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## Delving Further Into Dvaitavedānta On “The Concept of Liberation” by Roque Mesquita

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Roque Mesquita, *The Concept of Liberation While Still Alive in the Philosophy of Madhva*. Aditya Prakashan: New Delhi 2007. 48 pages, Rs. 120. ISBN 978-81-7742-073-9.

When one considers the grand diversity in Indian philosophical thought, one realizes that the academic study of Indian philosophy in the Western world still needs to catch up in a few fields. The main reasons for this are obvious: the number of academically trained researchers outside India who possess the skills that are needed for accessing the primary source materials has never been large; furthermore, there has been a clear tendency to concentrate on particular Indian philosophical traditions, not so much because of the importance of those traditions either for Indian philosophical history or for contemporary Indian religious thought, but because certain developments in Indian thought in the past seemed to support current tendencies in Western philosophy. This in turn has led to the formation of local traditions of the study of Indian philosophy in the West.<sup>1</sup> This means that large parts of Indian philosophical history have been neglected; schools of thought that are the philosophical base of living world views of many millions of people are disregarded because they are later developments,<sup>2</sup> or because of a

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1 Here one may consider the very strong concentration in numerous Western universities on, for instance, Buddhist studies or Advaita studies, which are of limited relevance for an understanding of Indian culture, if one considers that Buddhism virtually disappeared from India approximately a thousand years ago and Advaita never seems to have been popular with the masses, nor even with the small brahminical priestly section of society.

2 Early Western Indological studies were largely driven by the desire, typical of the Romantic Age, to learn about the ‘beginnings’ of things: the beginnings of religion, of philosophy, Sanskrit as one of the most ancient languages of the Indo-European family, etc. There is of course nothing wrong with such historical interests; but it is a bit odd that the classically oriented philologists rarely take an interest in the relevance

language barrier, or because they are geographically based in a part of India that is not among the regions traditionally studied in the West.<sup>3</sup> What is ‘known’ about such systems of thought is often a mixture of conjecture, hearsay, and the humbug of self-proclaimed experts; or it is presented in a theological and ahistorical form by traditionalistic scholars which often does not meet the standards of modern research with regard to precise documentation or ideological impartiality, and much remains largely unexamined and unchallenged in the academic community due to the unfamiliarity that arises from the aforementioned neglect.

The Dvaitavedānta of Madhva is one example of a neglected intellectual tradition, one that not only provides the theological framework for the religiosity of millions of people across and beyond India<sup>4</sup> but is also a phenomenon of considerable importance for Indian philosophical, religious and social history. Most persons outside India who take an interest in Indian thought seem to be charmed by the monistic varieties of Indian philosophy, especially the illusionistic forms (such as Advaitavedānta and Mādhyamika), and it is largely overlooked that India has a long tradition of realistic thought as well: one that does not try to explain away phenomenal reality as a mere metaphysical illusion but accepts its reality, either monistically or pluralistically. The entire fourth volume of Surendranath Dasgupta’s monumental *History of*

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of their studies for the present, and that many researchers who study contemporary culture are largely ignorant of the details of the historical roots of the culture.

3 Exactly the same applies to the study of several Indian languages and of the literatures in those languages.

4 The majority of the adherents of Madhva’s variety of Vaiṣṇavism / Viṣṇuism live in southern India, most of them in Karnataka (wherefore the bulk of modern writing about Madhva and his tradition is in Kannada), but the tradition branched out also to the northeast, where in Bengal Madhva is counted among the earlier teachers in the lineage of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. A modern offshoot of this Bengali tradition is the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) based in the USA, popularly known as the “Hare Krishna movement”, which, although it differs from the original Karnatakan variety of Vaiṣṇavism in a few ways, also lists Madhva among its gurus.

