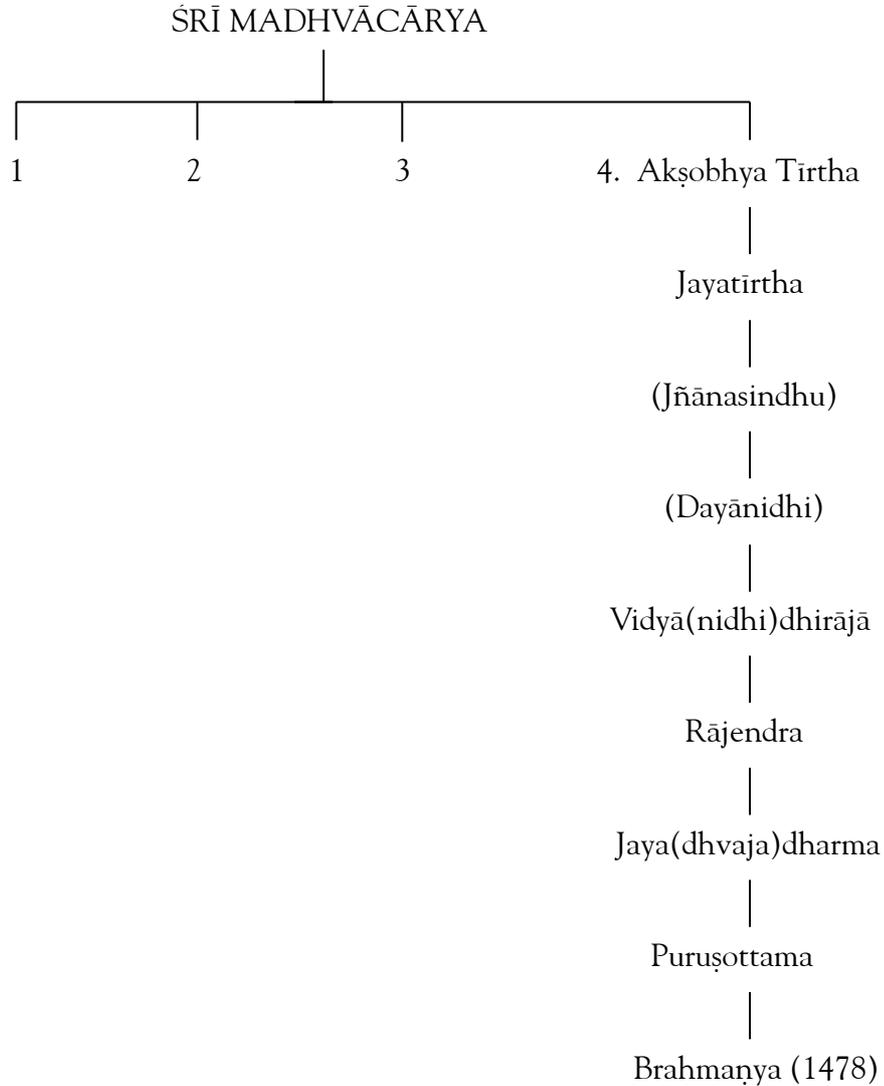


INFLUENCE OF MĀDHVA THOUGHT ON
BENGAL VAIṢṆAVISMNATURE AND EXTENT OF INFLUENCE
(A) EARLY WRITERS

According to the Vaiṣṇava traditions of Bengal, the religion of Caitanya was an offshoot of the Mādhva faith. Though Caitanya himself had his ordination as a monk from Keśava Bhārati,¹ who undoubtedly belonged to an Advaitic Order,² yet, he is said to have inherited his “Vaiṣṇava Dikṣa” from Īśvara Purī, who is said to have come from the Order of Bhaktas founded by Vyāsātīrtha thro' Lakṣmīpati and Mādhavendra Purī.³ The teachers Mādhavendra Purī, Īśvara Purī, Nityānanda and Advaita,⁴ were probably not Mādhvas in outlook. It is, no doubt, true that Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, one of the leading exponents of the Caitanya cult in the 18th Century, expressly states in his *Prameya-ratnāvalī* and other works, that Caitanya belongs to the Mādhva-Sampradāya, by virtue of his descent from Vyāsātīrtha through Lakṣmīpati and other monks and quotes the genealogy of teachers already mentioned by Kavikarṇapūra, in his *Gauragaṇoddesādīpikā*:

