

Return to Hampi (4/6/2008-4/10/2008)

On my first trip to India, having seen my father's pictures of Hampi, I immediately wanted to go there myself. The 16th century ruined capital of the Vijayanagar empire, set in a fabulous landscape strewn with boulders appeared to be a perfect place to live out my "Indiana Jones" fantasy. As soon as I got a bit of free time, I left my parents and sister in Madras and made the arduous journey to Hampi. It was really the first time I had traveled on my own, and the rather poor transport connections as well as the general difficulties of India made this trip a "baptism by fire" in independent traveling. I enjoyed the place as much as I had anticipated and thoroughly enjoyed wandering the countryside and poking my head in bat infested ruined temples.

I often try to avoid going back to places that I really liked for fear of ruining the memories of that first visit and being disappointed with the inevitable changes of passing time. I knew that Hampi had deservedly become one of the star attractions of southern India, and while I had seen just two other tourists during the three days of my first visit in 1994, I knew the place was overrun with tourists now. The increased popularity is not all bad, and a string of cheap guesthouses now line the river bank, where it's easy to pass the days idly talking with other travelers and tourists. So armed with a better camera and the same sense of, albeit muted adventure, I headed back to Hampi for my second attempt at a revisit on this trip. The first, you may recall, was thwarted by a presidential visit. Despite the increase in popularity of Hampi, it still requires a long journey to get there as there is really nothing of much interest in the vicinity to break the journey. My journey from Hassan was delayed a further couple hours when an overturned petrol tanker caught fire near the road, located too close to a bridge to detour around the flames. The added delay turned an already long 10 hour bus ride into a 12 hour one.

Back in Hampi I found I enjoyed it nearly as much as my first trip, it was still possible to wander away from the main sights through the maze of rocks, fields, and smaller ruins regaining that feel of exploration and solitude I experienced on my first visit. I spent four days wondering the ruins and relaxing at my riverside guesthouse. I probably would have spent longer had I not already booked my onward train tickets for my very long journey north. A self set deadline that helped me avoid a two week extended stay in Hampi and return to the Himalayas for the spring trekking season.



Firefighters attempting to put out the flames on an overturned petrol tanker, south of Hospet.



Firefighters attempting to put out the flames on an overturned petrol tanker, south of Hospet.



Flames on an overturned petrol tanker, south of Hospet.



Petrol tank catches fire on an overturned tanker, south of Hospet.



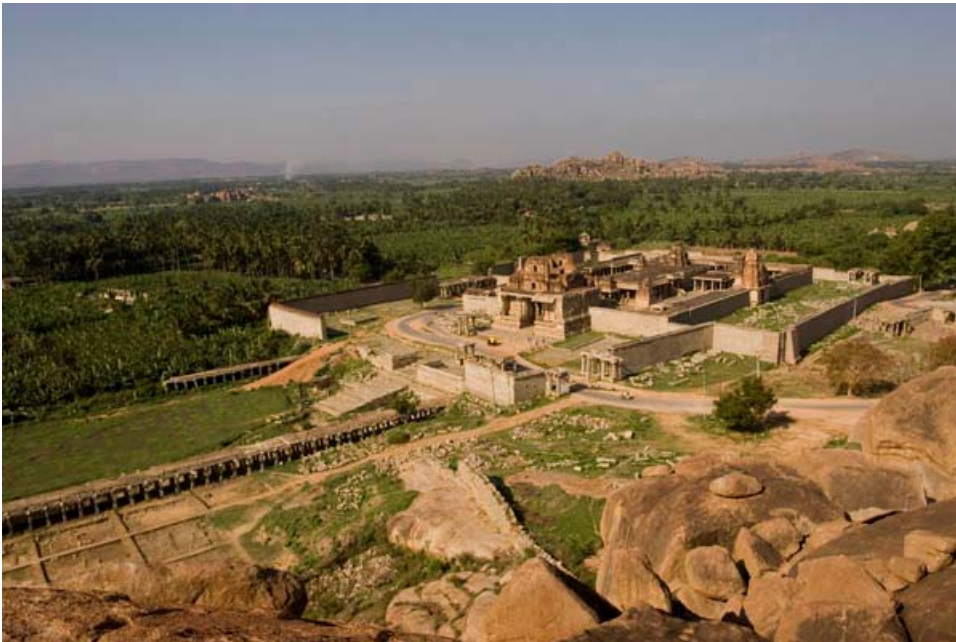
Firefighters losing the battle to put out the flames on an overturned petrol tanker, south of Hospet.



