

Acharya Madhva and his immediate disciples:

Instalment 1

Sri Madhava and Akshobhya Tirthas

It is good that the controversy about the period of Acharya Madhva has been settled as 1238-1317/8 AD, in the UM record also, favouring the dates first suggested by Sri CM Padmanabhachar supported by Dr. B N K Sharma and accepted by almost all later authorities. The dates given in the UM “Sathkathas”, Matha kaifiyaths etc have been set aside in favour of authentic historically verifiable records. Another analogy comes to mind where Eclipse calculations done in the traditional ways, have now a days given way to Drigganitha figures being finally adopted, for obvious reasons of the timing of the actual eclipse being verifiable by any one by simple observation of its occurrence. One hopes that similar principles will be followed in evaluating other stories in circulation, where impossible events are sometimes accepted as valid, based on an erroneous statement inherited and retained blindly over centuries.

The date of Acharya Madhva is extremely important to verify the historicity of the events described in Sumadhvavijaya, as well as many other issues like the periods of ascetics immediately following him. I had placed some comments on the issue referring to the dates and life histories of Sri Narahari Tirtha, based on Orissa records, during the recent Aradhana of the saint (2010). But many of the actual events are better comprehended when the actual historic events as recorded in contemporary history are kept visualized as back ground information.

At the very outset, a summary of the events in the very turbulent period (1310 – 1340 AD) during the last years of Acharya Madhva’s stay in his visible form, and the following periods of his immediate disciples, collected from a very good reliable historical record (The History and Culture of the Indian people published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai in 2001) is compiled and given here. It is not an exact quote, but an information summary relevant to our studies. This has been given in a different font and the original book may be consulted for any additional information.

A comparative study of the information would show that Acharya Madhva could possibly have encountered the Turkish army of Balban while crossing the Ganga (possibly near Kalpi on the traditional Jhansi-Kanpur-Brahmavartha pilgrimage route), sometime in the period 1265-1287 AD, when Balban was king (Madhva’s age 27 -49 years), perhaps during his second Badari Visit. C M Padmanabhachar in his well known book on Acharya Madhva had opined that he had met with the army of Jalaluddin Khilji (uncle of Allauddin). The name of the Hindu king and the location of the bank of the Ganges river where the Sumadhvavijaya incident took place are unspecified by him. The description of Madhva’s crossing the Ganga with his disciples without boats, with the Hindu King on the Southern bank and the Turkish Muslim army, with very cruel soldiers on the Northern bank seems to fit in with the period when Balban was still making efforts to prevent Hindus from reviving their rule in the territory under his control, which had been continuing since 1254 AD throughout his reign.

There is also proposal that this incident took place near Bengal instead of UP. As the first visit of Madhva to Badari is fairly well defined by being related to the initiation of Sri Padmanabha and Narahari Tirtha, and the latter had called himself as his disciple and a Sripada in 1264 AD itself in a Shasana in Orissa, the encounter with Balban's army would be during his second visit, on his way to Badari with a larger team of disciples, presumably after his installation of the Krishna Icon in Udupi, and thus would have included some Ashtamatha ascetics, one of whom is mentioned by name in Sumadhvajaya, as Sri Upendra Tirtha fighting robbers etc. After writing Geetha Bhashya before starting his first visit, he had composed Brahma Suthra Bhashya in Badari itself (a copy of which was sent in advance to his Ashrama Guru, Sri Achyutha Preksha). As Anuvyakhyana and Nyayavivarana were only written at a late stage after his debate with Sri Trivikrama Panditacharya, Dvadasaha Sthothra, Jayanthi Nirnaya, Krishnamrutha maharnava, etc would have been written towards the very end of his stay in Udupi, all other definitive works such as Geetha Thathparya, Upanishad Bhashyas, Vishnu Tatva nirṇaya, Khandanas, Tantrasara samgraha etc would be during the period between his two Badari visits, possibly in Udupi itself. Similarly the two great Tatparya Nirnayas on Mahabharata and Bhagavata would have been composed only after his return from his second visit, where he had received guidance and orders from Sri VedaVyasa to write them. All these factors as well as the rulership of Devagiri by Mahadeva (called as Iswaradeva in Sumadhvajaya) who ruled in 1261-1271 AD, which included North Konkan also in his time, seems to place Madhva's second visit in a narrow band of 1265 – 1271 AD, when Acharya Madhva was around 30 years of age.

