

Reflections on Swamy Desikan

(A Compendium of articles on Swamy Desikan's works and
References used by him)



A Compilation by
Dr.S.Sundar Rajan, MS Ortho, Trichy

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Cover picture: Swamy Desikan in Ratnangi at Thiruvahindrapuram

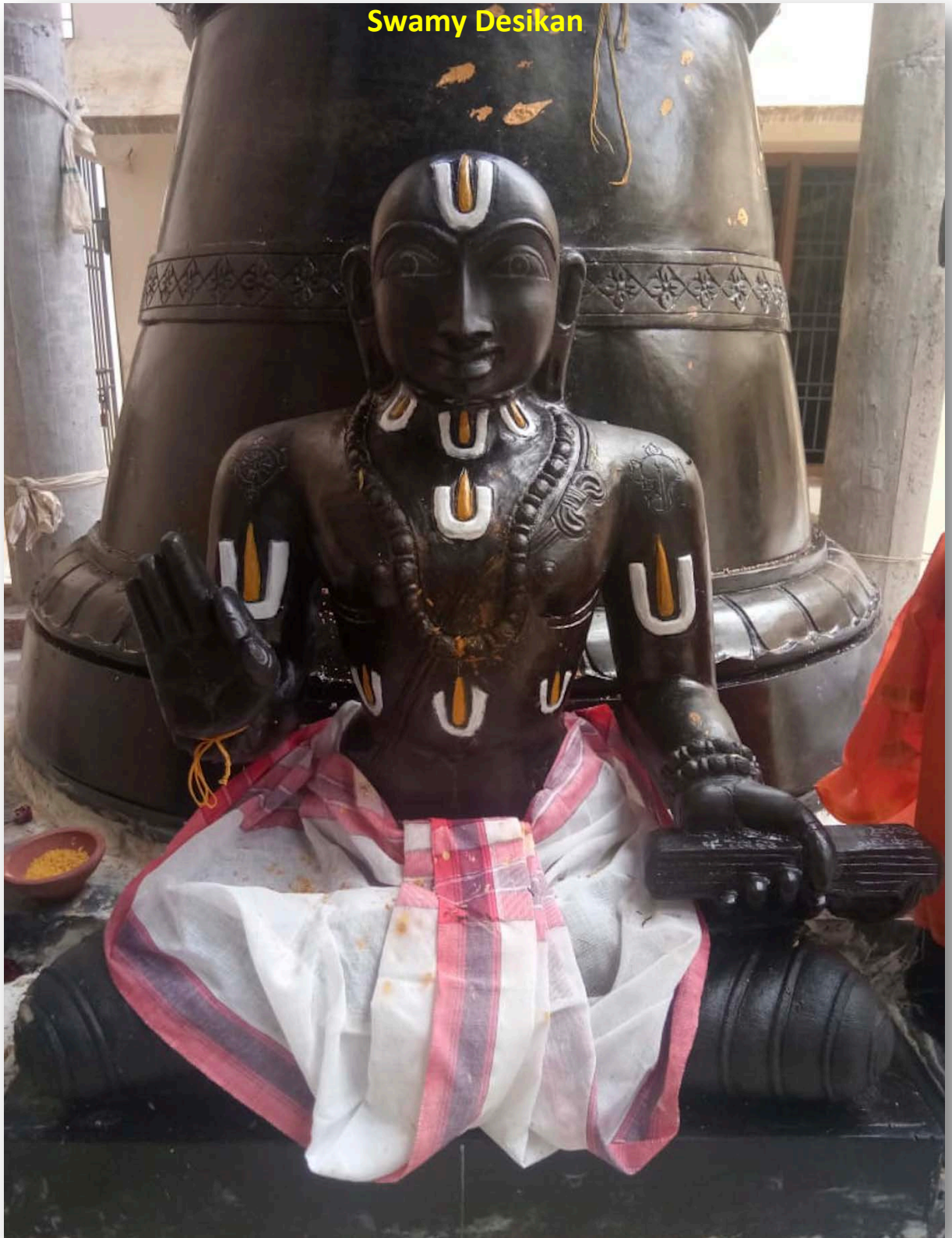
Reflections on Swamy Desikan

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Sri Hayagrivar and Swamy Desikan, Thiruvahindrapuram

**A Compilation by
Dr.S.Sundar Rajan, MS Ortho, Trichy**



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Chronology of Swami Sri Vedanta Desika's works



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Chronology of Swami Sri Vedanta Desika's works

This is an attempt to assign dates to Swami Sri Desika's works. It is not a comprehensive list of all of Swami's works. It is based on the thesis of Sri. Dr. Satyavrata Singh of Lucknow University, p 97 - 105.

THE CHOWKHAMBA SANSKRIT SERIES, STUDIES VOL. V

Thesis approved for Ph.D. by the University of Lucknow –

VEDANTA DESIKA: HIS LIFE, WORKS AND PHILOSOPHY —

A STUDY — BY - DR. SATYAVRATA SINGH, M.A. Ph.D.

Sastri, Sahityacharya Department of Sanskrit, Lucknow University,

THE CHOWKHAMBA SANSKRIT SERIES OFFICE

Postbox 8 Varanasi 1 (India) 1958.

Just be reminded, dear reader, Swami Vedanta Desika incarnated in 1269 CE. In Vedanta Desika mangalam, his son has stated that Swami learnt all that was to be learnt, at the blessed feet of Sri Apullar by the age of twenty. He then exegeted on Sri Bhasya thirty times after he ascended to the seat of Acharya, in 1295 CE, when his own acharya Sri Apullar shed his mortal coil. Swami Sri Desika was so brilliant that in 30 years he conducted 30 “kalakshepas” of the formidable Sri Bhasya. These teaching sessions dissected all, repeat all, aspects and nuances of the 545 “sutras” axioms, thread bare! This can't even be imagined nowadays.

Well here goes...

Swami's own admission in Sankalpa Suryodaya (I - 15) sets the ball rolling.

