

COVER STORY - DASARA

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India – Australia Friendship Fair is an annual event organised by UIA in Sydney which attracts large crowd of Indian community from all over NSW and interstate.

This event brings us back the joyous memories of Dasara celebrations during September – October months, a grand festival in the city of Mysore where thousands of people congregate near the Palace and Exhibition grounds to celebrate Dasara, as depicted on the cover of this souvenir.

Mysore is the cultural capital of Karnataka and Dasara Festival has always been a very special event ever since it was inaugurated by King Raja Wodeyar in 1610 AD.

Dasara is a ten day festival culminating on ‘Vijaya Dashami’, the tenth day. During the reign of Mysore Kingdom, the highlight of the festival was a spectacular procession with the Maharaja riding on a decorated elephant on ‘Vijaya Dashami’ day. The state government is maintaining the tradition of the grand procession of Goddess Durga.

In Karnataka, Dasara is celebrated as the state festival called ‘Nadahabba’ a joyous festival. During Dasara, the entire city of Mysore will be decorated and the Palace and other prominent buildings will be illuminated.

There are many legends connected with Dasara. According to a mythological legend, Goddess ‘Shakti’ (also called ‘Chamundeshwari’ and ‘Durga’) killed the mighty demon ‘Mahishasura’ on this ‘Vijaya Dashami’ day and Dasara is celebrated as a conquest of Good over Evil.

Dasara has derived from the Sanskrit word ‘Dasa-Hara’ meaning, ‘removing the ten’. According to mythology, Lord Rama fought Ravana a ten headed demon and killed him on ‘Vijaya Dashami’ the tenth day of the war and restored ‘Darma’ (righteousness) on earth. Dasara is therefore known as ‘Ram Leela’ (Life story of Lord Rama) in the northern part of India. The festival concludes on the tenth day with the burning of a huge effigy of demon king Ravana to celebrate the Victory (Vijay) of Good over Evil.

Dasara is celebrated for ten days as ‘Durga Pooja’ in West Bengal and ‘Navaratri’ in Tamil Nadu. In Maharashtra and Gujarat, this festival is famous for ‘Raas-Garbha’ and ‘Dandiya’, a dance form which is performed at night for nine nights. Women and men dance around an earthen lamp and a picture of Goddess Durga while singing devotional songs accompanied by drums and rhythmic clapping of hands.



Thousands gather to watch spectacular Mysore Palace under illumination