CHAPTER 1

THE HOYSALAS
The Hoysalas

I. Introduction

The Hoysalas, an indigenous dynasty of kings, ruled for over three centuries over almost the whole of Karnataka, leaving a rich heritage of imperishable monuments of art and culture. From the position of petty tribal chiefs and later from that of vassals of more powerful neighbours such as the Cholas, they rose to power in the 11th century i.e., from 1000 A.D. They proceeded to strengthen themselves in the southern part of Karnataka and ruled as contemporaries of the Senas, from the 12th to 14th centuries, i.e., from 1100 A.D. to 1346 A.D. In the course of their rule, they subdued the local chiefs in the western region and also drove the Chola governors away from the Kannada country. At the time of the Kalachuri usurpation of the Chalukya sovereignty, the Hoysalas declared their independence from the Chalukyas whose feudatories they had been. Thus they were the most powerful dynasty towards the end of the 12th century.
II. Their place in history and Field of influence

The Hoysala dynasty symbolised the cultural achievement of Karnataka. In the realm of art, this dynasty remains difficult to surpass or even equal in its exquisite beauty, its divine conception of soul-stirring themes, and its perfect execution of the most delicate delineations of abstract ideas. Art lovers from all over the world consider the temples of Belur, Halebid and Somnathpur, as places of pilgrimage.

The age of the Hoysalas could indeed be described as a Golden Period in the history of Karnataka, for the Hoysala monarchs ushered in economic prosperity, treated their subjects with the tender care of parents and adopted moral laws that could parallel the modern directive principles of state policy.

During their rule, the Hoysalas were responsible for the democratisation of education and learning, for they popularised education through the creation of Brahmapurīs, Sivapurī, Agrahāras, Mathas and Ghaṭikāsthānas.

This period also witnessed the birth of luminaries in the sphere of religion, philosophy, literature and architecture, such as Basaveśwara, Rāmanujāchārya, Madhvāchārya, Janakāchārya. Religious toleration was
the spirit of the age, for the four principal creeds
Brahmanism, Buddhism, Jainism and Veerasaivism -
flourished simultaneously. Vaishnavism and the Bhakti
movement were propagated with great fervour.

Hoysala influence is clearly evident not only in
Karnataka, but also in modern day government and in the
temples of Tamil Nadu. They could successfully exert
their influence over Karnataka mainly because of their
ability to offer organisation and leadership to its
mixed and ill-organised population. The institution
of village autonomy in modern day government, owes part
of its development to the Hoysala monarchs, for, under
their auspices village assemblies could function and
flourish.

The villagers were consulted with regard to
decision making and the appointment of leaders.
Commenting on this, G.S. Dikshit has observed
'Decentralisation of authority was effected in order
to get the advantages of delegation of power.'

Finally, traces of Hoysala influence are evident
in several of the temples of Tamil Nadu. An inscription
of 1257, during the reign of Vīra - Rāmanātha indicates
the foundation of a 'Salāi' (Ārogyasalāi or hospital)
to the west of the northern Gopura in the fourth prākāra
of the Śrīrangam temple. The Kaliyugarāman Gopura, in the east Chitra street, Śrīrangam, displays the Hoysala symbol of gandabherunda on each of its four jambs. In the northern suburb of Tiruvanaikka, Someśwarā installed images of gods, in suitable shrines in the names of his grand father Ballāla II, his grand­mother Padmalā, his father Narasiṁha II and his queen Somalā. The walls of the temple at Samayapuram are constructed with a few stones containing Hoysala Birudas.

III. Origin and nomenclature:

There are several versions regarding the origin of the Hoysala dynasty given by various scholars. According to tradition, the Hoysalas are descendants of the Yadavas, who belonged to the lunar race. Thus, titles such as Yadava-Nārayana were bestowed on them. The early members of the Hoysala dynasty were feudatory chiefs whose ambition lay in the conquest of the Chälukya territory. The area below the Tungabhadra river in the region of the Sahyādri mountains formed the homeland of the Hoysalas. It is also reported that the ancestors of the Hoysala family came from the village Sosavur or Sašakapura, which has been identified with Angadi in Mudigere Taluka.

