

REVIEW

of the dissertation titled:

"The Concept of Anandamaya Kosha according to Adi Shankara Acharya",
presented by **Antoniya Ivanova Nacheva**, a regular doctoral student at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, Department of Classical East, specializing in Indology, in the professional field of 2.1. Philology (Indian Literature and Culture), for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. **Milen Ivanov Marinov**, "St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo", Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Philosophical Sciences, appointed as a member of the scientific jury by order RD 38-86/12.02.2024 of the Rector of Sofia University.

Antoniya Ivanova Nacheva is a regular doctoral student in the Doctoral Program "Literature of the Peoples of Europe, America, Africa, Asia and Australia (Indian Literature and Culture)" at the Department of Classical East, Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in the period 2020 - 2023, enrolled by order No.: RD 20-71/17.01.2020 and expelled with the right to defend herself by order RD-20-671/14.3.2023 of the Rector of Sofia University. Currently, she works as a teacher of chemistry, physics, and biology at the First Private Professional High School for Digital Sciences "SoftUni BUDITEL", Sofia. She is engaged in Hatha, Ashtanga yoga, meditation, yoga nidra relaxation, prana healing, yoga philosophy, and yoga anatomy. She speaks English and Russian excellently, understands Sanskrit - according to the information in her autobiography.

The documents and materials presented by the doctoral student - dissertation, abstract, autobiography, several publications on the topic of the dissertation, protocols from successfully passed exams and completed tasks

according to the individual plan, her participation in national and international scientific conferences, seminars, and readings (e.g., 19th scientific conference of non-habilitated teachers and doctoral students at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", May 14, 2022; 2-day International Conference of Hybrid Learning, May 6-7, 2022, Chinmaya Vishwa Vidyapeeth University, Ernakulam, India), correspond in scope and content to the minimum national requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in the respective professional field. For three out of the six presented publications on the topic of the dissertation, there is detailed information in the national online bibliographic system (COBISS), two of which are substantial studies.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, five chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography. Its volume is 365 pages, exceeding the established typewritten standard, of which 350 pages constitute the main text. The bibliography covers 180 titles in English, German, French, Russian, and Bulgarian, directly related or supplementing the stated topic. It could also include some internet sources referenced in the dissertation, which have been utilized in the research in one way or another.

The scientific framework of the dissertation is meticulously crafted. Its focus is on the doctrine of Pancha Kosha (the five sheaths) by Adi Shankaracharya and the philosophical school of Advaita Vedanta founded by him. The subject of the research is one of these five sheaths, the innermost or Anandamaya Kosha (the sheath of bliss). The relevance of the chosen topic is justified by the lack of similar studies on the concept of Kosha in the ancient Indian sacred scriptures such as the Vedas, Brahmanas, major Upanishads, Brahma Sutra by Badarayana, the epic Bhagavad Gita, and the numerous commentaries (Bhashya) by Shankara dedicated to them. The aim of the dissertation is to thoroughly explore the significance of the concept of "Anandamaya Kosha" in the tradition of Advaita

Vedanta and in the vast scholarly legacy of its founder. To achieve this goal, the doctoral student sets herself several tasks: 1. To trace the concepts of Pancha Kosha and Anandamaya Kosha in the first three chapters of the Taittiriya Upanishad and analyze Shankara's commentaries on them. 2. To thoroughly investigate the origin and significance of the concepts of Ananda and Kosha in ancient written records. 3. To analyze Shankara's commentaries on Brahma Sutra 1.1.(6), the chapter dedicated to bliss. 4. To achieve a deeper understanding of each of the five sheaths, especially the last one, Anandamaya Kosha, the realization of which is experienced as Savikalpa Samadhi or union with Saguna Brahman. To fulfill these tasks, the following scientific methods are applied: comparative, etymological, semantic, and discursive analysis, synthesis, deduction, and generalization (p. 13).

