

ACHARYA MADHVA AND HIS IMMEDIATE DISCIPLES

Instalment II

BRIEF HISTORY OF SRI 1008 AKSHOBHYA TIRTHA (1350 – 1365/7 AD)

Sri Akshobhya Tirtha came on the scene of Madhva parampare at a crucial stage, in many respects. He had to face a rejuvenated and Vigorous Advaita school led by Sage Vidyaranya, a person of great abilities, scholarly achievements, political power and influence. He was also a contemporary of Vedanta Deshika, a great scholar- exponent of Vishishtadvaita. He had to organise the newly set up Mathas on regional basis taking into account the simultaneous development of two strong states in the Southern part of the country – the Bahamani and Vijayanagar kingdoms, along with the continued carnage of Hindus by fanatic Muslim rulers. . He was the master and teacher of one of the greatest intellects who has dominated Madhva philosophy, who himself acknowledged his gratitude to his master – Sri Jayatirtha, He was a terror in disputation to his opponents, and left behind numerous signs of his proselytising activity including temples originated by him – in Mulbagal, etc. He has also left behind 2 lineages of ascetics initiated by himself – at Koodali and Balagaru. He ruled the main pontificate of Acharya Madhva for 15 years but apparently composed no works – allowing his disciple Jayatirtha to fulfill that task most effectively and completely.

Sri Akshobhya was ordained by Acharya Madhva himself according to tradition while a few hold that he was ordained by Sri Padmanabha. The difference in his age of demise/last days of Madhva is 48/50 years (1317 – 1365/67 AD). As it is believed that he was also a ruler for a few years, and then he was ordained after his renunciation, Akshobhya would have to be at least 25 plus years and Madhva would be very near his final departure to Badari, at the time. Thus he could have studied directly under Madhva only for 4/5 years – as the latter would have gone way (in his 79 year in 1317 AD) – when Akshobhya would only be 29-30 years of age. Thus most of his study would be under Sri Padmanabha Tirtha irrespective of who actually ordained him. The generally accepted opinion is that he was born in 1282 AD, and was ordained around 1312 AD at an age of 30 and was in his early 80s when he entered Vrindavana. As there were numerous other ascetics ordained by Acharya Madhva and his immediate disciples, the smooth and orderly succession after Madhva – Padmanabha, Narahari, and Madhava must have been predetermined by Madhva himself. This supports the view that Madhva would have endorsed the succession of Akshobhya also 33 years later.

Though no compositions except a short Sanskrit sthuthra is attributed to him, there is no doubt about his great scholarly attainments – the best certificate in this regard is recorded by his famous disciple – Sri Teekacharya, himself a an absolute authority of Tatvavada as well as other competing systems of philosophy of Vedanta origin and others - “Akshobhyatirtha muninaa shukavath shikshithasya me” – attributing his vast knowledge, and expertise to the meticulous teaching by his master. He also eulogises him as a great

scholar in Tatvavada - “Padavakyapramanajna”, “Prathivadimadacchidah”, “Durvadivaranavidarana dakshadeeksham”, “Vyakhyananandalithakhiladushtadarpam”, comparing him to a Lion which destroyed all elephant-like strong opponents efficiently with the help of commentaries on the compositions of the Lord Himself. Anyone familiar with Sri Teekacharya’s writings would instantly recognise that he would never indulge in exaggerated praise, wasted words etc saying any thing without a full and proper background. Thus Sri Akshobhya must have spent a great deal of time with his disciple in his teaching preparing him for the latter’s prodigious output in the form of all major commentaries on Madhva compositions in a short period of 23 years, along with being the expert scholar representing Tatvavada to the outside world and establishing his Mathas and enlarging his flock. Without in any way belittling the scholarship and contribution of the others, it would appear that the lineage – Padmanabha – Akshobhya – Jayatirtha – Rajendra – Vibhudendra – Sripadaraja – Vyasaraaja – Vadiraja/Vijayindra would appear to be like the main trunk of the Jnana of Tatvavada – and thus Sri Akshobhya has been most important for the preservation and dissemination of Tatvavada over a critical and difficult time. He must have had many disciples, two of whose lineages have survived today, along with his Star pupil, Sri Teekacharya.

