

OPINION

Of Prof. Dr. Boyka Tsigova,

by procedure for acquiring the educational and science degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Indian Literature and Culture (Doctoral program: Literature of the Peoples of Europe, America, Africa, Asia, and Australia), professional field 2.1. Philology

The doctoral candidate **Antoniya Ivanova Nacheva** was enrolled in a regular doctoral program at the Department of Classical East of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", with a dissertation on the topic: "THE NOTION OF *ĀNANDAMAYA KOŚA* ACCORDING TO *ĀDI ŚAÑKARA ĀCĀRAYA*", on February 10, 2020. She She was officially withdrawn with the right to defend the dissertation on February 10, 2023. The supervisor of the doctoral candidate is Prof. Dr. Milena Bratoeva.

The documentation submitted by the candidate meets the requirements of the law, the regulations for its implementation, as well as the Regulations for the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

The procedure was carried out in accordance with the legal requirements.

The aim of the dissertation is to reveal in depth the significance of the concept of *ānandamaya kośa* by revealing the essence of the concept in Shankara's commentaries and the doctrine of the Advaita Vedanta philosophical school. The use of the two words, *ānanda* and *kośa*, in the Vedic texts (*Ṛgveda*, *Atharvavedaḥ*), the *Brahmanas* (*Brāhmaṇas*), the principal Upanishads, *Brahmasūtras*, *Gauḍapādakārikā*, *Bhagavadgītā*, and Shankara's commentaries on the principal Upanishads, *Brahmasūtra*, *Gauḍapādakārikā*, and *Bhagavadgītā* are initially examined.

To achieve the objectives set forth in the dissertation, primarily an analysis of Shankara's exegesis has been used tracing the application of his exegetical methods in the "*Taittiriya Upanishad*" (TU) and the *Brahmasutra* 1.1. (6). Studies of *anandamaya kosha* are conducted based on the TU, comparing translations of this Upanishad by Doyen, Müller, Shastri, Sarkin, and Olivelle. Shastri's translation (Aitareya & Taittiriya Upanishads with Shankara Bhashya. English Translation, Sastri.Sitarama.The India Printing Works, Madras, 1923), has been used for the analysis of Shankara's commentaries.

After reviewing the biographies and contemporary studies on Shankara's life, **Chapter 1** offers a summary synopsis of his life.

A review of the modern stylometric methods used by Hacker, Andrianich and other Indologists, in the study and proof of Shankara's authorship is also made.

Based on these studies, as authentic and a basis for comparison, the author uses the commentaries on the *Brahmasutra*, *Taittiriya* and *Brihadaranyaka* upanishads.

The second part of **the Second chapter** takes an approach to explore the etymology and semantics of the term *kośa* as it appears in the corpus covering studies on the ānanda memorials as well as in *Gauḍapāḍakārikā* and Śaṅkara's commentaries on the Major Upanishads, the Brahmasūtras and the *Bhagavadgita*. The chronological appearance of the concept of *panchakosha* is traced, and an attempt is made to analyze the development of the term's significance to its use in the discourse of Vedanta as a repository of *brahman*, limiting its original infinity within the framework of human beings and its various aspects and manifestations. **According to the author of dissertation, this research is new and has not been done before in the field of Indology.**

In **the Third** chapter, the structure and content of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (TU) is presented through the prism of a review of modern research on it. The nature and

origin of the methods of exegesis used by Shankara, are described in his commentaries on the *Taittiriya Upanishad*.

The fourth chapter examines the structure of the BS (*Brahmasūtra*), as well as the main philosophical messages in it, as fundamental to the Advaita Vedanta School.

In this context, both the relationship with the older ritualistic Mīmāṃsā, Purva Mīmāṃsā, and Vedanta, Uttara Mīmāṃsā, and the place and understandings of Śaṅkara and his disciples and the Advaita school, are examined.

The study in the **fifth chapter** bases on the works *Atmabodha* and *Vivekachudamani*, traditionally attributed to Shankara and very little studied; of Shankara's commentaries on the chapter on Bliss (Brahmānandavallī) of the Taittiriya Upanishad, on the chapter on the Blissful Self in the *Brahmasutra*, and excerpts from the major Upanishads. The study also delves into the semantic history of certain words present in their titles.

The conclusion includes a summary of the studies in each chapter and the main conclusions, as well as guidelines for future research.

The presented doctoral dissertation is an original scientific study that shows systematic theoretical knowledge and original reasoning combined with proven theses.

The important contributing points of the thesis can be summarized as follows:

- The philosophical ideas and messages of Adi Shankara are traced and explained in the analyses.
- The essence and origin of the methods of exegesis used by Shankara in his commentaries on the "*Taittiriya Upanishad*" are described.
- The concept of *panchakosha* is explored through the semantic history of the designations for each *kosha* and in the works attributed to Shankara, *Atmabodha*, and *Vivekachudamani*.

- Bulgarian language systematization of studies on the life, dating, and authorship of Adi Shankara.

- Based on the conclusions and methods applied in this dissertation, future research could be conducted on Shankara's commentaries, other Upanishads or parts of the Brahmasutra, or other works, considering different concepts.

This work could serve as a source of scientific information on the semantic history of the concepts of ananda and kosha, on systematized information about Shankara's life and his biographies, as well as on contemporary methods proving his authorship.

The author of the dissertation has **six publications** on the topic of the dissertation.

The Abstract of the dissertation is structured and corresponded to the main points and contributions of the dissertation. It precisely presents the main aspects and ideas of the PhD dissertation.

The doctoral candidate undoubtedly possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and applied skills for independent scientific research.

My overall assessment of the dissertation, abstract, and scientific publications of Antonia Nacheva is positive.

I recommend that the scientific jury propose to the esteemed members of the Faculty (Science) Council of the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" to award Antonia Ivanova Nacheva the educational and science degree of "Doctor" in the professional field 2.1. Philology (Indian Literature and Culture).

24.03.2024

Jury member: Prof. Dr Boyka Tsigova