To sum up, barring this brief encounter, Madhva's period was generally free of any impact of the Muslim rule in India, except for the last 6/7 years, when Allauddin Khalji invaded Dvarasamudra ruled by Ballala. Madhva's own area of activity in his last few years as a visible manifestation on earth – Kerala and South Canara, was completely free of any muslim influence. However, the period of his immediate successors Sri Padmanabha and Narahari Tirtha (1318 – 1333 AD) was a turbulent period, affecting almost all the areas of their activity – North Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and almost the whole of North India. Orissa was an Oasis of Security and Hindu ethos during this period. The Kampili Hindu kingdom survived for some time till 1327 AD, covering Dharwar, Raichur and Bellary, including the famous Anegondi (Hosanagara), which became the fertile ground for the growth of the future Vijayanagara empire set up by princes from the Kampili lineage. The situation rapidly improved only after 1340 AD, when the new Vijayanagara kingdom was firmly established in Hampi. The location of the Vrindavanas near Hampi of these early pontiffs, is therefore quite understandable. Thereafter, Vijayanagara empire was the bed rock of political support till it was also finally destroyed in 1660 AD. There was however a curious aberration in this during the period of the immediate successors to Sri Teekacharya when the Vrindavanas were located in an adjacent Muslim ruled Bahamani state, the reasons for which are unclear at this point of time.

Historical records of rulers during Acharya Madhva and his immediate successors.

(COMPILED FROM BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN BOOK –

The History and Culture of the Indian People)

Acharya Madhva – (1238 – 1317 AD)

Padmanabha Tirtha – (1318 – 1324 AD)

Narahari Tirtha – (1324 - 1333 AD)

Madhava Tirtha – (1333 – 1350 AD)
Akshobhya Tirtha – (1350 – 1365 AD)
Jaya Tirtha – (1365 – 1388 AD)

Delhi was ruled by Ilbari Turks from around 1210 AD to 1290 AD, the last was named Balban. Balban was in effective power as Viceroy supervising the rule of kings of Turkish origin from about 1242-1265 AD and continued to rule the Delhi Sultanate till 1287 AD. He was therefore the Turkish ruler who was ruling North India during both visits of Acharya Madhva. But his rule did not extend into Southern India, which was done for the first time by the Khaljis – Allauddin after 1296 AD. He had concentrated on establishing, consolidating and perpetuating his rule rather than conquests of new territory. He was also securing his frontiers against attack from the west by Mongols, southwest by Rajputs etc. and putting down insurrections from Awadh (Ayodhya) etc. South India was essentially Hindu ruled, till Allauddin invaded Devagiri in 1296 AD. Balban had to re-annex Lahore only a few years after his accession in 1265 AD., where mongols still ruled. Hindu chandellas had gradually extended their territory by occupying Jhansi and occupying even Mathura. Balban had to wage campaigns against them in 1251 AD. Balban waged 2 campaigns to obtain control over Aligarh district in 1254 AD.

C M Padmanabhachar has opined that Acharya Madhva's encounter reported in Sumdhvavijaya with a Muslim ruler was with Jalaluddin Khalji, uncle of Allauddin. According to recorded history, Jalaluddin came to power by 1290 AD, by putting an end to the Turkish rule, at an advanced age of 70 years . Taking the date of birth of Madhva as 1238 AD, he would be 52 years of age by this time. It is obvious that his first Badari visit would have been long past this date. During his short reign of 6 years, till 1296 AD, Jalaluddin also known as Firuz had led only two campaigns one against a Muslim rebel in Avadh (Ayodhya) in 1290 and Ranthambhor in Rajasthan next year. In fact all subsequent campaigns were led by Allauddin, his nephew. Thus, he is most unlikely to be the Muslim king encountered by Madhva. On the other hand, it would also tend to confirm that Acharya Madhva's second visit to Badari must have taken place well before 1290 AD in Balban's time, that is earlier to 1287 AD, where such military campaigns were common. This would give Madhva's age during the second Badari visit as less than 48 years, which would fit in with the accepted sequence in composition of his works.

The Khalji dynasty ruled in Delhi during 1290 – 1320 AD and their impact on South India is summarised as under:

Firoz Shah – 1290 – 1296 AD. Allauddin - 1296 – 1316 AD

Allauddin invaded in May/June 1296 Deogiri (Daulatabad), which was a Yadava kingdom ruled by Ramachandra, and plundered the town. He killed his uncle, Firoz by deceit on 20 July 1296 AD. In 1302 he tried to invade Warangal through Bengal and Orissa and was defeated. Allauddin invaded Devagiri again in March 1307, but he allowed the King Ramachandra to continue after paying tribute. In 1309, he invaded Warangal again with the help of Devagiri and besieged the city in January 1310. Finally after some resistance, King Prathaparudra was defeated and acknowledged it by paying huge tribute. From Warangal, his army went on to the extreme south of the country. It reached Devagiri again in February and went on to Dvarasamudra, ruled by the Hoysala King Ballala III, who sued for peace. The army went on to the Pandyan kingdom which extended from Quilon to Nellore on the east coast. They chased the two Pandyan princes waging Guerilla warfare, reaching Chidambaram with its golden temple which was razed to the ground. The temples at Srirangam were also sacked and Madurai temple of Chokkanatha was also set fire to. There is some doubt whether they reached Rameswaram also in this campaign. The

army returned to Delhi in October 1311, after about 5 months of continuous campaigning. Thus the period February to October 1311 was a period of intense warfare between Muslim forces loyal to the Delhi kingdom of Allauddin and the southern kings Ramachandra of Devagiri, Ballala of Dvarasamudra, and the Pandya princes – Sundara and Vira ruling the east coast including south Kerala.