The work is very extensive, well-structured, and possesses all the qualities of a modern scientific study. It demonstrates the ability of the doctoral student to analyze, synthesize, compare, and summarize, to extract the most essential from the studied texts, and to interpret them in depth. Impressively, the doctoral student shows excellent knowledge of the works of both domestic and foreign classical and contemporary authors dedicated to Adi Shankara and his commentaries, as well as numerous (authentic and otherwise) works (Ibid.).

CHAPTER ONE (pp. 17 - 56) "The Life of Adi Shankara: Intersection of Historical and Legendary Perspectives". This chapter presents excerpts from his three biographies and the main sources of historical information about his life, as well as a summarized synopsis of his life. An analysis is made of some contemporary studies related to the dating of Shankara - a matter that remains widely debated within the two traditional lineages of his successors (Kanchi Kamakoti Peetha and Sringeri Peetha), in the works of Indian scholars and Western indologists and orientalist. The issue of proving the authenticity of Shankara's authorship is discussed due to the vast number (over 400) of works

attributed to him. A review of contemporary stylometric methods used by P. Hacker, I. Andrijanić, and others in studying and proving Shankara's authorship is also provided.

CHAPTER TWO (pp. 57 - 116) "Etymology and Semantic History of the Concepts of Ananda (ānanda) and Kosha (kośa) in the Vedas: A Brief Overview". In this chapter, an attempt is made to trace the etymology and semantic history of the concepts of Ananda and Kosha. In the first part of the chapter, building upon the sole studies on this matter by P. Olivelle and J.A.B.van Buitenen, the doctoral student discovers and analyzes additional uses of the word Ananda in the corpus of the Vedas, Brahmanas, major Upanishads, Brahma Sutras, and Bhagavad Gita. The second part of the same chapter explores the etymology and semantics of the word Kosha in the aforementioned texts, as well as in the Gaudapada-karika, Shankara's commentaries on the major Upanishads, Brahma Sutras, and Bhagavad Gita. It chronologically traces the emergence of the concept of Pancha Kosha and attempts to analyze its etymology until its usage in the discourse of Vedanta as a repository of Brahman.

CHAPTER THREE (pp. 117 - 250) "The Concept of Anandamaya Kosha (ānandamayakośa) According to Shankara's Commentaries on the Taittiriya Upanishad (Taittirīya Upaniṣad)" constitutes the core of the dissertation. It is divided into several subchapters. Initially, the structure and content of the Taittiriya Upanishad are presented, followed by an overview of contemporary studies dedicated to it, and finally, the essence of the exegesis methods used by Shankara in his commentaries on this text are described. In the first main subchapter, the structure of the second chapter of the TU - Anandavalli is examined, followed by a discussion of each lesson (anuvaka), and an analysis of Shankara's commentaries on it. Excerpts from other Upanishads, cited by Shankara to clarify the meaning of TU, are also analyzed. The Anandavalli chapter contains the essence of the doctrine of the five koshas as a description of

the five atmanas, the passage through which, according to the understandings of the Upanishad text, is akin to an inner ritual leading to an unchanging state of bliss - that of unifying all aspects of the Self and all experiences from the external world. The second part of the third chapter discusses Bhriguvalli, in which Varuna is presented, who gives instructions to his son Bhrigu on how, through asceticism, often understood as knowledge in the Vedanta discourse, to attain and experience each kosha and, having attained it, to understand that Brahman is not that and to continue until achieving the blissful self. In each anuvaka, the chapter and commentaries are re-examined, highlighting the main philosophical messages and instructions, and tracing Shankara's exegetical methods. The third part of the second chapter of this dissertation is dedicated to Shikshavalli, the first chapter of TU, explaining the phonetics and proper pronunciation of words in the text as preparatory for Brahman-knowledge meditation on the sacred words, which sound and remain alive in the body of the adept, to connect him with the directions of the world and the deities, constructing a new sacred order - Rita, in him and the world.