*Vinshatyabdye visrutananavidhvidhye
trinshadvaram shravitashAririkAbhasyah
shreyah sriman venkatanathah srutipatyam
nathaprEthyai natakamarthya vyaditaitata*

“...where, he claims to have composed his drama the Sankalpa Suryodaya at the time of completing the 30th session of the teachings of the Sri Bhasya, beginning from after the termination of his studies at the age of twenty or thereabouts.”

The introductory verses of the Tattva Tikka give us a clue about the chronology of his works.

*Yatipathabudhou bhasyasyasan yathasrutachintitatha-
pravachanavidhavastavinshe jayadvajapattikah*

This means that he wrote Tattva Tikka at the start of the 28th SriBhasya teaching session. From these two statements we can derive that Tattva Tikka was most probably written in 1322 CE and Sankalpa Suryodaya, an allegorical play, in 1325 CE. Keeping these two as the reference points we can theorise about the dates of the other works composed before or there after. These can just be guesstimates. How we wish dates had been recorded in Indian history meticulously! The list below is given in as sequential manner as possible.

To begin, let us consider the works written in Swami Sri Desika's so called "first literary period", arbitrarily extending from 1295 CE to 1310 CE, a period of decade and a half. He most probably wrote the following, many devotionals and some other works.

1. *Hayagriva Stotra*,
2. *Dasavatara Stotra*,
3. *Varadaraja Pancasat*,
4. *Vegasetu Stotra*,
5. *Astabhujastaka*,
6. *Kamasikastka*,
7. *Saranagati Dipika*,
8. *Devanayaka Pancasat*,
9. *Paramartha Stuti*,
10. *Dehalisa Stuti*,
11. *lost Tamil stotras*,
12. *Sri Stuti and so on*.

We now come to the arbitrary "second literary period" of Swami Sri Desika extending from 1311 CE to 1361 CE. This period of 50 years is jam-packed with great events and achievements. It can be said that Swami Sri Desika proved by his written works why he was given the title Kavitharkika simha, lion among poets and logicians in this period. He also established himself as the Vedantacharya, a title given to him by the Original Vedantacharya, Lord Ranganatha, Periya Perumal of Srirangam. He fortified the school of philosophy of Bhagavad Ramanuja in such a way that its conceptual ramparts would never be breached by any one for all times to come. The granthas he wrote in this period are given chronologically.

1. Paduka Sahasra – 1313 CE.

This has been assigned by its commentator, Srinivasa of Bharadvaja Gotra, the son of Srinivasa Dasa, the celebrated commentator of Vedanta Desika's Nyaya Parisuddhi, to about Kali-4415 or Saka- 1286 conforming to CE 1313, on the numerical interpretation and calculation of the Paduka Sahaara Stanza—'Jayati Yatiraja Saktih etc. (Pa. S. Stanza 1008). The writer has not been able to decipher how this was done, even after reading up four different commentaries on the Sri Paduka Sahasra.

2. Sesvara Mimamsa – 1316 CE.

The Sesvara Mimamsa was written after the Nyaya Parisuddhi and the Tattva Mukta Kalapa at it refers to both of them. Further, as it has been referred to by the Gita Tatparya Chandrika (page 81 Madras edn.) of about 1318 CE, it was written before 1318 CE, say 1316 CE or thereabouts.

3. Gita Tatparya Chandrika – 1318 CE.

(Some confusion here, as Sata Dusani, is stated to have been written before, but it is dated as after GTC, vide infra.).

The Gita - Tatparya - Chandrika, GTC, a comprehensive, peerless and brilliant commentary on the Gita Bhasya of Bhagavad Ramanuja, was written after Sata Dusani (SD), as it quotes SD as a

reference. Also, GTC must have been written prior to Nyaya Siddhanjana because that quotes GTC as a reference vide. NS, p177, Madras edition.

*Ubhayavirudhataya granthanivahananthu srimadgitabhasyatikkayam
tatparyachandrikayamukthamasmabhih.*

4. Sata Dusani – 1320-21 CE.

Swami Sri Desika wrote Sata Dusani some where in 1320-21 CE, because it is known that it preceded Tattva Tikka, which was written as proved above and below, by 1322-23 CE. Sata Dusani is arguably the most important work of Swami Vedanta Desika in his role as the great teacher and dialectician of the Visistadvaitic school of philosophy, also called Ramanuja Darsana, propounded by Bhagavad Ramanuja.

5. The Saccaritra Raksa – 1321 CE.

This was written before the Niksepa Raksa as the latter refers to the former (cf. N. R. Page 19).

6. Niksepa Raksa – 1321-22 CE.

Written before, Gitartha - Sangraha - Raksha, GSR that alludes to it. Besides, as it refers to the Adhikarana Darpana, one of the extinct works of Vedanta Desika, it seems it was written after the Adhikarana Darpana. It came after the Saccaritra Raksa which has been referred to in the line (cf. N.R. page 29).

Prapanchitam chaitadasmabhi saccharitrarakshayam sudarsanadidharanadhikare.

It was also written after the Sata Dusani (1320-21 CE) as the latter has been mentioned in it in the line (cf. N. R. page 5)

Idancha satadushanyamlepakabhange prapanchitamasmabhi.

7. Pancharatraraksha – 1322 CE.

This was written before Nyaya Parisuddhi which refers (NP p 169) to it viz.

*Tat sarvam sripancharatraraksha siddanthavyavasthayam sarvaparamarshena
saddithamasmabhirithi tatraiva tadvistharah savathadharmagoptu - rnanyaisandath
itiprabroomah*

Pancharatraraksha came after Nikshepa Raksha

8. Tattva Tika – 1322-23 CE.

Vide supra.

9. Gitartha - Sangraha – Raksha – 1322-23 CE.

Swami Sri Desika wrote a commentary Gitartha - Sangraha - Raksha, GSR, on Sri Yamunacharya's Gitartha - Sangraha. It can be deduced that Gita - Tatparya - Chandrika was written before Gitartha - Sangraha -Raksha because GTC is referred to in it. In a like manner Niksepa Raksha too finds mention in GSR, so GSR must have been written after Niksepa Raksha. Hence GSR was most probably written in 1322-23 CE.

