THE CONCEPT OF TATTVATRAYA ACCORDING TO YATÎNDRAMATADĪPIKĀ
AN AUTHENTIC COMPENDIUM OF VIŚIŚṬĀDVAITA

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Abstract
The present paper explains the concept of ‘three realities’ according to Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy, expounded in the 17th century treatise named Yatîndramatadīpikā. The work faithfully brings out the teachings of tattvavaya by Rāmānuja, in a summarised manner and is considered as the authentic work in Viśiṣṭādvaita tradition. On the basis of the textual study, it has been concluded that knowledge of the three fundamental realities i.e. tattvavaya is very essential as far as Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy is concerned as liberation dawns on the embodied soul only after their precise knowledge.

Introduction
The author of Yatîndramatadīpikā, Śrīnivāsadāsa (17th century) was a direct descendant in the long line of Śrī Vaiṣṇava apostles (please vide colophon of Yatîndramatadīpikā). He was a well-known Viśiṣṭādvaitic philosopher who lived in Tirupati, Chittoor district about the beginning of the 17th century. The treatise is divided into ten sections called avatāras which are further divided into sub-sections.

Each section is having colophons indicating the completeness of the text composed in simple and lucid style full of meaning, this manual may be said to have no parallel among the works of its class in the system.

In this text, the concept of tattvavaya viz. cit is expounded in the avatāravii, acit in avatāras iv-vii and Īśvara in avatāra ix.

It is a compendious exposition of the teachings of Viśiṣṭādvaita in its aspect of metaphysics, moral and religion formally known as tattva, hita and purusartha. The book is called Yatîndramatadīpikā, or the Light of the system of Yatîndra or Śrī Rāmānuja.

Tattvavaya according to Rāmānuja
Viśiṣṭādvaita as a well-formulated philosophical system or darśana was expounded by Rāmānuja (1017-1137 A.D) on the basis of the correct interpretation of the scriptural statements in his monumental commentary on Vedānta-sutras known as Śrī-bhāṣya and also based on the teachings of his preceptors Śrī Vyāsa, Bodhāyana, Guhadeva, Bhāruçi,

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In view of this, Rāmānuja is regarded as the founder of the Viśiṣṭādvaita system. Śrī Rāmānuja has contributed nine works in Sanskrit on the Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy wherein he has made frequent reference to tattvatrāya.

Śrī Rāmānuja like other Vedāntins deduces his philosophy from the Šāstra’s; but gives a comprehensive and synthetic interpretation of it by recognizing the validity of Pāñcarātra as the word of God and accepting the equal value of the teachings of Rṣis and Azhvars in the scheme of Udbhaya-Vedānta. Viśiṣṭādvaita accepts the reality of experience in all its levels including dreams and illusions. Its tattvā comprehends the three entities, cit, acit and Iśvara which however are inseparable. God is defined as the śarīrin or self of souls and matter, as these two live and have their being in Him.

The individual soul has consciousness and blissful and existent. This is its natural state.

In the bound state, the variation in consciousness is due to its karmic effects. The innate consciousness is same for all souls. The variation comes in its attributive consciousness (dharmabhūta jñāna). This soul is considered as sub-servient to Iśvara, the Godhood, in the sense that it is a part of universal consciousness. Similarly, the sentient objects also forms a part of Godhood. The relationship between them is body-soul relationship i.e. śarīra-śarīrabhāva. Just as we are having conscious part of the body and inert part of the body like nails, hair, the non-sentient forms the inert flora and fauna, whereas the sentient beings form the conscious part. The philosophical knowledge consists in clearly understanding the nature of the three entities, cit, acit, and Iśvara, their distinctness from one another and their relations to one another.

These three realities are inter linked and called tattvatrāya collectively. Of these three, the Supreme Being (Iśvara) is called the “higher reality” (paratattva); the other two soul and matter are known as “lower realities” (avaratattva). Iśvara is the supporter, controller and master of both cit and acit. Just like the soul supports the body, Iśvara supports cit and acit.

