Policy Measures for Improving the Imageability in the City of Mysore

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ABSTRACT

Mysore city is an ancient, historical, cultural capital and heritage city. The city is known as the '*city of palaces*'. The city has both natural and built heritage and it has retained its studiously built character of a native princely city. The most imposing and majestic building in Mysore is the Ambavilas Palace, which is the landmark of the city. The architectural and urban design elements like vistas, focal points, landmarks, avenues, plazas etc., make it undoubtedly the most important tradition city in India. Albert – Victor road is beautifully laid down street, has a pathway beautifully laid within the Curzon park which and hugging the palace gate and fort with a moat on northern side of the palace as a landmark, represents the vista with edges. The townscape of the city viewed from Chamundi hills present a skyline of clock tower, statues, palaces, mansions depicts the beauty of the city. The paper attempts to identify the urban design elements which contributed to *image of the city* and suggest policy measures for conserving the elements of urban design in the City of Mysore.

Key Words: Built Heritage, Imageability and Policy Measures.

I. INTRODUCTION

 Mysore is the third largest city in the State of Karnataka and it had a population of 7,85,800 as per 2001 census. The name of Mysore was derived from *mahisha (a demon).* Formerly, the city was the state capital and head quarters of the Princely State of Mysore. It is situated at a distance 140kms from Bangalore, on the southern part of Karnataka State at 12° 18' North latitude and 76° 12' East longitude, and at an altitude of 770 mts above mean sea level. The city lies in a saucer shaped basin flanked by Chamundi hills on the south-east and a raised platform near Hinakal village on the west. The city has a salubrious climate and the temperature varies from 12° C to 35° C. It has an average annual rainfall of about 798mm. The city spreads across an area of 128.42sq.kms. The literacy rate is 82.8 percent. A majority of the city's population speaks Kannada language, while other languages such as Tulu, Tamil and Hindi are also spoken.

II. HERITAGE OF MYSORE

Mysore is a cultural and prime heritage city and it exhibits both tangible and intangible elements. It combines the historical facts and anecdotes with a harmonious combination of natural and built heritage. The city is known as '*cultural capital'* of Karnataka. It was the capital of Wodeyar Kings who ruled Mysore Kingdom for many centuries and contributed significantly to make the city as a cultural centre including art, poetry and music. The city is as known city of palaces and the museums, art galleries and the festivities that take place during the period of *Dasara* which attract worldwide audience. The total harmony of buildings, sites, lakes, parks and open spaces including backdrop of Chamundi hill adds to the city's aesthetics with different cultures and different styles of architecture. The heritage buildings have four distinct architectural styles viz. Indo-Saracenic, Traditional Hindu Style, Greaco-Roman and Gothic (Pearl). Thus, the city exhibits both tangible and non tangible elements of heritage character, and therefore, the Government of Karnataka recognized the city as Heritage city and Government of India has selected the city for Urban Renewal Project under cultural and heritage tag.

III. BUILT HERITAGE OF MYSORE

Mysore city has both natural and built heritage. The city has retained its studiously built character of a native princely city. The most imposing and majestic building in Mysore is the Ambavilas Palace, which is the focal point of the city. It was built in an Indo-Sarcenic style. The city is characterized by buildings, gardens, boulevards, and planned markets all these were the contributions of Maharajas, Dewans, and their talented workmanship. Their architectural and urban design elements like vistas, focal points, landmarks, avenues, plazas etc., make it undoubtedly the most important tradition city in India. Albert – Victor road is beautifully laid down street, has a pathway beautifully laid within the Curzon park which and hugging the palace gate and fort with a moat on northern side of the palace as a landmark, represents the vista with edges. The townscape of the city viewed from Chamundi hills present a skyline of clock tower, statues, palaces, mansions depicts the beauty of the city.