CHAPTER FOUR (pp. 251 - 295) "The Concept of Anandamaya Kosha in Shankara's Commentaries on the Topic of 'Bliss' (*Ānandamayādhīkaraṇa*) from the Brahma Sutra (Brahmasūtra 1.1.6) by Badarayana". This chapter examines the structure of the Brahma Sutra, as well as its fundamental philosophical messages, which are foundational for the Advaita Vedanta school. Attention is drawn to its authorship, which is also the subject of scholarly debates. The connection between the older ritualistic Mimamsa (Purva Mimamsa) and Vedanta (Uttara Mimamsa) is explored, along with the place and role of Shankara, his disciples, and the Advaita school in this context. The method of exegesis used by Shankara in his commentaries on the Brahma Sutra is presented - the five-step dialogical format of debate between a representative of the school and its opponent. A comparative analysis is then conducted on Shankara's commentaries on the topic of "Bliss"

from Brahma Sutra 1.1.(6) and on some clarifying texts from Anandavalli of the Taittiriya Upanishad.

CHAPTER FIVE (pp. 296 - 340) "The Five Sheaths of the Self (pañcakośa) according to Advaita Vedanta of Shankara". In this final chapter of the dissertation, a brief overview of the concepts of the five sheaths is presented. The identification with the sheaths keeps the individual in ignorance regarding their true nature, which is immutable bliss (ānanda). Overcoming inner ignorance involves discerning from the limiting adjuncts (sheaths) through the apophatic principle of "not this, not this" (neti, neti). The concepts of the inner witness (ātman) and the vital consciousness of ātman, ātmachaitanya, are discussed. Overcoming identification with the sheaths through the paths of knowledge and self-knowledge leads to the experience of ātman, which is immutable bliss. The exploration in this chapter is based on the poorly explored works Atmabodha and Vivekachudamani, traditionally attributed to Shankara; on his commentaries on the chapter on bliss in the Taittiriya Upanishad, on the chapter on the Blissful Self in the Brahma Sutras, and excerpts from the principal Upanishads.

The conclusion provides a summary of the research conducted in each chapter and the main conclusions, highlighting those that are novel for Indology, the contributory points, and the directions for future research.

I want to draw the attention of the doctoral candidate to certain grammatical peculiarities when rendering names from foreign languages into Bulgarian:

According to the phonetic spelling principle, after the vowel 'a,' 'й' (pronounced as 'y') is usually written, not 'и,' unless 'и' is stressed (e.g., 'адвайта' instead of 'адваита').

In accordance with the peculiarities of the Bulgarian language, if there is no morphemic connection between two elements, the duplication of consonants

'π' (p), 'τ' (t), 'η' (n), 'ι' (l), 'δ' (d), etc., should be avoided when spelling names. The same applies to the duplication of vowels.

The names of all parts of Vedic (Shruti) and post-Vedic (Smriti) Sanskrit literature are not proper nouns but rather common nouns (classes of objects) and should be written in lowercase. The same applies to the names of orthodox (astika) and non-orthodox (nastika) philosophical systems of India.

Attention should also be paid to the transcription of proper names from foreign languages into Bulgarian, with the clear understanding that the author bears full responsibility for this before the readers encountering them for the first time.

I recommend to the doctoral candidate not to rely too heavily on authorities, especially concerning translated literature, and to compare translations in different languages in order to gain the most complete and accurate understanding of the text. F. Schleiermacher (On the Different Methods of Translating) reveals the paradox of translation by pointing out the two paths through which the translator can connect the writer with the reader: the translator must either lead the reader to the writer or lead the writer to the reader – otherwise, the writer and the reader may never meet. I leave the choice of which path to follow to her.

We notice certain inaccuracies in the use of certain philosophical terms. In the dissertation (pages 58, 59, 112, 347) and in one of her publications ("Etymology and Semantic History of the Term 'Ananda' (Bliss) in Ancient Indian Literature", pages 3, 5, 6, 25), the doctoral candidate describes Brahman as "transcendental" instead of "transcendent" reality. However, these terms are not synonymous. Moreover, Kant describes as transcendental that knowledge which is possible before experience - a priori. It is opposed to the transcendent - that which is impossible even a priori, such as knowledge of God, of the immortality of the soul; which is fundamentally inaccessible to reason and can only be the

object of faith. The transcendental is beyond experience in the sense that it precedes it; its aim is to make knowledge possible through experience.

