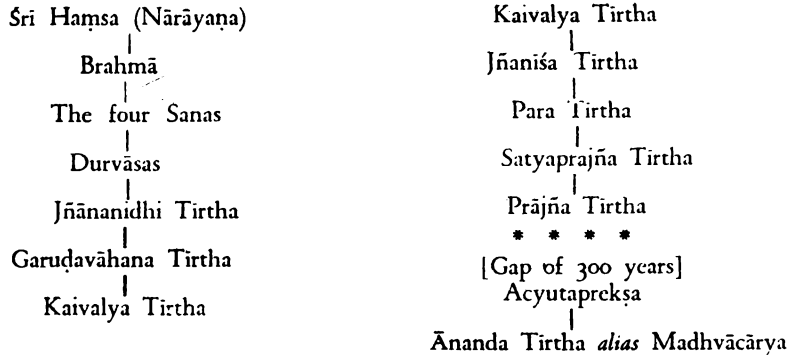


The Life and Works of Madhva

I. Predecessors of Madhva

Nothing definite or authentic about the forerunners of Madhva's theism is known to us beyond what has been recorded by Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍitācārya, in his *Maṇimañjarī*, a short poem furnishing the necessary mytho-historical back-ground to his more elaborate "Life of Madhva" (*Madhva-vijaya*). From this and from the evidence of Madhva's own works, it is clear that the system of the Ācārya claims its descent mainly from the ancient monotheism of the Ekānti-Vaiṣṇavas or the Bhāgavatas.¹ But for all practical purposes, Madhva is himself the first historical founder and exponent of the system of philosophy associated with his name. Pre-Madhva hagiology is a blank save for the bare names of a few "forerunners" preserved to us in the *Maṇimañjarī*. An account in the *Padma Purāṇa*² derives Madhva's 'Viṣṇu-Glaubens' from Brahmā (Brahmasampradāya). The following is the traditional 'Guruparamparā' of the sect up to Madhva :—



It will be seen from the above that tradition has preserved the names of at least half a dozen of the historical predecessors of Madhva. There is a gap of about 300 years between Prājña Tirtha

1 केवलवंश as it is called in *Maṇimañjarī*, VIII, 33 cd.

2 सम्प्रदाये ब्रह्मनाम्नि मध्वाचार्यः प्रतिष्ठितः (Pādma.) vide *Catussūtribhāṣya*, introd. XXIV.

and Acyutaprekṣa. And nothing is known of the persons who flourished during this period. It is alleged that the saints of the creed were suffering severe persecution at the hands of the Advaitins in ascendancy, during this period.³ A vivid and somewhat inflammatory account of this is given in chapter 7 of the *Maṇimañjarī*. Stripped of all exaggeration, the facts of the case were:

Driven to desperation by the ascendancy of Advaita, the Dvaita teachers had outwardly accepted monism. All that they could do was to ensure the bare continuation of their preceptorial line and leave the rest to the future.⁴ In the course of two or three generations, when the stormy past had been forgotten, the once quasi-monists became full-fledged monists and remained in that blissful state of ignorance of their original antecedents, till the days of Acyutaprekṣa. No genuinely historical work on Dvaita could therefore have been written or preserved at such times. That is why we do not find Madhva referring to any historical work of his predecessors. The last in this line was Puruṣottama Tirtha (*M. Vij.* vi, 33)⁵ alias Acyutaprekṣa who was the Saṇnyāsa-Guru of Madhva. It is clear from the *M. Vij.* that he was a warm Advaitin (v, 25; iv, 8; ix, 33-37)⁶ though different impression is sought to be created by a passage in the *Maṇimañjarī*.⁷ The very first Vedāntic classic in which his teacher instructed Madhva, was the *Iṣṭasiddhi* of Vimuk-tātman. (*M. Vij.* iv, 44). It is obvious therefore, that Madhva was himself the actual historical founder and exponent of his system.

3 Such persecutions have parallels in Indian and classical history. Witness for instance the persecution of the Christians in Rome, in the early centuries of the Christian era, and of Rāmānuja in the 10th century.

4 Such existence *incognito* is held to account for the non-preservation of the names of the teachers subsequent to Prājña Tirtha (a contemporary of Śaṅkara).

