

Vedāṅgas – Vyākaraṇam

1. Introduction

Vyākaraṇam or Grammar is one of the six Vedāṅgas and considered as the mouth of Vedapuruṣa (Veda personified). It is also called Śabdānuśāsanam. Unlike the Grammar of any other language, Vyākaraṇam of Sanskrit language is associated with philosophy. Literally, the term Vyākaraṇam means an instrument that separates (perfect) Śabdas from Apaśabdas (imperfect Śabdas). Dharma can be achieved by employing perfect Śabdas and the imperfect Śabdas cause Adharma. Just like any other Vedāṅga, Vyākaraṇam also would help one attain Mokṣa (liberation from the cycle of birth and death). The term Śabda is untranslatable as it denotes the following: varṇa (phoneme), prakṛti (nominal and verbal root), pratyaya (suffix), padam (word), vākyam (sentence), avāntaravākyam (sub-sentence), mahāvākyam (discourse), dhvani (sound) etc. Vyākaraṇam is not Grammar (parts of speech etc.) but more than that. It is a rough translation. Vyākaraṇam is considered to be the most important among Vedāṅgas as it is the base of all disciplines. For that matter, Grammar is the backbone of any language and literature.

2. Origin of Vyākaraṇam

The origin of Vyākaraṇam is there in Vedas – in Gopathabrāhmaṇa (p. 12) as we come across the terminology that is employed in Vyākaraṇam –

ओंकारं पृच्छामः – को धातुः? किं प्रातिपदिकम्? किं नामाख्यातम्? किं लिङ्गम्?

किं वचनम्? का विभक्तिः? कः प्रत्ययः? कः स्वरः? etc.

omkāraṃ pṛcchāmaḥ – ko dhātuḥ? kiṃ prātipadikam? kiṃ nāmākhyātam?

kiṃ liṅgam? kiṃ vacanam? kā vibhaktiḥ? kaḥ pratyayaḥ? kaḥ svaraḥ?

pṛcchāmaḥ = let us ask, omkāraṃ = Omkāra, kaḥ = which one is, dhātuḥ =

verbal root? kim = what is, prātipadikam = nominal root? kim nāma = what is

meant by, ākhyātam = a verb? kim = what is, liṅgam = gender? kim = what is,

vacanam = number? kā = which one is, vibhaktiḥ = case? kaḥ = what is meant

by, pratyayaḥ = suffix? kaḥ = what is meant by, svaraḥ = accent?

Let us take up the word 'om' – what is the verbal root? and nominal root? what is meant by verb, gender, number, case, suffix and accent?

3. Dichotomy of Śabdas – Secular and Vedic

The Śabdas in Sanskrit language can be put under two headings – Laukika (secular) and Vaidika (Vedic). So far as meaning is concerned there is no difference between Laukika and Vaidika Śabdas. Rather, the form of some Śabdas is different in Vedas:

S. No.	Laukikaśabda	Meaning	Vaidikaśabda
1	karṇaiḥ	with ears	karṇebhiḥ
2	devāḥ	Gods	devāsaḥ
3	prajāḥ	people	prajāsaḥ

Moreover, svara (accent) is mandatory in Veda and any change in svara would cause change in meaning. On the other hand, although svara is common to both kinds of Śābdas, people do not employ the same in Loka (secular). Another significant point is that there is free word order in Loka whereas in Vedic literature the order of words is prescribed.

4. Prātiśākhya and Vyākaraṇam

Before Pāṇini entered the scene, there used to be two separate Vyākaraṇams – the one exclusively useful to analyze Vaidikaśābdas, called Prātiśākhya and Vyākaraṇams meant for the analysis of Laukikaśābdas, such as Ṛkprātiśākhya etc. for Vedas, and Aindra vyākaraṇam for Loka. It was Pāṇini considered to be the most genius person on earth, who put the contents of both Prātiśākhya and Vyākaraṇam in a nutshell called Aṣṭādhyāyī (a treatise containing eight chapters). Thus, Pāṇini's Vyākaraṇam became a Vedāṅga.

5. Trimuni Vyākaraṇam

Aṣṭādhyāyī consists of about 4,000 Sūtras (elliptical sentences with economy of letters) and the Sūtras are supported by Vārtikas (sentence of amendment) by Kātyāyana et al. Patañjali, a great sage, authored Mahābhāṣyam (the great scholium), a vast and profound commentary on Aṣṭādhyāyī. Since Pāṇinīyam (Pāṇini's grammar) is based on the trio of

Sūtra, Vārtika and Bhāṣya of Pāṇini, Kātyāyana and Patañjali, it is called "Trimuni Vyākaraṇam" (Grammar of the three sages).