To recapitulate the political scene : The Delhi sultanate - Sultan Ghaiyasuddin (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. After this period, however, Sri Narahari Tirtha, his successor, who was in Hindu ruled Kalinga (Orissa) 1264 – 1293 AD, and rejoined Madhva, may have been active in Southern Andhra and Karnataka after his return, till 1333 AD. Mohamed Bin Tughlaq (1325 – 1351 AD), was in power during the times of Sri Narahari and Madhava Tirtha, tried to enlarge his empire in all directions, right from 1326-27 AD, when he quelled the rebellion of his sister’s son ruling Sagar (near Gulbarga) till he destroyed 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 Anatapur, 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), 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 (Harihara I) Hakka and Bukka, founders of Vijayanagara. Dvarasamudra, ruled by Ballala III 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 of South Canara on the west coast. The enforced

shifting of the capital from Delhi to Devagiri (Daulatabad) also took place in 1327 AD. During this entire traumatic period, 1326 – 1328 AD, Sri Narahari Tirtha was the pontiff of the Madhva parampare. Perhaps this explains the location of the two Vrindavanas of Sri Padmanabha and Sri Narahari in Navavrindavana and Chakra Tirtha in Hampi, near Anegondi, in a remote location far away from populated places, but very near the site of the newly developing Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar, which took the place of the old Kampili kingdom. The extra-ordinary situation of war, persecution of Hindus, rapid change of rulers and boundaries, and social instability was courageously faced by these stalwarts who not only sustained the religious fervor and implementation of social consciousness but also ensured its rapid growth in numbers as well as quality. By 1335 AD, 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 to which they had been forced into and became fervent Hindu revivalists, under the influence of the ascetic Vidyaranya, founding the kingdom of Vijayanagar in 1336 AD. *A Passing comment may be made here that the step taken by sage Vidyaranya in taking back the Kampili princes into the Hindu fold promptly as their so called conversion was by force brought rich dividends in the form of a rejuvenated Hindu society and must be emulated wherever similar conditions exist in future. If one recalls that almost 90 % of Muslims in India belong originally to Hindu religion and culture and have been mostly the product of forced conversions by mass slaughter of all able bodied persons and being given the only alternative option of conversion just to survive, kidnapping of women and children and penal taxation making it impossible for them to survive, which was aggravated and perpetuated through the policy of the Hindu community not welcoming them back after the force has been released, one should realize the need and importance of this pragmatic policy. Those of us who belittle the efforts of socially aware Swamijis like Sri Vishweshwara Tirtha of Pejawara Matha, quoting out of relevance Shasthra texts should understand that they and the very culture of which they are a fringe of, is in danger to its very existence due to such irresponsible and self-destructive policies.*

Let us also look the accounts given of his life in the Sashtika lore:

There is some superficial similarity in the story of Sri Akshobhya Tirtha and JayaTirtha in the Shashtika Parampares written by one Raghavendrappa of Doddaballapura. One KeshavaBhatta was the vassal ruler of Jamkhandi state under the Yadavas of Devagiri. His son Govinda Bhatta, had a proper Gurukula education and became the ruler, when his father died. After a few years of such rule, he met Acharya Madhva and became an ascetic (Akshobhya Tirtha) in 1312 AD and handed over his kingdom to his uncle Dhundiraja. Dhundiraja joined in the battles against Allauddin* (read Bahman shah) in 1352 AD. (Allauddin khalji had invaded South in 1312/13 AD). He and his son in law Sarvotthama deva died in the battle (in 1322 AD?).. But Allauddin * (Read Bahaman

shah) allowed his younger son Raghunatha Nayaka to continue to rule under him as a vassal king as advised by his minister Gangadhara Bhatta (Gangu?). But Raghunatha Nayaka was not interested in being a ruler, after the death of his father, brother-in-law etc. He divided his kingdom into 4 parts, one near Manvi given to Narahari Nayaka, an elder brother, second portion including Purandaragad to Krishnappa nayaka, and the other two given away to the trading community and scholars. (This part of the story seems to be pure fiction). He gave up his own throne and went to his elder Sri Akshobhya who was performing austerities in Hampi to be initiated as Sri JayaTirtha.. This story claims family relationships to Sri Akshobhya, with JayaTirtha, and later with Rajendra and Jayadhwaja also, who were brothers. The name Govinda Bhatta (Shastri?) of Sri Akshobhya, Gangu Brahmin described as the adviser of Allauddin here, but was the former master of the founder of Bahamani kingdom, Raghunatha Nayaka being the poorvashrama name of Jayatirtha, his hailing from Mangala vedhe near Pandharapur , and his being a chieftain of Vrishtikheta, sanskritised name of Malkheda etc. are similar. But the later name came in very late – not at the time these events were supposed to be happening). But, linking the Poorvashrama Govinda Bhatta to Allauddin Khalji's invasion in 1312 AD with the latter having a Brahmin minister seems to be an error, as well as the continuation of the Jamkhandi principality under Hindus, if true historically, was done by Hasan Gangu, the founder of Bahamani kingdom, in 1345/52 AD. In fact, Hasan Gangu also called Alladdin Bahaman shah, rebelled against the Delhi rule. *This story makes some nuggets of sense, provided one reads Bahman Shah Gangu, the founder of Bahamani kingdom instead of Allauddin Khalji where appropriate.

