

# The role of Acharya Madhva's pilgrimages for the Mādhvas of Udupi

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## Աշարյա Մադիվայի կատարած ուխտագնացությունների դերը Ուդուպիի մադիվաների համար

**Ղարիբյան Վահե Կ.**

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**Ամփոփագիր.** *Մադիվաները* հինդուիստական բրահմանական համայնքներ են, ովքեր հետևում են Մադիվաչարյայի Դվաիտա Վեդանտա դպրոցին (նաև հայտնի է որպես Տատվավադա): Ուդուպիի մադիվաների, ինչպես նաև ընդհանրապես վայշնավների կրոնական կյանքում կենտրոնական հոգևոր պրակտիկան ուխտագնացությունն է: Ուխտագնացության ավանդույթն ավելի կանոնավորվեց Մադիվաչարյայի՝ Բադրինաթ կատարած երեք ուխտագնացություններից հետո, որոնք նկարագրված են Նարայանա Պանդիտաչարյայի «Մադիվա Վիջայա» (12-13-րդ դարեր) աշխատությունում: Այս աղբյուրում մանրամասն պատմվում է Մադիվայի տարբեր սրբավայրեր ու սրբազան գետեր կատարած այցելությունների մասին, ինչպես նաև Մադիվայի ու Վեդավասայի հանդիպման մասին: Այս հոդվածը վերլուծվում է Մադիվայի կատարած ուխտագնացությունների դերը Ուդուպիի մադիվաների կրոնական մշակույթի որոշ ասպեկտների ձևավորման գործում:

**Հանգուցաբառեր՝** Հինդուիզմ, վայշնավականություն, Մադիվաչարյա, մադիվաներ, Մադիվա Վիջայա ուխտագնացություն, Ուդուպի, Բադրինաթ, ավանդույթ, կրոն

## Роль паломничества Ачарьи Мадхвы для мадхвов Удупи

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**Аннотация:** Мадхвы — индуистская брахманическая община, принадлежащая к школе Двайта Веданты (также известной как Таттвавада) Мадхвачарьи. Центральной духовной практикой в религиозной жизни мадхвов Удупи, как и для вайшнавов в целом, является паломничество. Традиция паломничества стала более упорядоченной после трех паломничеств Мадхвачарьи в Бадринатх, описанных в «Мадхва-виджае» Нараяны Пандитаचारьи (12-13 век). Источник детально повествует о посещении Мадхвой различных святых мест и священных рек, в частности, о встрече Мадхвы и Ведавьасы. В данной работе анализируется роль паломничества Мадхвы в формировании ряда аспектов религиозной культуры мадхвов Удупи.

**Ключевые слова:** Индуизм, вайшнавизм, Мадхвачарья, мадхвы, Мадхва-виджая, паломничество, Удупи, Бадринатх, традиция, религия

### Introduction

In Hinduism, pilgrimage (Sanskrit: तीर्थयात्रा, *tīrtha-yātrā*) is a fundamental element in the lives of devotees. Pilgrimage as an integral part of religious life is used by the followers of Hinduism as a process which promotes spiritual progress. There are many places of pilgrimage in India, as it has very rich spiritual traditions. For *Mādhvas* of Udupi, *tīrtha-yātrās* is also an undivisible part of their spiritual life.

There are a few academic works (e. g. B. N. K. Sharma “The Philosophy of Madhvacharya” and “History of the Dvaita School of Vedanta and its Literature”, Vasudeva Rao “Living traditions in Contemporary Context: The Madhva Matha of Udupi”) about the ethnographic peculiarities of the *Mādhva Vaiṣṇava Sampradaya*, such as the description of pilgrimage practice in Madhva tradition. Acharya Madhva's pilgrimages to Badrinath and other holy places were discussed

historically by scholars, but there isn't study on its influence and role in religious culture for the *Mādhvas* of Udupi.