IV. DEFINITION OF IMAGEABILITY

Imageability is a participative technological installation investigating the relationships between special conceptions of the city, historical memory, and the continuous dynamic emergence of cultural identity. It is a tool for expressing one's own vision of the city, exploring its history, and constructing a collective. Kevin Lynch introduced the concept of *imageability*, which he defined as that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer. It is that shape, colour, or arrangement which facilitates the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured, highly useful mental images of the environment. It might also be called legibility, or perhaps

visibility in a heightened sense, where objects are not only able to be seen, but are presented sharply to their senses. Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City* of 1961 was also seminal to the movement, particularly with regards to the concept of legibility, and the reduction of urban design theory to five basic elements - *paths, districts, edges, nodes*, and *landmarks*.

V. IMAGEABILITY OF MYSORE

Mysore is designed studiously as a princely city, has an established urban form to include urban design elements, imageability of the city and built structures that contributed to the aesthetics and architecture. The city is characterized by the towering presence of Amba Vilas Palace, which is the landmark and focal point of the city. Mysore is a city of long boulevards radiating from well defined central axis with well recessed public buildings balanced on either side can be a model for any town planner. The city planning can be identified as a combination of grid iron pattern residing on the radially expanding city. It has both architectural and urban design elements namely vistas, focal points, landmarks, avenues, and plazas made it undoubtedly the prominent heritage city. Mysore is characterized by heritage buildings, gardens, boulevards, and planned markets all these are the contributions of Maharajas, Dewans, and their talented workmanship. The architectural growth in Mysore occurred from 1805 and was completed by 1940. This marvel gave the city a skyline which is proclaimed a powerful aristocracy. Though, a large number of buildings were deliberately made in Hindu style or in Indo-Sarcenic style, and European classical remained the major style of the period. Chamarajendra Wodeyar and the Maharani Regent commissioned many distinguished buildings including some remarkable buildings in European Classical style between 1881- 1902. However Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV, who stands out among the great builder's of Mysore city and creators of its remarkable aesthetics. Mysore also witnesses a blend of various styles. The balanced treatment of architectural composition with a blend of man-made structures of natural features, have given the city a rare and captive beauty. The combination of different styles applied in statues, clock towers and fountains are so well executed in terms of purity of style and located in right places with the right proportion of open spaces incorporated in it. The townscape of the city viewed from Chamundi hills present a skyline of clock tower, statues, palaces, mansions, etc., which exists with its beauty. The treatment given to the public buildings are reasons of admiration inspiring state of thought about the rich past. The maintenance of beautiful gardens in the premises enhanced the appearance of the city.
The imageablity of city's aesthetics of urban design elements are expressed through the following elements:

1. Land Marks
2. Focal Point
3. Precinct
4. Public Square
5. Public and Private Realm
6. Vista and Axis
7. Nodes
8. Edges
9. Path
10. Juxtaposition
11. Urban Imagery
    a. Street Furniture
    b. Gateways
    c. Railings
    d. Hoardings

A. *Landmarks*

"The position of a prominent or well-known object in a particular landscape is called the landmark, which attracts attention". There are two important landmarks in the City of Mysore and they are Ambavilas Palace and Chamaraja Circle.
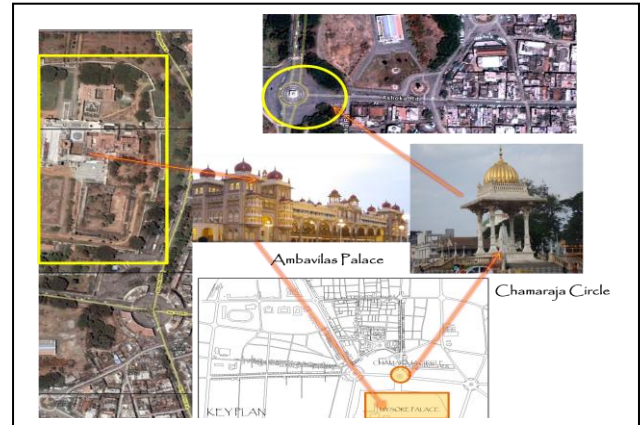

