

Sri ViswaPriya Teertha (Vrindavanacharya) (Bhavi Indra devaru) Vilasa Prabandha
by Sri DR. B.N.K. Sharma

-Contributed by Sri Chetan jayaram

INTRODUCTION

My maternal great grandfather Cochi Rangappacharya (1820-91) was a versatile Naiyayika and studied Tarkasastra in the Gurukula of the illustrious Satakoti Rama Sastri of Mysore for twelve years. Lather , he participated in a Vidvat Sabha for Tiruppunittura, the capital of Cochin state. His alertness and presence of mind and debating skills so impressed the Maharaja that he was offered the position of Chief Asthana Vidvan. So Rangappacharya settled down at Tiruppunittura and taught Tarka to many Royal Princes and others and spent the rest of his life in Tiruppunittura. In his thirties he went to Udipi and studied Madhva Sastra under Sri Visvapriya Tirtha of the Sode Matha. At his behest he wrote *Chandrikabhusanam* in refutation of the *Samkarapadabhusanam* of his contemporary Raghunatha Sastri Parvate of Maharashtra. Rangappacharya was the best beloved Sisya of Sri Visvapriya Tirtha and was always with him whenever the Swami visited Cochin state at the invitation of the reignin Maharaja and his sucessors who had all received Mudrankana from the Guru of Visvapriya Tirtha with all the members of their family. There were at least three to four Rulers of the Cochin state during the period who had openly professed their faith in the Madhva Siddhanta. Rangappacharya's other works include *Brahmasutra-Adhikarana-Nayamallika* ;§ giving the gist of each adhikarana of the B.S in one or two Sragdhara verses. As the original Ms. Of this work written in Nandinagari was undecipherable beyond B.Si1, Pada 1, the portion ending with II, I has been printed by me as an Appendix to the bare test of Vyasatirtha;|s *Chandrika* published by my friend the late Harati Raghavendra Rao, from Mysore (1981). His three other works the *Visvapriyasvilasa-Prahaandha* which is a biography of his Vidyaguru Visvapriya Tirtha in five vilasaa, and two short stotras one on Sri Bhavi Sameera Vadiraja Swami and another on Sri Bhavi Indra Visvapriya himself in eight verses each. All the three first printed at Kerala Mitra Press Cochin, in the year 1889 are now re-printed here. The Nandinagari MSS. Of his *Chandrikabhusana* is well preserved in our house. If gives me immense gratification that I have been privileged to publish these three works of my ancestor almost a century after their first edition. I have of course appended English Translations of the two Ashtakas and a resume of the contents of the *Visvapriya Vilasa* with short notes to be more useful to the present generation.

Sri VISVAPRIYA TERTHA (1776-1865)

Sri Visvapriya Tirtha was undoubtedly an epoch maker (Sakapurusa). He was a profound scholar and a Saint of extraordinary halo, an expert in organisation and an adept in public relations. He lived a most austere life subsisting on a handful of Laja and flour for many years. His biographer rightly points out how he was an ideal combination the highest devotion to the Lord, stupendous learning and powers of exposition and the most rigorous austerities and penances. It is said that Sri Bhutaraja (attendant of Sri Vadiraja used to serve him whenever occasions arose).

Sri Visvapriya Tirtha has come to be lovingly and respectfully known as "Vrindavana-Acharya;" as it was he who took the leading part a century and half after Sri Vadiraja;|s successor Sri Vedavedya Tirtha got prepared the text of what is now known as *Brindavan-akhyana* a very