10.Nyaya Parisuddhi – 1324 CE.

This was written much before Sarvartha Siddhi (ref - SS p 279), which alludes to it viz. *Anyatha sarva nyayaparisuddho vistarenoktha masmabhirithi neha prapanchitam*

11.Sankalpa Suryodaya – 1325 CE.

It was begun in 1325 CE as per Swami Sri Desika's statement (SS, I -15), see above.

12.Yadavabhyudaya – 1325-35 CE.

Being a poetic magnum opus, a Mahakavya, it must have taken some time even for a fast writer like Swami Sri Desika to complete it! It is the acme of Sri Vaishnava poetry in Sanskrit.

13.Subhasita Nivi – 1329-30 CE.

As the tradition this work was meant to instruct one Sarvajna Singappa Nayaka of Rajmundry (1330 CE) in general morality and ethics.

14.Tattva Mukta Kalapa – 1333 CE.

This is referred to in Adhikarana Saravalli (verse 43 and 559).

*Tadbhange lakshananam gani gamanika tattvamukthakalape
Visvamdravyadibhedadvisdamabhihitam tattvamukthakalape*

Tattva Mukta Kalapa, TMK, has been referred to in the Nyaya Siddhanjana (cf. page 289 Madras edn.). Also, TMK, gained early eminence to merit quotations in the Sarva Darsana Sangraha of the Advaitic philosopher Vidyananya (A.D. 1368).

15.Nyaya Siddhanjana – 1334-35 CE.

Nyaya Siddhanjana is a supplement of Nyaya Parisuddhi viz. (Nyaya siddhanjana introductory verse)

*Yannyayaparisuddhante sangrahe pradarshitam
punahstadvistarenatra prameyaabhidagmaye*

16.Adhikarana Saravalli, Dramidopanishad Tatparya Ratnavali and Mimasa Paduka – 1336-37 CE.

These three works are written in the same uniform style.

17.Hamsa Sandesa – 1338-39 CE.

18.Sarvartha Siddhi – 1339 CE.

This is an exhaustive commentary on Tattva Mukta Kalapa.

19.Rahasya group – 1345-50 CE.

The Gadya Traya Bhasya, the Stotra Ratna Bhasya the Catussloki Bhasya and the Isopanisadbhasya etc. belong to the Rahasya bhasya group. These works form the contemplative period of Swami Vedanta Desika's life. In Catussloki Bhasya the following lines alluding to GTB are seen which means that GTB was written prior to it, (CSB verse 1).

*Prtgugadyamukhesmabhih sriprapattiriyim satam
Sripatoustithamaikanthyam na vihanthithi sadhitam*

**20. Abhiti stava, Srimad Rahasyatraya Sara and Paramathabhanga –
1345-1369 CE.**

21. “Anouyaneela” – 1369 CE.

Let us end this article with a quote from Sri. Dr. Satyavrata Singh himself - “Even while nearing the end of his life Vedanta Desika seems to have composed some memorable lines such as the “Anouyaneela” etc. which were inscribed on the walls of the Srirangam temple in about A.D, 1371 to commemorate the victory of Hinduism in general and Srivaishnavism in particular over the Mohammedan vandalism of the times - (vide Epigraphica Indica Vol. VI page 330)” .

The main purpose of this article was to try to give dates to Swami Sri Desika’s works based on a well-known reference. The writer hopes that this will start a discussion on this topic, leading to definitive dates being confirmed, as far as possible, given the difficulty in timing Indian historical works.

Dr.S. Sundar Rajan, MS Ortho, Trichy Aug 3, 2018
Aadi 18 perukku.



Literature known to Swami Sri Desika



Swamy Desikan

Literature known to Swami Sri Desika

“Among the works focusing on Venkatanatha, after the pioneer study Tatacharya (1911), Satyavrata Singh’s 1958 study is noteworthy... perhaps even more importantly, it analyzes in depth (p. 106-136) the sources of Venkatanatha, especially within Vaisnavism.” This is a quote from - Venkatanatha (Vedānta Deśika) (c. 1269 - c. 1370) - By Shyam Ranganathan, at the website of Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, the URL of which is given below:- <https://www.iep.utm.edu/author/shyam/?search=Vedanta+Desika>.

What follows is gleaned from the remarkable thesis on Swami Vedanta Desika by Sri Dr. Satyavrata Singh, Sahityacharya, Dept. of Sanskrit, Lucknow University, published in 1958. Thesis approved for Ph.D. by the University of Lucknow- VEDANTA DESIKA: HIS LIFE, WORKS AND PHILOSOPHY — A STUDY BY - DR. SATYAVRATA SINGH M.A. Ph.D. Sastri, Sahityacharya, Department of Sanskrit, Lucknow University, THE CHOWKHAMBA SANSKRIT SERIES OFFICE, Postbox 8 Varanasi 1 (India) 1958.

It is a superfluity and merely stating the obvious to say that Swami Sri Desika’s knowledge was encyclopedic. It is a thankless task to embark on an attempt to list what all he knew. The excuse for doing this is to reiterate for the future generations the greatness of our Thoopulmani. In our country, down the centuries, literary works have the bad habit of just disappearing. Hence there is no harm in repeating what has been written before. Sri Dr. Satyavrata Singh’s thesis was written exactly 60 years ago!

To an extent, by our attempt, which will neccessarily be miniscule in the case of a divinely endowed genius like Swami Sri Desika, we can gauge his knowledge by the references or allusions he has made to other works in his own super-human corpus of granthas, written works. As always let us begin with the Vedas.

We can do no better than just quote Sri Dr. Satyavrata Singh –

“1. Vedic Literature:

First of all, his knowledge of Vedic literature is simply stupendous. On many an occasion, he quotes from the Vedic Samhitas. His knowledge of the following four Samhitas in their different recensions i. e.

