Introduction

Writing in 1930, Surendranath Dasgupta observed: "We have no authentic information about the life of Madhva. All that we can know of him has to be culled from the legendary and mythical lives of Madhva, called the Madhva-vyaya, and the Mani-Manjari of Narayana Bhatta, son of Trivikrama, who was an actual disciple of Madhva. Some information can also be gathered from the adoration hymn of Trivikrama Pandita." [A History of Indian Philosophy, vol. IV p. 52]

The learned writer had to observe as above as he had no access to all the Madhva literature prevalent then and also because he had no time and leisure to improve upon his observations. He himself has confessed: "The treatment of the philosophy of Madhva which is to follow was written in 1930; and so the present writer had no opportunity of diving into Mr. Sarma's excellent work which appeared some time ago, when the manuscript of the present work was ready for the Press". [Ibid p. 54]

Since 1930, much water has flowed in the Ganges. Much research has been done. Many have been forced to change their own opinions. A classical example is of Dr. B. N. K. Sharma, who is widely known for his works on
Dvaita literature and philosophy In his 'Philosophy of Sri Madhvacarya' [Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay 1962] Dr. Sharma stated- "He (Jayatirtha) seems to have spent the major part of his life at Ergola and later at Malkhed or Manyakheta (the old and historic capital of the Rastra-Kutas of Karnatak) now in the Gulbarga district of Mysore State. He passed away at Malkhed in 1388. His mortal remains lie entombed there." (Biographical Note, p.XV).

But in 1986, Dr. Sharma changed his opinion. "He (Jayatirtha) seems to have spent the major part of his life at Eragola and partly at Malkhed or Manyakheta, the historical capital of the Rashtrakutas of Karnataka, now in the Gulbarga District of Karnataka State.

"Later, he seems to have moved south towards Anegundi (Hampi) and passed away there in 1388. There is reason to believe that his mortal remains were laid to rest facing the tomb of Padmanabha Tirtha himself, on the island, which later came to be known as Navabindavana, on the Tungabhadra river. The tomb facing Padmanabha Tirtha's bears on its front two figures carved on it, one of an ascetic in standing position holding a danda and a Kamandalu in his hands flanked by the figure of a crossbelted soldier with a drawn sword held in the left hand, the right forefinger pointing to the ascetic. These figures are obviously intended to record and commemorate the earlier and later phases of life of the prince Jayatirtha who renounced family life and a Military career and became a Paramahamsa." [Philosophy of Sri Madhvacarya, Motilal
This is just to show that OBJECTIVE RESEARCH should not stop. Nobody should be carried away by the opinions of or conclusions arrived at by scholars, however great and renowned they may be. Hence, when the great and reputed Dasgupta remarked that the work 'Sri Sumadhva Vijaya' of Narayana Panditacarya is 'legendary and semi-mythical', one should take it as his individual opinion and not a conclusion based on valid evidences. Similar is his remark 'We have no authentic information about the life of Madhva'.

Indian tradition has accepted N P.'s S M. as a biography of M. What is a biography then, according to Indian thinking? Prof. G. V Nadgouda has the right answer: "Biography is primarily concerned with the career and character of a person. It is not merely a compilation of the deeds of the hero but a truthful transmission of a great personality. A successful biographer has to face two challenging problems. One the 'ethical' and the other 'aesthetic'.

"Pure biography is a truthful record of events. The biographer owes his allegiance to truth however difficult it may be to arrive at it. But it must not be lost sight of that it is a work of art too. The artist has his own point of view, his own vision and his own style. He has to retain his freedom of spirit. It is this personal interpretation that makes biography a work of art, a thing of beauty and a thing of delight. It is not merely hotch-potch of chronical events but involves rigorous selection and beautiful presentation.
"But the biographer is 'an artist on oath.' He must not take liberties with the material on hand and insert his own conjectures like a novelist. His imagination must be curbed by hard facts. He has a 'conscience' and has to approach his subject in a truthful manner. It is also not his business to be complimentary but to lay bare the facts as they are, however uncomplimentary they may be. He has to express his vision within the limited bounds without sacrificing truth at the altar of beauty.

"Viewed in this light, Sumadhwa Vijaya is an authentic biography of Acharya Madhwa...." [Sumadhwavijaya of Narayan Panduracharya (Ed) Text with English Rendering, Anandtirtha Pratishtana, Bangalore, 1991 M Vij General Introduction, pp. XII-XIII.]