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In other words, Iśvarais the soul (śarīrī) and both cit and acit are the body (śarīra). Hence the relationship (linkage) among these three realities is called body-soul relationship (śarīra - śarīrī bhava). For that reason, Viśiṣṭādvaita is also called the śarīrika śāstra.

**Tattvatrāya in Yatindramatadīpakā**

The Yatīndramatadīpakā, a manual of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta clearly explains the essence of Viśiṣṭādvaita in the following words :“In fact, the quintessence of Vedānta has as its support the unity of Brahman qualified by the sentient and the non-sentient things. With the purpose
of teaching this Brahman as the only reality qualified by cit and acit, the revered Bādarāyana began his enquiry into the nature of this Brahman as having modes. Thus, Nārāyana, the Supreme Vā sudre known by the name of Viṣṇu indicated by the term ‘Brahman’ and qualified by cit and acit is the only reality."

**Form of cit**

The essence of the cit of tattvatraya has been explained by Śrīnivāsadāsa in a very subtle manner. The common characteristics of the individual self and Īśvara are self-consciousness, sentiency, selfhood, illumine oneself for oneself.

The term cit means knowledge. It also means “possessing knowledge”. Hence the reality which possesses knowledge is called cit. Other names for this reality are cetana, jīva, ātmā, jīvātmā, ksetrajña, pumān and puruṣa, (sometimes puruṣa also refers to the higher reality Īśvara). There are countless jīvas in this universe. Each has a body such as a celestial, human being, animal, bird, fish, insect, plant, tree etc. Whatever body the jīva occupies, it is different from the body. This fact is brought out by a verse in the Viṣṇupurāṇa which states that the jīva is not a celestial, human being, animal or plant; the difference in the bodies which the jīva occupies are the results of past actions. pumān na devo na naro na paśur na ca pādapāh śarirākṛti bhedāstubhūpaite karmayonayah. (Viṣṇupurāṇa - 2.13.98)

The jīva is not only different from the body but also from the various sense organs and mind which vary from body to body. The body and the sense organs will perish but the soul (jīva) is indestructible. Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa has succinctly described the nature of the soul in the Bhagavadgītā (verses 2.18 – 2.25). He has said that the soul is indestructible (avināśinaḥ), is not born and does not die (na jāyate mriyate vā) and is eternal (nityam). Weapons do not destroy the soul, fire does not burn him, water does not wet him, wind does not dry him, the soul is not apparently visible, is incomprehensible and unchangeable.

The soul is monadic (aṇu). His form is made up of knowledge and bliss. He is self-luminous. He is eternally subservient to Īśvara. The jīvais always aware of himself and does not require any other external knowledge to know himself. The knowledge which constitutes his form is called dharmijñanā and helps him to be aware of himself at all times such as wakeful states, sleep, dream, meditation etc. There is another type of knowledge called attributive consciousness (dharmabhūta jñanā) which helps him to know his body and all persons and objects beyond his body. This second type of knowledge diminishes when the soul is embodied (associated with a physical body).
Relationship between \textit{cit} and \textit{Īśvara}

It was explained earlier that \textit{cit} or soul is the body of \textit{Īśvara}. This relation is called \textit{śeṣatva}. A \textit{śeṣa} is one who exists for another person, is totally dependent on him and whose services are intended for the benefit of the other person. The \textit{cit} has no possession of his own. All his possession and powers are endowed on him by the Supreme Being. It therefore follows that the soul (\textit{cit}) exists for \textit{Īśvara}. Sri Vedanta Desika describes the relationship between \textit{cit} and \textit{Īśvara} in three terms besides \textit{śeṣatva}. The soul is supported by \textit{Īśvara} (he is \textit{dhārya} and \textit{Īśvara} is \textit{dhāraka}), controlled by Him (he is \textit{niyamya}, He is \textit{niyantā}) and dependent on Him (he is \textit{paratantra}, He is \textit{svatantra}). Besides these relationship, there is another loving relationship between \textit{cit} and \textit{Īśvara}. The latter considers each soul as very dear to Him (\textit{hrdayaṅgamaḥ}). \textit{Īśvara} treats each soul as very close to Him as the \textit{kaustabha} jewel worn on his chest (\textit{mani vara iva śaṭreh}). \textit{Īśvara} the Supreme Being treats each \textit{jīva} as his son and disciple. This diverse relationship is a cardinal feature of the \textit{Viśiṣṭādvaita} philosophy and is totally different from the other two philosophies of Advaita and Dvaita.

