The Academic
International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research

An Online Peer Reviewed / Refereed Journal
Volume 3 | Issue 3 | March 2025
ISSN: 2583-973X (Online)
Website: www.theacademic.in

The Divine Architectural Legacy of the Hoysalas

Dr. Rajkumar Rajoriya
Deptt. Of History
D.A.V. College, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted on 22-03-2025

Published on 15-04-2025

Keywords:

Hoysala Temples, Belur, Halebidu, Somnathpura, Conservation, Inscriptions, Restoration

ABSTRACT

The Sacred Ensembles of Hoysalas, encompassing the Kesava Temple in Belur, Hoysalesvara Temple in Halebidu, and Kesava Temple in Somnathpura, showcase the architectural brilliance and cultural heritage of the Hoysala dynasty in Karnataka. Renowned for their intricate artistry and historical significance, these temples have undergone systematic conservation efforts since the early 20th century. Initially safeguarded by the Mysore government and later by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) after 1951, conservation measures have included structural reinforcement, chemical cleaning, and restoration of sculptures. Excavations at Halebidu unveiled remnants of earlier constructions, signifying a sustained sacred landscape. Key conservation activities, such as beam stabilization, removal of accretions, and weatherproofing, have addressed structural and environmental challenges. The study examines restoration efforts both before and after India's independence, focusing on financial investments, engineering hurdles, and detailed documentation in Mysore Archaeological Reports and Indian Archaeology – A Review. Enhancements like public amenities, landscaping, and promotional initiatives have enriched the visitor experience. Long-term strategies have mitigated threats from environmental degradation and vandalism, emphasizing the need for continued preservation of these temples, which epitomize Hoysala craftsmanship and play a vital role in India's World Heritage nomination.

DOI : https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15225277

Introduction:-

The Sacred Ensembles of Hoysalas comprise three significant Hoysala monuments in Karnataka: the Kesava Temple in Belur, the Hoysalesvara Temple in Halebidu, and the Kesava Temple in Somnathpura. While the first two are located in the Hassan district, the third lies in the Mysuru district. Included in India's 'tentative list' of cultural sites since April 15, 2014, the dossier for these ensembles was finalized by INTACH in collaboration with the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the primary stakeholder, alongside the Department of Archaeology, Museum and Heritage, Government of Karnataka. This dossier serves as the Government of India's official submission to the World Heritage Committee for the year 2022.

A review of archaeological investigations conducted on these monuments during both the pre- and post-Independence eras, as recorded in the Mysore Archaeological Reports (MAR) and Indian Archaeology – A Review (IAR), unveils fascinating details about their conservation, excavation, documentation, chemical cleaning, garden landscaping, and publications. In 1924, the Government of Mysore issued orders to protect the Kesava Temple in Belur and the Hoysalesvara Temple in Halebidu (MAR 1925:1), establishing a dedicated Archaeology Department for their maintenance. These temples were comprehensively documented, and two decades later, preservation and conservation activities were initiated.

Following India's independence, these monuments, along with the Kesava Temple in Somnathpura, came under the custodianship of the Archaeological Survey of India through the Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Declaration of National Importance) Act, 1951 (popularly referred to as LXXI of 1951). They were later protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.

Keshava Temple and Inscriptions, Belur The Keshava Temple, constructed in 1117 CE by the Hoysala king Vishnuvardhana, stands as an exquisite example of Hoysala art and architecture. Known as Vijaynarayana according to inscriptions, the temple is oriented east-west on a jagati (platform). Its architectural layout consists of a garbhagriha (sanctum), an antarala or sukanasi (vestibule), a mahamandapa (main hall), and mukhamandapas (entrance porches) on the north, east, and south. The

sanctum area features a stellate plan, while the mahamandapa and mukhamandapas are designed as indented squares.

View of Channakeshava Temple with a bhumija shikhara (1868)

A distinctive feature of the temple is its eastern entrance, where the royal emblem flanks the doorway on either side—a unique design, as other Hoysala temples traditionally place the emblem over the sukanasi. Among the three mukhamandapas, the eastern one stands out with its perforated screens and sculptured panels depicting royal figures, believed to be later additions during the reign of Narasimha. The adhishthana (base) moldings showcase intricate friezes of elephants, lions, horse riders, kirtimukha scrolls, and panels illustrating the Chaturvimasati forms of Vishnu. Other depictions include Shiva as Gajasuramardana, Vamana with Bali, Narasimha slaying Hiranyakashipu, Arjuna aiming at matsya-yantra, and the figures of Rati and Manmatha.

