

In one of your responses you had said:

// Just as the above mentioned Advaita scholars conceded defeat to Madhwacharya so also the famous Vidyaranya lost to Akshobhyathirtha who was fourth from Madhwacharya. Since he was an admirer of knowledge (vidyapakshapati) he erected a pillar in memory of the victory (jayastambha) near Mulbagal town of Kolar district, Karnataka where the argument was held. Similarly Appayadikshita lost to Vijayeendrathitha , Ananthakrishnashastri lost to Sathysdhyanathirtha and still recently Karapatriswamy lost to Vidyamanyathirtha. How many examples would you need? //

My reply:

About the supposed debate between Vidyaranya and Akshobhya Tirtha:

A Kannada book titled 'Akshobhya Vijaya Vibhrama' (The delusion regarding Akshobhya's victory) authored by Sri G.R.Patil (Retd. Director of Public Instruction, Dharwad, Karnataka) addresses this 'debate' and after a very detailed analysis of a number of documents and several Madhva books establishes that such a debate did not take place at all. The so-called Mulbagal 'stambha' has also been very deeply analyzed in this book. It shows how a Madhva scholar himself has spilled the beans regarding the cooking up of this debate-story. I recently finished reading this very interesting book. It has some 35 chapters and is very well documented. Spanning over 350 pages in good print, the book makes an incisive analysis of the subject. In the process it brings out many inconsistencies within the Madhva tradition about the event and the details thereof. Several noted Madhva scholars are differing over the dates that are crucial to the determination of the event. The very date of Madhva is a topic of much debate and disagreement among Madhva scholars. By analysing the various conflicting dates available with the Madhva Mutts and scholars, the author has concluded that if the debate ever took place it must have been some 15 years after the passing away of Akshobhya Tirtha or it took place when Vidyaranya was a boy of five years!!

The author has documented Vishistadvaita evidences also in this regard.

Above all, it is a very 'decent' book and does not contain unsavoury remarks or unprintable language against Madhvas. The author treats every Madhva Acharya with utmost respect, something that is missing in Madhva's reference to Shankara (sankara).

The Publisher: Brahma Vidya Prakashana, Shri Shankaracharya Sanskrit Pathashala, Gandhi Chowk, Dharwad. Year: 2005. Rs. 150. In the title page is contained this info. about the book:

'Akshobhya Vijaya Vibhrama' A research work negating the so-called disputation that took place between Akshobhya Teertha and Vidyaranya in 14th Century. It is an evaluation of the articles of many ancient and modern writers.

Madhwacharya's date although debated, is clearly established by his own work TITHINIRNAYA which is a text on Jyotisha. He has mentioned how many days in Kaliyuga had elapsed when wrote this text. This corresponds to 14-4-1309. Hence Akshobhyathirtha's date can be easily fixed. Vidyaranya happened to be Rajaguru of Hakka and Bukka whose date is well recorded in Indian history. For your information, Vijayanagara Samrajya was established in 1336. Hakka and Bukka reigned during 1336-1377. Vidyaranya was the 12th Peetadhipathy of Sringerimutt during 1380-1386. Akshobhyathirtha reigned Vedantasamrajya during 1350-1365. He was fourth from Madhwacharya who left this earth in 1317. Where is any problem for the two having discussions? These dates also support the fact that Vidyaranya celebrated Jayathitha's procession on a royal elephant being immensely pleased with his knowledge and intellect.

A protected monument is an evidence which cannot be denied so easily.

It is not strange on the part of an Advaitin to deny evidences when he is denying the visible world itself.

'Appayadikshita lost to Vijayeendrathitha'

This is another such cooked up story. Just as Madhvas claim 'evidence' for such a debate and victory by citing some 'vijaya-s' written giving details thereof, there are equal claims made by Advaitins giving details of this supposed debate where Appayya Dikshita defeated Vijayeendrathirtha and that the latter even absconded from the place. Old manuscripts/printed works can easily be cited by both parties to substantiate their respective claims. A scholar seeing such claims and counter-claims remarked 'The Victor, please come out'.

I am happy that you did not deny that their times were different as in the previous case. Two versions always exist when there is a debate. Appayya Dikshita sought for clarification regarding Dvaita and Advaita in Vijayeendra Thirtha when he was in death bed. This means that the former had begun to doubt about Advaita.

Ananthkrishnashastry lost to Sathyadhanathirtha

The above cited book 'Akshobhya Vijaya Vibhrama' cites an incident where a debate/discussion between the latter swami and Tilak was completely misreported to give the impression that the Swami won and Tilak lost. Someone

who mediated the debate later brought the truth to light. When such is the practice of the Madhva scholars/pontiffs in giving out false reports, who will believe in these stories of 'victory'?

It is a fact which an Advaitin feels difficult to believe. In fact Ananthakrishna shastri lost to the present pontiff of Pejavar Mutt when he was a boy just 18 years old.