Śrī Pīḷai Lokācārya has identified nine relationships between the supreme \textit{Īśvara} and the soul (\textit{jīva}). They are as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>\textbf{Īśvara}</th>
<th>\textbf{Jīva}</th>
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<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Son</td>
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<td>Protector</td>
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\textit{pīṭā ca rākṣakah śeṣi bhartā jñeyo ramāpatih}
\textit{svāmi ādhāro mamāta ca bhoktā ca ādya manūditāḥ}.\(^9\)

Souls (\textit{jīvas}) fall into three categories as bound (\textit{baddha}), liberated (\textit{mukta}) and everfree (\textit{nitya}) souls.\(^{10}\)buddhas are those who live in this world and continue to be entangled in worldly life. (This category includes animals, birds and plants also). Due to their continued attachment to worldly objects they are repeatedly born in a variety of bodies as a result of

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their past actions. *baddhas* can be divided into two categories as pleasure seekers (*bhubhuṣus*) and liberation seekers (*mumukṣus*). *bhubhuṣus* are those who pursue the three goals of *dharma, artha* and *kāma*. Among this category, those who pray to the supreme being alone for achieving these three goals are called *bhagavatparas*. Those who seek the assistance of other gods are known as *devatāntara paras*. Even among *bhagavat paras*, there are three types. They are: (i) those who have lost their wealth, prosperity etc. and seek to regain them – *ārtais*. (ii) the 2nd category aspire for wealth etc. afresh having not possessed them before – *arthārtais* (iii) the 3rd category is of those who seek knowledge about their own souls - *jijñāsus*.

The second type of *baddhas* who are known as *mumukṣus* aspire for *mokṣa* only to the exclusion of *dharma, artha* and *kāma*. They are always wanting to be liberated and seek the grace of the supreme being to achieve the goals. They are *bhagavatparas* since the supreme being (*Isvara*) alone can grant liberation. Now these *mumukṣus* are sub-divided into two groups: (i) those who adopt the path of devotion – *bhakti*, who are known as *bhaktas* and those who prefer the path of surrender – *prapatti*, who are called *prapannas*. Even among those who follow the path of devotion (*bhaktas*), there are two types, (i) adopting this path as a means to liberation – *sādhana bhaktas*, e.g sage Vyasa and (ii) adopting this path as an end in itself because this path results in intense experience of the Supreme Being *sadhya bhaktas*, e.g Śrī Nammālvār. Similarly *prapannas* can be divided into two sections: (i) those who seek liberation at the end of their present lives – *dṛpta prapannas* and (ii) those who seek it immediately because they are utterly disillusioned with the world and want immediate relief – *ārta prapannas*.

Among *baddhas*, there is another section who seek all the four goals, i.e *dharma, artha, kāma* and *mokṣa* from the Supreme Being, *Īśvara*. They are called *ekāntis*. Even among them, there are some who devotedly worship Isvara alone and do not even pray for liberation but get immense happiness in serving Him. They are known as *parama-ekāntis* or *paramaikāntis*. Such people are very rare indeed.

Those who seek knowledge about their own souls (*jijñāsus*) reach a state called *kaivalya* which is totally different from liberation (*mokṣa*) and is inferior to it. In the state of liberation, the soul gets a direct experience of the Supreme Being, attains immense bliss and performs eternal service to Him. In the state of *kaivalya*, all that the soul gets is experiencing the soul only and being released from the bondage of the physical body. The followers of the Northern school believe that those who have reached the *kaivalya* stage can also perform
bhakti or prapatti and then attain liberation, while the followers of the Southern school feel
that those who have attained kaivalya would remain in that state only and have no hope of
liberation.