5 It is by this name that he is referred to in the Śrīkūrmam Inscription of Narahari Tirtha (1281 A.D.).

6 It is said that there were frequent disagreements between Madhva and his Guru, and it was with great difficulty that the Ācārya ultimately converted him. (ix, 33-37) to his way of thinking.

7 VIII, 33 and 36.

No doubt, as we have seen in Part I, the theistic philosophy preached by the Ācārya has a long history behind it and goes back to the original basic literature of Hinduism viz., the Veda-Sāstra. But there is no evidence of immediate literary activity of any kind which would connect the works of Madhva himself with these original sources of his system, as is available for instance in the case of the works of Śaṅkara or Rāmānuja. We have seen the peculiar circumstances which are said to have rendered such links impossible in the case of the early forerunners of the Dvaita school.⁸ Such absence however need in no way belittle the importance, reliability or innate metaphysical satisfyingness of the system itself as obviously in the last resort such links in the chain must stop somewhere and the only appeal thereafter would be to the basic scriptures themselves on which a given system may claim to be based. That is why Madhva himself has passed by all his historical predecessors including Acyutaprekṣa himself in complete silence; and persistently claims to have received his message directly from the lips of Bādarāyaṇa-Vyāsa.⁹ Throughout his works Madhva acknowledges no other teacher save Vyāsa and has not even once mentioned the name of Acyutaprekṣa anywhere in his works.¹⁰ Of course, no offence was meant to nor any taken by Acyutaprekṣa himself. The history of Dvaita literature proper, thus begins with Madhva.

II. *Date of Madhva*

There has been a controversy within the limits of a century or

8 Even the four names of the (historical) predecessors of Para Tirtha are purely traditional. They are not recorded either in the *Maṇimanjari* or in the *M. Vij.* the earliest extant biographical sketches of *Madhva*. They are however to be found in the genealogical tables of the Bhaṇḍārkere Mutt (the original mutt of Acyutaprekṣa, still in existence).

9 Cf. तत्त्वैव शिष्यो जगदेकमतुः (*Mbh.* -t.-n. xxxii, 170) and many other similar references in the other works of Madhva.

10 Even his very first work, the *Gitābhāṣya*, a copy of which he is said to have left with his Guru before starting on his first trip to Badari (*M. Vij.* vi, 32), opens with a salutation to Vyāsa and Acyutaprekṣa is entirely ignored.

so over the date of Madhva. Both the 'traditional' date of birth 1199 A.D., claimed for him on the authority of a passage (xxxii, 131) in his *Mahābhārata-tātparyanirṇaya*, and the date Śaka 1040-1120 proposed in some of the geneo-chronological tables of the Uttarādi and other Mutts, have now been set at rest by the discovery and publication of the inscriptions especially the one dated Śaka 1203 of Narahari Tirtha—a direct disciple and second 'successor' of Madhva on the Pīṭha. The evidence of these inscriptions shows that Narahari was in Kalinga between 1264 and 1293 A.D. It appears also that he was the regent of the state 1281-93. If the statement of the *Mbh. -t.-n.* then, is to be accepted in its literal sense, Madhva would have lived up to 1278 A.D. According to the uniform testimony of the Mutt lists, he was succeeded by Padmanābha Tirtha who remained on the Pīṭha for seven years and after him Narahari occupied the Pīṭha for nine years. On this view, Narahari would have come to the Pīṭha in 1285. But the evidence of inscriptions shows that he was still in Kalinga in the years 1289, 1291 and 1293. The obvious inference is that he could not have come to the Pīṭha till after 1293.¹¹ The Mutt lists agree in placing Narahari's demise in the cyclic year of Śrīmukha. These two facts should go to show that the event cannot be placed earlier than 1333 A.D. Calculating backwards from the year of Narahari's demise, we arrive at 1317 (Piṅgala) as that of Madhva. Assuming that tradition is correct in assigning to him a life of seventy-nine years, and in placing his birth in a Viḷambi, we get 1238 A.D. as the year of his birth. This agrees very well indeed with the inscriptions of Narahari Tirtha—the terms of one of which (Śrikūrmam, 1281 A.D.) imply that Madhva was in flesh and blood at or about the time.