Now coming to the importance of M's biography 'Sri Sumadhva Vijaya' one must note that it should be studied together with the author's gloss on it called Bhavaprakāśikā which is estimated as below by Dr B. N K Sharma: "The object of this short gloss on the M Vij is to elucidate the obscure references and passages in the original and provide historical notes and comments, where necessary to identify the names of places and persons belonging to S. Kanara, appearing in their Sanskritised form (from the original Tulu), in the M Vij. This gloss is, thus, of immense value for a historical appreciation of those incidents in the life of Madhva, whose scenes have been laid exclusively in the Tulu country. It also helps to throw light on the correct name or identity of certain persons also referred to by other epithets and sobriquets (e.g. Cola-ja: Padmatirtha
and Dvipi Puri: Pundarika Puri). With this gloss we can easily reconstruct, fairly accurately, the movements of Madhva, within the Tulu country.

"As already mentioned, there are references in this gloss to another metrical biography, or may be to more than one such earlier work, on the life of Madhva. That they are different from the Anumadhvavyaya is obvious. We are unable to say anything more about these earlier 'Lives of Madhva'. The gloss adds considerably to our knowledge of the incidents in the life of Madhva, briefly alluded to in the M Vij.

"The author assures us in the Epilogue, that he has made a conscientious attempt to record all details as accurately as possible. He makes it more or less clear that he was not an eye-witness to many of the events narrated by him. This may show that he must have been too young to have a clear personal recollection of his early contacts with Madhva, if not that he had never seen him, in his life. The former hypothesis seems probable in view of certain other hints in his work (xii. 34) and seeing he was the youngest of the three sons of Trivikrama. His main sources are the earlier biographies cited by him, his own father and certain other eye-witnesses mentioned by him (Epilogue, verses 6-8)" [A History of Dvaita School of Vedanta and its Literature Vol. I pp. 287-8].

Hence S. M. should be read with the Bhāvaprakāśikā. How was S. M. composed ? N. P. states in his gloss: "Many did see M's deeds; but due to divine will some were forgotten. Some were remembered;
but all the remembered ones could not be heard by me. Among those heard some deeds were not described considering them to be divine secrets. Some more were not included in the poem due to the fear of making the biography to lengthy. Many deeds which were described by single persons were not included. Many told incidents as definitely witnessed by them. When there were accounts opposed to each other, the stronger was accepted as valid. Nothing has been brought in the poem out of poetic fancy or to extol the hero; nor has anything been described due to poet's sweet will. Hence, none should doubt the authenticity of the biographical sketch of M given in SM.

This is a honest confession of N. P., the biographer of great M. In the poem itself we come across a mention of M.'s disciples describing his deeds. E.g.

X. 2 "A certain disciple of Sri Purnaprajna mentioned to the host of virtuous persons possessed of curiosity the word associated with the praise of Sri Madhva and (his) virtuous deeds like a poem (such as the Naisadha) dealing with the praise of the hero (Nala) and having different metres (such as sardulavikridita, arya, totaka, prthvi and others.)

3. "Even by (the gauge of) duration of the life of gods all of us cannot indeed describe fully the wonderful deeds of Sri Madhva in the worlds. Though difficult, a little will be described (by me) to the people desirous of hearing.

XVI. 49 "It is not that this varied story pertaining to Sri Madhva and which is respectable among the stories of those
having holy fame was narrated thus only by a brahmin (-disciple) of the acarya. This story narrated directly even by the best of gods was sung by the gandharvas in the assembly of the gods for the pleasure of those gods." [English Rendering by D. R. Vasudeva Rau].

This shows that there were some accounts composed by M’s disciples describing his extra-ordinary deeds and other incidents connected with his life. It is also true that N.P. quotes some such verses in his *Bhavaprakasika*. (E.g V 8, 46, 48; VI. 15, 33, VII. 40; IX. 7; X. 7, 21, 22, 24, 49, 50, 52, 53; XI. 1; XII 43, 51, 53, XIII. 2) Besides, there are accounts connected with M.’s life in N.P.’s other two works viz. *Manmañjari* and Anu *Madhva Vijaya*. Hence all these four works should be taken as one unit serving as the source of M.’s biography.

Regarding the estimate of *S M*. it is better to know what its author has to state N. P. in his *Manmañjari* proclaims:

"Śrīmadhvo Vijayī ca Madhvavijayo Nārāyaṇa prodbhavah" It means. “Victorious indeed are both Śrī Madhvācārya and Śrī Sumadhvavijaya. Both have origin in Nārāyaṇa. That is, Śrī Madhvācārya descended to this mortal world due to Lord Nārāyaṇa’s command; and Śrī Sumadhvavijaya was composed by Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍitacārya.”