6. Three Defects – of Body, Speech and Mind

There are three kinds of defects related to body, speech and mind and, it is believed that Patañjali, in order to obviate the defects, authored Carakasūtram (Āyurveda), Mahābhāṣyam and Yogānuśāsanam. The study of Mahābhāṣyam is considered on a par with ruling of a great empire.

7. Benefits of Vyākaraṇam

There are three major benefits of the study of Vyākaraṇam –

- i. वेदानां रक्षा, vedānām rakṣā (protection of Vedas) – The Vedic literature, which is a mass of knowledge and non-human (apauruṣeya) has to be protected in terms of the form of Śabda, accent, sandhi (morphophonemics) etc. A non-vaiyākaraṇa (non-grammarian) cannot do this job. Therefore, in order to protect the rich and invaluable Vedic literature, inherited from sages one should study Vyākaraṇam.
- ii. लघुः उपायः, laghuḥ upāyaḥ (an easy device) – Thousands of Śabdās cannot be committed to heart. Vyākaraṇam is an easy device to know the gamut of Śabdās.
- iii. मोक्षः, mokṣaḥ (Arresting the cycle of birth and death) – Vyākaraṇam is considered not only as a Vedāṅga but also as a Darśana on a par with Vedānta etc. that is

useful in attaining Mokṣa, the ultimate goal of a human being. Therefore, Vyākaraṇam is considered as a highway to reach Brahman (Mokṣa).

8. How to Compile Vyākaraṇam

One would get Dharma (that leads to Mokṣa) by employing Śabdas i.e. perfect Śabdas, which are acceptable to Vyākaraṇa, with the knowledge of Vyākaraṇa. Although, there is no hitch, in terms of transformation of meaning, by employing Apaśabdas (imperfect Śabdas or those not acceptable to Vyākaraṇam), it is Dharma one has to forego. गौः (gauḥ) is the Śabda. गावी (gāvī), गोणी (goṇī), गोता (gotā), गोपोतलिका (gopotalikā) etc. are Apaśabdas employed to express the same sense. बाधा (bādhā) is the Śabda; भाधा (bhādhā), भादा (bhādā), बादा (bādā), are Apaśabdas. भेदः (bhedah) is the Śabda. भेधः (bhedhah), बेधः (bedhah), बेदः (bedah) are Apaśabdas. And the Apaśabdas are not limited in number. They may also vary from house to house, village to village etc.

If one wants to compile a Vyākaraṇam then he can list either Śabdas or Apaśabdas. There too, since the number of Śabdas is less and limited, it is wise to offer a list of the same and the implication is that the rest are Apaśabdas. Further, cataloguing all the Śabdas of a language like Sanskrit, which is rich in vocabulary, is an impossible task. Therefore, Pāṇini followed the 'general-exception-rule' system. A general rule is made and wherever there are exceptions another rule is made for them.

9. प्रयोगशरणं व्याकरणम्, prayogaśaraṇaṁ vyākaraṇaṁ (Vyākaraṇaṁ is based on usage)

Pāṇini is not creator (स्रष्टा, sraṣṭā) of Śabdas. Rather, he is a registrar (स्मर्ता, smartā), i.e. one who collects the information and records. Therefore, Pāṇini, with his Yogic capacity (योगशक्ति, yogaśakti), could discern the gamut of Śabdas across 1,137 branches of Veda and a vast literature of Loka, i.e. Upavedas, Vedāṅgas, Darśanas, Purāṇas etc. and such an exceptional sage compiled an exceptional work called Aṣṭādhyāyī. So, if there is usage (प्रयोग - prayoga) either in Veda or Loka, then only one can analyse such a Śabda through Vyākaraṇaṁ – this is what is meant by प्रयोगशरणं व्याकरणम् (prayogaśaraṇaṁ vyākaraṇaṁ), i.e. usage is the resort of Vyākaraṇaṁ.

10. धर्मनियमः, dharmaniyamaḥ (Vyākaraṇaṁ prescribes Dharma)

When people can have Vaidikaśabdas from Veda and Laukikaśabdas from Loka, why Vyākaraṇaṁ? Language changes by nature and it is not feasible to compile a Vyākaraṇaṁ for any language. Therefore, if and only if the Śabda, the Artha (meaning) and the Sambandha (relation) between them is immutable, then only it is feasible to compile a Vyākaraṇaṁ. Following the above norm, the trio of Pāṇini, Kātyāyana and Patañjali compiled the Vyākaraṇaṁ which has got two hallmarks, viz. brevity (lāghavam) and perfection (nirduṣṭatā) and the same made Pāṇinīyam popular across the globe.