There was a second expedition of Allauddin's army in 1313 AD, when Devagiri, Dvarasamudra and Telingana were subjugated. But the entire yadava kingdom could not be subjugated as the Hindu kingdom of Kampili (Bellary, Raichur and Dharwar) asserted its independence. Devagiri re-asserted its independence again in 1315 AD. In 1318 AD, Mubarak Shah invaded Deccan again defeating Warangal and trying to occupy Malabar. His son Khusrav was defeated in the battle for Delhi by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq in 1320 AD.

Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq ruled only for 5 years – 1320 – 1325 AD. In 1322 AD, the Muslim army attacked Devagiri and Warangal, but the expedition failed to conquer Warangal. Next year, one more expedition was sent and was only partly successful, as Prathaparudra continued in Warangal. But, there are indications that the Delhi army continued south to conquer the Pandya kingdom based on Madurai. Rajahmundry was won in 1324 AD, but Bhanudeva II of Kalinga (Orissa) repelled their further progress there. The son of Ghiyasuddin was the famous/notorious Muhammed Bin Tughlaq, who ruled for 27 years – 1325 – 1351 AD.

Sumadhvajaya is silent with regard to when the various incidents that have happened, except that some events have been juxtaposed in a particular order and can be arranged accordingly. Thus installation of Udupi Krishna must have taken place before the second visit, and after the first visit to Badari. Geetha Bhashya was the very first composition written even before he went to Badari for the first time. Brahma Suthra Bhashya was written in Badari during his first visit, when Sri Sathya Tirtha was the prominent ascetic disciple with him along with some others, who wrote the Bhashya as per Madhva's dictation. At this time, he could not have had his main disciples like Padmanabha, Narahari etc, who were ordained by him on his return visit from Badari in Godavari river banks. Sri Narahari Tirtha must have essentially remained in Orissa till late years of Madhva as per his orders – as indicated by his shasanas there. His date of the first shasana 1264 AD indicates the higher limit for the date of Madhva's first return from Badari and his route – possibly Godavari river bank, such as Rajahmundry and possibly a visit to newly constructed Jagannatha Puri, a great Vaishnava kshethra nearby, where Sri Narahari Tirtha must have invited and taken him, as he was an important resident in that kingdom. We can look at the possible scenarios later. Anuvyakhyana and Nyayavivarana must have been composed after the debate with Thrivikrama Pandithacharya. Some smaller works like Krishnamrutha maharnava, Yathipranava kalpa etc must have come up towards his last visible days on earth.

Acharya Madhva was still on earth during the period of Allauddin Khalji, (1296 – 1316 AD), but his presence seems to have been limited to the Kerala and Konkan west coasts which were unaffected by Alluddin's conquests and wars. His first visit with disciples to Badari kshethra was completed long before the Khaljis came to power (1290 AD), as His initiation of Sri Narahari Tirtha must have been before 1264 AD (Sri Padmanabha's initiation must have been somewhat earlier, and hence his first northern visit must have commenced well before 1260 AD, when he was just 22 years of age, taking note of the long and arduous journey, places visited on the way, at least three chaturmasas, and the long stay in Badarinath itself etc, where the famous Brahma suthra Bhashya was written). The period of Ghiyasuddin (1320 - 1325 AD) corresponds to that of Sri Padmanabha Tirtha (1317 – 1324 AD), in whose time the Deccan area was subject to repeated invasions from Delhi Muslim forces – 1318, 1322 and 1324 AD. Even Sri Padmanabha's area in Northern Andhra (Rajahmundry etc) – there is a suggestion that he was in the

court of Warangal) was severely disturbed in the continuous fighting. But, the area around Dharwar, Bellary and Raichur was still under the Hindu ruler of Kampili. During this period, however, Sri Narahari Tirtha, his successor, was in Hindu ruled Kalinga (Orissa) 1264 – 1293 AD, and perhaps rejoined Madhva after that period. His activity may have been confined to Orissa and South Karnataka after his return, till he also attained the Feet of the Lord in 1333 AD.