It is significant that though Hampi/Vijayanagara had come into being as the capital of the new Hindu state from 1340 AD, with an avowed objective of restoring traditional Hindu culture, Sri Akshobhya/Teekacharya chose to remain in the comparatively dangerous places like Yeragola and Manyakheta perhaps due to the past association of Sri Akshobhya Tirtha with that area. There is also a possibility that the absolute domination of Sri Vidyaranya in Vijayanagara kingdom at this stage, till his death in 1388 AD and Shaivite dominated worship of Vijayanagara kings, as well as the association of the family of the two pontiffs with the area of Jamkhandi could have been responsible for this decision. The Shashtika Vamsha pradeepa of R.Rajarao describes a peculiar incident which allegedly took place when Sri Akshobhya was residing in Hampi – *the daughter of Harihara I, the king was married to the prince of Kampili state – called Somashekhara, who headed his cavalry. Once, when he was moving around in the city, a cart came in his way and got stuck. The prince beat up the poor cart driver mercilessly. Sri Akshobhya expressed his displeasure fearlessly at this evil act. Very soon, he received an order expelling the ascetic from the Vijayanagar state itself, Sri Akshobhya left Hampi and came back to his home region of Jamkhandi state. Though Vidyaranya who was friendly with him, later expressed his regrets and invited him back, Sri Akshobhya did not return and continued in Manyakheta to his last days. There is no way of ascertaining the truth of this story, but it brings out that the staying away from Hampi of Akshobhya was deliberate. This may not apply to Sri Jayatirtha who was apparently honoured by Sri Vidyaranya much later .*

A exhaustive introduction written by Sri B. Venkoba Rao in his publication of Sri Vyasaayogicharitham in 1926 AD, republished by Dvaita Vedanta studies and research foundation recently says on the subject:

“Padmanabha Tirtha was the famous scholar Shobhana Bhatta of the Godavari delta. ... Warangal saved itself by surrender in 1318 AD but fell in 1322 AD., and (King) PratapaRudra died in Mantrakuta on the Godavari while being taken as a prisoner to Delhi. Harihara and Bukka, the treasurer and secretary of Prataparudra escaped and fled to Raja Ramanatha of Kampili near Anegondi. Padmanabha in his previous Ashrama was a Pandit of Warangal court ... He must have known Harihara and Bukka.

..

The Raja of kampili fell soon after the Vrindavana of Narahari Tirtha in 1333 AD. (in 1334 AD?). Vijayanagar was bornt in about 1336 AD, with Harihara as the King and Bukka ascended in 1345 AD. It was under instructions of Bukka that Madhavacharya later known as Vidyaranya undertook the publication of the Veda Bhashya.

It is evidently this great undertaking of the Advaita school and the atmosphere engendered by it, that made both Akshobhya Tirtha and Vedantha Deshika leave the neighbourhood of vIjayanagar and seek more congenial surroundings, where the individuality and convictions would not be stifled. Vedanta Deshika expressed this feeling in a reply to Vidyaranya’s invitation declining it and preferring to serve God rather than a King (original Sanskrit verse quoted in the book).

Akshobhya Tirtha came to the Pitha in 1350 AD and by this time Bukka I had apparently come to the throne ... Akshobhya Thirtha evidently wanted recognition and patronage of the Madhva school of philosophy and could not get it. The famous disputation between Akshobhya and Vidyaranya must have taken place after 1350 AD and before 1356 AD as will be shown later. Vidyaranya met JayaTirtha on the former’s return from Benares. Vedantha Deshika was alive then and for many years thereafter. The disputation took place in Mulbagal, where Kumara Kampana, the son of Harihara I was the viceroy between 1351-1356 AD) (Kolar Vol. of Epigraphica carnatica – p xxxiv of the introduction).