It is interesting to examine the views of different scholars with regard to the origin of the dynasty.
According to Rice, the Hoysalas were 'a family of hill chiefs to start with, on the western ghats.' Joshi views them as a community of people in the north Kanara district, known as Hosaleru, which is pronounced as Hoisaleru. In the opinion of Derrett, they could be descendants of the magalithic civilisation existing in northern Mysore in the third century B.C. He adds, however, that they could also have descended from the Aryan conquerors of the south-west Deccan. Sewell agrees with Rice in equating the Hoysalas with a family of hill chiefs living in 'the extreme west of Mysore', near the Ghats, at Angadi in the Mudigere taluk.

Epigraphical tradition leads one to conclude that the Hoysalas had a purely indigenous origin.

Ancient Tamil literature provides further insight into the origin of the Hoysalas. The later Hoysala rulers assumed the title 'Bellāla' (Vellāla = Val Alar - corrupted into Vellāla = Val Alar), which indicates the descent of this mediaeval dynasty from the ancient Vels of Tuvara-pati. Sangam literature confirms this descent of the Hoysalas from the ancient Tamil tribe, the velir community of south Mysore.

There is also a legend which attributes the foundation of the Hoysala kingdom to Sala, a young student,
who was worshipping the goddess Vāsantikā at Sosavur. His teacher, Suddatta, then gave him his fan, instructing him to strike the tiger. The teacher said 'Poy, Sala' i.e., 'smash Oh! Sala!' Thus from this time onwards the name of Poysala or Hoysala has been the designation of the Yadu kings. This event assumed such a great significance that even the royal emblem of the family depicted the story of Sala attacking the tiger, and this motif is found on almost every Hoysala temple.

IV. Succession details

Genealogy:

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Sala
  \_ Kama
        (C 1000 - 1045 A.D.)
          \_ Vinayaditya
                  (C 1045 - 1098 A.D.)
                    \_ Ereyanga
                            (C 1098 - 1100 A.D.)

Ballāla I Vīshnupardhana Uḍayaditya
(1100 - 1108 A.D.) (1108 - 1152 A.D.)
  \_ Ballāladeva
       \_ Nārāsimha I
            (1152 - 1173 A.D.)
              \_ Ballāla II
                   (1173 - 1220 A.D.)
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V. The most noteworthy kings:

The reign of the Hoysalas was marked by acts of conquest and annexation carried out by the ambitious chiefs who made their regime memorable by their achievements.

Kama (C. 1000 - 1045 A.D.)

Epigraphical sources portray a Hoysala chief in 1006 A.D. who enters into combat with Aprameya, a Chola General. This chief can be identified with King Kāma, the first Hoysala chief who came into conflict with the Cholas while trying to assert himself. Cherishing the ambition to build his own kingdom, this chief moved from the hilly tract to the plains 21.
Vinayaditya (C. 1045 - 1098 A.D.)

Vinayaditya's successor was his son Vinayaditya who extended his influence over a major part of Gangavadi. Towards the end of his reign, Vinayaditya had made the Hoysalas powerful enough to earn recognition from the Chalukyas.

Ereyanga (C. 1098 - 1100 A.D.)

After a brilliant career as a prince, Ereyanga succeeded to the throne at a late age and ruled only for two years till 1100 A.D.

Ballala I (C. 1100 - 1108 A.D.)

Ereyanga was succeeded by his eldest son Ballala whose kingdom consisted of Konkana, Bayalnad and Savimale. At the outset, Ballala was attacked by Jagaddeva, the Paramara prince who lived in the Kalanupaka as a Chalukya subordinate. However, Ballala was able to strike terror in the Chalukya forces and push them back. He proceeded to expand his territories by subduing the Chengalvas, a petty clan of chiefs ruling over certain areas in the modern Coorg and Mysore districts. After this, he occupied Alvakheda, then proceeded against the Pandyas of UchchangI and attempted to occupy the Belvola country after crossing the Tungabhadra. This open violation of the authority of Vikramaditya provoked him into sending his feudatory Achugi II to defeat the Hoysala chief and drive him back to his capital.
Vishnuvardhana (C. 1108 - 1152 A.D.)