*Indian Philosophy* is devoted to 'Indian pluralism' in its later brahminical form, which means Madhva and later developments that are based on his work. Good modern studies of Madhva are few and far between. Apart from Dasgupta, works by Helmuth von Glasenapp,<sup>5</sup> Susanne Siauve<sup>6</sup> and B.N.K. Sharma<sup>7</sup> deserve mention as general introductions in non-Indian languages. Such works are a valuable orientation aid for further, more detailed studies, such as those by Roque Mesquita. Mesquita's first monograph on Madhva, *Madhva und seine unbekanntes literarischen Quellen*, appeared in 1997 in German and in English translation in 2000.<sup>8</sup> It is a meticulous study of a sensitive matter in the literary history of Dvaitavedānta. Like all Vedāntins, Madhva seeks support for his views in the form of quotations from earlier texts that are held to be authoritative in his religious tradition, thus trying to convince his readers that his views reflect the true content of religious scripture. The problem with Madhva is that already for centuries, critics from rival schools of thought expressed their doubts about the veracity of Madhva's quotations, and the propounders of Madhva's Dvaitavedānta had no other, independent documents by which they could prove that veracity. In his study, Mesquita has gone through the collected writings of Madhva, has noted which 'quotations' cannot be traced (either because the works from which they are supposedly taken are mentioned by no one else and cannot be found, or because the titles of the texts are mentioned also by other authors but the texts cannot be found, or the texts of those titles exist but the quotations cannot be found in these extant texts); he further concludes that these dubious quotes always occur where Madhva puts forward a novel idea that was previously unknown

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5 GLASENAPP 1923 and 1992.

6 SIAUVE 1968.

7 SHARMA 1981 and 1986.

8 See the bibliography for the full details of these two books.

or unaccepted in Vedāntic circles and that is typical for his doctrine. The obvious conclusion to be drawn is that Madhva himself wrote these 'quotes' (perhaps felt forced to write them) in an intellectual environment where creative thinking had largely been replaced by, or narrowed down to, scriptural exegesis; hence an innovative thinker who was convinced of the value of his ideas had no choice but to present them as though they were old and merely 'rediscovered'. This in itself is nothing new, as it has occurred in other traditions and in other parts of the world as well. In India, the 'discovery' of Mahāyāna Buddhist texts by Nāgārjuna and others is a parallel, and the *Book of Mormon* is an obvious parallel in Christianity, to give just two examples. Madhva differs in that he did not produce complete new texts but many fragments of texts that in the argumentation of later Dvaitin apologists were allegedly lost.

Since the veracity of Madhva's quotations cannot be proven, it is purely a matter of belief to accept them as genuine and authoritative. Understandably, authoritativeness in the Mādhva tradition focusses strongly on the person Madhva himself, rather than on the earlier scriptural and exegetical Vedāntic tradition, of which some basic tenets are overthrown by Madhva's innovations. Some aspects of Madhva's reform of Vaiṣṇavism represent a revolutionary turn, which he himself justified by declaring himself to be an incarnation of the Vedic wind god Vāyu,<sup>9</sup> and the bulk of his followers today believe that *ācārya*, 'the Teacher' (as he is commonly referred to in Mādhva circles) was no ordinary human. Not surprisingly, Mesquita's conclusion that Madhva himself was the author of the 'unknown sources' is not appreciated by orthodox Mādhvas.

Mesquita's short study of "the concept of liberation while still alive" (*jīvanmukti*) in Madhva's thought<sup>10</sup> is another product based on

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9 ZYDENBOS 2001, pp. 116-117 (= ZYDENBOS 2007, p. 155).

10 It first appeared in German as "Die Idee der Erlösung bei Lebzeiten im System

his thorough perusal of Madhva's collected writings. Earlier modern scholars, such as M. Hiriyanna, S. Siauve, S. Radhakrishnan and J. Sinha, and with some reservation I. Puthiadam and D.P. Sheridan, seem to unanimously agree that Madhva did not accept the notion of *jīvanmukti*,<sup>11</sup> a blissful state of the individual that marks the end of his series of innumerable incarnations, and from which a lapse back into *saṃsāra* is not possible. Mesquita begins his treatment of the subject with a fragment from the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* as quoted by Madhva, which according to Mesquita is slightly altered (p. 9) and explained by means of a quote that supposedly is taken from the *Bhaviṣyatpurāṇa* but cannot be found in that text (p. 10; as Mesquita has shown in his earlier work on the 'unknown sources', this is a device which Madhva uses when he introduces a new idea). Furthermore, the only way to overcome mundane existence (*saṃsāra*) is "*nivṛttaṃ karma*, an action performed without the expectation of worldly or other-worldly reward, since its opposite the *pravṛttaṃ karma* produces now *karma*, which binds human beings to the mundane existence, undergoing transmigration" (p. 13). This is "achieved through yogic practices, which keep the senses under control, leading finally to *samādhi*" (ibidem).

Mesquita shows that (a) Madhva too uses the term *jīvanmukti* and "explains it at length quoting from innumerable sources. The special feature of these sources is that they are either completely unknown or, if they are known, the quotes are all with no exception, untraceable", and (b) this state of highest happiness is achieved through direct knowledge of Viṣṇu / Brahman (*aparokṣajñāna* / *brahmadarśana*), which destroys all ignorance and *anārabdhakarma* and "prevents the rise of new karma.

