

# Namaste 🙏 Karnataka



## *Dasara, Triumph of Good over Evil*

Mysore Dasara is the Nadahabba (state festival) of the state of Karnataka in India. It is a 10-day festival, starting with nine nights called Navaratri and the last day being Vijayadashami. The festival is observed on the tenth day in the Hindu calendar month of Ashvina, which typically falls in the Gregorian months of September and October.

The Hindu festival of Dasara, Navratri and Vijayadashami celebrates the victory of good over evil. It was the day in the Hindu legends when Goddess Chamundeshwari (Durga) killed the demon Mahishasura. Mahishasura is the demon whose slaying by the Goddess gave the city the name Mysuru. The Mysuru tradition celebrates the warriors and the state fighting for the good during this festival, ritually worshipping and displaying the state sword, weapons, elephants, horses along with Hindu Devi goddess in her warrior form (predominantly) as well as the Vishnu avatar Rama. The ceremonies and a major procession is traditionally presided by the king of Mysuru.

The city of Mysuru has a long tradition of celebrating the Dasara festival with grandeur and pomp to mark the festival. The Dasara festival in Mysuru completed 409th anniversary in the year 2019, while evidence suggests the festivities were observed in Karnataka state by the Vijayanagara Empire kings in the 15th century.

### History

The Dasara festivities began with the Vijayanagar kings as early as the 14th-15th Century. The festival played a historical role in the 14th-century Vijayanagara Empire, where it was called Mahanavami and the festivities are shown in the relief artwork of the outer wall of the Hazara Rama temple of Hampi. The Italian traveller Niccolò de' Conti described the festival's intensity and importance as a grandeur religious and martial event with royal support. The event revered Durga as the warrior goddess (some texts refer to her as Chamundeshwari). The celebrations hosted athletic competitions, singing and dancing, fireworks, a pageantry military parade and charitable giving to the public. After the fall of the Vijayanagar to Deccan Sultanates, these Hindu celebrations came to an end under Muslim rulers. The Wodeyars of Mysore formed a kingdom in Southern parts of the Vijayanagara Empire and continued the Mahanavami (Dasara) festival celebration, a tradition started initially by Raja Wodeyar I (1578-1617 CE) in mid September 1610 at Srirangapatna.

### Festivities

The festivities included a special durbar (royal assembly). It was during the reign of Krishnaraja Wodeyar III in the year 1805, when the king started the tradition of having a special durbar in the Mysore Palace during Dasara; which was attended by members of the royal family, special invitees, officials and the masses.

After the death of Srikanta Wadiyar in December 2013, Dasara celebration in 2014 was celebrated by placing the "Pattada Katti" (royal sword) on the golden throne. But since his accession to the throne in 2015, Maharaja Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar have been holding the Dasara celebration and durbar. The ninth day of Dasara called as Mahanavami is also an auspicious day on which the royal sword is worshipped and is taken on a procession involving elephants, camels and horses.

### Lights in Mysore Palace

The main attraction of the ten-day Mysore Dasara festival is the Mysore Palace which is lighted daily with nearly 100,000 light bulbs from 7 pm to 10 pm on all days of the festival. Various cultural and religious programs highlighting the dance, music and culture of the State of Karnataka are performed in front of the illuminated Palace.



A lit up Mysore Palace, the epicenter of all Dasara festivities held in Mysore