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## A brief discussion on Anantadeva and his works

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### Abstract:

Anantadeva is known for his commentaries and explanatory works on Vedic ritual practices and codes of conduct (śrauta and smārta traditions). His Smṛti-kaustubha in particular remains an important reference in Dharmasāstra literature, reflecting the continuity of Vedic tradition into the early modern period. It is very difficult to find out the exact date of Anantadeva. Anantadeva, a renowned Sanskrit scholar and ritualist from the Mithila region of North India, is known for his contributions to Dharmasāstra and Vedic ritual manuals (prayoga-granthas). Anantadeva's Cāturmāsya-prayoga is a critical work in the tradition of Vedic ritual manuals, preserving the procedures for seasonal sacrifices that affirm the cyclical harmony of nature, gods, and human society. It underscores Anantadeva's broader mission to transmit śrauta rituals through accessible and authoritative texts, securing the living legacy of Vedic yajña in post-Vedic India.

**Key-words:** Anantadeva, Vedic rituals, Prayoga, Human society

### Introduction

Anantadeva is known for his commentaries and explanatory works on Vedic ritual practices and codes of conduct (śrauta and smārta traditions). His approach was grounded in the Mīmāṃsā and Smṛti traditions, emphasizing correct ritual performance and interpretation of dharma. Anantadeva's father's name is Āpadeva. In the Ms. Āśvalāyanaīya Prāyaścitta by Anantadeva "इत्यापिवसुतान्तिवकृतश्रौताश्चग्रनसम्बध्प्रायश्चित्ताश्चन"<sup>1</sup>. It is very difficult to find out the exact date of Anantadeva. But according to NCC. Anantadeva's date is near about 1600 A.D. Anantadeva's grandfather was Ekanātha, taken as a Mahratta Saint (A.D. 1528-1600.). Āpadeva was a great Vedic scholar. He also wrote many texts related to the Vedic-rituals. Anantadeva, in his Manonurañjananāṭaka mentions Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa as his teacher (of the Bhaṭṭa family of Benares). Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa's date is A.D. 1513. As per the Āśaucanirṇaya, Anantadeva was the elder brother of Jivadeva and he was teacher of Raghunātha Navahasta according to Prayogaratnabhūā and Prāyaścittakutūhala.

### Works of Anantadeva :

Anantadeva wrote many texts a list given bellow;

- i. Āgrayaṇaprayoga
- ii. Antyeṣṭipaddhati
- iii. Cāturmāsya-prayoga
- iv. Ākhyātavādivarāna
- v. Adhānaprayoga
- vi. Rtvigvaran
- vii. Saṁkṣiptacālārcavidhi
- viii. Bhaktinirṇ

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- ix. Bhaṭṭālaukāratīkāyut
- x. Iṣṭiprayoga
- xi. Tattvanirṇaya
- xii. Prāyaścittaprayoga
- xiii. Ādhānaprayoga
- xiv. Sarvaprayaścittaprayoga

Most of these works are not published. They are lying in the different repositories. Only Bhaktinirṇ and Bhaṭṭālaukāratīkāyut were published. The editor of the text Bhaktinirṇ is Sri. Mangal Dev Shastri, published from Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Benares on 1937, another work Bhaṭṭālaukāratīkāyut was edited by M.M. Sri. Lakshmana Sastri, the text was published from Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Benares on 1921.

The 'Smṛtikaustubha' is also a great work, compiled by him. It was written for Baz Bahādura Candra, the Candra Rājā of Alomrah and Nainital from 1638 to 1678. A section of the Smṛtikaustubha is the Tithikaustubha<sup>2</sup>.

#### Colophon:

*iti tithikaustubhaII samāptaII // aparūāthavakāṇḍhitoya-jātiratātmanā // saṅpāditaII śaṅkareṇa kāśyāvaitithikaustubhaII // I/(f. 61v)*

*Smṛtikaustubha* was published from Bombay 1909.

The second edition of the *Smṛtikaustubha* was published by Pāndurang Jāwanjī from Nirṇaya Sāgar Press, Bombay on 1931.

A brief description of some of the specific works are discussed below

#### Āgrayaṇaprayoga

Anantadeva, a prominent scholar from the Mithila region of medieval India (circa 16th–17th century), is known for his significant contributions to Vedic ritual literature and Dharmaśāstra. Among his various works, the Āgrayaṇaprayoga holds a special place as a ritual manual (prayoga) detailing the procedure for performing the Āgrayaṇa rite, a traditional Vedic ceremony centered on the offering of first fruits from the harvest.