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Madhvas" in PREISENDANZ, Karin (ed.), *Expanding and Merging Horizons: Contributions to South Asian and Cross-Cultural Studies in Commemoration of Wilhelm Halbfass*. Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 2007, pp. 433-454.

<sup>11</sup> References to the expressed opinions of these authors are given in MESQUITA 2007, p. 7, n. 4.

The remnants of *prārabdhakarma*, which keep the *jīvanmukta* alive, are destroyed by fruition and by the performance of devotional works until the hour of death. Since the entire karmic residues are deleted in this supreme hour, *videhamukti* follows immediately.”<sup>12</sup> This liberation, so Madhva states, depends entirely on Viṣṇu’s free will. Here Mesquita notes that Jayatīrtha, who is popularly referred to in Mādhva circles as the *ṭīkācārya* or ‘the teacher of the commentaries’, who lived two generations after Madhva and whose commentaries form the basis of most of the orthodox Mādhva theology today, disagrees with Madhva because “the destruction of *prārabdhakarma* through fruition and through performance of devotional works [...] would obstruct the free will of Viṣṇu” (cf. Jayatīrtha’s *Nyāyasudhā* 68a,1-2). Here we probably have the reason why the earlier modern scholars who have touched upon the topic, and who have already been mentioned above, were of the opinion that Madhva did not believe in *jīvanmukti*: conservative Mādhva *paṇḍitas* today rely more on the writings of Jayatīrtha than on those of the originator of their tradition, Madhva. Apparently the simple reason for this is that Madhva’s style of writing at times is very dense, whereas Jayatīrtha’s is very wordy and thereby more explicit and easier to follow. Jayatīrtha’s popularity is also the reason for the orthodox resistance to the publication of the *mūlapāṭha* or original redaction of Madhva’s writings in the 1960s: Jayatīrtha’s commentaries are based on the *pracalitapāṭha* or ‘current redaction’, which according to the editor of the *mūlapāṭha*, Bannanje Govindacharya, is corrupted at many points.<sup>13</sup> Concerning the nature of *jīvanmukti*, Mesquita concludes that here too, Madhva’s views differ from those of earlier Vedāntins. Madhva himself was fully aware of this, as his supportive ‘quotations’ indicate.<sup>14</sup> While

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12 MESQUITA 2007, pp. 40-1.

13 Personal communication. See also ZYDENBOS 2001, p. 123 (= ZYDENBOS 2007, pp. 162-3).

14 MESQUITA 2007, p. 52, n. 95.

in Advaita the *jīvanmukta* still suffers a slight trace of metaphysical ignorance (*ajñānaleśa*),<sup>15</sup> Madhva believes that the *jīvanmukta* is omniscient, is an *aparokṣajñānin* who has shed all ignorance. For this reason the *jīvanmukta* does not acquire any new karma; some remnants of *prārabdhakarma* keep him alive in his final incarnate state, until they too “are destroyed by fruition and by the performance of devotional works until the hour of death”(p. 40). Mesquita assumes that Madhva “developed his teachings of *jīvanmukti* under the influence of non-advaita authors, such as Kumārila and Śrīdhara<sup>16</sup>”(p. 42), but he also points out that Madhva rejects their *jñānakarmasamuccayavāda*, the idea that both knowledge as well as the performance of Vedic duties are needed to attain liberation, and he is “the first to relate the teaching of *aparokṣajñāna* to *jīvanmukti*”(p. 21). *Aparokṣajñāna* is held to be a special knowledge that destroys all ignorance and all karma of which the workings have remained dormant, and one attains an irreversible state of highest happiness (p. 40). The significance of Mesquita’s study for the history of Indian religion and philosophy may be not immediately clear to most readers. Seventeen years ago, the present reviewer published an article titled “On the Jaina Background of Dvaitavedānta”,<sup>17</sup> which to my knowledge received public discussion twice. Firstly, Mesquita approvingly quoted it in a footnote in his book on the unknown sources. Secondly, B.N.K. Sharma wrote a piece in a collection of essays,<sup>18</sup> in which he rejected my conclusions not on philosophical, historical or philological grounds

15 Ibid. p. 41-42, p. 42 n. 92.

16 Author of the *Nyāyakandalī*, a work on Nyāya philosophy.

17 ZYDENBOS 1991. A much shortened version appeared earlier under the title “Jaina Influences in the Formation of Dvaita Vedānta” in KOPPEDRAYER, K.I. (ed.), *Contacts Between Cultures: South Asia, volume 2*. The Edwin Mellen Press: Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter, Canada 1990), pp. 293-8, and was reprinted twice: in the *Jain Journal* (Calcutta) vol. 25 (1991), pp. 103-9, and in LALWANI, Ganesh (ed.), *Jainthology*. Jain Bhavan: Calcutta 1991, pp. 178-84.