Fig. 1 Land Marks of Mysore

Ambavilas Palace is a prominent landmark, a three storied structure having the tallest tower with the gilded dome rising to a level of 145 ft from the ground. It was built in Indo-sarcenic architecture style. The domes and the external elements are of Islamic architecture. But the interior of the palace is a fine example of Hindu architecture. Together, it is an aesthetic blend of Hindu and Muslim architectures. Illuminated palace stands in its full grandeur and splendour posing the majestic image to the city. The palace exhibits the following characters namely (a) most renowned Palace, (b) innermost landmark (c) reveal the strength and power of the place, (d) monumental scale (e) most visited tourist place and derives income from tourist (f) architectural style, domes, arches, decorations, carvings etc., makes it significant and (g) draws people's attention. Chamaraja Circle is another landmark in the city and it has straight axis to the K.R.Circle. The circle also acts as a focal point from the Ashoka road and Harding circle. It has square in composition with Dilwara-style carved brackets of elaborate design and Maharaja Chamaraja Wodeyar's statue erected in 1920. The gold plated dome and intricate carvings makes it important.

B. *Focal point*

'Focal point is a critical point of a distance function. Focal point focuses specifically a point of interest which makes a place unique in streets, market places of town. Focal point will be column, cross, clock tower which crystallises the situation and confirms this in the spot'. Silver Jubilee Clock Tower has been built to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of the then king Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV. Seventy Five (75'0) feet square tower topped with Indo Saracenic style and vertical symbol of congregation. It is located in the centre of the city and acts as a main focal point, located on the old procession street. The Krishna Rajendra circle which has the statue of the then king Krishnaraja Wodeyar as a focal point is located in the intersection of Sayyaji Rao road, Albert Victor Road and Devaraja Urs Road. Surrounding

structures respond to the circle in circular form, integrating the character and stylistic unity.
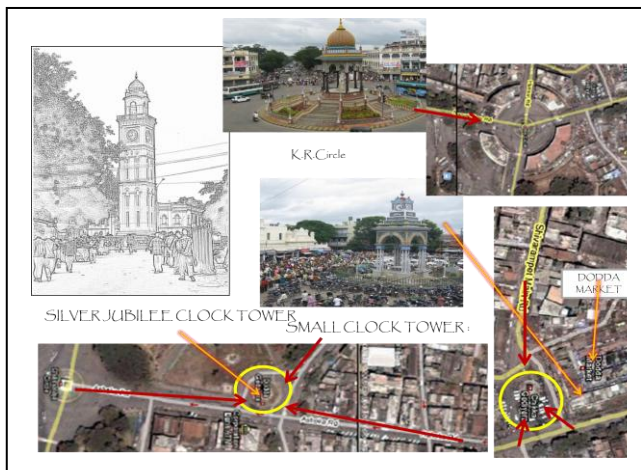

Fig. 2 Focal Point

C. Precinct

'A subdivision or district of a city or town forming a particular part of an urban area is precinct. When a group of buildings placed together having different or varied styles of architecture, then the area around it forms a precinct'. Krishnarajendra Hospital is an example of an entire building having a typical architectural style, thereby forming the precincts around it. The central dome, built in Vatican model, dominates the elevation. Tuscan, Ionic and Corinthian columns and Greek architecture presents a grand look, thereby providing area surrounding it a precinct. The hospital complex consisting of group of buildings with different specialization, like Cheluvamba hospital, K.R.hospital, Ophthalmology block and surrounded by Medical College together form a precinct. The Ambavilas Palace and its group of building, temples, landscape and public space within fort forms another relevant example of a precinct due to its distinct style of architecture within the premises. The other precincts are Devaraja market along with the 'small clock tower' (Chikka Ghadiyara), Town Hall Precincts, Gandhi Square Precincts, Old and Present Procession Street-Precincts and many more.

Fig. 3 K.R. Hospital Precincts

D. Public Square

'Public Square is a space used by the public. A public square can acts as the focal point, land mark and enclosure'. Harding Circle commemorates the Viceroy's visit to Mysore city in 1913. The circle is geometrically designed with six gateways facing each other. The roads split into six deviations, all of which are flanked with ornamental gateways, which in turn add to the aesthetic part of the circle. Vasavi circle in front of the Devaraja market including the Chikka Ghadighara form a public square. In an intersection wherein the JLB road and Irwin road meets near railway station, the Statue of Dr.Babu Jagajeevanram is installed in this intersection by replacing the beautiful water fountain circle with landscaped traffic rotaries which with urban form. Railway station is also a public square and it is the rendezvous point of all who board and disembark the train at this point.

E. Vista and Axis

'Foreground linked by background through different elements like landscape, water bodies or pathways etc., closed by a mass of building and it produces a sense of power and omnipresence'. The stretch of buildings on either side of the road creates a vista, with the foreground circle. Albert Victor Road leading from Harding circle to DC office via Chamaraja circle and Krishnaraja circle forms a vista. The street axis has avenue of trees and beautiful architectural landmarks on the same street. The pathway leading from Ashoka circle is a very good example of vista.

F. Nodes and Edges

'Nodes are strategic points in a city which the observer can enter. Primary junctions, transport transit, terminals and convergence of path. The circles and junctions forms the nodes. There are many nodes and the buildings or open spaces around them form the edges'.
Krishna Rajendra Circle is a node, and four roads converge at this junction. The buildings at the edges respond to the node. A large number of vehicles moving towards the nodes because of proximity of location of city bus resulted in greater volume of traffic, congestion and delay. Traffic signals are installed to regulate the vehicular and pedestrian movement. Vishweswaraiah circle is also a node with four roads converging at this intersection. This junction is functioning as self operating rotary without traffic signals. Harding Circle is a self operating rotary with six roads converging at this rotary and all the roads have gateways. It is installed with water fountain and traffic signals. One of the interesting characters of Mysore city is that the building responds to the road edges in K.R.Circle, Ashoka circle and other prominent places. At all these points, the buildings respond to geometry of curvilinear pattern by converging towards the focal point which can either be a fountain, statue, and island. Even though, the buildings differ in their functions, the building styles follow the pattern of uniqueness.
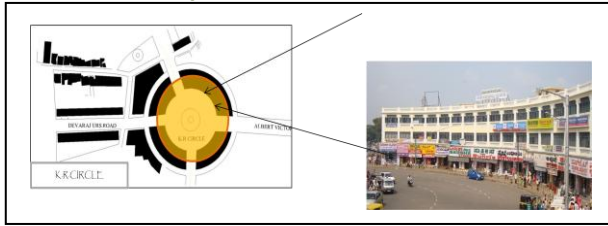
Fig. 4 Edges-K.R.Circle

G. Path

'Paths are the channels along which the observer customarily moves. Paths are nothing but pedestrian networks, which links the town together in a viable pattern. Continuity and access are always maintained'. All main roads in city core have pathways and are well regulated for the movement of traffic and pedestrians with signal synchronisation in the central area. Paths were provided with street furniture like lamp post, railings, ornamented sign boards etc.

H. Juxtaposition

'Juxtaposition is an act or instance of placing close together or side by side, especially for comparison or contrast. The unequal character of both is sharply brought together. It demonstrates a mixture of different elements'. Mysore has many heritage structures and these are vital for their architectural style. But due to the change in trend and demand for more commercial spaces, people started glass façade buildings by replacing old traditional architectural buildings. This change in urban form is seen more in the heritage area. Many buildings, which have come up in the recent past in the heritage area are not compatible and harmonious with the existing architecture.

Fig. 5: Juxtaposition

I. Public and Private Realm

'Public realm refers to the level of comfort of the public. Private realm refers to the view or perception which a person has, by looking at the exterior of the private building'. The streets used by people, their ease in using them are the public realm. The Albert Victor Road an example for this and creates a safe, attractive and accessible town at central environment. Avenue of trees, which gives a soothing view for the people who drive or walk on that way. The treatment of these areas of public realm is as important as the built development for vision.

J. Urban Imaginary: Gateways, Railings, Signage and Hoardings Gateways: Gateways are one of the prominent urban imaginary features of Mysore acting as the welcoming element denoting power and traditional access to the Fort Area in the central. The gateways are diminishing in importance with every passing day due to lack of maintenance and roads widening.

Fig. 6 Gateways of Mysore City

Railings: The railings in Mysore city are traditional in style with different patterns made out of cast iron. There were varieties of railings found in different roads with floral and other patterns and these railings are damaged, misplaced and even stolen due to lack of maintenance and security.

Signages: Signages are symbols or words whose functions are to provide directions, identification, information and orientation. Signages are not addressed properly to establish harmony to outfit the heritage area due to absence of certain prototype designs which depicts some style of architecture of the place.

Hoardings: It is a large outdoor signboard structure erected for displaying advertisements. Hoardings are not compatible with the heritage area; either obstruct the view or cover the architectural characteristics of the buildings. In many places street names and valuable information about the buildings are covered by the hoardings.

VI. PROPOSED POLICY MEASURES

Mysore city is rich with built heritage structures of architectural, historical, cultural importance, but, built heritage character of Mysore city is dominated by urban design elements like, landmarks, vistas, nodes, axis, focal point elements, streetscapes, water bodies and parks and open spaces. Lack of control and insensitive approach by recent developments urban design elements are facing threats and due to excessive demand for commercial developments the existing architectural buildings/areas are undergoing architectural transformation, massing, modern materials with juxtaposition, deterioration, etc., are all incompatible with the existing architecture in the core area. Landmarks, nodes, focal elements, vista, skylines, have been affected by insensitive and intrusive developments in addition to 195 signage and hoardings which are incompatible with the existing areas in the palace surroundings. The following are the suggestions for improving the imageablity in Mysore city.

1) Comprehensive urban design guidelines are to be introduced to protect and preserve the built structures in the heritage zones of Mysore city. The existing built-form, massing, setbacks, scale and architectural style are to be strictly monitored and maintained. Urban design elements which exist in the core area need to be protected to enhance the aesthetic quality.

1) Architectural control in terms of height, bulk, facade style, character, elements, building materials, etc, to be strictly imposed in core area.

2) Architectural control in relation to building height, facades treatment, building style, character, colour, materials usage, etc., may be imposed in the palace surrounding buildings/areas of primary zone.

3) Architectural control to be imposed on Sayyaji rao road, Albert victor road, Ashoka road, Deavaraja Urs road, Irwin road, New Sayyaji rao road and Palace surroundings, so that architectural character of the street to be maintained in harmony with the heritage area

4) All signages, hoardings, heritage plaque, information signs, to be compatible and designed to suite the existing architecture of the place.

5) Street furniture to be designed to suite the heritage areas and placed at appropriate intervals.

6) All the railings, sitting benches, compound wall details and sign boards should conformity with the heritage area.

7) Electric light poles and fixtures must be consistent with the existing architecture of the place.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

Mysore City is a royal city, and it has strong roots of urban design elements viz. landmarks, path, nodes, axis and urban imaginary which contributed significantly for good imageability of the city. The major heritage buildings, precincts and areas are located in the core area of the city. The development from 1860 to 1930 has contributed to the city's aesthetics, architecture, and beatification of the city and cultural heritage of the city. The development of architectural built heritage structures of Mysore city lead by Ambavilas palace as landmark and focal point of city's elements indicate that the city is meticulously planned and accompanied by distinctive monuments, royal mansions and other built forms; gardens, lakes and water bodies, boulevards and urban design elements like, focal points, vista, axis, landmarks, water fountains, statues, etc., make it undoubtedly the most important heritage components of the city and worth conserving it.

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