

A Study of the Hoysala Dynasty's Impact on Karnataka's Literature and Art

***Dr. Nagendra Kumar**

Abstract

The Hoysala Empire, a Kannadiga empire from the Indian subcontinent, governed much of what is now Karnataka, India, from the 10th to 14th century. The Hoysalas transferred their capital from Belur to Halebidu. The Hoysala kings hailed from Malenadu, a high location in the Western Ghats. During the 12th century, the Western Chalukya Empire and Kalachuris of Kalyani fought and captured Karnataka and rich lands north of the Kaveri delta in Tamil Nadu. By the 13th century, they controlled most of Karnataka, tiny sections of Tamil Nadu, and parts of western Andhra Pradesh and Telangana on the Deccan Plateau.

The Hoysala era was a watershed moment in the history of South Indian art, architecture, and religion. Hoysala architecture is the most notable legacy of the empire. There are around a hundred extant temples dotted across Karnataka. The Hoysala rulers, who controlled the Mysore Plateau in the 12th and 13th centuries A.D., were known for their appreciation of art. They developed a new architectural style. During this era, temples at Belur, Halebid, and Somnathpur were particularly renowned. The temples are star-shaped. The sculptures stand on a beautifully carved star-shaped foundation. The shikharas, although pyramidal, are lower than those of other temples. The Somnathpur temple, erected by Vinaditya Ballal in 1043 A.D., is the oldest of its kind. The little temple was beautifully crafted, with three pyramidal vimanas above three shrines. The Hoysaleswara temple in Halebid and the Chenna Kesava temple in Belur are excellent examples of Hoysala art. The Hoysaleswara temple consists of two identical temples situated on a five-foot-high star-shaped terrace. The temples are made of gray soapstone, ideal for carving, and include star-shaped vimanas with projections on three sides. The inner arms link both temples. The mandapa ceilings and pillars of the hall are artistically carved. The base has intricately carved friezes of tigers, elephants, horses, birds, and heavenly creatures, each with its own beauty. The temple has intricately carved statues on its ceilings, interior and exterior walls.

Keywords: Vishnuvardhana, Halebid, Belur, Hoysala, Art, Architecture, Literature

Introduction

The Hoysalas controlled Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu from the 10th to 14th centuries. Although inscriptions also suggest ties to the Yadavas of North India, historians believe they were indigenous to the Malnad area of Karnataka. King Nripa Kama II established the Hoysala Empire and is credited with forging an alliance with the Western Ganga dynasty. His son Vinayaditya succeeded him, and then his son and their sons until Veera Ballala I passed away without a child, at which point his younger brother Vishnuvardhana Raya took over. The name Vishnuvardhana Raya is very significant in Hoysalas' history.

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Under King Vishnuvardhana Raya, the kingdom rose to prominence in politics. The most well-known of his several military victories was his 1116 conquest of the Gangawadi region from the Cholas. Additionally, Srivaishnavism gained prominence and Sri Ramanujacharya's influence expanded across the Karnataka area under his rule. Bittideva was the original name of Vishnuvardhana Raya, who only adopted this name after switching from Jainism to Srivaishnavism. Under his sponsorship, many Vaishnava temples were constructed, while his queen, Shantala Devi, who continued to be a devoted Jain, supported several artists. Veera Ballala II, the grandson of King Vishnuvardhana Raya, formed an independent kingdom and freed the Hoysalas from Chalukya subjugation in the late 1100s. According to Kannada tradition, he established Bangalore. Narasimha II, his son, succeeded him, and Vira Someshwara, his son, succeeded him. His sons, Narasimha III and Ramanatha, took control of the divided kingdom when civil war broke out during his administration. Narasimha III's son Veera Ballala III is regarded as the Hoysala dynasty's last emperor. He brought the kingdom back together, but it broke apart and was combined with other empires when he died in the battle of Madurai in 1343. This paper aims to outline the Hoysala Empire's contribution to the advancement of Kannada literature and art.

Hoysala literature

The extensive corpus of writing in Kannada and Sanskrit created by the Hoysala Empire (1025–1343) in present-day southern India is known as Hoysala literature. Nripa Kama II founded the kingdom, which rose to political prominence under King Vishnuvardhana (1108–1152) and then began to wane until the Khalji dynasty invaders defeated it in 1311. Writings on the socio-religious advancements of the Jain and Veerashaiva faiths, as well as to a lesser degree the Vaishnava faith, made up Kannada literature during this time. The Hoysala court produced the first famous Brahmin authors in Kannada. The famous philosopher Madhvacharya wrote a significant body of monastic Vaishnava literature in Sanskrit on Dvaita (dualistic) philosophy, despite the fact that the majority of courtly textual output was in Kannada. The court poets were the ones who first popularized writing Kannada literature in local meters. These meters included ragale, which were lyrical compositions in blank verse; tripadi, which were three-line verses; shatpadi, which were six-line verses; and sangatya, which were songs performed to the accompaniment of a musical instrument. Nonetheless, Jain authors persisted in using the classic champu, which is made up of both poetry and prose. Noblemen, commanders, pastors, ascetics, and saints connected to monasteries all produced significant literary contributions in Kannada in addition to court poets. Writings on the socio-religious advancements of the Jain and Veerashaiva faiths, as well as to a lesser degree the Vaishnava faith, made up Kannada literature during this time. The Hoysala court produced the first well-known Brahmin authors in Kannada. The famous philosopher Madhvacharya wrote a significant body of monastic Vaishnava literature in Sanskrit on Dvaita dualism philosophy, despite the fact that the majority of courtly textual output was in Kannada.

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poets. Significant sociopolitical changes occurred in the Deccan, south of the Krishna River, starting in the 12th century. The Hoysalas, indigenous Kannadigas from the hill area of the Malnad region in present-day Karnataka, were gaining political dominance at this time. As subordinates of the Western Chalukyas of Kalyani, they are known to have existed as chieftains from the middle of the tenth century. The area returned to local control in 1116 when Hoysala King Vishnuvardhana overthrew the Cholas of Tanjore and seized Gangavadi portions of present-day southern Karnataka. As the Chalukya dominance waned in the next decades, the Hoysalas declared their independence and became one of southern India's most influential governing dynasties. As a result, the Hoysala kingdom saw a flourishing of literature in the native Kannada language. The following categories can be used to broadly categorize this literature: works that are primarily focused on Jain themes; works that contrast with Shaiva writings but are not part of the Vachana poetic tradition; early Brahminical works by Vaishnava; works from the beginning of the Bhakti devotional movement in the Kannada-speaking region; writings on secular subjects; and the first works in native meters, ragale, sangatya, and shatpadi.

Jain writers have been writing about Tirthankar saints, rulers, and other significant figures in the Jain faith for centuries. The Hindu epics, including the Ramayana and the Bhagavata stories of the Hindu deity Krishna, were also composed in Jain. Renowned Kannada literature expert R. Narasimhacharya claims that during the "Augustan age" of Kannada literature, which spanned the earliest known works to the 12th century, more Jain authors wrote in Kannada than in any other Dravidian language. In their expositions of Shaivism, the Veerashaiva writers—who were followers of the Hindu deity Shiva—discussed his twenty-five forms. The Hindu epics, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the Bhagavata, were all treated by Vaishnava writers.

In Siva-ganada-ragalegalu 1160, Harihara wrote poetry in the ragale meter, departing from the long-standing Jain custom of producing Kannada literature in the champu form. In Harishchandra Kavya 1200, his nephew Raghavanka wrote a special retelling of the account of King Harishchandra, thereby establishing the Shatpadi tradition. The sangatya meter was first used by Sisumayana in his Anjanacharita and Tripuradahana 1235. Nonetheless, some academics have persisted in using Sanskritic forms as Mudige Ashtaka, Pampa Sataka, Ashtaka eight-line verse compositions, Champu Ramachandra Charitapurana, and Shataka 100 verse compositions.

There is disagreement about the precise origins of the haridasa movement in the Kannada-speaking area. In his book Karnataka Bhaktavijaya, renowned Harikatha scholar Belur Keshavadasa said that the movement was started by the 9th-century saint Achalananda Dasa of Turvekere in the present-day Tumkur district. However, the 9th-century idea is not supported by the language employed in Achalananda Dasa's writings or the finding of a piece written under the pen name "Achalanada Vitthala" that makes reference to the philosopher Madhvacharya from the 13th century. One of Madhvacharya's first pupils, Naraharitirtha 1281, is regarded as the first Haridasa to compose Vaishnava works in Kannada. Popular secular subjects included works on rhetoric (Udayadityalankara), grammar (Shabdamanidarpana), natural sciences (Rattasutra), mathematics (Vyavaharanita), fiction (Lilavati), and poetry (Sringararatnakara).

Some well-known literary families made significant contributions. One Jain family produced a number of writers, including the renowned anthologist Mallikarjuna (1245); his brother-in-law Janna (1209), the court

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poet of King Veera Ballala II; Mallikarjuna's son Keshiraja (1260), who was regarded as the greatest theorist of Kannada grammar by D. R. Nagaraj, a scholar of literary cultures in history; and Sumanobana, who served in King Narasimha I's court and was Keshiraja's maternal grandfather. The poets Harihara 1160 and his nephew Raghavanka 1200, who pioneered the use of local meters, were devout followers of the deity Shiva from a Shaiva family.

Even their epigraphs, which were often written in elegant and lyrical language rather than prose and had flower pictures in the margins, demonstrate the Hoysala monarchs' strong support for the Kannada language. Kannada poets and authors during this time received royal support at the courts of neighboring kingdoms in the western Deccan in addition to the patronage of the Hoysala. Several governing dynasties, including the Western Chalukyas, the Southern Kalachuris, the Devagiri Seuna Yadavas, and the Kolhapur Silharas, actively supported Kannada literature and utilized it in inscriptions.

The rise in popularity of writers who were multilingual in Telugu and Kannada led to a pattern of interaction between the two languages that has persisted till the present day. During this time, the Kannada language's Veerashaiva canon was translated or modified into Telugu. Of these multilingual poets, Palkuriki Somanatha 1195 is the most well-known. He was a follower of social reformer Basavanna. Around 1150, the Chola chieftain Nannechoda wrote in Telugu and utilized a lot of Kannada vocabulary. The emperors of the Vijayanagara kingdom continued to fund authors in both languages after the fall of the Hoysala monarchy. King Deva Raya II, in 1425, had Chamarasa's seminal work *Prabhulingalile* translated into Telugu and Tamil, while Bhima Kavi translated the Telugu *Basavapurana* to Kannada in 1369, motivated by Palkuriki Somanatha. While the Srivaishnava, a branch of Vaishnavism, competed with the Telugu and Sanskrit authors, many Veerashaiva writers at the court of the 17th-century Kingdom of Mysore were multilingual in Kannada, Telugu, and Sanskrit.

Several writers from this era are listed in contemporary records as having works that are thought to be lost: Maghanandi, who is likely the author of *Rama Kathe* and the guru of Kamalabhava in 1235; *Srutakirti*, who is the guru of Aggala and the author of *Raghava Pandaviya* and possibly a *Jina-stuti* in 1170; Sambha Varma, who Nagavarma mentions in 1145; Vira Nandi Chandraprabha Kavyamala, 1175; Dharani Pandita Bijjala Raya Charita and Varangana Charita; Vidyanatha Prataparudriya; Ganeshvara Sahitya Sanjivana; Harabhakta, a Veerashaiva mendicant *Vedabhashya*, in 1300; and Siva Kavi, who wrote the *Basava Purana* in 1330. The monarchs of the dynasty held imperial aspirations during the early 12th-century rise of the Hoysalas. In addition to surpassing his rulers, the Western Chalukyas, in military prowess and architectural accomplishments, King Vishnuvardhana aspired to make Vedic sacrifices worthy of an emperor. His conversion from Jainism to Vaishnavism resulted from this. The renowned scholar Ramanujacharya popularized the Sri Vaishnava religion, a branch of Hindu Vaishnavism, at around the same time that he fled the Cholas to Hoysala land. For a long, Jains remained the dominant cultural group in what is now southern Karnataka, but these societal shifts would eventually lead to a decrease in Jain literary production. Many bards and academics were drawn to the Hoysalas' court by their increasing political power, and they composed panegyrics about their benefactors.

Mallinathapurana 1105, which describes the development of the Jain saint's soul, was written by Nagachandra, a scholar and the architect of the Mallinatha Jinalaya, a Jain temple dedicated to the 19th Jain

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tirthankar, Mallinatha, in Bijapur, Karnataka.

Some historians claim that he was patronized by King Veera Ballala I. Later, he penned his masterpiece, the Ramachandra Charitapurana, often known as the Pampa Ramayana, a Jain adaptation of the Hindu epic Ramayana. It is the oldest surviving Kannada-language rendition of the epic, written in the traditional champu meter and according to Vimalasuri's Pauma charia tradition. The composition, which has sixteen pieces, differs greatly from Valmiki's original epic. Nagachandra portrays King Ravana, the antagonist of the Hindu epic, as a tragic hero who, in his weakness, kidnaps Sita, the Hindu deity Rama's wife, but is ultimately redeemed by her love to Rama. In a further departure, Ravana is killed in the last fight by Rama's devoted brother Lakshmana rather than Rama. In the end, Rama adopts Jaina-diksha, who becomes a Digambara monk, an ascetic, and achieves nirvana enlightenment. The work gained Nagachandra the appellation "Abhinava Pampa" (the "new Pampa") and was seen as a companion to the Pampa Bharatha of Adikavi Pampa 941, a Jain adaptation of the epic Mahabharata. In addition to their brahminical form, the Hindu epics Mahabharata and Ramayana also have Jain counterparts, although only in Kannada.

Known for her humor and wit, Kanti 1108 was one of the first female Kannada poets and Nagachandra's contemporaries. The two engaged in arguments and repartees. During the reigns of King Veera Ballala I and King Vishnuvardhana, Rajaditya, who was originally from either Puvinaabage or Raibhag in the present-day Belgaum region, served in the Hoysala court. Three of the first works on mathematics in the Kannada language are attributed to him: Vyavaharaganita, Kshetraganita, and Lilavati. He wrote in simple poetry on arithmetic and other mathematical subjects. Udayadityalankara 1150 is a work on rhetoric written by Udayaditya, a Chola prince. Dandin's Sanskrit Kavyadarsa served as its model.

Age of Harihara

One of the first Veerashaiva authors who was not a member of the Vachana poetry tradition was Harihara, also known as Harisvara, who lived in Hampi and was born into a family of Karnika accountants. He is regarded as one of the Hoysala era's most important Kannada poets. He has been referred to as a "poet of poets" and a "poet for the masses" due to his non-traditionalist views. His works altered the direction of Kannada poetry, and he served as an inspiration to succeeding generations of poets. King Narasimha I's court poet, Kereya Padmarasa, was impressed by Harihara's early works and presented him to the monarch, who later became his sponsor.

In the Kalidasa tradition, he wrote the Girijakalyana "Marriage of the mountain born goddess – Parvati" using the Champu style. It is a ten-part tale that culminates in the union of the deity Shiva and Parvati. He was a master of various meters. Anecdotally, Harihara was so opposed to extolling worldly people that he slapped his disciple Raghavanka for mentioning King Harishchandra in the seminal book Harishchandra Kavya, which was written about 1200. The indigenous ragale metre is said to have been created by Harihara. His biography of Basavarajadevara ragale, the first lyrical biographer in Kannada, provides intriguing insights about the main character without necessarily adhering to the prevailing ideologies of the day. The Nambiyana ragale, also known as Shivaganada ragale or Saranacharitamana— "The holy lake of the lives of the devotees"—is a collection of 100 poems attributed to him. It is named for the saint Nambiyana. He composed the Pampa sataka in the sataka meter and the Mudige ashtaka in the ashtaka metre about 1200.

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Hoysala art and architecture

Figure sculpture is abundant in almost every temple in Hoysala. This preference was further aided with soapstone, which permits exquisite details and clarity. In contrast to later Western Chalukyan architecture, this represents a return to a more comprehensive iconographic portrayal of scenes from popular epics. But it's important to keep in mind that in temple design, they are crucial to the composition and structural stability of the building rather than only being ornamental.

The sanctum sanctorum, or garbha griha, is a cuboid compartment with a centrally located murti (enshrined image) on a pitha (pedestal).

The vimana (or mulaprasada) of a temple is made up of the shikhara (superstructure), which rises above the garbha griha, and the shrine. On top of the shikhara is an amalaka, a ribbed stone with a kalash at its finial. The garbha griha is joined to an enormous pillared mandapa (porch) in front, primarily facing east (or north), by an intermediary antarala (vestibule).

Giant gopurams, or elaborate entry towers, loom above each doorway as one approaches the temple.

There are often several little shrines and sheds in the prakaram, or temple courtyard. The vimanas might have an orthogonal, semi-stellate, or stellate layout. One distinctive feature of the Hoysala temples are the finely carved banded plinths, which are made up of a number of horizontal courses that form rectangular strips with small slits in between. Additionally, the temples themselves are sometimes constructed on a jagati, or elevated platform, which is utilized for pradakshinapatha, or circumambulation.

The Temple Complex of Chennakesava: This is a single-shrine temple, or ekakuta. Unfortunately, the shikhara has been destroyed by the effects of time. An encased figure of Krishna (whose name is Kesava, while Chenna means lovely) is housed in the garbha griha. Built on a great scale, the whole temple adheres to the basic Hoysala architectural design. It is positioned on a jagati with an east-west direction. There are 60 bays in the hall, and there are ten-meter shrines on each side. There are 38 exquisitely carved figurines known as salabhanjika or madanika (bracket figures) under the eaves of the mandapa (outside ritual hall). These were added later, probably under Veer Ballala II's rule, based on their locations and inscriptions. In the same year, Shantala, the queen of Vishnuvardhan, dedicated Kappechennigaraya, which is located at the southern end of this major temple. The picture of Venugopal is kept in a subshrine next to the main shrine. This temple is less ornate but nevertheless adheres to the stellate layout.

To the west of Chennakesava, another temple called Viranarayana is located inside the same property. This Vaishnava temple, known as an ekakuta, was most likely built later in the 12th century CE. It is constructed on jagati in the fundamental pattern of a garbha griha and an antarala leading to the mandapa. It's interesting to note that this temple lacks the narrative friezes that are common in Chennakesava temple and is somewhat austere. Located southwest of the main temple, the Saumyanayaka temple is a comparatively small building. A minister working for Vijaynagar King Harihara II restored the ruined shikhara in 1387 CE.

Veer Ballala II built a terraced pond known as Vasudev Tirtha northwest of Chennakesava. It is a common

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practice in all temples for followers to ablate before entering the mandapa. Many of these additions and changes, both little and large, have persisted far into the rule of this region's subsequent kings.

Halebidu Prior to the city being chosen as the capital of the Hoysala Empire, Halebidu was known as Dwarasamudra, which alludes to a big water reservoir that was dug out over 75 years ago. Its current appellation, "old city," undoubtedly alludes to the fact that it was abandoned after being twice pillaged by the sultanates' invading forces. The two garbha grihas (sanctum sanctorum) of this Shaiva temple, which is a dvikuta (temple with two shrines), are joined by a mandapa (porch), creating a spacious, open hall. The name Shantaleshwara comes from the fact that one temple is devoted to King Vishnuvardhan and the other to his Queen Shantala. It was mostly built around 1121 CE with the support of affluent local merchants and aristocracy. The twin temple has four entrances, and on each side of each are little vimanas. On the same jagati are two auxiliary temples dedicated to Nandi (bull) and Surya (sun). Beautiful friezes on temple walls poetically depict tales from the Bhagavata Purana, Mahabharata, and Ramayana.

These reliefs offer as a comprehensive study in the symbolism of Hindu art and preserve one of the best works produced by Hoysala artisans.

Conclusion

Among the last significant temples constructed in India were the Hoysala temples. The impact of Muslim invasions was rapidly increasing, and monarchs were more focused on fending against the invaders than on creative pursuits like architecture and painting. The temple that was produced by combining the Dravidian and North Indian styles is so distinctive that it is sometimes categorized as the Hoysala style. Early tests were discovered at ancient Dwarasamudra, on the outskirts of the kingdom. The Hoysala temple's design, which consists of several cellas or garbha-grihas serviced by a common mandapa, adds to its uniqueness. Each of these cellas had a star as its plan. When we examine the plan and discover that it is composed of a grid of rotating squares, we may comprehend why the temple deviates from the conventional square shape. Thus, a star-like outline is produced. Although it was now characterized by round columns whose shafts had been lathed and so gained many parallel knife-edges, the mandapa was still square. Halebid, Belur, and Somnathpur are the greatest places to see Hoysala sculpture and architecture, particularly the elaborate and decorative pieces. The family generously supported literary artists in Kannada and Sanskrit.

In addition to supporting the arts, the Hoysala kings fostered the growth of Kannada and Sanskrit literature. Despite the continued popularity of Sanskrit literature during Hoysala rule, native Kannada intellectuals received more royal favor.

Historian Sheldon Pollock claims that Kannada became the dominant courtly language during the Hoysala dynasty, completely replacing Sanskrit. The legends "victor at Nolambavadi" (Nolambavadigonda), "victor at Talakad" (Talakadugonda), "chief of the Malepas" (Maleparolganda), and "Brave of Malepa" (malapavira) were inscribed in Hoysala-style Kannada script on King Vishnuvardhana's coinage. Ramanujacharya sought safety in Tondanur and then Melkote after escaping potential persecution by the Chola King, a Shaiva. However, this incident had little effect on Vaishnava literature in Hoysala countries at the time. Even though Jains continued to hold cultural dominance in what is now southern Karnataka for

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a while, the famous philosopher Ramanujacharya sought safety from the Cholas in Hoysala territory at around the same time and popularized the Sri Vaishnava faith, a branch of Hindu Vaishnavism. These social changes would later contribute to the decline of Jain literary output.

***Lecturer**
Department of History
M.A.J. Government College
Deeg (Bharatpur)

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