

# The Jyotirmath Śaṅkarācārya Lineage in the 20th Century

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Śaṅkara and his disciples:  
A popular print



A meeting of the Śaṅkarācāryas in 1979:  
From L to R: Svāmī Svarūpānanda Sarasvatī (Jyotirmath),  
Svāmī Abhinava Vidyātīrtha (Śṛṅgeri), Svāmī Nirañjanadeva  
Tīrtha (Purī) & Svāmī Abhinava Saccidānanda Tīrtha (Dvārakā)

## Summary

There is currently a succession dispute at the Jyotirmath Śaṅkarācārya seat, the origins of which date back to the year 1953. The major contenders for the title are Svāmī-s Svarūpānanda Sarasvatī (also the Śaṅkarācārya of Dvārakā), Vāsudevānanda Sarasvatī and Mādhava Āśrama.

## About the author :

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- i. a discussion of *parisaṃkhyāna* in the *Upadeśasāhasrī* (The Adyar Library Bulletin, v. 62, **1998**);
- ii. a critical review of the authorship of *Pañcīkaraṇa* (Philosophy East and West, v. 51, no. 3, **2001**); and
- iii. a critical discussion of the *Śaṅkaravijaya* texts (International Journal of Hindu Studies, v. 5, **2001**).

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## **Background**

Ādi Śaṅkarācārya (8th cent.) is traditionally said to have established four Āmnāya maṭhas (monasteries) in India, and to have placed them under the leadership of his four chief disciples. The heads of these four and other monasteries of the Daśanāmī orders have come to be known as Śaṅkarācāryas themselves, in honor of the founder. They are the principal leaders of the ten orders of the Daśanāmī Saṃnyāsins associated with Advaita Vedānta. The principal eastern (*Pūrvāmnāya*), southern (*Dakṣiṇāmnāya*) and western (*Paścimāmnāya*) institutions are based at Purī (Orissa), Śṛṅgerī (Karnataka) and Dvārakā (Gujarat) respectively. The northern (*Uttarāmnāya*) Śaṅkarācārya seat is at Jyotirmaṭh (also known as Joṣīmaṭh) near Badrināth. In addition to these four, there are numerous other maṭhas throughout India, as also the seven Daśanāmī *ākhārās* (Jūnā, Nirañjanī, Mahānirvāṇī, Ānanda, Aṭal, Āvāhan, Agni - the last is a Brahmācārīn *ākhārā*, not a Saṃnyāsīn one), which have their own administrations and leaders.

The history of Jyotirmaṭh is extremely complicated. According to official accounts, after the period of one Svāmī Rāmakṛṣṇa Tīrtha in the 18th century, the maṭha was extinct for about 165 years, before it was revived in 1941, under Svāmī Brahmānanda Sarasvatī. However, in the meantime, various Saṃnyāsīns had claimed to be the Śaṅkarācārya of Jyotirmaṭh, and for some time, many people thought that the *Rāval* (chief priest) of the Badrināth temple was also the Śaṅkarācārya of Jyotirmaṭh. There are records of lawsuits from the early 1900's, which show a number of names, each laying claim to the Jyotirmaṭh Śaṅkarācārya title. Before discussing the recent history of this institution, one issue must be properly understood. What does it mean for a maṭha to have become extinct? In the traditional understanding, the answer is intimately tied with the person of the Maṭhādhipati, i.e. the head of the maṭha. To say that a maṭha has become extinct is to say that the lineage of successors has petered out, either because of confusions in the line of succession or because of the lack of qualified people to lead the maṭha.

The appointment of Svāmī Brahmānanda Sarasvatī in 1941 was made by religious groups based in Vāraṇasī (the *Bhārata Dharma Mahāmaṇḍala*, *Kāśī Vidvat Pariṣad*, and the *Akhila Bhārātīya Dharmasaṅgha*), with the blessings of Svāmī Bhārātī Kṛṣṇa Tīrtha, the then Śaṅkarācārya of Purī. Svāmī Candraśekhara Bhārātī of Śṛṅgerī also endorsed Brahmānanda's appointment. Thus, right from the beginning of Jyotirmaṭh's revival in 1941, the opinions of the

heads of other Āmnāya maṭhas were taken seriously into consideration.<sup>1</sup> Another important factor that legitimated the Jyotirmaṭh revival should not be overlooked. This is the involvement of the Hindu kings in north India in the process, and their acceptance of Brahmānanda Sarasvatī. The ruler of Garhwal was important because Badrināth was in his province, while the rulers of Vāraṇāsi and Dārbbhaṅga were well known and respected as patrons of several religious institutions. India was not yet independent in 1941, and this royal recognition helped in overcoming potential opposition from previous claimants to the Jyotirmaṭh title and their followers. Brahmānanda was selected as he was widely regarded as the epitome of the qualifications mentioned in texts like *Mahānuśāsana* and *Maṭhāmnāya*, which are attributed to Ādi Śāṅkarācārya. For the purposes of this discussion, it is immaterial to investigate who wrote these texts, or to question whether Ādi Śāṅkarācārya established any maṭhas at all. It is sufficient to note that the living tradition of Advaita monasticism more or less unanimously accepts these texts and the four Āmnāya maṭhas as originating from Ādi Śāṅkarācārya himself.

### **Beginnings of Conflict**

Svāmī Brahmānanda Sarasvatī passed away in 1953, but he had not clearly indicated his successor. This immediately caused a problem, as he had initiated a number of disciples into Saṃnyāsa. A few weeks after he passed away, a will was found, according to the terms of which, a disciple called Svāmī Śāntānanda Sarasvatī was named as the first choice for succeeding to the Jyotirmaṭh title. However, many followers of Brahmānanda Sarasvatī were satisfied neither with the credentials of Śāntānanda, nor with the validity/authenticity of the will. Perhaps, the doubts about the will were themselves based partly upon the perception that Śāntānanda was not a good choice for successor. His quickness to take charge of the maṭha administration on the basis of this will also probably raised many eyebrows. Meanwhile, there

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<sup>1</sup> This reflects the spirit of the times. In practice, the widespread tradition of affiliating all the Daśanāmī orders with the four Āmnāya maṭhas is quite nominal in nature. In the 20th century, the relations among these four maṭhas have been much strengthened and placed on a more formal footing. For example, Svāmī Bhāratī Kṛṣṇa Tīrtha had begun as a student of Vedānta at Śṛṅgeri, but he was initiated into Saṃnyāsa at Dvārakā. Bhāratī Kṛṣṇa Tīrtha was at Dvārakā from 1921 to 1925, after which he was appointed to the Purī title. And after more than a century of neglect, a concerted effort was made to revive the Jyotirmaṭh seat. It is said that Brahmānanda's guru, Kṛṣṇānanda Sarasvatī, was associated with the Śṛṅgeri maṭha, but this may be due to nothing more than the traditional affiliation of the Sarasvatī orders with Śṛṅgeri. Note that the last known Jyotirmaṭh Śāṅkarācārya in the 18th century is named as Rāmakṛṣṇa Tīrtha in some sources, and as Rāmakṛṣṇa Āśrama in others.