- (i) The Rigveda Samhitas (The Vaskala Sakha) and The Vajasaneya Sakha
- (ii) The Yajurveda Samhita (the Katha Sakha) and The Vajasaneya Sakha
- (iii) The Samaveda Samhita (The Ekayana Sakha), and
- (iv) The Atharva Veda Samhita.

is evident, even, to a casual reader of his works. Apart from the above Vedic Samhitas, he knew

the Khilas or the Vedic Miscellanies and taking them to be later compilations, contended for their validity equal to that of the Vedas in the respect of what may be termed as Vaisnava Sadacara". These are referred to in Saccaritra Raksa and Stotraratna Bhasya.

"2. The Brahmanas and the Aranyakas:

His works contain abundant allusions to the following Brahmanas and the Aranyakas works:

- (i) The Satapatha Brahmana
- (ii) The Taittiriya Aranyaka
- (iii) The Rahasyamnaya Brahmana
- (iv) The Ekayana Brahmana
- (v) The Antaryami Brahmana
- (vi) The Maitrayaniya Brahmana (Cf. Sata Dushani. Vada 65)."

Theses are alluded to, in Gitabashya Tatparya Chandrika and Saccaritra Raksa and Stotraratna Bhasya.

"3. The Upanisads:

Along with the major Upanisads such as the Chandogya, the Taittiriya, the Brhadaranyaka, the Isa, the Kena, the Prasna, the Katha, the Mundaka and the Svetasvatara, the minor Upanisads of Vaisnavite interest such as:

- (i) The Mahopanisad
- (ii) The Sudarsanopanisad
- (iii) The Subalopanisad
- (iv) The Maitrayaniyopanisad
- (v) The Amrtavindupanisad
- (vi) The Narayanopanisad
- (vii) The Kausitaki
- (viii) The Satyayana

and so on have contributed to his great grasp of Visistadvaita and Sri Vaisnavism." All these are alluded to in Gitabashya Tatparya Chandrika, Saccaritra Raksa and Stotraratna Bhasya and Sata Dushani.

"4. The Sutra Works:

Amongst the Sutra-works of Srouta, Dharma and Grhya topics, the works of Vedanta Desika contain references to:

- (i) the Bodhayana Dharma Sutra
- (ii) the Apastamba Dharma Sutra
- (iii) the Gautama Dharma Sutra (Saccaritra Raksa Page 65).
- (iv) the Apastamba Grhya Sutra (Pancaratra Raksa Page 125), and
- (v) The Lokaksi Grhya Sutra (Sata Dusani Vada 65)."

"5. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata:

Vedanta Desika's works abound in extensive quotations from the Ramayana and the

Mahabharata on points of Sri Vaisnava religion and ritualism. What they suggest is that much before the time of Vedanta Desika interpolations were regularly taking place in the two great National Epics of India. For Vedanta Desika the Ramayana was a Sastra of esoteric Sri Vaisnavism and the Mahabharata, a Sri Vaisnava Dharma Sastra. There was one Itihasa Sammucaya (Vide No. 1974-77 of D. C. S. Mss. Madras Vol. IV - Rangacharya) a compilation of interesting moral stories of the Mahabharata much in vogue in Desika's times. One Itihasottama (Vide No. 1978 D. C. S. Mss. Madras, Vol. IV - Rangacharya) is also mentioned by Desika which was, in all probability, a work in line with the Itihasa Samuccaya". These have been referred to in Saccaritra Raksa, Stotraratna Bhasya, Pancaratra Raksa and Niksepa Raksa.

"6. The Puranas and the Upapuranas:

Almost all the Puranas and the Upapuranas have been used by Vedanta Desika to prove the points of Sri Vaisnavism. On one single page of his Saccaritra Raksa (Page 58) the following 10 Puranas and Upapuranas have been quoted.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (1) the Padma, | (6) the Linga, |
| (2) the Bhagavata, | (7) the Varaha, |
| (3) the Agni, | (8) the Skanda, |
| (4) Bhavisya, | (9) the Vamana, and |
| (5) the Brahma Vaivarta, | (10) the Matsya. |
| Besides these, | |
| (11) the Garuda, | (16) the Markandeya, |
| (12) the Brahmanda, | (17) the Siva, |
| (13) the Vayu, | (18) the Kurma, |
| (14) the Aditya, | (19) the Visnu Purana |
| (15) the Harivamsa, | and so on are also referred to. |

The widely prevalent custom of 'Purana Pravacana' has also been noted by Desika. By his time all the Purana and the Upapuranas had come into being in their present shape and magnitude. He mentions a Purana Sara Samuccaya which is not mentioned by any Catalogue whatsoever of Sanskrit Mss. (vide Stotra Ratna Bhasya - Page 62 and Pancaratra Raksa - Page 144)".

"7. The Smriti works:

In addition to the Manu-Smrti and the Yajnyavalkya Smriti which are commonly used, the following Smrtis also have been handled by Vedanta Desika.

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| (1) the Sandilya, | (6) the Angiras, | (11) the Brddha Daksa, |
| (2) the Vasistha, | (7) the Harita, | (12) the Likhita, |
| (3) the Yama, | (8) the Brddha Jabala, | (13) the Medhitithi, |
| (4) the Visnu, | (9) the Atri, | (14) the Parasara, |
| (5) the Sankha, | (10) the Dattatreya, | (15) the Vrhhaspati, |

and so on". All these have been alluded to in Saccaritra Raksa, Stotraratna Bhasya and Sata Dushani.

"In his times the Smriti Sangraha of Varadarajar must have been in great vogue...

Other digests of Smritis such as the Smṛti Chandrika of Yajñika Devana Bhaṭṭa (of 12th century) and the Prayoga Paddhati Ratnavali of Bhojaraja (13th Century) must have been current in his times as is evident from his allusions to them. The Smṛti-works of Vijñeśvara were also known to Vedānta Desika". Swami refers to these in Saccaritra Rakṣa, Pancaratra Rakṣa and Sata Dushani.

"8. Agamas and Samhitas:

Vedānta Desika had access to the vast field of the Agamas and the Samhitas of Vaisnavite interest. He was a Pancaratrika and his allegiance to the Pancaratra-Samhitas was pronounced. In his study of the Samhitas of the Pancaratra school of the Bhagavatas, he had taken, it seems, great pains in collating different recensions and correcting the texts, where necessary. He was well aware of the Pancaratra Samhitas in the making even in his own times, as he refers to the temple-ministrants busy making interpolations in the Samhita literature.