Mohamed Bin Tughlaq was in power during the times of Sri Narahari, Madhava and Akshobhya Tirtha. MBT tried to enlarge his empire in all directions. In 1326-27 AD, He quelled the rebellion of his sister's son ruling Sagar (near Gulbarga) and the latter sought shelter from the small Hindu kingdom of Kampili (which Allauddin could not subjugate during 1313 - 1315 AD), which had grown in power and prestige, including parts of Anantapur, Chitradurg and Shimoga districts along with the original Bellary, Dharwar and Raichur. The Sultan's army was twice defeated by the Kampili army, but the heroic king had to shut himself up in the fort of Hosadurg (Anegondi). Though he held out for more than a month, he finally died in battle. His kingdom was annexed as a separate province under the Sultan. The surviving sons of the King were carried to Delhi and forced to convert to Islam. Among them were two sons Hakka and Bukka, the founders of Vijayanagara. The fugitive muslim taking shelter was sent to Dvarasamudra, then ruled by Ballala III. He was again invaded by the Delhi army, his city destroyed in 1327 AD, but remained king over a part of his old kingdom (based on an inscription of 1328 AD). At this point of time, Tughlaq ruled over most of South India – including the Pandya kingdom of Madurai, Hoysala kingdom of Karnataka and Warangal, except for a small strip on the west coast. The enforced shifting of the capital from Delhi to Devagiri (Daulatabad) also took place in 1327 AD. During this traumatic period, 1326 – 1328 AD, Sri Narahari Tirtha was the pontiff of the Madhva parampare, and may have been having some support from his old Orissa kings. Perhaps this explains the location of the two Vrindavanas of Sri Padmanabha and Sri Narahari in Hampi, in a remote location far away from populated places, but very near the site of the newly developing Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar. *The extra-ordinary resilience and capacity of the early Gurus who nurtured Tatvavada in such difficult times and maintained its literature and knowledge base intact and even added to it evokes our admiration.* By 1335 AD, (after Sri Narahari Tirtha) there was a resurgence of Hindu armies led by Prolaya Nayak and Kapaya Nayak from East Godavari district, Vira Ballala III , the Hoysala king etc who forced the withdrawal of the Muslim armies from Warangal itself. When Tughlaq tried to contain the rebellion by appointing Hakka and Bukka who had been forcibly converted to islam, as Governors of Kampili, it did not succeed as they renounced Islam and became fervent Hindu revivalists, under the influence of the ascetic Vidyananya, founding the kingdom of Vijayanagar in 1336 AD.

Towards the close of 13 th century, M Kulashekhara Pandya ruled the kingdom with the capital at Madurai, which comprised of a greater part of the peninsula. When Allauddin Khalji invaded the south, there was an internal war of succession between his sons Sundara and Vira, the former seeking the assistance of the Muslim invader, after he was defeated. But after the Muslim commander Kafur left the area, the brothers and their successors continued to rule seperately, though weakened. Kerala ruled by Kulashekhara had escaped the invasion of Muslims and had established authority over the cholas and the Pandyas, by defeating both the brothers – around 1312-1313 AD. (Note the correspondence to Acharya Madhva's period 1238 – 1317 AD). Madhva's south Indian tour would be during the time of the Pandyan king Kulashekhara (1256-57 AD) and Kerala remained free of Muslim invasion during his entire stay on earth. After 1313 AD, the Kerala king tried to expand his kingdom towards Kanchi. But the Pandyas defeated the Kerala king by taking the help of Hoysala King Vira Ballala III. The Pandya kingdom was also invaded soon after, by King Prathaparudra from Warangal (Kakathiyas) who captured Kanchi. Though Tughlaq established a Muslim state called Mabar, head quartered at Madurai in 1323 AD, most of the remaining parts of the Pandya kingdom was ruled by pandya princes till about 1380 AD. Even

after Vijayanagara empire was established in 1350's, some Pandya principalities ruled from 1367 – 87, 1384 – 1415, and 1395 – 1411 in Tinneveli district.

The Muslim ruled Kingdom at Mabar head quartered at Madurai which came into existence when an independent sultanate was established by a rebellion against the rule of Tughlaq from Delhi in 1334 AD, was shortlived for only five years as the northern part was liberated by a Hindu army, taking the help of Vira Ballala III and Kapaya Nayaka. But, in one of the wars, Vira Ballala himself was killed and his army defeated. Daghani, the Muslim king was extremely cruel and killed Hindus in large numbers like beasts. The Muslim dynasty came to an end in the next decade, with the death of a worthless king borrowed from Bahamani kingdom, when they were invaded by Kumara Kampana, a commander of Bukka raya of Vijayanagara kingdom based in Mulabagal during a series of expeditions in 1364 – 1370 AD. Thus the Muslim rulers, of whom some persecuted the Hindus, ruled the Madurai capital and surrounding territory very badly during 1334 – 1370 AD and some small parts till 1378 AD. This period corresponds to Sri Madhava and Akshobhya Tirtha's reign (1333 – 1365 AD) in the earlier part and its destruction part to the 23 years of Sri Jayatirtha's reign in the Madhva parampare (ending in 1388 AD). It is clear that the period 1333 – 1365 AD saw Hindu powers at a low point and Muslim invasions and persecution at a high level except for the Hindu Kingdom of Hoysala Ballala III in Dvarasamudra, the burgeoning kingdom of Vijayanagar at Hampi, and Kerala. The old Pandyan kingdom (in the present Tamilnadu) as well as the area around Madurai/Rameswaram etc was the scene of great strife and tribulations for the Hindus. Kalinga (Orissa) maintained itself under Hindu rule till 1434 AD, though it did suffer some reverses during the time of Bhanudeva III (1352 – 1378 AD), when his capital was occupied and the famous Jagannatha temple at Puri was desecrated in 1352/53 AD. The apparent limitation of propagation of Madhva tenets to areas in the South western India (Karnataka and the Konkan coast) during the times up to Sri Vidyadhiraja Tirtha (1388-1402 AD) can be understood in the context of their being forced to stay in the comparatively peaceful Hindu ruled states as above. Even Ramanuja was persecuted in his time and forced to leave Srirangam, and the temple there along with that at Chidambaram had been sacked by Allauddin in 1310 AD (when Madhva was still there). The temple was only restored after the Vijayanagara empire came up strongly.