The sanctum contains two-storeyed devakoshthas (niches) featuring images of Narayana, Vasudeva, and Madhava. The three temple entrances are adorned with elaborately carved makara toranas (arched doorways), with depictions of Narasimha slaying Hiranyakashipu, Varaha slaying Hiranyaksha, and Lakshmi Narayana accompanied by their respective retinues. A highlight of the temple is its 38 exuberantly sculpted bracket figures, known as Madanikas, placed over the pillars between the eaves

and capitals in the mahamandapa and mukhamandapa. Additionally, the temple complex houses a few subsidiary structures and shrines.

View of Channakeshava Temple without the Shikara (2020)

Vishnuvardhana's chief queen, Shantala, commissioned the construction of the temple known as 'Kappe Chennigaraya', a stellate, simpler variety of Hoysala architecture, located to the south of the main temple. The layout is similar to the main temple, with the addition of a southern shrine that houses an image of Venugopala. The primary sanctum, situated to the west, enshrines an image of Vishnu as Keshava, with an inscription on the pedestal commemorating its consecration by Queen Shantala.

To the west of the main temple lies the Viranarayana Temple, built around the 12th century CE. Smaller in scale compared to the main temple, it is constructed on a raised platform and features a garbhagriha (sanctum), antarala (vestibule), and a pillared mahamandapa (main hall) in an east-west orientation. The temple exhibits an austere elevation, reflecting a simpler style of Hoysala architecture.

Northwest of the main temple is a stepped pond called Vasudeva Tirtha, commissioned by Vira Ballala II. This pond includes an ornate entrance, flanked by two corner towers, adding to the temple complex's architectural richness.

View Channakeshava Temple, Belur without Shikara (Image Source: ASI)

During the Vijayanagara Empire, shrines dedicated to Saumya Nayaki in the southwest and Andal in the northwest were constructed. In 1397 CE, Gunda, a general serving Harihara II, rebuilt the imposing seven-storey gopura over the eastern Mahadwara. Additional constructions included tall granite lamp posts and the Uyyale Mandapa (Figures 5 and 6) in 1414 CE, as well as the Yagashala in 1484 CE. Minor architectural additions continued during the rule of the Mysore Wodeyars.

Suggestions were later made to the authorities to address aesthetic and structural concerns, such as relocating modern lamp posts from the terrace, where they detract from the temple's frontal view, to a less prominent location below the terrace. Additionally, recommendations included the urgent removal of banyan plants taking root on the roof in front of the garbhagriha and on the north side of the Kappe Chennigaraya Temple. This delay was deemed particularly hazardous for the integrity of the temple.

A comprehensive restoration scheme for the temple was submitted, with an estimated cost of Rs. 23,020. However, due to financial constraints, the government decided to postpone the project for a year. During inspections, it was observed that the temple required urgent attention, leading to proposals for a gradual implementation of the restoration plan. Immediate actions were recommended to ensure regular monitoring of the monument to prevent vandalism and curb the deterioration of the stones. Additionally,

prompt removal of deep-rooted plants growing on the walls of the Kappe Chennigiraya shrine was emphasized, as any delay in this matter posed significant risks to the structure's integrity.

General view of Channakeshava Temple, Belur (Image Source: ASI)

General view of Channakeshava Temple, Belur (Image Source: ASI)

The government issued final orders based on the recommendations submitted by the special committee for the preservation of the temple. In Order No: 511-7 — Muz / 135-23-13 dated 13th October 1924,

administrative sanction was granted for several initiatives. These included an allocation of approximately Rs. 3,325 for works related to the Belur temple, the appointment of two watchmen with a monthly salary of Rs. 12 each, and provisions of Rs. 500 and Rs. 100 per annum respectively for two temples to cover annual repairs over a period of three years. Additionally, annual inspections of the Channakesava Temple at Belur were carried out as per para 5 (v) of the Government Order dated 14th September 1920, with observations recorded regarding its condition.

