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

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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 जन्मात्मया यतः । (1-1-2) has the passage from this Upaniṣad i.e. यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायते, येन जातानि जीवन्ति, यत्रायति, अभिनवित्त्वाति, तद्विजितश्च सः, तदुद्भवः । for its viśayavākya. The whole of the Ānandamayādīkaraṇa (1-1-12 to 19) has the ānandamīṃmāmsā 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.¹

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 *Brahmasūtraśaṅkarabhāṣya* (B.S.S.B.) 142 times.² 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 *Taittirīuoaniṣadabhāṣya* 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 Ānandamayādīkaraṇa 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. It may also be noted that the second interpretation of the Ānandamayādhiḥkaraṇa 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 Ānandamayādhiḥkaraṇa (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 Ānandamayādhiḥkaraṇa. The relevant portion of the T. U. which has been taken up as a discussing point in the Brahmasūtra begins as follows:

तस्माद् एतस्मादत्मनं आकाश सम्भूतः। आकाशाद्युः। उपोयर्जिनः। अनेनेपः। अद्यः पृथ्वी। पृथिव्या ओषध्यः। ओषधीयोगत्रम्। अनात्सुरुः। स वा एष पुरुषोज्जस्समय तत्स्येदमेव शिरः। अर्यं दक्षिणः। पक्षः। अयुक्तं पक्षः। अयात्मा। इति पुच्छे 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 (vijñānāmaya) 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 Ānandamayādhiḥkaraṇa.

According to the first interpretation put forth by Śaṅkarācārya,
Anandamaya 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), Anandamaya is not Brahman. It is one of the five sheaths, as Śaṅkarācārya says in his B.S.S.B., तद्विज्ञापतिंत्वैवात्रमण्याद्व आनन्दमय्यपर्यत्ता: पञ्चकोशकल्पयते। 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 Śaṅkarācārya 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 Śaṅkarācārya fortifies the thought that Anandamaya is not Brahman. The bhāṣya in the Upaniṣad runs as follows:

अक्षमयादित्व आनन्दमया तत्तत्भव भौ विद्य दिदीर्मत्वेन अविद्याकृतिपञ्चकोशाधिपतनः अनेक्विद्विदित्वपञ्चकोशाधिपतनः तत्तत्त्वं एत्तमादित्वमयादित्वादित्वादि।

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 न एत्तस्मात् अनन्दमयादि 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.

Thus Anandamaya 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 Śaṅkarācārya 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 Anandamayadhikarana in the
Brahmasūtra.

We know that in the T.U., after Annamaya comes Prānamaya and so on. At this place, Śaṅkarācārya in his T.U. bhāṣya observes एवं मनोमयादिभि: पूर्वपूर्वविश्वापिभिरहत्येत| सूक्ष्ममयान्तरात्माकासात्मादिभूतः। क्षेत्रविधात्कृतैतर्भवन्त:। सब्र प्राणिन:। तथा स्वाभाविकनामसात्मादिकारणेन निलेना-विकृतेन सर्वधेन सत्यज्ञानतलक्षणेन पञ्चकोशातिरेण सर्वायमान:। आत्मावनः।

Similarly all creatures are possessed of selves by virtue of 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 ākāsa, 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.

Further one more finer point Śaṅkarācārya makes in the T.U. bhāṣya which he did not make in his bhāṣya on the Ānandamayādikaraṇa.

संक्रमणाच्य ‘आनन्दमयमालामुपसंक्रमयति’ इति वक्ष्यति। कायाँत्तमां च संक्रमणमालामुपसंक्रमयमां दृष्टयुः। संक्रमणकर्मितेभी चानन्दमयम आत्मा श्रूयते। यथात्ममालामुपसंक्रमयतीति। न च आत्मन: एवोपसंक्रमणमू। अधिकारिविधाद-संभावाच। न ह्यात्मकेवालन: उपसंक्रमण संभावति। स्वामिन: भैदारावत्। आत्मानूँ च ब्रह्म संकपितु॥

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.\textsuperscript{11}

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.\textit{bhāṣya}.

About the second interpretation it may be stated that the ācārya was not wavering between \textit{ānanda} and \textit{ānandi} so to say as Belvalkar and Ranade seem to be averring.\textsuperscript{12} 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.\textit{bhāṣya}. In fact, as we could mark, in the T.U.\textit{bhāṣya}, he is more original, vigorous and incisive unshackled by the tradition.

Regarding Śaṅkarācārya's \textit{Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣadbhāṣya}, Daniel Ingalls has observed that Śaṅkarācārya breaks with traditional interpretations frequently whereas in the \textit{Brahmasūtra-bhāṣya}, he is very careful not to depart from the tradition.\textsuperscript{13} This observation, I think, is applicable to T.U.\textit{bhāṣya} by Śaṅkarācārya.

So from the forgoing discussion, it would be seen that Śaṅkarācārya sets aside that interpretation which connects Brahman with \textit{Ānandamaya}. I may venture even further, that had it been in Śaṅkarācārya's power, he would even have rejected the term \textit{Ānanda}, devoid of any suffix like \textit{mayaṭ}, 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. saccidānanda 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 saccidānanda, 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 epiteth and the phrase saccidānanda 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 Brhadaranyakopaniṣad (2-4-11) it is stated that ते स वेद वेदां सुद्द एकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां स्पष्टां त्वं गावेकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषा गन्धां नासिकेत एकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषा रसां विहवेकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषा सुधां चक्षुरेकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषा श्रवणां शोकमेकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषा स्वास्त्यान्यान गन्धां एकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां विद्यां हद्धमेकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषा कर्मणां हस्तावेकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां विपश्चिमादानामुपपथ एकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषा स्वास्त्यान्यान गन्धां एकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां विद्यां हद्धमेकायनम् : (B.U.2-4-11)
It is - as of all waters the uniting poing 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 poing 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 (even sarvesāmānandānām 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 poing is speech. ¹⁴

Similarly in the Praśnopaniṣad a question is asked: In whom, pray, are all things established? (कस्मपुर वसौ समप्रतिषिता भवतीति) 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 सोय्य वथासि जास्तोहुष्सम समप्रतिषिने। एवं है वै तत्सर्वः पर आत्मानि समप्रतिषिने। पृथ्वीं च पृथिवीमात्र च चाषिकापदमात्र च तेजस्त तेजोमात्र च वायुः वायुमात्र च चक्षुः द्रष्टि च श्रीर्त्व च श्रीरत्व च प्राणं च प्रात्वं च स्त्रियाः सप्तित्रयं च त्वक् च स्नातित्रयं च चाकुच वर्गमयं च हस्तो चादात्त्वं च चोपस्थितात्त्विथित्वं च पावात विन्स्तितित्वं च पादो च गन्तव्यं च मनः मन्त्रमें च बुद्धिः बोधिः च चाहुर्गंधाह्नकृत्वं च चित्तं च चतुर्यित्वं च तेजः विद्यावित्वं च प्राणम् विधारण्यित्वं 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 (upastjaścānandayitavyamca), 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 Kauśitaki 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.’
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‘Wherewith pleasure and pain?’
‘With the body’
‘Wherewith bliss, delight and procreation?’
‘With the generative organ’
(‘Kṣaṇ anandam, ratiṁ, praṇātimiti, upasthena’)
‘Wherewith goings?’
‘With the two feet’
‘Wherewith thoughts, what is understood and desired’
‘With intelligence (praṇā), he should say.16

Similarly in the same Kauśitaki 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.’

(आनन्दे रति प्रजाति ते मचि दध इति पुनः। (Kau. U. 2. 11)

It is noteworthy that in the Kau. U. thesre three words viz. ananda, rati and praṇātī are being repeatedly used.18 Praṇātī may be connected with jan to generate, procreate. Rati may be dealing more with the aspect of sexual pleasure from ram verb, and ananda may mean a general over-all sexual gratification or satisfaction.19

In the B.U., ananda, as if, has been defined and it is not difficult to see that context is associated with sexual pleasure. Yājñavalkya says मनसा वै तपाः तिष्ठति, तस्यां प्रतिरूपः पुजो जागमे, स आनन्दे। (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 praṇātī along with ananda occurs and there is a word amṛta also alongwith praṇātiramṛtamānanda ityupasthe (T.U.3-10-3).

It can be seen that all these words praṇātī, amṛta and
ananda are connected with upastham, a generative organ.

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

(Prāṇya upasṛṅga ātsrṣeṇa sātvānāsāvatā prajatamapāyati) (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 ananda 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 tadbha prāṇya śrīya sparśiyāk ca n bhaīṛ kṛṣṇa kete nātassū. As a man in the embrace of a beloved woman knows nothing, without, nothing within.

In the C.U.(7-25-2) sa eva eva pashyate vā manā vā eva vijñanātmakāryaṃ kṣīḍa ātmābhuma ātmanānād: 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 ananda almost in erotic terms.

Similarly in the Mundakopaniṣad, the same words are employed in the following context, viz

prāṇo hṛṣṇe v: sarvabhūtekañc bhavati vijñanānividdha-bhavate.

nātāśraya ātmanākrod: ātmanāt: kriyāvarṇeṣ bhāvavidaḥ vairadeḥ:队伍

(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 ananda, originally used to have an erotic or sexual connotation and hence, might have been considered profane by the philosopher like Śaṅkarācārya. Of course, it cannot be gainsaid that, in the Upaniṣads, the word ananda 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 ananda was not suitable to Śaṅkarācārya’s steadfast, and unflinching pursuit of the absolute monism.

Śaṅkarācārya did not want to dilute his rigorous, absolute monism and so he shunned the phrase saccidānanda along with ananda. That was also the reason, why he, having offered two interpretations in the anandamayādhitkarana, left the first interpretation of ānandamayā 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 Śaṅkarācārya’s having two interpretations in the Ānandamayādhitkarana, having abandoned one in his T.U. bhāṣya and not mentioning ever the phrase saccidānanda in his entire literature.

References
3. Ibid, p. 139
4. Dr. Paul Deussen, The System of the Vedanta, p. 139
Here and hereafter, this edition is utilised for the T.U. bhāṣya by Śaṅkarācārya.


15. Ibid, pp. 386-387.


17. तमाह केन मे पूर्वत्तानां नामानानां नौत्तित प्राणेनाति ब्रुवाय। केन स्त्रीनानाति वाचेति केन तपस्थतानाति मन्सेति केन ग्रहानाति प्राणेते ब्रुवाल। केन चण्डानाति चबुत्तेति केन शब्दानाति श्रोतेेति केन विज्ञायतिन केन विशेषातिन हस्तामानाति केन झुक्कुह्निति मंत्रायति केननां पारस्यामानाति केन विद्याहृतां कामानाति प्रश्नदर्शिति प्रमानति दुवानात (Kaśyapi U. 1-6, उपनिषदों-प.196, ed. by पण्डित जागदीश शास्त्री, pub. Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi, 1970.)

18. Further in the *Kau.U.*, उपस्थ एवात्मां एकमाक्षस्मद्वृह तस्यानन्दो ित तत्त: प्रज्ञाति: परस्यात्मात्विभिः 3-5, Again in 3-7, न हि प्रज्ञेयं उपस्थ आनन्दं ित तत्त: प्रज्ञाति: कान्यन ग्रामयेद्यनम्प में मनोमृतस्यात। Ibid pp:202-203