Bahamani kingdom was founded by an emir named Hasan Gangu succeeding into the seat of Devagiri/Daulatabad, when he rebelled successfully against Mohamed Bin Tughlaq in 1345 AD (when Sri Madhava Tirtha was in the pontiff's seat). The founder was a servant of a Brahman called Gangu, who discovered a pot of gold, when tilling a field for his master. His name Bahman was derived from this past, to show his gratitude to his master. It is stated that even today, a street in Gulbarga is called Bahmanpura, where a number of Brahmins live, who claim descent from Bahman. Bahman shah made his capital at Gulbarga, where it remained till 1425AD, when it was changed to Bidar. Thus for the entire period of the reigns of Sri Akshobhya Tirtha to Vagisha Tirtha of UM and RajendraTirtha of SVM, Gulbarga and its surrounding territory was being ruled by Muslim kings of Bahamani dynasty. Only later, Ahmad Shah shifted the capital to Bidar. The first king Bahman shah subjugated all the smaller kingdoms around his own, but left the local Hindu and Muslim chieftains alone to continue to rule. A specific case is also recorded of one Ismail Mukh who was given a Jagir near Jamkhandi who was influenced by Narayana, another chieftain into rebelling against Bahman Shah himself. Bahman Shah punished Narayana, who had killed Ismail earlier and consolidated the area of Bijapur district under him. He died in 1358 AD at an age of 67 (when Sri Akshobhya was in the holy seat) and was succeeded by Mohammad Shah, his son.

The defensive wars against the Hindu kingdom of Warangal which had also been fighting against Delhi sultanate and the Hindu state of Telingana in the north and the newly born state of Vijayanagara in the south, also started in his time. Bukka 1, the Hindu king of Vijayanagar demanded the Krishna-

Tungabhadra Doab and jointly with Warangal tried to secure more territory at the expense of the Bahamani kingdom. But in the wars that followed in 1362 AD, after some victories described in exaggerated terms by Muslim historians, some boundaries were settled and Golconda had to be ceded to Bahamani kingdom with Telingana agreeing to pay tributes and war booty. During the period 1364 – 1375 AD, till his death, there was peace and improvement in administration. **“He also started the use of artillery in his wars with Vijayanagara”**. This is significant as in earlier wars both in North and South of India, we read of elephants being used as Siege breakers or for assault and block defences and tributes being demanded and obtained in the form of hundreds of elephants from Kingdoms like Orissa etc which had plentiful forests . Mohammad Shah’s period of comparatively peaceful rule mentioned above corresponds to the early part of the reign of Sri Teekacharya (1365-1388 AD), who mostly stayed in Yeragola for his compositions and his Guru Sri Akshobhya’s Brindavana pravesha took place in Manyakheta in 1365 AD (near present Malkhed). Gulbarga remained the capital during the entire period. The construction of the structure, possibly originally a Gun emplacement, now housing the Vrindavanas in Malkhed on the river bank of Kagini river could have been done **at the earliest** during 1362/64 AD, as an defensive structure initially. There is of course, no information about when it was really constructed, or whether it came up later. There is no record of any sacking of Manyakheta town during this period, which may have justified shifting the Vrindavana of Sri Akshobhya Tirtha during 1365 – 1388 AD, when Sri JayaTirtha ruled. On the other hand there is an indirect confirmation that being in the heart of a newly growing kingdom, the historic town was safer than those areas nearer the borders of the new contesting states. There is also a strong indication that Sri Teekacharya, being the pure ascetic having renounced the world, chose a cave in yeragola for his monumental compositions – as it would not be disturbed by battles, disturbances from a more populated place and consequent harassments in its vicinity. It is also clear that after Sri JayaTirtha, the local situation at Malkheda itself became uncongenial for Madhva saints – as evidenced by their first shifting to Yeragola (Vidyadhiraja, etc) and then to Hampi (Kavindra etc) again, as well as other historic data being mentioned below.

A picture of the state of the land in Bahamani kingdoms as given by the quote of Dr. B N K Sharma from the Oxford History of India Page 282, second edition in his “Sathyameva jayathe” may be noted.