Secondly, the number of commentaries on *S M*. speaks of its popularity and also the high respect earned by it. Besides the poet’s own commentary named *Bhāvaprakāśikā*, four more are well-
They are:

1) *Padārthadīpikā* of Vedāṅgaṭīrtha;

2) *Padārthadīpikodbodhikā* of Viśvapatīṭīrtha

3) *Mandopakārini* of Chalari Nṛśimhācārya’s disciple Śeṣācārya.

4) *Padārthapraṇakāśikā* of Lakṣmīnṛśimhasūri’s son Ānandatīrthācārya.

Further, the tradition says that there were three more commentaries written by Chalari Narasimhacarya, Mudgala Anandatirthacarya and Lingeri Vyasaacarya. But these are not extant.

Regarding the significance of commentaries on *Ś M.*, Dr. B N. K. Sharma observes, under the title ‘Commentaries on Madhvaśākya’—

“The BHAVAPRAKASIKĀ of Narayan Pandita is more a textural and historical note on the original than a regular commentary on the verses. As the work soon received universal acceptance among the followers of Madhva as the most valuable hagiological work of their system and the most complete and authentic account of the life and doings of the Founder of their system and his immediate disciples and followers, it came to be regarded as an inspired Oracle of Sri Madhva himself and has gained a unique place in the regard and affection of entire Madhva community. These factors apart from its undoubted literary excellence, have brought into existence a number of elaborate commentaries on it by later day scholars. At least five such commentaries are known to us. The fact that two of these commentaries are from famous Ascetics of the Asthamathas of Udipi like Sri Vedanga Tirtha (circa 1450) of the Sode Mutt and Sri
Visvapathi Tirtha (Circa 1600 A.D) of the Pejavar Mutt, is in itself a tribute to the greatness of the original and the regard in which its author though a Grahasta, had been held even by the ascetics who deemed it a duty and an honor to comment on his work, while others have quoted from it in their works.

"Among other commentaries known may be mentioned those of (3) Lingeri Vyasacharya, (circa 1640 A.D) and (4) Anandatirtha son of Lakshminarasimha Suri (circa 1700 A.D.) and presumably a nephew of the celebrated Raghavendra Svami and (5) Chalari Seshacharya (c.1700) ...." [Sri Symadhvavijaya, with the commentary of Visvapati Tirtha, published by Sri Pejavar Mutt Udipi, 1951, Introduction, pp. 24-25.]

Modern scholars have also commended the merits of SM

The following opinions can be read with interest:

C. M. Padmanabhachar observes:

"As to the sources from which materials can be gathered for a "Life" of Sri Madhva, it has to be remembered that Srman Madhva Vijaya by Narayana Pandithacharya is almost the solitary fountain of information on the subject. It is very probable that a biographical sketch of Sri Madhva was composed in his own time. Some one of his learned disciples seems to have kept a diary of his tours, and sketched his doings from time to time, recording all the important events of his life. These biographical sketches are not extant now. The only authoritative biography extant is the well-known Madhva Vijaya written by Pandit Narayanacharya. This Pandit is almost a
contemporary of Sri Madhva, for, his father Trivikrama Pandithacharya was a convert of Sri Madhva, who, having conducted a memorable controversy with the Master and become convinced, sought chelas hip under him. This event was towards the latter part of Sri Madhva’s career. Pandit Narayanacharya might have been with his father in this eventful time. His junior paternal uncle, Sankarachar by name, had been Sri Madhva’s Librarian for some time even before. This Library was stolen by enemies about this time, and it caused great sensation and stir. Hence if Pandit Narayana was of mature years, he should certainly have known all about the Library theft and his father Trivikrama’s controversy. ... Making some allowance for poetic fancies, the account contained in Madhva Vijia is fairly full and authentic.” [Life and Teachings of Sri Madhvachariar, M/s. C. A. Pattabhiraman and C. A. P. Vittal, Bombay, 1983, pp. 21-2]

Dr. B. N. K. Sharma remarks:-

"The life and achievements of Madhva are narrated here in this Kavya (Madhva- Vijaya) of 16 cantos. It is the earliest extant biography of Madhva, tho' not the earliest ever composed. ... The account is, in the main, fairly full, reliable and accurate, even as regards details. Tho' the theme is religious and hagiological, the author has managed to infuse a genuine poetic feeling into his work and it stands as one of the leading Kavyas in Dvaita Literature and as a good specimen of a Mahakavya in Sanskrit. Despite his religious outlook, the author was a poet of merit and the son of a gifted poet. Even as a
piece of Kavya, it stands on a much higher level than similar "Vijayas" in the field like the Samkaravijayas of Anandagiri and Madhavacarya. As Madhva and his biographer were not far removed in time from each other, the work is able to achieve a far greater measure of historical accuracy and wealth of contemporary details, than was possible for the authors of Samkara's biographies, who were removed from their subject by more than five to six centuries" [A History of Dvaita School of Vedanta And Its Literature Vol. I Bookseller's Publishing Co. Bombay 1960 pp. 286-7]