Though Akshobhya Tirtha won a victory in the disputation .. the political atmosphere must have been uncongenial as he left for the banks of the Bhimarathi river, in the neighbourhood of the Vaishnava center of Pandharpur and in the Bahmani kingdom, which was newly founded in 1347 AD with the support of the Maharashtra chieftain, he must have found freedom to develop the philosophy of his school. This is also indicated in the Jayatirtha Vijaya shloka ..

The famous Vakyartha between Sri Akshobhya and Sri Vidyaranya has naturally generated controversy which is still unresolved today, even among Madhva scholars apart from the natural reaction from Advaita scholars who can not accept emotionally that their shining Star of the day lost the battle. This subject needs a separate discussion which will be added later. The majority of Madhva scholars of repute as well as many noted scholars from Vishishtadvaita hold that there was a dispute, which Sri Akshobhya won, based on the judgement of the mutually agreed Referee – Sri Vedanta Deshika. This fact alone would explain to a great extent as to why Sri Akshobhya decided to stay on in his native areas – though he might have noted the change in political climate due to the formation of

the Bahamani kingdom, in his last days [(1358 AD (when Bahaman gangu died) to 1365 AD (when the wars with Vijayanagara etc had started)]. The coincidence that his Vakyartha must also have taken place around the beginning of this period may also be noted.

Thus, it would be noted that while it is difficult to be specific and certain, there must have been strong and compelling reasons for Sri Akshobhya and Sri Jayatirtha to continue to remain and use the Bahamani kingdom areas of Pandarapur, Manyakheta, Yeragola etc instead of Hampi used by the earlier savants of Madhva lineage. In the event, the Manyakheta location proved disastrous –as it led to the desecration of the sacred Vrindavana of Sri Akshobhya Tirtha and its “shifting” to the present location on the bank of the Kagini river in a comparatively restricted location, of course centuries later. The shifting itself seems to be beyond doubt, as Sri Prabhanjanacharya writes in his book “Sri Jayatirtha sthothra manjari” in the introduction as follows: (in Kannada) – Sri Teekacharya’s Moola Vrindavana is on the banks of the Kagini river. The Moola vrindavana of Akshobhya stated to be inside the fort (Manyakheta) earlier, is to the right of the Teekacharya Vrindavana. On the left side is the Moola Vrindavana of Sri Raghunatha and in the outside enclosure are the Vrindavanas of Sri Vyasatirtha etc.

Thus it appears 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 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 is an underlying assumption here that the ancient Manyakheta was intact in the time periods of Sri Akshobhya and JayaTirtha under consideration. History in this regard is as follows:

*Unfortunately, the Rashtrakoota empire was weakened and disintegrated after 972 AD, when they lost a war with the Paramara king, Suyaki and the capital city Manyakheta was completely sacked and plundered. This marked the end of Rashtrakootas as a significant ruling clan and the rise of a branch of Chalukyas which came up to rule Deccan. Though its importance was lost as a capital of an empire, the town had survived with the same name as a regional center, for the smaller kingdoms which replaced it and ruled by a local chieftain possibly Jamkhandi. The capital was moved from Manyakheta in 1042/68 AD by the Chalukya king Someswara I. The Historical records of the “Moghul Empire” of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (Vol.7) indicates that Aurangjeb tried to destroy the two Muslim kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda in 1685/86 on the suspicion that they were collaborating with the Marathas, and succeeded in doing so and annexed their kingdoms. **Manyakheta was on the front line and held by Golconda army for 2 months**, in approximately July 1685, after which it was occupied by the Moguls. The Moguls asked that this town should be ceded to them, which was also done.*

The earlier kingdom of Golconda was tolerant to Hindus and was having two Brahmins as Prime minister and his executive assistant. The town of Manyakheta must have been totally sacked by Aurangzeb this time.