“Yeragola was the seat of Sri Vidyadhiraja and his successors till the time of Vidyavidhi. It was then part of the Bahamani kingdom whose capital was first at Kalburgi (Gulbarga) and was later shifted to Bidar. Under Bahamani rule (1347-1482) the Deccan was torn by savage wars against the Hindu rulers of Vijayanagara and Warangal. Horrid cruelties were committed by Sultan Muhammad Shah I (1358 -). The ferocious struggle continued until the Sultan was reputed to have slain a half million Hindus. The population was so much reduced that the Uttara Karnataka country did not recover for ages. The eighth Sultan Firoz Shah (1397 – 1422 AD), was a fierce bigot who spent most of his time in pitiless wars against Hindu neighbours, being determined to use his best endeavours in the suppression of infidelity and the strengthening of Faith. He went on expedition almost every year forcing the Raya of Vijayanagar to pay tribute. Ahmed Shah who ruled from 1422-35 resumed the war on Hindus. He attacked the Vijayanagar territory with even greater savagery than that of his predecessor. He was succeeded by Aluddin II who renewed the war with Vijayanagar which resulted in a peace favourable to the Sultan. Humayun who ruled after him (1458-61) and had already earned a terrible reputation for ferocious cruelty indulged in the maniacal passion for the infliction of pain. Many men and women suspected without reason of favouring rebellion were stabbed with daggers, hewn in pieces with hatchets or scalded to death in boiling water or hot oil. The story of the dynasty as it appears in the books is not attractive reading. Between 1347-1478, with the exception of the fifteenth sultan, all the sovereigns were blood thirsty tyrants. The record of their wars with the neighbouring Hindu princes is a mass of sickening horrors”.

Though this picture may need amendment based on the success of the Vijayanagar state during its earlier years as well as under Krishnadevaraya, It would thus appear that though the founder may have had some initial mental bias to adopt a policy of live and let live with Hindu kings and people, the Bahamani kingdom on the whole must have been extremely adverse to Hindu interests after him, which covers almost the entire period from Sri Jayatirtha to Sri Raghuttama and Vyasaraja swamin.

As the next topic, let us look at the location of the “Moola Vrindavanas” of the two next disciples of Acharya Madhva to understand the implications of the history features mentioned earlier.

MOOLA VRINDAVANAS OF SRI 1008 MADHAVA and SRI AKSHOBHYA TIRTHA

The Vrindavana of **Sri Madhava Tirtha** was originally located at Hampi after his demise in 1350 AD and then shifted to Mannur as per Dr. B N K Sharma and some Matha records. The shifting is reported to be on the basis of a *Svapna soochana* (direction given in a dream) to a prominent person in Mannur and the new one was first installed in the open in a place called Uppinagadde in Kheda-mannur. However, when the area was being flooded by the river, it was reinstalled in the present location of an UM Pathshala based on another dream indication given to Sri Vyasaramacharya of Adya lineage at the time of Sri Sathyaparayana Tirtha (around 1850 AD). The contextual information for the reasons of the shift is not shown in the traditional records of UM such as the Sathkatha, which attributes the shift to the depredations of Muslims in Hampi area and has called the Vrindavana in Mannur as a “Second Vrindavana”. As only one Moola Vrindavana can exist, by definition, the shift is implicitly accepted by Sathkatha.

However this issue needs to be further explained as Sri Madhava Tirtha entered the Vrindavana in 1350 AD, when the Vijayanagar kingdom had already been established 10 years earlier by Harihara 1 in Hampi. The area was well protected being the very heart of the new empire till it was destroyed finally by the Bahmani forces in the early 17 century. The shifting appears actually to be after a time lapse of centuries after installation and may not be at all connected to Muslim invasions. The original reasons for the shift given in the story of Sathkatha was casual and without any basis and perhaps changed when it was seen to be untenable, specially as no other parallel case seems to exist of such a shifting of the Vrindavana of any ascetic from Hampi area. The cause of the first shifting – a dream – is also very vague, as there is no record of the person, who got such a major effort done, which could not be done by any single individual without the approval of the Mathas performing regular Aradhanas for the main Moola Vrindavana. The second shifting was essentially to locate it within the premises where another Vrindavana existed earlier, to facilitate regular worship, which might have been less easy in an isolated location. The origin of the dreams being attributed to the saint is also doubtful at best, as there would have been one, and not two successively, given by the divine saint and that too, when the Hampi area was under devastation– and not much later and in piecemeal. Such efforts are justifiably made when there is imminent danger to the original by flooding or unavoidable natural causes (Also see the Vrindavana of Sri Akshobhya Tirtha below). Only in the recent past, one Sosale Vyasaraja pontiff tried to shift many widely scattered Vrindavanas to one location for less important reasons. He failed, in many well known instances such as Sri Lakshmikantha Tirtha, Kambaluru Ramachandra Tirtha etc and caused strong feelings of disapproval in the devotees.