**Muktas**

Those who have been liberated from this world are known as muktas. Mukti means release.
The liberated is one who after accepting prapatti as the means, performs all nitya (regular)
and naimittika (incidental) religious duties as ends in themselves, since he regards them as
consecrated service enjoined by Bhagavān; who refrains from committing offences against
Bhagavān and the votaries of Bhagavān. They will never again be born in this world. They
will eternally reside in the Supreme abode, Śrīvaikuṇṭha in the direct and immediate presence
of the Supreme Being and enjoy boundless bliss. They will be performing countless services
to the Supreme Being. They will not be affected by changes in the material world like
deluges (pralayas) etc. which mark the end of a cycle of epochs (yugas) and others. Muktas
have the same experience as nityas who have always been in Śrīvaikuṇṭha.

**Nityas**

Nityas or Nityasuris are ever-free souls who have never been born in this world and have
always remained in the supreme abode since the beginning of creation. e.g of such souls are
Ananta (Adiśeṣa), Garuḍa and Viṣvakṣena. The Supreme Being’s ornaments and weapons are
nityas too. The will of the Lord, Īśvara is their will also. They sometimes accompany the
Lord in His incarnations according to His will or incarnate independently and carry out His
wishes. The Azhvars are considered as incarnations of nityasuris.

**Bliss in Śrīvaikuṇṭha**

Nityas and muktas enjoy identical boundless bliss in Śrīvaikuṇṭha. This bliss consists of four
types of experiences, all simultaneous. They are:

(i) being in the same world as the Supreme Being (sālokya)
(ii) having the same appearance as Him (sārupya)
(iii) being near Him (sāmipya)
(iv) enjoying the same bliss as Him (sāyujya)

Further, in the liberated state, nityas and muktas have the power to go anywhere and their
attributive knowledge (dharmabhūta jñanā) is total and complete.
The term *acit* means non-sentient. It is inert (*jada*). Since this reality exists for others, it is called *paraka*. *Acit* is divided into four categories:

1. Primordial matter (*prakṛti*) and its evolutes.
2. Time (*kāla*)
3. Attributive knowledge (*dharmaḥ jñāna*)
4. Transcendental spiritual matter (*śuddha sattva*)

Primordial matter (*mūla prakṛti*) or *prakṛti* as it is usually called is the foundation of all material objects in the universe such as bodies, sense organs, elements and their innate nature. Since it comprises three traits (*guṇas*) viz. *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*, it is also known as *triguṇa*. Since it is indestructible but only changing from one form to another, it is known as *ākṣara*. Since it is the cause of attachment of the soul to the material world, it is called *avidya*. Since it is illusory (ever changing), it is known as *māyā*. *Mūlaprakṛti* is always subtle in nature. First, it is transformed from the subtle state to the gross state when it is known as *mahat*. From this state, the next stage of egoity (*ahamkāra*) emerges. It is to be noted that egoity is a state of inert matter and different from egoism which is the state of mind of an individual about himself. The *ahamkāra* consists of three sections called as *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasaahāmākāra*, which are in fact manifestation of the three *guṇas*.

A clear understanding of the various divisions of *acit* is essential as they constitute obstacles to liberation and hence have to be overcome.

**Time**

Time is an *acit* which is also eternal. It has the same status as *prakṛti*. Time existed even before creation. It is infinite but has no qualities like *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. It is divided into three kinds as past, present and future. When it is associated with seasons, it acquires the name and quality of that season. During summer, when the sun is predominant, we call it hot time and during winter it is known as cold time. In the material world it is divided into various segments such as second, minute, hour, day, week, fortnight, moth, year etc. Since this material world extends to the spiritual world (Śrīvaikuṇṭha) and since various celestial and other beings inhabit it, there is a slight difference in the reckoning of time for those beings. What constitutes a month for humans is reckoned as a day for the manes (*pitrs*) or departed souls. What is one year for humans is one day for the celestials (devas) like Indra, Varuna and others. Uttarayana is day time for them and Dakshinayana is night for them.
Attributive knowledge (dharmabhūta jñāna)\textsuperscript{16}

It is a non-sentient entity though it has got knowledge (jñāna) in its name. It is not conscious or sentient. It is like a lamp which is giving out light but does not know that it is doing so. It is a quality of the soul (jīva) and will always remain attached to him. This helps the soul to know his body and all external objects and beings. It will get contracted when the soul is associated with a body which is made of inert matter. It is also restricted due to the fact that the sensory organs and perception are also tainted with prakṛti. But there is a possibility of its expansion even in the embodied state by proper control of senses. However, it does not reach its full potential till the bound soul (baddha) becomes totally liberated and finds a place as a mukta in Śrīvaikuṇṭha. For muktās and nityās, dharmabhūta jñāna is total and complete like that of Īśvara.

