



## Chapter 3



***Mahishasuramardini  
sculpture, Aihole,  
Bagalkote District***

## The Age of Imperial Dynasties

uring this period, the Chalukyas of Badami, Rashtrakutas, Chalukyas of Kalyana and Hoysalas built powerful kingdoms in Karnataka, paving the path for prosperity in both political and cultural spheres. Until then, the Karnataka rulers had ruled within the borders of Karnataka, but with the advent of these ruling dynasties, they began to control most of Dakshinapatha. They also expanded their territories towards northern India and southwards towards Tamilnadu. This period which was marked by political power and economic prosperity, also witnessed development in the field of literature, art and architecture.

### Chalukyas of Badami

The history of the Deccan in general and Karnataka in particular assumes special significance with the start of the rule of the Chalukyas of Badami from around 500 A.D. They were also called the early Western Chalukyas to distinguish them from the later Chalukyas who ruled from their capital at Kalyana. The rulers of this dynasty inspired the Kannada



speaking people to maintain political and cultural unity. Fortunately, the rulers erected a large number of inscriptions, with the help of which the history of this period can be reconstructed.

Jayasimha was the first ruler of this dynasty and ruled from 500-520 A.D. They belonged to the *Manavya gotra* and called themselves *Haritiputras*. Jayasimha is mentioned in many inscriptions as having defeated the Rashtrakuta king Indra and as having established the Chalukya kingdom. Very little is known of one of his sons, Ranaraga, but his son Pulakesi I is generally regarded as the real founder of the Chalukya dynasty after the overthrow of the Kadambas of Banavasi. Inscriptions refer to him in various ways such as Polekeshin, Pulikeshin and Pulukeshin with many titles such as *Satyasraya*, *Ranavikrama*, *Sriprihvivallabha*, *Srivallabha*, etc. He performed many sacrifices such as *Agnishtoma*, *Vajapeya*, *Asvamedha*, etc. His inscription on the cliff of the Badami hill dated 543 A.D. describes him as a powerful king. The fact that the later rulers of the dynasty proudly describe his rule in glowing terms suggests that he was regarded as the real founder of the dynasty.

After Pulakesi I, his son Kirtivarma I came to the throne and ruled from 566-596 A.D. Almost all the inscriptions refer to him as Maharaja. He performed *Bahusuvarna* and *Agnistoma* sacrifices. Kirtivarma's contribution to the consolidation of the Chalukya kingdom cannot be underestimated. He subjugated the Kadambas, a task begun by his father and made the Chalukya position more secure. The work on the famous Vaishnava cave at Badami was started through his initiative.

Kirtivarma I was succeeded by his brother Mangalesa. This is perhaps due to the fact that Kirtivarma's son

Pulakesi II was still young. Mangalesa ruled from 596-610 A.D. and was a very strong and powerful ruler. The important wars that he fought were against Kalachuri Shankaragana and Buddhavarma. By defeating them, Mangalesa extended his empire northwards upto Mahi. According to the Mahakuta pillar inscription, Mangalesa wanted to set up a pillar of victory on the banks of the Ganga and erected this at the Mahakuta temple near Badami. Mangalesa had many titles such as *Ranavikrama*, *Sriprihvivallabha*, *Paramabhagavata*, *Ururanaparakrama*, etc. In memory of his brother Kirtivarma, he commissioned the construction of the famous rock-cut Vaishnava shrine at Badami (Cave No.3). When Kirtivarma's son, Pulakesi II, attained maturity, Mangalesa was reluctant to hand over the kingdom to him and considered making his own son the next king. Sensing this, Pulakesi II left the kingdom and organised an army of his followers and in 610 A.D., gave a tough fight to Mangalesa, in which the latter lost his life.

After killing his uncle, Pulakesi II occupied the Chalukya throne in 610 A.D. and ruled up to 642 A.D. The Kadambas of Banavasi, the Alupas and the Gangas of Talakad were also defeated and accepted the overlordship of Pulakesi II. The Mauryas ruling in Konkana also surrendered to Pulakesi who occupied Puri, i.e. Elephanta near Bombay. The kings of Malva and Lata also became the subordinates of Pulakesi II. Gujarat too became a part of the Chalukya kingdom. Encouraged by these victories, Pulakesi went to the Narmada where he was opposed by Harshavardhana of Kanauj, the ruler of North India. In a fierce battle that took place between the two, Harsha was humiliated and forced to retreat. This enabled Pulakesi to become the undisputed monarch of the territory comprising 99,000 villages. Pulakesi then turned towards the east and defeated the Panduvamshis and Eastern Gangas ruling in Kosala and Orissa respectively and captured Pistapura and Kunala area, i.e., modern Kolleru, in the north Andhra coast. Then Pulakesi attacked the Pallavas and went as far as Kanchi, the Pallava capital and defeated the Pallava king Mahendravarma I. In a diplomatic move, he extended a hand of friendship to the

Chola and Pandya kings who were the enemies of the Pallavas. This information is stated in the Aihole inscription, and hence it may be construed that all these victories were achieved before 634-635 A.D., the date of the inscription. He placed Dharasraya Jaysimha, his own brother, in charge of the Khandesh area and another brother, Kubja Vishnuvardhana was sent as the Governor of Vengi area. Subsequently, he became independent and started the kingdom of the Vengi Chalukyas or the Eastern Chalukyas. Satyasraya Dhruvaraja governed the Revati islands under the direct control of Pulakesi II. Through all these arrangements, the Chalukyan glory reached its apex. His kingdom comprised the entire area between the Kaveri and the Narmada. He also sent an envoy to the Persian king Khusrav II who returned the courtesy through an ambassador. The Chinese traveller HieunTsang visited the Chalukyan kingdom during this period and paid handsome tribute to the king and the prosperity of the kingdom.

However, when everything seemed glorious, a great catastrophe befell the Chalukyas in the form of an invasion by the Pallavas. Narasimhavarma I, the Pallava king, made preparations to avenge the defeat of his father and invaded the Chalukya kingdom. Battles were fought at Manimangala, Suramara and Pariyala in which Pulakesi's army was defeated. The defeat was so decisive that the Pallava army came to Badami and engraved an inscription to mark this great event. The Pallava king even assumed the title *Vatapikonda* in 642 A.D. Perhaps Pulakesi died heart-broken because he is not heard of after this battle.

In the year 655 A.D., Pulakesi's son Vikramaditya I freed the Chalukya kingdom from the clutches of the Pallavas. He fought successfully against three generations of the Pallavas, namely Narasimhavarma, his son Mahendravarma II and his son Parameshvarvarma I. He pursued the Pallavas upto their capital Kanchi in 670 A.D. Though his son Vinayaditya and grandson Vijayaditya helped him in his wars, the credit for reviving the glory of the Chalukyas goes to Vikramaditya I. He was succeeded by his son Vinayaditya in 681 A.D.

As Vinayaditya had good training in administration and warfare under his grandfather and father, he was an experienced prince. Immediately after coming to the throne, he put down the turbulent elements with an iron hand and established peace and prosperity. He built many temples and patronised literary men such as Niravadya and others. Towards the end, he had to fight against the Pallavas. His son Vikramaditya II was the leader of this invasion against Pallava Parmeshvaravarma II. The Chalukyas defeated the Pallavas and extracted tributes from them. He ruled till 733 A.D.

His son Vikramaditya II succeeded him. Though he ruled for only 12 years, he was successful in all his military campaigns. He invaded the Pallava country, defeated Nandivarma II and captured the insignias such as *katumukha*, *samudraghosha*, a number of elephants and heaps of rubies. He entered the city of Kanchi but did not destroy it. He visited the Rajasimhesvara and other temples of the Pallavas and generously granted gold ornaments to these temples and erected a Kannada inscription at Rajasimhesvara.