was a widespread rumor that Brahmānanda Sarasvatī had been poisoned. This set a number of civil lawsuits into motion. To the best of my knowledge, no criminal lawsuits were filed against anyone, on the basis of the poisoning theory. Śāntānanda's reputation definitely took a blow in the process, and the major complaint against him remained that he was unfit for the post of Śaṅkarācārya, because he did not measure up to the qualifications described in the *Mahāmuśāsana* texts.<sup>2</sup>

Also, in 1953, Svāmī Hariharānanda Sarasvatī (popularly known as Karapātrī Svāmī), another disciple of Brahmānanda Sarasvatī, was seen as the more deserving candidate to become the Śaṅkarācārya, but he didn't want the title. In fact, as the head of the *Akhila Bhāratiya Dharmasaṅgha*, it is said that Hariharānanda had been the first choice for the Śaṅkarācārya post in 1941, but he had declined and proposed his guru's name (Brahmānanda) instead. It is also said that it was Hariharānanda who convinced his guru to accept the position. Hariharānanda Sarasvatī passed away recently, and avoided the Śaṅkarācārya title for himself, but the opinion of his followers is reflected in the title they have given him - *Abhinava Śaṅkara*.<sup>3</sup>

### **Divided Lineage**

Because of the controversy over Brahmānanda's will and Śāntānanda's succession, the organizations involved in reviving Jyotirmath in 1941 considered other nominations for the Śaṅkarācārya post. Svāmī Abhinava Saccidānanda Tīrtha, the then Śaṅkarācārya of Dvārakā, blessed these efforts. In 1953 itself, one Svāmī Kṛṣṇabodha Āśrama was appointed as the new Jyotirmath Śaṅkarācārya, contesting Śāntānanda's claim.

Kṛṣṇabodha Āśrama was not a direct disciple of Brahmānanda Sarasvatī, but given the nature of Jyotirmath's revival in 1941, this was not necessarily a disqualification. The new appointment also had the support of the Purī maṭha, but it must be noted that this maṭha was to

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<sup>2</sup> Another complicating factor was Śāntānanda's friendship with Mahesh Yogi (see below). For Svāmī Śāntānanda's side of the story, see Rameswar Tiwari, *The whole thing, the real thing: brief biography of Shri Gurudeva, Shri Jyotishpeethoddharak Brahmleen Jagadguru Bhagwan Shankaracharya Shrimad Swami Brahmanand Saraswatiji Maharaj of Jyotirmath, Badrikashram*, Delhi Photo Co., New Delhi, 1977 (LC Call No.: BL1175.B68T5813). On a cautionary note, publications from either side of this dispute are likely to make unsubstantiated claims, and should be subjected to independent verification.

<sup>3</sup> For details, see Krishna Prasad Sharma, *Abhinava Śaṅkara, Svāmī Karapātrījī, Smṛti Grantha*, Akhila Bharatiya Dharmasaṅgha Prakashan, Meerut, 1988 (LC Call No.: BL1175.H35 A62 1988).

have a few succession problems of its own, within a decade.<sup>4</sup> When Kṛṣṇabodha Āśrama passed away in 1973, he nominated Svāmī Svarūpānanda Sarasvatī to the title. Svarūpānanda is a direct disciple of Brahmānanda Sarasvatī, but he has also studied under both Kṛṣṇabodha Āśrama and Abhinava Saccidānanda Tīrtha of Dvārakā.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, Śāntānanda had not relinquished the Śaṅkarācārya seat, so that by this time, the two major claimants of the title were Svarūpānanda and Śāntānanda.

In the year 1980, Śāntānanda stepped down from the title, in favor of Svāmī Viṣṇudevānanda Sarasvatī, another disciple of Brahmānanda. However, Viṣṇudevānanda Sarasvatī passed away in 1989/90, while Śāntānanda Sarasvatī was still alive. Following this, one Svāmī Vāsudevānanda Sarasvatī was named as the successor. Śāntānanda passed away in late 1997, and Vāsudevānanda Sarasvatī is currently the sole representative of this lineage. Vāsudevānanda was present at the appointment of a Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara of the Mahānirvāṇī ākhārā in 1995 (according to Hinduism Today, August 1995). Adding to the complexity of this dispute is the fact that according to the terms of Brahmānanda's contested will, one Svāmī Dvārakeśānanda Sarasvatī was supposed to have been the second choice after Śāntānanda. There is no indication that Dvārakeśānanda ever claimed the Śaṅkarācārya title, or that it was ever formally offered to him. A similar situation obtains with Svāmī Paramātmānanda Sarasvatī, who was also named in the will, but as the next choice after Viṣṇudevānanda.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Svāmī Bhāratī Kṛṣṇa Tīrtha of Purī was away touring the USA and UK in the late 1950's. During this absence, Svāmī Śaṅkara Puruṣottama Tīrtha was placed in charge of the maṭha. Bhāratī Kṛṣṇa Tīrtha passed away soon after returning to India, and was succeeded by another disciple named Yogeśvarānanda Tīrtha in the year 1960. He passed away just a few months after taking charge, in the year 1961. This resulted in some uncertainty in the Purī succession also, followed by the inevitable litigation. In 1964, Candraśekhara Śāstrī of Jaipur, one of the nominees in Bhāratī Kṛṣṇa Tīrtha's will, was initiated by Abhinava Saccidānanda Tīrtha of Dvārakā, under the name Nirañjanadeva Tīrtha, and coronated as the Śaṅkarācārya of Purī. See *Mānonīta Jagadguru Śaṅkarācārya Śrī Candraśekhara Śāstrī Abhinandana Grantha*, Abhinandana Samāroha Samiti, Jaipur, 1964 (LC Call No.: BL1210.M346).

<sup>5</sup> Details about Hariharānanda Sarasvatī, Kṛṣṇabodha Āśrama and Svarūpānanda Sarasvatī are available from a commemorative publication titled *Jagadguru Gaurav* (undated, probably 1973-4), published by the Akhila Bharatiya Dharmasangha Prakashan, Meerut. This carries messages from the heads of a number of other maṭhas, including the other three Āmnāya maṭhas, and the Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras of various Daśanāmī ākhārās.

<sup>6</sup> It should also be remembered that Dvārakeśānanda was one of those skeptical about the authenticity of the will, and he probably hadn't changed his mind about it. He passed away before the major lawsuits involved in this dispute were resolved. I am unaware if he has personally initiated any disciples into Saṁnyāsa. As for Paramātmānanda, the general perception was that he should have been named before Viṣṇudevānanda. That he was listed after the latter was another reason offered to doubt the authenticity of Brahmānanda's will.

It is difficult to ascertain the opinions of the heads of other institutions about this course of events. After the nomination of Kṛṣṇabodha Āśrama, the Purī and Dvārakā maṭhas do not seem to have been involved in Jyotirmath affairs to any significant extent. In the south, Svāmī Candraśekhara Bhāratī of Śṛṅgeri had been succeeded by his disciple, Svāmī Abhinava Vidyātīrtha, in late 1954. Official Śṛṅgeri accounts mention that the new Svāmī did meet Śāntānanda Sarasvatī during his first northern tour in 1956/7. It remains unknown whether the Śṛṅgeri Śaṅkarācāryas tried to mediate or whether they took sides in the Jyotirmath dispute in this period. However, this may not indicate that the Śṛṅgeri authorities differed from the Purī and Dvārakā authorities at a later time, with respect to endorsing Śāntānanda. In 1979, when the first conference of the four Śaṅkarācāryas was held at Śṛṅgeri, Śāntānanda and Viṣṇudevānanda were not invited, and it was Svarūpānanda Sarasvatī who represented Jyotirmath. There is no indication that the rival lineage of Śāntānanda and his disciples was endorsed at this time by any of the other Śaṅkarācāryas.