Smoke plume from the burning petrol tank on an overturned tanker, south of Hospet.



Towards Virupaksha Temple from Hemakuta Hill, Hampi.



Krishna Temple, Hampi.



**Towards Virupaksha Temple
from Hemakuta Hill, Hampi.**



Langurs on the Krishna Temple, Hampi.



Narashima Statue, Hampi.



Achutharaya Temple, Hampi.



Krishna Temple, Hampi.



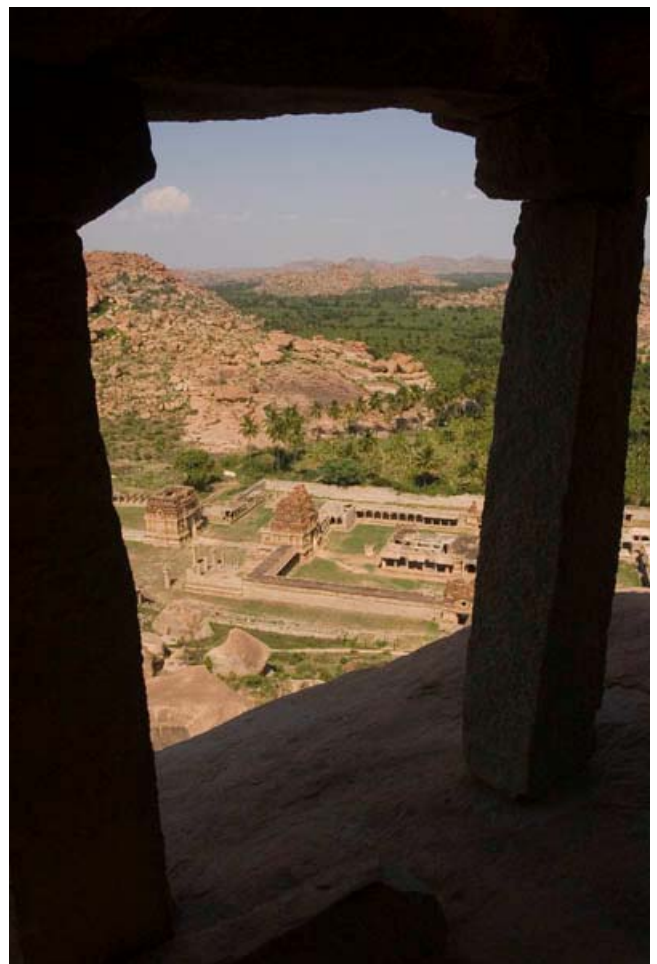
Village house, Hampi.



Achutharaya Temple, Hampi.