***Rock with cave cut temples at Badami, Bagalkot district***





*Side view of Virupaksha Temple at Pattadakal, Badami, Bagalkot district*







*Gaudara Gudi, Aihole, Bagalkot District*



*Ladkhan Temple, Aihole, Bagalkote District*





His queens Lokamahadevi and Trailokyamahadevi are famous in art history for the patronage they extended to temple construction at Pattadakal and for their grants to Gunda, the architect of the temples.

Kirtivarma II ruled from 745-757 A.D. until he was defeated by Rashtrakuta Krishna I. No information is available about the sons and daughters of Kirtivarma II. After a reign of two and a half centuries, the rule of the Chalukyas of Badami came to an end.

The Badami Chalukyan rule is a glorious period in the history of the Deccan and Karnataka. For the first time, political unity of Karnataka was established and Karnataka became a household name in the entire country. The boundaries of Karnataka were expanded to include distant areas. Though the Chalukya territory was vast, the kings of the dynasty made efficient arrangements for its administration, which was admired by traveler Hieun Tsang. Development of Sanskrit and Kannada literature, establishment of educational institutions such as *agharas*, *brahmapuris* and *ghatikas* are due to the enlightened rule of the dynasty. The Chalukyan contribution in the field of art deserves special mention. The architects under Chalukya patronage evolved the Vesara School of art, a distinct school different from the then prevailing Nagara (northern) and Dravida (southern) schools. This is a major contribution of the Chalukyas. They experimented with different schools of art and perfected the system of temple building. Their art centres, Aihole, Pattadakal and Badami were ateliers or workshops of art of an all-India character and were visited by artists from all over the country. Aihole, Pattadakal and Badami have monuments built in the Nagara, Dravida and Vesara styles of art, a rare phenomenon in Indian art history. The Chalukyas have contributed a great deal to the image and status of Karnataka.



*Mahakuteshwara Temple Complex, Mahakuta, Badami, Bagalkote district*

### Rashtrakutas of Malkhed

The Rashtrakutas were one of the highly distinguished dynasties of the Deccan and Karnataka. Their rule extended to most parts of the Deccan. Because of the wide extent of their empire, their history forms a brilliant chapter in the history of India. The expression *Rashtrakuta* is taken as an official designation which in course of time crystallised into a family name. In their inscriptions they are referred to as *Lattalura-puravaradhisvara* thereby showing that Lattalur was their original home. Lattalur has been identified as modern Latur in Osmanabad district, which was a part of the Kannada country. Their names are all of Kannada origin. They patronised Kannada language and literature. The *Jura Prashasti* of Krishna III found in Jabalpur, is written in Kannada characters. Kannada is used for the sign-manual even in the Sanskrit records of Gujarat and other branches of the Rashtrakutas. It was thus very clear that the Rashtrakutas were a Kannada speaking people



hailing from Karnataka. The Rashtrakuta royal emblems were *Garuda* and *Palidhvaja*.

Dantiverma is the earliest known member of the Rashtrakutas followed by Indra, Govindaraja, Karka I, Indra II and Dantidurga. Indra II married a princess of the Chalukya family of Gujarat and had a son named Dantidurga. For all purposes, he could be considered as the founder and the first ruler of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. He ruled from 735-756 A.D. In the beginning, he was a subordinate of the Chalukyas of Badami, perhaps stationed in the Aurangabad area. He collaborated with Chalukya Avaijanashraya Pulakesi in defeating the Arabs and helped Vikramaditya II in his campaigns against Kanchi. When Kirtivarma II came to the throne, Dantidurga was able to establish his supremacy in the northern portions of the Chalukya empire. Subsequently, he defeated Chalukya Kirtivarma II and put an end to the Chalukya empire. This marked the beginning of the independent Rashtrakuta rule. He assumed titles like *Prithvivallabha* and *Khadgavaloka* and performed *Hiranyagarbha mahadana*. After becoming independent, he assumed the titles *Maharajadhiraja*, *Paramesvara* and *Paramabhattaraka*. He died childless in 756 A.D. and was succeeded by his uncle Krishna I.

Krishna I fought against the Chalukyas and gave a death blow to them. Then he marched against Konkana and after defeating its ruler reinstated Sanaphulla of the Silahara family. He then took on Ganga Sripurusha who opposed the Rashtrakutas strongly, but finally Krishna I gained an upper hand and went up to Manne, without gaining any territorial advantage. In this fight against the Gangas, his son Govinda II played a prominent role. Encouraged by this performance Krishna sent him against the kingdom of Vengi in 769 A.D. Govinda II defeated the Vengi ruler Vishnuvardhana. Thus Krishna I consolidated the position of the Rashtrakutas and died in 773 A.D. His son Govinda II became the



***Jaina Narayana Temple, Pattadakal,  
Bagalkote District***



Rashtrakuta king. A significant achievement of Krishna I is the construction of the Kailasa temple at Ellora which is considered to be a unique experiment in Indian architecture. An inscription describes the temple as not the work of human beings but those of divine architects and there is no exaggeration in this statement.

Govinda II who ruled for a short period failed as a king due to his pleasure loving and licentious habits. It is not known whether he himself gave up the kingship and passed it on to his younger brother Dhruva or the latter wrested the kingdom from Govinda in a battle and then became king.

Dhruva began to rule from 780 A.D. His immediate political activity was to arrange a northern expedition as it was an opportune time since Gurjara Pratihara Vatsaraja and the Pala king Dharmapala of Bengal were quarrelling among themselves. With the help of his two sons Govinda and Indra, Dhruva crossed the Narmada and marched towards Kanauj. First Vatsaraja opposed the army but was defeated. It was next the turn of Dharmapala to be defeated and he even lost his royal insignia. Thus Dhruva became the undisputed master of northern India as well. After a short stay in the land between the Ganga and the Yamuna, he returned with a large number of war trophies, including the emblems of the rivers. While returning to his capital, Dhruva went to the kingdom of Vengi where the ruler Vishunvardhana IV without risking a war, offered his daughter Silabhattarika, in marriage to Dhruva and renewed his friendship. Though Krishna I had defeated Ganga Sripurusha earlier, his son Sivamara did not accept the Rashtrakuta supremacy. In the battle that followed between the two, Sivamara was imprisoned and Dhruva's son Stambha was appointed Governor of the Ganga territory. Dhruva then moved into the Pallava territory and defeated Nandiverman I and returned to his capital. With these victories, Dhruva gained a vast empire and was the most respected ruler in India.

Rashtrakuta influence spread in all directions due to his personal bravery and statesmanship. Dhruva had four sons: Karka, Stambha, Govinda III and Indra. Govinda III and Indra helped their father in the northern campaigns and Stambha was the

Governor of Gangavadi country. Dhruva appointed his son Govinda III as his successor and when he died in 793 A.D., the latter became the king.

Though Dhruva wanted to avoid contest among his sons for the throne, Stambha, the elder brother of Govinda III staged a revolt against the latter. The confederacy of Stambha consisting of 13 rulers was easily defeated by Govinda III. Stambha became a prisoner at the hands of Govinda III, but Govinda took pity on him and released him from prison and restored to him the Governorship of Gangavadi. Having established himself as the undisputed master at home, Govinda turned his attention to the north. He placed his faithful brother



***Kailasa Temple, Ellora, Maharashtra***

Indra as the Viceroy of southern Gujarat and entrusted him with the responsibility of protecting his kingdom. Vatsaraja's successor Nagabhata could not face the Rashtrakuta army for long and he fled from the battlefield. Chakrayudha of Kanauj surrendered to Govinda III. Dharmapala of Bengal also surrendered to the victorious Rashtrakuta king, who then marched, with great jubilation, upto the foot of the Himalayas in 800 A.D., a feat not achieved by any of his predecessors. Next, he defeated Vijayaditya II, the Vengi Chalukya ruler. After these conquests, he started again on his southern campaign and made Alampur on the Tungabhadra his base for operations. Pallava Dantivarman was defeated in 803 A.D. and other rulers like the Pandyas, the Cholas and the king of Sri Lanka submitted to him. Thus, his southern expedition was also a great success.