Svarūpānanda, being a direct disciple of Brahmānanda, traces his lineage directly to the ascetic who was the first Śaṅkarācārya of the revived Jyotirmath. His predecessor, Kṛṣṇabodha Āśrama was not a direct disciple of Brahmānanda Sarasvatī, and accounts written by Svarūpānanda's followers do not mention him very prominently.<sup>7</sup> Needless to say, the list of Śaṅkarācāryas of a maṭha must be distinguished from the *Guru-śiṣya* lineages of the Saṃnyāsins who become Śaṅkarācāryas. In an ideal situation, the lineages are identical, but circumstances often dictate otherwise.

Other major factors that affect this succession dispute are the relationships of the principals with Indian political parties and with internationally popular gurus. Svarūpānanda Sarasvatī's involvement with the Indian Congress party dates back to the period of the Independence struggle, before he became a Saṃnyāsin. He remains close to numerous Congress politicians (e.g. Digvijay Singh of Madhya Pradesh and P. V. Narasimha Rao, the former Prime Minister of India), and has been quite vocally anti-VHP and anti-RSS.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, or perhaps

<sup>7</sup> For other reasons, official Purī accounts do not mention Śaṅkara Puruṣottama Tīrtha, who deputized for Bhāratī Kṛṣṇa Tīrtha in the 1950's, or Yogeśvarānanda Tīrtha, who succeeded Bhāratī Kṛṣṇa Tīrtha in late 1960. See note 4 above. Nirañjanadeva Tīrtha, who became the Śaṅkarācārya of Purī in the year 1964, is listed immediately after Bhāratī Kṛṣṇa Tīrtha.

<sup>8</sup> In 1990, Svarūpānanda fiercely opposed the VHP's *Śilānyāsa* ceremonies for a Rama temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya. He proposed to conduct a ceremony of his own, at a different site, but was placed under



because of this, Śāntānanda, Viṣṇudevānanda and Vāsudevānanda have all had the support of the *Hindutva* organizations. Vāsudevānanda is usually present at major VHP and RSS events, where he is introduced as the Jyotirmath Śaṅkarācārya. Śāntānanda and Viṣṇudevānanda have also had close connections with Mahesh Yogi, who used to be Brahmānanda Sarasvatī's secretary. In fact, the earliest doubts about the will left by Brahmānanda Sarasvatī were linked to suspicion of the motives and actions of Mahesh Yogi (then called Mahesh Brahmācārī), the founder of the international Transcendental Meditation group. These connections probably did not endear Śāntānanda and Viṣṇudevānanda to the predominantly Brāhmaṇa following of the various maṭhas. I have also heard rumors that when Śāntānanda stepped down in favor of Viṣṇudevānanda, there was the hand of Mahesh Yogi behind it. As with so many aspects of this dispute, I don't know if this is just rumor or if there is something more to it. It is well known that Svarūpānanda and Mahesh Yogi don't see eye to eye on any issue, and the *ex-TM* literature has much information about their disputes.<sup>9</sup> However, the connection of Mahesh Yogi to Śāntānanda and his lineal successors is not without its own complications. For example, Deepak Chopra, the popular New Age author, who used to have intimate ties to Mahesh Yogi and his organization, has now broken his connections to him, and claims acknowledgement directly from Vāsudevānanda Sarasvatī instead (<http://www.chopra.com/shankaracharya.htm>).

### **Other Candidates**

Another Svāmī has claimed that he was once offered the Jyotirmath Śaṅkarācārya title, which he respectfully declined. This is Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī, who has set up an “International Society of Divine Love” and a Raseśvarī Rādhārāṇī temple, known as *Barsana Dham*, in Texas,

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preemptive arrest before he reached Ayodhya. He used to be characterized by the VHP as a *sarkārī-sādhu*, at a time when *sarkār* was synonymous with the Congress party. After 1992, however, he has insisted that a temple must be built at the controversial site, although not under the VHP's leadership. To that end, he has set up an independent trust, whose members are the other Śaṅkarācāryas and representatives of the Mādhva, Rāmānujī and Rāmānandī traditions.

<sup>9</sup> Ample material from the *ex-TM* literature is available online, at <http://www.minet.org>. See files titled **A Visit to the Shankaracharya**, at <http://www.minet.org/Documents/index.html>, which report an interview of Svarūpānanda by Robert Kropinski, a former TM follower. The sequence of events is somewhat confused in these documents, probably because of Kropinski's poor command of the Hindi language. For example, he reports that Svarūpānanda was already the Śaṅkarācārya of Dvārakā before taking up the Jyotirmath title. However, Svarūpānanda succeeded to the Dvārakā title only in 1982, when he had already been at Jyotirmath for close to a decade.

USA. Although he was initiated into Saṁnyāsa by Brahmānanda Sarasvatī, his personal religious philosophy is Acintya Bhedābheda, associated with Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas.<sup>10</sup> This leads me to seriously suspect his claim of having been offered the Śaṅkarācārya post. Still, for the record, if his claim is valid, then we have two Svāmīs who have rejected offers to become the Śaṅkarācārya of Jyotirmath, namely Hariharānanda Sarasvatī and Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī. We should also not forget Dvārakeśānanda Sarasvatī and Paramātmānanda Sarasvatī, who were named in a contested will, but did not press their claims. And if we dig deep enough, we will probably unearth more disciples of Brahmānanda Sarasvatī, who were all potential candidates for the Śaṅkarācārya position at one time or the other, which they all rejected. As an aside, a few relatively unknown, early Indian publications of the Transcendental Meditation movement claim the Śaṅkarācārya title for Mahesh Yogi himself, but this is not to be taken seriously. While Mahesh Yogi was indeed one of the followers of Brahmānanda Sarasvatī, he has never formally become a Saṁnyāsin. Moreover, his international following probably obviates any need for him to claim the Śaṅkarācārya title for himself now.