The successor of Ballāla I was his younger brother Vishnuvardhana who began his rule with a campaign to the south in order to subjugate Gangāvāḍī and Nolambavāḍī. After that, it appears that he attacked and subdued the Kongalvas and the Nidugal Cholas, who were Chola subordinates. He also made expeditions to the Nilgiris and the Kongu country to extend the Hoysala authority over the Salem – Coimbatore area. In an attempt to declare his independence of Chālukya allegiance, Vishnuvardhana began to proceed against the Chālukya feudatories such as the Pāndyas of Uchchangārī who were governing the Nolambavāḍī province. This made him adopt the title of Nolambavāḍīvādīgonda, i.e., the conqueror of Nolambavāḍī. Next he captured Baltare and crossed Tungabhadrā to conquer the fort of Kummata. By attacking the territories of the Kadambas of Hangal, he also secured that fort. In 1136 A.D. he captured Bankapura after a victory over the Kadambas. Thus by 1149 A.D. his territories included Gangāvāḍī, Nolambavāḍī, Banavāsī, Hangal and Huligere with his capital at Bankapura. Though he did not achieve independence, Vishnuvardhana succeeded in liberating the entire Gangāvāḍī area from Chola control and spread his influence as far as Belvola and Bellary in the north.
Narasimha I (1152 - 1178 A.D.):

The son of Vishnuvardhana by name Narasimha inherited the kingdom, but failed to take advantage of his reign to consolidate his position. As such he proved to be an unworthy successor of his father.

Ballala II (1173 - 1220 A.D.):

A significant event in the reign of Ballala II was his defeat of the Pandyas and conquest of Uchchamgiri. By 1178 A.D. he secured Hangal, and in 1190 A.D. he was victorious in a fierce battle near Soratur in Gadag taluk, after which he established himself in Belvola, with Lakkund as his stronghold. By moving into Raichur district, he captured important places such as Kukkanur and Manvi, and then turned eastward to capture parts of Raichur – Bellary area. Ballala extended Hoysala control up to Malaprabha in the north, after defeating Seuna Bhillama. By intervening in the Chola affairs, he earned great prestige in the south and secured for his family the position of a sovereign ruling power.

Narasimha II (1220 - 1235 A.D.):

Succeeding his father to the Hoysala throne in 1220 A.D., Narasimha II's rule for 15 years was significant for his achievements in the Chola territory. He secured from the Chola ruler some territory around Kannanur which he entrusted to his son Somesvara.
in reinstating Rājarāja on the Chola throne, and was regarded as the saviour of the Chola throne after he subdued the Pāṇḍya king Naravarman Sundara Pāṇḍya 30. Thereafter, there was a tremendous increase in his influence over the Chola country and the Kannanur region was added to the territory controlled by the Hoysalas.

Someśvara (1235 - 1253 A.D.):

The reign of Someśvara brought about a shift in the policy of the Hoysalas as regards their neighbours in the north and in the south. After having supported the Cholas all this time, Someśvara now turned to the aid of the Pāṇḍyas 31. He defeated Rajendra and declared himself as the saviour of the Pāṇḍyas. Then Someśvara divided his kingdom into two parts and made his elder son Narasimha III govern the northern area with Doraśamudra as the capital, while he placed the southern region from Kannanur under his younger son Rāmanātha. Someśvara himself lived in Kannanur for a few more years.

Narasimha III (1253 - 1292 A.D.) and Rāmanātha (1253 - 1295 A.D.):

Someśvara's partitioning of the country resulted in frequent conflicts between Narasimha III and Rāmanātha.
These continued until Narasimha III in 1291 A.D.
Owing to his death, Ramanatha was able to secure some territories in Kolar and Bangalore districts. However, Ramanatha lost Kannanur after a clash with a Pandyaruler and thereafter shifted his capital to Kundani, to the north of Kannanur.