An estimate of Rs. 970/- was received for repairing the pond and undertaking other urgent restoration works (MAR 1929:2). Restoration efforts commenced and continued throughout the year, during which the premises were thoroughly tidied. Two unsightly accretions, which had stood on the platform for centuries, were removed, revealing and cleaning the intricately carved images previously obscured by these structures. Additionally, several isolated images within the enclosure were repaired and housed in newly constructed pavilions. Door shutters were prepared and installed for one of the temple's openings, while a design for a new set of doors for the main gateway was submitted to the Executive Engineer.

The restoration work on the main temple was completed, and efforts to organize the surrounding shrines were initiated (MAR 1931:229). The restoration activities were conducted throughout the year as per the approved program. A recommendation to the government for extending the establishment’s tenure by three years was approved for an additional year (MAR 1932:257). Consequently, the renovation work continued throughout the year 1933 (MAR 1933:290), during which the monuments were inspected by the respective officers.

Certain suggestions for improving the temple premises were evaluated from both aesthetic and architectural perspectives and subsequently submitted to the government. The expenditure incurred for repair and maintenance of the monument amounted to Rs. 250/- (MAR 1934:210). Additionally, the monument was inspected by the Director of Archaeology.

The conservation work for the temples at Belur progressed with the cooperation of the Public Works Department. To support these efforts, the government appointed a committee specifically for the renovation of the temple (MAR 1936:1). As part of the process, the dilapidated Kalyanamantapa and Naganayakana-Mantapa were removed to provide an unobstructed view of the temple from the southeast. During this phase, several new inscriptions were discovered and documented (MAR 1936:18).

In July 1935, Mr. J. F. Blakiston, the Director-General of Archaeology in India, visited Belur and Halebidu, offering valuable suggestions for the conservation work (MAR 1936:20). With the combined efforts of the Public Works Department and the Belur and Halebidu Temples Renovation Committee, the renovation activities at Belur continued.

Documentation: Inscriptions from the Hassan district, along with illustrations of the renowned Halebidu and Belur temples, were published across two volumes (MAR 1902:1 and 1903:1). Additionally, around 43 plates showcasing architectural details from the temples at Belur, Arisikere, and Somnathpura were completed (MAR 1903:5).

A monograph on the Kesava Temple, Belur, was produced, with an excerpt containing a vivid description included in the report (MAR 1911:11, 15). Photographs excluded from the monograph were later printed in a separate volume (MAR 1912:2). Furthermore, a detailed study of the Kesava Temple, Belur, was conducted in 1919.

Post-Independence EraConservation: The flooring around the kitchen block and parts of the prakara, which were in a deteriorated state, were re-laid with new stone slabs where necessary and repointed in other areas (IAR 1953–54:24). The leaky terraces over the main shrine and dalans were made watertight (IAR 1956–57:54), while expanded-metal teakwood frames were installed on the kitchen openings to prevent the entry of monkeys (IAR 1959–60:107). The roofs of the main navaranga and granary were also rendered watertight (IAR 1960–61:98), and the carvings on the ceiling of the mukha-mandapa were cleaned of extraneous deposits (IAR 1967–68:97). Additionally, new ornamental doors, designed to match the original pattern, were installed in the ranga-mandapa of the main shrine, while ordinary doors were fitted for the Devi shrine (IAR 1968–69:97).

The chemical preservation of sculptures and reliefs, both inside and outside the temple, which began in 1967–68, was continued in the following year. During this period, an area of 262 sq. m. was treated out of the total 2950 sq. m. (IAR 1969–70:110). Additionally, the loose stucco figures on the gopura were secured, filleted, and edged to prevent further deterioration (IAR 1971–72:91).

The fallen compound wall in the southeastern corner was reconstructed, and the terrace of the Rama shrine was made watertight by replacing the old, decayed mortar with fresh cement mortar. The wire-

mesh frame at the gopura was also replaced. Repairs were carried out on the shrines of Soumyanayaki and Ranganayaki, as well as the kitchen (IAR 1973–74:71–72).

In addition, cleaning activities were undertaken for various temple sections, including the southern wall of the garbhagriha, the western and southern walls of the navaranga, the varaha panel on the lintel of the southern entrance, niches on the southern wall of the garbhagriha, small niches on the exterior of the southern entrance, and the canopies near the southern entrance. The interior pillars of the temple were also cleaned. General cleaning of the premises was performed using dry brushing and detergents such as Teepol.

Vegetation growth was removed with the application of ammonium hydroxide solution and mild organic acids like muriatic acid. Deoxidine mixed with water was employed to eliminate reddish stains from the stone surfaces. The bracket figures were treated with wax polish and brushed to achieve a glossy finish. Other treated areas were preserved using polyvinyl acetate dissolved in toluene.

