

REVIEW

By Assoc. Prof. Dr Antoaneta Nikolova, SWU "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad,

member of the scientific jury

regarding the PhD thesis of **Antoniya Ivanova Nacheva**

**on "THE NOTION OF ĀNANDAMAYA KOŚA ACCORDING TO ĀDI
ŚAṄKARA ĀCĀRAYA"**

for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor"

Professional direction – 2.1 Philology

Scientific specialty – Literature of the Peoples of Europe, America, Africa, Asia,
and Australia

1. Data on the doctorate, dissertation, abstract and publications

Antoniya Nacheva is a full-time doctoral student at the "Classical East" department at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". She has a rich and varied biography, testifying to a searching personality who wants to reach the very foundations of the universe, exploring it in depth on the material plane as a master of subtle organic synthesis, but also trying to reach the depths of the psychic as a researcher on Indian culture both in terms of theory and yogic practice. The different sides of her interests are well combined in her teaching activities as a chemistry and physics teacher and yoga instructor. Her activities to a large extent confirm the idea of the unity of microcosm and macrocosm, which lie at the foundations of Indian culture. The presented dissertation aptly synthesises the interests of the PhD student, discussing this topic in a non-standard way.

The PhD thesis consists of 365 pages, divided into an introduction, five chapters, a conclusion, and references. The bibliography includes 178 titles, 14 of them by Bulgarian authors.

The abstract has a volume of 47 pages. It adequately and fully presents the theses, the content, the main results, the conclusions and the contributing points.

The author has 6 publications on the subject, fulfilling and exceeding the minimum national requirements for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor".

2. Scientific contributions

The dissertation examines one almost uninvestigated in Bulgaria topic, namely the concept of anandamaya kosha, as presented by one of the most prominent Indian thinkers, Shankara.

In the introduction, the PhD student clearly presents the goals and tasks, the subject and object of the research, indicates what research methods will be used. The available research works on the topic are comprehensively presented, their results are recognised and the place of the current work with its innovations is very well outlined. The achievements of Bulgarian researchers are also clearly highlighted, which places the research in the context of the high development of the Bulgarian school of Indology.

The first chapter presents in details Shankara's life at the intersection of the historical and the legendary. The various opinions on the exact dating of his life, as well as on the authorship of the works attributed to him, are thoroughly and dialogically examined. The clarification of works with undisputed authorship is necessary for the further analysis.

The second chapter analyses the etymology and semantic history of the concepts ananda and kosha according to the corpora of the Rigveda, Atharaveda, Samaveda, the Brahmanas, the major Upanishads, the Brahmasutras, and the Bhagavadgita. The view of kosha as presented in Sankara's commentaries on Chhandogya Upanishad, Taittiriya Upanishad, Mandukya karika, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and Brahmasutra is analysed in detail. In this chapter, extremely valuable information about the use of the terms in the mentioned works is given and justified conclusions about their original meaning are made. The analysis of these concepts as well as of the concept of panchakosha from its first appearance in the Vedic texts to its use in the discourse of Vedanta provides a good basis for justification of the author's ideas.

The third chapter is the most extensive. It analyses in detail the concept of anandamaya kosha according to Shankara's commentary on the Taittiriya Upanishad. The methods of exegesis used by Sankara are very neatly presented and elaborated, and it is shown how they are used in his commentaries on each verse of the three parts of the work. Antoniya Nacheva compares and analyses various Western translations of Shankara's commentaries, giving and explaining her own opinion in order to clarify nuances of meaning and to support her thesis about Shankara's style and ideas.

The fourth chapter, in a similarly competent manner, examines the concept of anandamaya kosha in Shankara's commentaries on the subject of the 'Blessed One' from Badarayana's Brahmasutra.

The fifth chapter places the topic of anandamayakosha in the context of a comprehensive understanding of the panchakosha or five containers of the self according to Shankara's Advaita Vedanta. In this chapter, based on the analyses and comments of the previous chapters, the main ideas of the thesis are fully developed.

Each chapter ends with a presentation and systematisation of the main findings.

The concluding part of the PhD thesis presents all the conclusions in a clear, orderly and synthesised form.

Thanks to the extensive and rich analysed material, Antoniya Nacheva can confidently conclude that the unity of microcosm and macrocosm in their essence of atman and brahman is a basic postulate in Shankara's non-dualism. The PhD student's hypothesis about the connections between saguna brahman, anandamayakosha, the blissful self and the experience of savikalpa samadhi, as well as its relationship to nirguna brahman, the experience of nivikalpa samadhi and the turiya state, is convincingly presented. The author reasonably and competently discusses the understanding of non-dual philosophy about the

relationship between the path of knowledge and the path of worship, the relationship of knowledge and meditation, and the movement from the manifested to the unmanifested states of being and vice versa. Very valuable is the conclusion that Shankara's seemingly contradictory statements are in fact evidence of his conviction that truth cannot be reached through analytical reasoning alone.

The PhD thesis is an extensive and profound, competent and rich study of an important topic that has both theoretical and practical implications by virtue of the essential connection between theory and yogic practice in Indian thought. It systematises significant research material and dialogically presents new ideas.

I completely agree with the contributing points indicated by the author. They undoubtedly confirm the increasingly authoritative development of Indology in Bulgaria.

3. Conclusion

The presented PhD thesis is an original, creative and contributing work. It meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. Therefore, I will vote YES to award Antoniya Nacheva a scientific and educational degree "Doctor" in professional direction 2.1 Philology, Scientific specialty – Literature of the Peoples of Europe, America, Africa, Asia, and Australia.

19.03.2024

Assoc. Dr. Antoaneta Nikolova

