

## ROQUE MESQUITA

*Madhva: Viṣṇutattvanirṇaya*. Annotierte Übersetzung mit Studie. [*Publications of the De Nobili Research Library XXVIII*]. Wien: Sammlung De Nobili, 2000. 562p. € 69.- (ISBN 3-900271-33-X).

*Madhvas Zitate aus den Purāṇas und dem Mahābhārata*. Eine analytische Zusammenstellung nicht identifizierbarer Quellenzitate in Madhvas Werken nebst Übersetzung und Anmerkungen. [*Publications of the De Nobili Research Library XXXIV*]. Ibid. 2007. 643p. € 68.- (ISBN 3-900271-40-2).

One point of criticism which is occasionally levelled in India against Western Indological researchers is that they occupy themselves with a distant past that has little relevance for living Indian culture, and that later developments in Indian thought that still are of contemporary cultural relevance tend to be neglected and remain unknown. One such

later development is the philosophy of Madhva, which is the doctrinal base of a variety of Vaiṣṇava religiosity that is one of the major religious traditions of India, particularly in the south and northeast. In Western languages, the most important writings on Madhva's thought to date have been Volume IV of S.N. Dasgupta's *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge 1922), *Madhva's Philosophie des Vishnu-Glaubens* by Helmuth von Glasenapp (Bonn 1923; available in English translation by Shridhar B. Shrothri as *Madhva's Philosophy of the Viṣṇu Faith*, Bangalore 1992), and *La doctrine de Madhva* by Susanne Siauve (Pondichéry 1968). After these early writings, the recent writings of Roque Mesquita (M.) represent a new stage in the study of Madhva.

The two publications under review complete what the author considers a "trilogy" on Madhva, which is intended to be a "solid base for future research on Madhva" (*Viṣṇutattvanirṇaya*, p. 11). The first volume of this trilogy appeared in 1997: *Madhva und seine unbekanntenen literarischen Quellen* (which has since also appeared in English translation as *Madhva's Unknown Literary Sources*, New Delhi 2000). This is a study into the nature of the "quotations" from older authoritative texts in Madhva's writings that cannot be traced, either because the works that supposedly are quoted cannot be found, or because the known versions of works with such titles do not contain the quoted passages. This highly intriguing aspect of Madhva's writing was already noticed by thinkers of rival schools of Indian thought centuries ago, and it was casually explained by Madhva's latter-day followers as the result of theft and loss of those texts. M.'s 1997 study shows that the matter cannot be all that simple as this traditionalist account says, and he has offered a more convincing explanation.

The *Viṣṇutattvanirṇaya* (also known as *Viṣṇutattvavinirṇaya*), subject of the second part of the trilogy, is one of Madhva's later and most important writings. For those readers who are less familiar with Madhva's thought, the useful analysis of the text at the beginning of M.'s translation (p. 35-47) provides a quick survey of the topics that are discussed, such as the nature of the authority of the Veda (including criticism of the positions of Mīmāṃsā and Advaita), the importance of Viṣṇu's grace for attaining liberation, the non-identity of the individual souls and Viṣṇu, the reality of the phenomenal world, and the absolute sovereignty of Viṣṇu. The prominence of this work among Madhva's writings becomes clear when one realizes that Madhva's school of Vedānta arose in opposition to various systems of monistic thought that had gained popularity in the centuries preceding him; thus the *Viṣṇutattvanirṇaya* is a work of special programmatic importance. M. also deserves praise for using the *mūlapāṭha* or "original reading" of Madhva's works, published in the 1970s by Bannanje Govindacharya, as the basis for his translation rather than the vulgate *pracalitapāṭha* that, unfortunately, is still customarily used.

The translation is the result of a very careful and explicit, conscious reconstructing of Madhva's thoughts in the context of his historical situation. Modern translations in India are usually meant for internal use within the religious community, in a context in which the acceptance of certain ideas and values is taken for granted: they are either not expressed at all or, if they are expressed, they are not investigated. The question of Madhva's "unknown sources" is one illustration of this tendency: modern authors in India have, out of deference towards the tradition, never questioned the authenticity of those quotations, nor have they ever asked themselves what the significance of this question for this important chapter in the history of Indian philosophy is.