For this article the study of Narayana Panditacharya's hagiographic work called "Madhva Vijaya" which is about the life of Madhvācārya gives an opportunity to comprehend the peculiarities of the pilgrimage practice of Madhva and its cultural aspects for *Mādhvas* of Udupi.

### Body

The *Mādhvas* are Hindu Brahmin communities in India (mostly in South India) who follow the Dvaita philosophy of Madhvācārya (tatvavāda). They are communities of *Mādhvas* mostly in the Indian states of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Goa, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh [5]. The religious traditions and spiritual practice of the *Mādhvas* are an important part of Vaishnava tradition. For the *Mādhva* Vaiṣṇava Sampradaya (tradition), pilgrimage is an essential element and the religious leaders of the *Mādhvas* have completed pilgrimages to various holy centers of India.

The principal examples for *Mādhva* Vaiṣṇava Sampradaya are the Madhvācārya's (see pic. 1) *tīrtha-yātrās* to Badrinath presented in the Madhva Vijaya.



Fig. 1. Sculpture of Madhvacharya, Udupi, India

In the Madhva Vijaya (Madhva's biography) written by the Sri Narayana Panditacharya the son of Trivikrama Panditacharya (direct disciple of Madhvācārya), was told about the Acharya's pilgrimage to Badrinath [5, p. 612]. Madhva's biography (The Madhva Vijaya) refers to the Acarya's pilgrimages to Badrinath (see pic. 2) to dedicate his earliest work, the *Gītabhasya* (the commentary of Bhagavad Gita) [3, p. 266] to Sri Vishnu (Supreme God in Vaishnavism) [4, p. 38] there and his subsequent visit to Vyasasrama (the monastic heritage of Vedvyasa) from there.



Fig. 2. Badrinath temple, Uttarakhand, India

In Madhva Vijaya was described the two major pilgrimages of Sri Madhvacharya to Badarikashrama. These two great examples of pilgrimage become essential and fundamental definition for *Mādhvas* as the ideal example of *tīrtha-yātrā*.

The two Badari-yātrās was described in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> sargas (cantos) of Madhva Vijaya [7], presenting the Madhvācārya's meeting with Sri Vedavyasa and Lord Narayana, which become the wonderful occasion not only for Madhvas but also for all Vaishnavas. In the period of being in Badarikshrama Acharya presented his Gitabhasya to Vedavyasa, that work became the one of the essential sources for *tatvavāda* philosophy.

After his return from the pilgrimage, Acharya Madhva undertook to write a commentary on the Brahma-sutras (Madhvācārya ordained by Vedavyasa to write commentaries of Brahma-Sutras (also known as Vedanta Sutras) [1, p. 5]

Sri Narayana Panditacharya gave the idea of two important parts of pilgrimage as well as the two types of *tīrtha-yātrā* completed by Acharya Madhva (Madhva Vijaya, 6.35) [7] which are:

1. **The sacred places** - (rivers, temples, mountains) as the place for *tīrtha-yātrās*. In different periods of their lifetime the Madhvas complete pilgrimages to holy places, which generally belong to Vaishnava Sampradayas.

2. **Shastra study** - this type of pilgrimage is mostly common in Gurukuls (Vedic schools) and in the Ashtha Mathas of Udupi (eight monastic centers).

In the future perspective of the *Mādhva* Vaiṣṇava Sampradaya these types of *tīrtha-yātrās* become important and obligatory for *Mādhvas*, especially for the community members who have high religious status, such as sannyasins, pandits.

Acharya Madhva's pilgrimages to Badrintah become the great example of pilgrimage in the *Mādhva's* devotional life and a remarkable part of the Vaiṣṇava religious culture in general.

Examining some peculiarities of Sri Madhvācārya's Badari-yātrās, and its influence to the future tradition of *Mādhvas* it is worth to outline the uniqueness of Badrinath pilgrimages, because it serves as revival of Vedic religious culture in the frame of pilgrimage practice.