Taking note of the history of Manyakheta since early 8 th century, there have been only two serious destructive events in its history – the first by Paramaras when it was still the capital of the Rashtrakuta empire in 972 AD, centuries before the time of Madhva and Jayatirtha. . The second serious destruction was when Aurangzeb destroyed it in 1686 AD, after which it seems to have been completely abandoned. A new town came up later near the old ruins during the British period in the first half of the 19 th century. The location of the Vrindavanas is at present on the bank of the Kagini river, some distance away from the old ruins and the existing town called Malkhed. It is reasonable to presume that the Sri Akshobhya Vrindavana was originally located inside town as it existed in the 14 th century (1365 – 88), at which point of time, the place was a small, but strategically important town. A fort was built subsequently by an official of the Nizam government in the early 18 th century?. In 1779 AD, it became a district called by the name Malkhed, with a new town built at a new location away from the old ruins. Even the name Malkhed seems to be of comparatively recent origin – 18th century, corrupted from the original Manyakheta. The name Vrishtikheta etc appear to be sanskritised from of Malkheda only and not from the old name Manyakheta.

Discussion on the Vrindavanas in Malkheda as at present:

There are three different possibilities to account for the present arrangement of Vrindavanas of Sri Akshobhya, Sri Teekacharya etc as at present in Malkhed.

1. Sri Teekacharya's Moola Vrindavana was located first in the present site and Sri Akshobhya's came later after shifting from the old town. Various arguments as to why this is not possible have been discussed already in my earlier postings. 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 most probably Sri Raghunatha's, the highest was already there. The most likely original location of Sri Teekacharya's Moola Vrindavana would have to be considered as inside the town rather than here and might have received the same treatment as the original Vrindavana of Sri Akshobhya. This option is thus ruled out.

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 would have to be, in any case much later than the Vrindavana pravesha of Sri Raghunatha in 1504/1527 AD ?, it is difficult to explain as to why all the constraints of space etc were accepted, when shifting two more Moola Vrindavanas to the present location. It should have been far more likely to have been located outside the covering

structure nearby as in the case of those of Sri Vyasa Tirtha (the direct disciple of Sri Teekacharya) and/or the covering structure demolished and modified to suit the new locations of all the three Vrindavanas. There is also no tradition about shifting of 2 Vrindavanas from the old town or their prior existence there.

3. Sri Akshobhya's was shifted first, to the location where Sri Raghunatha's existed already, while Sri Jayatirtha's was a Mrittika Vrindavana added later for convenience in daily worship. The space available between the Vrindavanas of Sri Akshobhya and Sri Raghunatha does not permit the deep pit of the stipulated Moola Vrindavana of Sri JayaTirtha, where the body of the saint is first lowered and buried in Salt etc, which is at least 8 to 10 feet square, specially when another Vrindavana is already present within less than 4-5 feet of the new one. The same argument rules out the installation of Sri Raghunatha's Moola Vrindavana, if Sri JayaTirtha's Moola vrindavana had already existed there for a century or so. This seems to be the only feasible option explaining the presence of the Three Vrindavanas today.

There is one more element which would have been considered. The only source of destruction of a Vrindavana located in the open which could be anticipated was from Muslim marauders. But, they have themselves a tradition of worship of graves of their own saints. If at all, there would be any damage, it would only be to plunder any wealth or jewellery etc. In fact, even the Nizam's government had supported the worship of Sri Jayatirtha's "temple" at Malkhed by annuities and land grants.

There are also some clear logical inferences based on the present visible evidence of the location and order of the three Vrindavanas in the structure. This analysis shows the order in which the present complex has developed:

- i. It can be assumed that all the Vrindavanas were installed in a structure which predated them. This seems to be valid considering the nature of the structure with its low roof, heavy construction, lack of circulating space around the Vrindavanas except in one side, predominance of length as well as sloping roof, which seems to have been accommodated by the different heights and sizes of the Vrindavanas.
- ii. It is certain that Sri Akshobhya Tirtha's original Vrindavana was in the Fort in the old Manyakheta town, now in ruins and what is now called his Moola Vrindavana must have been brought there, when the original got destroyed.
- iii. The historical order of Vrindavana pravesha was Sri Akshobhya – 1365 AD, Sri JayaTirtha – 1388 AD and Sri Raghunatha – 1504 or 1527 AD. In addition, the Vrindavana of Sri Vyasatirtha, a direct disciple of Sri Jayatirtha is outside the structure, which must have been installed just a few years after Sri JayaTirtha (1400 + AD) and a century before Sri Raghunatha Tirtha.
- iv. According to History, the Moola Vrindavana of Sri JayaTirtha must come first if installed at this location, as that of Sri Akshobhya was already in the town. This could happen only, if and when Sri JayaTirtha's Vrindavana was installed by his successor Sri Vidyadhiraja, he found that the location