This is how and why Sanskrit has become the only language that is suitable for computers.

So, Vyākaraṇam, following the usage prescribes the Śābdas and usage of such Śābdas, with the knowledge of Vyākaraṇam, would fetch Dharma. In other words, unlike other languages, usage of a Sanskrit Śabda, in the said fashion would get two things – transformation of meaning and Dharma. Needless to say, Dharma would lead to Mokṣa.

11. वर्णसमाम्नायः, Varṇasamāmnāyaḥ (The Alphabet)

According to the uninterrupted tradition, Pāṇini performed Tapas (pray to God while leading an ascetic life) of Śiva. The latter appeared and while dancing sounded his Ḍhakka (a small handheld double sided drum) for fourteen times. The sounds were taken by Pāṇini as the following set of Sūtras that consist of the Alphabet. They are called Māheśvarasūtras (aphorisms offered by Śiva) and are the base of the Aṣṭādhyāyī –

अ इ उ ण् ॥१॥ ऋ लृ क् ॥२॥ ए ओ ङ् ॥३॥ ऐ औ च् ॥४॥ ह य व र ट् ॥५॥
ल ण् ॥६॥ ज म ङ ण न म् ॥७॥ झ भ ञ् ॥८॥ घ ढ ध ष् ॥९॥ ज ब ग ड द श्
॥१०॥ ख फ छ ठ थ च ट त व् ॥११॥ क प य् ॥१२॥ श ष स र् ॥१३॥ ह ल् ॥१४॥
i) a i u ṇ ; ii) ṛ ḷ k ; iii) e o ṅ ; iv) ai au c ; v) ha ya va ra ṭ ; vi) la ṇ ;
vii) ṇa ma ṇa ṇa na m ; viii) jha bha ṇ ; ix) gha ḍha dha ṣ ; x) ja ba ga ḍa da ś
xi) kha pha cha ṭha tha ca ṭa ta v ; xii) ka pa y ; xiii) śa ṣa sa r ; xiv) ha l .

One can make a number of Pratyāhāras (abbreviations) out of the Sūtras and achieve economy by not uttering each letter. The last letters are meant to make Pratyāhāra and therefore are not to be counted. Such a letter is called technically called 'it'.

'ak' is a Pratyāhāra which denotes the letters – a, i, u, ṛ, and ḷ

(**a,i,u,ṛ**; **ṛ,ḷ,k**; e,o,ñ; ai,au,c; ha,ya,va,ra,ṭ; la,ṇ; ña,ma,na,ṇa,na,m; jha,bha,ñ; gha,dha,dha,ṣ; ja,ba,ga,ḍa,da,ś;
kha,pha,cha,ṭha,tha,ca,ṭa,ta,v; ka,pa,y; śa,ṣa,sa,r; ha,l)

'ac' (it means a vowel) denotes – a, i, u, ṛ, ḷ, e, o, ai, and au

(**a,i,u,ṛ,ḷ**; e,o,ñ; ai,au,c; ha,ya,va,ra,ṭ; la,ṇ; ña,ma,na,ṇa,na,m; jha,bha,ñ; gha,dha,dha,ṣ; ja,ba,ga,ḍa,da,ś;
kha,pha,cha,ṭha,tha,ca,ṭa,ta,v; ka,pa,y; śa,ṣa,sa,r; ha,l)

The letter 'ha' is uttered twice keeping a specific grammatical application in mind. The Pratyāhāra 'al' means any letter, i.e. ac or hal. Since a, i, u, ṇ etc. are useful in creating designations such as ak, ac, hal etc. they are called Saṃjñāsūtras (aphorisms for designation).

12. जातिः – व्यक्तिः, jātiḥ – vyaktiḥ

'Do not kill a cow' – means – do not kill any cow. Here, the word 'cow' in the sentence means the total number of cows on earth, i.e. the class of cows or Jāti. 'Fetch a cow' – means fetch a single cow. The word 'cow' in this sentence means a cow individual, i.e. a single cow or Vyakti. The Jāti of a cow is expressed by a suffix, viz. *tva* or *ta* – gotvam or gotā (cowness) and it is abstract.

The Jāti has got the Vyakti as its resort, i.e. if one wants to know Jāti, it is available in a Vyakti only. Similarly, one cannot find a Vyakti devoid of Jāti. In other words, Jāti and Vyakti are nāntarīyaka (inseparable). This concept is universal, i.e. applicable to all languages. Gotvajāti is available only in a cow and a cow devoid of Gotvajāti is not available.

