

## Creating Awareness for Heritage Conservation in the City of Mysore: Issues and Policies

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**Abstract:** Heritage awareness is a crucial part of any heritage conservation and management. The creation of awareness is time-consuming and it requires commitment and local support. It is often the most recognizable component of a heritage management. One of the most effective ways to build and maintain respect for community's heritage is through a selection of activities that raise public awareness and increase appreciation. The success of heritage conservation initiatives depends on the understanding and participation of the local community. The City of Mysore is one of the prominent historical, cultural and heritage cities in India. The city has been identified as a heritage city for conservation by the State and Central Governments. The awareness programmes have also been launched under Jawarharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission by City Corporation in collaboration with Heritage Commissioner's office. The paper focuses on the efforts made by various agencies for creating awareness for heritage conservation and proposes policy measures for creating effective heritage awareness in the city of Mysore.

**Key Words:** Heritage, Culture, Conservation, Awareness and Policies

### I. Background

Heritage awareness is an important component of conservation. One of the basic causes for damage of heritage is due to lack of awareness to the public at large and non involvement of people in the process of conservation as well. The Constitution of India prescribed under the *fundamental duties* that the protection of heritage is one of the important duties of each and every Citizen of India, but the efforts made by the local authorities and agencies are not significant. The society's responsibility is to conserve the heritage that was created in the past. The local people need to take part in the process of conservation. Therefore, it is high time that greater emphasis to be laid down for creating awareness to the public including people at large.

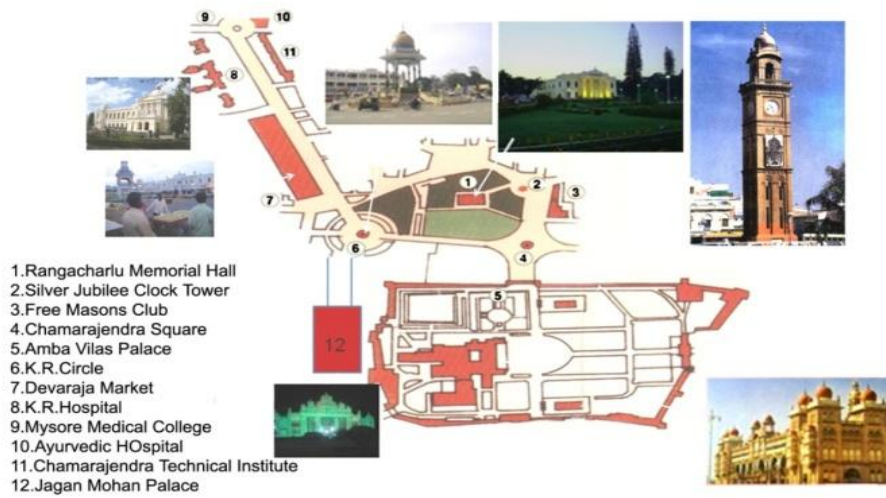
### II. Heritage Awareness in Mysore

The Department of Archeology, Museums and Heritage, Heritage Commissioners office, Mysore City Corporation and Tourism Department have taken a leading role for creating awareness on heritage by involving stakeholders of Mysore. The Mysore Heritage Area Experts Committee for preservation and protection of heritage areas has listed 201 heritage buildings. Heritage commissioner's office has given guidelines and suggestions to keep the vicinity of heritage buildings clean and tidy and it has fixed "signage boards" with brief description (Shilaphalaka) which are placed near the heritage buildings.

The workshops, seminars, photo exhibitions of heritage buildings/structures and visit to heritage areas are being conducted for tourists, officials, publics, and school and college students. A small booklet on heritage of Mysore was published. Awareness programmes for tour guides and training programme on conservation and maintenance of heritage buildings for various government department officials were also organized by heritage commissioner's office. For creating awareness among school and college students, *heritage clubs* were started in the year 2007. Photo exhibition on monuments and buildings were organized in the premises of Exhibition Authority during Dasara celebrations. Besides, dance, dramas, cultural activities, essay writing, debate, painting/sketches and Janapada programmes were also conducted. Heritage walk is being introduced to create awareness among the public throughout the year. The public, tourists, different departmental official, schools and college students, NGOs, hospitality people, travel agencies and other concerned peoples were involved extensively. The other details of heritage structures along the path are printed and are given to all participants to create better awareness and knowledge on built heritage of the city. T-shirts, caps, embossed with landmark buildings are also given to participants. The heritage walk (see fig.1) has been designed as people initiative, where they shall be equally involved in making the project a success.