18 Chapter II, “Jaina background of Dvaita Vedanta – A farfetched theory,” in SHARMA 2001, pp. 35-44.

but in the manner of an orthodox theologian whose views on the matter are based on a frame of reference that is provided by the traditional doctrine,<sup>19</sup> emphasizing a faith in certain notions that are considered to be beyond questioning; in other words, it is a critique much like the one he co-authored on Mesquita's book about Madhva's unknown sources. From an Indological point of view, both these critiques are beside the point, since they do not show why Mesquita's and my efforts to investigate the foundations of Dvaitavedānta, which are based on historical, philological and philosophical considerations, are flawed. The critiques state little more than that Sharma believes his belief is more satisfactory than the results of Mesquita's and my research because it is a belief that is based on a present-day, theologically conditioned traditional world view that is accepted in his religious community; this

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19 Characteristically, Prof. Sharma does not refer to any primary Jaina source materials (except indirectly, through references in my article) but refers to Jaina ideas as they are (mis-) represented in texts of his own tradition: texts which, as I have explicitly stated in the context of the Jaina concept of *syādvāda*, are unreliable sources of information. The defence of the misrepresentations by Vedāntins which Sharma makes toward the end of his essay is rather illustrative of his argumentative style: "Commenting on the Syadvada of Jainism Prof. Zydenbos says Śāṅkara and other earlier commentators on BS [Brahmasūtra – RZ] had perverted its original meaning and other Vedāntins had followed suit [...]. As leading Jain writers like Bhaskaranandī (1250) came long after Śāṅkara, it is not made clear why he had not spoken out and taken Śāṅkara to task for his misrepresentation of Anekantavada or whether any other Jain writers have dealt with the point. If they had done so, it is up to Prof. Zydenbos to bring it to light, instead of simply saying that the 'Syadvada does not say so'" (p. 244). – Prof. Sharma's doubts about this side issue can be set at rest easily. Already in 1922, Surendranath Dasgupta pointed this out in a standard modern reference work (*History of Indian Philosophy*, Motilal Banarsidass: Delhi 1975 (repr.), vol. 1, ch. 6, p. 179), adding that *syādvāda* is based on *naivādvāda*, which is already dealt with in works such as Umāsvāti's *Tattvārthasūtra* (perhaps 2nd century CE), I.33, immediately after, in I.32, it has been declared that a fool does not know how to distinguish what is from what is not (i.e., *tertium non datur*, also according to Jaina thinkers), as is also elaborated in detail in commentaries such as the *Sarvārthasiddhi* by Pūjyapāda (5th century CE), who lived in Karnataka centuries before Śāṅkara and the later Vedāntācāryas set foot there. One can also refer to an author such as Hemacandra (1088-1172), who addressed the issue of later Vedāntin criticism directly and in detail in the auto-commentary to his *Pramāṇamīmāṃsā*, I,1,32 (MOOKERJEE, Satkari (ed.), *Hemacandra's Pramāṇa-Mīmāṃsā*. Text and Translation with Critical Notes. Tara Publications: Varanasi 1970). In other words: early Jaina authors have stated their own position sufficiently clearly already centuries before Śāṅkara, and the later ones surely had better things to do than to repeat Hemacandra's work and complain about the superciliousness of their Vedāntin critics, who for centuries have apparently preferred to believe their own hearsay rather than to earnestly study the writings of their opponents before criticizing them.

makes his critiques religiously fundamentalist. At the end of my article, I concludingly listed the arguments why, in my opinion, the ontological and epistemological structure of Madhva's doctrine is basically Jaina and was adapted by Madhva in such a way as to fit a *bhakti* religion and the brahminical hierarchic social structure; none of these arguments has been refuted.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the arguments that led Mesquita to believe that the 'unknown sources' quoted by Madhva have not been lost but are Madhva's own creations have also not been addressed by Rao and Sharma, as Mesquita has pointed out in his rejoinder.<sup>21</sup> Professor Sharma is one of the most learned and distinguished scholars in the Mādhva community living today, and he is by far the most influen-