Pāṇini employed the technic of Jāti and Vyakti in his Aṣṭādhyāyī. In the Māheśvarsūtra, 'a, i, u, ṇ', 'a' means the Jāti of 'a', which means the eighteen types of 'a' – ३१

(a – hrasva / short), आ (ā – dīrgha / long), आ३ (a3 – pluta / longer), आ (udātta / anudātta / svarita), अ (non-nasal) and अँ (nasal). Thus a total (3 x 3 x 2) of eighteen akāras (the letter a) are taken care of by a single 'a' due to Jāti. Such is the economy of Pāṇini.

If Pāṇini wants to denote a short 'a', then he say 'at', for the long one 'āt', i.e. he adds 't' to the specific letter so that Jāti is not applied. This process is called 'taparakaraṇam' (adding 't' to the letter).

13. चतुष्टयी शब्दानां प्रवृत्तिः, catuṣṭayī śabdānāṃ pravṛttiḥ (Four-fold Behavior of Śabdas)

The gamut of Śabdas is put under four headings following their behavior –

- i. Jāti (Class) – The word gauḥ denotes gotvajāti. Due to nāntarīyakatva (inseparability) the vyakti is also denoted simultaneously.
- ii. Guṇaḥ (attribute / property / qualifier) – 'śuklā gauḥ' (a white cow) – here 'śukla' is a Guṇa.
- iii. Kriyā (activity) – pacati (cooking) is a word that denotes a 'kriyā'.
- iv. Saṃjñā (name or designation) – Rāma is the name of a person.

All the above four, i.e. Jāti, Guṇa, Kriyā and Saṃjñā are available associated with a Vyakti.

14. शब्दानुशासनम्, Śabdānuśāsanam (a treatise that prescribes Śabdas)

Vyākaraṇam is often referred to by the term Śabdānuśāsanam, which literally means a treatise that prescribes Śabdās by vividly offering their structure, i.e. root, suffix etc. As has already been stated, the term Śabda denotes a number of things such as varṇa (phoneme / letter), prakṛti (root), pratyaya (suffix), padam (word), vākyam (sentence), avāntaravākyam (sub-sentence), mahāvākyam (discourse) etc. and hence could / should not be translated. Pāṇini's Vyākaraṇam deals with all the said elements.

Vākyam (sentence) is the unit of language. Where are you coming from? 'Hostel'. Here the answer, i.e. hostel, is an elliptical sentence. 'I', 'am', 'coming' and 'from' are ellipses. Therefore, even if it is a single word, be it noun or verb, if it conveys a complete sense then it is (an elliptical) a sentence.

15. How to Compile Vyākaraṇam?

Cataloguing all the sentences employed is simply impossible. Even the words are innumerable to list. Therefore, the founders of Vyākaraṇam have come down to the combination of prakṛti (root) and pratyaya (suffix). By adding a number of Pratyayas to a single root one can easily produce many Śabdās.

kṛ (to do)

kṛ + tavya = kartavyam (duty)

kṛ + kti = kṛtiḥ (work)

kṛ + nyat = kāryam (work)

kṛ + kyap	= kṛtyam (duty)
kṛ + śa	= kriyā (activity)
kṛ + anīyar	= karaṇīyam (duty)
kṛ + tṛc	= kartā (doer)
kṛ + ṇvul	= kārakaḥ (doer)
kṛ + aṇ	= kāraḥ (doer)
kṛ + kta	= kṛta (done)
kṛ + ktavatu	= kṛtavān (one who did)
kṛ + lyuṭ	= karaṇam (instrument)
kṛ + kvip	= kṛt (doer)
kṛ + ṇic + lyuṭ	= kāraṇam (reason)

While analyzing the Śabdas, Pāṇini first makes a general rule such as "karmaṇi aṇ (Aṣṭādhyāyī 3-2-1)" – if a verbal root is preceded by a word in accusative case then there will be the suffix 'aṇ'.

Kumbham (a pot) karoti (producing) – kumbha + kṛ + a = kumbhakāraḥ (a potter).