### **Svarūpānanda at Dvārakā**

A further complication was introduced in 1982, when Abhinava Saccidānanda Tīrtha, the Śaṅkarācārya of Dvārakā, passed away, leaving a will with a few names as possible choices for his successor. Listed among these was Svarūpānanda Sarasvatī of Jyotirmath. The others either declined or were eliminated from consideration for one reason or the other. Svarūpānanda was then coronated at Dvārakā, in a ceremony presided over by Svāmī Abhinava Vidyātīrtha of Śṛṅgeri. Svarūpānanda Sarasvatī's Dvārakā title is undisputed, and he is routinely described in press reports as the Śaṅkarācārya of Dvārakā. However, it should be noted that while his status as the head of two principal maṭhas is somewhat unusual, and also confusing for the lay public, it had not been insisted that he relinquish his position at Jyotirmath, before taking charge at Dvārakā. Svarūpānanda had attended the 1979 meeting of the Śaṅkarācāryas at Śṛṅgeri, in his

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<sup>10</sup> See the September 95 issue of Hinduism Today. There is also a website of Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī's organization, at <http://www.isdl.org/html/swamiji.html>. Close watchers claim that membership of ISDL is made up mostly of former TM followers, but Prakāśānanda's affiliation with Acintya Bhedābheda and Caitanya Mahāprabhu also probably attracts *ex*-ISKCON members. Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī represents an interesting contemporary example of how a person can be a Daśanāmī Saṁnyāsin and still not be an Advaita Vedāntin.



capacity as the Śāṅkarācārya of Jyotirmath. He also attended the funeral ceremonies of Svāmī Abhinava Vidyātīrtha at Śṛṅgeri in 1989. In June 1993, a joint statement was issued by the Śāṅkarācāryas, in connection with the Ayodhya dispute, which Svarūpānanda Sarasvatī signed twice, in his dual capacity as the head of both Dvārakā and Jyotirmath. And as Jayendra Sarasvatī of the Kāñcī maṭha has also signed the 1993 statement, I assume that he too accepts Svarūpānanda at both Dvārakā and Jyotirmath. It must be noted that although the Kāñcī maṭha is not one of the four original institutions, its contemporary influence means that the opinion of its head counts for something in these controversies.<sup>11</sup> Svarūpānanda has publicly stated that the Kāñcī maṭha is only a branch of the Śṛṅgeri maṭha,<sup>12</sup> but he did attend the birth centenary celebrations of Candraśekharendra Sarasvatī of Kāñcīpuram in 1993. Indeed, the very presence of Jayendra Sarasvatī along with the heads of the four Āmnāya maṭhas is a marked change from the absence of the Kāñcī maṭha in the 1979 meeting of the Śāṅkarācāryas, and is an acknowledgement of the current political importance of this institution. Clearly, at least in the eyes of these others, Svarūpānanda is the Śāṅkarācārya of Jyotirmath, and also of Dvārakā. However, Vāsudevānanda's connections with the *Ākhārā Pariṣad* (a coordination body that deals with such matters as order of procession of the *ākhārās* during the Kumbha Melā, etc.) indicate that the Daśanāmī *ākhārā* structure may not be unanimously supportive of Svarūpānanda.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> It is well known that between the years 1842 and 1863, the heads of a maṭha in Kumbhakoṇam acquired control of the Kāmākṣī temple in Kāñcīpuram and moved their establishment to that city. This marks the origin of the Kāñcī maṭha. See Mattison Mines and Vijayalakshmi Gourishankar, *Leadership and Individuality in South Asia: The Case of the South Indian Big-Man*, Journal of Asian Studies 49 (4): 761-786, 1990. The fame of the Kāñcī maṭha has grown in this century, under the leadership of its late centenarian head, Candraśekharendra Sarasvatī, whose powerful and influential disciples include R. Venkataraman, the former President of India, and T. N. Seshan, the former election commissioner. The Kāñcī maṭha sometimes claims the *Dakṣiṇāmnāya* status for itself, denying Śṛṅgeri's traditional status. See the preface in T. M. P. Mahadevan, *The Sage of Kanchi*, Kanchi Mahaswami Ninetieth Birthday Celebration Committee, Secunderabad, 1983, pp. i-iii. However, *Suśamā*, an important lineage text of the Kāñcī maṭha, claims a "*Mūlāmnāya*" status for Kāñcī, with jurisdiction even over the four Āmnāya maṭhas. The 1993 joint statement carries Jayendra Sarasvatī's signature, but interestingly enough, no Āmnāya designation is given to the Kāñcī maṭha. This maṭha's origins and history are highly controversial, being contested most vigorously by Śṛṅgeri maṭha followers. See R. Krishnaswamy Aiyar & K. R. Venkataraman, *The Truth About the Kumbhakonam Mutt*, Sri Ramakrishna Press, Madurai, 1973, and Raj Gopal Sharma, *Kanchi Kamakoti Math - A Myth*, Ganga-Tunga Prakashan, Varanasi, 1987.

<sup>12</sup> See Svarūpānanda's press statements reported in *The Curious Case of the Missing Monk*, cover story in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, issue dated September 13, 1987, and in other Indian newspapers and magazines from around the same time.

<sup>13</sup> Hinduism Today (August 1995) reported that Svāmī Nityānanda, a disciple of Svāmī Muktānanda of the Siddha Yoga movement, was appointed as a Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara of the Mahānirvāṇī *ākhārā*, in the presence of Vāsudevānanda Sarasvatī of Jyotirmath. Nityānanda was thrown out of the official organization of the Siddha

### Mādhava Āśrama's claim to the title

There is a third claimant to account for, named Svāmī Mādhava Āśrama, who is a disciple of Kṛṣṇabodha Āśrama, and also a leading light of the *Akhila Bhāratīya Dharmasaṅgha*. He came into prominence after he visited Nepal in 1997, for the 25th anniversary celebrations of King Birendra's accession to the throne. He also attended the Kumbha Melā in 1998, where he was injured in a riot.<sup>14</sup>

Mādhava Āśrama's claim to the Jyotirmaṭh Śaṅkarācārya title is based on the stance that after Svarūpānanda Sarasvatī took up the Dvārakā Śaṅkarācārya title in 1982, his title at Jyotirmaṭh has been nullified by the passage of time. According to his followers, in 1982 itself, Nirañjanadeva Tīrtha of Purī had requested Svarūpānanda to give up his Jyotirmaṭh title in favor of another Saṃnyāsīn before taking up the Dvārakā Śaṅkarācārya post. However, for more than a decade after assuming charge at Dvārakā, Svarūpānanda Sarasvatī had continued to retain his Jyotirmaṭh title. It is said that in 1993-4, the *Kāśī Vidvat Pariṣad* and the *Akhila Bhāratīya Dharmasaṅgha* decided that this was creating much public confusion, and decided to coronate Mādhava Āśrama as the Śaṅkarācārya of Jyotirmaṭh, at Vāraṇāsi itself.<sup>15</sup> Mādhava Āśrama does not recognize the claim of Vāsudevānanda Sarasvatī to the Jyotirmaṭh title, as he traces his own claim to the title through his guru, Kṛṣṇabodha Āśrama, and to the decision of the *Kāśī Vidvat Pariṣad* and the *Akhila Bhāratīya Dharmasaṅgha*. It should be noted that as Svarūpānanda's

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Yoga group by his sister and co-disciple, Cidvilāsānanda (Gurumāyī). Nityānanda continues to have some Siddha Yoga followers of his own, who do not recognize Cidvilāsānanda. International connections between Mahesh Yogi's TM followers and Nityānanda's faction of Siddha Yoga followers should not also be ruled out. However, the Daśanāmī *ākhārās* constitute a diverse set of institutions, and there could be many different kinds of internal alliances and disagreements. Unlike the Śaṅkarācāryas, the Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras of the Daśanāmī *ākhārās* are appointed/elected on a more democratic basis, along the lines of the old village Pañcāyat system.