1238-1317 A.D. thus appears to be the most satisfactory date

¹¹ It cannot be that Narahari was allowed to be the regent at the court of Kalinga and occupy the pīṭha of Madhva at the same time between 1285-93.

for Madhva.¹² The relevant material bearing upon this question has been brought together and discussed by me in two papers on the subject contributed to the *Annamalai University Journal* (iii, 2, and v, 1.), and to them further attention is invited. The various other theories on the date of Madhva have also been examined and refuted there.^{12a}

III. *Life of Madhva*

The *Madhvuviṇaya* of Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍitācārya is the earliest biography of Madhva that has come down to us. If we eliminate the many miracles and supernatural incidents which the piety and zeal of the biographer have attributed to him, we may get a fairly complete picture of the Ācārya's life and mission. There are also well-written accounts in English of the life and teaching of Madhva.¹³

i

Madhva was born of Tuḷu¹⁴ Brahmin parents of humble status at the village of Pājakakṣetra,¹⁵ some eight miles to the south-east of the town of Udipi in the South Kanara district of the Madras Presidency. His father's family-name was Naḍḍantillāya of which

¹² This date has recently been upheld by Dr. Saletore in his *Ancient Kārnāṭaka (History of Tuḷuva)*, Poona, 1936. In the light of this date, the statement in the *Mbh. -t.-n.* would have to be explained as a rough estimate in terms of centuries, the actual difference between the two being thirty-nine years.

^{12a} Prof. P. P. S. Sastri has recently championed the date of the Mutt lists, in his paper on 'Mādhva chronology' in the *Kuppuswami Sastri Com. Vol.* (Madras). With more zeal than regard for facts he has adopted 1181 A.D. as the year of the Śrīkūrmam Inscr. But he forgets that there are *five more* inscriptions of Narahari, all dated between 1264 and 1293, wherein the chronograms given admit of no emendation whatever. For a refutation of the Professor's plea see my rejoinder in the *Annals of B.O.R.I.*, vol. xix, 3.

¹³ By such authors as C. M. Padmanābhācār, C. N. K. Iyer, S. Subba Rau, and C. R. Krishna Rau.

¹⁴ Madhva was thus a Tuḷu (Sivalli) Brahmin and not a Kanarese as supposed by some.

¹⁵ Not Kalyāṇpūr as wrongly stated by Carpenter (p. 406) and Barth (p. 195). The old family-house of Madhva still stands at the village of Belle in Kakra-Maṭha (Tuḷu for Pājakakṣetra).

the well-known "Madhyagehabhaṭṭa or "Madhyamandira"¹⁶ is the Sanskrit equivalent. Madhva's original name was Vāsudeva. At the age of seven or so, he had his 'Upa-nayana' and went through a course of Vedic and Śāstric studies under a teacher who belonged to the family of the 'Totantillāyas' ('Pūgavana' *M. Vij.* iii, 49).

ii

The next event in the life of Vāsudeva was his renunciation. It is difficult to fix his age at the time, but it was probably soon after his sixteenth year (iii, 54-56). His studies of the Śāstras had, in the meanwhile, created in him a profound repulsion towards the prevailing philosophy of his day and he was filled with a desire to resuscitate the old realistic theism of the Vedaśāstra, in its pristine purity. The call of the spirit took him to Acyutaprekṣa from whom he sought and obtained initiation as a monk under the name of Pūrṇa-prājña.

Some time after initiation was spent in the study of Vedāntic classics beginning with the *Iṣṭasiddhi*. Frequent disagreements between master and disciple terminated the studies before long. Pūrṇa-prājña was made the head of the Mutt of Acyutaprekṣa. It was on this occasion that Acyutaprekṣa conferred upon him the name of Ānandatīrtha. The name "Madhva" by which he is more widely known, was not given to the Ācārya by anyone. It was assumed by him (for a reason that will be clear later on) as being synonymous with the other.

Madhva spent some time in and about Uḍipi, teaching the disciples of Acyutaprekṣa and entering into disputations with a

¹⁶ Not "Madhyamandāra" as given out by Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar (*Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism* etc. Strassburg, 1913, p. 58.) The equivalent "Madhyamandira" is applied to Madhva too by Mādhava in the *Sarvadarśana Saṁgraha*. It was the family name (cf. *M. Vij.* ii, 9.) "The name Naḍḍantillāya" cannot "be traced to the fact that it (the village of Naḍḍantādi or Madhyatāla,) was the midday halting place of Madhva" (Saleore, *Ancient Kārnāṭaka*, vol. i, p. 416, f.n. 11, Poona 1936) for the very simple reason that according to the evidence of *M. Vij.* ii, 9, Madhva's father also went by that name (Naḍḍantillāya).

number of Pandits, Monistic, Jain and Buddhist. The *M. Vij.* (v, 8-16), mentions his encounters with Vāsudeva Paṇḍita, Vādisiṃha and Buddhisāgara. This teaching and constant disputations considerably sharpened his powers and made him an adept in reasoning and polemics. Encouraged by the initial successes, the Ācārya made up his mind to go on a South Indian tour and find a wider field for the propagation of his new faith. Trivandrum, Cape Camorin and Rāmeśvaram were among the places visited. At Cape Camorin, he fell into a violent conflict with an Advaitic monk *wrongly identified*¹⁷ with Vidyāśaṅkara Tīrtha—the then (?) Svāmi of the Śrīringeri Mutt. After the conclusion of “Cāturmāsya” at Rāmeśvaram, he moved on to Śrīraṅgam where the Ācārya must have come into personal contact with the followers of Rāmānuja there. From Śrīraṅgam he seems to have returned to Uḍipi through a northern route.

Altogether the southern tour must have taken two or three years to be finished. It must have shown Madhva that breaches had already been effected in the citadel of Māyāvāda and this knowledge must have strengthened his original resolve. No wonder then, that soon after his return to Uḍipi, Madhva began his career as an author with a commentary on the *Gītā*, which was not however published till after his return from the first north Indian tour, which came off shortly.

This time, the Ācārya had a larger retinue than on the earlier occasion. We have no information as to the route taken, the places visited or the incidents on the journey. It is stated that while at the hermitages of the Himalayas, Madhva left by himself for Badarī the abode of Vyāsa. He returned after a few days and composed his Bhāṣya on the *B.S.* which was transcribed by Satyatīrtha. Resuming their homeward march, the party journeying probably through

17 By C. N. K. Iyer and C. M. Padmanābhācār. For a refutation of this most untenable identification see my paper: “The Madhva-Vidyāśaṅkara Meeting,—A Fiction,” *Journal of the Annamalai University*, vol. iii, no. 1.

Behar and Bengal, came ultimately to Rajamundry. Here there was a protracted debate at the conclusion of which the famous Śobhāna Bhaṭṭa (the future Padmanābha Tīrtha) was worsted and converted. The conversion of Narahari Tīrtha also must have taken place at the same time.¹⁸

The north Indian tour had made a considerable impression on the people. Till now Madhva's criticism of the Advaita had been mostly destructive. But after the publication of his own commentaries on the *Gītā* and on the *Sūtras*, no one could say that he had no alternative to give in place of the system which he so severely criticised. The first achievement after the return to Uḍipi was the conversion to his own views of Acyutaprekṣa who fell *not without* a fierce struggle (*M.Vij.* ix, 33-37).

The merits of the new system, the living earnestness of its founder, his irresistible personality and incisive logic soon brought many converts and adherents.¹⁹ To bring and hold them all together, the Ācārya had the beautiful image of Śrī Kṛṣṇa installed in a newly erected temple at his Maṭha at Uḍipi and made it the rallying centre of his followers (ix, 43). He also inaugurated a few reforms and introduced some changes in the ceremonial code of his adherents. These were the substitution of flour-made ewes for live ones in sacrifices and the rigorous observance of fasts on Ekādaśī days.

18 Dr. Saletore (*History of Tuluva*, p. 439) is definitely wrong in dating Narahari Tīrtha's meeting with Madhva as late as 1270. The ascetic title of "Śrīpāda" is found applied to the former (as pointed out by me in *A. U. Journal*, iii, 2, p. 247) even in the very first inscription of 1264 which would mean that Narahari Tīrtha's conversion must have taken place in or about 1264 but certainly before 1270.

19 Dr. Saletore (*op. cit.*, 444-49) is wrong again in connecting the legends touching the conversion of certain members of the Koṭīśvara and allied groups by a *Mādhva ascetic* narrated in the *Puttige* version of the *Grāma Paddhati* with Madhva. It is enough to show that the passages cited speak uniformly of a Mādhva Muni,—an ascetic of the Mādhva order कलौ युगे मध्वमतप्रचण्डम् ! which would be inapplicable to Madhva himself. The incident as will be shown later on, has reference in reality to Vādirāja Tīrtha.

The *M. Vij.* (ix, 44-50) seems to refer to one such Piṣṭapaśu-yajña actually performed at the instance of Madhva at which the Ācārya's younger brother officiated as Hotṛ-priest. We are told that a member of the Maraḍitāya family (Jarā-ghaṭita-gotra) organised a protest and created a good deal of opposition to this new type of sacrifice. But Madhva stood firm and carried the day.

After this he again started on a (second) north Indian tour to Badarī and returned after visiting Delhi, Kurukṣetra, Benares and Gayā (x, 52). The subsequent tours were confined mostly to the South Kanara district. Viṣṇumaṅgala, (near Kāsargod) Kaḍatala etc. were his favourite resorts. The years that followed brought further acquisitions to his fold. The prestige of the new faith had been very well established. Many works had in the meantime been written by Madhva such as the Bhāṣyas on the ten Upaniṣads, the ten Prakaraṇas and running expositions of the *Bhāgavata* and *Mahābhārata*. Naturally, the increasing popularity of the new faith caused no small anxiety and heart-burning to the custodians of the established faith (Advaita). Desperate remedies were tried to combat the danger. We are told of an actual raid on the library²⁰ of Madhva (xiv, 2) which contained a very valuable collection of books. The books were afterwards recovered and restored to the Ācārya at the intervention of Jayasimha the ruler of Kumbla.²¹ The incident naturally brought Madhva into touch with the ruler at whose request he visited his capital. Close on the heels of this visit came the momentous conversion of the great Trivikrama Paṇḍita (probably a court-Pandit of Jayasimha) who was the foremost scholar and autho-

20 Dr. Saletore (*Ancient Tuluva*, p. 424) is mistaken in giving "*Madhva-siddhānta*" as the name of one of the works stolen on the occasion. There does not appear to have been any such work in existence and none is mentioned either in the *M. Vij.* or other sources known to us. The raid itself is said to have been carried out at the instigation of the Advaitic monk Padma Tirtha who is reported to have hailed from the Coḷa country (xii, 2) and his ally Puṇḍarika Puri.

21 C. M. Padmanābhācār has wrongly identified him with the then ruler of Travancore, which is unsupportable.

rity on the Advaita Vedānta, in those parts. This Trivikrama was the father of Madhva's biographer Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍitācārya. After his conversion Trivikrama was commissioned to write a commentary on Madhva's *Sūtrabhāṣya* which he did under the name of *Tattva-pradīpa*.²² The Ācārya himself had by this time composed his master-piece the *Anuvyākhyāna* on the Sūtras.

Trivikrama's conversion was another turning point in the history of the faith. Many more joined the fold and Madhva's fame spread far. His parents died about this time (xv, 91) and the next year his younger brother and seven others were ordained monks (xv, 128-30). These became the founders of what later on came to be known as the eight Mutts of Uḍipi.

The last years of the Ācārya seem to have been spent in teaching and worship. His three works, the *Nyāyavivaraṇa*, the *Karmanirṇaya* and the *Kṛṣṇāmr̥tamahārṇava*, were all probably composed about this time.

His mission was now nearly completed. His message to the world had been delivered and he had the satisfaction of seeing it well-received. His works had been placed on an enduring basis. He had gathered round him a band of devoted disciples who could be relied upon to carry the light of Theism to the nook and corner of the land. It was time for him to retire from the scene of his labours and leave *them* in charge of future work. Charging his disciples with his last message in the closing words of his favourite Upaniṣad—the *Aitareya*, not to sit still, but to go forth and preach,²³ Śrī Madhva* disappeared from view, on the ninth day of the bright half of the month of Māgha, of Piṅgaḷa 1318 A.D.

B. N. KRISHNAMURTI ŚARMA

22. A fragment of which was published by me in 1934 (Madras, Law Journal Press).

23 नाप्रवक्त इत्याचार्या आचार्याः (A. Ā.)