In cases where aṇ is not applicable he makes an exceptional rule – "ātaḥ anupasarge kaḥ (Aṣṭādhyāyī 3-2-3)" – if the verbal root is ending in ā and not prefixed with an upasarga (pra, parā etc.) then there will be the suffix 'ka', in the same context.

gām dadāti (one who donates a cow) = godaḥ

16. उपसर्गाः, upasargāḥ (Prefixes)

Pāṇini provided with twenty two upasargas which can be prefixed to nouns and verbs and they cause change of meaning:

प्र, परा, अप, सम्, अनु, अव, निस्, निर, दुस्, दुर, वि, आङ्, नि, अधि, अपि, अति, सु, उत्, अभि, प्रति, परि, उप।

pra, parā, apa, sam, anu, ava, nis, nir, dus, dur, vi, āṅ, ni, adhi, api, ati, su, ut, abhi, prati, pari, upa.

hāraḥ = a garland of pearls

prahāraḥ = a stroke

āhāraḥ = food

saṃhāraḥ = killing

vihāraḥ = stroll

parihāraḥ = compensation

upahāraḥ = gift

apahāraḥ = theft

17. Pāṇini's Other Works

In order to achieve integrity, Pāṇini provided with a couple of works in support of Aṣṭādhyāyī:

- i. Liṅgānuśāsanasūtrapāṭhaḥ – is a group of Sūtras which help in deciding the gender of Śabda by the suffix etc.
- ii. Dhātupāṭhaḥ – This is a list of about 2,000 verbal roots
- iii. Gaṇapāṭhaḥ – It is just like a dictionary of words with the same suffix. The words ending with the same suffix are grouped and called a gaṇa (group).
- iv. Śikṣā – Pāṇini authored a Śikṣā, one of the Vedāṅgas, dealing with pronunciation etc.

With Aṣṭādhyāyī, Pāṇini authored five works for Vyākaraṇam. Apart from the above, Pāṇini took 'Uṇādisūtras' of Śāntanumaharṣi, that are useful in producing Śabdās.

18. Concepts in Aṣṭādhyāyī

Pāṇini put the gamut of Padas (words) under two headings – subāntam (noun) and tiṇāntam (verb). Here is his style of analysis -

- i. Kṛtpratyayaḥ – the suffix added on a verbal root is called kṛt - ram + ghañ = rāmaḥ
- ii. Supratyayaḥ – the suffix added on a Prātipadikam (nominal root / kṛdānta / taddhitānta / samāsa) is called sup (21 sup-pratyayas) – rāma + su = rāmaḥ

- iii. Strīpratyayaḥ - the suffix added on a Prātipadikam (before sup) to denote femininity is a strīpratyaya – aja + tā = ajā (a female goat)
- iv. Taddhitapratyayaḥ – the suffix added on a subanta is called Taddhita – aditi + nya = Ādityaḥ (Sun)
- v. Tiṇpratyayaḥ – the suffix added on a verbal root in order to produce a Tiṇantam (verb) is called Tiṇ – bhū + ti = bhavati.

The above procedure is called Morphology (Science of a Word). Padaśāstram is another synonym of Vyākaraṇam.

According to tradition a scholar must have deep knowledge of Padavākyapramāṇaśāstras (Vyākaraṇam, Mīmāṃsā, and Nyāya).

- vi. Sandhi (Morphophonemics) – This is called Phonology. When two letters are pronounced in quick succession, it is called sandhi and the result is phonemic change (phoneme = letter) – gaṅgā + udakam = gaṅgodakam (water of Ganges).
- vii. Samāsa (a compound word) – Two or more words having separate meanings unite to form into a single word called Samāsa (literally group) and the same conveys a united single meaning – rājñāḥ (king's) puruṣaḥ (servant) = rājapuruṣaḥ (king's servant)
- viii. Kārakam (Dealing with Syntax) – The Kāraka theory deals with the analysis of a sentence. Kāraka is the semantic expression and is represented by a vibhakti (case) at syntactic level. Kartā (doer / subject / agent), karma (object), karaṇam

(instrument), sampradānam (the person at the receiving end), apādānam (the thing from which something parts) and adhikaraṇam (the base) – are six Kāraḥas.

A prātipadikam (nominal root) which generates a verb is a Kārakam –

rāmaḥ vanam gacchati (Rama is going to forest).

In the above sentence 'rāmaḥ' is kartā and 'vanam' is karma.

Ṣaṣṭhī (possessive case) is not considered as a Kārakam because it denotes the relation between two things (nouns) – rājñāḥ puruṣaḥ (the king's servant).

Pāṇini analyzed 'discourse' (Mahāvakyam) also.

ix. Āryāvarta – Any Śabda not touched by Pāṇini but is used by Āryas can be taken as authoritative – says Pāṇini (6-3-109). Āryas were the people residing in 'Āryāvarta', the place surrounded by Himālayas (North), Vindhya (South), Prayāga (East) and Kurukṣetra (West).

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References

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