#### Āgrayaṇa: A Vedic Rite

The Āgrayaṇa yajña is a śrauta ritual mentioned in the Brāhmaṇa and Kalpa literature. It is performed to offer the first portion of newly harvested grains, usually rice or barley, to the gods—especially Agni—as an act of thanksgiving and sanctification. The rite underscores the Vedic value of reciprocity between humans and the divine, where agricultural prosperity is acknowledged as a gift of the gods and ritually consecrated before use.

#### Structure and Purpose of the Āgrayaṇaprayoga

Anantadeva's *Āgrayaṇaprayoga* serves as a practical guide to conducting this ancient ritual in accordance with Vedic

injunctions. Written in Sanskrit, the text outlines the ritual sequence, including:

- Preliminary preparations, such as choosing the appropriate day, purifying the ritual space, and preparing the sacrificial fire.
- Selection and preparation of grains to be offered, reflecting strict ritual purity.
- Recitation of Vedic mantras, primarily from the Ṛgveda and Yajurveda, invoking deities like Agni and Indra.
- Offerings (homa) into the sacred fire, typically of cooked grain (puroḍāśa or caru).
- Post-ritual acts, including distribution of prasāda and the observance of related vrata (vows).

The work is an example of a prayoga-grantha, which simplifies complex śrauta procedures for ritual specialists and householders alike. It reflects Anantadeva's broader commitment to preserving Vedic traditions in an era of significant cultural transition.

Anantadeva's *Āgrayaṇaprayoga* is a valuable text that bridges Vedic ritualism and practical religious observance. Through it, he reinforces the cultural and spiritual importance of the Āgrayaṇa offering, preserving its relevance for his time and posterity. It stands as a testament to the enduring relationship between agriculture, religion, and cosmic order in the Vedic worldview.

#### Antyeṣṭipaddhati

*Antyeṣṭipaddhati*: A Vedic Guide to Funeral Rites

Among his ritual texts is the *Antyeṣṭipaddhati*, a specialized manual that outlines the correct procedure for performing Antyeṣṭi, the funeral rites for the dead. Antyeṣṭi (literally "the last sacrifice") refers to the final Vedic sacrament (saṁskāra) performed at the end of a person's life. It includes the cremation of the body, ritual purification, and post-death ceremonies that ensure the soul's journey to the ancestral realm (pitṛloka) or liberation (mokṣa).

#### Anantadeva's Antyeṣṭipaddhati

- The *Antyeṣṭipaddhati* (literally "manual for the last rites") by Anantadeva provides a systematic and accessible guide for performing Vedic funeral rituals according to the tradition.
- This text is classified as a paddhati, meaning it is a step-by-step procedural manual based on scriptural sources such as the Gṛhya Sūtras, Smṛti texts, and Purāṇic traditions.
- It is intended primarily for practicing Brahmins and ritual specialists, but also serves as a reference for householders concerned with the proper performance of śrāddha and other post-death rituals.

## Contents of the *Antyeṣṭipaddhati*

### 1. Pre-cremation rituals:

- o Ritual bathing of the body
- o Dressing the deceased
- o Placing the body on the bier (artha)
- o Mantras for leading the procession

### 2. Cremation procedure:

- Placement of the body on the funeral pyre
- Offering of oblations (āhutis) to Agni (fire)
- Recitation of Vedic mantras from the Yajurveda
- The role of the chief mourner (karṭṛ)

### 3. Post-cremation rituals:

- Collection of ashes (asthi-saṅgraha)
- Immersion of ashes in a sacred river
- Setting up a śrāddha ceremony (ancestral offerings)

### 4. Śrāddha and Piṇḍadāna:

- Detailed procedures for piṇḍa offerings to the departed soul
- Feeding of Brāhmaṇas and observance of mourning (śuddhi)

The *Antyeṣṭipaddhati* of Anantadeva plays an important role in preserving the continuity of Vedic funeral traditions, especially in North India.

- It ensures that the complex procedures of Antyeṣṭi and Śrāddha are performed correctly, in line with śāstric authority.
- As with his other works (like *Smṛtikaustubha* and *Āgrayaṇaprayoga*), this manual reflects Anantadeva's scholarly method of synthesizing Vedic, Smṛti, and local ritual traditions into a usable guide.

Anantadeva's *Antyeṣṭipaddhati* stands as a key text in the tradition of Vedic ritual manuals, offering a detailed and practical framework for funeral rites. Rooted in ancient scripture and adapted for ritual continuity, it affirms Anantadeva's role as a preserver of Vedic and Brahmanical ritual culture in medieval India.