lengthy metrical work in the characteristically alliterative style of Sri Vadiraja. This text is said to have been communicated by Sri Vadiraja himself speaking from within his Samadhi(he had entered Sajivasamadhi) daily over a period of several years at the rate of two or three verses, to his deaf dumb attendant who had served him with deep reverence and sought his blessings to know his own svarupa and the real greatness of his Guru as the Saviour of). The attendant used to speak out these verses and then lapse into his former state. Vedavedya notices his extra-ordinary phenomenon and had the verses recorded over the years and it has come to be known as *Brindavana-Akhyana* . It was completed and finalised in 1642. It was however during the period of Sri Visvapriya Tirtha that his work was given the widest publicity. He commissioned one of his talented disciples Sri Musna-Acharya to write a Sanskrit commentary on the *Brindavana-Akhyana* and another devoted disciple of his Sri Raghupravira Tirtha of the Bhimanakatte Matha wrote his *Pramanyabodhini* substantiating the authenticity and validity of the *Svapna-Brindavanakhyana* . It was printed in 1925 from Belgaum. The theme of the *Svapna-Brindavanakhyana* is the Mahima of Sri Vadiraja and his identity with Latavya one of the senior most of the Devas belonging to the *Ruju-Gana* to succeed to the position of Vayudeva in the next Brahmakalpa / *Rujus* have been defined by Sri MADhva as a cadre of Devas who are eligible to attain the official status of the Brahmadeva in a hierarchic order at the end of each Brahmakalpa after succeeding to the position of Sri Vayudeva . The question of Sri Vadiraja's *Rujutva* has become a controversial issues among some sections of the orthodox MADhvas which are reluctant to accept the validity of *Svapna-Brindavanakhyana* . All the same the belief is strongly held about its authenticity by hundreds of families of devotees of Sri Vadiraja all over the country particularly in the Uttara-Karnataka area and in the Haridasa Kuta circles. It is on record that one of the distinguished pontiffs of the Uttaradi Matha Sri SatyaDharma Tirtha (1798-1830) entertained Sri VisvaPriya Tirtha in his Mutt. The name of Sri JamKhandi Vadirajacharya is still remembered as one of the powerful spokesmen of the Rujutva of Sri Vadiraja in the last century.

There can be no two opinions on the point that Sri Visvapriya Tirtha's favourite disciple Cochi Rangappacharya was the fittest person to write an authentic account of the Saint's life for the benefit of posterity. Following the conversion of the ruling family of Cochin to Madhva fold in his predecessor's days, Sri Visvapriya Tirtha is known to have visited the capital a number of times and made fairly long stays there.

A report of the conversion of the then royal family and others in the time of Sri Visvadhisa is to be found in the Extract from the Cochin State Manual quoted in my History of Dvaita School of Vedanta and Its Literature (2nd Edition. P.543 published by Motilal Banarisdass Delhi, 1981)

[1] It is widely believed that it was this same attendant of Sri Vadiraja whose svarupa was revealed to him by the great Saint that was born a century and a half afterwards as Visvapriya Tirtha.

The Visvapriyavilasa highlights many of the memorable incidents and happenings in the life and career of the Saint and the events connected with his frequent visits to the Cochin State. The account of his first Paryaya and the visit of the then Maharaja of Mysore Sri Mummadi Krishnaraja Odeyar are strikingly described. The pen-picture of the revered Guru is lovingly drawn. The closing period of the Saint's life on earth , the anguish of Sri Raghupravira Tirtha at the parting and the mixed feelings of the huge concourse of the Bhaktas , the arrival of the Daiva-Vimana to take his diving self up to his heavenly abode (See the verse *Indratvam tava maskaripravara bho yuktam nu manyamahe* (V.35) are bound to linger long in the minds of the readers.

It is a great pity that no portraits or paintings of the Guru have come down to us. The portrait gallery of the Cochin Royal house many perhaps have preserved such a painting. Photography had probably not yet entered the field then. The biography gives the cyclic year and date of the exit of the Saint from the scene of his earthly life as Krodhana (1865) , in the month of the Ashadha , on the Amavasya day.

The reasons for publishing a second edition of the Visvapriyavilasa are two. One is that as nearly as a hundred years have gone by since its first edition, no copies are available now to satisfy the requirements of the present generation of the Bhaktas of the Saint. The second is that the Pacchedas of the words in the first edition have left much to be reminded on account of the indifference or incapacity of the Printers at the time. We are now far advanced in this respect and I have endeavoured to give a properly edited text for purposes of Parayana. An English resume of the work is also given to help the general readers who may be curious to know something of the greatness of the Saint, but cannot follow the Sanskrit original. Some footnotes are given identifying the names of the places or persons mentioned in the text.