In the words of Prof. K. T. Pandurangi:-

"Sri Madhavijaya is a sacred text for the followers of Madhva Philosophy. It is a unique Sanskrit Mahakavya for many reasons. It is an authentic biography of the founder of a system of philosophy. It is a historical poem giving a picture of the socio-cultural situation in India during 13th and 14th centuries. It is a philosophical poem giving a lucid account of the tenet of Dvaita philosophy. It is a fine sanskrit Mahakavya exhibiting the excellences of a classical Sanskrit poem. A reading of this poem gives the joy of reading a fine poem as well as the joy of assimilating the high tenets of philosophy and religion. The description of an imposing personality of a great spiritual leader given here with admiration and devotion, makes a deep impact on the readers.

"Sri Narayana Pandita, the author of this poem, has planned his poem very carefully. His intention is not merely to give the biographical details of Sri Madhvacharya but also to portray him as a reviver of Vedic religion and philosophy with strong theistic
foundation. Sri Madhva himself had boldly declared that he is a messenger of God. It is on this basis that the life of Sri Madhva is deterninated here. Therefore, in addition to biographical details, the poet gives a brief account of the previous incarnations of the messenger, his miraculous deeds all along, his extensive tour of the country, his visit to Badari and meeting Sri Vedavyasa and Narayana, going to the regions not accessible to ordinary human beings, his debates with several scholars and their conversion to the revived faith, and a detailed account of his work and doctrine. His establishing a Krishna temple at Udupi, ordaining eight Sannyasins to worship the idol, his ordaining other Sannyasins to propagate his philosophy and several other details are also given. It the midst of all this, a fine portrait of the personally handsome, strong and spiritually inspiring personality of Sri Madhvacharya is given all along the poem with a beautiful poetic touch. It is a poem that deals with only a mission, and builds admiration and followers for its mission. The poet's admiration for this personality and this mission is so deeprooted that he loses no occasion to describe it. His description is spontaneous. It is not poetically laboured. This makes this poem all the more appeating,” [Narayana Panditacarya’s Sri Madhva Vijaya Ed. D. R. Vasudeva Rao, Srimadanandatirtha Publications, Visakhapatnam, 1983 Introduction, pp.ii-iii.]

Prof. P. Nagaraja Rao appreciates:-

"The Sumadhva Vijaya is the authentic and complete biography of Sri Madhva by Narayana Panditacarya, the third son
of Trivikrama Panditacarya. The biography is at once all three in one: great literature, sound philosophy and inspiring religion. This is the one unchallenged contemporary historical account of the Master culled from all available source materials for his life. It is a part of Madhva sampradaya to recite a chapter or two of the biography as a part of the daily ablutions one performs. The Vayu Stuti too is one such recital.

"The biography is not a formal recounting of the incidents of the Master's life. It is remarkable for its multiple excellences. It is authentic in its truth-value, substantial in its comprehension and bulk, a remarkable unitary Kavya, sublime in its theme, vivid and fluent as a narrative, inspiring as great poetry and full of illuminating insights. The biography interprets and narrates the leading incidents of the Master's life and expounds the contents and wisdom of the Master's 37 works. The father and the son Trivikrama Pandita and Narayana Pandita have placed the followers of Sri Madhva under a magnificent, deep spiritual debt by their works - the Vayu Stuti and the Sumadhva Vijaya respectively." [Ibid. Appreciation. pp xxxiii-xxxiv].

In 1962, Dr. B N. K. Sharma in his A History of Dvaita School of Vedanta and its Literature wrote regarding S M. "The work deserves to be translated into English for the sake of the valuable historical materials in it." (p. 286). Fortunately, now two English translations of S M. have been published, one by D.R. Vasudeva Rau and another by Prof G. V. Nadgouda. It is pertinent to note their opinions regarding the worth of S M.
D. R. Vasudeva Rau opines:

"The Sumadhva Vijaya of Narayana Panditacarya is the only one full-fledged biography of Sri Madhva (1238-1317) who revolutionised philosophical thinking in India by his sound and irrefutable logic. From a study of the Bhavaprakasika, a gloss on the Sumadhva Vijaya by the poet himself we understand that there was an earlier metrical work on the life of the Acarya. According to the late C. M. Padmanabhachar, "It is very probable that a biographical sketch of Sri Madhva was composed in his own time. Someone of his learned disciples seems to have kept a diary of his tours and sketched his doings from time to time recording all the important events of his life.