Karapatriswamy lost to Vidyamanyathirtha

This story too has been going round the Advaita circles with a totally different note. The victory of the former and the losing of the latter is the Advaitic version. Moreover, the following information gives a picture of the latter Swami that puts anyone on the guard while hearing such stories of his defeating Advaitins:

Here is a material copied from a site: http://www.kamakotimandali.com/sringeri/vilasa_2.html

// The pontiff who heads both Bhandarakeri and Palimaru mutts in Udupi - Vidyamanya Tirtha, has frequently tried to drag Sri Mahasannidhanam (Sri Abhinava Vidyatirtha MahaswamigaL) to a debate unsuccessfully. He would organize mock debates in his mutt. The person speaking for Advaita would be one of his own young disciples. A lot of noise would be generated and the audience would stare at the drama without following a single word. When they were tired, the Swamiji would get up and declare Advaita as falsehood. He would then declare that Shankaracharya has now surrendered to Madhwacharya! During some lectures, he would describe Advaita as follows: 'The Parabrahman of the Advaitins is without a form and qualities. He has no eyes, ears, nose, mouth, legs or hands. He is thus lame, blind, deaf, dumb and nothing. The atheists are much better than these Advaitins'. A certain elderly friend of mine who had attended one such lecture returned with grief after understanding the level of his knowledge.

Vishwanandana Tirtha - What is wrong with remarking your Nirguna Brahman as lame etc. when he has no legs etc. as accepted by you? One need not be afraid of your wretched Nirguna Brahman as it has no organs or mind or wisdom to harm one. But beware of our revered Vishnu who has infinite legs etc. to cut you down into pieces.

When any pontiff from any mutt decides to visit Sringeri, first a Srimukham is sent officially. A Poorna Kumbha Swagata is given to the visiting pontiff at the Sringeri mutt. Without following this Shishtachara, Vidyamanya Tirtha barged into Sringeri one fine day. He entered Nrisimhavanam, produced a list of questions and demanded answers for these questions. It was as though it was legal notice to Sri Mahasannidhanam. Sri Mahasannidhanam welcomed him warmly and said, 'It is not our Samskara to debate rudely with our guests. Any pundit in our mutt can answer all your questions and more. It is simply not necessary that I begin a debate with you. The rules of a traditional debate necessitate the presence of an able judge who is currently not present in our case. You tell me who is the judge to our debate? There is no use for humanity in

these futile debates which only serve to boost one's ego. I will not stoop to these levels but you may get all clarifications to your questions from any student of our Veda Pathashala.'

Sri Vidyamanyaswamiji was not after these formalities. His only intention was to prove that Advaita is wrong. The Sringeriswamiji could have answered at least one of the ten questions presented. He failed to do so giving lame reasons.

Later Vidyamanyathirtha threw an open challenge. He announced that he would present one lack Rupees to whoever establishes Advaita. Where had your students or scholars or you had hidden at that time?

Unable to drag Mahasannidhanam into a controversy, the pontiff returned to his place and brought out a news letter, 'Dwaita Vijaya'. He falsely claimed in this news letter that he had defeated the Jagadguru Shankaracharya and hence Advaita in a debate. The same pontiff opposed the establishment of Sri Shankara Sanskrit University at Kaladi by the central government of India. In spite of severe opposition by this pontiff and other Udupi pontiffs, Sri Shankara University was established and this esteemed institution continues to spread knowledge to this day.

Many of the genuine oppositions fail in a parliament due to majority on the other side. It doesn't mean that the step taken by the ruling party is always correct.

Many Madhwas have however regarded Srimadacharya with great respect and have been disciples of the Sringeri mutt. Sri Kunigal Rama Shastrigal, father of Sri Sacchidananda Shivabhinava Nrisimha Bharati Mahaswamigal in Purvashrama, was a great scholar in the court of Krishnaraja Wodeyar III of Mysore. Many great scholars belonging to Smarta, Madhwa and Srivaishnava communities were his disciples. He was well-known not only in the southern states of India, but his fame had also spread to other parts of the subcontinent like Bengal. Vishnupadacharya, son of a Madhwa scholar Julupi Krishnacharya, was a student of Sri Rama Shastrigal. He had studied Tarka and Vedanta under Sri Rama Shastrigal and was a great scholar. He gradually developed an interest towards Advaita philosophy and his sharp intellect advised him to accept Advaita as the sole truth. Vishnupadacharya began to debate with Dvaita scholars and defeated countless opponents with his irrefutable arguments. Upset with his love for Advaita, Madhwas banned him from Madhwa society. But this did not change his love for Advaita or respect for Srimadacharya. With enhanced vigor, he started propagating the glory of Advaita and continued to defeat Dvaita scholars in arguments. Eventually, not a single Dvaita scholar was left who could challenge him for a debate. The Uttaradi mutt pontiff of Udupi mediated to put an end to humiliation of the Dvaita scholars and advised the Madhwas not to challenge him for a debate.//

Duryodhana conquered a number of stalwarts on Pandava side. Does it mean he was a great personality?

Vishwanandana