<sup>14</sup> Mādhava Āśrama's 1997 visit to Nepal is reported in the online issues of The Rising Nepal (<http://www.nepalnews.com/trn.htm>), dated April 5, 11 and 12, 1997. Jayendra Sarasvatī of the Kāñcī maṭha also visited Nepal at the same time and is said to have met with Mādhava Āśrama. The riot during the 1998 Kumbha Melā began as a conflict among Nāga monks belonging to the Jūnā and Nirañjanī *ākhārās*, and caused a split within the *Ākhārā Pariṣad*. However, there were also allegations that hooligans hired by either Svarūpānanda or Vāsudevānanda or both were responsible for breaking into Mādhava Āśrama's rooms and beating him up. Also see J. E. Llewellyn's Kumbha Melā site (<http://www.smsu.edu/RelSt/faculty/Llewellyn/madhwashram.html>).

<sup>15</sup> Mādhava Āśrama's claims can be found in a booklet titled *Jyotiṣpīṭha kī Ācārya Paramparā aura Śaṅkarācārya Śrī Svāmī Mādhavāśrama jī Mahārāja* (undated, probably 1993-4), published by Sanatan Dharmasāṅgh, Delhi. Page 3 of this booklet gives his installation date as 27 November 1994, while page 10 gives the date as 27 November 1993. Thanks to J. E. Llewellyn of Southwest Missouri State University, for sharing with me a copy of this publication.

position also has to be traced to Kṛṣṇabodha Āśrama, the *Kāśī Vidvat Pariṣad* and the *Akhila Bhāratiya Dharmasaṅgha*, the ascendance of Mādhava Āśrama represents a schism within the ranks of the traditional supporters of Svarūpānanda.

To summarize, after Brahmānanda Sarasvatī (1941-1953), the competing lineages are:

1. Śāntānanda Sarasvatī (1953-1980, d. 1997)	1. Kṛṣṇabodha Āśrama (1953-1973; not a direct disciple)	
2. Viṣṇudevānanda Sarasvatī (1980-1990; disciple of Brahmānanda; predeceased Śāntānanda)	2. Svarūpānanda Sarasvatī (since 1973; disciple of Brahmānanda)	2. Svarūpānanda Sarasvatī (1973-1993/4 [1982 ?])
3. Vāsudevānanda Sarasvatī (since 1997 [1990 ?]; disciple of Śāntānanda)	3. Mādhava Āśrama (since 1993/4; disciple of Kṛṣṇabodha Āśrama)	
Not including - Hariharānanda (Karapātrī), Dvārakeśānanda, Paramātmānanda and Prakāśānanda (?)		

### **The Role of Other Traditional and Modern Institutions**

The above discussion has dealt only with the cultural and religious aspects of the Jyotirmath dispute. A few centuries ago, such problems would have been referred to the local king, and perhaps solved quickly. In independent India, the dispute has been taken to the secular courts, but these are quite different from the old princely *darbārs* in their procedures and rules. The judges also lack legislative and executive authority over religious institutions, unlike the Hindu king of old days. It seems to me that those who did not wish to acknowledge Śāntānanda as the Śāṅkarācārya of Jyotirmath did not sufficiently appreciate these changes in modern times, and expected the courts to accept their cultural, moral and religious arguments as legally valid. Thus, none of the civil suits in this dispute seems to have been framed in terms of contesting the legal *bona fides* of Brahmānanda's will. Consequently, a judge ruled that even if Śāntānanda was not properly qualified according to traditional standards, there was no legally valid reason to set aside his claim to the succession.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> My thanks go to Dana Sawyer of the Maine College of Art, who kindly shared with me the results of his field studies and interviews. See also his article, "Monastic Structure of Banarsi Dandi Sadhus" in *Living Banaras: Hindu Religion in Cultural Context*, ed. Hertel, Bradley R. and Cynthia Humes, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.

In 1980, after Śāntānanda abdicated in favor of Viṣṇudevānanda, a new lawsuit was filed, on the grounds that according to Brahmānanda's will, Dvārakeśānanda Sarasvatī should have been appointed in case Śāntānanda stepped down. Thus, notwithstanding what was privately thought about the will and its legitimacy, its terms were co-opted, as a strategy to displace Viṣṇudevānanda. However, the proverbial judicial delays in India played their role, and before this case was even heard, Dvārakeśānanda passed away. After Viṣṇudevānanda passed away, there seems to have been a lull in the dispute. After Śāntānanda also passed away in 1997, and Vāsudevānanda formally took charge, a fresh round of litigation has begun. The latest development from this angle is that as of 2001, a court at Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, has prohibited Vāsudevānanda from using the title of Śaṅkarācārya. The reasons cited for this are that his installation is suspect, and that Svarūpānanda has the better claim to the Jyotirmath title, both for historical reasons and by virtue of being acknowledged by the other Śaṅkarācāryas. This ruling more or less coincided with the 2001 Kumbha Melā and the Indian media has even begun describing Vāsudevānanda as the “former” Śaṅkarācārya of Jyotirmath. Thus, notwithstanding the previous legal standing of Śāntānanda, his disciple and successor seems to have suffered a legal setback now.

According to currently applicable Indian law, which is itself based on pan-Indian tradition, a Maṭhādhipati has the right to choose his successor from among his disciples. In an ideal case, this right is vested solely in and exercised solely by the Maṭhādhipati, in accordance with the norms specified in texts like the *Mahānuṣāsana*. However, given the history of this particular case, the involvement of two bodies external to Jyotirmath proper has to be duly noted. These are the *Kāśī Vidvat Pariṣad* and the *Akhila Bhāratīya Dharmasaṅgha*. It is agreed on all hands that the role played by members of these two organizations was a key factor in reviving the Jyotirmath in the year 1941. However, once Svāmī Brahmānanda Sarasvatī was accepted as the Jyotirmath Śaṅkarācārya, and there were no serious disputes about it at the time, further activities of these other institutions with respect to succession issues could be construed as unnecessary interference. Śāntānanda and his successors trace their claim to a will of Brahmānanda, but the *Kāśī Vidvat Pariṣad* and the *Akhila Bhāratīya Dharmasaṅgha* have not accepted this. Interestingly, if the opinions of these bodies are to be set aside at any time after 1941, only the lineage of Vāsudevānanda (through Śāntānanda) can be traced directly to

Brahmānanda, without any interruptions. However, it is precisely this lineage that seems to lack the necessary traditional support and that also seems to have now lost its previous legal standing.

