What is Sadhana-Chatustaya?

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PART IV

Introduction

The four aspects of sadhana-chatustaya (four-fold qualifications) are,
1. viveka (discrimination)
2. vairāgya (dispassion)
3. śamādi-śaṭka-sampatti (the six-fold disciplines beginning with śama) and
4. mumuṣutvam or mumuṣutā.

Of the four we have seen the first three elaborately. Now we shall discuss in detail the fourth and the last aspect of sadhana-chatustaya, i.e., mumuṣutvam.

Mumuṣutvam - Definition

Veānta Śāra gives a concise definition:

Mumuṣutvam - mokṣecchā

Mumuṣutvam is the yearning for liberation.

Vivekacūḍāmaṇi (verse 27) has a more elaborate definition:

Ahaṅkāra-videhaṅtān bandhān
Ajañanakalpitān
Svavṛṣṭvabodhena mokṣamārthāḥ mumuṣutā.

Ahaṅkāra-videhaṅtān bandhān ajñānakalpitān, svasvarūpāvabo
bodhena mokṣamārthāḥ mumuṣutā.

Mumuṣutā is the desire to free oneself through the knowledge of one’s real nature, from all bondages, beginning with the ego etc., and extending to the body, which has been created by ignorance.

From these definitions we see that mumuṣutā or mumuṣutvam is the desire for liberation. Pujya Gurudev used to stress the nature of mumuṣutvam by calling it the burning desire for liberation.
Three Types Of Mumukšutvam

The yearning for liberation is very rare. The Bhagavad Geeta (VII, 3) says that among thousands, one rare individual strives for liberation. Why is it so? It is because of the strength of one’s viṣaya vāsanās (pleasure seeking extrovert tendencies) which one has gathered through one’s sojourn through many lives. Mumukšutvam is indirectly proportional to the strength of one’s viṣaya vāsanās. This is because mumukšutvam means searching for happiness inside and viṣaya vāsanās means searching for happiness outside. Both cannot co-exist. Depending on the strength of mumukšutvam the scriptures classify it into three types.

1. Manda mumukšutvam: The word manda means dull or inferior. How does mumukšutvam first begin? It arises in one’s mind when one goes to a satsaṅga (used in the sense of spiritual discourses) and listens to the exposition of scriptural ideas. Inspired by the satsaṅga one feels ‘I must know God’. When this desire is not followed by any concrete steps towards the pursuit of God, it is called manda mumukšutvam. In time this desire may even wane away. Hence, it is of utmost importance to nurture this faint desire.

2. Madhyama mumukšutvam: madhyama means middling or average. When one takes concrete steps to fulfill the desire to know God, like approaching a Guru and sincerely beginning to strive for liberation, it is called the madhyama or the middling type.

3. Uttama mumukšutvam: Uttama means the best. This is also known as pravrddha, meaning fully grown or tīvra, meaning intense. The seeker achieves uncompromising detachment from the world and absolute dedication towards the path of Self-realization. It is only this uttama type of mumukšutvam that can give liberation. The Kathopaniṣad declares yameva vṛṣṇate tena labhyah - he who chooses It (uncompromisingly), attains It. This intense desire for liberation is compared to the frantic urgency of a man looking for a pond of water to douse the raging fire on his head.

The vedantic tradition illustrates this tīvratva i.e., the intense nature of uttama mumuk-
\textit{śutvam} with the help of a simple but powerful parable. The following is adapted from the \textit{Gospel of Sri Rama krishna}. “A disciple asked his teacher, “Guru, please tell me how I can see God”. “Come with me,” said the Guru, “and I shall show you”. He took the disciple to the lake, and both of them got into the water. Suddenly the teacher pressed the disciple’s head under the water. After a few moments he released him and the disciple raised his head and stood up spluttering and gasping. The Guru asked him, “How did you feel?” The disciple said, “Oh! I thought I would die; I was panting for breath”. The teacher said, “When you pant thus for God, then you will know that you don’t have to wait long for His vision”. In the disciple’s panting for breath, only one wish was there, ‘I want air’. So too if one has the intense soul-felt desire, ‘I want God and God alone and nothing else’, it is called \textit{uttama śutvam}, or a burning desire for liberation.

There is yet another type of \textit{śutvam}, rather a mere mockery of it, called \textit{ati-manda-śutvam} or the extremely dull type. Such a person wishfully thinks, ‘What is destined to come to me will come even if I don’t want and what is not destined will never come even if want. Hence if there is \textit{mukti} in my \textit{prarabdha} (destiny) let it come when it has to come.’ Thinking thus he puts forth no effort to cultivate \textit{viveka}, approach the Guru etc. There is not even a vague possibility of liberation for such a fool.