Many voluntary agencies namely Dr. Reddy Foundation and 'Royal Heritage Walk' have been conducting activities related to heritage walk in the city. Many foreign tourists have participated in the heritage walk. Post graduate students of arts, history and tourism department's students of the University of Mysore and private colleges are also participating in the heritage walk and they are working towards creating awareness on heritage assets.

Fig.1: Route Map of Heritage Walk



**A. Initiatives of Heritage Walk by IHCN:** The Indian Heritage Cities Network Foundation (IHCN) has established its centre at Mysore in May 2011 for boosting the heritage conservation activities in the city. It has organized four-day third biennial conference in Mysore during May 2011 and the conference was funded by UNESCO, New Delhi, in collaboration with the Government of Karnataka, Karnataka Urban Infrastructure Development Finance Corporation and Mysore City Corporation. The conference deliberated on various aspects of heritage cities and its conservation. “Heritage Walk” to historic core areas was organized to the conference delegates.



### III. SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
1. Awareness programmes viz. heritage walk, workshops and competition: debate, essay writing, painting, etc., initiated by Heritage Commissioners’ Office. 2. A special component of heritage conservation is being planned under JNNURM project. 3. Networking of Institutions – Philanthropist/Charitable Institution, heritage clubs, IHCN, UNESCO, NGOs, schools and colleges.	1. There is no significant effort for developing effective IEC materials for creating awareness. 2. No specific information to the public authorities or public for management of heritage assets including alterations and demolitions. 3. There is no wide publicity drives. 4. No mechanism for participation of people or owners of private buildings/ stakeholders.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
1. Setting up of Heritage Cell for planning, management, and control and resource mobilization. 2. Scope for framing of Heritage Polices and IEC under JNNURM Tool Kit. 3. Tourist Development Plan of State Government to boost heritage and culture.	1. Private owners and businessmen resist/ oppose for maintaining the assets owned by them. 2. Relocation of City Bus and Sub-urban terminals for pedestranisation in the heritage core and restricting vehicles.

#### IV. Issues and Options

The awareness programmes are being conducted by the city authorities by involving public and stakeholders, which has achieved a reasonable success in Mysore city. Still a large mass of people and owners of the heritage buildings and authorities have to realize holistically the need and importance of safeguarding this valuable rich heritage of Mysore. In spite of these little efforts, many valuable heritage buildings are demolished; building elements disfigured; encroachments and incompatible developments have come around the heritage buildings; structural problems continued and heritage buildings are not maintained in the heritage area of Mysore. The awareness programmes are required to be conducted more regularly and consistently involving all sections of the society, especially owners of the heritage buildings, officials of the development authority and people living in and around the heritage areas/buildings. Already identified heritage walk path is limited to certain streets and the extension of path to other important heritage buildings namely Jagan Mohan Palace in the vicinity of heritage core to be explored. The heritage path proposed by the heritage commissioner's office is lacking with public amenities, street furniture, tourist information route map, professionally trained subject guide and few heritage buildings are in bad condition and facing structural problems.

- Heritage path proposed by heritage commissioner's office is lacking with basic amenities, street furniture, separate heritage-track and information maps.
- Present heritage walk includes only buildings surrounding the palace, even though large number of architecturally important buildings concentrated in other part of the city.
- Heritage buildings are in bad condition and few are in dilapidated condition requires urgent conservation, preservation and adoptive re-use measures.
- Lack of awareness to both officials and owners of the private buildings leads to demolition and built transformations.
- Commercial activities in the core area attract large volume of traffic and informal sector people.
- Private owners of the heritage buildings lack conservation knowledge due to this many buildings are demolished or altered without showing concern to the existing architecture.