There can also be serious doubts whether what was provided in Mannur is only a Mritthika Vrindavana and the Moola one is still in Hampi area, untraced presently. The features of the present Vrindavana of Sri Madhava Tirtha are quite different and are unlikely to be the original type, without the large stone slabs similar to those of his predecessors, like Sri Padmanabha, Sri Narahari Tirtha etc, which though located in the same area as “Hampi”, where his first Vrindavana location is stated to be. It is also noteworthy that these have not been disturbed till very recently within the last decade – when some evil souls disturbed the Vrindavana of Sri Narahari Tirtha. A fabricated story of grave robbers ostensibly in search of buried treasure also appeared in the Newspapers. It is unbelievable that anyone who had any idea of the purpose of such structures present there and in Navavrindavana for centuries past, would have done so, taking the serious trouble and making organised efforts to move the heavy stones which should have involved several persons. Unfortunately, this crime against our Parampare and a great saint has not been investigated properly and the Vrindavana was taken over by the UM and some repairs carried out. This was a heinous crime against the great ascetic, a great devotee and follower of Acharya Madhva, who had achieved a great deal during his life time, which damns the people concerned for all time, to Andhahthamas in the Madhva mind as well as in the non-erasable records of the Almighty.

Thus there is no credible evidence that the present Vrindavana at Mannur is the original Vrindavana of Sri Madhava Tirtha shifted from Hampi. Though a Peetha lineage descended from his direct disciple Sri Madhuhari Tirtha has continued over the centuries till now and is presently in Thambi halli, it is recorded that the pontiffs of this Matha are *not permitted* to worship the Vrindavana at Mannur by the UM claiming exclusive right of worship. This Matha which had fought legal battles to survive as an independent institution has since established a Mritthika Vrindavana at Thambihalli. It is unfortunate that the “My Matha” concepts have apparently deprived these genuine devotees and descendents of the unfettered right to worship Sri Madhava Tirtha’s Vrindavana, at Mannur, such as is available today.

Similarly, the Vrindavana of **Sri Akshobhya Tirtha** was also originally located in the ancient town of Manyakheta, within the protecting fort, whose ruins lie near Malkhed of today and where a Mantapa still exists called by his name. The town which was once the capital of the Rashtrakoota empire, the first empire in recorded history based on Karnataka, also covering the whole of the Indian peninsula and had existed for many centuries, was sacked and completely destroyed by Aurangjeb in 1686 AD as per recorded history. There was an earlier invasion of this capital of the Rashtrakootas, but it was well before the time of Sri Akshobhya Tirtha and the town was only looted and not totally destroyed at that time. After the final destruction and complete abandoning of the town, it appears that a part of the original Vrindavana and some stones were shifted to the present location on the banks of the Kagini river. The nature of the structure there with low roof with concealed entrance almost at ground level, low profile etc housing the two Vrindavanas of Sri Akshobhya Tirtha and Sri JayaTirtha today, seems to indicate that it was not built after the Vrindavanas were in place, but was in prior existence for some other purpose, where some parts of the original Vrindavana were brought and reconstructed. A close inspection will reveal that even the low roof is sloping with the Vrindavana of Sri Akshobhya being of reduced height as compared to that of Sri JayaTirtha by its side and that of Sri Raghunatha Tirtha, which is the tallest.

This is a clear indication of the Vrindavanas being so constructed as to adjust to the height available of the structure. The outside structure could have been a Gun emplacement shelter with rectangular slits for Gun muzzles, commanding the crossing of the river by fording or by boats, which must have been there, before the river was provided with a bridge nearby, in the recent past.

The Akshobhya Tirtha Vrindavana is also with considerably reduced height and size than was usual in those days. If it were the original Vrindavana established by his great disciple – Sri Jayatirtha in 1367 AD as per UM table and 1365 AD as given in HDSV of Dr. Sharma.– it could have been similar to that of Sri Padmanabha and Sri Narahari Tirtha's, in size and construction and could not be hidden in such a low profile. It is also unlikely to have been established here, in an area subject to periodical flooding away from the then flourishing town of Manyakheta where ruins of the Mantapa also identified with the saint still exist. Without the Vrindavana, the naming of the ruined structure inside the Fort as Akshobhya Tirtha Mantapa would also be pointless. Also, it is unlikely that the present Vrindavana itself was originally installed by his successor, the great Jayatirtha on the river bank in its present location, arrangement and size, when there was a Sri Akshobhya Tirtha matha in those days inside the town. Further if it were being established for the first time itself on the banks of the Kagini river, in the open, there would be no necessity for its being constructed with reduced dimensions, but would have been installed in the same manner of Vrindavanas at that time, as seen elsewhere, when there was no danger from any one. Both Sri Akshobhya Tirtha as well as Sri Jaya Tirtha were from noble ruling families of the area and had well established support from local rulers as per their life histories and no lack of resources could be attributed to the Matha for this purpose. There was also no practice of putting up any shelter or covering on Vrindavanas, in those days, and the tops would have carried Thulasi plants as in the Navavrindavana cases. The practice of providing shelters came up much later. Even if it is assumed that the original vrindavanas in the present form only were installed in the open, and the covering came much later in Malkhed, it is difficult to explain as to why it was constructed in such a way as to not provide easy access even to the Archakas and makes it difficult to have Darshana and perform pradakshinas by the devotees. Thus it seems to be well established that Sri Akshobhya Tirtha Vrindavana was reinstalled after a process of Kalakarshana etc in the present location, when it became necessary to do so perhaps in the late 17 century, that is 400 years after it the saint went to Samadhi, when the Manyakheta town was sacked and destroyed.