Clearly, the *locus standi* of *Kāśī Vidvat Pariṣad* and *Akhila Bhāratīya Dharmasaṅgha* was not questioned when Kṛṣṇabodha Āśrama was appointed to the Jyotirmath title, except perhaps by Śāntānanda and his followers. As for the other maṭhas and their heads, whatever their reservations may have been about Śāntānanda's qualifications for the Śaṅkarācārya title, their endorsement of Kṛṣṇabodha Āśrama's appointment and/or his subsequent appointment of Svarūpānanda meant that they tacitly approved of and accepted the actions of these two organizations. Thus, both bodies got more firmly entrenched in matters relating to succession at Jyotirmath. Both Svarūpānanda Sarasvatī and Mādhava Āśrama trace their claim to the Jyotirmath title through Kṛṣṇabodha Āśrama and *via* an acknowledgement of the right of the *Kāśī Vidvat Pariṣad* and the *Akhila Bhāratīya Dharmasaṅgha* to decide the question of who would be the Śaṅkarācārya of Jyotirmath. However, it could also be argued that these organizations have no right to unseat a Śaṅkarācārya who is generally seen to be qualified for the post. Svarūpānanda was nominated by Kṛṣṇabodha Āśrama, but these two organizations seem to have had no objections against him, at least till 1982, when he took charge of Dvārakā also. The decade-long gap between Svarūpānanda's accession to the Dvārakā title and Mādhava Āśrama's appointment in 1993/4 also seems significant. If Mādhava Āśrama's claim of having been appointed by these two bodies is correct, this only means that the *Kāśī Vidvat Pariṣad* and the *Akhila Bhāratīya Dharmasaṅgha* have tried to exercise a right over Jyotirmath for the third time. In 1941, the rationale was the revival of an extinct institution. In the 1950's, the rationale was the controversy over a will. In the 1990's, it has been the confusion arising due to Svarūpānanda's Śaṅkarācārya title at the Dvārakā seat. As Mādhava Āśrama's Jyotirmath Śaṅkarācārya title is very much dependent upon the latest intervention by these two bodies, it is not too far off the mark to say that his claim to the title holds only so long as he enjoys their confidence. It is not at all inconceivable that a fourth competing lineage will be put forth in the future, if either Mādhava Āśrama or his successor develops differences of opinion with the leaders of one of these organizations. Another possible scenario is that Mādhava Āśrama could stand to lose, if either Svarūpānanda or Vāsudevānanda manages to win their support.

A number of the lawsuits involved in the Jyotirmath succession are still pending, either unresolved in the lower courts, or under appeal in the Allahabad High Court. The Jyotirmath

property remains divided between the camps of Śāntānanda (now Vāsudevānanda) and Svarūpānanda. Thus, en route to Badrināth, in the village of Joṣīmaṭh, there are two separate establishments, located quite near each other, each calling itself **the** official Jyotirmaṭh. I am unaware if Mādhava Āśrama and his supporters have filed any lawsuits against Svarūpānanda and/or Vāsudevānanda or whether they have been able to get established in the old maṭha property. However, in this dispute, possession of or jurisdiction over the maṭha's property is not the criterion that decides the identity of the legitimate Śāṅkarācārya. The primary issue is one of authenticity and/or authority of the disciple lineage. My personal opinion is that it would be extremely difficult to legally uphold a claim that one man cannot be the head of two different maṭhas. Therefore, unless the permanent legal standing of the *Kāśī Vidvat Pariṣad* and the *Akhila Bhārātīya Dharmasaṅgha* in matters of succession at Jyotirmaṭh can be proved, Mādhava Āśrama's claim seems to be the weakest, from all possible perspectives. As may be expected, no side is willing to concede the Śāṅkarācārya title to one of the other two. Both Svarūpānanda Sarasvatī and Mādhava Āśrama seriously deny the authority of the entire lineage beginning with Śāntānanda Sarasvatī. However, Mādhava Āśrama and Svarūpānanda Sarasvatī also mutually question each other, and Vāsudevānanda Sarasvatī denies the rights of both. No quick resolution of the dispute seems possible, but none of these three are very young in age. Unless there is a consensus candidate acceptable to all parties in this dispute, reconciliation seems impossible. When any one of them passes away, or nominates another person to his own claim while alive, he will simply transfer to the person of his successor all the associated disputes against the other two (and *their* respective successors).

In this century, there have been similar disputes and lawsuits in connection with the succession at Purī and Dvārakā also. In contrast, south Indian maṭhas in the Advaita Vedānta tradition are relatively non-controversial in this regard, as the southern Śāṅkarācāryas are very selective about whom they personally initiate as monks. Traditionally, at Śṛṅgeri, the current Śāṅkarācārya carefully chooses and trains his successor, who therefore is in the public eye for at least a few years before assuming charge. The senior Ācārya also typically withdraws from public life, and lets the chosen successor handle administrative issues. Or else, just before passing away, the Śāṅkarācārya clearly names his unique choice of successor from among his own disciples. Kāñcī and other southern maṭhas also usually take similar caution about their succession. The southern Śāṅkarācāryas tend to discourage the formation of a large retinue of



Samnyāsin disciples. In cases of southern maṭhas that are closely associated with particular communities, but where the lineage has suddenly become extinct, e.g. the Shirali Chitrapur maṭha of Chitrapur Sārasvata Brāhmaṇas in southern Karnataka (<http://www.chitrapurmath.org>), the succession is revived through a community effort, often with the help and support of other well respected maṭhas. Purī, Dvārakā and Jyotirmath seem to operate by very different procedures. Matters of succession are left rather nebulous, or stated in a will, with a choice of candidates for the successor. More often than not, the will is contested, so that the succession soon becomes a highly charged political issue, and the lineages become more complicated than in the Wars of the Roses.

### **The Role of Royalty**

The relationships of all these institutions with members of current and erstwhile royal houses continue to remain important. Mādhava Āśrama's visits to Nepal are usually highlighted to buttress his claim. Reading the publications of his followers, one gets the distinct impression that the support of the King of Nepal is seen as a very important factor in legitimating Mādhava Āśrama's claim to the Jyotirmath Śaṅkarācārya title. Reciprocally, the King of Nepal is described as the "King of all Hindus in the world," presumably because he is the only legitimate Hindu monarch left today, even if his role within Nepal has been much reduced in recent times. The *Kāśī Vidvat Pariṣad* enjoys the patronage of the current "king of Vāraṇāsi," who is, I assume, also a leading light of the *Akhila Bhāratīya Dharmasaṅgha*. The revival of Jyotirmath in 1941 was facilitated by the role played by the then significant Hindu princes in north India. Members of India's erstwhile royalty continue to be important in Hindu religious institutions, even if their roles have become largely ceremonial, e.g. the Gajapati royal family in the Jagannātha temple festivals in Purī, the Mysore royal family during the Navarātrī festival, and the Travancore royal family in the Padmanābhasvāmī temple festivals in Tiruvanantapuram. As for the other maṭhas, in the pre-1947 era, administrative issues were routinely referred to the local rulers. For example, there are well-documented records of the interactions of the Śṛṅgeri administration with various ruling houses, from the Vijayanagara emperors in the 14th century, to the kings of Mysore and Hyderabad in the early 20th century. A large part of the recent growth of the Kāñcī maṭha to an important status can be traced to the relationship that successive

Maṭhādhipatis have maintained with the Marāṭhā rulers of Tañjāvūr and the British administrators of Madras Presidency, as also politicians and bureaucrats of independent India.