The main objectives need to create awareness are to;

- Encourage and promote awareness on traditional built forms of the city.
- Create better awareness regarding heritage resources.
- Co-ordinate efforts of different disciplines, stakeholders and authorities.
- Mobilize finance and resources for restoration and support participatory action programmes.
- All the listed heritage buildings are to be placed with special plaque (Shilapalaka) at the entrances to enhance the identity and inculcate a sense of pride and belonging among the neighborhoods.



Fig. 3: Shilapalaka and Sign board Installed in Front of Building

- Create awareness among the general public towards the importance of safeguarding heritage assets.
- Heritage walk needs to be promoted more intensively by involving professionals, institutions, associations, volunteers, tourists, agencies, community organizations, NGOs and all stakeholders.
- The dilapidated heritage buildings to be given wide publicity for undertaking conservation and restoration measures by the owners of the property.
- Public private partnership initiatives to be encouraged on similar lines of Infosys Foundation, which has extended financial support for conservation and restoration of Jayalaxmi Vilas Mansion and other heritage buildings of the University of Mysore. Similar initiatives from private and other stakeholders are to be promoted and encouraged for conservation and restoration of dilapidated or damaged heritage buildings in the city.
- Best way to maintain the building is to put them for some use. The damaged or ruined heritage buildings to be restored to original character and put them under adaptive re-use and compatible uses like, tourist oriented activities, museums, tourist information centers, tourist hotel, arts and craft centre, etc.
- Adaptive reuse of building to be encouraged in consultation with management or owners of building as done in the case of Lalitha Mahal Palace and Jayalaxmi Mansion illustrated below:
  - a) Hotel Lalitha Mahal *Palace* has been under adaptive re-use and converted the palace into five-star hotel by suitably modifying to suit the function without affecting the structure and character of the building.



- a. Jayalaxmi Vilas Mansion, located in the University campus has been conserved under public private partnership initiatives from Infosys foundation by successfully accommodating folklore museum and research centre without affecting the existing architecture.
- Devaraja market, Gun house, Lawnsdowne building, Janatha bazaar, Free mansions club are in dilapidated condition and they located very close to the Palace and tourist zone needs immediate attention of restoration by involving private and other agencies' support. Similarly, many heritage buildings, particularly private residential heritage buildings in the city are in need of restoration and adoptive re-use.
- Mysore City Corporation has constituted Heritage Cell to create awareness among citizens and to develop a comprehensive plan for the conservation of Mysore city. Many awareness and conservation programmes have to be taken up immediately.
- Specialized training programmes need to be organized for conservation professionals. The efforts of community groups and individuals need to be supported to ensure heritage conservation.
- Conservation aspects to be included in curriculum of schools and colleges to bring more awareness among younger generations.
- Heritage artifact, viz. sandal wood artifact, sandal soap, silk saris, sandal wood garlands, traditional Mysore paintings, etc, needs more publicity to showcase the wealth and diversity of the art and architecture of Mysore.
- Light and sound shows showcasing Mysore city's history, culture, art and architecture was started in May 2011 and organized inside the palace premises for public and tourists to highlight and to create better awareness on Mysore heritage. Similar kind of programmes needs to be encouraged with the help of public and private partnership to boost tourism.
- Association of old heritage property owners need to be formed to encourage conservation and restoration of their structures and also to help them in getting financial assistance, property tax exemption, resolving legal issues, etc. towards safeguarding built heritage of Mysore.
- Create more awareness through educational and publicity programs and involve local community in developing tourism and heritage management.
- Public participation has to be seen as an important tool in the process of urban conservation. People have to be involved at the initial stages to achieve a self sustenance and continuity.