The date of this shifting of Sri Akshobhya Vrindavana becomes crucial as it was not done in his successor's time but much later, and the story that Sri Jayatirtha's Moola Vrindavana was located just by the side of his Guru needs further enquiry based on the fact of this shifting.

There are three different possibilities regarding the present position of Sri Akshobhya Tirtha's Vrindavana in this regard:

1. Sri Teekacharya's Moola Vrindavana was located first in the present site and Sri Akshobhya's came later after shifting. Various arguments as to why this is not possible which have been discussed earlier regarding Sri Akshobhya Tirtha's Vrindavana will apply equally in this case. It is also quite significant that Sri JayaTirtha's Vrindavana is

in the middle of the shelter and Akshobhya's was installed in the lowest portion of the structure, when Sri JayaTirtha's and Sri Raghunatha's were already there. The most likely original location would have to be considered as inside the town. This option is thus ruled out. A more detailed analysis of the position follows later.

2. Both the Vrindavanas were located in the old town and were shifted together, when it was destroyed. This would have been a possible explanation, but for the fact that the Third Vrindavana in the present Malkhed location – said to be that of Sri Raghunatha is also within the covered structure. As the shifting was in any case much later than the Vrindavana pravesha of Sri Raghunatha in 1504 or 1527 AD ?, it is difficult to explain as to why all the constraints of space etc were accepted, by a Matha with ample resources when shifting two more Moola Vrindavanas to the present location. It should have been far more likely to have been located nearby and the covering structure demolished and/or modified to suit the new locations of the three Vrindavanas.
3. Sri Akshobhya's was shifted first, much earlier to the location where Sri Raghunatha's existed, while Sri Jayatirtha's was a Mrittika Vrindavana added later for convenience in daily worship by a family of traditional archakas belonging to one family who were found in control during the 18 th century on wards who would have limited resources. The space available between the Vrindavanas does not permit the deep pit, where the body of the saint is first lowered and buried in Salt etc, which is at least 8 feet square, specially when another Vrindavana is already present within less than 4-5 feet of the new one..

Taking all these facts into consideration, it appears that the first Vrindavana at this location was that of Sri Raghunatha, in 1527 AD, which could be a Moola Vrindavana, while Sri Akshobhya's came later, after the desecration inside the town after 1686 AD with a reduced profile, but which may qualify as a Moola Vrindavana, with some of its parts shifted from the Fort, but without the original pit etc. Sri Jayatirtha's Vrindavana could have been added later as a Mritthika Vrindavana. Further detailed reasoning to support the conjecture are given below.

All the above conjectures are also supported by other circumstantial evidence . Till 1837 AD, the name Malkhed was unknown, as the previous name Manyakheta had been changed by the Nizam state to Muzaffarnagar in 1752 AD. The new name Malkhed was given for the first time by the British administration, when they formed a new district in 1837 AD. The three Vrindavanas on the bank of the Kagini river in Malkhed were being worshipped by a family of Archakas, who were being paid an allowance and also granted some land for their maintenance during the 19 th century by the Nizam government – “for service of Temple Sri Jayatheertha Swamy, Malkhed”. It was in July 1956, that the then endowment minister of Andhra ordered that the premises to be handed over to Sri Uttaradi Mutt in response to an application given by them. It is noteworthy that an earlier application by 1946 AD to the then Hyderabad Government was rejected by them and the Archakas had continued to enjoy the properties and their traditional right to worship the Vrindavanas. The name Malkhed appears in many devara namas, mentioning the Vrindavana of Sri JayaTirtha, where sometimes the sanskritised version – Vrishtiketa – Male (rain in kannada) also appears. The genuineness of the Devaranamas as well their interpretation is being discussed separately.

However, there seems to be no doubt that the two Vrindavanas of Sri Madhava and Akshobhya may not be Moola Vrindavanas in the sense that the mortal remains of the Saints are buried in those locations or the original construction of Vrindavanas as installed by their successors is remaining today. The present Vrindavanas termed as “Moola” are created clones at a much later time than the demise of the saints, with no clear records or indications as to why it became necessary to do so. This should not deter us in our faith or devotion to them – as their Vrindavanas, in what ever manner created, should have their divine presence in them and we offer worship on that basis.

I have just brought out facts as known to me from various sources and records. Sri JayaTirtha’s Moola Vrindavana is believed to be at Malkhed only, by a large number of persons based on a very long tradition as well as evidence and is an article of faith to UM. I would like these issues to be discussed in our forum without heat but with more light being thrown, so that we could form our own conclusions. I would be particularly anxious to know how the apparent Anupapatties (logical errors) mentioned above would be answered by those advocating this issue.

To be continued: