

## Śaṅkarācārya and the *Taittirīyopaniṣad* (with reference to his *bhāṣyas*)

- Vijay Pandya

The *Taittirīyopaniṣad* (T.U.) is one of those few Upaniṣads which have exercised a tremendous influence upon the course of Indian philosophy over the centuries. It is this Upaniṣad which has formed the core of the *Brahmasūtra* available at present along with some other classical Upaniṣads. Some of the sūtras of the extant *Brahmasūtra* have been based upon this upaniṣad. The very second sūtra जन्माद्यस्य यतः । (1-1-2) has the passage from this Upaniṣad i.e. यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते, येन जातानि जीवन्ति, यत्प्रयन्ति, अभिसंविशन्ति, तद्विजिज्ञासस्व, तद्ब्रह्म । for its *viṣayavākya*. The whole of the *Ānandamayādhikaraṇa* (1-1-12to 19) has the *ānandamīmāṃsā* of this upaniṣad as the basis.

Then, there is one theory according to which there were various *Brahmasūtras* belonging to the various Upaniṣads, the *Taittirīyopaniṣad* likely being one of them.<sup>1</sup>

Śaṅkarācārya was not to miss the enormous philosophic significance of this Upaniṣad, as is evidenced from the fact that he has quoted the T.U. in his *Brahmasūtraśāṅkarabhāṣya* (B.S.S.B.)142 times.<sup>2</sup> He has also written a commentary on the T.U.

Here, before we go deeper into the discussion, it should be made clear that, we assume both the *bhāṣyas* viz. B.S.S.B. and the *Taittirīyopaniṣadbhāṣya* to be authentic from the pen of Śaṅkarācārya, though occasionally the doubts have been raised about them. Scholars like Deussen think that the second interpretation of the *Ānandamayādhikaraṇa* is an interpolation. Similarly the T. U. *bhāṣya* is also authentic as Sureśvarācārya has commented upon it and there are sub-commentaries upon the *Vārtika*, a commentary by Sureśvarācārya on the T. U.

*Bhāṣya*.<sup>3</sup> It may also be noted that the second interpretation of the *Ānandamayādhikaraṇa* is quite in consonance with T. U. *Bhāṣya*.

If we want to understand Śaṅkarācārya's philosophical position towards the T.U., then, his *bhāṣyas* on *Ānandamayādhikaraṇa* (1-1-12 to 19) of the *Brahmasūtra* and the relevant portion of the T.U. are indispensable.

We know that Śaṅkarācārya has given two interpretations of the *Ānandamayādhikaraṇa*. The relevant portion of the T. U. which has been taken up as a discussing point in the *Brahmasūtra* begins as follows :

तस्माद्वा एतस्मादात्मन आकाश सम्भूतः । आकाशाद्वायुः । वायोरग्निः ।  
अग्नेरपः । अद्भ्यः पृथ्वी । पृथिव्या ओषधयः । ओषधीभ्योऽन्नम् ।  
अन्नात्पुरुषः । स वा एष पुरुषोऽन्नरसमय तस्येदमेव शिरः । अयं दक्षिणः  
पक्षः । अयमुत्तरः पक्षः । अयमात्मा । इदं पुच्छं प्रतिष्ठा ।

From the Ātman, the ether proceeded, from ether, the wind, from the wind the fire, from the fire the waters, from waters the earth, from earth the plants, from plants food, from food man, he is made up of food.

And then in the similar fashion the T. U. proceeds further. In this self of food dwells inside another self of breath (*Prāṇamaya*), again in the self of breath, there is self of mind (*manomaya*). Further in the self of mind is the self of understanding (*viññānamaya*) and in the self of understanding is the inner self which consists of bliss (*ānandamaya*).

Now the crucial point of discussion in the *Brahmasūtra* and in the T.U.*bhāṣya* is this self consisting of bliss, *Ānandamaya*.

Who is this *Ānandamaya* ?

Śaṅkarācārya puts forth two interpretations in his commentary on the *Ānandamayādhikaraṇa*.

According to the first interpretation put forth by Śaṅkarācārya,

*Ānandamaya* is Brahman.

According to the second interpretation which some scholars like Deussen have dubbed as an interpolation, (but we believe it to be as authentic as the first one), *Ānandamaya* is not Brahman. It is one of the five sheaths, as Śāṅkarācārya says in his B.S.S.B., तद्विजिज्ञापयिष्यैवात्रमयादय आनन्दमयपर्यन्ताः पञ्चकोशा कल्पयन्ते ।<sup>5</sup> The five sheaths extending from the sheath of food upto the sheath of bliss are merely introduced for the purpose of setting forth the knowledge of Brahman.

Similar interpretation is offered in the T.U.*bhāṣya*, and in the T.U.*bhāṣya* by Śāṅkarācārya the interpretation resembling that of the first interpretation in the B.S.S.B., is nowhere in sight. It is most interesting and edifying to see how Śāṅkarācārya fortifies the thought that *Ānandamaya* is not Brahman. The *bhāṣya* in the Upaniṣad runs as follows :

अन्नमयादिभ्य आनन्दमयान्तेभ्य आत्मभ्योऽभ्यन्तरतमं ब्रह्म विद्यया प्रत्यगात्मत्वेन दिदर्शयिषुः शास्त्रं अविद्याकृतपञ्चकोशापनयनेन अनेकतुषकोद्रववितुषीकरणेनैव तदन्तर्गत तण्डुलान्तरस्तौति । तस्माद्वा एतस्मादन्नरसमयादित्यादि ।<sup>6</sup>

Brahman is the inmost of all selves beginning from the physical sheath and ending with the blissful one. The scripture starts with the text तस्मात् वा एतस्मात् अन्नरसमयात् etc. with a view to revealing through knowledge that Brahman as the indwelling self by following a process of eliminating the five sheaths just as rice is extracted from the grain called *Kodrava* that has many husks.<sup>7</sup>

Thus *Ānandamaya* is not Brahman and it is one of the sheaths which one has to transcend in order to realise Brahman.

The T.U. *bhāṣya* is running close parallel to the second interpretation offered by the great ācārya in his B.S.S.B.

As Śāṅkarācārya was writing an elaborate *bhāṣya* on the T.U., he makes some other subtler points which he did not mention in his *bhāṣya* on the *Ānandamayadhikaraṇa* in the

*Brahmasūtra.*

We know that in the T.U., after *Annāmaya* comes *Prāṇāmaya* and so on. At this place, Śāṅkarācārya in his T.U. *bhāṣya* observes एवं मनोमयादिभिः पूर्वपूर्वव्यापिभिरुत्तरोत्तैः सूक्ष्मैरानन्दमयान्तैरकाशादिभूता-  
रब्धैरविद्याकृतैरगत्मवन्तः सर्वे प्राणिनः । तथा स्वाभाविकेनाप्याकाशादिकारणेन नित्येना-  
विकृतेन सर्वगतेन सत्यज्ञानान्तलक्षणेन पञ्चकोशातिगेन सर्वात्मना आत्मवन्तः ।<sup>8</sup>

Similarly all creatures are possessed of selves by virtue being provided with the bodies beginning with the mental and ending with the blissful which successively pervade the preceding ones and which are made up of the elements, beginning with *ākāśa*, that are the creations of ignorance. So also they are blessed with the self by the Self that is common to all, self-existent, the source of ether etc., everlasting, unchanging, all-pervading, defined as truth, knowledge and infinite and beyond five sheaths.<sup>9</sup>

Further one more finer point Śāṅkarācārya makes in the T.U. *bhāṣya* which he did not make in his *bhāṣya* on the *Ānandamayādhikaraṇa*.

संक्रमणाच्च 'आनन्दमयमात्मानमुपसंक्रामति' इति वक्ष्यति । कार्यात्मनां च संक्रमणमनात्मनां दृष्टम् । संक्रमणकर्मत्वेन चानन्दमय आत्मा श्रूयते । यथात्रमयमात्मानमुपसंक्रामतीति । न च आत्मन एवोपसंक्रमणम् । अधिकारविरोधाद-  
संभवाच्च । न ह्यात्मनैवात्मन उपसंक्रमणं संभवति । स्वात्मनि भेदाभावात् । आत्मभूतं च ब्रह्म संक्रमितुः ।<sup>10</sup>

This also follows from the fact of *Samkramaṇa* (attaining). The text will say 'He attains the self made of bliss. (T.U.2-5) and things that are non-selves and effects are seen to be attained by others. Moreover the self made of bliss is mentioned in the text as the object of the act of attaining just as it is the *annamayam ātmānam upasamkrāmti*, he attains the self made of food. Nor is the (unconditioned) Self attainable since such an attainment is repugnant to the trend of the passage and it is logically impossible. For the (unconditioned)

Self cannot be attained by the Self in as much as there is no split within the self and Brahman is the Self, of the attainer.<sup>11</sup>

So this argument of attaining is a very subtle one, and additional too, to the points made in the BSSB by Śaṅkarācārya. The great ācārya offered two interpretations of which he elaborated the second interpretation and the first one he altogether ignored in the T.U.*bhāṣya*.

About the second interpretation it may be stated that the ācārya was not wavering between *ānanda* and *ānandi* so to say as Belvalkar and Ranade seem to be averring.<sup>12</sup> We may, in fact, conjecture that, the first interpretation was handed down to Śaṅkarācārya by the tradition and he felt bounden by the tradition to mention the interpretation of which he himself was little convinced.

The second interpretation is consistent with his overall relentless pursuit of absolute, rigorous unflinching non-dualism and which gets reflected in the T.U.*bhāṣya*. In fact, as we could mark, in the T.U.*bhāṣya*, he is more original, vigorous and incisive unshackled by the tradition.

Regarding Śaṅkarācārya's *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣadbhāṣya*, Daniel Ingalls has observed that Śaṅkarācārya breaks with traditional interpretations frequently whereas in the *Brahmasūtra-bhāṣya*, he is very careful not to depart from the tradition.<sup>13</sup> This observation, I think, is applicable to T.U.*bhāṣya* by Śaṅkarācārya.

So from the forgoing discussion, it would be seen that Śaṅkarācārya sets aside that interpretation which connects Brahman with *Ānandamaya*. I may venture even further, that had it been in Śaṅkarācārya's power, he would even have rejected the term *Ānanda*, devoid of any suffix like *mayat* which obviously, under no circumstances, he could admit.

Tradition sanctified by usage and hallowed by time was too overwhelming for him to reject the term *ānanda*. In support of this statement, it may be mentioned that, in the whole of literature by Śaṅkarācārya the most frequent phrase in the Indian philosophy, i.e. *succidānanda* taken as a whole does not occur. Individually *sat*, *cit* and even *ānanda* did occur in the literature by the ācārya, but as a definition of Brahman and even otherwise by way of inserting such phrases, this phrase *succidānanda*, is conspicuous by its absence.

So, as with *ānandamaya*, Śaṅkarācārya considered *ānanda* epithet of Brahman as qualifying it. The epithet *ānanda* goes against the tenor of his philosophical strain and despite Śaṅkarācārya, in the Post-Śankara period the epithet and the phrase *succidānanda* have continued to reign unchallenged.

Though there is no direct evidence to prove it but, according to Śaṅkarācārya, it appears *ānanda* would bring the worldly content which would pollute, so to say, Śaṅkarācārya's Brahman.

And perhaps (not sure) the connotations of the word *ānanda* contextually used in the classical Upaniṣadic literature, had strengthened his aversion to the word *ānanda* being applied to Brahman.

It is not very infrequently that in the Upaniṣads the word *ānanda* has a sexual connotation. To point out a few :

In the *Bṛhadaranyakopaniṣad* (2-4-11) it is stated that  
 स यथा सर्वासामपां समुद्र एकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां स्पर्शानां त्वगेकायनम्,  
 एवं सर्वेषां गन्धानां नासिके एकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां रसानां जिह्वैकायनम्, एवं  
 सर्वेषां रूपाणां चक्षुरेकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां शब्दानां श्रोत्रमेकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां  
 सङ्कल्पानां मन एकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां विद्यानां हृदयमेकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां कर्मणां  
 हस्तावेकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषामान्दानामुपस्थ एकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां विसर्गाणां पायुरेकायनम्,  
 एवं सर्वेषामध्वन्तं पादावेकायनम् एवं सर्वेषां वेदानां वागेकायनम् । (B.U.2-  
 4-11)

It is - as of all waters the uniting point is the sea, so of all touches the uniting point is the skin, so of all tastes the uniting point is the tongue, of all smells the uniting point is the nostrils, so of all forms the uniting point is eyes, so of all sounds the uniting point is the ear, so of all intention (*sankalpa*) the uniting point is the mind (*manas*), so of knowledge the uniting point is the heart, so of all acts (*karma*) the uniting point is the hand, so of all pleasures (*ānanda*) the uniting point is the generative organ (*evam sarveśāmānandānām upastha ekāyanam*) so of all evacuations the uniting point is the anus, so of all journeys the uniting point is the feet, so of all Vedas, the uniting point is speech.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly in the *Praśnopaniṣad* a question is asked : In whom, pray, are all things established ? (कस्मिन्नु सर्वे सम्प्रतिष्ठिता भवन्तीति) And in the answer to this question are supplied couples having the cause-effect relationships. As birds resort to a tree for a resting place, even so, O friend (Pippalāda addressing to Gārgya, a questioner) it is to the Supreme Soul (*ātman*) that everything here resorts.

स यथा सोम्य वयांसि वासोवृक्षं सम्प्रतिष्ठन्ते । एवं ह वै तत्सर्वं पर आत्मनि सम्प्रतिष्ठते । पृथिवी च पृथिवीमात्रा चापश्चापोमात्रा च तेजश्च तेजोमात्रा च वायुश्च वायुमात्रा चाकाशश्चाकाशमात्रा च चक्षुश्च द्रष्टव्यं च श्रोत्रं च श्रोतव्यं च घ्राणं च घ्रातव्यं च रसश्च रसयितव्यं च त्वक् च स्पर्शयितव्यं च वाक् च वक्तव्यं च हस्तौ चादातव्यं चोपस्थश्चानन्दयितव्यं च पायुश्च विसर्जितव्यं च पादौ च गन्तव्यं च मनश्च मन्तव्यं च बुद्धिश्च बोद्धव्यं चाहङ्गाश्चाहङ्कर्तव्यं च चित्तं च चेतयितव्यं च तेजश्च विद्योतयितव्यं च प्राणश्च विधारयितव्यं च ।

(*Praśnopaniṣad* 4-87, 8)

Earth and the elements of earth, water and the elements of water, heat (*tejas*) and the elements of heat, wind and the elements of wind, space and the elements of space, sight and what can be seen, hearing and what can be heard, smell and what can be smelled, taste and what can be tasted,

the skin and what can be touched, speech and what can be spoken, the hands and what can be taken, the organ and what can be enjoyed (*upastjascānandayitavyamca*), the anus and what can be excreted, the feet and what can be walked, mind (*manas*) and what can be perceived, intellect (*buddhi*) and what can be conceived, egoism (*ahamkāra*) and what can be connected with 'me', thought (*citta*) and what can be thought, brilliance (*tejas*) and what can be illumined, life-breath (*prāṇa*) and what can be supported.

Similarly in the *Kauṣitaki Upaniṣad* ānanda has been associated with *upastha* - a generative organ. The passage runs thus :

He says to him 'Wherewith do you acquire (*āp*) my masculine names.

'With the vital breath (*Prāṇa*, masc.)' he should answer.

'Wherewith feminine names ?'

'With speech (*vāc*, fem.)'

'Wherewith neuter ones ?'

'With the mind (*manas*, neut.)'

'Wherewith odors ?'

'With the breath. (*Prāṇa*)'

'Wherewith forms ?'

'With the eye'

'Wherewith sounds ?'

'With the ear'

'Wherewith the flavors of food ?'

'With the tongue'

'Wherewith actions ?'

'With the two hands.'



