

# What Is

# Anubandha-Chatuṣṭaya\*?

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All traditional Indian texts, philosophical or otherwise, indicate the *anubandha-chatushtaya* at the very outset. In this article we shall explore and analyse what exactly we mean by *anubandha-chatushtaya* with specific reference to *Vedanta*.

## Four-fold

The *anubandha-chatuṣṭaya* is four-fold

1. Adhikārī or the qualified person
2. Viṣaya or the subject matter
3. *Prayojana* or the result
4. *Sambandha* or relationship

## Its Importance

No one takes a medicine without a general idea about it.

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\* In articles such as this which carry several technical terms, standard rules of transliteration are applied. However, occasionally we judiciously digress from them keeping in mind our foreign readers. For example, *catuṣṭaya* is spelt across this article as *chatusṣṭaya*.

One would like to know the specific disease the medicine cures, who can consume it, what would its result be and so on. *Anubandha-chatuṣṭaya* addresses the following preliminary questions regarding a text so that one can decide whether one wants to (or can) study it.

- a) Who is qualified to study the text (*adhikārī*)?
- b) What is its subject matter (*viṣaya*)?
- c) What is the result of the study (*prayojana*)?
- d) What is the relationship between the text and its subject matter (*sambandha*)?

## Its Literal Meaning

The word *chatuṣṭaya* means 'four'. *Anubandha* means 'connection'. So *anubandha-chatuṣṭaya* literally means 'the four connections'. Since it is only on enquiry into the above-men-

tioned four questions that one would decide to connect oneself with the text (by studying it), these four are called anubandha-chatuṣṭaya or the 'four connections'. The word Anubandha-chatuṣṭaya is loosely translated in English as the 'four preliminary questions' or the 'four basic considerations'.

Now we shall see in detail each of the above mentioned anubandhas.

## 1. *Adhikari* or the Qualified Person

The word *adhikārī* means a qualified or fit person. Thus, this first consideration indicates the fit recipient for *Vedānta*. One may sow a seed, but if the land is not suitable, say, it is very dry, the seed may not even sprout. In the same way, even if the knowledge of *Vedānta* is given to a person, unless he is an *adhikārī*, it will not give its full benefit of liberation.

Only a person whose heart is purified (*chitta-śuddhi*) and who has the necessary amount of single-pointedness or concentration (*chitta-ekāgratā*) is a perfectly qualified person for the pursuit of *Vedānta*. To elaborate

– there are basically three *doṣas* (defects) in the mind. They are

- a) *āvaraṇa*
- b) *mala*
- c) *vikṣepa*.

### a. *Āvaraṇa* or Veiling

Ignorance veils the true nature of the Self. One's true nature is as the *Upanishads* declare — 'satyaṁ jñānaṁ anantaṁ brahma' – *Brahman* that is of the nature of pure Existence, Consciousness and is Infinite. But one considers oneself to be the *upādhis*, i.e., the limiting adjuncts – the body, *prāṇas*, mind etc. This is the basic problem, the worst mistake and it is caused by ignorance of the Self. This non-perception of oneself, caused by *avidyā* (ignorance) is called *āvaraṇa*. This basic *doṣa* (defect) is removed only by the knowledge of the Self that forms the *viśaya* (subject-matter) of *Vedānta*.

### b. *Mala* or Impurity

This expresses as the tendency to indulge in sinful and prohibited actions and thoughts. This is caused by *aśubha-vāsanās* (sinful tendencies) accumulated through thoughts and actions during the sojourn of many past

lives. This is removed by performing one's obligatory duties in the spirit of *karma yoga*, avoiding prohibited actions and actions prompted by worldly desire and by cultivating virtues like compassion, fearlessness etc. Prāyaścitta (purificatory rites) should be done for cleansing one's heart and to ward off the harmful effects of prohibited actions done in the past. Through these methods, śubhāvāsanās (noble tendencies) arise and aśubhāvāsanās (sinful tendencies) are removed, giving rise to chitta-śuddhi (purification of the mind).

### c. *Vikshepa* or Restlessness

The person whose mind does not remain steady in vedānta-śravaṇa (listening) but wanders is said to be suffering from vikshepa-doṣa. Upāsanā (contemplation) removes this defect of the mind. A person whose mind has become steady by regular practice of upāsanā is said to have attained chitta-ekāgratā (single-pointedness of the mind).

An adhikārī (qualified for Vedanta) is a person who has removed only the maladoṣa (the defect of impurity) and vikshepa-

doṣa (the defect of restlessness). He approaches the Guru who imparts the liberation-bestowing knowledge of Vedanta, which removes his āvaraṇa-doṣa (the defect of veiling).

Needless to say, the adhikārī would be an āstika (a believer in the *Vedas*) and would have a general idea of God and the possibility of freedom from bondage, for otherwise, he would not seek liberation and approach the Guru for the knowledge of Vedanta.

If the person is an uttama-adhikārī (perfectly qualified) then the knowledge will give liberation. If he is *madhyama* (mediocre-qualified) or *manda* (low-qualified) then the Knowledge will not lead to liberation immediately. He will have to cultivate more of chitta-śuddhi and chitta-ekāgratā. Only when the ground is well-tilled, watered etc., can one get a good crop!