Apart from the Three Gems of the Pancaratra-school i.e.

- (i) the Jayakhya Samhita,
- (ii) the Sattvata Samhita and
- (iii) the Pauskara Samhita which he handles,

time and again, in his Pancaratra Rakṣa, Saccaritra Rakṣa and Rahasya Rakṣa, he refers to or quotes from the following Samhitas also:

- | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Padma, | 17. Jayottara, | 33. Samkarsana, |
| 2. Hayagriva, | 18. Sanatkumara, | 34. Saunaka, |
| 3. Paramesvara, | 19. Padmodbhava, | 35. Prahlada, |
| 4. Naradiya, | 20. Satatapa, | 36. Visnutattva, |
| 5. Bhargava, | 21. Tejodravda, | 37. Ananda, |
| 6. Vasistha, | 22. Maya, | 38. Parasara, |
| 7. Gargya, | 23. Vaibhava, | 39. Paramesthya, |
| 8. Vihagendra, | 24. Pancaprasna, | 40. Parasarya, |
| 9. Ahirbudhnya, | 25. Sukaprasna, | 41. Marici, |
| 10. Kalottara, | 26. Tattva Sagara, | 42. Mankana, |
| 11. Srikara, | 27. Sandilya, | 43. Svayambhu, |
| 12. Isvara, | 28. Dakṣa, | 44. Kasyapa, |
| 13. Bharadvaja, | 29. Kratu, | 45. Satamuka, |
| 14. Saumantava, | 30. Atri, | 46. Dhanada, |
| 15. Vaihayasa, | 31. Bodhayana, | 47. Visvakṣena, |
| 16. Citra Sikanddin, | 32. Parama, | 48. Hiranyagarbha, |
| | | 49. Balapauskara and so on". |

All these have been alluded to in Pancaratra Rakṣa, Saccaritra Rakṣa, Stotra Ratna Bhasya and Chatussloki Bhasya.

"Amongst the Srivaisnava writers of theology, it is Vedānta Desika alone, who, next to Yamunacarya, dives deepest into the 'Pancaratra-Mahabbodhi' and takes out the genuine pearls for the good of his followers. Unlike other teachers of Sri Vaisnavism who cast aspersions on the Vaikhanasa Samhitas, Vedānta Desika tries to harmonise the Vaikhanasa and the

Pancaratra-views and inspite of his adherence to the latter takes great pains to prove the validity of the former. It seems the growth of the Pancaratra Agamas and Samhitas had become enormous by his times ie the 13th- 14th centuries and all the apocryphal contributions passed for the genuine literature. Apart from the above Samhitas held to be of divine inspiration and origin by the Sri Vaisnavas, Vedanta Desika refers to the following Samhita-digests and allied Nibandhas:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Satyaki Tantra. | 9. Visnukalpa. |
| 2. Laksmi Tantra. | 10. Naradiya Sangraha. |
| 3. Sattvata Tantra. | 11. Sri Visnu Dharma. |
| 4. Visnu Tantra. | 12. Visnu Mandira. |
| 5. Sri Sastra. | 13. Brahmaratra. |
| 6. Naradlya Paddhati. | 14. Kasmiragama pramanya. |
| 7. Srlmadastaksara Brahmavidya. | 15. Tantra Sara-Samuccaya, and |
| 8. Sri Krsna Mantra Kalpa. | 16. Namatraya Vidhana”. |

Swami has quoted from these in Pancaratra Raksa and Nyaya Parisuddhi.

“It is a pity that most of the above Samhitas are not available in print now and many more are known only through their quotations in Vedanta Desika's works”.

“9. *Other works:*

Now, as regards the literature known to him. of

- (i) the 6 orthodox systems of philosophy in original and in commentaries.
- (ii) the non-orthodox schools of thought.
- (iii) the Kavyas, the Natakas and the Stotras.
- (iv) works on poetics, metrics, dramaturgy and so on,
- (v) lexicography and
- (vi) medical and miscellaneous works.”

“10. *Early Visistadvaitic Literature:*

Vedanta Desika was in close touch with the whole field of Visistadvaitic philosophical literature and Sri Vaisnava esoteicism and spiritualism. In fact, what he did not know of the ‘Ubhaya Vedanta’ literature, probably did not exist.

All the works, say, of

- (i) The Alvars.
- (ii) the Exponents of the Alvars.
- (iii) Yamunacarya and his exponents.
- (iv) Ramanuja and his commentators.

were well known to him”.

Dr.S. Sundar Rajan, MS Ortho, Trichy Aug 27, 2018.



Swamy Desika's pointers to works of Purvacharyas



Young Swamy Desikan seated on the lap of Sri Nadadur Ammal

Swami Desika's pointers to works of Purvacharyas

Swami Sri Desika has referred often to works of his predecessors, in his granthas. Many, if not most, of the purvacharyas' works to which he has made references are unavailable to us, 750 years past. It is a sad commentary on our tradition that important written works were frittered away. That is the bane of Indian history, all around. Dates that cannot be confirmed and important books that have become extinct. This is true of Sri Ramanuja's darsana, too.

One can't understand how a very very important work of Swami Sri Desika himself, the peerless Nigama Parimala, an exegesis on Bhagavad Vishaya, has been lupta, lost, for the past so many, many years. Irreparable loss!

Swami Sri Desika, a parama karunika, most merciful, has recorded in his vast repertoire of works, statements of his former and contemporary preceptors and commentators. This at least allows us to learn about those lost works, in whatever small measure possible. What follows is a list of these references, gleaned from the remarkable thesis on Swami Vedanta Desika by Sri Dr. Satyavrata Singh, Sahityacharya, Dept. of Sanskrit, Lucknow University, published in 1958.

1. Sri Nathamuni:

His period - 824-924 CE.