#### A. Stakeholders Participation

The following agencies have involved in creating heritage awareness in the city and are (a)INTACH (b) MHATF (c) Voluntary Organizations (d) ADB and (e) JNNURM. Besides the agencies that were participated in awareness are listed below:

- **Government Authorities:** Department of Archeology, Museums and Heritage, Mysore City Corporation and Mysore Urban Development Authority.
- **Public Authorities:** Tourism department, Lake development authority, Horticulture department, Public works department, Electricity department, University of Mysore, Hospitals, KUIDFC, Police and Law-Order Department, Information and Broadcasting Department and Other public Offices
- **Private Agencies:** Hotels, Travel agencies, Private Property Owners.
- **Tourists:** Domestic, National, and International
- **Institutions:** Education department, Schools and colleges, CAVA: Traditional Arts and crafts, paintings, Arts and cultural department. (Rangayana, folklore, Sanskrit, etc.), Department of Kannada and Culture, Folklore and Museums, Yoga Music and dance.(Private)
- **NGOs:** INTACH, IHCN, UNESCO, Heritage clubs, Voluntary organizations,
- **Service Providers:** Hotels, Travel Agencies, Tonga's and Tourists Guides

#### V. Proposed Heritage Policies for Creating Awareness

The existing programmes are not adequate and are to be conducted rigorously rather an on a piece meal approach, It needs to be given more professional touch to bring more systematic awareness involving various professionals, agencies and stakeholders in the field. Following new initiatives are proposed;

- A. **Restructuring of Heritage Walks:** The existing heritage walk path proposed by heritage commissioner's office to be continued by including Jagan Mohan Palace and may be named as Royal walk or heritage walk-1. The newly proposed heritage walk may be named as Nature walk or Heritage walk-2 mainly covering Mysore university educational institutions located in university campus including Kukkarahalli Lake environs. The proposed walk starts from Maharaja's college centenary hall by covering the following buildings namely Maharaja's College, Yuvarajas College, Oriental research institute, Maharaja's Junior college, Maharanis College, Deputy Commissioner's office, Crawford hall, Kukkarahalli Lake and heritage walk may conclude at Jayalaakasmi Vilas Mansion.
- B. **Freedom Walk:** Freedom Walk be organized in heritage areas on all national level festivals like, Independence day, Republic day and birth days of important National leaders like Gandhiji, Vivekananda, Nethaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Mysore Maharajas, Dewans of Mysore, Freedom fighters etc., so that people will gather in large numbers to celebrate these events and also understand and respect, pay homage.