20 ZYDENBOS 1991, p. 265: "three facts, viz. (i) the clear similarities between Jainism and Dvaita, which by contrast they do not share with other systems of Indian thought, (ii) the greater antiquity of the development of these ideas in Jainism in comparison with Dvaita, and (iii) the historical religious and philosophical situation in which Dvaita originated, all show that great Jaina influence in the formation of Dvaita is practically certain. In six topics, viz. (a) *tāratamya* vis-à-vis *bhavyābhavyatva*, (b) the notion of memory as a valid source of knowledge, (c) the possibility of *pramā* being considered a *pramāṇa* as well, (d) the twofold categorization of *pramāṇas*, in which Dvaitin *kevala* corresponds to Jaina *pratyakṣa*, (e) the Dvaitin concept of *saviśeṣābheda* vis-à-vis Jaina *anekāntavāda*, (f) the concept of *sākṣin* vis-à-vis the Jaina theory of the soul, we can clearly discern a Jaina background." Furthermore, as a crucial part of my argumentation: "Here we must notice that most of these ideas imply each other" (ibidem).

Prof. Sharma conveniently ignores the chronological argument (ii) altogether. The socio-historical dimension in (iii) is quickly dismissed in one sentence: "in the social and religious barriers [*sic*] between the Jaina and the Brahminical community of those days and the Atheistic character of of the Jaina System it would be difficult to believe that there was scope for initiating any warm exchange of thought" (SHARMA 2001: 40). This is, at best, begging the question. My findings seem rather to indicate that the various communities were quite familiar with each other's ideas, which in itself is not so surprising. Madhva himself called Śāṅkara a *pracchannabauddha*, a 'crypto-Buddhist': this suggests, firstly, that Śāṅkara was familiar with Buddhist ideas, and secondly, that Madhva was familiar with both Śāṅkara and Buddhism. Considering the concrete historical situation in which Madhva lived, it is more than likely that he was familiar with the teachings of the Jainas. Finally, the systemic argument that the six similarities together are ontologically meaningful and support each other, cannot be dismissed, as Sharma tries to do, by superficially pointing out that a certain word was used in some context or the other that can vaguely be called Vedāntic in some sense or the other.

21 MESQUITA 2003. Also in their critique of Mesquita, Sharma and Rao retreat into ahistorical theology and conveniently ignore Mesquita's systemic argument that the 'unknown sources' serve the purpose of supporting teachings that are particular to Madhva's doctrine.

tial and important one writing in English, which makes him also the one who is most widely regarded in the academic community outside India. It is significant that as an apologist of the tradition toward the outside world he apparently could not put forward any relevant non-religious counter-argument to refute either the conclusion that Madhva borrowed heavily from Jaina thought, or that the source of the ‘unknown sources’ is Madhva himself. His arguments may be valid for theologically committed members of the Mādhva religious community, but hardly for Indological scholarship. This is a difficulty that can arise in discussions with traditional *paṇḍitas* and *śāstrins* who are insufficiently familiar with the idea that their tradition can be fruitfully studied also from a non-theological point of view and by researchers who are not committed members of the community of believers. This lack of familiarity and understanding can result in faulty perceptions of a polemical nature, in which any questioning of a traditional dogma or any difference of opinion can be perceived as an attack upon an entire religious culture. But a detached, personally non-committed, rational study of the source materials of a philosophical or theological tradition (in which the researcher is committed to openness, fairness, and logical reasoning) is not disrespectful, and disagreement over what is purely a matter of faith, when the disagreement is based on a critical investigation of those materials, ought not to be seen as an attack on the value of the tradition as a whole. Madhva’s ideas about *jīvanmukti* may have been a new development in Vedānta, but they were not unprecedented in the history of Indian thought. The idea that a special kind of knowledge destroys ignorance, leads to bliss and prevents the binding of new karma but does not instantaneously destroy all karma, for which reason the individual continues to live incarnate for some more time until physical death, is found in Jainism:<sup>22</sup> the same philosophy from which, as I have shown

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22 A detailed treatment of the classical Jaina view of *mukti / mokṣa* on the basis of the final tenth chapter of the *Tattvārthasūtra* together with Umāsvāti’s commentary can be found in ZYDENBOS 1983.