The northern portion of the open courtyard, stretching from the Andal shrine to the tank, was re-laid with stone pavement, with the joints carefully pointed. The terrace of the old kitchen in the northwest corner was rendered watertight, and repairs to the inside walls were undertaken. Sculptures in the canopies of various aisles, along with the pillars inside and outside the temple, underwent chemical treatment. The restoration process, covering approximately 350 sq. m., involved the removal of soot, hardened oil, and lime wash using organic acids and a Teepol emulsifier. Polyvinyl acetate was applied as a consolidator, while Mohini figures and southern lintels were polished with wax (IAR 1974–75:120). This work continued into the following year (IAR 1975–76:130) and was finally completed (IAR 1976–77:135), with the entire temple being preserved using a 3% coat of polyvinyl acetate in toluene.

Cement patchworks, previously used to fill missing portions of the base, were replaced with carved soapstone pieces that simulated the original design. Around the dvaja-stambha, a small garden was created (IAR 1977–78:115). Damaged stones on the temple's exterior were reinforced, with worn-out sections replaced by new stones seamlessly matching the adjoining surfaces. A few damaged stucco figures from the main entrance gopura were also repaired and strengthened. Additionally, the top surfaces of the roofs of the Rama and Vahana mandapas were re-plastered after the removal of the old, decayed plaster.

Thick growths of moss, lichen, dust, and dirt on the temple were removed using a 1–3% aqueous ammonia solution combined with a small amount of non-ionic detergent, such as Teepol. To prevent fungal growth, a fungicidal coating of 1% zinc silico-fluoride solution was applied, followed by a preservative layer of 3% polyvinyl acetate solution in toluene.

The decayed wooden components of the frame inside the vimana of the Soumyanayaki shrine were replaced, and the interior was re-plastered. The exterior plaster of the vimana was scraped off and re-applied with fresh plaster. The pedestal of the primary image in the Ranganayaki shrine, which had shifted from its original position, was reset.

To address structural concerns, the sagging prakara wall on the southern side of the temple was underpinned to prevent further deterioration. Similarly, the northern wall was reinforced with stone masonry and concrete underpinning for added stability.

The interior walls of the Sowmyanayaki shrine were plastered using a combination mortar, carefully toned to match the original stone color. The dislodged chhajja stone of the Rama shrine was removed and reset to its original position (IAR 1985–86:158). A portion of the collapsed southern prakara wall was also reset in alignment with the original structure. Remodelling of the stucco work on the gopura of the mahadvara commenced (IAR 1988–89:138), continued through subsequent years (IAR 1989–90:160), and was eventually restored to its original design (IAR 1990–91:122).

The deteriorated stucco sculptures and decorative motifs on the western face of the gopura of the mahadvara were repaired and restored after the removal of encrustations (IAR 1991–92:165). Stone sculptures and decorative carvings were chemically treated to eliminate vegetation growth and oily reddish-brown deposits. A dilute ammoniacal solution combined with Teepol was used to soften these deposits for easy removal via mild brushing. Approximately 1195 sq. m. of chemically cleaned area was treated with a 1% aqueous solution of sodium pentachlorophenate for fungicidal protection (IAR 1994–95:142).

Oil and soot deposits were removed from sculptures located on the exterior walls, niches, brackets, and select interior areas using an ammonia-Teepol solution. Lime splashes were eradicated using dilute glacial acetic acid. Fungicidal treatment was applied using a 0.5% sodium pentachlorophenate solution in water, while Acrypol P876 in toluene was employed as a preservative (IAR 1995–96:193–194).

Chemical cleaning of the remaining 792 sq. m. was undertaken to remove oil and soot from the sculptures and carvings on the pillars and ceilings of the Navaranga and Sukanasi in the temple's interior using neutral detergent and liquor ammonia. The treated areas were preserved with a 1% Acrypol P876 solution, and the sculptures were further safeguarded with an application of micro-crystalline wax.