The tradition of pilgrimage in religious life of the *Mādhvas* of Udupi is inherited from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and transferred as an essential part of their community and *grihasthas* (householder, religious status acquired after marriage) life having the great example of Madhvācārya. The whole tradition of pilgrimage during the long time of practice became the section of Vaiṣṇava tradition, mostly because the

*Mādhvas* are presenting one of the main schools of Vaiṣṇava denomination inside Hinduism.

The practice of pilgrimage has various important aspects for all devotees of Madhva tradition, principally for *Mādhvas* of Udupi which we can observe in Badrinath pilgrimages, in the frame of these important practices.

1. **Karma yoga** (Sanskrit: कर्म योग)-the yoga of action), directly connected with pilgrimage practices, worship rituals, yajnas (Vedic sacrifices) to various Hindu temples and shrines, not only belonging to the Madhva tradition.

2. **Jnana yoga** (Sanskrit: ज्ञानयोग) - the yoga of knowledge) which includes the study of Vedic literature, such as 4 Vedas (Rig, Sama, Yajur, Atharva), Itihasas (Mahabharata, Ramayana), Bhagavd Gita, Puranas etc.

3. **Bhakti yoga** (Sanskrit: भक्ति योग) - (the yoga of devotion), particularly emphasizing devotion and love towards a personal god. Bhakti Yoga is considered a path of the heart, focusing on developing a deep and loving connection with the divine.

The Badari-yātrās include these components as the prime example for them. The spiritual culture of worship is also outlined in *Madhva Vijaya*, such as the Acarya's worship to Vedavyasa and Lord Narayana (Sri Vishnu).

Daily worship or *puja* (worship) is very important for all *Mādhvas*, especially for brahmins. For brahmins who follow the Madhva's tradition required to perform *pujas*. The *pujas* (dedicated to Sri Vishnu) are intended to present the supreme status of Sri Vishnu and the doctrine of hierarchy (*tāratamya*) of the universe.

The *Mādhvas* who become pilgrims and visit different holy places generally follow the idea of attaining *mukti* (liberation). The idea of *mukti* (see in detail [6]) is highly discussed in Madhva's philosophy as the highest aim of spiritual life, being more important among other *purusharthas* [2, p. 17], such as *kama* (desires), *artha* (wealth) and *dharma* (duty).

In Madhva Vijaya we can observe this idea also in the third last *tīrtha-yātrā* of Madhvacharya to Badrinath in the year 1137 CE.

Nowadays The *Mādhvas* of Udupi following the example of Acharya Madhva, complete their pilgrimages, religious service and worship rituals in different Hindu temples, for example at Sri Krishna temple of Udupi and other two temples in Car Street (see pic. 3), which have become vastly popular places of pilgrimage for the majority of Vaiṣṇava schools and their followers.



**Fig. 3.** Three temples on Car Street: Sri Krishna Temple, Sri Sri Ananteshwara temple and Sri Chandramouleshwara, Udupi, India

**Conclusion:** Madhvācārya's pilgrimages highly promoted the Udupi as an pilgrimage center and underlined the importance of Udupi's religious life in the framework of Madhva tradition. The spiritual traditions of the *Mādhvas* of Udupi year after year are becoming more perceptible as a part of Vaiṣṇava spiritual culture and contribute Madhvācārya's philosophy for people seeking spirituality and interest to Hindu culture, as well as Vaiṣṇava culture. The *tīrtha-yātrā* tradition which has been formed specially inside the religious practice of Udupi's religious community of *Mādhvas*, became a remarkable part of Vaishnava denomination. The Madhvācārya's *tīrtha-yātrās* to Badrinath and his devotion to Sri Vishnu became the significant example for all *Mādhvas* for organizing and regulating their religious culture and values, also it will continue to serve as a guiding model for Mādhva Vaiṣṇava Sampradaya.

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