'Wherewith pleasure and pain ?'

'With the body'

'Wherewith bliss, delight and procreation ?'

'With the generative organ'

('Ken ānandam, ratim, prajātimiti, upasthena')

'Wherewith goings ?'

'With the two feet'

'Wherewith thoughts, what is understood and desired'

'With intelligence (*prajñā*), he should say.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly in the same *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad*, further, father says 'My bliss, delight and procreation in you I would place. The son replies : Your bliss, delight and procreation in me I take.'

(आनन्दं रतिं प्रजातिं ते मयि दध इति पुत्रः । (Kau. U. 2. 11)

It is noteworthy that in the *Kau. U.* these three words viz. *ānanda*, *rati* and *prajāti* are being repeatedly used.<sup>18</sup> *Prajāti* may be connected with *jan* to generate, procreate. *Rati* may be dealing more with the aspect of sexual pleasure from *ram* verb, and *ānanda* may mean a general over-all sexual gratification or satisfaction.<sup>19</sup>

In the *B.U.*, *ānanda*, as if, has been defined and it is not difficult to see that context is associated with sexual pleasure. Yājñavalkya says मनसा वै सम्राट् स्त्रियमभिहायते, तस्यां प्रतिरूपः पुत्रो जायते, स आनन्दो । (B.U. 4-1-6) Verily, your majesty, by the mind one betakes himself to a woman. A son like himself is born of her. He is bliss.

In the *T.U.* context also, the word *prajāti* along with *ānanda* occurs and there is a word *amṛta* also alongwith *prajatiramṛtamānanda ityupasthe* (T.U.3-10-3).

It can be seen that all these words *prajāti*, *amṛta* and

*ānanda* are connected with *upastham*, a generative organ.

In the *Kau. U.*, it appears that a process of sexual intercourse is purported to be described.

प्रज्ञया उपस्थं समारुह्य उपस्थेनानन्दं रतिं प्रजातिमाप्नोति । (*Kau. U.* 3-6) With intelligence having mounted on the generative organ, with the generative organ, one obtains bliss, delight and procreation.

So far, we have discussed that the word *ānanda* is explicitly connected with the generative organ and has sexual connotations.

And there are some places in the Upaniṣad where no direct connection can be perceived, but at the same time, there are sexual allusions. The celebrated passage from the *B.U.* gives an illustration of the erotic or amorous congruence in 4-3-21 तद्यथा प्रियया स्त्रिया सम्परिष्वक्तो न बाह्यं किञ्च वेद नान्तरम्. As a man in the embrace of a beloved woman knows nothing, without, nothing within.

In the *C.U.*(7-25-2) स वा एष एवं पश्यन्नेवं मन्वा न एवं विजानन्नात्मरतियत्न क्रीड आत्ममिथुन आत्मानन्दः Verily who sees thus, who thinks thus, who understands thus, who has pleasure in the soul, who has delight in the soul, who has intercourse with the soul, who has bliss in the soul. It can be seen that this passage endeavours to define *ānanda* almost in erotic terms.

Similarly in the *Munḍakopaniṣad*, the same words are employed in the following context, viz

प्राणो ह्येष यः सर्वभूतैर्विधाति विजानन्विद्वान्भवते ।  
नातिवादी आत्मक्रीडः आत्मरतिः क्रियावानेष ब्रह्मविद्यां वरिष्ठः ॥

(M.U.3-1-4)

Truly it is life that shines forth in all beings. Understanding this, one becomes a knower. There is no superior speaker. Having delight in the soul (*ātman*), having pleasure in the

soul, doing rites, such a one is the best of Brahma-knowers.

From this discussion, it is certain that the word *ānanda*, originally used to have an erotic or sexual connotation and hence, might have been considered profane by the philosopher like Śāṅkarācārya. Of course, it cannot be gainsaid that, in the Upaniṣads, the word *ānanda* has been employed in the non-sexual and unerotic contexts also. But it did not remain a pure, unalloyed, non-contextualised and shorn of all undesirable association. Hence the word *ānanda* was not suitable to Śāṅkarācārya's steadfast, and unflinching pursuit of the absolute monism.