Transcendental spiritual substance (śuddhasattva)

This substance called śuddhasattva\textsuperscript{17} is a unique kind of spiritual matter which is found only in Śrīvaikuṇṭha. It is therefore referred to as aprakṛta (non-prakṛti). It does not have rajas and tamaś qualities at all. Further it is totally different from even the sattva guṇa found in the material world. The form of the Supreme Being and His consorts, all objects in Śrīvaikuṇṭha such as mansions, gardens, rivers, ramparts as well as the bodies assumed by nityas and muktas are all made of śuddha sattva. The entire Śrīvaikuṇṭha is thus made of śuddha sattva. The bodies assumed by Īśvara during His incarnations are made of śuddha sattva. So are His images and those of His consorts in temples installed after due consecration. Though it is luminous, it is still classified as acit, since it lacks sentience or consciousness.

Īśvara

Īśvara\textsuperscript{18} is the higher Reality, supporting, controlling and the master of the other two realities, cit and acit. He is worshipped in every religious act, the bestower of all fruits, the sustainer of all, the cause of all effects and has everything except Himself and His consciousness as His body. The term “Īśvara” is a derivative word, just like Viṣṇu and Nārāyana.Īśvara means “one who possesses aiśvarya which is wealth”. What is this wealth? It is a combination of both the eternal world (nityavibhūti) and the created world (līlavibhūti, which is the area of the Īśvara’s pastimes). Nitya means eternal, vibhūti means glory or prosperity and līlā means play. It is held in the Upaniṣads that the Supreme Being willed the creation of the universe for his pleasure. The nityavibhūti is the abode of Īśvara in His transcendent (para) form and also of the eternally free and liberated souls (nityas
and muktas). The līlāvibhūti houses the bound (unliberated) souls i.e baddhas in their various bodies, human beings, animals, fish, birds, plants, insects etc.

**Īśvara’s triple relationship**
Śri Vedanta Deśika describes the relationship between Īśvara, cit and acit in a succinct way when he says that He is the supporter, controller and master of both of them, i.e He is their dhāraka, niyantā and šesī. This relationship leads to the fact that the Supreme Being is the universal soul (śarirī) of both cit and acit.

**Īśvara’s form, nature and qualities**
Īśvara is all pervasive (vibhu) unlike the soul who is monadic (anu). His form is brought out through five terms, i.e eternality (satyatva), form made of knowledge (jnānatva), pervasiveness i.e not being limited by place, time object (anantatva), boundless bliss (ānandatva) and being totally free from any blemishes (amalatva). These five descriptive terms fully describe Īśvara and are called “svatīpā nirūpaka dharmas”.

Īšvarais also known as Bhagavān, i.e one who possesses bhagas, positive attributes. He possesses supreme knowledge (jnāna), supreme strength (bala), supreme lordship (aiśvarya), supreme virility (vīrya), supreme potency (śakti) and supreme splendour (tejas). Since Īśvara has all the six qualities, He is called Bhagavān. These qualities are referred to as “nirūpita svarūpa viśeṣaṇas”.

Īśvara is totally independent (svatantra). He needs no assistance from any other deity for His triple actions of creation are (sṛṣṭi), protection (sthitī) and dissolution (saṃhāra). He is the material cause¹⁹ (upādāna kā raṇa), the instrumental cause (nimitta kāraṇa) and auxiliary cause (sahakāri kāraṇa) of the universe. These three functions can be explained through an illustrative simile. To make an object like a pot, mud is the primary material need. Hence mud is the upādānakāraṇa of the pot. Then there should be a potter to shape the mud into a pot. He is nimitta kāraṇa and thirdly there should be a wheel to rotate the mud before it becomes a pot. The wheel is sahakāri kāraṇa. While in the case of transforming the mud into a pot, three different objects are needed, Īśvara alone is capable of performing all the three roles. Hence He is all the three causes rolled into one. Further, when mud becomes a pot, it changes form. But, in the case of Īśvara, when He creates the universe, He remains unchanged. Hence it is said that He creates the universe out of His will alone. Since He is Supreme and independent, He is usually referred to as Paramātmā.