Summarising the ideas mentioned above, Vedānta-sāra defines the adhikārī:

अधिकारी तु विधिवद्-अधीत-वेद-  
वेदाङ्ग-गत्वेन आपाततोऽधिगत-अखिलवेदार्थः  
अस्मिन् जन्मनि जन्मान्तरे वा  
काम्य-निषिद्ध-वर्जन-पुरःसरं नित्य-

नैमित्तिक-प्रायश्चित्त-उपासना अनुष्ठानेन  
निर्गत-अखिल-कल्मषतया नितान्त-निर्मल-  
स्वान्तः साधनचतुष्टय-सम्पन्नः प्रमाता।

*The adhikārī is an inquirer who, by reason of his formal study of the Vedas and Vedāngas, has a general knowledge of what the Vedas teach; whose mind is purified through cleansing, in this or in a previous life, of all sins by abstaining from kāmya karmas (desire-prompted actions) and niṣiddha karmas (prohibited actions) and by the performance of nitya karmas (daily duties) and naimittika karmas (occasional duties), prāyaścittas (purificatory ceremonies) and upāsanās (contemplation); and who is equipped with the sādhana-chatuṣṭaya.*

*Sādhana-chatuṣṭaya\** (the four-fold means) comprises a) *viveka* or discrimination, b) *vairāgya* or dispassion, c) the group of six qualities like *śama* (control of the mind) etc. d) *mumukṣutva* (intense desire for liberation). These four bestow on the seeker various

qualities that give both *chitta-śuddhi* (purification of the mind) and *chitta-ekāgratā* (single-pointedness of the mind).

## 2. *Vishaya* or Subject Matter

The *viśaya* or the essential subject matter of Vedānta is the knowledge which propounds the identity between the individual self and *Brahman*, technically called *jīva-brahma-aikya*. This identity is revealed from the standpoint of the *śuddha-chaitanya* (pure Consciousness) and not from that of the *upādhis* (limiting adjuncts) like the body etc. Other topics like the *jagat-sṛṣṭi* (creation of the universe), *upāsanās* (description of various contemplations) etc., are all meant to give further clarity on this essential purport of Vedānta, the *jīva-brahma-aikya*. Vedānta-sāra explains:

विषयः जीवब्रह्मैक्यं शुद्धचैतन्यं  
प्रमेयं तत्र एव वेदान्तानां तात्पर्यात् ।

*The subject-matter to be expounded is the identity between the individual self and Brahman, which is the pure Consciousness, that alone being the final purport of the Upanishads.*

\* *Sādhana-chatuṣṭaya* forms a topic by itself and hence will be explained in a later article.

### 3. The *prayojana* or the Result

This is also called *phala* or fruit. What is the result of the study of *Vedanta*?

The *Chandogya Upanishad* establishes the *prayojana* when it declares:

तरति शोकम् आत्मवित् ।

Tarati śokaṁ ātmavit

(Chandogya Upanishad 7.1.3)

*The knower of the Self crosses over sorrow.*

Self Knowledge bestows one with supreme happiness by destroying the *āvaraṇa* (the veiling of the Self), which was described as the most primary of all *doṣas* (defects). With the destruction of ignorance one crosses over the realm of *samsāra* and becomes a *mukta* or a liberated soul never to be born again. This *prayojana* is many a times described in the classical *Vedanta* texts to be *ātyantika-duḥkha-nivṛtti* (the complete cessation of sorrow) and *paramānanda-prāpti* (the attainment of supreme happiness). And who would not want this?

### 4. *Sambandha* or Relationship

This is the relationship which

exists between the *grantha* (text) and the *viśaya* (subject-matter of the text) i.e., the *jīva-brahma-aikya*. This is technically explained as *pratipādaka-pratipādyā-sambandha*. *Pratipādaka* means that which expounds i.e., the *grantha* (text) and *pratipādyā* is that which is expounded i.e., the *jīva-brahma-aikya*.

Though the importance of the first three *anubandha-chatuṣṭaya* viz., *adhikārī*, *viśaya* and *prayojana* is normally understood, the last one, *sambandha*, is generally missed out or just dismissed as not important! *Sambandha* establishes the clear and unambiguous relationship between the text and its contents. Just as there is a clear relationship between the potter and pot as the creator and the created, so too, the relationship between the text and Self Knowledge is made clear as that between the 'expounder' and the 'expounded'. In this way the absolute and clear use of the scripture with respect to Self Knowledge is firmly established thus prompting the student to make a thorough perusal of the text.

There are also other types of *sambandhas*, though given less importance during discussions.

They include:

- a. Kartṛ-kartavya-sambandha: Kartṛ means 'the doer' and *kartavya* means 'that which is to be done'. This relationship exists between the adhikārī and the vichāra (study).
- b. Prāpya-prāpaka-sambandha: Prāpya is that which is to be attained and prāpaka means 'the one who attains'. This relationship exists between the *prayojana* and the adhikārī.

All of them only make a point to show the clear, distinct and unambiguous relationship that exists between the *grantha*, adhikārī, viṣaya and *prayojana*.

## In Retrospect

Thus in this essay we have seen in detail the following points:

- The word *anubandha-chatuṣṭaya* means the 'four connections', for

these are the preliminary considerations based on which one decides to study the text.

- The first *anubandha* – *adhikārī*, describes the qualifications of a fit student of *Vedānta* as being one endowed with *chitta-śuddhi* and *chitta-ekāgratā*.
- The second *anubandha* – *viṣaya*, describes the central topic of *Vedānta* to be *jīva-brahma-aikya*.
- The third *anubandha* – *prayojana*, describes the result to be *mokṣa*.
- And the fourth *anubandha* – *sambandha*, clearly points out the direct relationship between the text and the subject matter of *Vedānta*.

In our next essay we shall explore the topic of *sādhana-chatuṣṭaya* or the four-fold qualifications of an adhikārī.

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