One of my cousins by the second remove Sri B.V. Madhava Rao has generously offered to finance the publication and I tender my sincere thanks to him, I have great pleasure in dedicating this publication to the revered memory of his father the late B.M. Vijendra Rao, retired Sub-Registrar, Coimbatore(my father's first cousin)

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SRI VADIRAJASHTAKAM

Sri Latavya, the seniormost of the Rujuganadevas after Sri Mukhya-Prana, took birth on earth as Sri Vadiraja, at Huvinakere village (near Khumbasi in South Kanara) and received Sannyasa Diksa from Sri Vagisa Tirtha (spiritual descendant of Sri Vishnu Tirtha)

He used to offer cooked 'ṣ Hayagriva 'V maddi' to his Aradhya Devata Sri Hayagriva as daily Naivedya.

Worshipping Lord Krishna installed by Sri Madhvacharya in his Mattha at Udupi he renovated the Krishna temple which had fallen into disrepair and damaged by a fire and conducted his first Paryaya-Puja (on a biennial basis).

In the reign of Sri Krishnadevaraya of Vijaynagar, he participated in the Vidvat Sabha held under the presidency of Sri Vyasaraja Swami and received marked honors and offerings from the King.

He made an extensive tour of pilgrimage all over India, commemorating the sanctity of the various Kshetras, tirthas and their deities in the temples and embodied these descriptions in a beautiful Prabandha called Tirthaprabandha , in Sanskrit . A reading of it is sufficient to confer the benefits of an all-India pilgrimage and bathing in those sacred rivers.

He wrote several works refuting the Charvaka, Bauddha, Jain and Mayavada schools teaching such false doctrines as the identity of Jiva and Brahman and a monumental work on Madhva Philosophy in beautiful alliterative verses, known as Yuktimallika.

The future Sri Vayudeva (Bhavisamira) caused the precious idol of Sri Trivikrama worshipped by Sri Brahmadeva , to be brought to him by Sri Bhutaraja and installed it in the temple he built at Sode, at the request of King (Arasappa Nayaka) who was cured of his leprosy by bathing in the waters sanctified by the Guruji's ablutions.

Seated in the Panchabrindavana at Sode surrounded by carvings of divinities he communicated his own Mahima through an unlettered Brahmin. In the Dvajastamba in front of Sri Trivikrama temple his image is carved along with the figure of a Swam (hamsa) the vehicle of Sri Brahmadeva (to indicate his position as the future incumbent in the office of Brahma in the future kalpa).

This Stotra is composed by Cochi Ranagappacharya the recipient of the nectarine grace of Sri Visvapriya Yogi who is like the Swan sporting in the waters viz. Sri Vadiraja the next heir - apparent to the position of Sri Vayudeva in the next Brahmakalpa. All those who read this Ashtaka or hear it read with devotion, will become dear to Sri Vadiraja.

SRI VISVAPRIYASHTAKAM

Salutations to the celebrated Guru Visvapriya Tirtha, who was given Sannyasa Diksha by Sri Visvesha Tirtha, the disciple of Sri Visvadhishvara Tirtha of the Sode Vadiraja Matha of Udupi. He was immersed in the contemplation of the quintessence of Vedanta Sastra as expounded by Acharya Madhva.

He was an amsa of Indra and incarnated on earth to add to his Sadhanas and to uplift the good souls on earth. He carried his Puja box on his own shoulders, gave up eating cooked food and subsisted only on Laja for years, a most rigorous discipline even for Yogis to practise.

He worshipped Vedavyasamusthi installed by Sri Madhvacharya at the Madhyatala(Naddantadi) Matha and conducted its Puja placing it between the images of BhuVaraha and Hayagriva, the pratimas of his Samsthana.

During his Paryaya, Sri Krishnaraja Odeyar, the Maharaja of Mysore made a pilgrimage to Udupi and being highly pleased with the splendour of Sri Krishna Puja made liberal endowments for the Annadana at the temple at the suggestion of the Guru. The Maharaja of Cochin State and his family members became staunch Vaishnavas by his Upadesha. Salutations to the great Guru.

He expounded the great works of Sri Madhwacharya at Sode for many years. On account of his many superhuman deeds he came to be recognised as the God Indra incarnate. Salutations to the Guru.

Placing the Vighraha of the Lord of Lakshmi in a golden Mantapa he performed the Puja according to rules of Sastras with Vedic Chants and Tantric rites and mantras and gratified the Brahmins with sumptuous food and dakshinas.

Marvellous are the glories of the Guru devoted to Vadiraja and the lotus feet of Sri Hayagriva. It was mainly due to his initiative that the Mahatmya of the Bhavi-Sameera Vadiraja was made known far and wide in the world in all its aspects.

This stotra is composed by Cochi Rangappacharya , devoted to the lotus-feet of Sri Visvapriya. May the Lord Krishna of Udupi and our Adi-Guru Sri Madhvacharya present unseen even to this day at Udupi be pleased with this offering

SYNOPSIS OF

VISVAPRIYAVILASA PRABHANDA

VILASA- I

After invocation to the Lord the author pays homage to his Vidyaguru Sri Visvapriya Thirtha , who adorned the Pith of Sri Sode Vadiraja Swamy Matha of Udupi as his twelfth successor. He has also come to be known as § Brindavana Acharya §, more widely and popularly, as he was mainly responsible for giving widest publicity to the Brindavana-Akhyana , a work commemorating the greatness of Sri Vadiraja Swami (1480-1600) as the incarnation of the god Latavya who stands next to Vayudeva in the hierarchy of the § Ruju-Gana§ whose members alone are entitled to hold the office of the four-faced Brahma, in the succeeding Kalpas. The Akhyana was first published by Sri Vadiraja's successor Sri Vedavedya Tirtha but not so widely. The credit of publicising it far and wide (without the aid of the printing Press) in the 19th century goes entirely to Sri Visvapriya Thirtha. He was undoubtedly a mightly and powerful personality, with a rare combination of Ekantabhakti to the Lord , erudite scholarship in the Sastras, brilliant expository powers and rigid observance the ascetic discipline, fasting , prayer and contemplation.(i.2)

He was the son of Krishnacharya , a pious Taulava Brahmin of the region. His precocity even as a child attracted the attention of Visvadhisa Tirtha who had the young lad ordained as a Balasannyasi thro; § his first ascetic disciple Visvesha Tirtha. The young ascetic's scholarship evoked admiration from many great scholars of those days like Jaya Venkatacharya.

About this time (in the 1780 s) the then Maharaja of Cochin who was a ripe scholar sought the guidance of his Tutelary deity at Tiruppinnittura, the capital, to show him the path of Moksha. The Lord directed him to take to the path preached by Sri Vadiraja. Deputations were sent to Udupi and Visvesha Tirtha went to the Cochin state and administered Suddha-Vaishanava Diksha to the Ruler and his brother Princes and members of the royal family.

Some years later, the two Senior Gurus passed away and Visvapriya tirtha succeeded to the Pitha of the Sode Mutt about 1794 A.D. He doubled his austerities now, gave up cooked food and started subsisting on a handful of Laja and flour, for many years. Such austerities in so young an ascetic evoked the admiration of the contemporary heads of Mutts like Bhuvanendra Tirtha (1774-99) of the Raghavendra Swami Mutt.

Sri Visvapriya Thirtha made his first pilgrimage to Sode to worship the Mula VVrindavana of the Saint at Sode and spent his days in Puja and Path-Pravachana. He then started on a Trithayatra and returned to Udupi. Some miracle wrought by Sri Bhutaraja on the way are recorded to highlight this greatness.

VILASA- II

His first Paryaya festival [*Paryaya is the biennial rotation of office of the high Priest of the Krishna Matha among the heads of the eight mutts inaugurated by Vadiraja. Each mutt gets its turn once after 14 years*] of Udupi Krishna was conducted Sri Visvapriya Thirtha at the age of fourteen or so (1798-1800). The highlight of the occasion was the visit of Sri Krishnaraja Odeyar Maharaja of Mysore to Udupi as the guest of honour. Pleased with all that he saw of the Pujas and darshan of the Lord, the Maharaja at the suggestion of the Saint made liberal grants for perpetual Annadana at the temple. The royal ladies doffed their costly ornaments and laid them at the feet of the Lord. During the Rathotsava there was some pretty non-cooperation engineered by disgruntled elements in the supply of materials for the display of the usual fireworks. The Saint got tons of camphor to make good the absence of fireworks. A miracle happened at the Madhyatala (Naddantadi Matha) where the Guru had gone to perform Puja of Vyasamusthi. During the Abhisheka the Vyasa-Prathika blue in color turned milk-white to the consternation of all. An aged Brahmin of eighty in the audience began to dance in joy and told the assembly that the same thing has happened on a earlier occasion in his youth when Vyasadeva was immensely pleased with the Puja. Other Miracles at Gajjaldi and Mayandi are also recorded . One of the them refers to the Saints meeting Vadiraja in person and holding a long conversation with him in Sanskrit. But the people around could not see any one to whom the Guru was talking. During those days the Guru was travelling on foot and sleeping on ground. This vilasa ends with the Guru's visit again to Sode and performing the Rathotsava of Sri Trivikrama with great splendour.

VILASA- III

Bhuvanendra Tirtha camping at Tirthahalli was told by some Brahmins that they say Sri Visvapriya Thirtha seated on a rock in the middle of the river performing his Japa. Dignitaries were sent by Bhuvanendra Tirtha to the Sode Mutt at the place to invite him to the Mutt of Bhuvanendra Tirtha. They were informed that the Saint was at Sode and not at Tirthahalli. A miracle indeed.

At this time , the Ruler of Cochin had some doubts about the expression of Svarupa-Sukha in Moksha and sought enlightenment from the Guru. He was asked to dance during the Puja and he did so and was convinced by the foretaste of his Svarupa-Sukha. On this occasion of his visit to Cochin Swamiji installed the idol of Sri Hayagriva at the Matha which stands behind the Krishna temple at the Tiruppinittura and now goes by the name 'Embiran Matham'. The aged Annayacharya of Udupi was blessed with progeny this time. The great scholarly Maharaja of the times, an ardent follower of Sri Madhva Philosophy, attained Aparoksha at his palace in Cochin his soul making its exit through the Brahmarandhra (Brahmanadi) as mentioned in the Sutras.(Brahmarandhra is a tiny aperture in the skull)

His successor Rama Varma invited the Guru to his state. The Guru passed thro' Calicut and was received at Tiruppinittura with royal honors and military salute. He camped there for a long time. During the Puja at the palace, the miracle of Vyasa-Prathika changing color from blue to milk-white occurred once again. From Cochin the Swamiji went to Mysore at the invitation of the Maharaja. On his way back to Udupi the Maharaja sent with him an escort of armed men to accompany him.

VILASA- IV

On his return to Udupi, the Swamiji taking into account the declining standards of the Kali age, made a thoughtful innovation of selecting a successor from the Grahasthasrama and named him Varaha tirtha. The ordination was opposed by some other heads of the Udupi Mathas. Years later, the Saint bowed to local sentiment and ordained another from the Brahmacharyasrama. Varaha Tirtha lived for some years more accompanying the Guru on his tours and he predeceased the Guru.

Again at the pressing invitation of the Ruler of Cochin, the Saint paid another visit to him. This time he stayed for more than one year in the town chitoor, giving discourses on the great classics of Madhwa system attended by the Maharaja himself and by Raghu tirtha and a large number of seasoned scholars including Ranagappacharya (as he himself says) Subsequently the Swamiji left for Trichur where discourses were arranged on Sri Vadiraja's Yuktimallika. The Maharaja and his brothers attended these discourses. During the Purapravesha of the Swamiji in Trichur the Maharaja took the Guru in a decorated palanquin and walked by the side waving the Guru with his own hands with a golden handled Chamara, as a mark of respect. Later Swamiji took leave of his royal disciples and devotees and returned to Udupi.

VILASA- V

The last Paryaya of Sri Visvapriya was performed in his ripe old age of seventy. In spite of declining physical strength he carried out his onerous responsibilities with the zeal and enthusiasm of a young man. He rebuilt his Mutt at Papanasini and after Paryaya went again to visit the Cochin state on invitation from his beloved disciple Ravi Varma Maharaja. Varaha Tirtha was also along with the Swamiji then. The Ruler performed PadaPuka to his Guru at his palace.

In the Spacious rectangular courtyard around the temple of Purnatrayisa (Krishna) a great Vidvat Sabha was arranged attended by the scholarly Maharaja himself. A Vakyartha on the Sastrayoni Sutra was arranged. The opposing team of scholars was silenced by the surging eloquence of the Guru, his logical cogency and magnetism. Later the Saint began to teach Brahmasutra Bhasya of Sri Madhva (without the Tika) to a Brahmin minister of the King.

Taking Final leave of his royal disciples, the Swamiji returned to Sode and made a formal Samarpana of all his Sadhanas at the feet of Sri Vadiraja in the PanchaVrindavana. Here Varaha Tirtha began his study of the NyayaSudha under the Guru, with avidity. Sometime later he passed away to reap the reward of the study of Nyayasudha at the abode of the "Sudhasanas" (the gods in Svarga)

The Guru now finally returned to Udupi, far advanced in age, He was eighty one. Sri Raghuvara Tirtha hurried to meet him in his last days. In the Cyclic Year of the Krodhana (1865) in the month of Ashadha, on the Amsvasya day the Great Guru after performing his daily Puja, feeding Brahmins and distributing Dakshinas to them laid down his mortal body with the name of "Krishna" on his lips. His immortal self entered the Devavimana which had arrived to take him to his heaven.

His Successor enshrined his mortal body in a Brindavana at Udupi erected by the side of Sri Vagisha Tirtha (Guru of Sri Vadiraja) (and covered it with brass plates) and performed Aradhana . Some years later a Mruttika-Brindavana was erected for Vadiraja by devotees of Tamil Nadu at Kannapa Nadi (near the town Shirkali) and] and f ; the annual Aradhanas are still being conducted by the Trustees [people of the Panchagramas adjoining.

[1] The Late Vadiraja Bhagavtar of Kumbalonam was the Managing Trustee of the Kannappanadi Brindavan and his son is now doing so. Years ago, when I was in Annamalai University at Chidambaram. I have had the privilege of giving a discourse on the life os Sri Visvapriya teertha swamiji at the Brindavana of Kannappanadi .

CONCLUSION

It is hardly possible to do justice to the glorious life of the Master. I have recorded here what I have personally seen and have heard from reliable sources to the best of my capacity.

Even now years after my Gurus departure when I write about him My Master; |s scintillating eloquence of discourses on Vedanta listened b with rapt and respectful attention by eminent scholars , his felicity of expression, the various acts of his enthralling Puja awakening spontaneous waves of deep devotional emotion overwhelm the heart when recalled to mind and fill it with gratitude to the Almighty for the benefit of the years of close contact and association with such a Saviour of Souls.

O Master, you are rightly considered an Amsa of Devendra. Like him, stationed at the feet of the Lord (in the sky). You shatter to pieces arguments of adversaries with thundering effect. Like him you shower ambrosial words for rejuvenation of the deserving souls on earth. Obeisance to You. O embodiment of pure intelligence , kinsman of the devotees , conqueror of passions like Sambhu, O Yogin who has subdued the vital airs, inspirer of the Good people, like the Sun in respect of lotuses the thread that holds together the gems of numerous worthy disciples, and the best of the Gurus, salutations again.

Here ends the Sri Visvapriya Vilasa Prabhandha of Cochi Rangappacharya, the dear disciple of the great Guru.

Sribharatiramana mukhyapranatargata- Srikrishnarpanamasthu.