



The Royal Armoury - Wodeyar Period Weapon Collection- Conservation Challenges

Dr. Vasantha Kumari C

Associate Professor, Dept of History, Government First Grade College for Women, Chamarajapete,
Bengaluru -560026, Karnataka state, Mail Id: vasanthahis79@gmail.com

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20589872>

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 17-05-2026

Published: 10-06-2026

Keywords:

*Wodeyar period royal
armoury, weapon
collection, conservation,
challenges*

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the challenges surrounding the conservation of royal armoury in the Mysore Palace. The royal armoury of Wodeyar was called popularly as the **Ayudha Shala** is a priceless collection of about 700 to 1000 offensive and defensive weapons .It is housed inside Mysore Palace also known as Amba Vilas Palace. The collection dates from late 13th century to 20th century. It is an exclusive collection of the Wodeyar period armouries. The Ayudha Shala is a restricted area sealed and locked away from the public for security reasons. The preservation of historical armouries presents a unique set of conservation challenges. As several of these arms are made with different materials combining metal, leather, wood, lacquer and textile. These objects are highly susceptible to environmental degradation. An immediate need for balancing dynamic management mechanism along with ethical display practices and strict climate control is essential. Otherwise conservation of these historic and distinctive weapons might become hazardous.

Introduction: Mysore palace armoury is a centuries old armoury with wide collections of weaponry dating back to 14th century. It houses nearly thousand weapons both offensive and defensive. The armoury consists of variety of swords, guns, small weapons, coated bastions, artillery guns, knives, etc.

Rare items in the royal armoury – The royal armoury has several special items which are not only unique but also very rare of its kind.



1. **Small guns**- There are small guns presented to the **Krishna Raja Wodeyar king III** by Colonel Wellesley of the British army in 1803.
2. **Elastic sword** - The armoury was initially planned and se designed by **Krishna Raja Wodeyar king III** who took personal interest in the armoury and provided each weapon with metallic labels and serial numbers. His collections included an elastic sword. This sword was worn as a belt and it originally belonged to **Kaneteerava Narasa Raja Wodeyar** (1638-1659 AD).
3. **Knife**- There is a knife bearing the inscription **CHURA DE 2** of chikkadevtraja Wodeyar belonging to 18th century a so sword named NIMCHA belonging to Hyder Ali anther sword named as **SANVA** belonging to Tipu Sultan and a knife **PESH KABZA** inscribed used by KR Wodeyar III during 19th century. All these weapons are worshipped during Dasara.
4. **PATA**- A traditional Indian thrusting and slashing weapon called as pata is another stock in the armoury. It is a straight double edged blade attached to a built in h gauntlet which protects forearm. This weapon is considered as the most favoured weapon of the Mysore cavalry. It was used by soldiery during charges on enemy armies.
5. Many of the weapons are inscribed with the kannada word **Sri Krishna** .There are daggers featured with steel blades gold inlay work and talisman designed to offer divine protection to the wielder.

The royal armoury traditions

The royal armoury is opened done in a year during Mysore Dasara festival . On **Maha Navami Day** , the royal scion of the Wodeyar family performs the traditional **Ayudha Pooja** inside the palace durbar hall. During this sacred ceremony select antique weapons are taken out and worshipped according to Wodeyar traditions. The Mysore Dasara festival welcomes huge number of tourists both domestic and Foreign and is a ten day royal celebration of vivacious traditions and extravagant rituals. The worship and veneration of royal weapons gains significance as the Wodeyar kings have been worshipping them since ages and are brilliant pieces of master art and craft work.

Challenges of conservation of armouries

1. **Challenges Of managing right temperature and humidity**- Several weapons in the royal armoury are made of different objects. These objects consist of varying materials that react differently to changes in outside temperature and humidity. A humidity level that prevents metal from rusting might simultaneously cause organic materials like leather or wood to wrap and crack. There are instances of historical weapons being rusted due to changes in humidity levels across museums of



India. The care takers of museums have find it very difficult to maintain old weapons because in India humidity and temperature levels rise and decrease very sharply.

2. **Challenges Of managing high illumination and electricity light** - it is also noticed that several weapons in the royal armoury are covered with silken fabrics and lacquered surfaces which are extremely sensitive to light and high illumination on display cabinets. This will bleach dyes and fragile fabric content wrapped on the weapons. Sometimes the movement of several weapons from show case cabinets to sunlight has shown peroxide impact. It is also noticed that Wodeyar king worships select weapons on Dasara 10 day celebration where they are washed , smeared with precious scents and bedecked with flowers. This is conducted with extensive supervision and regulatory directives. State authorities need to look at these management challenges scientifically.
3. **Challenges Of managing precious weapons-** It is also debated that conservation of several weapons is impossible or replacing them with other similar weapons is also not possible. Preserving silken fabric lining covered with tight surfaces several layers of interior coating of several weapons is a hard challenge before the state authorities. Repairing damaged exteriors is also perilous. Several weapons have golden layered exterior support and it is very gentle and precious. The palace authorities restrict public viewing because of these factors.
4. **Challenges Of Creating structural support-** There is another great risk in conservation of these historical weaponries. Creating structural support which can bear the weight of heavy metal weapons is very risky. Poor handling and poor mounting of cannon like weapons causes permanent physical stress and over time the weapons might become unsystematic.
5. **Challenges Of managing Corrosion & Pest Damage** - Meeting the challenges of corrosion and pest damage also requires greater management mechanism. Moisture and oxygen lead to active corrosion like forming of the red and green rust on weapons' exterior surfaces. It is also known that organic materials are highly vulnerable to pests like beetles or moths which consume wooden and textile linings attached to weapons. The management of royal armoury needs to manage this challenge very mechanically.

The preservation of historical armouries has always presented a unique set of conservation challenges. As arms combine multi objects layers such as metallic exteriors, leather coated lining, wooden cases, lacquer mixed surfaces, and textile made objects they are highly susceptible to environmental degradation and corrosion. Moisture and oxygen lead to active corrosion like the red and green rust. It is also known that organize materials are highly vulnerable to pests like beetles or moths which consume wooden and textile linings attached to weapons.



The fact that the armoury is not open to general public is contended by Dasara celebration lovers across Karnataka. There have been several high raged voices condemning the Palace authorities in prohibiting the public to get pleasure from the glances of the royal armoury. Several associations have raised voices to open the armoury at least for one month during Dasara vacations. Since the royal armoury is a coveted historical treasure, the management authorities have been very careful in handling the pressure situation.

Conclusion- Thus each piece of weapon in the armoury collection of the Wodeyar kings is a master crafted piece. The preservation of these weapons needs special management mechanisms. Balancing active conservation ethical display practices and strict climate control is essential. Meeting the challenges of conservation of royal weapons also requires greater management mechanism.

References:

- **Aiyangar Krishnaswamy S** - Collected Essays on the Literary and Political History of Southern India , Asian Educational Services , New Delhi
- **Business standard** – Mysore scions worships royal armoury during Dasara , article dated October 2024
- **Eaton, Richard M.** - A Social History of the Deccan, 1300-1761 : Eight Indian Lives. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- **Gururajachar S** – Some Aspects of Economic and Social Life In Karnataka AD 1000 1300 , Mysore ,1974.
- **Harish PS** - defense apparatus of the Mysore with special reference to war weapons during 18th century , Proceedings of the Indian history Congress , Vol. 83 , December 2024
- **Hayavadana Rao C**, History of Mysore (1399–1799 A.D.): Incorporating the Latest Epigraphically, Literary and Historical Researches, Volume III (1766–1799), Bangalore: Government Press(1946).
- **Ikagame Aya** - Princely India Re Imagined - A historical Anthropology of Mysore From 1799 to the Present, 2013
- **Rice, B. Lewis** - Mysore Gazetteer Compiled for Government. Vol. 1. New Delhi, Madras: Asian Educational Services.2001
- **S Raja Ram**- The Vanished Raj – Memoirs of Princely India, Prism Books , 2019
- **Subrahmanyam, Sanjay** -Warfare and State Finance in Wodeyar Mysore. In Subrahmanyam, Sanjay (ed.) Penumbra Visions. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press (2001).
- **Vikram Sampath** -Splendours Of Royal Mysore , Rupa Publications , 2008