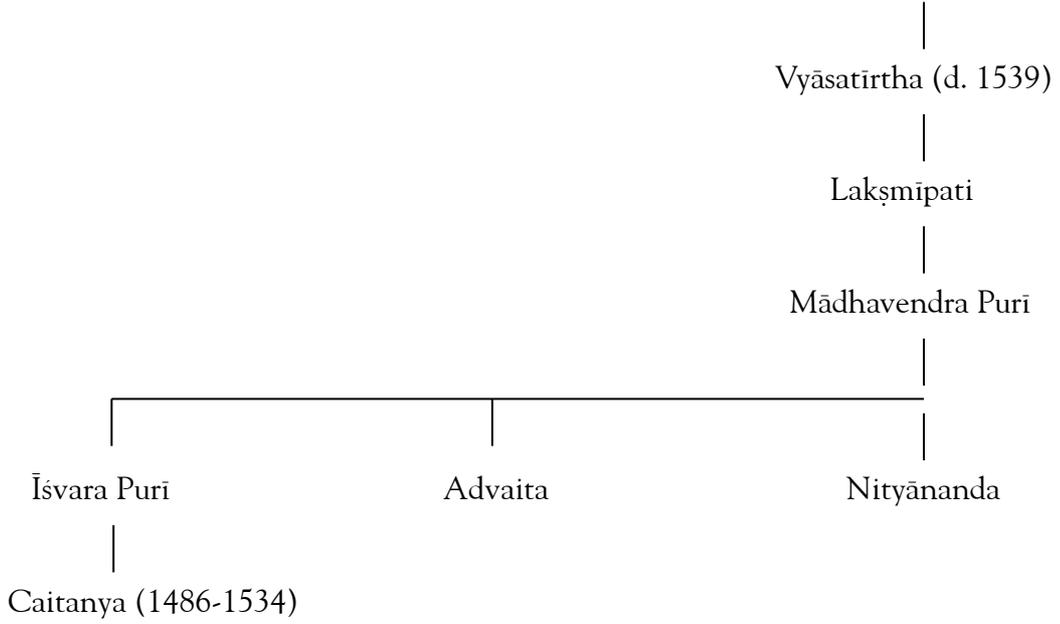


1 *Caitanyacandrodaya* of Kavikarṇapūra, 1854, p. 140.

2 Prabhu kahe: āmi hai hina-sampradāya (*Caitanyacaritāmṛta* 1.7.64, p. 152)

3 See *Gauragaṇoddesādīpikā*.

4 Purī is a title of an Advaitic order of Monks.



In recent years, however, the accepted Mādhva descent of Caitanya (Sampradāya) has been seriously questioned and sought to be repudiated by certain Bengali writers like Dr. S. K. De⁵ and Amarnath Ray⁶ and the genealogy given by Baladeva dismissed as a forgery and a concoction. This has met with stout opposition from traditional quarters in Bengal and Assam and a keen fight is still going on over the issue.⁷

The genealogy furnished by Kavikarṇapūra and Baladeva, is to some extent, defective. The names of Jñānasindhu and Dayānidhi are nowhere to be found among the successors of Jayatīrtha. Vidyānidhi is evidently a mistake for Vidyādhirāja and Jayadharmā a variant of Jayadhva. As for Vyāsātīrtha himself, there is nothing to show that he could not have had a North Indian disciple of the name of Lakṣmīpati, who might have been initiated into the Bhakti Pantha, which he transmitted to Mādhavendra Purī and other monks obviously of an Advaitic order. As a matter of fact, Madhva himself received orders from Acyutaprekṣa, who for all practical purposes represented an Advaitic order, so far as outward appearances went. It might also be remembered that the Ekadaṇḍi order is common to both the Śaṅkara and Madhva Sampradāyas, while other Vaiṣṇava orders differ from them.