**Mumukshutvam precedes all other sadhanas**

Though \textit{uttama mumukṣutvam} comes only after the cultivation of the first three aspects of the \textit{sādhana-chatuśṭaya} – viveka, vairagya and śamādi-śatkasampatti a sort of mild \textit{mumukṣutvam} (what has been described as \textit{manda mumukṣutvam}) does exist even before one embarks on all these \textit{sadhanas} like \textit{viveka} etc.

Why should it be so? Because no action begins without a desire. \textit{Prayojanamanuddhiśya mūḍho’pi na pravartate} – even a fool does not start acting without some desire or aim in mind. It is certainly true that before the perusal of Vedanta, one will not be able to say in the strict vedantic sense – ‘I want the knowledge of \textit{jīva-brahma-āikya’}. But dissatisfied with the \textit{dṛśya-prapañca} (perceived
world of objects, emotions and thoughts – OET), one would certainly say from whatever little one has heard in satsangs, ‘I want the vision of God’, ‘I want to know the Truth’, or ‘I want perfect happiness’ etc.

No pursuit, including the spiritual one of seeking God, is possible without desire. True, this desire for God puts an end to all other desires and with the dawn of Self-realisation, this desire also comes to an end. It is by retaining this desire for God in mind that one embarks on the spiritual path. Thus Mumukṣutvam precedes every spiritual sādhanā, nay, it even precedes the seeker’s entry into the spiritual path!

Even though one’s mumukṣutvam may be of the inferior (manda) or middling (madhyama) type, by cultivating vairāgya (detachment which arises from discrimination), the six inner disciplines like śama etc., and the grace of the Guru, it grows into a well developed (pravṛddha) state and then confers its fruit of liberation.

Thus to progress from manda or madhyama to uttama type of mumukṣutvam one has to become steady in the first three aspects of the sādhanā-chatuṣṭaya i.e., viveka, vairagya and śamādi-sampatti.

The verse also gives great importance to the grace of the Guru. What does Guru’s Grace mean? The grace of the Guru is the blessings of one’s noble Teacher which arises because of his immense compassion for a sincere seeker. The seeker may not be highly qualified but if he is sincere, the compassionate Guru does bless the seeker. The Guru’s grace expresses in the form of his wishes, ‘May this Siṣya (student) become liberated’. Needless to say the wishes of such mahatmas (noble souls or realized Masters) never fail. Nothing is impossible with the grace of the Guru and nothing is possible without the grace of the Guru.

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The Five-Fold Analysis
Of Mumukshutvam

a) Hetu – the cause: sādhu- saṅga* (association with sādhus – the wise and the noble).

b) Svarūpa – the nature: intense desire for liberation and thus the complete cessation of desire for the pleasures of this world as well as the other higher worlds like heaven etc.

c) Kārya – the effect: one reaches the lotus feet of the Guru.

d) Avadhi – the perfection or culmination: renunciation of all actions and total dedication to the spiritual pursuit.

e) Phala – the result or fruit: mumukṣutvam propels a sādhaka to the Supreme. Certain texts also indicate the sāyujya type of mukti with regard to brahmaloka (will be discussed in the later essays).

In Prospect

With mumukṣutvam we conclude our discussion on the fourth and last aspect of sādhana-chatuṣṭaya. A person endowed with all of them is called an adhikāri or qualified aspirant.

Such a fit seeker enters into the next phase in his spiritual journey – he approaches the Guru who bestows on him the knowledge of the ultimate Truth. Cultivating the sādhana-chatuṣṭaya and then reaching the lotus feet of the Teacher is a great milestone in one’s spiritual path. Now the journey progresses in leaps and bounds. More about the way to approach the Guru, the nature of the Guru etc., will be discussed in the next essay.

To summarize the important points discussed in the essays on the four aspects of sādhana-chatuṣṭaya (i.e., viveka, vairāgya, śaṭka-sampatti and mumukṣutvam) a tabulated chart of their five-fold analysis is given on the next page. It is better to go through the chart after studying the essays on all the aspects of sādhana-chatuṣṭaya.

* Even though the initial manda mumukṣutvam springs from sādhu – saṅga, this becomes slowly-madhayama and then uttama as one attains perfection in the first three aspects of the sādhana-chatuṣṭaya i.e., viveka, vairāgya and śamādiśaṭka-sampatti.