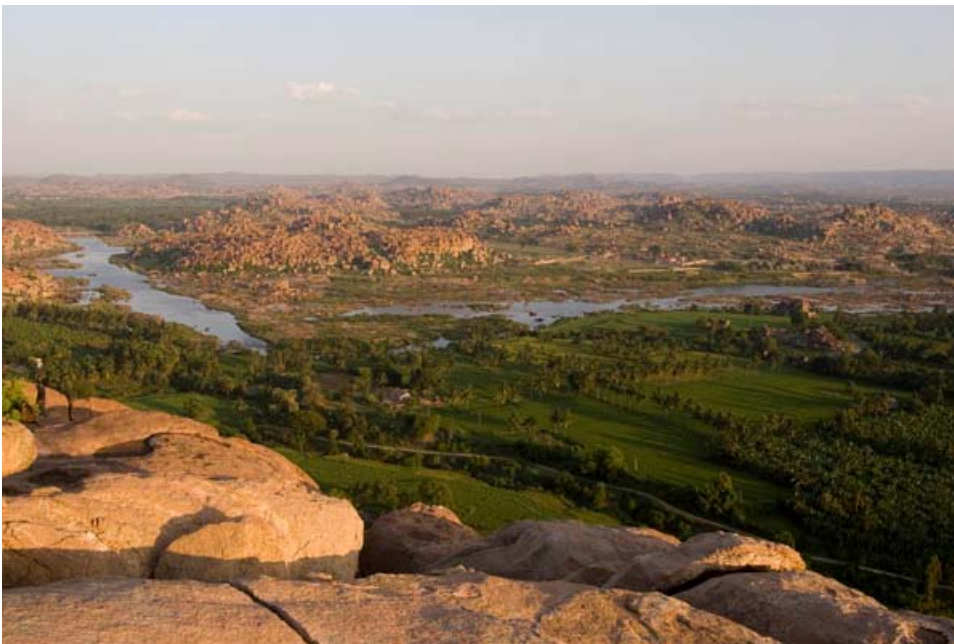
Hemakuta Hill, Hampi.



View from Matanga Hill, Hampi.



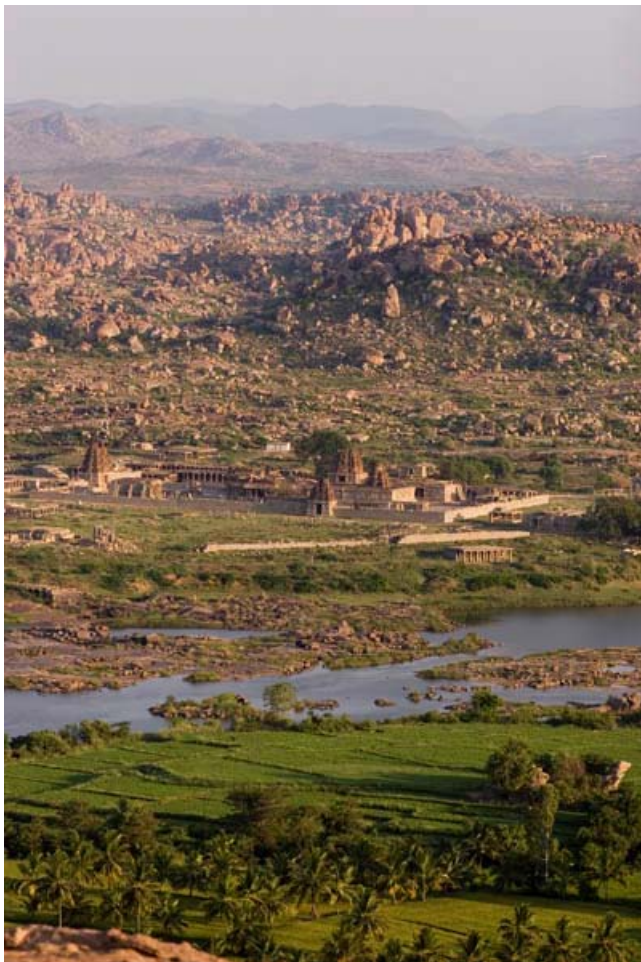
View, with monkey appropriately enough, from the Hanuman Temple popularly known as the “monkey temple,” Hampi.