### Anantadeva's *Cāturmāsya*prayeroga:

A Vedic Ritual Manual for Seasonal Sacrifices

Among his important ritual manuals (prayoga-granthas) is the *Cāturmāsya*prayeroga, which outlines the procedures for the *Cāturmāsya* sacrifices—a triad of seasonal śrauta yajñas performed to sustain cosmic order and agricultural prosperity.

The term *Cāturmāsya* refers to a group of three Vedic sacrifices performed at intervals of four months each, thus covering the full agricultural and seasonal cycle. The three yajñas are:

1. Vaiśvadeva – performed at the end of spring (Vasanta).

2. Varuṇapraghāsa – at the end of the rainy season (Varṣā).
3. Sākamedha – at the end of autumn (Śarada).

These rituals are śrauta yajñas, meaning they are performed according to śrauta sūtras with full recitation of Vedic mantras and participation of multiple priests.

### Purpose of the *Cāturmāsya*prayeroga

Anantadeva's *Cāturmāsya*prayeroga is a ritual manual that provides:

- Step-by-step instructions for each of the three sacrifices.
- The correct sequence of actions (krama), from altar preparation to oblations.
- The exact mantras from the Yajurveda, Ṛgveda, and Sāmaveda.
- Ritual roles for various priests (ṛtviks).
- Observances of seasonal significance, such as offerings of seasonal foods or symbolic items (e.g., curd, rice, plants, or cattle).

It is intended as a practical guide for learned Brāhmins and ritual specialists, ensuring performance of these complex Vedic rites

### Anantadeva's *Adhānaprayoga*:

A Vedic Manual for Establishing the Sacred Fire

The *Adhānaprayoga*, a text dedicated to guiding the adhāna, or installation of the sacred fire (agnyādāna), a foundational rite in the Vedic sacrificial system.

In Vedic ritualism, adhāna (from the root dhā, “to place”) refers to the initial consecration and establishment of the three sacred fires—the Āhavanīya, Gārhapatya, and Dakṣiṇāgni—which are central to the life of a Vedic householder (agnihotrin). Once installed, these fires are kept burning daily and used for all subsequent śrauta and gṛhya rituals, such as Agnihotra, Darśa-Paurṇamāsa, *Cāturmāsya*, and more.

### Purpose and Content of *Adhānaprayoga*

Anantadeva's *Adhānaprayoga* provides a step-by-step guide for the proper performance of the fire-installation ceremony, based on śrauta sūtras and Smṛti traditions. The text likely includes:

- Preliminary requirements: eligibility of the sacrificer, purity rules, materials needed (wood, vessels, altar space, mantras).
- Construction of the altars (vedi): placement and orientation of the three fires.
- Invocation of deities: with precise Vedic mantras from the Yajurveda, especially relevant for Agni and the ritual space.
- Lighting of the sacred fires: using traditional methods like churning fire (araṇi sticks).

- Consecration of the householder as an agnihotrin: signifying entry into the Vedic life of yajña.

The manual serves both as a pedagogical tool and a ritual reference, ensuring that the complex procedure is executed with doctrinal and ritual precision.

### Significance of the Text

- Anantadeva's Adhānaprayoga preserves one of the most foundational rituals in Vedic tradition, essential for sustaining the cycle of yajña and dharma.
- In an era when elaborate Vedic rituals were increasingly rare, such manuals were crucial for maintaining continuity of śrauta practice.
- The text reflects Anantadeva's broader mission to systematize Vedic rituals for practitioners, combining scriptural authority with practical accessibility

### Conclusion:

Anantadeva, a prominent Vedic scholar and ritualist, significantly contributed to the preservation and systematization of Vedic rituals through his detailed prayogas and paddhatis. His works, such as the Āgrayanaprayoga, Adhānaprayoga, Cāturmāsyaprayoga, and Antyeṣṭipaddhati, offer precise procedural guidance for conducting Vedic sacrifices and rites. These texts serve as vital manuals for both practitioners and scholars, bridging the oral tradition with written documentation.

Anantadeva's contributions reflect a deep commitment to dharma and the continuity of Vedic culture in changing socio-religious contexts. His methodical approach ensured that ritual practices remained accessible, standardized, and relevant across generations. In conclusion, Anantadeva's works hold enduring value in the study of Vedic ritualism, embodying the scholarly rigor and devotional dedication necessary to sustain such a vast and nuanced tradition.

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### Foot Note:

<sup>1</sup> Ms. Āśvalāyanīya Prāyaścitta, No.G-10309, G-757, Folia No. 10B and 19B

<sup>2</sup> NCC. Vol. I. P. 127-128