Śāṅkarācārya did not want to dilute his rigorous, absolute monism and so he shunned the phrase *saccidānanda* along with *ānanda*. That was also the reason, why he, having offered two interpretations in the *anandamayādhikaraṇa*, left the first interpretation of *ānandamaya* as Brahman, in the lurch, so to say, completely ignored it in the T.U.*bhāṣya*.

This is how I have endeavoured to unravel the mystery of Śāṅkarācārya's having two interpretations in the *Ānandamayādhikaraṇa*, having abandoned one in his T.U.*bhāṣya* and not mentioning ever the phrase *saccidānanda* in his entire literature.

### References

1. Belvalkar S.K, *Shree Gopal Basu Mallik Lectures on Vedānta Philosophy*, 1929, p. 140-146
2. Dr. Paul Deussen, *The System of the Vedānta*, Reprint 1972, p. 31.
3. Ibid, p. 139
- 3(1). *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, Advaita Vedānta*, ed. by Karl H. Potter, 1981, pp. 116, 204.
4. Dr. Paul Deussen, *The System of the Vedānta*, p. 139
5. *Bṛuhmasūtrasāṅkarabhyāṣya* NSP edition, 1938, p. 185.
6. *Taittirīyopaniṣad* with the commentary by Śāṅkarācārya, in the Volume ईशादिदशोपनिषदः, शाङ्करभाष्यसमेतः, Pub. Motilal Banarasidass, reprint 1978, p. 294.

Here and hereafter, this edition is utilised for the *T.U.bhāṣya* by Śaṅkarācārya.

7. Translation by Swami Gambhirananda, *Eight Upanisads*, Vol I, Second Edn., 1948, p. 322.
8. *T.U.bhāṣya*, p. 291.
9. Translation by Swami Gambhirananda, p. 326.
10. *T.U.bhāṣya*, p. 294.
11. Translation p. 335-336.
12. Belvalkar and Ranade, *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol II, *The Creative Period*, 1927, p. 252.
13. Daniel Ingalls, *The Study of Śaṅkarācārya*, Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, 33, 1952, quoted by E. A. Soloman, in *Śaṅkarācārya's Bhāṣya on the Brhadāranyakopaniṣad. A Few Salient Points in the Volume Ādi Śaṅkarācārya* (12th Centenary Connotation Volume 1992) ed. by Dr. Gautam Patel. Pub. by Directorate of Information, Government of Gujarat, Gandhinagar.
14. Translation by R. E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanṣads*, OUP, 1995, p. 131.
15. Ibid, pp. 386-387.
16. Ibid, pp. 306-307.
17. तमाह केन मे पौस्यानि नामान्याप्नोतीति प्राणेनेति ब्रूयात् । केन स्त्रीनामानीति वाचेति केन नपुंसकानीति मनसेति केन गन्धानीति प्राणेनेत्येव ब्रूयात् । केन रूपाणीति चक्षुषेति केन शब्दानीति श्रोत्रेणेति केनात्ररसानिति जिह्वयेति केन कर्माणीति हस्ताभ्यामिति केन सुखदुःखेति शरीरेणेति केनानन्दं रतिं प्रजातिमित्युपस्थेनेति, केनेत्या इति पादाभ्यामिति केन धियो विज्ञातव्यं कामानिति प्रज्ञयेति ब्रूयात्तमाह (*Kauṣītaki U.* 1-6, उपनिषत्संग्रहः-p.196, ed. by पण्डित जगदीश शास्त्री, pub. Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi, 1970.)
18. Further in the *Kau. U.*, उपस्थ एवास्या एकमङ्गमदूहळं तस्यानन्दो रतिः प्रजातिः परस्तात्प्रतिविहिता, 3-5, Again in 3-7, न हि प्रजापेत उपस्थ आनन्दं रतिं प्रजातिं काञ्चन प्रजापयेदन्यत्र मे मनोऽभूदित्याह । Ibid pp:202-203
19. G. Glaspert Sauch S. J., *Bliss in the Upanisads*, pub. Oriental Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi. 1977, p. 134.