Oil and sooty deposits on the exterior walls, niches, brackets, and some interior areas of the sculptures were cleaned using an ammonia-Teepol solution. Lime splashes were removed with dilute glacial acetic acid. To prevent fungal growth, a 0.5% sodium pentachlorophenate solution was applied as a fungicide, and Acrypol P 876 dissolved in toluene served as a preservative . A total area of 792 square meters underwent chemical cleaning to remove oil and soot from sculptures and carvings on the pillars and ceilings in the Navaranga and Sukanasi sections of the interior, using neutral detergent and liquor ammonia. The treated areas were subsequently preserved with a 1% Acrypol P 876 solution, while the sculptures were finished with a protective layer of micro-crystalline wax.

Additionally, a fresh weatherproof layer was installed on the leaky roof of the Amman shrine following the careful removal of damaged and deteriorated brick and lime concrete . Behind the Ranganayaki temple, the old, damaged rubble flooring was replaced with newly dressed and side-cut schist stone flooring.

General view of Hoysalesvara Temple, Halebidu (1868)

(Image Source: British Library Archives)

The Hoysalesvara Temple in Halebidu, referred to as 'Vishnuvardhana Poysalesvara' in inscriptions honoring Hoysala King Vishnuvardhana, was constructed in 1121 CE. This intricate dvikuta (twin) shrine, dedicated to Lord Shiva, features an east-west orientation and was commissioned by Ketamalla Dandanayaka. Later epigraphical records acclaim it as 'Hoysaleswara Panchikeswara'.

The temple's layout includes a sanctum, vestibule, hall, and porch, seamlessly connected in the region of the dance hall. Slightly distant from the eastern mukhamandapas are two Nandi mandapas, both situated on the same jagati (platform). The temple boasts four typical Hoysala-style entrances, flanked by miniature shrines, which also embellish the Nandi mandapas, enhancing the temple's grandeur. The jagati provides a striking elevation to the monument, with flights of steps to the north and south leading to the respective shrines, and an additional staircase on the southern side of the southern Nandi mandapa.

To the east and west, two additional shrines were later added—Shantaleshvara (west) and Ballaleshvara (east), as indicated by inscriptions. The shrine dedicated to Surya was constructed adjoining the southern Nandi mandapa. The temple once featured a prakara (enclosure) with an imposing southern gateway crowned with the royal emblem atop the mandapas.

This temple represents the zenith of Hoysala artistry and architecture, with over four hundred exquisitely crafted wall sculptures, depicting deities from the Shaiva and Vaishnava pantheons, as well as secular themes. These sculptures are arranged on the intricately carved adhishthana, which features eleven friezes showcasing animals, scrollwork, swans, makaras, and more. Among the highlights of the temple's bhitti (wall) sculptures are masterpieces such as the dancing Ganesha, the divine trinities, seated Sarasvati, Govardhanagirdhari, Shiva as Gajasuramardana, dancing Sarasvati, dancing Bhairavi, and Mahishamardini.the Horticulture Branch of the Survey. The excavation revealed the remains of an east-facing twin temple extant only up to urdhava-padma moulding and represented in plan by two garbha-grihas and a common mahamandapa. In front of the mahamandapa, remains of a flight of steps with an elephant balustrade were exposed. The remains of another temple facing west and having a sanctum and a mandapa were also encountered in the area north-east of the above-mentioned complex. This was extant up to the adhisthana portion. To the south of this temple, a stepped platform with five courses in

diminishing order and having a square socket at the top was

General view of Hoysalesvara Temple, Halebidu (1968) (Image Source: ASI)

exposed. To the north of this stepped platform an inscribed hero-stone consisting of three panels was discovered. The inscription mentions the name of the king Vishnuvardhana and Narasimha I of Hoysala dynasty. Therefore, it can be presumed that this temple complex predates the construction of the Hoysalesvara temple and belongs to the Hoysala period between eleventh and twelfth century CE (IAR 984- 85:31).

View of Hoysalesvara Temple, Halebidu (2020) (Image Source: ASI)

Conservation Efforts: In 1896, in response to a complaint from a European visitor, measures were introduced to prevent vandalism to the finely polished Nandi statue, which had been marred by visitors scratching and carving their names onto it (MAR 1897: 3). Additional recommendations included addressing leakage, replacing deteriorated pillars and, if feasible, beams in the north-east corner of the large Nandi-mantapa, as well as measures to prevent damage to the friezes caused by the weight of the structure on the bulging portion of the eastern face. General maintenance of the temple structure was also advised (MAR 1911: 11).

Inside the temple compound, mounds of earth were removed, and the surface was leveled. Proposals were made to restore the large Ganesha idol, an exquisite work of craftsmanship with a broken right arm. To protect the idol from further vandalism, a railing around it was proposed (MAR 1923: 2).