"It is indeed our good fortune that Narayana Panditacarya was almost a contemporary of Sri Madhva. He seems to have been present when the disputation took place between his father Trivikrama Pandita and Sri Madhva. He has made mention of this historic debate which prompted his father to turn over a new leaf by embracing the Dvaita Philosophy and thereby Trivikrama did a great service especially by his commentary known as Tattva-pradīpa on the Sutra-bhasya of the Acarya.....

"The Sumadhva Vijaya which consists of sixteen cantos and 1008 verses is a carefully planned work which, while narrating the life-history of an eminent Acarya who blazed a new trail in the history of Indian Philosophy, gives us an idea of the socio-political life of the country in that period. In the course of his narration the poet has touched upon many epoch-making events in the life of our Acarya. The avatars of Sri Vayu culminating in the appearance of Sri Madhva on the philosophical scene, Sri Madhva's
boyhood, his ordination, conquest of the pundits in the south, trip to the north, visit to the sacred Badari, meeting with Lord Narayana, second visit to Badari, his superhuman adventures on the way, the fruit of study of the Sutrabhasya of Sri Madhva, the conference of the mayavadis to stem the tide of Sri Madhva's philosophy and their sorrowful defeats, royal patronage of king Jayasimha, emergence of Trivikrama Pandita on the scene as the doughty champion of Advaita, the Acarya's daily of worship, his scholarly routine discourse and the historic debate with the mighty Trivikrama Pandita who, in the end, became a convert to the new faith, the collection of disciples, the superhuman deeds of the Acarya and his sudden disappearance while expounding the Aitareyopanisad are all recounted in order with devotion and fervour in this great work.

"It must be noted that this work is at once Mahakavya and sastra. The poet has not only displayed his literary skill in the composition of a Mahakavya by the employment of a variety of alamkaras, vrttas and yamakas but has also recorded the essential features of the Dvaita philosophy as expounded by the Acarya from time to time and especially in the fifteenth canto which elaborately sets forth the purvapaksas of others and the Acarya's Siddhanta thereon." [Op cit. Preface, xxi-xxvi].

Prof. G. V. Nadgouda in the 'General Introduction' to his 'Sumadhwayaya of Narayan Panditacharya' (Text with English rendering) writes inter alia:

"Sumadhwa Vijaya is an authentic biography of Acharya Madhwa. It is not merely a hagiological work but it is an artistic one. It is the first available full fledged biography of a great personality that opened a new
chapter in the history of world philosophy. It is the great story of a great soul - the Jivottama, the prime reflection of the supreme Lord. Narayana Panditacharya had to do enough spade-work and take sufficient pains.

C. M. Padmanabhachar is of the opinion that a biographical sketch of Madhavacharya might have been composed in his own time depending upon the diaries and notes maintained by his learned disciples Narayana Panditacharya, almost a contemporary of Acharya Madhwa, had the good fortune to attend the historic debate between his father Trivikramacharya and Anandatirtha at Vishnumangala temple and witness the triumph of the Acharya and the welcome surrender of his father.

In Bhavaprakashika, his own gloss on Sumadhwa Vijaya, he assures that being vowed to truth, he has meticulously collected the details of the Acharya's life from various reliable sources and selected with a searching when confronted with conflicting material and heard other details from many honest mouths who had the good luck to see and enjoy the Acharya's exploits. Nevertheless Narayana Panditacharya's work of art bears his own stamp. It is sauced with his devotion for the Acharya, Lord Vedavyasa, and Lord Narayana. He is copious in his glowing tributes to the Guru and the God. He foregoes no chance to depict their glories. He has coined as many as three hundred and seventeen synonyms to describe Madhwmacharya....

"It is not mere idolatry but a spontaneous expression of his overwhelming devotion. It is a poetic biography of Anandatirtha who scintillated on the philosophic firmament and brought about reviviscence of vedic learning by an artist vowed to truth, keeping close to the tested records" [Op. cit. pp. XIII-XIV.]
Hence, there is every need to make a new and comprehensive study of N. P.'s *S M.* which is a biography of the celebrated M. In this direction, an attempt has been made in this thesis. Thus, this thesis is a substantial contribution to the existing literature on Dvaita Vedanta, a major system of Indian Philosophy.