Perhaps, all this is in keeping with the nature of generic Hindu religion, as monks are supposed to be supported by the householders, while the kings are expected to uphold *dharma*. However, although Śaṅkara describes the monk as an *atyāśramin* (one who is beyond all *āśramas*), and asks rhetorically, “*kathaṃ varṇāśramī bhavet?*” the situation of the contemporary Śaṅkarācāryas is considerably more complicated. Ideally, a Maṭhādhipati pursues only otherworldly concerns, as he is first and foremost a monk. In the Advaita tradition, he is also eventually expected to transcend all concerns of both this world and the next. However, a maṭha is a social institution, and has one foot firmly planted in this world. The coronation of a Śaṅkarācārya as the head of a maṭha is called a *paṭṭābhiṣeka*, and closely resembles that of a classical Hindu king. Therefore, when the very issue of who is the legitimate Maṭhādhipati is confused or controversial, the realities of this world take center-stage. Certainly, there is a substantial amount of documented evidence to show that for many centuries now, the Śaṅkarācāryas and their maṭhas have not been strangers to the rulers of India and their politics. It could be argued that even though contemporary Daśanāmī Saṃnyāsins make use of courts and legal documents like wills, they have not fully woken up to the constitutional reality of democratic India. Thus, they are often seen as expecting outmoded patterns of social behavior, and as giving undue importance to old royal dynasties. On the other hand, it could also be argued that this is simply one manifestation of a larger reality in India, whose new rulers have succeeded only in establishing modern personality cults and political dynasties in place of the old royal houses. The interactions of Saṃnyāsins with politicians and erstwhile royalty, and the disputes over who is a legitimate Śaṅkarācārya, are all part of a larger clash between the old and the new, in which the old, with all its inertia, is at a great disadvantage.

It remains to be seen how the Śaṅkarācārya institutions, in general, and the Jyotirmath, in particular, secure their continued existence in future, by resolving their internal disputes in the context of the external political and social constraints they face in 21st century India.

### **A Review of William Cenkner’s Work on the Śaṅkarācāryas**

William Cenkner’s book, *A Tradition of Teachers*, has been mentioned (<http://listserv.liv.ac.uk/cgi-shl/WA.EXE?A2=ind9801&L=indology&O=T&P=11063>) in the

INDOLOGY discussion. While Cenkner makes some valid observations about the inherent strengths and weaknesses of the Śaṅkarācārya tradition, he is often unreliable when it comes to factual details. What his introduction calls the “inclusive tradition” of the Kāñcī maṭha is in fact a highly contested claim within the Daśanāmī tradition, with the potential to cause a deep schism. As for the Jyotirmath succession controversy, it has always been a matter of public knowledge, both because of the close physical proximity of the two separate establishments at Joṣimath and the fact that all the people involved are public figures. Cenkner is astoundingly silent about all this. If he were to be believed, there is just no succession dispute at all, and Śāntānanda’s position at Jyotirmath is unquestioned. He also specifically mentions the succession disputes at Dvārakā and Purī in this century, but strangely enough, he mentions a controversy where none existed, namely at Śṛṅgeri.<sup>17</sup> Cenkner tells us that Nirañjanadeva Tīrtha’s coronation as the Śaṅkarācārya of Purī in 1964 was conducted in the presence of the Śaṅkarācārya of Jyotirmath, but neglects to inform us that this was Kṛṣṇabodha Āśrama, not Śāntānanda. Cenkner is also aware of the 1979 conference of the four Śaṅkarācāryas, but neglects to inform us that it was Svarūpānanda, not Śāntānanda or Viṣṇudevānanda, who was acknowledged as the Śaṅkarācārya of Jyotirmath then. Cenkner’s 1995 edition seems to be a reprint of the 1983 edition, and although he has provided a fresh preface, which mentions Svarūpānanda Sarasvatī’s name, he still does not mention the Jyotirmath succession dispute. One is left with the impression that even as late as 1995, there was no dispute whatsoever about

<sup>17</sup> William Cenkner, *A Tradition of Teachers - Sankara and The Jagadgurus Today*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1983, pp. 109-110, mentions an early 20th-century challenge to the Śṛṅgeri Śaṅkarācārya. This statement can be traced to Cenkner’s rather blind reliance on a Kāñcī maṭha publication (A. Nataraja Aiyer and S. Lakshminarasimha Sastri, *The Traditional Age of Sri Sankaracharya and The Maths*, Minerva Press, Madras, 1962). However, this book only describes a succession controversy in the Kūḍalī maṭha, dating back to 1875 CE. The Kūḍalī maṭha, which is said to have originated as a branch of the Śṛṅgeri maṭha, is situated near the confluence of the rivers Tuṅgā and Bhadrā. Kūḍalī and other old branches of Śṛṅgeri have their own independent lineages, which have branched off from the Śṛṅgeri list at some point in the past. The succession dispute at the Kūḍalī maṭha has still not been resolved, and there continue to be two competing lineages there today. Obviously, the controversy in the succession of Kūḍalī maṭha does not adversely affect the main Śṛṅgeri lineage, and it is very surprising that Cenkner seems not to realize this. It must also be mentioned that Aiyer and Sastri are only interested in proclaiming the Kāñcī maṭha’s supremacy over all other maṭhas. Among other curiously partisan statements, they attempt to prove that Kūḍalī is the “original” Śṛṅgeri maṭha, and that the Śṛṅgeri maṭha itself is a “neo-Śṛṅgeri” maṭha. Aiyer and Sastri are also quoted in Volume III of *The Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies - Advaita Vedanta up to Sankara and His Pupils*, edited by Karl Potter, where Śaṅkara’s disciple, Sureśvara, is said to have been especially associated with the Kāñcī maṭha. It should be obvious that the political relationships among the various maṭhas, succession disputes within a maṭha, and the consequent propaganda literature, have started to adversely affect academic discussions of Advaita and Advaitins. This problem has particularly affected many publications from the Department of Philosophy of the Univ. of Madras.

the Śaṅkarācārya title at Jyotirmath. Cenker's silence about this dispute is highly surprising, and either he is exceedingly naïve or one has to suspect an unbecoming bias on his part.

Cenker's description of Śāntānanda Sarasvatī as the head of all Daṇḍī Saṃnyāsins is also extremely misleading, to say the least. There is no one head of all these Saṃnyāsins. The heads of the Purī maṭha have traditionally been Daṇḍī Saṃnyāsins, so that the Purī Śaṅkarācārya might also be described as their head. The Dvārakā and Śṛṅgeri Śaṅkarācāryas are Paramahansa Saṃnyāsins, the highest rank among the monks, and would each have a better claim to being the overall head of the Daśanāmīs. On the other hand, in spite of the affiliation of all Daśanāmī Saṃnyāsins with the maṭhas at Śṛṅgeri, Purī, Dvārakā and Jyotirmath, the Daśanāmī *ākhārās* are more important throughout north India, with numerous leaders, each with his own following. Even if there were no dispute about succession, describing the Śaṅkarācārya of Jyotirmath as the head of all Daṇḍī Saṃnyāsins would be rather inaccurate. And the endorsement of Svarūpānanda by the Purī and Śṛṅgeri maṭhas would make Śāntānanda's claim (and now Vāsudevānanda's claim) even more tenuous. It may be added that acrimonious disputes about succession within one maṭha and about the relative importance of the various maṭhas are not limited to recent history. There are records of such disputes dating back to the 17th century and earlier. Often, such disputes are also accompanied by philosophical and doctrinal differences, so that a study of these would offer significant clues to the development of the post- Śaṅkaran traditions of Daśanāmī Saṃnyāsins and Advaita Vedānta. Cenker seems to be completely blind to such crucial features of the Śaṅkarācārya tradition, and this is because his historical research leaves much to be desired.