- C. **Street Plays:** Street plays with participants of the local community and eminent personalities from the area to be organized by involving institutions like Rangayana, CAVA and other institutions on a common platform to understand the issues related to tangible heritage in the city.
- D. **Children's Books:** Books depicting the history of Mysore city, Mysore Maharajas' and important events like Mysore Dasara and brief history of city monuments should be published in simple language for understanding and creating interest among the children.
- E. **Heritage Products:** Mysore is famous for sandalwood, silk and Mysore paintings. Various products and artifacts made out of sandalwood, Mysore sandal soap, silk saris, Mysore Turban, popularly known as Mysore Peta, sandalwood garlands etc', are very popular in the country. These products' exhibition cum sale to be organized in the core heritage zone and this will benefit both tourists and locals and also the revenue generates from this can be utilized for the heritage development.
- F. **Elected Representative's Involvement:** The involvement of politicians in their respective areas to be ensured in all the citizen forums, ward sabha, ward committee and other formal and informal organizations of the city corporation, They need to be involved at all stages of development and heritage related activities namely cultural and other important events of the city.
- G. **Museum cum Information Centre:** At present tourists who are visiting the city are finding difficulties in getting first hand information on various aspects of the heritage city. Many of the valuable arts, crafts, paintings and heritage buildings of the city are slowly disappearing due to urban expansion and city's growth. Opening an information centre and museum to showcase city's rich heritage in the heritage area will benefit both tourists and locals.
- H. **Light and Sound Shows:** Present illumination of Palace on holidays and Sundays to be continued to attract tourists and general public to the heritage area. Light and sound shows pertaining to history, culture and architecture of Mysore city to be organized in palace premises (Just started on may- 2011) to create more attraction and interest among the tourists and public (similar activity happening in red fort Delhi). These programmes are to be performed during the Dasara season and summer seasons continuously and general holidays as well. This will spread the message of history of Mysore very fast to all concerned tourists of different destinations and attract more tourists to the city.
- I. **Tonga Tour:** During Mysore Maharajas Period Tonga ride has been very popular among the tourists as well as local people. Over a period of time due to city's fast growth, and modern development automobiles dominated the city streets and Tongas are reduced. The age old Tonga vehicles are to be decorated and re-introduced in the heritage area. The pedestrianizing the area around main Palace needs to be undertaken to facilitate the visits to heritage buildings (heritage walk area) to synchronize with Tonga riding. Tonga riders can be trained as guides and given identity cards, taking people for guided tours to the important heritage areas. Maps and photographs of the places are to be displayed in tongas. Also, pollution free vehicles may be promoted for environmental friendliness for which tourism department has to take necessary steps for initiation of this programme.
- J. **Heritage City News paper:** Heritage and tourism department along with citizens group can jointly bring out news paper exclusively discussing the issues related to heritage city and public awareness. This will spread the message of heritage awareness to more people in short period of time. The Hindu, Times of India and Star of Mysore are already publishing city heritage issues on regular basis in addition to Sunday's special editions.
- K. **Training Administrators:** Knowledge, skills and attitudes on heritage to be provided to the officials, who work in various departments related to heritage in Mysore city. Proper education and awareness programmes to these officials can go a long way in protecting and preserving the rich built heritage. The training programmes are to be organized in the State Institute of Urban Development (SIUD) and District Training Institute, Mysore regularly as a specialization to promote efficient heritage management. Lectures and demonstration programmes on different aspects of built, cultural heritage and conservation and management be introduced. Mysore Heritage Cell may take a leading initiative in conducting this programme.
- L. **Festivals:** Mysore Dasara is a very popular and world famous attracts tourists. In order to ensure community participation to raise the level of awareness and sense of belonging about the heritage, festivals like Mysore Dasara, cultural festivals, World Heritage Day and heritage week may be organized every year. Cultural events, photo exhibition, drawing, paintings and essay competitions, lecture series and other related activities can be a part of the events to create more awareness on heritage to children and public.
- M. **Heritage Awards:** Heritage awards to be initiated to encourage people, individual, organizations, schools and media to take part in the competitions. "Mysore Heritage Awards" to be instituted for recognizing the efforts of conservation of heritage areas/buildings in Mysore. This should be an annual feature and award to be decided by a panel consisting of many eminent personalities and this event can be organized on 18<sup>th</sup> April of every year to celebrate World Heritage Day. The other suggested awards namely best maintained residential heritage building award, best maintained public building award, heritage school award, news paper award covering maximum number of heritage issues, heritage reporter award for best reporting heritage issues and life time contribution award.
- N. **Promotion of Heritage in Education:** Heritage educational programmes are successful only when the local community comes forward to support and initiate heritage related activities. This is possible when the local people to whom the very heritage belongs understands its values, takes pride and establish a sense of belonging. Social and cultural festivals play a greater role in generating awareness and mobilize communities. Community meetings, audio, visual shows, exhibitions, street plays, annual celebrations, cultural walks books and publications are all of effective means of cultural education.

The National Commission on Urbanization and Model Building Bye-laws of Government of India has recommended that there is a need for incorporating the conservation principles into the basic curricula of architecture, engineering and town planning. In order to create awareness of the value of heritage, suitably designed courses has to be included in the curricula of schools and colleges. Motivations and training of technical personnel in these lines will help in spreading the message of heritage conservation. Education and awareness programmes therefore are the most significant tool to achieve continued relationship with the past.

## VI. Conclusions

Though, there is enough scope to include the heritage subject in the preparation of master plans under section 12(1)(f) of the KTCP Act and to contain separate heritage regulations, the present regulations are not adequate to meet the challenges of heritage areas. There is need to evolve detailed regulations for delineating heritage zones, and Development Control Regulations on lines of Hampi World Heritage Regulations for proper planning and conservation heritage areas in the City of Mysore. Further, efforts are required to create greater awareness among the people to include Information Education Communication, heritage walk, freedom walk, street plays, light and sound shows, Tonga tour, heritage festivals, heritage awards, heritage news paper for promoting effective management and conservation of heritage area.

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