Apart from the two English translations of the *Viṣṇutattvanirṇaya* that have been brought out in India by S.S. Raghavachar (Mangalore 1959; repr. Madras 1985) and K.T. Pandurangi (Bangalore 1991), modern translations have appeared in Kannada (most of

the adherents of Madhva's doctrine are geographically concentrated in southern India, and Kannada is their lingua franca) by K.T. Pāṃḍuramgi (Bangalore 1983, under the title *Viṣṇutattvavinirṇaya*) and Śrī Viśvēśātirtha, pontiff of Śrī Pējāvāra Maṭha in Uḍupi (*Viṣṇutattvavinirṇayasāra. Kannadaśāra Mattu Saralānuvāda*. Bangalore 1986). This latter translation was reprinted, with an elaborate commentary by the translator, in: *Daśa-prakaranaṅgaḷu. [Śrī Sarvamūlagramthagalu Saṃputa 6]*. Bangalore: Akhila Bhārata Mādhva Mahāmaṇḍala, 1994. These Kannada translations are meant for a broad educated readership, and this underlines the importance of this text in contemporary religious thought in this tradition.

M.'s translation (p. 51-235) is very richly annotated, with footnotes occupying more than half of the space on most pages. The translation is very faithful to the original, and references to Madhva's "unknown sources" are specially marked. It is followed by a thoughtful and detailed study, which comprises more than half of the entire book (p. 239-531), of a number of key matters that the Viṣṇutattvavinirṇaya discusses and that are of prime importance for Madhva's thought: the hierarchical dichotomy of knowledge, the *sākṣin*, the *anupramānas* (perception, inference, and Vedic revelation), the threefold infiniteness of Viṣṇu, the unity of Viṣṇu, and Viṣṇu's absolute independence. The book ends with five useful indexes (p. 533-562) of names, of titles of unknown ("fiktive") works, of fictive quotations from *smṛti* texts, of other quoted texts, and of subjects. The work is so thorough and detailed that we may safely assume it to be the definitive work on the Viṣṇutattvavinirṇaya at least for quite some time to come, and it deserves to be considered one of the basic texts for a modern study of Madhva's thought as a whole.

The third part of the trilogy, *Madhvas Zitate*, brings together all the quotations from *purāṇas* and the epics which Madhva adduces in support of his special doctrines and which cannot be identified by means of the sources that are available today. Madhva follows a regular pattern when using these quotations: first he formulates his own idea, then he "quotes" a text to assure his reader that his idea already is part of an existing tradition. The problem is that the majority of these quotations have not found acceptance among the learned outside the tradition which Madhva himself founded; even the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, which traces its own origin to Madhva, is aware of the dubiousness of Madhva's quotations (*Madhvas Zitate*, p. 21, n. 3). Nearly two thousand verses are given here (p. 31-285) together with a translation in German (p. 289-445), a *pāda* index (p. 449-624), an index of further unidentifiable quotations from *śruti*, *āgama* and other texts (p. 625-637), and a thematic index (p. 638-643) indicating topics that are discussed by means of unidentifiable quotations.

This book has more than one use. Firstly, it serves as hard evidence for the conclusions which M. reached in his 1997 book. Not entirely unexpectedly, orthodox Mādhvas were disturbed by M.'s findings, and attempts were made to discredit the seriousness of M.'s work, in India as well as internationally. (A brief discussion of this matter is included in my review of yet another recent publication by M.: *The Concept of Liberation While Still Alive in the Philosophy of Madhva*. New Delhi 2007; see *Münchener Indologische Zeitschrift* 1 [2008-2009] 260-272) With the appearance of *Madhvas Zitate*, it is now up to M.'s critics to show that Madhva has cited existing texts that contain the passages that he has used, rather than that they are new creations. A second use of this book is that it helps to identify those portions of Madhva's doctrine that are most likely to contain original ideas. Thirdly, this listing of the quotations according to the titles of works from which they supposedly were taken supports M.'s conclusion that the sources were fabricated, because one finds contradictory statements within what is supposed to be one text (see p. 22-23); if, on the other hand, these verses were newly composed as the occasion

demanded, without an existing text from which they were drawn, then such inconsistencies could easily occur. It is worth noting here that although the condemning criticism by earlier Indian authors of Madhva's quoting as "literary fraud" ("literarische[r] Betrug", as M. translates the expressions *svamātrakalpita* and *svakapolakalpita* on p. 24) is discussed in a lengthy footnote (p. 24, n. 15), M.'s own attitude is much more lenient, and he respects Madhva's statements that his work was prompted by impulses which he received under divine inspiration from Viṣṇu ("viṣṇuprasādāt" on p. 25 is obviously a printing error, fortunately very rare in this book, for *viṣṇuprasādāt*).

Like his previous writing on Madhva, these two books by M. are very welcome and valuable contributions to the study of a hitherto still neglected area of Indological research. These solid philological contributions cannot be overlooked in future research on Madhva.

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