adjacent to that of Sri Akshobhya's in the town was already unsuitable or had been destroyed. Sri Vidyadhiraja would have to have some specific reason to select this location over all other possible locations, including Eragola, Navavrindavana etc and the only reason could be the express wish of his Guru Sri JayaTirtha to be near his own guru and in such a case, the Moola Vrindavana of Sri JayaTirtha also should have been in the town. There is no evidence what so ever that such an event of the destruction of the town happened between 1365 and 1388 AD nor that the Moola Vrindavana of Sri Akshobhya was destroyed during this period itself – a few days after the saint entered it .

Further, if such an event had happened, even for arguments case, Sri Vidyadhiraja could never have risked installing his beloved Guru's Vrindavana in such a dangerous environment in Malkheda itself. This basic fallacy in the assumption of the installation of the Moola Vrindavana of Sri JayaTirtha here rules it out completely as a Niravakasha pramāṇa. v. There is another strong evidence against such a thing having happened here. If Jayatirtha's Moola Vrindavana was installed here, the next Vrindavana in order would be that of Sri Vyasa tirtha, his direct disciple. This Vrindavana would have been found inside the structure and not that of Sri Raghunatha, who came a century later. Why was Sri Vyasa Tirtha Vrindavana kept outside, conveniently anticipating the then unknown future space reservation for Sri Raghunatha Vrindavana cannot be explained.

vi. The installation of any Vrindavana in this structure would also indicate an element of fear against vandals, marauding armies etc and seeking protection by keeping a hidden profile. Such an environment was not there certainly in Sri Akshobhya's Vrindavana pravesha. There is no reason to believe that it was there even in 1388 AD, as both the Guru and Shishya continued staying in the general area in preference to the Hindu ruled Vijayanagara. This could be anticipated in Sri Raghunatha's time only, and it is possible to explain as to why his successor chose such a location for the installation of his Guru's Vrindavana . Even if it was true in Sri Jayatirtha's time, his Vrindavana could have been in Yergola where Sri JayaTirtha spent most of his life, rather than in a town already under threat.

vii. It is not possible to accept that the structure was built after one or more vrindavanas were in place. If it was built by the devotees, they would have built in differently, with the Vrindavanas in the open as was the practice elsewhere, with a Mantapa to perform Pujas etc in the front. If it was built by outsiders they would never have bothered to save the Vrindavanas which might be inside, as they would impede its utility to them or they would have selected a site a little further away and built their structure.

viii. There are only two reasonable scenarios which explain the present situation on the ground. One would be to accept that both Vrindavanas of Sri Akshobhya and Sri JayaTirtha were in the Manyakheta town and were destroyed at some time well after their periods, and were brought here by the devotees into an abandoned structure. The original location of both in

such a case would have to be in there. This option seems to be invalid as there is no such tradition – and it would have not been difficult to maintain such a historical account if it happened that way and there was no reason what so ever, to change it to the present story. .

ix. The only other possible scenario is that the very first Vrindavana in the location was that of Sri VyasaTirtha (a Bidi Sannyasi) some time in early 1400s and in an open field, near the structure (which could have even come up later). The next would be in the abandoned structure itself, the Vrindavana of Sri Raghunatha Tirtha, a hundred years later, when the structure had been fully abandoned and free for use by devotees. During these periods the Vrindavana of Sri Akshobhya was in town only and was brought here after the destruction of the town by Aurangjeb in 1686 AD. Sri Jayatirtha's Vrindavana therefore could not be Moola at all – as it would have to be brought from some other location – like that of Sri Madhava Tirtha, for which some historical records would have existed...

x. Though the lack of any good reason for it is evident, if one assumes the Moola Vrindavana of Sri JayaTirtha came first in the present location in a structure that had already been abandoned at the time of his demise in 1388 AD, the Vrindavana, would be located near the center of the structure towards the outside end where the height is more. The installation of the Moola Vrindavana of Sri Raghunatha more than a century later would then have to be outside as not enough space would be left inside. No one would be able to foresee that such a future event would happen and reserve space for it! The re-installation of Sri Akshobhya could follow much later as it would not involve the large deep pit itself and would only mean arranging some stones and debris from the previous location. Apart from the unlikelihood of an installation of a Moola Vrindavana at all, in such a structure in the first place, it is clear that the events which have happened at different times long after each other could not have been conceivably ever planned and arranged as they appear to be now, if all of them were Moola Vrindavanas.

Taking all these facts into consideration, it appears that the first Vrindavana at this structure 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. One of the arguments against this being Sri JayaTirtha's Mritthika Vrindavana has been that no such practice existed at his time. It is not being argued that the Mritthika Vrindavana came in 1388 AD, but much later. Sri Prabhanjanacharya has quoted a piece of paper claimed to be in the handwriting of Sri Narayana Tirtha, an ascetic disciple of Sri Vyasaraaja (Demise – 1539 AD) and a contemporary of Sri Vadiraja that there were Mritthika Vrindavanas in Anegondi courtyard of Sri Madhava Tirtha, Sri Akshobhya Tirtha and Sri JayaTirtha. There is also a statement claimed

as his, that Sri JayaTirtha entered a Guha (Cave) in Malkheda. As all the Vrindavana relocations we are discussing have happened after that of Sri Raghunatha, a contemporary of Sri Narayana Tirtha, the feasibility of Mrithhika Vrindavana in Malkheda does exist as the practice was already in use. Sri Jaya Tirtha did not enter into a cave in Malakheda at all – as is well known, unless the present structure was misunderstood by Sri Narayana Tirtha to be a cave! It is necessary to authenticate this evidence as genuine fully before placing reliance on it for determining the final resting place of Sri JayaTirtha.

xi. It is also interesting to note that one more ascetic of SVM, Sri Purushotthama Tirtha is believed to have entered a cave near Abbur in 1460 AD. The cave exists even today and is not man-made. No Vrindavana of the saint exists anywhere outside or inside the cave and there is no dispute about the story among devotees. The reference to cave entry for Sri Jayatirtha is incompatible with finding a Vrindavana for him and that too, in a manmade structure. Treating only the name of the place Malkheda as valuable evidence in the face of non-existence of any cave there and finding a Vrindavana instead reduces the value of this evidence as hearsay and not direct and best evidence.

xii. Assuming that this paper which should be almost 500 years old is genuine, some issues arise based on its contents:

The existence of Mrithhika Vrindavanas for the two Madhva shishyas – Sri Madhava and Akshobhya in Anegondi along with that of Sri JayaTirtha proves that the practice of establishing such Vrindavanas was already in use. The necessity for these Vrindavanas – all brought into one central place in Anegondi seems to show that either the Moola Vrindavanas elsewhere were not accessible to people for worship or had been subject to vandalism. As this period corresponds to the heyday of wars between Vijayanagara and Bahamani kingdoms, this is understandable. Is it possible that Sri Narayana Tirtha had not personally visited the places in yeragola, Manyakheta etc in a hostile Bahamani kingdom, where Sri Jayatirtha “entered” into a Cave and made the comments based on hearsay.

xiii. Tirtha Prabandha of Sri Vadiraja, who was contemporary of Sri Narayana Tirtha contains very specific statements about the places he actually visited and saw personally. His evidence therefore is better based and stronger, as he has eulogized Sri Jayatirtha presumably as one among the eight saints staying in Navavidavana in his time. Unlike the isolated and scrap piece of paper claimed to belong to Sri Narayana Tirtha, the shlokas of Sri Vadiraja are a part of an integral whole composition containing all the usual requirements of a valid proposition statement – Vishaya, Prayojana etc. This statement cannot be explained away by saying that Sri Vadiraja was carried away in remembering the great contribution made by Sri Jayatirtha, though he was not there and present elsewhere - as he was clearly engaged in describing Navavrindavana and its features including the resident saints which included such greats as Sri Padmanabha Tirtha and his own Guru Sri Vyasaraaja.

However, my immediate objective at present is not to discuss the location of the Teekacharya Moola Vrindavana in Naavrindavana, but only to show that what is in Malkhed now is not a Moola Vrindavana. This issue would need further inputs taking into account literary evidence which is relied upon by both sides to "Prove" the present location of Sri Teekacharya;s vrindavana and other available data also.

To be Continued: