CONCLUSION

The Vijayanagara empire with its capital at Hampi, Hospet Taluk, Bellary District of Karnataka, was founded by Harihara I and his four brothers Kampa, Bukka, Maddappa and Marappa of the Sangama dynasty around A.D. 1336. It was founded to preserve Hindu dharma and culture and check the onslaughts of Islam into South India. True to its proclaimed goal of preservation of Hindu religion, social order and culture, the rulers of the Sangama dynasty, the Saluva dynasty, the Tuluva dynasty and their feudatories strove not only for the subtenance of political freedom but also for the preservation and popularisation of Hindu religion, art, literature, architecture, painting and everything connected with Hindu life.

Among the Sangama monarchs, the best known was Devaraya II, who ruled from about A.D. 1424 to 1446, since his reign saw record achievements in the fields of art, architecture, literature and economic prosperity. His court was visited by the Persian Ambassador, Abdur Razzak in A.D. 1443 and the Italian traveller Nicolo-dei-Conti in circa A.D. 1420 - 21. According to Abdur Razzak, the city of Bijanagar (Vijayanagara-Hampi) that the pupil of the eye has never seen a place like it, and the ear of intelligence has
never been informed that there existed anything equal to
it in the world.  

The Sangama dynasty was followed by the Saluvas
whose first representative was Narasimha I, who ruled from
A.D. 1485 to 1491. He encouraged trade and commerce parti-
cularly with the Arab countries. Here, what Nuniz says of
him in this regard is worth quoting, ' He, Narasimha I,
caused horses to be brought from Qromuz and Adeem (Adeen, in
Persian Gulû) into his kingdom and thereby gave great profit
to the merchants, paying them for horses just as they asked,
he took them dead or alive at three horses for a thousand
pardoos, and of those that died at the sea they brought him
the tail only and he paid for it just as if it had been
alive '  

It is interesting to note that such scenes of
horses as being sold by foreigners can be often seen in the
sculptured friezes at Hampi.

The Saluvas were followed by Tuluvas. Among the
monarchs of Tuluvas, Krishnadevaraya was the greatest emperor
and his reign from A.D. 1509 to 1529, was the most prosperous
in South India. His magnificent court was visited by
Portuguese traveller, Domingo Paes  

whose account throws much light on the artistic achievements
and economic prosperity of this period. He built many temples,
palaces, etc., of artistic interest among which may be named
the Krishna temple, the Mahanavami Dibba, the gigantic image of Lakshmi-Narasimha, the Badavi Linga, the House of Victory at Hampi. He was also responsible for expansion and further embellishing of the earlier works as can be seen in the Vitthala Swamy temple, the Hazararamaswamy temple and the Virupaksha temple at Hampi. These depict a wealth of sculptures on a variety of subjects. In the fateful battle of Rakkasa-Tangadi, which is popularly known as Talikota in A.D. 1565, Aliya Rama Raya was beheaded and Sadasivaraya survived this catastrophe but shifted the capital from Hampi (Vijayanagara) to Penukonda and again to Chandragiri, in Andhra Pradesh.

The battle of Rakkasa-Tangadi, was so fatal and a finishing blow to the Vijayanagara empire, that it could never rise again to its former position, though it lingered on for some more years under the Aravidu kings. But the metropolis Vijayanagara, that is, Hampi, became a mass of ruins for ever and this misfortune was further aggravated by the thieves, robbers and marauders who preyed upon it.

The Sculptural Art of Hampi (Vijayanagara) period as in the past, was influenced by the historical factors like the centuries old traditions, literary works as the Vedas, Puranas, Epics, Canons of Iconography as codified in the
various Agamas etc., all of which formed the very basis of sculptural activity. The Vedas, Puranas, Mahabharata, Ramayana, Bhagavata and other religious works provided themes for the Vijayanagara sculptures to carve on stone and other medias like metal etc. The minor religious cults and their practices have also sometimes been represented in the sculptures as seen in Matsyendranatha, hata-yogis, Bhairava, Veerabhadra, Kali, Diagramatic Linga, etc., and in later days, the sculptures of Vaishnava Alvaras and Saiva Nayanars became very popular.

The types of sculptures that were produced during the period of A.D. 1336 to 1565 at Hampi were varied.

The sculpture of Siva in various manifestations both Ugra and Saumya forms, and also in symbolic representations form an important group. His associates such as Ganesa, Nandi, Karttikeya, Veerabhadra, etc., are also seen in good number.

Next popular group is of Vishnu with his various incarnations, both major and minor including Seshasayi Vishnu and others.

The next important ones are of Jaina. They include the twenty-four forms of Tirthankaras.
Minor Divinities like those of Ganesa, Karttikeya, Hanuman, Garuda, Surya etc., are also represented. Goddesses, both the Saivate and the Vaishnavite, are the other commonly seen in various forms like those of Mahishamardini, Gaja-lakshmi etc.

During the Vijayanagara period, the main stress was on mass and variety in their creations, sometimes not strictly adhering to the established canons, proportions etc., probably master sculptors were not employed all the time and probably for that reason some of the sculptures were left un-finished. But generally they are always well proportioned as seen in the most of the sculptures carved even in granite stones whereas the sculptures prepared in black granite or green chlorite schist are better carved and finished with more details of decorations, expressions etc., and these were probably executed by the master sculptors. Such of them were generally meant to be the main deities of the temples.

The Vijayanagara sculptures are generally less ornate when compared with those of the Hoyasala, irrespective of the media in which they were executed. But they normally followed the texts and traditions. The sculptures of Hampi (Vijayanagara) which are generally massive are not without
vitality and force. The sculptures are more stylised, bold in depiction and execution but balanced in conception and execution. The anatomy of the figures produced by the Vijayanagara sculptor is still an ideal one as embodied in the scriptures of the Hindu canons as conceived and executed during the earlier schools of sculpturing. They are yet close enough to nature and carry the spark of life to convince. On the whole, the achievements of the Vijayanagara sculptors are simply admirable and thrilling to the beholders.
CONCLUSION

References:

1. Elliot and Dowson, 'History of India as Told By Its Own Historians.', Vol. IV, p.89.
3. Elliot & Dowson, op.cit., Vol. IV, p.106.
5. Ibid., pp. 297-376.