Inspection reports from Revenue Sub-Division Officers were submitted, and the Government issued final orders based on the recommendations of a special committee tasked with preserving the temple. Through Order No. 511-7 — Muz /135-23-13, dated 13th October 1924, administrative approval was granted for various works, including purchasing tools (at a cost of Rs. 550), appointing two watchmen with a monthly salary of Rs. 12 each, and allocating Rs. 500 and Rs. 100 per annum for three years to fund annual repairs.

Annual inspections were subsequently undertaken in line with paragraph 5 (v) of the Government Order dated 14th September 1920, with observations on the temple's condition documented (MAR 1925: 4). A sum of Rs. 192 was spent on watchmen wages (MAR 1927: 151), and an estimate for repairs amounting to Rs. 100 was received (MAR 1929: 2).

Extensive restoration efforts were systematically carried out. These included clearing vegetation, leveling the ground, cement-pointing the joints of the basement, and supplying missing pieces such as finials for the small pavilions surrounding the temple. A proposal was also made to repurpose available portions of fallen parts from the ruined temples in front of the Buchesvara temple at Koravangala to replace missing parts in the Hoysalesvara temple at Halebidu (MAR 1930: 230 and 301). Additionally, extracts about the Hoysalesvara temple were printed (MAR 1930: 33–48), and a detailed note on the temple and other archaeological sites of interest was included (MAR 1930: 33–49/61).

A bulging portion of the temple's structure on the east was identified, and an estimate for its reconstruction, submitted by the Executive Engineer, was reviewed and returned (MAR 1932: 257). Conservation work continued with the cooperation of the Public Works Department. In 1936, the Government appointed a committee to oversee the renovation of the temple (MAR 1936: 1).

Post-Independence Era Conservation: The precincts of the Hoysalesvara temple underwent extensive cleaning and restoration efforts. Loose sculptures and carved stones were collected and displayed within a sculpture shed inside the compound (IAR 1953–54: 23–24). The leaky roof of the temple was dismantled and relaid, while the surrounding area was cleared of vegetation and leveled. Scattered sculptures and carved stones were sorted for exhibition in the proposed sculpture shed (IAR 1954–55: 40). The leaky terrace of the Nandi-mandapa was waterproofed (IAR 1956–57: 54), and the temple's flooring was re-laid by substituting missing stones and pointing flagstones with cement mortar (IAR 1974–75: 101).

The polished Shahabad stones in the Navaranga, previously used for missing flooring slabs, were replaced with soapstone pavement to match the original construction (IAR 1977–78: 115). Chemical treatments were applied to the exterior of the Santalesvara shrine and areas between it and the Hoysalesvara shrine, including the south-west and north-west flanks of the Hoysalesvara temple. Moss, lichen, and lime wash were removed, while brown and yellow stains were eliminated using oxalic acid and deoxidine respectively (IAR 1977–78: 142).

Out of a total area of 2410 square meters, 1996 square meters of carvings and sculptures covered with vegetational growth and lime wash were treated. The vegetational growth was removed with a 10% ammonia solution, adamant stains were treated with deoxidine solution, and lime wash was removed using a 5% solution of glacial acetic acid. A fungicidal application of 1% sodium pentachlorophenate was followed by preservation using a 2% Perspex solution in toluene (IAR 1978–79: 151). Continuing this work, dust, dirt, moss, and lichen were cleared with soft brushes using a solution of 1–2% ammonia combined with 2% Teepol in water. Fungicidal preservation with 1% sodium pentachlorophenate was applied, and the treated surfaces were coated with 3% Perspex in toluene. Wax polish was experimentally applied to select pillars (IAR 1979–80: 155).

The original *prakara* wall and the basement of the main gate were uncovered during debris removal on the southern side of the temple (IAR 1983–84: 214). Flagstone pavement was installed in front of the

northern entrance steps to prevent rainwater stagnation. The decayed lime concrete over the entire temple roof was removed (IAR 1988–89: 138), and the joints of the roof slabs were pointed and relaid with fresh concrete (IAR 1989–90: 160).

Conservation Work on the Navaranga and Northern Entrance: The broken beams of the *Navaranga* were repaired by incorporating concealed I-section girders. A thin strip containing the original lotus medallion carved on the beam's bottom surface was carefully sawed off and reaffixed beneath the concealed I-section girder using epoxy resin. The supporting pillars inscribed during the Vijayanagara period, which had been added earlier, were removed and transferred to the Archaeological Museum. The roof was relaid with a fresh weatherproof layer of brick jelly in lime mortar (IAR 1990–91: 122).

Concrete slabs over the northern entrance were meticulously dismantled for resetting with original members. Additionally, chiselled and dressed architectural components were prepared to replace missing ones (IAR 1992–93: 152).

The broken beams, roof slabs, and out-of-plumb upper register of the wall, along with the *kapota* of the northern entrance, were dismantled by cutting through the brick-jelly concrete roof. The broken beam was strengthened using a concealed stainless steel T-section girder of appropriate size, and severely damaged or missing roof slabs were replaced. The masonry construction supporting the *kapota* was dismantled, and corresponding carved architectural members, previously housed in the reserve collection of the Archaeological Museum, Halebidu, were restored to their original positions. Masonry supports that had been added to the *mukha-mandapa*'s inner side were removed, exposing an ornate niche in the west wall (IAR 1993–94: 162).

The broken beam of the northern entrance, dismantled earlier, was further reinforced with a concealed I-section girder of suitable size. After repositioning all beams and roof slabs disturbed during the process, the structure was rendered water-tight. Missing veneering members on the inner face on either side of the entrance, as well as stone flooring in the missing section of the northern entrance, were replaced (IAR 1994–95: 113).

Chemical Cleaning and Preservation: Micro-vegetational growth, ochre stains, calcareous deposits, and other accretions were removed from the *Nandi-mandapas* in front of the Hoysalesvara and Shantalesvara shrines. Approximately 2140 square meters of the temple area underwent chemical

cleaning and fungicidal treatment with a 1% aqueous solution of Santobrite. Once dried, the surface was preserved with a 1% Acrypol solution dissolved in toluene (IAR 1994–95: 142–43).

Chemical Treatment and Preservation Efforts: The walls and ceilings of the *Navaranga* hall, along with the interior of the *Nandi-mantapa* opposite the Shantalesvara Shrine, underwent chemical treatment. Oily and sooty accretions were removed using a mixture of ammonia and Teepol solution, while calcareous and other ingrained deposits were cleared through chemico-mechanical methods with an aqueous solution of acetic acid. Treated areas were preserved with 1% Acrypol P 876 dissolved in toluene (IAR 1995–96: 194).

Subsequent efforts included chemical cleaning of sculptures within the shrine's interior, targeting calcareous and ingrained deposits, as well as ochre patches in the *Navaranga* hall. Glacial acetic acid in water was utilized for cleaning, followed by a final wash with an aqueous solution of ammonia and detergent. The treated surfaces were then preserved with a 1% Acrypol P 876 solution in toluene, marking the completion of this phase of work (IAR 1996–97: 309).

Roof Repairs: The deteriorated plaster on the leaky roof of the main shrine was scraped off and replaced with a thick plaster mixture containing mortar and waterproof cement compound to ensure water-tightness (IAR 1996–97: 249). Similarly, the dead lime concrete from the roof of the twin temple was removed and replaced with a fresh course of *surkhi* mixed with lime mortar to prevent leakage (IAR 2006–07: 181).

Documentation Efforts: Photographic plates were prepared to showcase the architectural grandeur of the temple (MAR 1901: 4). All temples at Halebidu were thoroughly examined, and additional detailed information about the Hoysalesvara temple was published (MAR 1911: 6–9). Furthermore, the Architectural Draughtsman created seven plates illustrating the temples at Halebidu, Arsikere, Harnahalli, and Koramangala. A comprehensive list of photographs and drawings related to the Hoysalesvara temple was compiled, which included ornamental base (South), Elephant and Garuda, North full view, South-east view, East side (middle), Ravana and Nandi (North), West side (middle), South side, Trimurti and other figures, Varaha and other figures, Inscription pillar, Narasinha and Sarasvati, Ceiling in east entrance, Gopalakrishna figure, East view, North-west view, South-west view, Trimurti and Subrahmanya (North), Ganapati, Trimurti and other figures (South), Ganapati and Vishnu,

Niche-full view (North-West), East doorway, South doorway, and West full view, among others (MAR 1911: 25).

In addition, a drawing of the ornamental base was prepared (MAR 1912: 18), along with seven plates depicting scrolls and canopies (MAR 1912: 25). Six additional plates were created (MAR 1915: 24), and nearly 45 photographs documenting the Hoysalesvara temple were compiled (MAR 1912: 28–29). Several photographs excluded from the Monographs of Halebidu were printed in a separate volume (MAR 1921: 2).

The monograph on Halebidu Temples was still under development by Rao Bahadur R. Narasimhachar (MAR 1926: 103).

Laying of Garden: Preparatory cultivation for re-turfing the lawns was undertaken (IAR 1973–74: 92), and twelve hectares on the eastern side of the garden were properly maintained (IAR 1974–75: 130). The old wall dividing the garden was removed to provide an unobstructed view of the monument. The addition of roses in curved beds and ornamental flowering trees enhanced the beauty of the expansive garden (IAR 1975–76: 139–40).

Due to the drying up of the Dvara-Samudra tank, which served as the primary water source, the irrigation system faced significant challenges. Nevertheless, sufficient silt was collected and spread in the flower beds. Approximately 480 meters of kerb stones were installed along the pathways in the extended section of the garden (IAR 1976–77: 146). However, maintenance efforts were hindered by water shortages, and attempts by the State Geological Department to drill a borewell proved unsuccessful (IAR 1977–78: 155).

To address irrigation needs, a suitable submersible pumping set was installed, ensuring the garden remained neat and tidy throughout the year (IAR 1979–80: 166). Coconut plants were introduced, and irrigation pipelines were laid (IAR 1984–85: 285). Additional measures were taken to alleviate water scarcity during the summer, including the sinking of a new borewell. PVC pipelines were installed for proper irrigation in the newly acquired area along Dwara-Samudra, where coconut plantations were also established (IAR 1985–86: 211).

CONCLUSION

The enduring legacy of these remarkable temples, constructed approximately 750 to 900 years ago, speaks to the rich heritage and architectural brilliance of their time. Over the centuries, they have undergone extensive phases of conservation, preservation, restoration, excavation, and meticulous documentation, ensuring their splendor is preserved for generations to come. This comprehensive effort reflects a profound dedication to safeguarding these cultural treasures.

The recent visit by the UNESCO team in September has further elevated hopes and anticipation, with many believing that the inclusion of the 'Sacred Ensembles of Hoysalas' in the World Heritage List is imminent. Such recognition would not only underscore the historical and artistic significance of these monuments but also cement their place as a cherished legacy of global heritage.

References

- Kumaran and Saranya ISSN 2347 – 5463 Heritage: Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Archaeology 10: 2022-23 (2025)
- IAR. 1953-54. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1953-1954. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1954-55. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1954-1955. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1956-57. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1956-1957. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1957-58. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1957-1958. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1958-59. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1958-1959. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India. IAR.
- 1959-60. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1959-1960. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1960-61. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1960-1961. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1961-62. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1961-1962. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.

- IAR. 1967-68. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1967-1968. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1968-69. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1968-1969. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1969-70. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1969-1970. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1971-72. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1971-1972. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1972-73. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1972-1973. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1973-74. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1973-1974. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1974-75. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1974-1975. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1975-76. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1975-1976. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1976-77. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1976-1977. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1977-78. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1977-1978. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1978-79. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1978-1979. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India
- IAR. 1979-80. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1979-1980. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1980-81. Idian Archaeology: A Review 1980-1981. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1981-82. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1981-1982. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1983-84. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1983-1984. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.

- IAR. 1984-85. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1984-1985. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1985-86. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1985-1986. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1987-88. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1987-1988. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1988-89. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1988-1989. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1989-90. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1989-1990. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1990-91. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1990-1991. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1991-92. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1991-1992. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1992-93. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1992-1993. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1993-94. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1993-1994. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1994-95. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1994-1995. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1995-96. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1995-1996. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1996-97. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1996-1997. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- IAR. 1999-2000. Indian Archaeology: A Review 1999-2000. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- MAR. 1896. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1897. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1901. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1902. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1903. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.

- MAR. 1910. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1911. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1912. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1915. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore
- MAR. 1920. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1921. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1923. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1924. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore
- MAR. 1925. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1926. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1927. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1928. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1929. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1930. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1931. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1932. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1933. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1934. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1935. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore
- MAR. 1936. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1939. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.
- MAR. 1940. Mysore Archaeological Report. Bangalore: Government of Mysore.