Ballala III (1291 - 1342 A.D.)

Narasimha III's son Ballala III succeeded to the throne in 1291 A.D. He ruled over the united Hoysala kingdom by 1301 A.D. Epigraphical records reveal that Ballala fought against the Muslims but had ultimately to submit to them and surrender his wealth to them. Though he could return safely to his country by 1313 A.D. he had to send his son to the court of Delhi. Later he was able to annex areas around Arunasamudra which he made his southern headquarters. Ballala met his death in 1342 A.D. at the hands of Ghiyasuddin after being captured by the Muslim General Nasirudin.

Virupaksha Ballala IV (1342 - 1346 A.D.)

He was the successor of Ballala III and was crowned in August 1343 A.D. However, his reign was not significant
for, by this time, the new kingdom of Vijayanagar was founded by the Sangama brothers in the Hoysala territory.

By this time, the Hoysala kingdom comprised of the Salem district, the western half of north Arcot and Chittor districts, the whole of Uchirapalli district excluding Karur, the Tanjore, the Papanasam and Mannargudi taluks of the Tanjore district and the eastern part of Pudukottalai state as well as east Mysore country comprising the modern Kolar district, Kannanur and south Arcot. It is reported that by 1346 A.D. most of the Hoysala territory was under the dominion of the new power.

In this way, the rule of the Hoysalas, which had lasted for over three centuries, came to an end.

VI. Cultural Contributions:

The achievements of the Hoysala dynasty in the fields of art, architecture, literature and religion have rendered their rule outstanding in the history of our country.

Religion:

Among the religious faiths that prevailed during the Hoysala rule, Buddhism was not very prominent. However, according to archeological and epigraphical
evidence, it appears that Buddhism did assert itself only in a few centres like Balligave, Kadiri, Banavasi, Goa, Dambal, Kolivad and Sannat.

Jainism exerted a powerful influence over the people of Karnataka and was followed in many parts of the region. One of its great patrons was Vinayaditya II who had several tanks, temples, and Jaina shrines constructed. His son Ereyanga was also a devout Jaina and made a grant of Rachanahalla in Belgola in 1094 A.D. Vishnuvardhana's queen Santaladevi as well as his generals were active supporters of Jainism. Among her many religious endowments queen Santaladevi founded the Jaina temple of Sāntīśvara Gandhavarana at Sravana Belgola. Narasimha I was tolerant towards Jainism which was followed by most of his generals. Ballāla II followed his example. Both Narasimha II and Ramanātha were patrons of Jainism. Someśvara, not only worshipped Jaina deities, but also encouraged his subjects to do so.

Thus, until the rise of Vaisnavism and Saivism, Jainism enjoyed the patronage of most of the Hoysala rulers.

Saivism

The ancient faith of Saivism prevailed from an early period and flourished through the long centuries. It was divided into orthodox Saivism of the Vedic tradition.
Pāṣupata or Lakuliṣa sect and the reformist Vīraśaivism.

The Cult of devotion:

Devotion or Bhakti as a mode of attaining the highest goal in religion assumed a special importance as well as an independent status. The great teacher Śaṅkara promoted this cult with regard to his theistic approach to religion.

Rāmānuja and Madhva emphasized devotion to Vishnu as a means of salvation. Narahariḍīrtha, one of the disciple of Madhva, was a pioneer in starting the Bhakti movement of the Harihāsas.

The roots of the Bhakti cult to Vishnu around the deity Vitthala of Pandharpur, were laid during the Seuṇa - Hoysala period, in the Kannada country. It is well known that in 1236 A.D. the Hoysala king Somesvara entered deep into the Seuṇa territory to offer a grant to the god Vitthala of Pandharpur.

Literature:

The Hoysala period was noted for the abundance of Sanskrit and Kannada literary works, both in the religious and secular fields.

In the field of Sanskrit literature, a family of scholar - authors bearing the title of Vidyā - Chakravartī,
flourished in secular works. The most noteworthy is Vidya-Chakravarti II who wrote the account of Narasimha II's battle against his southern foes in the prose work Gadyakarnamrita. Trivikramapandita composed the Ushāharana, while his son wrote the Mādhava-Vijaya, which was the biography of Madhva-chārya. Among the prominent works on Advaita philosophy were Ānandabodha, Chitsukha and Saṅkarānanda. To expound his philosophy of qualified monism, Rāmānuja composed Śrī-bhāṣṭya. Madhva contributed to the religious dogmas and philosophy of the Dvaita school, by writing thirty-seven original works on a variety of topics. Several Kannada inscriptions and poetic epigraphs were composed during this period. In the reign of Ballāla I, the poet Nāgachandra or Abhinava Pampa wrote the Rāmachandracharita-Purāṇa and the Mallīnāthapurāṇa. Brahmaśīva composed the Jaina polemic work Samayaparīkṣā, while Nāgavarman II is credited with works on grammar and rhetoric. Jagaddala wrote the Karnatakā Kalyānakaraka, the translated work on medicine. To Rājaditya belong a number of works on mathematics. To the court of Ballāla II belonged Hemichandra who wrote Līlāvatī, and Janna who received the title of Kavichakravarti (Poet emperor) for his compositions. Another eminent author of this period was Rudrabhaṭṭa, the author of Jagannātha-Vijaya. Mention must also be made of Keśīrāja whose treatise on grammar Sabdamanidarpāna is
renowned. The renaissance of the Vīraśaiva movement characterised by simple literary forms, was spearheaded by Harihara and by his nephew Rāghavānka. The latter's Hariśchandrakāvya is indeed a masterpiece in the Shatpadi metre. Thus there were several eminent composers of vāchanas in lucid lyrical prose.

Art and architecture:

An invaluable inheritance of the Hoysalas from their predecessors, the Gaṅgas, is the unique image of the Jaina divinity Gommatesvara at Sravanabelgola. Standing 57 feet high, on the top of the Indrabetta hill, it is renowned in the world of sculptural art. Its daring conception and gigantic dimensions make it unrivalled in India. The masterpieces of the Hoysala temple craftsmen themselves are unforgettable for their architectural blend in conformity with the "Vimāna" composition and the coherence of the "Rekhā-Nāgara Prasāda". The dominant and pervasive features of the Hoysala architecture, which adopted the Chālukyan style in an ingenious manner, included embellishment, statuary and figure - carving, nicety, refinement and minuteness of details.

The features constituting the hall-mark of the Hoysala temple, include the cella or garbhagriha, attached vestibule or śukānāsī, connecting pillared hall or navarāṅga, and also an open pillared pavilion called the mukhamandapa.
An innovation introduced by the Hoysalas is the star-shaped ground plan. The zigzag character of the temple wall to facilitate the sculptures being seen in the sunlight and shade, the exuberant carvings on the doorway and the deep and domical ceiling are the other characteristics of the Hoysala style. Great progress was made in the construction of temples, under some of the Hoysala kings. The reign of Vishnuvardhana (1108 - 1152 A.D.) the fifth king of the dynasty, was full of great architectural activity. The Lakshmi Devi temple at Doddagaddavalli, Hassan district, is admirable, with its four towers. Vishnuvardhana ordered the construction of the famous Kesava temple at Belur in commemoration of his victory over the Cholas. It has also been revealed by the Archaeological Survey of Mysore that the Bhaktavatsala temple at Belgola was built during the reign of Vishnuvardhana.

The queen of Vishnuvardhana, Santaladevi was responsible for the construction of the Kappe Chennigaraya temple, within the enclosure of the Kesava temple. Several other temples such as the Kirtinarayana temple at Talkad and those of Siddheswara and Kesava at Marale also belong to the reign of Vishnuvardhana.

Narasimha I's reign (1152 - 1173 A.D.) also witnessed the construction of a large number of temples, of which at least fifteen are well-known. The Iswara temple built in
1160 A.D. at Anekonda, near Davanagere, has ornate pillars. Twenty-four forms of Vishnu can be seen in the Keśava temple of 1163 A.D. at Hullikere. The Somesvara temple, with its three-celled structure built at Suttur, Nanjangud taluk, in 1169 A.D. appears to be a rare specimen of Hoysala art. Another important temple is that of Brahmeswara built at Kikkere, in 1171 A.D. An excellent example of the Hoysala style is the Bucheswara temple at Koramangala, near Hassan, built in 1173 A.D. The finest temple of Narasimha I's reign, however, is that of Hoysaleswara at Halebid. In the opinion of Fergusson, the authority on eastern and western architecture, this temple like the Parthenon, is the finest example of its class. While the former symbolises the best in human feeling, the latter stands for the best in human intellect.

The reign of Ballala II (1173 - 1220 A.D.), which lasted for forty seven years, witnessed the creation of twenty three temples. An interesting monument built in 1196 A.D. is the Amriteśwara temple at Amritapura, near Tarikere, which has sculptures illustrating episodes from the Bhāgavata, the Mahābhārata, and the Rāmāyana. Ballala II and his wife Abhinava Ketaladevi were responsible for the construction of the Kedareswara temple at Halebid in 1219 A.D. Other illustrious temples are the Trikūṭāchala
(Triple temple) dedicated to Mahālingeswara at Muvattanahalli and the triple temple of Chatteśwara at Chatchattanahalli near Halebid of 1200 A.D. Yet another superb specimen is the Iśwara temple at Arsikere of 1220 A.D.

During the reign of Narasiṃha II (1220 - 1235 A.D.) many beautiful temples such as the Galageśwara and Kalleśwara at Heggare, Chitaldurg district, the Someśwara at Harnahalli and the Mallikārjuna at Basral, Mandya district, were constructed.

To Someśvara's reign (1235 - 1253 A.D.) belong several splendid temples, as for example the Lakshmī-Naresīma temple and the Sadāśiva temple at Nuggihalli. The Panchalīṅga temple at Govindanahalli, Mandya district, is remarkable for five towers over the five cells, all in the same alignment.

The reign of Narasiṃha III (1253 - 1292 A.D.) was equally conspicuous for the addition of exquisite temple like the triple temple of Yoga Mādhava at Settikere, Tumkur district, of 1261 A.D. The Keśava and the Mule-śaṅkaraśwara temples at Tiruvekere, Tumkur district, are excellent examples of Hoysala art. The Lakshmī-Narasīma temple at Holenarasipur was also built during his reign. However, the finest temple of this period is the Keśava
temple at Somanathapur of 1268 A.D. with its symmetrical and proportionate three stellate towers.

Fine Arts:

The Hoysala rulers spared no efforts in their encouragement of the fine arts such as music, dance and dramas. These were pursued by the royal and aristocratic families as well as by other social groups. Temples made these performances an integral part of their routine and rituals. The popularity and prevalence of these fine arts are richly described in literature and are also reflected in the profuse sculptured scenes on the Hoysala temple walls.

The elaborate narrations of the epic themes are very interesting and they also point out the knowledge the artist had of the literary works.

The Rāmāyana, Mahābhārata and Bhāgavata scenes are carved on the basement of the temples in such a way that they meet the eye.

The idea of depicting the Sālabhanjikas attracted the artists as they could exhibit their talent in these. There were no canons or conventions to be adhered to.

These depictions have only decorative value and no structural significance.
In the Hoysala monuments, they are carved in the round unlike the Chalukyan ones which are in relief on entablature. Hoysala compositions are unique as they are shown in a variety of ways such as dancing, singing, hunting or decorating.

VII. General economic affluence:

While determining the economic policy of the state in general, the Hoysala kings adhered to the precepts of the ancient and medieval writers 60.

The inscriptions reveal that the Hoysala rulers pursued a policy of progressively reclaiming land and of bringing a large area under cultivation, which resulted in the increase of the Hoysala land revenue 61.