Through his heroism, military skill and diplomacy, Govinda III became the undisputed master of the entire country. He assumed high sounding titles such as *Jagadrudra*, *Jagattunga*, *Prabhutavarsha*, *Srivallabha*, etc. He also arranged for the proper administration of his vast empire. Govinda's queen, Gamundabbe gave birth to a son when he was returning from his northern campaign. They named him Amoghavarsha Nripatunga. Govinda appointed his nephew Karka Suvarnavarsha of Gujarat as the guardian of the prince. Govinda died in 814 A.D. At the time of his death, the Rashtrakuta empire had reached its zenith and never again did it reach greater heights. Hence, there is no exaggeration in calling Govinda III the greatest of the Rashtrakutas.

When Amoghavarsha was able to take up the responsibility of the empire himself, Karka returned to his home in Gujarat. Amoghavarsha was a peace-loving person interested in religion and literature. His Sanjan plates inform us of his supreme sacrifice for the welfare of his people and even offered his own finger to the Goddess Mahalakshmi of Kolhapur to ward off a calamity to his subjects. He was a scholar and an author and *Kavirajamarga*, the earliest Kannada work, is ascribed to Sri Vijaya, his court poet. The great Jaina teacher and author Jinasena was his guru. Sakatayana wrote a work on grammar *Amoghavritti*, under the patronage of Amoghavarsha. *Sabdanushasana* is his other work. Mahaviracharya, the author of *Ganitasarasangraha* also prospered under this king. He was a great patron of religions including Buddhism. After a long reign of 64 years, Amoghavarsha died in 878 A.D. and was succeeded by his son Krishna II.

Krishna had friendly relations with the Arabs. After the death of Krishna in 914 A.D., his grandson Indra III became the king and ruled till 929 A.D.

Indra's expedition to the north was a great success for the Rashtrakutas when Mahipala fled from the battlefield leaving Kanauj. Indra was succeeded by his son Amoghavarsha II who ruled for just one year. Then Govinda IV, his brother, came to the throne in 930 A.D. Amoghavarsha III became the king in 934 A.D. He was an old man and had more interest in religious activities and hence his son, Krishna III took an active part in the administration.

After the death of Amoghavarsha III, Krishna III ruled from 939-967 A.D. In 949 A.D., at the famous battle of Takkolam, Chola Parantaka was defeated and prince Rajaditya was killed by his ally the Ganga king Butuga. This was such a severe blow to the Cholas that they could not raise their heads for many decades. The Rashtrakuta forces marched upto Rameshvaram and set up a pillar of victory and built Krishneshwara at the site. He also achieved great success in north India as well as in the Vengi country. Thus, Krishna III was successful in all his campaigns. He was the last great ruler of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. His *Jura prasasti*, found near Jabbalpur and written in Kannada, gives a glorious account of his greatness. As his son died prematurely, Krishna III was succeeded by his younger brother Khottiga in 967 A.D.

Khottiga was not a powerful ruler. Paramara Siyaka Harsha invaded the Rashtrakuta kingdom in 972 A.D. and plundered the capital. However, Ganga Marasimha intervened and drove Harsha out of the Rashtrakuta dominions. At this time, Khottiga died and was succeeded by Karka II, who ruled only for a year. In 973 A.D., Tailapa, a Chalukya feudatory, revolted against the Rashtrakutas and defeated Karka. The glorious Rashtrakuta dynasty began to decline and the Kalyana Chalukyas rose as imperial sovereigns.

The Rashtrakuta empire was perhaps more extensive than any other Hindu empire in the Deccan. In no other period of ancient Indian history did the Deccan enjoy the high political prestige as during the time of Rashtrakutas. The statement of the Arab traveller Sulaiman in 851 A.D. that the Rashtrakuta empire was



*Shirwala Temple, Gulbarga District*

one of the four great empires of the world and that they were the most feared rulers of India is not simple flattery but true. They also organised the administration of their kingdom on sound lines. Education, literature and religion were encouraged. In the field of architecture, they were responsible for a large number of rock-cut shrines at Ellora and other places as well as a number of temples. The Kailasa temple at Ellora gives the Rashtrakutas a permanent place in Indian history.

### Chalukyas of Kalyana

The Chalukyas of Kalyana, so called because they ruled from the capital Kalyananagara (Basavakalyan, Bidar district), are considered to be the descendants of the Chalukyas of Badami. Most of the inscriptions of the Chalukyas of Kalyana start their genealogy from the Chalukya kings of Badami and mention Taila II who is the first king of the Chalukyas of Kalyana as their

descendant. The famous Kannada poet Ranna also treats Taila II as belonging to the Badami line. The genealogy as given in the inscriptions mentions Vijayaditya's other son Bhima I after whom followed Kirtivarma III, Bhima II, Vikramaditya III, Ayyana I, Vikramaditya IV and finally Taila II. The same genealogy with some minor variations has been furnished by Ranna too. Not much is known about the predecessors of Taila II. It can be assumed that the Badami Chalukya rulers after they lost their paramount power were waiting for an opportunity to assert their independence. This opportunity presented itself when the Rashtrakuta power declined and Taila II lost no time in striking a death blow to the Rashtrakutas.

Taking advantage of the Paramara invasion on the Rashtrakutas, Taila II overthrew Karka II in 973 A.D., declared his independence and ruled from 973-997 A.D. The Gangas took sides with the Rashtrakutas and offered opposition to Taila II, but not with great success. Taila defeated Rajaraja Chola in 992 A.D. and his son Ahavamalla defeated the Chola army in 995 A.D. Taila laid the firm foundation for the Chalukya rule. He had two sons, Satyasraya and Dasavarma, and after his death, the former came to the throne.

Satyasraya who had the titles *Ahavamalla*, *Irivabedanga* and *Sahasabhimha* ruled from 997- 1008 A.D. The hostility between the Cholas and the Chalukyas continued during this period too. Ranna, one of the greatest poets of Kannada, was patronised by Satyasraya. After his death, his nephew (Dasavarma's son) Vikramaditya V came to the throne and ruled for eight years. He was a weak king and the Cholas and the Paramaras easily invaded the kingdom. However no great danger befell the kingdom. After him, his brother Ayyana ruled only for some months and perhaps abdicated the throne in favour of his brother Jayasimha II.

Jayasimha who had the titles *Jagadekamalla* and *Mallikamoda* ruled between the years 1015-44 A.D. His immediate concern was to face the coalition of Paramara Bhoja, Kalachuri Gangeyadeva





*Group of Temples, Pattadakal, Badami, Bagalkot District*





*Papanatha Temple, Pattadakal, Badami, Bagalkot District*



*Galaganatha Temple, Pattadakal-Badami,  
Bagalkot District*





***Parvathi and Kartikey Temples,  
Sandur, Bangalore***





and Rajendra Chola. A fierce battle took place on the banks of the Godavari around 1018 A.D., in which Bhoja occupied Konkana and Rajendra Chola burnt down the Chalukya capital. Soon, Jayasimha gained the upper hand, defeated Bhoja and took back Konkana. He also defeated Seuna Bhillama III and entered into matrimonial alliances with his family and thus saved the Chalukya kingdom. His queens were Devaladevi, Suggaladevi and Lakshmidēvi. He issued gold *padmatanka* coins with his name or title *Jagadekamalla* inscribed on them. After his death, he was succeeded by his eldest son Somesvara I.

Somesvara I who ruled from 1044-68 A.D. was also known as *Trailokyamalla*. He continued the war with the Cholas. Inscriptions give a detailed account of the results of the battles fought. Despite these military engagements, he built the capital Kalyana and made it famous. He had a large number of feudatories of whom Hoysala Vinayaditya and Jayakeshi I of the Goa Kadamba family are notable. According to Bilhana, Somesvara was afflicted with a serious type of fever; he drowned himself in the Tungabhadra in 1068 A.D.