in 1990, Madhva borrowed much of his ontology and epistemology. The liberated individual is described by Madhva as an *aparokṣajñānin*, elsewhere as a *samyagjñānin*, i.e., one who possesses *samyagjñāna* or correct knowledge, a concept that is so important in Jainism that it occurs in the very first line of the *Tattvārthasūtra*.<sup>23</sup> The attainment of the highest, most comprehensive form of *samyagjñāna*, which the Jains term *kevalajñāna*, means the annihilation of four basic categories of karma, which collectively are termed *ghātikarma* (*darśanāvaraṇīya*, *jñānāvaraṇīya*, *antarāya* and *mohanīya*: faith-obscuring, knowledge-obscuring, inhibiting, and delusive karma) or those which, in P.S. Jaini's description, "have a directly negative effect on the qualities of the soul",<sup>24</sup> i.e., an effect on consciousness. The other four basic types, the *aghātikarma*, "which bring about the state and particular conditions of embodiment",<sup>25</sup> are not thus immediately affected. One sub-category of *aghātikarma* is *āyuhkarma*, the karma that determines *āyus* or longevity. But in time, this karma too will be exhausted, and then the physical death of the omniscient individual will occur, which does not mean the annihilation of the individual soul (exactly as Dvaita also holds, in contradistinction to the monistic schools of Vedānta). During this final stage in the final incarnation, the individual soul experiences its innate qualities totally unhampered by any karma, is omniscient and experiences supreme happiness. In view of this, it is quite clear from where Madhva borrowed the basic components for his concept of *jīvanmukti*: obviously from the same source from which he drew components for his ontology and epistemology. Mesquita's short study fills important gaps in scholarly understanding about Madhva's concept of *jīvanmukti*: first of all, it conclusively shows that Madhva accepted this possibility, and secondly, how his views on

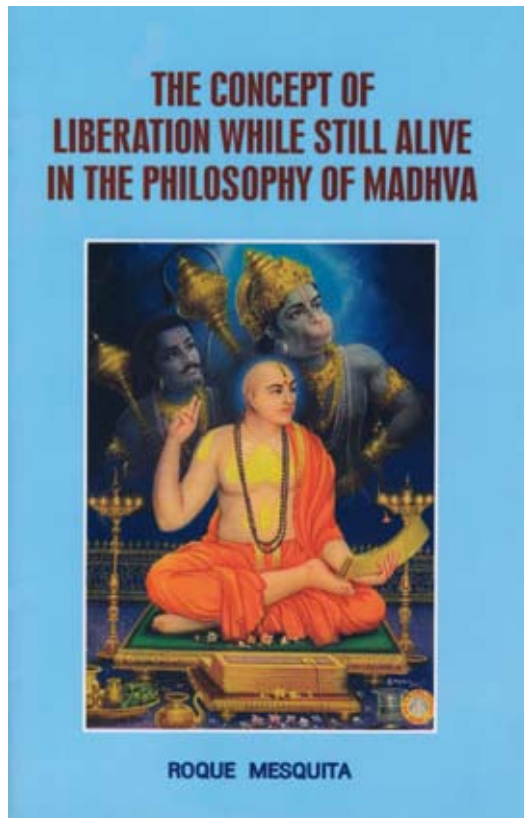
23 *Samyagdarśanajñānacāritrāṇi mokṣamārgaḥ*, *Tattvārthasūtra* I,1.

24 JAINI 1979, p. 151.

25 *Ibidem*.

the matter differ from that of Advaita. At the same time, apparently unawares, Mesquita has provided further evidence that Dvaita has borrowed heavily from Jainism. Here too, Madhva obviously combined Jaina ideas with Vaiṣṇava theism, and this innovation, which could not be justified by means of older texts that were a part of the accepted Vedāntic literary tradition, was justified by quotes from what Mesquita terms “unknown or fictitious sources” (p. 42). Orthodox Mādhvas may be disturbed by the suggestion that just as Śaṅkara has been called a *prachanna bauddha* or ‘crypto-Buddhist’ (also by Madhva), Madhva might be termed a *prachanna jaina*. But non-religiously, for Indological scholarship, the mounting evidence is of great positive interest. It shows that active and fundamental borrowing by at least one major ‘Vedic’ tradition of philosophical thought from a so-called ‘heretical’ school occurred as late as the fourteenth century, and it demands a re-thinking not only of the significance of dubious terms such as *vaidika* and *avaidika*, ‘orthodox’ and ‘heretical’, but also of the position of Jaina philosophy in the totality of Indian philosophical history.

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