Festivals in Frames

Stories, Traditions and Celebrations across India



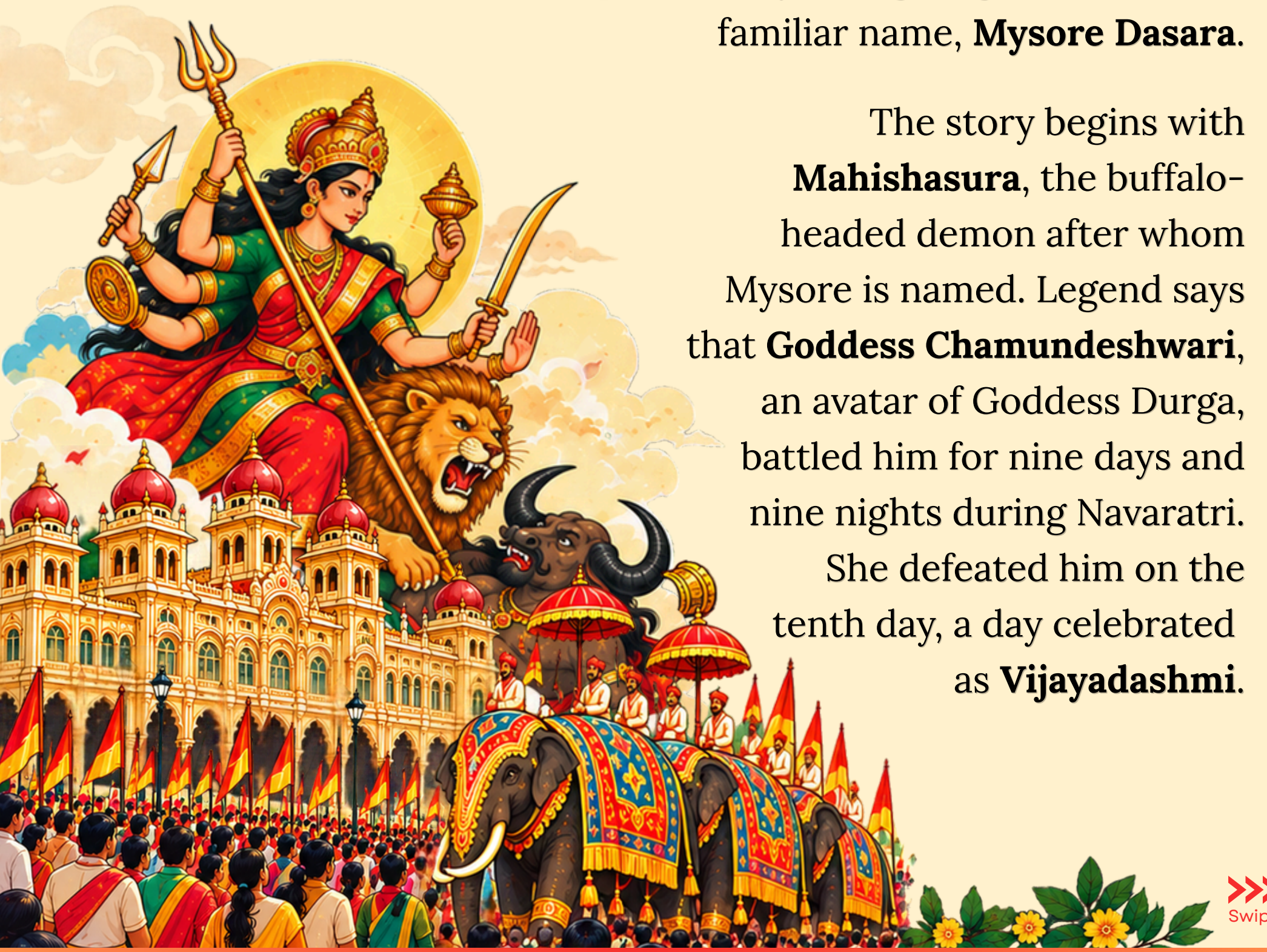
Chapter 1:

Mysore Dasara



Mysore's 400-Year-Old 10-Day Celebration!

Every year, Karnataka celebrates Dasara as **Nada Habba**, or the **'festival of the land'**, for ten days. The grandest celebrations take place in Mysore, giving the festival its familiar name, **Mysore Dasara**.



The story begins with **Mahishasura**, the buffalo-headed demon after whom Mysore is named. Legend says that **Goddess Chamundeshwari**, an avatar of Goddess Durga, battled him for nine days and nine nights during Navaratri. She defeated him on the tenth day, a day celebrated as **Vijayadashmi**.

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The Festival's Family Tree

Mysore Dasara has a long royal history. Its celebrations can be traced back to the **Kadambas of Banavasi** in the fifth century. The **Chalukyas of Badami** carried the tradition forward, before the **Vijayanagara** kings transformed it into a grand spectacle in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Under the **Bijapur Sultanate**, the festivities faded. However, in 1610, **Raja Wodeyar I** of the Wodeyar dynasty revived the celebrations at **Srirangapatna**, laying the foundation for what became known as **Mysore Dasara**.

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The OG
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How do we know what these celebrations looked like centuries ago? Travellers left behind vivid accounts of the grand **Mahanavami celebrations of Vijayanagara**.