In several places in the dissertation (pages 16, 147, 296, 321) and in one of her publications ("The Five Sheaths of the Self (pañcakośa) according to Shankara's Advaita Vedanta," page 329), the doctoral candidate uses the word "apophatic" and its various word forms. From the context, it is understood that the term refers to "apophatic" (Greek ἀποφατικός – negative). Apophatic theology seeks to express the absolute God by rejecting all descriptions relating to Him. On this occasion, I will quote the German evangelical theologian Theodor Christlieb: "But if even the thoughts of the old Hindoos did sometimes rise from the contemplation of various deified natural phenomena, such as the dawn, the lightnings, and the storms, etc., to that of the one primal cause of all things, this cause was regarded not as the One God, but as an impersonal undefined existence, of which all that could be said was, that it is not what it is."¹ These words correspond to what is stated in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad III, 9, 26, that the doctrine of Brahman is *neti, neti* (cf. Marinov, M. Vedic Teachings, p. 74).

I would like to express disagreement with the assertion made by the doctoral candidate that the monism of the Upanishads is similar in its fundamental philosophical idea to Plato's monism (Abstract, p. 31, 38). The same claim is made in one of her publications, which is still in press ("Commentaries (bhāṣya) of Adi Shankaracharya on the topic of bliss (ānanda)," p. 3, 5), and in the dissertation itself (p. 43, p. 268).

However, Plato's essential doctrine is dualism. Monism is a single idea in his esoteric works. Plato's myth of the world's creation is based on the dichotomy of the eternally being, which always is, and the eternally becoming, which never is. To which of these does the World Soul belong? Phaedrus assigns it to the eternally being, calling it the "unbegotten," while Timaeus assigns it to the

¹ Th. Christlieb, *Modern Doubt and Christian Belief*, p. 77.

becoming, stating that it was created by the Demiurge. Its creation is described as a mixture of the unchanging (the One) and the becoming, the variable (the Indefinite Dyad). Here, some similarities with the views of later Vedanta traditions, such as Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita and Madhva's Dvaita Vedanta, can be observed. These are the subsequent stages in the development of the doctrine of bheda-abheda (the doctrine of identity and difference, according to which Brahman exists simultaneously in two aspects: as immanent in the world and souls, in inseparable unity with them; and as transcendent to the world, absolutely different from it).

As original contributions in the doctoral thesis, the following should be noted: detailed analyses of Shankara's commentaries on the Taittiriya Upanishad and the Brahma Sutras, tracing the exegetical methods used and the main philosophical ideas related to the repository of bliss and the paths for its attainment in Advaita Vedanta philosophy; semantic analysis of the concept of kosha in the Vedas, Brahmanas, Brahma Sutras, and major Upanishads, as well as in Shankara's commentaries; tracing the etymology of the concept of panchakosha in the mentioned sources and the hypothesis that it is first used by Gaudapada in his Gaudapada-karika and subsequently introduced by Shankara in his commentaries on the Taittiriya Upanishad and Brahma Sutras; some new additions to the studies of Olivelle and Buitenen on the semantic history of the concept of ananda in Vedic scriptures; systematization of studies on the lives, dating, and authorship of Shankara in Bulgarian.

The abstract has been prepared according to the requirements, accurately reflecting the main content of the doctoral thesis and summarizing the research findings.

The critical remarks and recommendations I have made are intended solely to support the future scientific research of the doctoral candidate.

The critical remarks and recommendations made by me are solely aimed at supporting the future academic research of the doctoral candidate. Based on the presented material so far, I confidently give my positive evaluation of the conducted research, as presented in the above-reviewed dissertation, abstract, achieved results, publications, and contributions. I propose to the esteemed academic jury to award Antonia Ivanova Nacheva the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional direction 2.1. Philology (Indian literature and culture).

Date: March 27, 2024

Veliko Tarnovo

Reviewer:

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