His son Somesvara II succeeded him and ruled upto 1076 A.D. His popular title was *Bhuvanaikamalla* which is seen on his gold coins also. Somesvara's brother Vikramaditya VI planned to take over the kingdom, because he felt suspicious about the designs of his brother. At a later stage, Vikramaditya openly opposed his brother, Somesvara II with the help of his younger brother Jayasimha, Jayakeshi, Hangal Kadamba Kirtivarma, Seunachandra and others. He was victorious and occupied the throne in 1076 A.D.

Vikramaditya VI ruled from 1076-1127 A.D. He started reckoning a new era from the date of his accession to

the throne and called it as *Chalukya-vikrama-varsha*. He reduced the number of wars against the Cholas which his predecessors had fought incessantly. There were minor fights between Vikramaditya VI and Chola Kulottunga, which brought no tangible benefits to either of them. Vikramaditya had to also fight on other fronts. His own brother Jayasimha IV who had helped him to the throne rebelled against him, even though Vikramaditya had not only made him a Governor but also added many provinces like Banavasi, Santalige, Kundur, etc. to his kingdom. Vikramaditya defeated him in 1082 A.D. He also defeated Silahara Bhoja, the Alupas, and Paramara Nagavara and Vijayaditya in 1088 A.D. and subsequently helped Jagaddeva of Dhara. However, Jagaddeva abdicated the kingdom and lived with Vikramaditya VI as his subordinate. Hence, his kingdom was extended upto the Narmada. He also defeated Gurjara Sindhuraja, Kalachuri Jajalladeva and the ruler of Tripuri. As the Vengi, i.e. the Eastern Chalukyan ruler, had succeeded to the Chola throne, parts of that kingdom came to be included in the territory of Vikramaditya VI. Hoysala Vishnuvardhana, began making minor incursions into the Chalukya territory with the intention of assuming independence. Vikramaditya, sensing his devious plans, deputed Paramara Jagaddeva to chastise Hoysala Vishnuvardhana, but Jagaddeva was defeated. Another war took place between the two at Kannegala in which the great Hoysala minister, Gangaraja defeated the Chalukya army. In the battle fought at Halasur and Hosavidu, the Hoysalas were defeated and Vishnuvardhana accepted the feudatory status.

Vikramaditya's rule of 50 years was a glorious period in Karnataka history. Peace and prosperity prevailed which fostered cultural developments. Vijnanesvara, the celebrated jurist who wrote *Mitakshara*, a commentary on the *Yajnavalkya-smṛiti*, paid handsome tribute to Vikramaditya VI, his patron, for his statesmanship. Bilhana, a court poet who composed *Vikramankadevacharita* which is a mine of information on the life and times of Vikramaditya VI, was also a part of the times. Many inscriptions also contain glorious descriptions of Vikramaditya's



rule. His queen Chandaladevi, a lady of great accomplishments, has been described as *Natya-Vidyadhari*, *Abhinava-Sarasvati*, etc. Many temples were built during this period, notable for their architectural beauty and fine sculptures. In the temple at Jalasangi (Bidar district) there is a beautiful sculpture of a young woman writing an inscription praising Vikramaditya VI. Karnataka became a great centre of cultural activities during the reign of Vikramaditya VI. After a long reign of half a century, Vikramaditya VI died in 1127 A.D. and was succeeded by his son Somesvara III in the same year.

Somesvara III ruled from 1127-39 A.D. and adopted the title of *Bhulokamalla*. Hoysala Vishnu-varadhana remained docile during this period without making any attempt to become independent. Thus the absence of wars helped the king devote more time and energy to literary pursuits. In 1129 A.D., he composed an encyclopaedia called *Abhilasitartha-chintamani*, also known as *Manasollasa*. His other work was *Champu-kavya* called *Vikramankabhyudaya*. Because of his great scholarship, he was known as Saravajna Chakravati. He had two sons, Jagadekamalla II and Taila III, and was succeeded by the former who ruled from 1139-49 A.D. Jagadekamalla was already an old man when he came to rule and under these circumstances, was not able to govern the Chalukya kingdom.

The Kakatiya feudatory Prola II not only strengthened his power but freed most of the areas in the east coast from the Chalukyan rule. Hoysala Vishnuvardhana rebelled again, defeated the Kadambas and occupied Hangal, Bankapura and Banavasi. With the help of his faithful officers, Jagadekamalla II was able to take back these areas.

Even the Kalachuri chief, Bijjala had made extensive preparations to become independent and was waiting for an opportunity.

As Jagadekamalla II had no sons, his brother Taila III succeeded him and ruled from 1149-62 A.D. Kalachuri Bijjala was the first to rebel against Taila III and was largely responsible for the downfall of the Chalukyas. By 1153 A.D., he proclaimed independence and occupied many parts of the Chalukyan kingdom. The Silaharas and the Hoysalas also became independent. The Kakatiya ruler, Rudradeva not only became independent but also defeated Taila III in a battle. Bijjala established the Kalachuri rule in place of the Chalukyas.

### Kalachuri intervention

Kalachuris belonged to the Kalachuri family which ruled in Madhya Pradesh. In course of time, one family migrated to Karnataka to seek their fortunes. They belonged to the *Haihaya-kula*, and Mahismati on the Narmada was their original home. The names of the early rulers of the Kalachuri family are known from 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Permadi's son, Bijjala II who was Vikramaditya's



Side view of Shiva temple, Jalasangi, Humnabad, Bidar district



grandson, defeated Chalukya Taila III and established the Kalachuri kingdom. They ruled as the subordinates of the Chalukyas in the Bijapur area and developed matrimonial relations with them.

Bijjala II began his career in 1130 A.D. as a subordinate of the Chalukyas. When Taila III was not able to assert himself, Bijjala began assuming imperial titles. As early as in 1153 A.D., he began an era in his name. Around 1162 A.D., Bijjala defeated Taila III and occupied the throne but there was such strong opposition to Bijjala's rule from the loyal feudatories of the Chalukyas and others that he could rule only for five years. In all his political activities, Bijjala was greatly helped by his able general, Kasapayyanayaka. Bijjala's treasurer was the celebrated religious leader, Basaveshvara.

After the death of Bijjala in 1167 A.D., his son Rayamurari Sovideva became king. There was great confusion as intrigue increased among the feudatories. Sovideva was succeeded in 1175 A.D. by Mallikarjuna who lost the kingdom within a year. In the next 10 years they were ruled by Sankama, Ahavamalla and Singhana. By 1184 A.D., Chalukya Somesvara IV, the fugitive Chalukya prince, staged a come-back and defeated the Kalachuris. In this, he was ably assisted by his capable general, Brahma. He was not allowed to rule in peace because two other families, the Hoysalas and the Seunas, had become powerful enough to challenge the authority of Chalukya Somesvara IV. By 1186 A.D., he was driven away to Jayantipura which is described as his capital. Seuna Bhillama V fought against Somesvara near Kuppia in Gulburga district in 1188 A.D.

Although Somesvara was victorious, the joy of victory was short-lived. Hoysala Ballala II defeated the Chalukya general, Brahma and planted his flag on

the fort of Kalyana. Very swiftly Bhillama, the Seuna king, also moved against the Hoysalas and a fierce battle took place between the two at or near Kalyana in which Bhillama was victorious. It is said that Bhillama acquired Kalyanalakshmi after this battle. Thus, Somesvara IV was deprived of his kingdom by Bhillama and later by Ballala. Though Somesvara IV lived upto 1198 A.D. as testified by inscriptions, he was no longer the Chalukya monarch. Thus, the Chalukyas moved out of the political scene.