The works of the Paramacharya of our Visistadvaita tradition is known only through the allusions to them, recorded by Swami Sri Desika. None of those precious granthas are available, in whatever form. The Nyaya-Tattva was a trenchant criticism of the Nyaya of Gotama, the Vaisesika of Kanada and the traditional expositions of the Nyaya-Vaisesika teachers. It is clear from Vedanta Desika's references to the Nyaya Tattva that it was one of the most comprehensive and ambitious treatises on the philosophy of Visistadvaita. It was written mostly in prose intermixed with verses to suit the occasion. Its division of topics into Pada and Adhikarana was suggestive of its adherence to the hoary tradition of Sastraic discussion. Quotations from the first to the 8th Adhikarana are scattered here and there in the Nyaya Parisuddhi, the Nyaya Siddhanjana, the Tattva Tika and the Sarvartha Siddhi of Vedanta Desika. The other two works attributed to Sri Nathamuni are Purusa Nirnaya and Yoga Rahasya.

2. Sri Uyyakondar, Pundarikaksacharya:

His period 826-931CE.

Only two stanzas are quoted by Vedanta Desika from an anonymous work of Pundarikaksacharya (vide Sata Dusani Vada 7), the teacher of Sri Yamunacharya. But these stanzas convincingly prove the logical and dialectical character of the work of Pundarikaksacharya which is lost now.

3. Sri Manakalanambi, Rama Misra I:

His times - 832 - 937 CE.

No work of Rama Misra, the disciple of Pundarikaksacharya and the teacher of Yamunacharya (10th century A.D.) has come down to us except in its allusions in the works of Vedanta Desika or works. He was an upholder of the Yathartha-Khyati theory.

4. Sri Yamunacharya and 5. Sri Ramanuja:

Fortunately, all the written works of Sri Ramanuja are available to us. Most of Swami Alavandar, Sri Yamunacharya's works too are available. No small credit goes to Vedanta Desika for the preservation of the works of these two great teachers. But the Purusa Nirnaya or the Mahapurusanirnaya of Yamunacharya, mentioned by name by Vedanta Desika has, nevertheless, become extinct, at present. This has been referred to in - Nyaya Parisuddhi p.148 (Conjeevaram Edn.) and its import in Nyaya Siddhanjana.

5. Sri Rama Misra II:

His period - 1094-1150 CE.

In the thesis itself there is confusion to as who this Sri Rama Misra II is. At various places this is said to be 1. Sri Somasiandan, 2. Sudarsanacharya, Sruthaprakasikacharya and 3. Sri Ramapillai, brother of Sri Parasara Bhatta and son of Sri Kuratazhwan. Be that as it may, his works have been profusely quoted by Swami Sri Desika. He was an exponent on the works of Ramanuja. His exposition of the Sri Bhasya referred to as the Vivarana is almost extinct now except for its passages quoted by Vedanta Desika. He is called the Vivaranakara. The 'Sri Bhasya Vivarana' of Rama Misra II has been criticized, here and there, by Vedanta Desika, in his Tattva Tika (p.64). Rama Misra II seems to have written a gloss on Ramanuja's Vedartha Sangraha also and Vedanta Desika knew this work as the Vedartha-Sangraha-Vivarana (From N. S. Page 211 and 352). Another lost work of Rama Misra II which Vedanta Desika quotes from and criticises is the 'Sadārtha Samksepa' (From N. S. Page 261)".

6. Kuratazhwan, Sri Vatsanka Misra:

He was elder to Sri Ramanuja. His period 1010 - 1116 CE. His works are:

- (1) A Bhasya on the Dramida Bhasya. It is extinct now.
- (2) Sri Vaikuntha Stava.
- (3) Atimanusastava.
- (4) Sundara Bahustava.
- (5) Varadaraja Stava.
- (6) Sri Stava

The works (2 to 6) are devotional lyrics and hymns and their choice stanzas are referred to by Vedanta Desika.

7. Sri Parasara Bhatta:

There is some confusion about how long he lived. In various anecdotes it is said that he died young. he was supposed to have been born when Sri Kuratazhwan was quite old. The works of Parasara Bhatta played a great part in the mental make-up of Vedanta Desika. None of his

philosophical and logical works has so far seen the light of day. Abundant allusions to them are scattered, here and there, in Vedanta Desika's works. The Nyaya Parisuddhi alone refers to Parasara Bhatta and his works more than 24 times. In his Nyaya Siddhanjana also Vedanta Desika refers to him and his works more than 20 times. It is very rarely that Vedanta Desika differs from the viewpoint of Parasara Bhatta. In the opinion of Vedanta Desika, Parasara Bhatta was evidently the best of the Post-Ramanuja Visistadvaitic logicians.

Only the following poetical works of Parasara Bhatta are in print:

- (i) Sri Ranga Rajastava (I and II Parts).
- (ii) Sri Guna Ratna Kosa.
- (iii) Asta Sloki.
- (iv) Sri Ranga Natha Stotram.
- (v) Bhagavadguna Darpana a commentary on the Visnusahasra Nama Stotra.

All the above works are devotional lyrics and contain some of the finest lines of Visistadvaitic poetry. His most important work, which Vedanta Desika mostly draws upon, is the Tattva Ratnakara written in prose-cum-verse Sastraic style. To-day the Tattva Ratnakara is known to us only from its copious quotations in Vedanta Desika's Nyaya Parisuddhi. It was a most comprehensive treatise on the logic of the Visistadvaita Vedanta. None of the catalogs of Sanskrit Mss makes even a mention of it. Even in the times of Vedanta Desika, the Tattva Ratnakara does not seem to be available in full as it ended at the passage 'Atra Tattvavidah etc. presumably a passage of the 'Prameya' chapter, dealing with 'acit' or inert matter. Another authoritative work of his mentioned by Vedanta Desika is the 'Adhyatma Khanda Dvaya Vivarana.' It also is lost now. It seems to have been a great attempt at the explanation of Visistadvaita. It contained a discussion on 'Sarira' and held Ramanuja's conception of Sarira in the Sri Bashya to be of a unitary nature though allowing, of triple interpretation. It also held the view that the ultimate realization was the realization of Brahman and never the acquisition of Aisvarya or the attainment of pure selfhood. A work of Parasara Bhatta, abundantly alluded to by Vedanta Desika in his Panca Ratra Raksa, was presumably a discussion on the Srivaisnava cult and ritualism. It also is irretrievably lost now. Moreover, the tradition ascribes to Parasara Bhatta the authorship of a commentary on the 'Sahasra-Giti' - the Songs of the Alvars.

