

A History of the Town of Omkareshvara

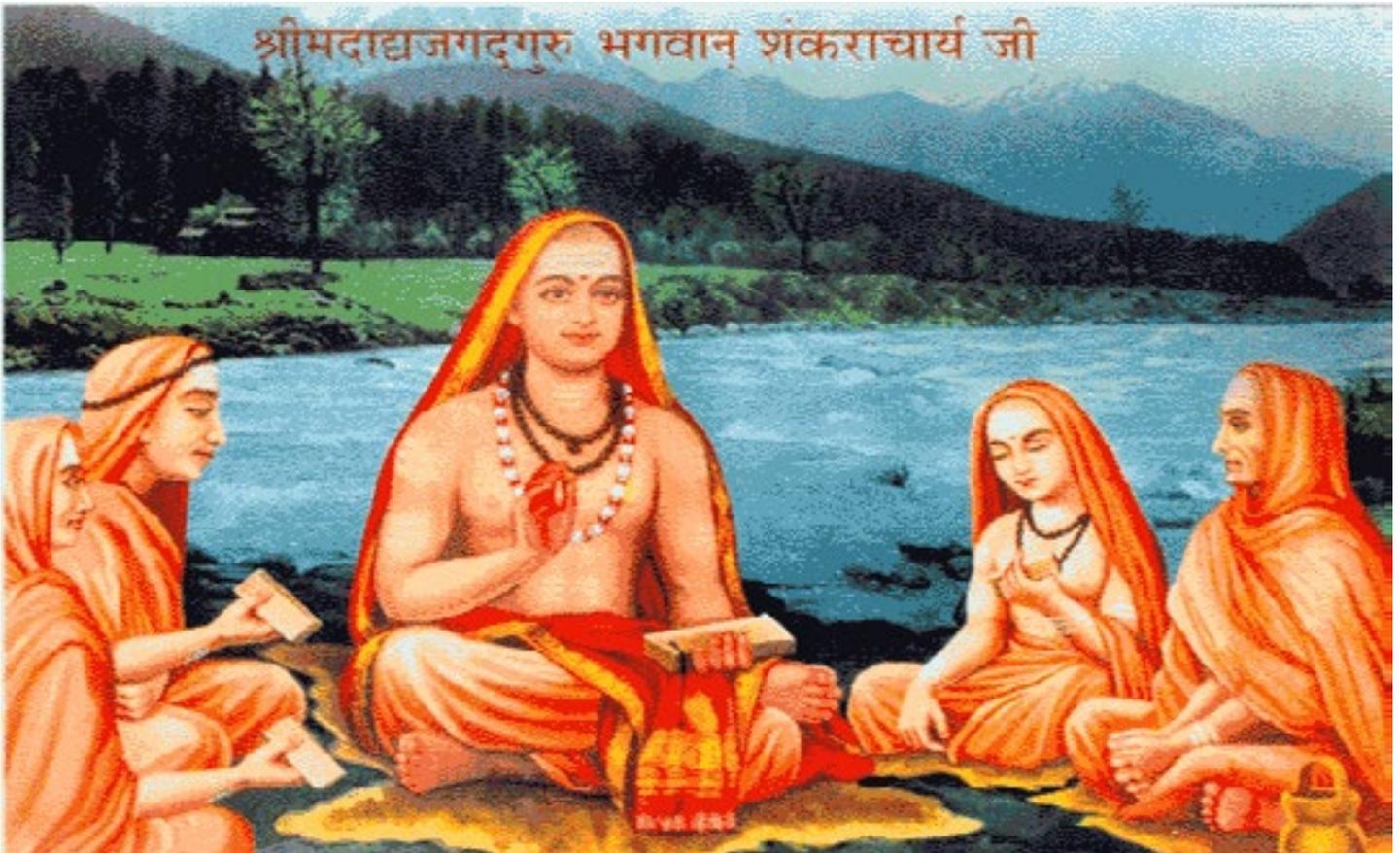
Omka Mandhata, Omkareshvara, also spelled: Omkareshwar, Omkareshvar, is “the Most Sacred of the Sacred Sites symbolizing the sacred symbol OM.” The three holy cities are Shiva Puri, Vishnu Puri, Brahma Puri Omkareshvar, also known as Mandhata Omkareshvar, which is a holy island shaped like the sacred symbol “Om.” The rivers Narmada and Kaveri converge, forming the island Omkara Mandhata. Nature blessed this island with two hillside ranges that reveal the sacred symbol “Om,” visible only from above. The island is located 77km south of Indore in Madhya Pradesh, India. It draws thousands of devotees daily to one of 12 Jyotirlinga shrines of Shiva.

Legend is that the Vindhya mountain prayed to Shiva-Omkareshvara and was blessed here. As the legend goes, upon the request of the Devas, the Shivalinga split into two, one half becoming Omkareshvara and the other Amaleshvara. King Mandhatha of the Ishvaku clan is believed to have worshipped Shiva here. Govinda Bhagavatpaada, the guru of Shankaracharya is believed to have

lived in a cave here, as well as many others like the great philosopher Adi Shankara, who was born in 804 A.D.

Mandhata Omkareshvara was ruled in the medieval period by Bhil Chieftains under the Parmars of Dhar, the Sultans of Malwa, and the Scindias of Gwalior. In 1824 the Scindias gave Mandhata to the British. After India’s independence, the Rajas lost their Jagir rights to Mandhata Omkareshvara. In 1959 the Omkareshvara temple was declared a Public Trust under the M.P. Public Trust Act of 1951.

It was here at Omkareshvara that Shankaracharya was born to Aryamba and Shivaguru of Kaladi in South Kerala. At the age of eight, he found his Guru Shri Govinda Bhagavadpada and was initiated to Sannyasa. As the legend goes, Adi Shankara walked hundreds of miles through forests, valleys, crossing mountains and rivers, finally reaching Omkareshvara to find Shimad Govinda Bhagavatpada in a state of Nirvikalpa Nishtha in a cave under a Banyan tree on the bank of the River Narmada.



Shankaracharya on the banks of the Narmada River