### **Appendix: The Lineages of Other Institutions**

As the above discussion has frequently mentioned the other Advaita maṭhas in India and their Śāṅkarācāryas, here is some information about the lineages of the major institutions.<sup>18</sup> Only the 20th century is covered. The dates given are years of accession to the title and resignation or passing away.

#### **Purī (Pūrvāmnāya)**

- ♦ Śāṅkara Madhusūdana Tīrtha (up to 1925)
- ♦ Bhāratī Kṛṣṇa Tīrtha (1925-1960)<sup>19</sup>
- ♦ Yogeśvarānanda Tīrtha (1960-1961)<sup>20</sup>
- ♦ Nirañjanadeva Tīrtha (1964-1992; stepped down in 1992)
- ♦ Nīścalānanda Sarasvatī (since 1992)<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> The Kāñcī maṭha (<http://www.kamakoti.org>), which has also been mentioned in this discussion, has been headed by Candraśekharendra Sarasvatī (1905-1994) and Jayendra Sarasvatī (since 1994). The chosen successor to Jayendra is Vijayendra Sarasvatī.

<sup>19</sup> At Dvārakā till 1925, but note that this title was under dispute at the time. Prosecuted by the British Indian Government in 1921, for his involvement in the freedom struggle and his support of the Khilafat movement. See Maulana Mohammed Ali, *The historic trial of Ali brothers, Dr. Kitchlew, Shri Shankaracharya, Maulana Hussain Ahmed, Pir Ghulam Mujaddid and Maulana Nisar Ahmed*, New Times Office, Karachi, 1921, with a foreword by Mahatma Gandhi. The *Shri Shankaracharya* in the title is a reference to Bhāratī Kṛṣṇa Tīrtha. Author of a mildly controversial book called *Vedic Mathematics* (LC Call No.: QA27.I4 B46). He is the only major Śāṅkarācārya to have traveled outside the subcontinent.

<sup>20</sup> See also the Dvārakā listing. He passed away shortly after assuming charge, and without nominating a successor. This resulted in a period of litigation (1961-1964). His name is not included in the official Purī list.

<sup>21</sup> The 1998 Kumbha Melā was the occasion for a small dispute about Nīścalānanda's title as the Purī Śāṅkarācārya. One Adhokṣajānanda Tīrtha, who called himself the Śāṅkarācārya of Purī, gave press interviews, calling on Svarūpānanda, Vāsudevānanda and Mādhava Āśrama to resolve their mutual controversy during the Kumbha Melā itself. He suggested that if they could not resolve their dispute in a timely fashion, all three should be removed from the seat, and Nīścalānanda should be made the Śāṅkarācārya of Jyotirmath instead. Nothing came out of this, as it seems to have been quickly realized that Adhokṣajānanda himself had no valid claim to the Purī title. His attempt to resolve the Jyotirmath dispute seems to have had no other purpose than to create doubt regarding Nīścalānanda's position at Purī, thereby strengthening his own claim to the Purī Śāṅkarācārya title (private communication from J. E. Llewellyn).

Throughout 1998 and 1999, Adhokṣajānanda was busy giving press interviews, to project himself in the Indian media as the rightful head of Purī maṭha. Nīścalānanda seems quite close to many VHP leaders, while Adhokṣajānanda seems close to Congress party politicians. Adhokṣajānanda has tried to use to his advantage the fact that for different reasons, both the current Śāṅkarācāryas of Śrīngeri and Dvārakā keep away from the leaders of the VHP. For example, see <http://www.rediff.com/news/1998/aug/31shan.htm>. Adhokṣajānanda also tried to mediate between the Indian government and the Hurriyat leaders in Kashmir. However, more recently, the Indian media has begun to seriously question his standing, perhaps because the Orissa state courts and administration do not recognize his claims. See <http://www.india-today.com/itoday/20000731/religion.html>, <http://www.rediff.com/news/2000/jun/28puri1.htm> and <http://www.rediff.com/news/2000/jul/06khan1.htm>.

**Śṛṅgeri** (*Dakṣiṇāmnāya*) <http://www.jagadgurus.org>

- ♦ Saccidānanda Śivābhinava Narasimha Bhāratī (up to 1912)<sup>22</sup>
- ♦ Candrasekhara Bhāratī (1912-1954)<sup>23</sup>
- ♦ Abhinava Vidyātīrtha (1954-1989)
- ♦ Bhāratī Tīrtha (since 1989)

**Dvārakā** (*Paścimāmnāya*) <http://www.shardapeeth.org>

- ♦ *Officially reported lineage:* Rājarājeśvara Śaṅkara Āśrama (up to 1901) - Mādhava Tīrtha (1901-1916) - Śāntyananda Sarasvatī (1916-1926) - Candrasekhara Āśrama (1926-1945).  
*Disputed lineage:* Trivikrama Tīrtha (up to 1921) - Bhāratī Kṛṣṇa Tīrtha (1921-1925) – Svarūpānanda Tīrtha and Yogeśvarānanda Tīrtha (1925-1945).
- ♦ Abhinava Saccidānanda Tīrtha (1945-1982)<sup>24</sup>
- ♦ Svarūpānanda Sarasvatī (since 1982)

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<sup>22</sup> He is credited with having inspired the rediscovery of the village of Kālaṭi in Kerala, the birthplace of Śaṅkara, where he renovated old temples and established a traditional school for studying the Vedas and Advaita texts. He also instituted the current practice of celebrating *Śaṅkara Jayanti* annually, and arranged for the publication of a complete set of the texts traditionally attributed to Śaṅkara.

<sup>23</sup> He is the author of a Sanskrit commentary on Śaṅkara's *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, which has been translated into English, and published from Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (LC Call No.: B133.S4 V47 1973).

<sup>24</sup> The appointment of Abhinava Saccidānanda Tīrtha to the Dvārakā title in 1945 finally settled an old succession dispute at this maṭha. Before taking over at Dvārakā, he was the head of a maṭha at Mūlavāgil in Karnataka, an approximately 200 year old branch of the Dvārakā maṭha. In the late 19th century, the then Dvārakā succession was internally divided, much like the current situation at Jyotirmaṭh, and the heads of the Mūlavāgil maṭha had also staked a claim to the Dvārakā title. In the year 1925, Bhāratī Kṛṣṇa Tīrtha moved to Purī, thereby removing himself from this dispute. In 1945, Yogeśvarānanda Tīrtha is said to have given up his claim to the Dvārakā seat, in order to join his guru, Bhāratī Kṛṣṇa Tīrtha, at Purī. Abhinava Saccidānanda Tīrtha then took over charge at Dvārakā, with Bhāratī Kṛṣṇa Tīrtha's approval, thereby merging the collateral lineage of the Mūlavāgil maṭha with that of Dvārakā. Abhinava Saccidānanda Tīrtha played a major role in succession issues at Purī and Jyotirmaṭh. He also established the *Ādi Śaṅkara Kaivalya Dhāma* near Kedārnāth.