8. Varada Visnu Misra:

He lived around 1130 CE.

Vedanta Desika refers to Varada Visnu Misra in his Nyaya Parisuddhi and Nyaya Siddhanjana. He mentions him sometimes simply as Visnu Misra. At times he characterizes him as Ekadesin and labels his views as 'Ekadesi matam'. No catalog of Sanskrit Mss' contains any reference whatsoever either to Varada Visnu Misra or to his works. It seems that Varada Visnu Misra, a much studied Visistadvaitic logician, came ultimately to be forgotten by the Ramanujists of the post-Vedanta Desika period. Be it as it may, his importance in the Visistadvaitic school cannot be minimized so long as we know that it was he, amongst others of his times, who paved the way to the progress of the Visistadvaitic logic and the syncretisation of the Nyaya with the Ramanuja Darsana. Varada Visnu Misra seems to have been deeply imbued with the impressions of the ancient Nyaya of Udayana and Bhasavarjuna and Vasudeva, Hence it is that

Vedanta Desika takes him to task, labeling his reconstructions of Visistadvaitic logic as 'Un-Bhasyic'.

His foremost work, extensively used by Vedanta Desika, was the 'Mana-Yathatmya-Nirnaya'. It was an authoritative prose-cum-verse treatise on Visistadvaitic logic. It was a comprehensive work dealing with all the topics of the Nyaya such as Pratyaksa, Anumana, Vada, Jalpa, Jati and so on. In fact, Vedanta Desika quotes from it, on all the above topics, in his Nyaya Parisuddhi. But the fact is that Varada Visnu Misra was one of the precursors of Vedanta Desika and that his Mana-Yathatmya-Nirnaya was one of the sources of the Nyaya- Parisuddhi. It is a pity that the Mana-Yathatmya-Nirnaya is irretrievably lost. There was another work of Varada Visnu Misra which had equally met the same fate as the Mana Yathatmya Nirnaya, it appears that this work was a commentary on the Sruta Prakasika of Sudarsanacarya and was written presumably before the Mana Yathatmya Nirnaya. Although Vedanta Desika does not mention the name of this work, yet, he seems to allude to its discussion on 'Soul: atomic VS. all-pervasive'.

Varada Visnu Misra preceded Varada Narayana Bhattaraka, another eminent Visistadvaitic writer, known only through Vedanta Desika's works. Vedanta Desika suggests, more than once, that, the Prajna Paritrana of Varada Narayana Bhattaraka followed the views of the Mana-Yathatmya-Nirnaya of Varada Visnu Misra in regard to the limbs of syllogistic reasoning.

9. Narayana Muni:

He lived around 1160 CE.

Narayana Muni is known to us only through the extensive quotations of his works in Vedanta Desika's Pancaratra Raksa (pp. 111, 117, 145 etc.), Stotra Ratna Bhasya (page 40) and so on. He is to be differentiated from Narayanacarya, the author of the Tattva Nirnaya who was a follower of Yadava Prakasa. He is also not the same as Narayanarya, the Visistadvaitic teacher and exponent of the Mimamsa Sutras and the author of one Niti Mala (published in the Annamalai University Philosophy Series). Vedanta Desika does not give the name of his work or works. But the quotations clearly suggest the nature of his work or works. One of the works of Narayana Muni must have been a comprehensive metrical treatise on the cult and ritualism of Sri Vaisnavism and the doctrine of Prapatti and Panca Kala Krtya. Another work in prose was probably a short manual on the Pancaratra worship. Apart from the above unnamed treatises known through Vedanta Desika's works, Narayana Muni seems to have also written a commentary on the Stotra Ratna of Yamunacarya. It seems, besides, that he had commented upon the work or works of his teacher Vangi Vangesvara.

Adyar Library contains the following Mss. of Narayana Muni's works -

1. Astasloki Vyakhya.
2. Aradhana Sangraha Karika.
3. Bhagavadgitartha Sangraha Vibhaga.
4. Bhava Prakasika (a commentary on the Brahma Sutras).

Rangacarya in his Catalogue vol. 5 (vide No. 2876) mentions Narayana Muni as 'Sastiprabandhanirmata' or the author of 60 works. As Narayana Muni is held in much esteem by Vedanta Desika, we may presume that he was a great exponent of Visistadvaita in its practical side and had a clear and complete grasp of the Ramanuja Darsana and the Sri Srivaisnava religion. According to the Guruparampara, Narayana Muni had his appellation of 'Nanjiyar' our saint, given to him by Parasara Bhatta in recognition of his staunch adherence to Visistadvaita.

10. Visnu Citta:

Visnucitta or Engal Alvan (A.D. 1106-1200) was the disciple-successor of Kurukesvara or Tirukkurukaipiran Pillan (A.D. 1061-1161). On many an occasion, Vedanta Desika quotes from Visnucitta's works. One of his works was a commentary on the Visnu Purana, known as 'Visnucittiya'. It is available, now-a-days, in print. He had written, besides, the following works which Vedanta Desika quotes from:

- i. Prameya Sangraha.
- ii. Sangati Mala.

None of the above works has been mentioned by any of the Sanskrit Mss' Catalogues. The quotations from Prameya Sangraha suggest that it was a comprehensive treatise on Visistadvaitic logic and metaphysics, contributing much to the thoughts of the Nyaya Parisuddhi and the Nyaya Siddhanjana of Vedanta Desika. Most of the anonymous quotations in the Nyaya Parisuddhi seem to be from this work of Visnucitta. The Sangati Mala was a work after the Sri Bhasya of Ramanuja and promised to preserve the viewpoint of the Visistadvaita Vedanta, while expounding the Adhikaranas or the sub-sections of the Vedanta Sutras. Visnucitta seems to have also expounded the Prapatti - philosophy of the Gadyas of Ramanuja in his work called the 'Gadya Vyakhyana'.