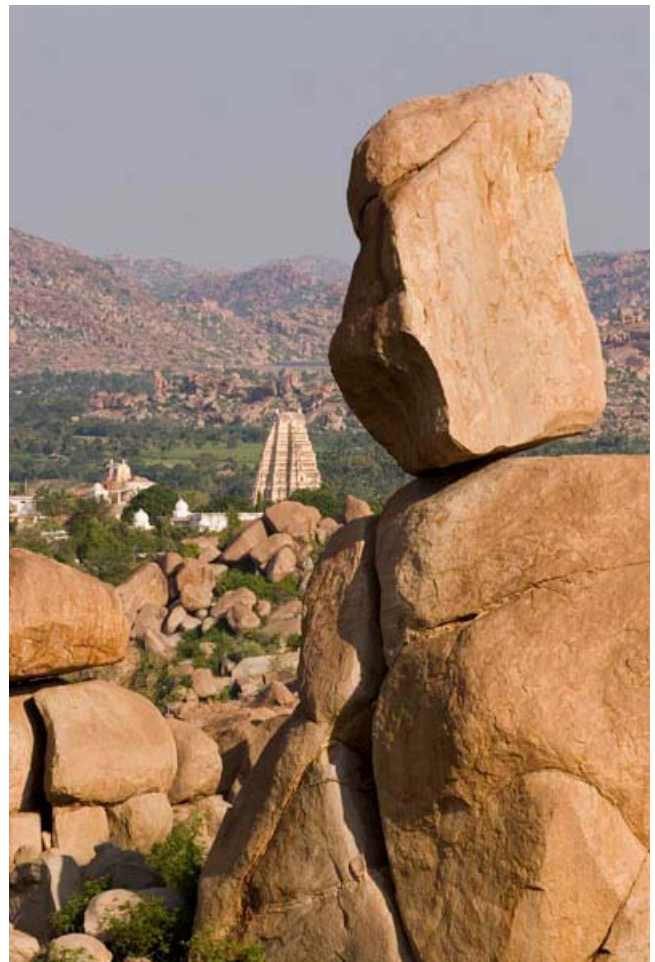
View from the Hanuman Temple popularly known as the “monkey temple,” Hampi.



Sunset from the Hanuman Temple popularly known as the “monkey temple,” Hampi.



View towards Vitthala Temple from the Hanuman Temple popularly known as the “monkey temple,” Hampi.



Towards Virupaksha Temple, Hampi.



Sadhu bathing at the Hanuman Temple popularly known as the “monkey temple,” Hampi.



Queen's Bath, Hampi.



Towards Virupaksha Temple from Hemakuta Hill, Hampi.



Lotus Mahal, Hampi.



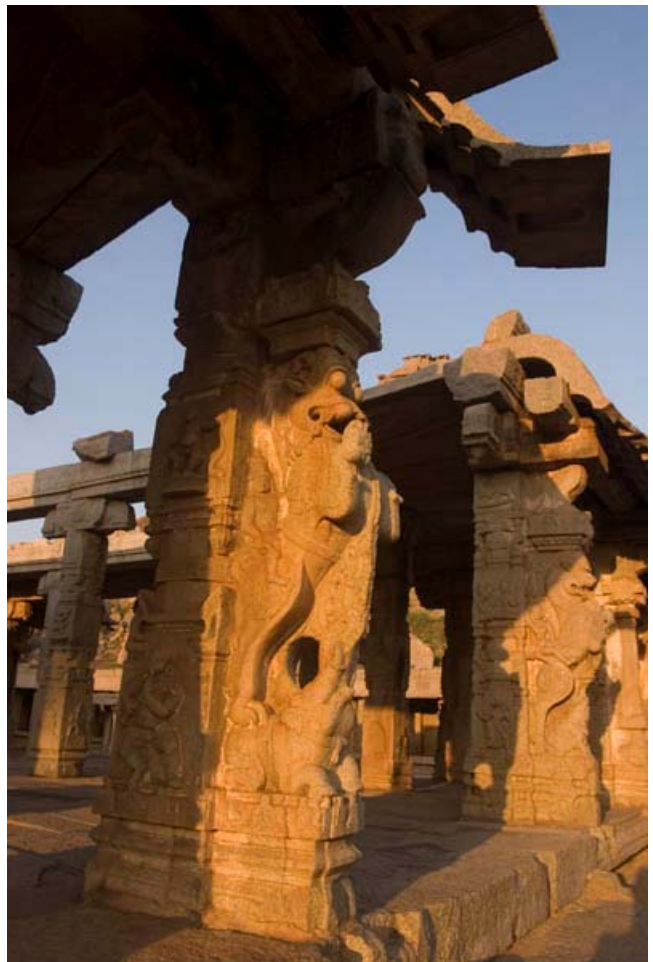
**Hazara Rama Temple,
Hampi.**



**Towards Virupaksha Temple
from Hemakuta Hill, Hampi.**



Upset girl on a swing, Hampi.



Achutharaya Temple, Hampi.



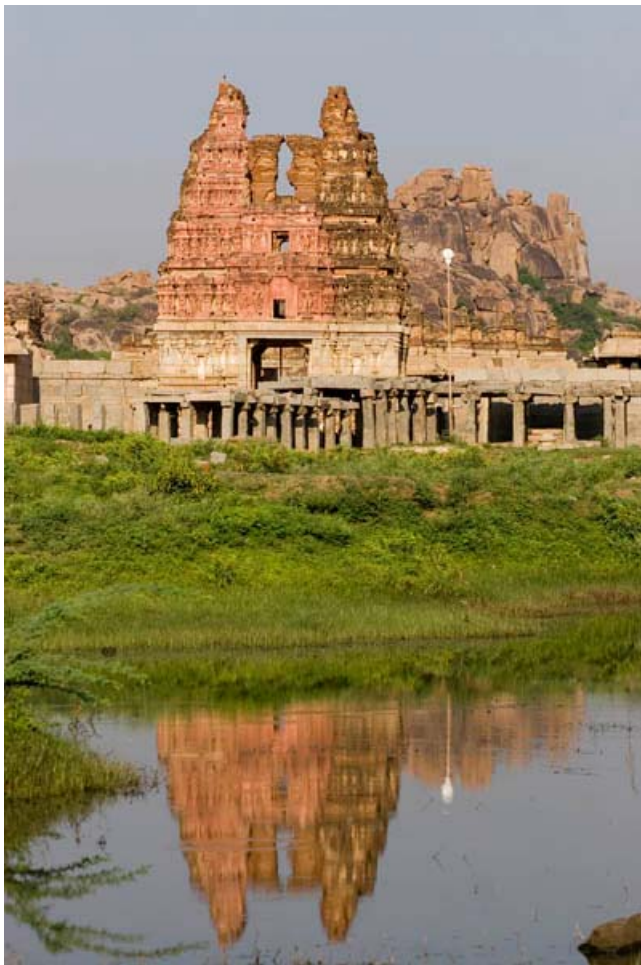
Hemakuta Hill, Hampi.



Hampi.



Vitthala Temple, Hampi.



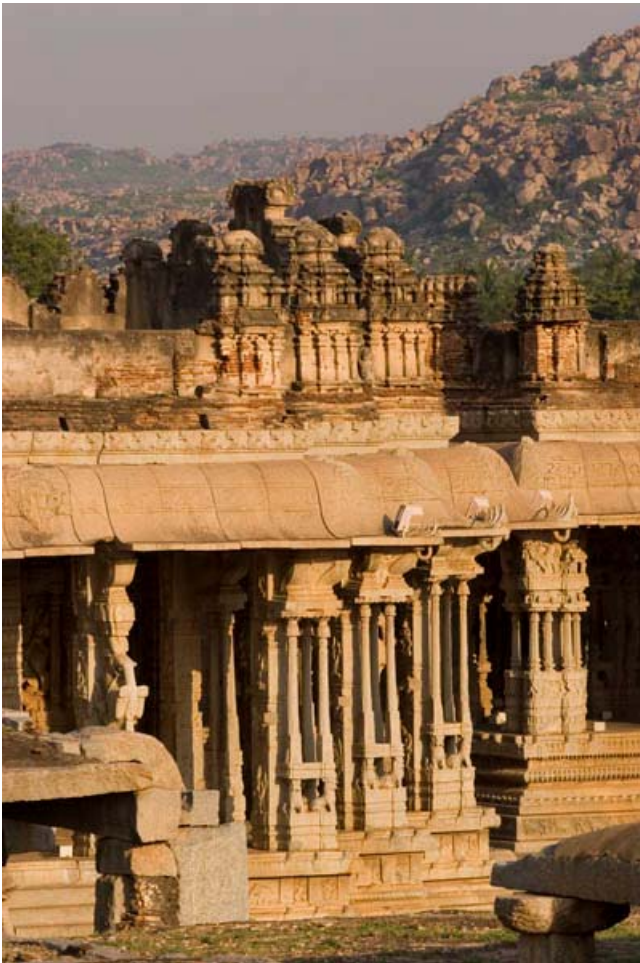
Vitthala Temple, Hampi.



Vitthala Temple, Hampi.



Vitthala Temple, Hampi.



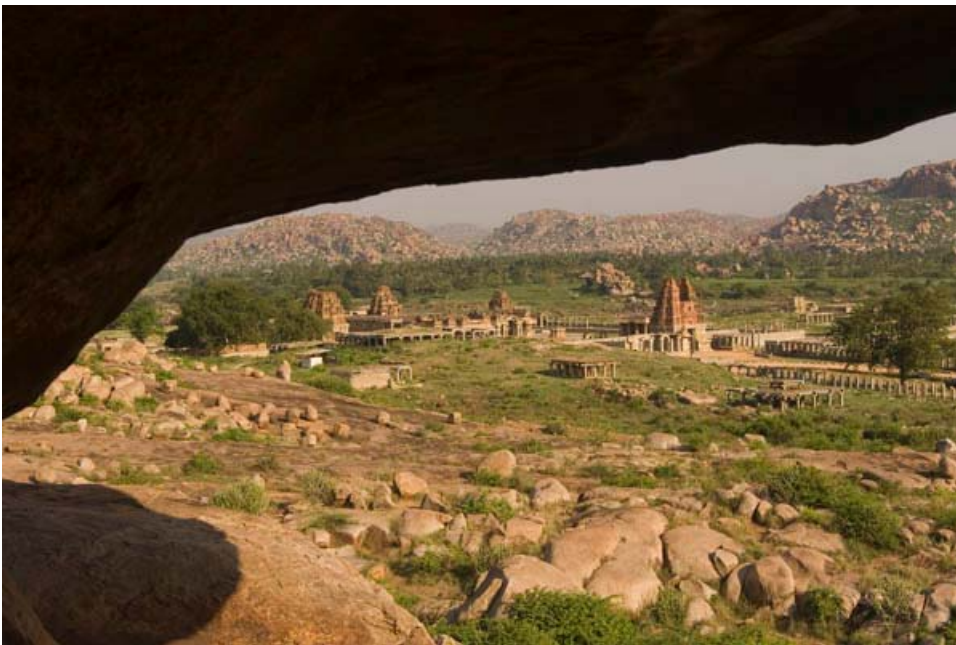
Vitthala Temple, Hampi.



Vitthala Temple, Hampi.



Vitthala Temple, Hampi.



Vitthala Temple, Hampi.



Wedding, Virupaksha Temple, Hampi.



Happy girl with not so happy baby, Virupaksha Temple, Hampi.



Member of the wedding band, Virupaksha Temple, Hampi.



Member of the wedding party holding an offering plate, Virupaksha Temple, Hampi.



Boy gets blessed by temple elephant, Virupaksha Temple, Hampi.



Virupaksha Temple, Hampi.



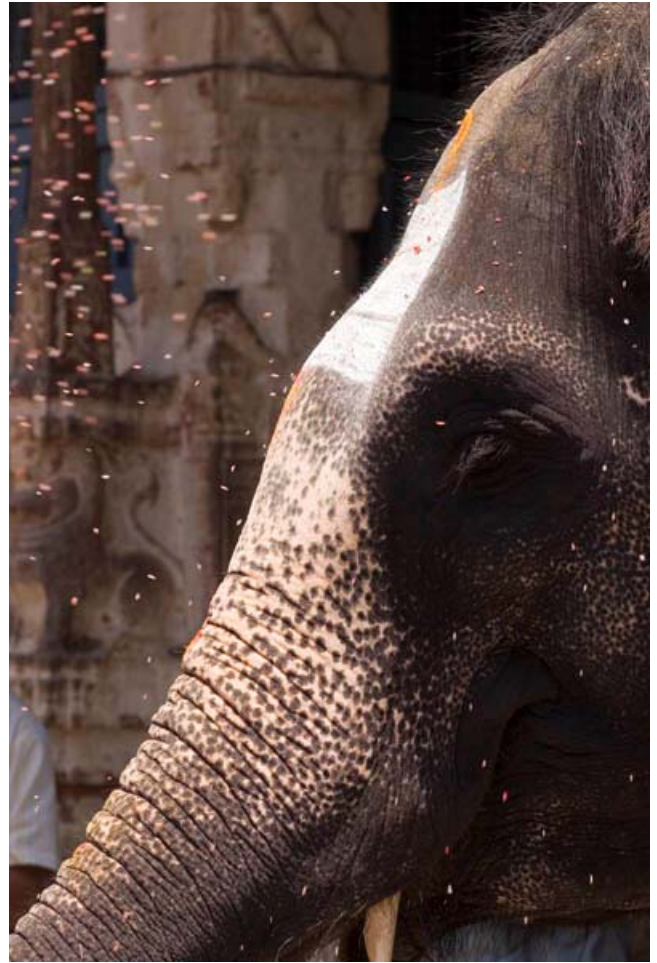
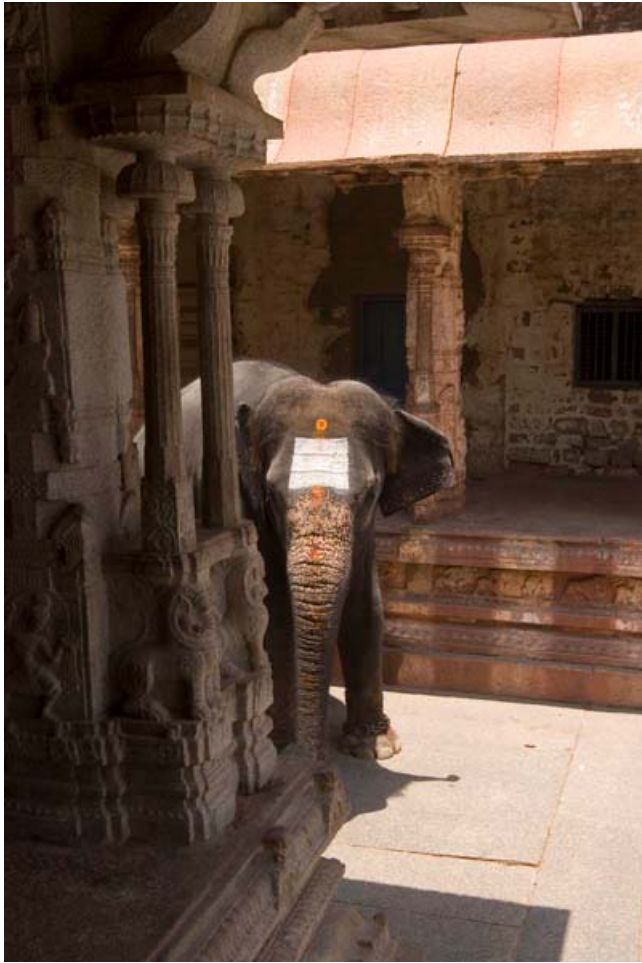
Kids, Virupaksha Temple, Hampi.



Kids, Virupaksha Temple, Hampi.



Member of the wedding band, Virupaksha Temple, Hampi.



Temple elephant, Virupaksha Temple, Hampi.