1420s

Niccolò de' Conti

described people pelting fruits at men perched atop poles.

1443

Abdur Razzaq

marvelled at the multi-storeyed, carved pavilions.

1535

Fernão Nuniz

wrote about watching the king shoot arrows to symbolically claim his territory.

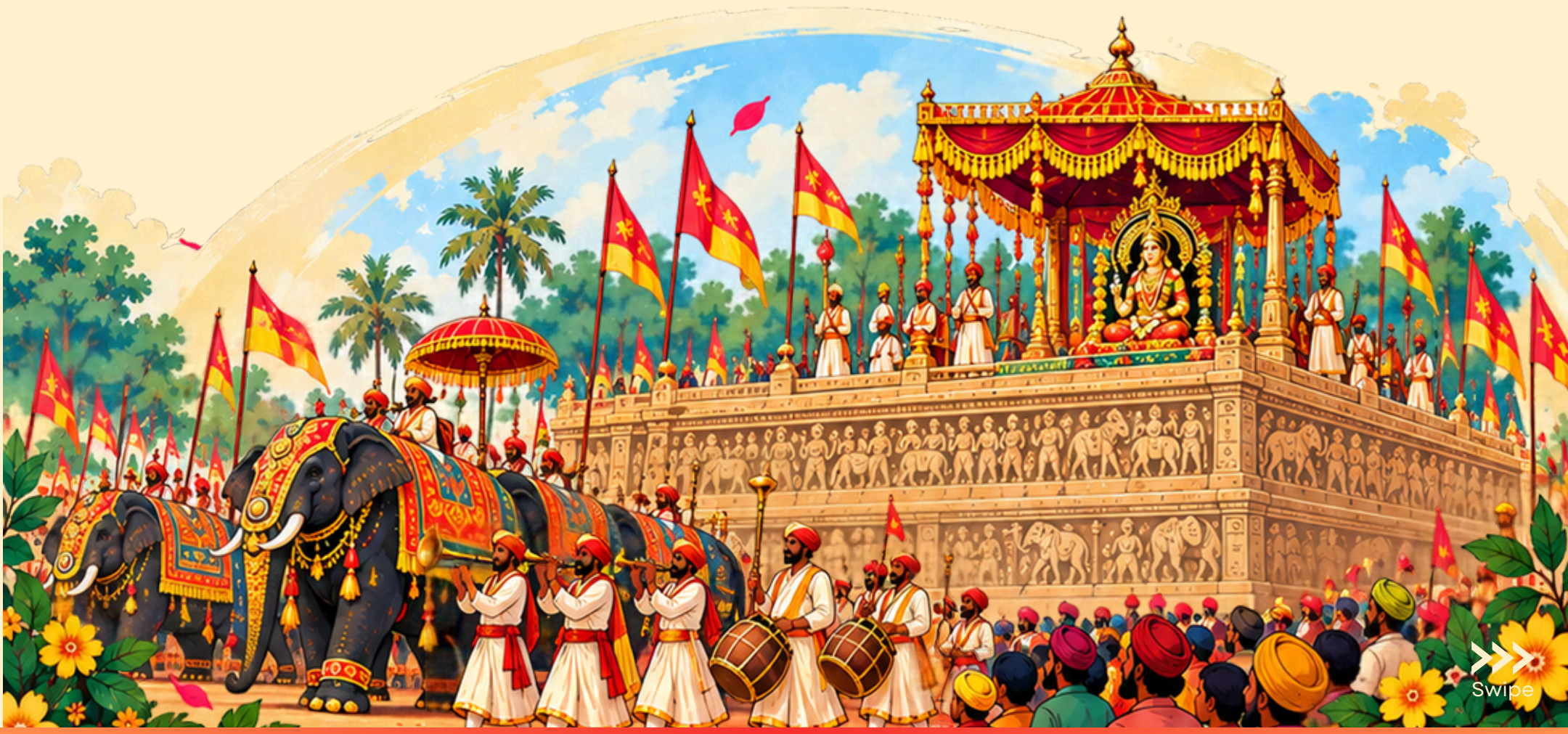


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Music, Dance, Feasts and Fast

For **nine days**, the city came alive with feasts, music, and dance. Royal elephants and horses took center stage in grand ceremonies, while fireworks lit up the night.

But amid all this celebration, the king himself observed a fast. Seated beside the deity on the royal stage, the **Mahanavami Dibba**, he watched the festivities unfold.



Timeless Traditions

Centuries later, the grandeur of Mysore Dasara still lights up the city.

The magnificent **Mysore Palace** is illuminated, transforming its familiar silhouette into a dazzling sight. The ninth day, **Ayudha Puja**, brings another important tradition, as weapons and tools are worshipped in a ritual believed to ward off evil.



A Grand Finale

Then comes **Vijayadashmi**, literally meaning,
‘Victory on the Tenth Day’.

The iconic **Jumbo Savari** carries the idol of **Goddess Chamundeshwari** to **Bannimantap**, where the sacred Banni tree is worshipped. The festival draws to a spectacular close with the **Panjina Kavayatthu**, a grand torchlight parade.

And today, even drones join in, lighting up the skies during the festival that has been celebrated for centuries.