11. Varada Naryana Bhattaraka:

He lived about 1150 CE.

Vedanta Desika mentions Varada Narayana Bhattaraka, by name, in his works. He also quotes profusely from his works. Varada Narayana Bhattaraka seems to have written the following works:

1. *Nyaya Sudarsana or Vedanta-Nyaya-Sudarsana*, an exposition of the Sri Bhasya (some portions of the work are published by A. R. Krishnamachariar in his Sri Bhasya edn. with 10 commentaries).
2. *Prajna Paritrana*. This work is known only through its quotations in Vedanta Desika's works. It was a metrical treatise on Visistadvaitic logic. It was one of the precursors of the Nyaya Parisuddhi and the Nyaya Siddhanjana. On many an occasion, Vedanta Desika dittoes its views. Varada Narayana Bhattaraka had his appellation as 'Vakulabhrtkinkara'. In fact, Kumara Vedantacarya, the son and successor of Vedanta Desika, identifies him with Vakulabhrt Kinkara.

12.Varadacarya:

Varadacarya or Vatsya Varada, known also as Nadadur Ammal (A.D. 1165-1275) was the greatest of the exponent of the philosophy of Ramanuja. He had in Atreya Ramanuja his most devoted student and disciple. Vedanta Desika, early in his childhood, as the tradition goes, is said to have met in Varadacarya his spiritual teacher and preceptor. The following are his works referred to by Vedanta Desika:

1. Tattva Sara.
2. Tattva Nirnaya.

The catalogs of Sanskrit Mss'. mention certain other works also by Varadacarya:

1. Aradhana Karika.
2. Paramartha Stutih.
3. Prapanna Parijata.
4. Prameya Mala.

But Vedanta Desika does not mention any one of them.

13.Senesvararya:

He most probably lived around 1250 CE.

Vedanta Desika mentions Senesvararya in his Adhikarana Saravalli (1.25) as the first and the foremost of the post- Ramanuja teachers of Visistadvaita. He also refers, in his Tattva Tika (Page 20 Madras edn.) to a Nyaya Sangraha or Sarlraka Nyaya- Kalapa-Sangraha as the work of Senesvaracarya. Before the Sruta Prakasika of Sudarsanacarya and the Nyaya Sudarsana of Varada Narayana Bhattaraka, it was, in fact, the 'Nyaya-Kalapa-Sangraha' of Senesvararya which was considered to be an authoritative interpretation of the Brahma Sutra topics.

14.Sudarsana Bhattaraka:

He lived around 1300 CE.

Sudarsana Bhatta alias Vyasarya or Sudarsana Bhattaraka was an early contemporary of Vedanta Desika. The celebrated Vatsya Varada is said to have been his teacher. It is said that he witnessed the aged Sri Nadadur Ammal blessing the child Venkatanatha.

He wrote the following works:

- (1) Sruta Prakasika, a commentary on the Sri Bhasya. This work is one of the sources of inspiration for the Tattva Tika of Vedanta Desika. It is published in parts.
- (2) Sruta Pradlpika, an independent exposition of the Brahma-Sutras. Its manuscript copy is preserved in the Madras Oriental Mss. Library.
- (3) Tatparya Dipika, a commentary on the Vedartha Sangraha of Ramanuja. It is known only through its allusions in Vedanta Desika's works.
- (4) Subalopanisadvakhyana, an exposition of the Subalopunisad. Ranga Ramanuja, the famous Visistadvaitic exponent of the Upanisads and a commentator of the Nyaya Siddhanjana of Vedanta Desika, shows his acquaintance with this work of Sudarsanacarya.
- (5) An exposition of the Ramanuja Gadyas. The work is lost now.

15.Narayanarya:

He must have lived between 1075 CE and 1250 CE.

The works of Narayanarya have been referred to by Vedanta Desika. The following seem to be his works:-

1. *Niti Mala*. It has been published in the Annamalai University Philosophy Series. According to Vedanta Desika, the views of the Niti Mala are 'Ekadesimatam'.
2. *An exposition of the Mimasa-Sutras*. Vedanta Desika has criticized this exposition of the Mimasa labeling it as Praudhi Prakakasna or a mere show of interpretative skill. Nevertheless, this work of Narayanarya was one of the sources of inspiration, for Vedanta Desika's Mimasa writings.
3. *A commentary on the Gita*. The work is preserved only in some of its passages quoted in the Gita Tatparya Candrika of Vedanta Desika.

16.Atreya Ramanuja:

Vedanta Desika's acharya. His maternal uncle. He was fourth in direct descendance from Sri Ramanuja himself. Vekatadhvari is his later descendant. He is traditionally known as the author of 3 works. So far, only his 'Nyaya Kulisa' (published as Annamalai University Philosophy series No. 1) has seen the light of day. Its loss is a great loss to Visistadvaita and to the study of Vedanta Desika. Vedanta Desika in his Tatparya Candrika on Ramanuja's Gita Bhasya quotes a stanza of Atreya Ramanuja. The stanza in question suggests another work of Atreya Ramanuja, presumably a work on the Sri Bhasya.

17.Meghanadari Suri:

Meghanadari Suri was an early contemporary of Vedanta Desika.

He was a philosopher-acharya who lived a little before Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika. Vedanta Desika mentions him as 'Asmadlyah' (our own man) in his Nyaya Parisuddhi. He was a Tengalai Srivaishnavacharya and a great Tarkika, He wrote the following works :-

1. *Nyaya Prakasika*, a commentary on the Sri Bhasya. Vedanta Desika refers to the work in his Tattva Tika (pages 13 and 18, Madras edn.) and characterizes it as an Ekadesin's work.
2. *Nyaya Dyumani*, an extensive treatise on Nyaya- Visistadvaita-syncretism. Vedanta Desika indirectly alludes to it in his Nyaya Parisuddhi.
3. *Bhava Prabodha*.

Swami Sri Desika has quoted many former preceptors and commentators in his very many works. If he had not done so, many of these works would have remained unknown. The tragedy is that many are not available now.

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