

Opinion

by Prof. Dr. Ivan Iliev Kamburov

of a dissertation for the award of an educational and scientific degree "doctor"

Developed at: SU "St. Kl. Ohridski", Faculty of Classical and New Philologies, Department of
"Classical East"

Professional direction: 2.1. Philology,

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Author: Antonia Ivanova Nacheva

Topic: "The concept of anandamaya kosha according to Adi Shankara acharya "

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

Antonia Ivanova Nacheva was enrolled by order: RD 20-71/17.01.2020 as a full-time doctoral student at the "Classical East" department of the SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" and awarded with the right of defense on 10.02.2023. The confirmed topic of the dissertation work is " The concept of anandamaya kosha according to Adi Shankara acharya " with academic supervisor Prof. Dr. Milena Bratoeva. The training in the doctoral program is carried out according to an approved individual plan. The doctoral student has successfully passed the exams provided for in the Individual Study Plan. The dissertation work has been discussed and proposed for defense by the "Classical East" department. We note that no procedural violations were committed and all provisions in the Regulations for the Terms and Conditions for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

The presented text is interdisciplinary and was carried out through the prism of the philological approach and in the presence of the philosophical reception regarding the subject of research.

The dissertation, in my opinion, has an original character, not only because in our scientific thought no research has been conducted on this topic, as well as due to the fact of the theoretical relevance of the subject of research, but also due to the exemplary way of realizing this project. Unfortunately, in the form of an opinion, I could hardly present the extremely positive attitude towards this text, which brings me back to my ten-year studies devoted to the philosophy of the Indian Hegel - Shankara .

We would not be wrong if we assume that Shankara is perhaps the brightest representative in the history of Indian thought up to this point. He is an outstanding religious philosopher, poet-mystic, orthodox theologian and reformer, founder of monasteries and itinerant preacher, brilliant polemicist and traditionalist. It is no coincidence that with his more than 330 texts interpreting the "triple canon" of Vedanta and created in only 32 years of life, they formed the concept of the philosophical system - Advaita-Vedanta , the most influential school in Indian thought and led to the theoretical overcoming of Buddhism and the displacement of its influence outside India.

Shankara 's 8th century Advaita-Vedanta (lit. non-dual completion of the Vedas) is a typical example of a complete system of absolute monism that ends the creative period of Indian philosophy. Shankara carries out an analysis of the cardinal idea of liberation (moksha) for Indian philosophical thought and offers a solution opposite to the Buddhist " atmavada " which for Indian culture turns out to be, if not final, then at any rate fundamental.

His philosophical approach proposes the achievement of liberation by semantic means - all states of the psyche, which are presented as subjective experiences, are consistently described with the help of semantic rules (vichara), whereby mental phenomena are not signs of states of consciousness, but objectified by thus they are something external and alien to consciousness.

The paradox is that in this system, unlike Buddhism, the "state" of liberation is not achieved, but clarified, since liberation always "is", it is an existing being, but it must be realized. But the description of these states by the traditional means of reliable knowledge is a source of untrue knowledge, and therefore a special kind of revelation of Brahman is introduced into the Vedanta - " aparoksha-anubhuti " ("absent attainment", that is " anubhava " immediate experience).

The essence of this process of discourse is that consciousness distinguishes its own reflective procedures from the objectively corresponding means of expression until they are exhausted, as a result of which one reaches an exit from linguistic structures, and then consciousness moves to the realization of true "knowledge" in the higher states (abhiudaya) and moksha but in another type of "physics".

The dissertation analyzes precisely this transition, the movement of the mind to the higher states passing through the corresponding "layers" of the " panchakosha " sheaths, of the Atman and in particular to the "gateway to Brahman" - the anandamaya kosha or the culminating point of enhanced bliss. The doctoral student researches not only the semantic but also the philosophical- hermeneutic use of the concept " anandamaya kosha" in part of Shankara's commentaries on the main Upanishads (Taittiriya upanishad) and of the Brahma Sutra 1.1.(6).

The educational preparation of the doctoral student has a significant influence on the quality and significance of this theoretical reflection - in addition to her bachelor's degree in biotechnology, two master's degrees, and above all, in our opinion, her not only specializations, trainings and retreats , but yoga and Vedanta practices at one of the most - famous contemporary Indian teachers from 2008 till now.

The text of the doctorate has passed an anti -plagiarism check, according to the accepted rules of the University of St. Cl . Ohridski", which confirms the original nature of the study.

Structurally, the dissertation consists of an introduction, five chapters, a conclusion and a bibliography. The volume of the study is 365 pages, of which 351 pages are basic scientific text. The bibliography covers 178 titles, of which 14 are by Bulgarian authors.

The methodological scheme for conducting a scientific study has been correctly constructed and defined . The topicality of the topic has been revealed and substantiated against the background of already carried out studies on this problem, which are not so many, and in this sense the specific dissertation complements not only the absence of such research in Bulgarian Indology , but expands the available international ones.

The object of the research is the doctrine of panchakosha describing the five receptacles of the soul in Shankara 's commentaries , and one of them is chosen as the subject - the anandamaya kosha, the innermost of the five sheaths of the Atman (p. 12).

The main goal that the doctoral student sets for himself and which he analytically achieved is to reveal in depth the meaning of the concept of anandamaya kosha in Shankara 's commentaries and in the doctrine of the Advaita school of philosophy Vedanta . (p. 10)

The research tasks are also correctly formulated.

The scientific methods used to achieve the goal are correct and correspond to the tasks and the analyzed text. To those indicated, I would also add the historiosophical method used by the doctoral student , as well as the hermeneutic approach which is applied precisely in accordance with the semantic criteria introduced by the doctoral student in relation to the different types of texts. The development has been refined from a linguistic point of view.

An abstract in a volume of 49 pages is also presented, which follows the structure of the dissertation and presents its content in a synthetic form, as well as the scientific contributions specific to the research area and a list of publications on the topic of the dissertation work. The doctoral student has six published articles on the subject of the research, with which he has fulfilled the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of ZRASRB and, respectively, according to Art. 24, para. 1 of the Regulations for the implementation of the RSARB.

2. Scientific contributions.

At the very beginning of her analysis, Antonia Nacheva accurately recapitulates one of the controversial issues for all ancient Indian philosophers - life, creativity, authorship in the case of Hell Shankara through the intersection between reality, mythologizing, fitting into tradition, etc. (pp. 17-53).

I consider the specific analysis, both from a philological and a religious-philosophical point of view, the etymology and semantics of the two main categories of ananda and kosha in the Vedas (p.57-117) to be a proven contribution, which in such a detailed classification version according to these texts of Shankara not implemented. According to Antonia Nacheva, in the Upanishads , the basket acquires the meaning of a container internal to man. In Chh U 3.15.1 and 3.15.3 it is "chest," "coffin," "treasury," which in its cavity is the air; antariksha contains atman - as a protected and hidden treasure. In TU 1.4 kosha is used in the expression brahmaṇaḥ kośo ' si medhayā pihitaḥ , after " Thou art the shell of brahmin veiled with worldly knowledge" Shastri (1923: 68) or "abode of brahmin who is the supreme self".

It is accepted that in a wider context kosha is used in the sense of a sheath, although the PhD student finds that from the Vedas to Shankara 's commentaries kosha is understood as a container that contains wealth rather than a sheath. The textual and semantic fact established by the doctoral student is valuable, that BSShbh 1.1.19, as well as in TUShbh 2.5, asserts that anandamaya atman is not brahman , and in this context Shankara uses the expression "the succession of sheaths" in his commentary on BS 1.4.14 and 1.4.15 as well. Based on Bötling and Roth's dictionary, the different connotations of the basket are ascertained, which "tend to contain rather than to cover", "a place for storing valuable things", and Deussen 's translation is

"is a receptacle of Brahman " (TU 1.4) (brahmaṇaḥ kośo ' si medhayā pihitaḥ : "is the abode of brahman who is the supreme self").

The fundamental question and assumption that the doctoral student asks himself is whether the meaning of the basket used in this passage gave Shankara reason to call these bodies atman ?! The essential point is the textual analysis which has been carried out in relation to TU 2-5 in which the translation presents the soul's "abodes" or "sheaths", and that these are defined by means of a word combination with the noun atman : annamaya atman , pranamaya atman or as annamaya , pranamaya etc. a term describing the five receptacles. (p.98)

It is correct to doubt whether the concept of kosha was introduced for the first time by Shankara or by his teacher Gaudapada (the five receptacles in ManU 3.11). The doctoral student demonstrated to us a precise philological and semantic analysis of the concepts of kosha and ananda , showing and proving the interpretive invariance of the categories in ancient Indian philosophy.

The decision about the semantic meaning of the category "basket", for example, can be reached depending on the specifics of an analysis of Shankara 's philosophical reflection in the relevant text, which has a certain addressee and specifics (for example, the commentary of TU and BS) can be interpreted at different levels transcendental , ontological , phenomenological (eg bimba - pratibimba -vada, teaching about the image and proto-image ; while the atman is located in the system body-reason-feelings, complete unity of Brahman and Atman is not possible , and their relations are similar image (pratibimba) and reflection of the proto-image (bimba); or to the two types of interpretation of Brahman (saguna and nirguna) for example. In each of these approaches the connotation will have a different semantic horizon, and hence the different type of reception. Why, because Shankara is not only an outstanding philosopher-theoretician, but also an authoritative religious figure, as well as a talented preacher of his teachings.

The question is in the context of the interpretation of the concepts "kosha" and " ananda " - as philosophical categories (padartha) of self-reflection or as empirical psychosomatic structures, approaches that the doctoral student clarifies in the different chapters of the dissertation. In this case, the main concept is Atman . The question is, what kind of Atman is involved and can the Atman-Sakshin be placed somewhere, in a casket', a 'container' for example? or be shrouded, covered, hidden, etc.? Why?

Because the unity of the Atman as an eternal and unchangeable reality is opposed not only by the differences of the manifest world but also by the diversity of the psychic properties of the personality, because in the Indian orthodox tradition the psyche is also a constituent part of the natural world. In this sense, it is through the sheaths that Atman "affects" the various spaces of being . The Atman -Brahman as sakshin (not the individual Self- Atman as a psychosomatic unity) figuratively speaking "lies" beyond the Anandamaya kosha the subtlest body (the body of bliss), which is also an illusion as it is separate from the Atman and associated with the karanasharira .

This Atman is transcendent to the koshis , it is " sva-pradhanatvam " (independent self-essential basis) and is covered by them, not in a "coffin" in which it is rather antahkarana . It is the distinction of Atman as a pure being from the transitory and changeable states of the body and psyche that is reflected in the teaching of the "five Atmans " which are as if "nested" into each other TU - " panchakosha ". These "bodies" (basket) are layers and rather "cases" which,

in our opinion, is more semantically related to the ontological meaning and functions of these sheaths in which the Atman of the living being is, as it were, "clothed". And since they are envelopes of this inner atman, they are often, on the principle of transference, purely figuratively named "atmans" or "inner essences, the inner self of the individual."

The innermost "case" is ananda -maya - atman which is filled with bliss. This last "Atman" - anandamaya -kosha (consisting of bliss) which is presented as a set of mental states that occur in a state of deep dreamless sleep and is characterized by deep calmness is interpreted depending on the context of use - from one on the other hand, it is often simultaneously presented as the intimate, thinnest covering and also as the innermost essence of the atman. E.g. in TU Shankara explains that the "Atman of Bliss" is the innermost of all "layers" (koshas) therefore, bliss is the result of which knowledge and action are undertaken for its sake.

It is about two levels - of ananda (bliss) which is in the Upanishads and Brahman which is ananda in its essence. The second, absolutely transcendent level of ananda "penetrates" all layers, including the layer - the basket of bliss, which is a component of the empirical self, into which the intellect - buddhi, which perceives positive states, "enters". In addition, ananda is also found in profane joy - the birth of a child, the achievement of the desired, etc.

According to Shankara the characteristic of Brahman in its transcendental aspect e.g. in BrhU he cannot know his bliss, if this is possible there is a split (of subject and object of knowledge) which contradicts the unity of the Absolute. Brahman does not know ananda, the liberated cannot know ananda, as he is devoid of body and cognitive organs. As an example of a different usage, we will point out that in Atmabodha this context is different.

All these features have been examined and interpreted by the doctoral student, which shows that Antonia Nacheva not only knows the specifics of the most complex philosophical system of India - Shankara's Advaita-Vedanta, but also that she is a precise researcher who can bring her practical skills under theoretical analysis, which those familiar with this type of problem know that in most cases it is not just difficult, but even impossible.

With this, we find that the dissertation's contributions are theoretically and logically correctly derived.

I have no joint publications with the PhD student.

I express a wish to the doctoral student that this text be published as a monographic study with the conviction that it will take its rightful place not only in Bulgarian Indology, but also in scientific thought dedicated to Indian spirituality.

3. Conclusion.

The dissertation contains scientific results that represent an original contribution to science and meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB and the relevant Regulations of SU "St. Kl. Ohridski". The presented materials and dissertation results fully comply with the specific requirements of the Regulations of the SU for the application of the ZRASRB.

The dissertation shows that PhD student Antonia Ivanova Nacheva possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty "Literature of the

Peoples of Europe, America, Africa, Asia and Australia" (Indian Literature and Culture) by demonstrating qualities and skills for independent conduct of scientific research.

Positively evaluating the qualities of the presented dissertation work, I propose to the scientific jury, which I respect, to award the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional direction 2.1. Philology, by Antonia Ivanova Nacheva, and I will definitely vote for it.

Sofia, 25.03.2024

Prof. Dr.:.....
(Iv. Kamburov)