The Kalyana Chalukya rule is a significant period in Karnataka. For long it succeeded in establishing its supremacy in south Indian politics. It also contributed to the cultural development. In administration, it evolved new principles which made the people happy and the country prosperous. The guilds of merchants and the assembly of the *mahajanas* in the *agraharas* give an insight into the prosperity of the times and the local autonomy enjoyed by the people. Some of the luminaries in Kannada and Sanskrit literature flourished during this period. The period also marked the advent of a new social and religious movement under the leadership of Basavanna. This brought a wave of great social reform and helped the growth of the *Vachana* literature in Kannada. The Chalukyas patronised the construction of a large number of beautiful temples all over their territory. Gadag, Belagavi, Itgi, Kukkanur, Kuruvatti, Lakkundi, Harihara, Dambal, Chaudadanapura and other places have temples built under the patronage of the Chalukyas of Kalyana. These temples still stand as eloquent witness to the glory of the Chalukyas.

### Seunas of Devagiri

The Seunas of Devagiri, also known as the Yadavas, ruled parts of northern Karnataka at the same time as the Hoysalas. Seuna was the name of the dynasty though they were referred to as the Yadava dynasties. The word Seuna is written variously as Sevuna, Seguna, Semuna, etc. The exact meaning of the word is not known but Hemadri's *Chaturvarga Chintamani*, which is one of the important sources for the history of this dynasty, states that the dynasty got the name from Seunchandra, one of the early kings



of this family. The Seunas are given a legendary origin in their inscriptions stating that they belonged to *Yaduvamsha* into which Krishna was born and they migrated from Mathura or Dvaravati to the Deccan. Some of the early historians characterised the Seunas as Marathi speaking people as their capital Devagiri is located in present day Maharashtra, as well as the fact that the Seunas patronised Marathi literature. The names of the rulers of the dynasty like Dadiyappa, Bhillama, Singhana and Rajugi are of Kannada origin in Karnataka. Their queens like Voddiyavva and others also had names ending in Kannada words. The Seunas had selected Kannadigas as their state officers. A majority of their inscriptions were written in the Kannada language and script. Their early coins also had legends in Kannada. The rulers assumed, Kannada titles and called themselves the lords of Karnataka. All these factors indicate that they were Kannadigas with their kingdom in northern Karnataka.

The Seunas contributed greatly to the political and cultural life not only of Karnataka but that of the entire Deccan. They extended patronage to religion, literature, music and architecture. The Seuna achievements are marked in the fields of religion and art. This period saw the emergence of a new religious faith called *Mahanubhava* movement. Literally, the term means 'men of great experience'. The founder of this faith was Chakradhara whose life history is described in the book *Lilacharitra* written by Mahimabhatta. The Mahanubhavas believe in no God other than Krishna. He is their supreme deity who influenced the religious life of the people to a large extent. This period also saw the development of Marathi literature.

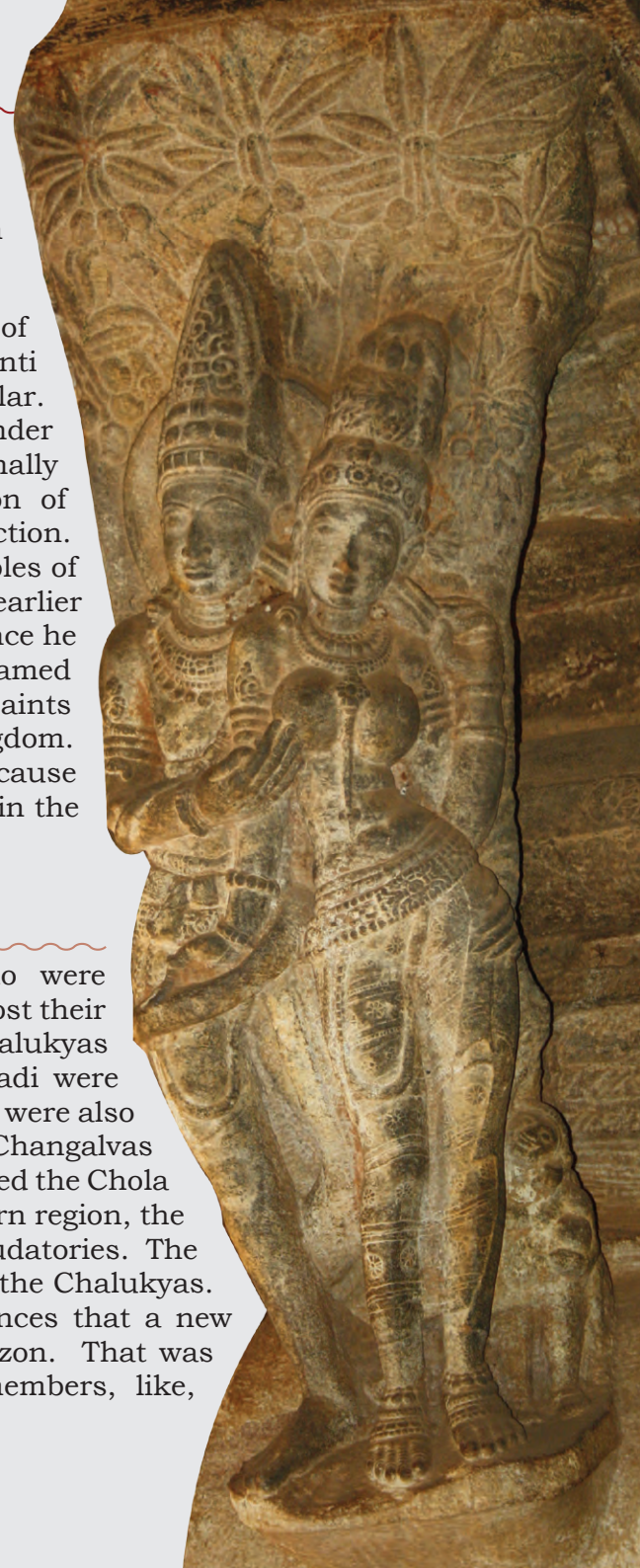
The cult of Vithala and Jnanadeva marks another important aspect of religious life under the Seunas. Vithala of Pandharpur had become highly popular during the period and Jananadeva became the chief apostle and spokesman of this cult. He formed a Vaishnava group, the membership of which was open to all. He wrote *Jnaneshvari* in Marathi, a commentary on *Bhagavadgita* and devotional poems called *abhangas*. Another saint of the

period was Namadeva, a great champion of the Bhakti school. His influence on the common people is very powerful.

In the field of art, a new school of architecture called Hemadpanti style became highly popular. Hemadri, who was a minister under the Seuna kings, is traditionally credited with the introduction of this style of temple construction. However, there are many temples of this style which were dated earlier than Hemadri, but perhaps since he popularised this style, it is named after him. Some Virashaiva saints also flourished in the kingdom. Thus, the Seunas served the cause of culture and earned a name in the history of Karnataka.

## Hoysalas

The Gangas of Talakad who were holding sway over Gangavadi lost their power with the advent of the Chalukyas of Kalyana. Parts of Gangavadi were occupied by the Cholas. There were also two feudatory dynasties, the Chandalvas and the Kongalvas, who accepted the Chola suzerainty. In the north-eastern region, the Nolambas became powerful feudatories. The Cholas frequently fought with the Chalukyas. It was under such circumstances that a new ruling family rose on the horizon. That was the Hoysala family whose members, like,





Seunas, called themselves *Yadavanarayana* and lords of Dvaravatipura.

Sala is known to be the founder of this family hailing from Shashakapura (Sosevur), identified with Angadi in the Chikkamagaluru district. The family name Hoysala is derived from splitting the word into two - Hoy (*Poy*) Sala and a story is associated with it. It is believed that a tiger rushed into the precincts of the temple of Goddess Vasantikadevi and a master who obviously had his hermitage there, ordered his disciple, Sala to kill the tiger. The disciple killed the tiger and hence came to be designated as Hoy (*Poy*) Sala which thereafter, became the name of his family. The fact that even by the 12<sup>th</sup> century, this episode has been recorded in inscriptions recounts the Hoysala genealogy that the myth had been accepted by the general populace as a fact and had become popular. However, Sala has not been identified.

The Hoysalas came into the limelight from the beginning of the 11th century. In the Kaliyur (near Talakad) inscription of about 990 A.D., a Hoysala chief is mentioned in the Ganga confederacy fighting against Aprameya, a Chola general, and this chief is identified as Nripakama, the earliest known member of the Hoysala dynasty.

His son and successor Vinayaditya is first referred to in a record of 1047 A.D. A major part of Gangavadi had come under his control. He allied himself with the Chalukyas and Chalukya Somesvara I also extended a helping hand to him. Vinayaditya deputed his son Ereyanga to assist Somesvara II in his war against the Paramaras and Ereyanga. He assisted his master not only in pushing back the enemy, but also in pursuing him upto his capital.

Epigraphs extol the part played by Ereyanga in the campaigns against the Malepas, the Cholas and the king of Malva, Kalinga and Vengi, the capture of strongholds like Dhara and Balayavattana and the most prized Chakrakuta in the Bastar district of Madhya Pradesh. In some of these battles, Ereyanga made his own son Vishnuvardhana participate, thus introducing him to the art of warfare. Vinayaditya selected Velapura (Belur, Hassan district) as his capital city and consolidated his own position. He had a long reign of more than five decades from 1045-95 A.D. He had three sons, Ballala I, Vishnuvardhana and Udayaditya and two queens, Echaladevi and Madhavadevi.

Ballala I succeeded his father who had been the master of a fairly extensive kingdom which, besides the home territory in Hassan, Chikkamagaluru and Tumkur districts included Konkana and Savimale (Sandur region, Bellary district). This was a vast area but Ballala's predecessors had secured them as feudatories. Ballala now thought of becoming an independent ruler. His overlord was Chalukya Vikramaditya VI. Having fought innumerable battles as a prince, he had consolidated his own position soon after succession to the throne. Ballala's moves to declare independence were watched and Jagaddeva, the Paramara prince who had sought shelter under Vikramaditya was sent with a force to put down the new rebel. Ballala, however, ably assisted by his brothers, Vishnuvardhana and Udayaditya defeated Jagaddeva and drove him back in 1100 A.D.

Next the Changalvas, ruling around Kodagu and parts of Mysore district, were forced to accept the suzerainty of Ballala who thereafter occupied Alvakheda (Dakshina Kannada). The Pandyas of Uchchangi in Bellary district also fell. By then, Ballala had Tungabhadra as the border of his principality. He, however, was more ambitious and wanted to take Belvola (Dharwad region) under his sway. Vikramaditya's trusted lieutenant Achugi of the Sinda family of Erambarage (Yelburgi) was dispatched against the Hoysalas who were defeated in a bloody battle. This put an end to the ambitious designs of Ballala who, thereafter, till the end



*Fort, Basavakalyana, Bidar District*





*Madukesavara Temple, Banavasi, Uttara Kannada District*





*Brahma Jinalaya, Lakkundi, Gadag District*





*Mahadeva Temple, Ittagi, Koppal District*





**Channakeshava Temple, Belur**

of his life in 1108 A.D., had to be content with the subordinate position that he held. Ballala had three wives, all of whom were sisters given to him in marriage by one of his generals, Mariyane. Yet, he had no issues and the leadership passed into the hands of his younger brother, Vishnuvardhana.

Vishnuvardhana first turned towards Gangavadi which had been annexed by the Cholas. He effortlessly ousted the Cholas from Talakad with practically no effort, and proceeded up to Kanchi which he occupied for a short while. Kolar and Nangali, two other strongholds of the erstwhile Gangas, were also conquered. Thus, by 1116 A.D., Vishnuvardhana occupied the whole of Gangavadi.

By 1152 A.D., Vishnuvardhana who had ruled for over four decades from 1108-52 A.D. had grown quite old. He led a happy personal life with his queens, of whom the most prominent were Shantala, Lakshmidēvi and Bammaladevi. Shantala was

adept in fine arts, a staunch Jaina by faith and had a very broad outlook. Vishnuvardhana was originally a Jaina but was converted to Srivaishnavism by the saint Ramanujacharya, the expounder of *Vishishtadvaita*. That Vaishnavism received a fillip in the period cannot be denied. The Keshava temple at Belur and the Hoysalesvara temple in the Hoysala capital Dvarasamudra (Halebid), built during this time, are two jewels of the Hoysala style of architecture. Many other temples and several irrigation tanks were also completed during his time, contributing towards peace and prosperity of the kingdom.

Vishnuvardhana's eldest son Ballala died a premature death before 1133 A.D. in which year, his other son Narasimha was born. This prince was designated as *yuvaraja* (crown prince) soon after his birth. Narasimha I could not meet the expectations of his deceased father. He lost hold over the Nalamabavadi province and but for the timely action of his general Bokimayya, the Chandalvas and Kongalvas also would have freed themselves from the Hoysala suzerainty. Kalachuri Bijjala who came to power at Kalyana used force to expel the Hoysalas from Banavasi. Thus the hard earned territories slowly slipped out of their hands but the king was not troubled. However, his son Ballala II, who as early as 1168 A.D. had become the king-designate was not affected. Impatient with his father's passive attitude, Ballala rose in revolt and in 1173 A.D., he forcibly seized the kingdom from his father.

**Main deity in the sanctum of Channakeshava Temple at Belur, Hassan District**



Ballala II ruled for over three decades from 1173-1220 A.D., a period recognised as a glorious chapter in the history of the Hoysalas. He not only put an end to the setbacks witnessed during his father's reign, but also succeeded in fulfilling his grandfather's dream of making it an independent kingdom. The Tungabhadra region became a frequent battleground between the Seunas and the Hoysalas. It was a struggle for supremacy and a struggle for the occupation of the region which was economically affluent. The contest was settled in the battle of Soratur in 1190 A.D., near Gadag, between Ballala and Seuna Bhillama V in which Ballala finally emerged victorious.

After occupying Belvola, Ballala moved swiftly and took over forts in Kukkanur and Manvi in the Raichur-Bellary area. Ballala's hold over Belvola continued till 1212 A.D. when Singhana got an upper hand and pushed the Hoysalas below the Tungabhadra. This period witnessed the emergence of the two rival powers ruling over independent kingdoms, with the Tungabhadra as the common border between the two. During his last years, Ballala had to interfere in Chola politics since one of his wives, Chola Mahadevi, was from that family. His daughter, Somaladevi was married to the Chola king Kulottunga III who having been overthrown by his Pandya adversary, Maravaraman Sundara, sought the help of Ballala to regain the kingdom. Ballala entrusted this work to his son Narasimha II who succeeded in his mission. This earned Ballala the title *Cholarajya-pratishthacharya*.

Having interfered in the politics of the south, Narasimha II who reigned from 1220-35 A.D. was further entangled in it when the next Chola king Rajaraja III was also in trouble. The Kadavaraya Kopperunjinga acted on behalf of the Pandya and forced Rajaraja to escape

from the capital. Narasimha II marched to the Chola country in 1222 A.D., defeated the Kadava and other enemies and reinstated Rajaraja. Narasimha had to set things right and station an army with his son Someshvara in charge at Kannanur which became a secondary capital of the Hoysalas. Later, Narasimha himself proceeded against Maravarma Sundara Pandya and subdued him. The region around Kannanur became a part of the Hoysala kingdom. Narasimha's reign period of about 15 years witnessed the growth of the Hoysala kingdom in the south. In the north, Tungabhadra was the boundary.

Being closely associated with the Tamil countries from his youth, Someshvara who reigned from 1235-53 A.D. was not very interested in the northern territories. He preferred to stay at Kannanur than at Dorasamudra.

In the latter part of his rule, he had to resolve the domestic quarrel between his two sons, Narasimha III and Ramanatha. He divided the kingdom into two, and his elder son Narasimha was placed in-charge of the northern portion with Dorasamudra as the capital, while the southern region with Kannanur as the capital was made over to Ramanatha, the younger son. Someshvara himself stayed in Kannanur till the end of his life.

The partition of the kingdom weakened both the brothers and the differences between them widened. In 1271 A.D., Seuna Mahadeva and his successor Ramachandra in 1275 A.D., led attacks against the Hoysalas, which Narasimha repulsed with great difficulty. Seunas held the places around Chitradurga. When Ramanatha succeeded in the southern portion of the Hoysala kingdom, the relationship between them and the Cholas became strained. Jatavarma Sundara Pandya I, the successor of Maravarman Sundara Pandya proceeded against the Hoysalas with a huge army. Someshvara died soon after this battle. Ramanatha, having lost his kingdom, intensified his hostilities against his brother Narasimha, succeeding to some extent in occupying parts of Kolar and Bengaluru districts. Ramanatha had been forced to



shift his capital to Kundani to the north of Kannanur from where he administered his kingdom for a few years till his death in 1295 A.D.

Meanwhile, Narasimha passed away in 1291 A.D. and his son Ballala III ascended the throne. Ramanatha had expected that with Narasimha's death, he would gain that inheritance. He, therefore, opposed Ballala's accession, a reason why Ballala's coronation ceremony had to be postponed till January 1297 A.D. Ballala deftly put him down and from then on, the Hoysala kingdom again came under one banner in 1301 A.D.

Ballala III ruled for over five decades from 1291-1342 A.D. His reign witnessed a sustained effort to try and regain his lost kingdom and put up a courageous fight against the inevitable. Unfortunately, he lost sight of the changing conditions of the period in the north and by the time he realised it, he had grown too old to rise to the occasion. At the end of his life, he had the greatest satisfaction of seeing the birth of a new kingdom which embraced the whole of south India in a masterly manner. Not only was the land saved from foreign yoke, politically speaking, but also the danger that

lay in store for Indian culture was thwarted.

In the north at Delhi, a Sultanate had been established and before Ballala's accession, Jalauddin Khilji was ruling as the Sultan. His young and ambitious nephew, Allauddin had been sent to Kara, a province located at a distance from the capital. From Kara, he led repeated expeditions against the Seunas and the Kakatiyas of Warangal. These rulers did not realise the trouble that lay ahead and were involved in frequent aggressive quarrels.

In 1295 A.D., Allauddin struck the Seuna capital Devagiri and returned with abundant booty. He next attacked the Hoysalas in 1301 and 1302 A.D. The battles were fought between Kampiladeva, the chief of Anegondi on behalf of the Seuna and the Hoysala general Somaya who lost his life at Holalkere. In 1306 A.D., the Hoysala army led by the king invaded the fort of Lakkundi. The Hoysalas also fought with Kamadeva, the Kadamba chief of Hangal, once in 1300 A.D. at Sirsi and then in 1302 A.D. Ballala III intervened in Pandyan politics on behalf of Sundara Pandya but did not take stock of the menacing situation in the north of his own kingdom.

Allauddin dispatched his general Malik Kafur against the Hoysala capital and further south to the Coromandel Coast in 1311 A.D. The general received help from Ramachandra, the Seuna ruler, who sent his own general Parashurama Dalavayi as the guide. Ballala, who had moved to the south, had to hurry back to the capital and offered mighty resistance. The Muslim army proved more powerful and Ballala had to pay a huge tribute. Kafur forced Ballala to render him help in his march further south. Both the Pandya rivals absconded, abandoning the cities and temples of the kingdom



*Shantinata Basadi, Halebid, Hassan District*



to be looted by the invading army which returned to Delhi only in October of that year. For the Hoysalas, it was a big blow as the enemy took his son Virupaksha Ballala with them to the court of the Khiljis. The latter, however, was well received and treated and sent back to the kingdom by 1313 A.D. Yet, Ballala did not change his policy. He misjudged the Muslim invasion as a closed event and pursued his hostile activities in the Pandya kingdom. Several others had now joined the fray. Vira Pandya sought the help of Ravivarma Kulashekhara of Kerala, while his rival enlisted the support of Kakatiya Prataparudra and Ballala III. Sundara Pandya gained an upper hand but had to pay a heavy price by way of ceding the territories around Arunasamudra (Tiruvannamalai) to the Hoysalas. Thereafter, Ballala made this place his capital.

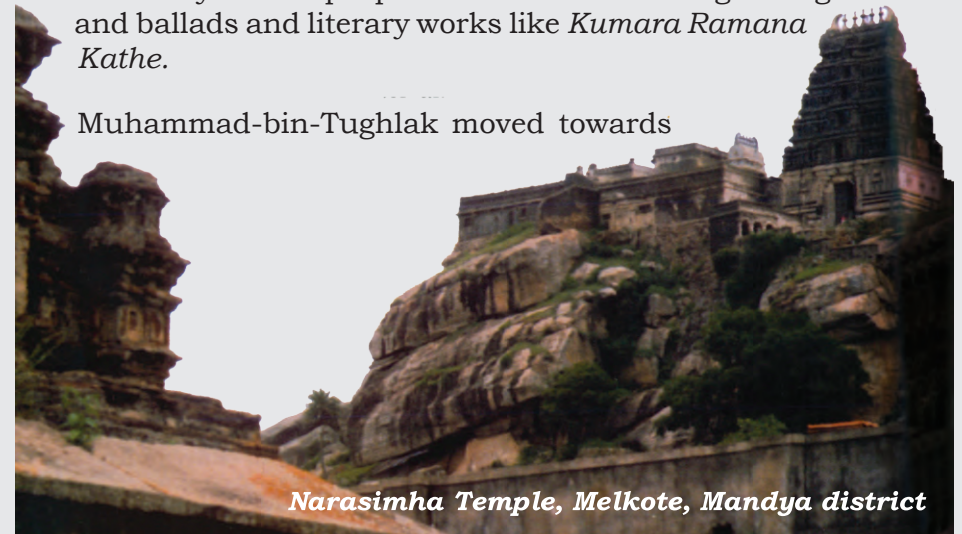
By 1318 A.D., the Seuna kingdom surrendered and became a province of Delhi. In Karnataka, by then the small state of Kampili with Kumata as its capital had risen to power, as a sort of buffer between the territories of the Seunas and the Hoysalas. Mummadi Singeyanayaka who reigned from 1280-1300 A.D had Doravadi in Ballakunde division as one of his strongholds. He quietly but steadily enlarged his principality to include parts of Chitradurga district, as far as Harihara. His son Kampiladeva *alias* Khandeyaraya, who ruled from 1300-27 A.D., as an ally of Seuna Ramachandra had faced the Hoysalas on the battlefield. The death of the Seuna king provided him an opportunity to expand and he occupied parts of Shimoga, Chitradurga, Bellary, Raichur and Dharwad districts in Karnataka and Anantapur district in Andhra Pradesh. It was now Kampila's turn to face the attack of Malik Kafur in 1314 A.D. In 1320 A.D., Ballala attacked Kampila, who with the help of his heroic son Ramanatha warded off the

Hoysala attack. Within a year, in 1321 A.D., in Delhi, the Khiljis were replaced by the Tughlaks. Ghiyasuddin, the new Sultan, sent his son, Ulugh Khan, the future Muhammad-bin-Tughlak to the South with a huge army under the pretext of collecting arrears of tribute from the Karkatiyas. In a second attempt, the army captured Warangal and took Prataparudra prisoner. The last Kakatiya king committed suicide in 1323 A.D on the way to Delhi. Within two years, Muhammad-bin-Tughlak ascended the Delhi throne and soon after in 1327 A.D., dispatched an army to the south. This time their aim was not to loot, but to conquer. The Seunas and Kakatiyas had already fallen and Ballala, unable to face the enemy, sought shelter in Tiruvannamalai. His capital was open for plunder and destruction. Then the invader moved further south and occupied Madurai, the Pandyan capital. This principality was now placed under a Muhammadan governor. Thus, by 1330 A.D, only the Hoysala kingdom and the small kingdom of Kampila remained independent.

Kampili was attacked thrice and in the final encounter Kampila and his son Ramanatha fought heroically and in the process lost their lives. Kampila, and more so his son, Ramanatha, remain in the memory of the people of Karnataka through songs

and ballads and literary works like *Kumara Ramana Kathe*.

Muhammad-bin-Tughlak moved towards



*Narasimha Temple, Melkote, Mandya district*



Dorasamudra, in pursuit of a rebel who had taken shelter under Ballala. Since Ballala had by now tasted the strength of this Muslim army, he made over the rebel to his master, who mercilessly put him to death. Thus, the Hoysalas overcame the danger that had threatened the kingdom. He realised by now that combined efforts were necessary to drive away the enemy once and for all, because, the enemy had not only come to stay but had brought with them a religion to forcibly thrust upon the conquered. Ballala made up his mind to save the country and its culture through a combined effort. Hence, he supported the cause of the chiefs of the Andhra region, Prolayanayaka and his cousin Kapayanayaka who were making similar attempts to free the country. With his help, they succeeded in driving out Malik Maqbul, the Governor of Telanganna who had to retreat to Delhi. Ballala himself vanquished the army in Malabar, the area which was left under the charge of Shambuvaraya family. Within his own kingdom, realising his declining age, he encouraged his subordinates to act independently. Harihara and his four brothers were left in charge of the northern territories of the kingdom. Meanwhile, Allauddin Udaji who had succeeded Jalaluddin Hasan Shah, the Sultan of Madurai, invaded the Hoysala kingdom in 1340 A.D. The Hoysalas besieged the fort of Kannanur in 1342 A.D. and

forced the enemy to open the negotiations for peace. Unwittingly, he conceded to their request to give time for consultations with the new governor of Madurai and this gave them time to replenish their army. Suddenly, they attacked and in no time vanquished the Hoysala army and Ballala III was captured. The Sultan had him killed, got his skin stuffed with straw and displayed the body at the gates of Madurai. This has been testified by Ibn Batuta.

According to epigraphical evidence, Ballala was a grand old man of four score years when he died on 8 September 1342 A.D. He was succeeded by his incompetent son Virupaksha Ballala IV. He was the last ruler as by then, the Harihara brothers had laid the foundations of the Vijayanagara kingdom.

The Hoysalas have carved out an immortal place in the annals of Karnataka history, not only as strong rulers, but more significantly as promoters of the culture and arts of Karnataka. Vishnuvardhana not only laid the foundations of an independent Hoysala kingdom but also gave impetus to the blossoming of Karnataka culture. A style of architecture, now named after their dynastic name, came to flourish during the period. His worthy wife, Shantala was the personification of culture and fine arts. This was a period of dedicated heroism when several classes of valorous warriors like

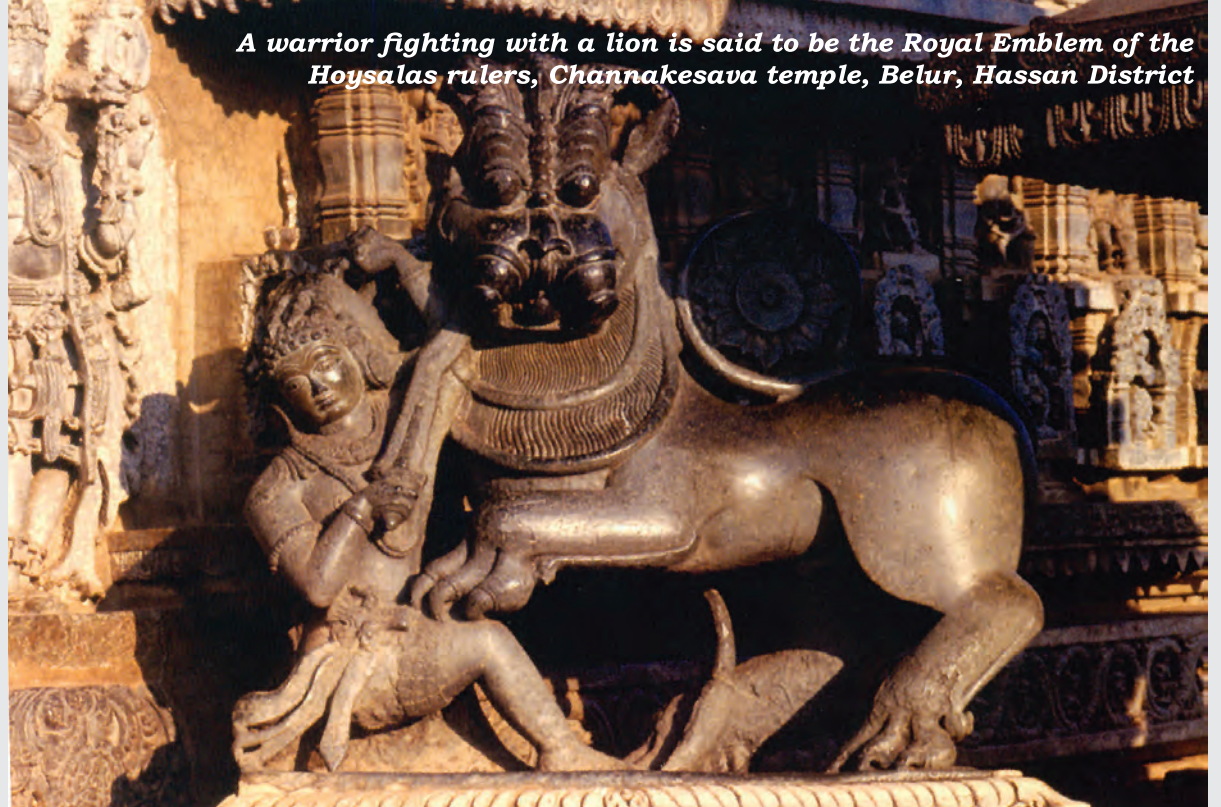


*A side view of Hoysaleswara and Kedareshwara Temples, Halebidu, Hassan district*



the *lenkas*, *ankakaras*, *velevalis* and *garudas* dedicated their lives, with unflinching faith and loyalty to their masters. Religious tolerance was the hallmark of the period when the most popular religions, Jainism, Saivism, Vaishnavism, etc. flourished side by side and received royal patronage.

It is traditionally believed that Vishnuvardhana was converted to Srivaishnavism by Ramanujacharya. Although the story of conversion remains unsubstantiated by contemporary evidence, that Ramanuja and his philosophy had its impact on this part of Karnataka is amply illustrated by the large number of Srivaishnava temples that came into existence in the period. Tonnur and Melkote were two centres of Srivaishnavas. This was also the period of emergence of the Dvaita system of philosophy, also called Vaishnava, propounded by Madhvacharya from 1238-1317 A.D. One of the basic elements of these schools of thought was devotion or *bhakti*, which came to be treated as a cult by itself. Even in the field of literature, besides the great philosophical treatises in Sanskrit by Ramanujacharya and Madhavacharya and their followers, there were a good number of writers on Advaita. The period also witnessed the composition of secular literature in the court of the Hoysala kings. Mention must be made of a family of such writers, all whom bore the title of *Vidyachakravarti*. In Kannada, literature flourished due to the royal patronage given through the instituting of poet laureateships, great



***A warrior fighting with a lion is said to be the Royal Emblem of the Hoysalas rulers, Channakesava temple, Belur, Hassan District***

education centres, etc. This was the period of Kannada poets like Nagachandra (also described as Abhinava Pampa), Rajaditya, Sumanobana, Harihara, Raghavanka, Kereya Padmarasa, Rudrabhatta, Nemichandra, Kesiraja and Janna. The period also witnessed the composition of literary inscriptions of high order, some of them being composed by well-known poets like Nagachandra and Janna. Thus the period of rule of the Hoysalas is an important period in the history of Karnataka.