The problem of insufficient water supply was dealt with by building tanks, sinking wells, digging canals and constructing sluices and embankments 62. The village assembly was entrusted with the task of maintaining irrigation works which involved repairs to damaged tanks, removing silt, and preventing damage. Financial aid came from private charity, temple contributions, State help and income from the tank. The industries set up during the Hoysala period included metal industries, textiles, woodwork and pottery. The rural economy of the country helped to stabilise the development of these industries.
The traders mentioned frequently in the inscriptions were dealers in grains, cloth, elephants, horses and other cattle, jewellers, oil mongers, betel leaf sellers, firewood, and hawkers. Those following these trades organised their own associations or 'trade guilds' which exercised an effective influence on the political, economic and social spheres. Among some of the great trading centres were Mosaic, Belagola, Arsikere and Dalige. Cotton yarn, muslins, incense, betelnuts, coconut and ivory were exported during the Hoysala period. Thus under the liberal rule of the Hoysalas in the fields of trade and commerce, economy flourished.

VIII. General evaluation:

The Hoysala dynasty bequeathed a significant legacy to the main stream of Indian culture, in the spheres of art, architecture, literature, religion, philosophy and political organisation. It is difficult to find many other dynasties that could surpass the exquisite pieces of art created by the Hoysalas who made ornamentation a unique norm in their task of building temples. Indeed the temples at Belur, Halebid and Somanathapur are famed for their delicate and beautiful sculptural work, and they are a living testimony to the amazing talent of the Hoysala artists. The sculptural compositions of the Hoysalas are unique for they portray maidens either singing, dancing, hunting, or ornamenting
instead of the usual female forms that are found bending, kicking or reclining against the trees. Among the several sculptures carved by the artists belonging to varied schools, the Salabhanjikas of the Hoysalas are definitely the most florid and intricate. The artist's main idea was to exhibit as many facets of feminine physique, grace and beauty as possible notwithstanding their significance, and the symbolism governing their conception. Another notable feature was that the Hoysala sculptor generally failed to make a distinction between the arrangement of the hair and ornaments of the male and female figures, thus making it difficult to distinguish between one from the other without the aid of the surface anatomy of the torse and udarabandha.

In the field of religion, this period witnessed the rise and growth of the soul-stirring Bhakti movement which was launched by great philosophers of the period such as Ramanuja, Madhva, and Basava. They taught love and liberalism which was to shake the society from inertia and ignorance. This movement levelled down all barriers of caste and creed and thus made religious toleration the keynote of the age.

In the political field this dynasty is known for its meteoric rise to power, quick consolidation, extension
of control over territory, and after three centuries its sudden disappearance from the scene of activity. However, it cannot be denied that the Hoysalas were able to hold sway over a large part of Karnataka mainly due to the loyal services of their ministers who were well qualified and capable men of learning and distinguished qualities 68.

The Hoysala period marked a significant epoch in the history of the Kannada language and literature for the kings were true patrons of literary activity 69. Gems of Kannada literature adorned the royal court. Thus the Hoysala period can rightly be called the golden period in the history of Karnataka.

IX. Aim of study:

The aim of the present study is to assess in details the iconographic contribution during the regime of this dynasty which has made a signal contribution to the culture of south India. Much work has been done on the Chalukya dynasty as well as the Vijayanagar kingdom, but the Hoysala dynasty, which succeeded the Chālukyas of Badami, had a lot in common and a lot of differences. It evolved its own ornamental sculptures, strong political policy and rich literature. The Hoysalas made a deep impact on the subsequent Vijayanagar dynasty which did not fail to realise the importance of the artistic, architectural and literary heritage which their predecessors had left for them.
CHAPTER I


8. Ibid., p. 238

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15. Historical Inscriptions of South India, p. 57.

16. Coelho, W., *op. cit.*, p. 1


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26. Ibid., p. 257

27. Ibid., p. 260

28. Ibid., p. 263

29. Ibid., p. 267

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32. Ibid., p. 273

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35. Ibid., p. 290

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38. Ibid., p. 318

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49. Ibid., p. 296.
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54. Ibid.
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57. Ibid., p. 184
58. Ibid., p. 183
61. Ibid., p. 459
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
66. It can be observed from the contemporary art of the period from other parts of the country, that a distinct style of depicting the male and female figure was in vogue.