The point, therefore, stressed by some Bengali writers against the Mādhva affiliation of Caitanya, on the ground that Caitanya took what they call “Māyāvāda-Sannyāsa”, (meaning Ekadaṇḍi order), is, thus, of no force. In this way, Caitanya himself might have inherited the gospel of Bhakti from his teacher Īśvara Purī. But there are not sufficient proofs that Īśvara Purī was, at any time, imbued with purely “Mādhva” ideas. Even if he had been, his title “Purī”,⁸ is a sufficient indication that he could not have *belonged* to the Mādhva *order*, which in the 16th century could not have tolerated such a distinctively 'Advaitic' title for one of its brethren. We know too that Caitanya himself (1486-1534) was a younger contemporary of Vyāsātīrtha (1478-1539). It sounds rather strange that Caitanya should have preferred to take orders from an Advaitic monk in or about 1509

5 See his paper in Winternitz Com. Vol. Leipzig, 1933, p. 201, which suffers from several misapprehensions re. the order of Mādhva Sannyāsins such as that these ascetics *retain* their Śikhā and yajñopavita after ordination and do *not* use the salutation “Nārāyaṇa-smaraṇam”.

6 See his paper on Caitanya and Madhva in Assam Research Soc. Journal, July 1934, April 1935.

7 See Rejoinder to the above by Acyutācaran Tattvanidhi J.A.R.S. Jan. 1935.

8 We have seen Vyāsātīrtha had many Advaitins among his disciples such as his biographer Somanātha. But the title Purī is distinctively “Advaitic”. See M. Vij. 12.2.

when he might have known that the illustrious Vyāsātīrtha (the Paramaguru of his Paramaguru, according to the tradition of Baladeva) was then alive and at the height of his power in the South. All things considered, it appears more or less certain that Caitanya had not heard of Vyāsātīrtha at all, until much later, say about 1520 when he went to the South. It is not, however, unlikely, that a Bhakti Movement was started in the North by Rājendra Tīrtha and his disciple Jayadhvaja, during their sojourn there. The tradition, in the Vyāsarāja Mutt, is that Rājendra, after his ordination, went north and never returned and we have no record of his place of internment in any place in S. India. We have it from Kavikarṇapūra, that the celebrated Viṣṇu Purī, author of *Bhaktiratnāvalī* was a disciple of Jayadhvaja. Most probably, it was this Viṣṇu Purī, who was the real founder of the Bhakti Movement in the North and the teachers Lakṣmīpati, Mādhavendra Purī and Īśvara Purī were descended from him and of these Īśvara was probably contemporaneous with Vyāsātīrtha and presumably well-acquainted with him.

This may, in a way, explain, how, in later days when the genealogy of the Caitanya Sampradāya had to be put up, he came to be reckoned in the line of Śuddha Vaiṣṇava monks descended from Madhvācārya. So far as Caitanya himself was concerned, there is no means of estimating the exact nature and influence of the special doctrines of Madhva, on him, as he has not left us any philosophical works of his own. Judging him from his biographies, this influence does not appear to have been very pronounced.

Even at the time of his visit to the South, he does not seem to have been taken up over-much with Mādhvaism. The Bengali biography *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* speaks of his visit to Uḍīpi, the birth place of Madhva; but quite apart from the fact that its account is by no means flattering to the *then* Svāmīs of the Kṛṣṇa Maṭha, the criticisms *said to have been made by Caitanya on the doctrines of Madhva*, suffer from a serious misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the true and actual position taken up by Madhva on the relative positions of Karma, Jñāna and Bhakti, in the scheme of Sādhanas. Perhaps, Caitanya had ample time, afterwards, to revise his opinion of the faith of Madhva and instruct his disciples accordingly.

However that may be, it is *not* true to say that “Bengal Vaiṣṇavism came under the influence of Mādhva thought, through Jīva Gosvāmin, the nephew of Rūpa and Sanātana”. For, Rūpa himself, *was considerably influenced by Madhva's special doctrines*, in his *Laghubhāgavatamṛta*. He not only quotes⁹ from Madhva, but is also *anxious to reconcile his views with those of Madhva*, on certain very intimate doctrines of his Śuddha-Vaiṣṇavism¹⁰ and quotes the very passages cited by Madhva from the *Brahmatarka* (a work quoted *only* by Madhva and not known to us through any other source, or recognized by any other system), on the unity of the Divine constitution. The doctrine is known as that of “Saviśeṣābheda” between God and His attributes and all Avatāras and is based on the peculiar doctrine of “Viśeṣas”, that is distinctive of Mādhva metaphysics (which has been dealt with at length under VIṢṆUDĀSĀCĀRYA and VYĀSATĪRTHA in Chapters XXIV and XXIX of this work). The conception of “Acintyaśakti” that is introduced by the Caitanya school, is again clearly set forth by Madhva under B. T. 12.7.49 and is only a terminological variation of the same idea of “Viśeṣa”. Rūpa also appeals to the many authorities, cited by Madhva on this issue, in his *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*, *Bhāgavata-Tātparyā* etc. Thus, the influence of Mādhva *thought* in moulding an important aspect of Vaiṣṇava theology of Bengal and its conception of Godhead, even in the works of Rūpa Gosvāmin, cannot be seriously denied.

Still, it could not be said that Rūpa had decided to adopt Madhva as his sole and only guide and teacher or was prepared to entirely agree with him, in all matters. His respect for Madhva does not exclude his homage to the great Advaitic commentator on the *Bhāgavata*: Śrīdhara Svāmin, whom

9 *Laghubhāgavatamṛta*, Veṅkaṭeśvara Steam Press, Bombay, 1902, p. 55.

10 Op. cit. pp. 125 (*Pādma*) and 162-63.

he quotes and mentions several times. Rūpa's nephew, Jīva Gosvāmin, is no doubt greatly influenced by the views of Madhva and is prepared to take his word for it, that such sources as *Caturvedasikhā*, *Brahmatarka*, are genuine. But, he is equally well-disposed towards the memories of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. The attitude of the early followers of Caitanya, then, seems to have been one of eclecticism. At the same time, the Bengal Vaiṣṇava writers have, as a rule, shown their *undisguised antipathy to the Māyāvāda of Śaṅkara*¹¹. Jīva says *in so many words*, that he would follow the lead of Śrīdhara Svāmin, ONLY so far as it would be in *keeping with the principles of genuine Vaiṣṇavism of the Śuddha-Vaiṣṇava type*. The term “Śuddha-Vaiṣṇava” is traditionally applied to the system of Madhva as distinguished from that of Rāmānuja and others. The implication in Jīva Gosvāmin's words is obvious that he cannot and would not follow Śrīdhara in his predilections for Advaita.

All these show that the Gosvāmins¹² were equally divided in their allegiance between Madhva and Śrīdhara. It may therefore be observed that till the days of Jīva Gosvāmin, the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas were only *partially influenced* by the writings of Madhva and his followers. The dependence on and attachment to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* shown by Madhva's system, was also very probably one important factor which brought the Caitanya cult closer to it than to those of Śaṅkara or Rāmānuja and paved the way for its ultimate affiliation with it, which was bound to come as a logical fulfilment of its “Śuddha-Vaiṣṇavism”.

(B) It was in the 18th century that this influence became *very pronounced and predominant*. The two great writers of this period were (1) Rādhādāmodara, a Kānyakubja Brahmin and (2) his disciple Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa of Orissa or S. Bengal.

1. RĀDHĀ DĀMODARA (C. 1710-60)

He wrote a *Vedānta Syamantaka*, which has been published from Lahore.¹³ It is a short tract in six Kiraṇas (chapters) dealing with the Pramāṇas to be accepted, the five Prameyas viz., God, Souls, Prakṛti, Time and Karma. Chapters 3-5 deal with the Prameyas one after the other. Rādhā Dāmodara quotes passages from the *B. S. B.* of Madhva (p. 14) and pleads vigorously for the distinction of the Jīva and Brahman and repudiates the doctrine of Avācyatva of Brahman (p. 21).

2. BALADEVA VIDYĀBHŪṢAṆA (C. 1720-90)

His pupil Baladeva, is said to have belonged to the Balasore district of Orissa lying in the southern border of Bengal proper. He was a contemporary of Jayasīṃha, Ruler of Jeypore, who flourished in the beginning of the 18th century. Aufrecht notes that one of Baladeva's works, a commentary on the *Utkalikāvallārī*, was written in 1765 A.D. He was a painstaking scholar and an enthusiastic follower of Caitanya though not always quite an accurate authority on the philosophy or theology of Madhva, judging from certain mis-statements of his. But of his zealous acceptance of and devotion to Madhva Sampradāya, there can be no doubt. He “studied Vedānta in Mysore and became well-versed in the commentaries of Śaṅkara and Madhva and got himself initiated into the cult of the latter” (M. Nandi. *Philosophy of Baladeva*, p. 18). He lived to a ripe old age and spent his last days at Bṛndāvan, adopting Sannyāsa.

11 In the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* itself (Ādililā 7.121 ff) Caitanya, on the occasion of a meeting with Advaitins at Banaras, is represented as establishing the *aṇutva* of the Jīvas and as having severely criticized the Vibhutva-interpretation of that adhikaraṇa, by Śaṅkara. (P. 161-64, Gauḍīya Edn.)

12 Sanātana in his *Vaiṣṇavatoṣiṇī* c. on the *Bhāg.* refers to Śrīdhara Svāmin with respect (No. 3522-3, Ind. Office Mss.)

13 Punjab Oriental Series, XIX, 1930.

WORKS

Over a dozen works¹⁴ are ascribed to him, which include (1-10) cc. on the ten Upaniṣads (11) the *Viṣṇusahasranāma* (12) a *Stavamālā* and commentaries on (13) the *Laghubhāgavatamṛta* of Rūpa Gosvāmin and (14) on the *Ṣaṭsandarbha* of Jīva Gosvāmin. We have also an independent tract of his entitled *Prameyaratnāvali* and (16-18) three works dealing with the *Brahmasūtras*.

Of these, the *Prameyaratnāvali*, is an exposition of the nine cardinal principles of the Vaiṣṇavism of Caitanya which are identical with and based on the nine fundamental tenets of Madhva's religious and philosophical thought, summed up in the well-known verse cited by Baladeva with the remark:

śrīman-madhva-mate hariḥ paratarah satyaṁ jagat tattvato |
bhedo jivagaṇāḥ hareranucarāḥ nicocca bhāvāṅgatāḥ |
muktirnaijasukhānubhūtiramalābhaktiśca tatsādhanam |
hyakṣāditritayaṁ pramāṇamakhilāmnāyaikavedyo hariḥ | |

which he paraphrases with one of his own, indicating the perfect harmony of views between Madhva and Caitanya on these points:

*sri-madhvah praḥa visnum paratamam akhīlamnya-vedyam ca visvam
satyam bhedam ca jivam hari-carana-jusas taratamyam ca tesam
moksam visnv-agghri-labham tad-amala-bhajanam tasya hetum pramanam
pratyaksadi-trayam cety upadisati harih krsna- caityanyacandrah*

and writes:

*anandatirthai racitani yasyam prameya-ratnani navaiva santi
prameya-ratnavalir adarena pradhibhir esa hrdaye nidheya*

It is in this work that he gives the Guruparamparā of Caitanya from Madhva through Rājendra Tirtha and Vyāsātirtha. His most important work is however the *Govinda Bhāṣya* on the B.S. which draws heavily on the B.S.B. of Madhva. We have a manuscript of this work¹⁵ in the Madras O.L. (R. No. 2290). The *Siddhāntaratna* or *Govinda-bhāṣyapīṭhikā* (Madras O.L. 2989) is a sort of introduction to the above and contains the following eight pādas:

[list them]

The author bows in his work to Rūpa and Sanātana calling them “veritable clouds in dispelling the dust-storms of Māyāvāda” (verse 4) and concludes with a handsome and reverential tribute to Madhva:

[quote it]

He wrote his own commentary on the *Siddhāntaratna* (Madras R. no. 2989). It is remarked in the course of this commentary that the author wrote his *Siddhāntaratna* to reinforce his *Govindabhāṣya*. Here, too, is affirmed Caitanya's descent in Sampradāya from Madhva.

14 See Introd. to *Laghubhāgavatamṛta*, Venkatesvar Press, Bombay, 1902.

15 Translated into English by Srisha Chandra Vasu, S.B.H. Series.

Dr. Nandi has tried to show:¹⁶ that “any judgement on Baladeva's philosophy being similar to Caitanya's or Madhva's will be one-sided and unjustifiable” (*Op. cit.* p. 509). The data on which he has arrived at such a conclusion are full of inconsistencies. Referring, for example, to the doctrine of Viśeṣas accepted by Baladeva, he writes, “Dasgupta and M.N. Sircar think that Baladeva has borrowed the original idea of the doctrine of Viśeṣas from the Madhva school, to which he formally belonged. *I think it would be more correct if we say that he has borrowed it, if at all, from his spiritual preceptor Rādhā Dāmodara; the reason being that the examples (Be-ness exists; Distinction is different; Time exists) which Baladeva has used and the purpose for which the doctrine of Viśeṣas has been brought up are exactly the same as used by Rādhā Dāmodara in his work Vedānta-Syamantaka*” (p. 77, italics mine). A reference to p. 335 and footnote therein would at once disprove any originality for the *formulation* of the doctrine of Viśeṣas or the *purpose* for which it has been introduced or the *examples* with which it has been supported either for Baladeva or for his teacher Rādhā Dāmodara (who has himself quoted from Madhva's B.S.B.) as these examples given by Baladeva and his teacher have been taken bodily from the *Nyāyāmṛta* of Vyāsātīrtha.

Dr. Nandi would not have claimed any originality for the doctrine of Viśeṣas or the examples supporting it for Baladeva and his preceptor, had he been aware of the existence of such a work as the *Nyāyāmṛta* and of this particular doctrine having been established there, argumentatively, in the section on Viśeṣas! Since it is admitted by Nandi himself that Baladeva studied Vedānta in Mysore and got himself initiated into Madhva's Sampradāya (there?), it hardly stands to reason that Baladeva had not studied such a monumental work on the Mādhva system as the *Nyāyāmṛta*. Nandi is wrong, again in endorsing without proper examination, Sircar's view that while Madhva accepts Viśeṣas in relation to the attributes of the Absolute, the Jīvas and the world also, “Baladeva *confines* his Viśeṣas to the distinction of attributes in the Infinite and (does) *not* (extend them) to the categories of existence such as Jīvas, Prakṛti etc. and *hence, breaks off from the Mādhva traditions*” (p. 78, italics mine).

For, a little thought bestowed upon the significance of the examples actually cited by Baladeva to elucidate the category of Viśeṣa (from his preceptor's work) would show the absurdity of Dr. Nandi's contention that Baladeva *confines* his Viśeṣas to the infinite Brahman and does *not* extend it, like Madhva, to other categories of existence such as the Jīvas and Prakṛti. For the examples of the Sun and his light, the serpent and its coil (*ahikuṇḍala*) cited by Baladeva in his commentary on B.S. 3.2.28, *pertain to the realm of Prakṛti* and the material world and clearly involve the acceptance of the theory of Viśeṣas as a necessary logical truth already verified and accepted in respect of the categories of existence and applied, by parity of reasoning, to the realm of Brahman *also*. Otherwise, these examples would not be competent to establish the presence of the *sādhya* (“Viśeṣas”) in Brahman, to regulate the relation of *dharmadharmibhāva* between Brahman and its attributes, without reference to an actual or absolute difference.

In the same way, the supposed non-acceptance by Madhva, of the four kinds of Mukti viz., Sālokya, Sārūpya, Sāmīpya and Sāyujya, which Nandi has urged as another formidable proof of Baladeva's “breaking off” from the Mādhva tradition is equally imaginary. It is not based on any first-hand acquaintance with the works of Madhva. For, the existence of these four kinds or aspects of Mokṣa has been fully recognized by Madhva and it has been actually used by him as one of the many arguments in favor of his thesis of gradation of intrinsic bliss (*ānandatāratamya*) among souls in Mokṣa (B.S.B. 4.4.19).