Īśvara has got a divine (aprākṛta) form which is made of transcendental spiritual matter (śuddha sattva). The Upanisads says that He is present in the transcendental form (para) in

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Śrīvaikuṇṭha in the cosmic form, the milky ocean and in the orb of the sun. In the para form, Īśvara receives the services of both nityas and muktas. In the cosmic form, He is available for personal worship by Brahmā, Śiva and other lesser gods and for hearing their prayers. In the third form, He is contemplated by devotees on earth who are striving for liberation.

Īśvara alone can grant liberation to aspiring devotees on earth. In view of this, He is called the siddhopāya. Some action on the part of the aspirant for liberation is needed to get Īśvara assist him in the process of liberation. These actions are having recourse to the path of devotion (bhakti mārga) or surrendering to Him (prapatti or saraṇāgati).

Though Īśvara is compassionate towards all, He is strictly impartial. He endows each soul in the universe with a body and sense organ strictly in accordance with the soul’s previous merits and sins and also rewards him according to his desires. He grants wealth and self-knowledge to those who seek these attainments. He is open to surrender by all living beings when they seek liberation as their goal.

Conclusion

Yatīndramatadīpikā expounds the tattvatraya concept (in the light of Viśiṣṭādvaita) as the ultimate. It summarises how matter and individual self are absolutely dependent on Īśvara for their existence, their dependence being similar to that of body upon self. Īśvara is substance and the world of matter and self form his inseparable attributes. The text brings out in a very precise manner why this system is called Viśiṣṭādvaita, wherein the attributive elements (matter and self) and the substantive element (Īśvara) form a synthetic unity.

While a bound soul is getting liberated, it is required to realize the three realities. There should arise the knowledge of the three fundamental realities, when the liberation dawns on the embodied soul who desires salvation.

Even the Supreme Lord, who desires the liberation of all waits for this birth of desire in the embodied soul.

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1Yatīndramatadīpikā, colophon, इति श्रीमद्रापूरकांतिलकश्रीमन्तपार्वार्थसम्प्रदायस्यमदासेन श्रीमद्रापूरकांत गविखाय पदकमलसेवापरायणस्य मूमुक्षिर्निवेदिकाभिविविवासदासेन वर चतु यतीन्द्रमतदी पकायत्वाशारीरिकपरिभाषा।

2Ibid, 1.1, श्रीमन्तपार्वार्थस्य एव चद चद ये समाप्ति भविष्यप्रति यतीन्द्रमतदी पकायत्वाशारीरिकपरिभाषा।

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The aspirant is needed as 

is well aware of his aspiration and will grant liberation at the appropriate time. Mainly, they base their views on their perception of 'causeless compassion on'. The followers of the Northern school believe that though He is inherently compassionate, He requires some effort on the part of the aspirant as otherwise He will be termed as partial towards some whom He liberates sooner than others. His compassion will be activated by the aspirant’s actions. 'Iśvara' compassion is therefore "compassion for a cause" (sahetuka kṛpā). Of course, Iśvara is the goal of attainment, hence He is upeya too.
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Chaṇḍogyopanishad Bhāṣya


Īśādi nava Upaniṣad, Sankara Bhāṣya Śrī BhāṣyamŚāririkamimamsabhāṣyam by Rāmānuja

Gita Press, Gorakhpur


Śrī Bhāṣya with Srutaprasakasika of Sudarsan Suri

Śrīmadbhagavadgītā


Śvetāśvataropanisad


Taittirīyopanishad


Vedantasāra byRāmānuja


Vedārthasaṁgraha by Rāmānuja

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Yatīndramatadīpikābhy Śrīnivāsadāsa


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