**OPINION**

**by Prof. Dr. Vladimir Gradev**

for the materials submitted for participation in the competition

for holding the academic position "professor"

in a professional field 2.1. Philology (Sanskrit – language and culture) announced for the needs of Faculty of Classical and Modern philology at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", published in the State Gazette, issue 86 from the 13th of October 2023

Associate Professor Gergana Rumenova Ruseva, who is the only candidate, submitted documents for participation in the announced competition 2.1. Philology (Sanskrit – Language and Culture).

The set of electronic materials presented by Assoc. Prof. Ruseva is in accordance with the Regulations of the Sofia University (SU). The documents and their attached textual contents are complete. They fully meet the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b of Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation, and the additional requirements of SU for occupying the academic position of professor.

Gergana Rumenova Ruseva was born on 13.06.1974 in the city of Sofia. In 1997, she graduated with honors from higher education in Physics at SU. In 2000, she graduated with full honors in "Indology" from the University of St. Kliment Ohridski" with a diploma thesis on the topic: "Katha Upanishad – translation from Sanskrit and commentary". In 2005, she became a doctor with a successfully defended dissertation on the topic: "Indo-Aryan personal pronouns in diachrony". From 2002 to 2009, Ruseva was a part-time teacher of Sanskrit and Hindi in the "Classical East" department at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", while simultaneously working as a physicist at the Institute for Nuclear Research and Nuclear Energy – Bulgarian Academy of Science. Since 2009, Gergana Ruseva has been an assistant professor, and since 2012 – associate professor of Sanskrit in the “Indology” section in the "Classical East" department at Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". She teaches Sanskrit, lexicology, morphology and syntax of Hindi, and also teaches courses in academic writing, Darshana: Indian Worldviews in the BA Indology program, as well as Early Buddhism in Texts and Jyotisha: Traditional Indian Astrology in the MA Buddhism program (with an Eastern language). She is the supervisor of two successfully defended dissertations and three successfully defended Master's theses. From 2019 until now, Prof. Ruseva is the head of the "Classical East" department, Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology of the "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Prof. Gergana Ruseva is the author of 4 monographs, 34 scientific articles and studies in Bulgarian and English. She is the author of a Sanskrit teaching aid, and 14 translations from Sanskrit and Hindi. Her scientific works have 61 citations in Bulgarian, Russian and English. She is the head of two research projects. She has participated with reports in 30 national and international scientific conferences.

Gergana Ruseva participate in the competition with 11 publications, including two monographs and 9 scientific articles, of which 4 in English, published in Bulgarian and international scientific volumes.

I will dwell briefly on the candidate's research activity, which I find directly related to the specific topic of the competition.

The monograph “Forward to the Past, Back to the Future: Ideas of Time in Ancient India” examines the various mythological and cosmogonic ideas about the nature of time according to the ancient Indo-Aryans. In the monograph, cognitive metaphors for time in the Vedic language, as well as the differences with the model for expressing "time" in the Bulgarian language, are thoroughly explored. The modes of expression and interweaving of space and time in various aspects of sacrifice and ritual are also examined. Vedic concepts of time, eternity, change, modality and their interplay are carefully analyzed. Presented in detail with translation, commentary and analysis are two main hymns from the Vedas which are devoted to time as the supreme essence. The Vedic calendar and the different ways of determining the year are discussed in detail. Mythical notions of time as the cycle of being and their manifestations in the Vedas and ritual are explored. The change that took place with the Upanishads, when time gradually came to be understood as a transcendent reality, is shown, as well as the subsequent striving in both Buddhism and early Hinduism for liberation from the grip of time.

The second monograph “To Taste of the Sweetest Fruit of Immortality: Ideas of Death, the Path to the Hereafter, and Sleep in Ancient India” explores ideas about death and dying, the path to the hereafter, worlds beyond the living and beyond waking, the interweaving of these worlds with our familiar world, which largely determine the entire worldview system of the ancient Indo-Aryans. The first part of the monograph explores the Vedic ideas about the other world and the journey to it. The development of notions of immortality is shown and rituals to achieve immortality in the heavens and to avoid the repeated death of one already residing in the heavens are analyzed. The second part of the monograph clarifies Indo-Aryan ideas about the relationship between sleep and death, about the essence of dreams, their classification and significance for everyday life, about their predictive power and impact. The ways of interpreting dreams and their perception, as a door to the other world, and as a parallel reality affecting waking life. Practices for lucid dreaming, for controlling dreams and their effects are also analyzed.

In the studies, Gergana Ruseva explores additional aspects of the notions of time in Vedic and Buddhist culture, analyzes the image of the tree of life and death and recounts the wanderings of the soul in the other world, traces the experience of momentarity in Buddhism, problematizes the basic concept of prāṇa for Indian culture, highlights the originality and significance of the myth of the creation of the world for the general worldview and ritual practices in Indian culture.

In the materials presented for participation in the competition, Gergana Ruseva explores important problems of Indological science in linguistic, religious and cultural terms. More specifically, in terms of linguistics, she builds up semantic chains and a semantic map of the basic for Indian culture concept prāṇa. She also explores the linguistic representation of the more abstract conceptual domain 'time' through the more concrete 'space' in Vedic and Sanskrit. From a religiological and cultural point of view, Prof. Ruseva establishes the connection and the mutual determination and regulation of the myth of the creation from the dismembered body of the first being and the experience in initiation, sleep, or during the ritual sacrifice. She successfully traces this relationship across the various dimensions of its distinctiveness and in the texts and practices of Buddhism. Her research into the religious ideas of the Indo-Aryans about time, fate, their perception of the year as a living organism, and the role of the symbol of the tree connecting the worlds and the different levels of existence are particularly significant. She successfully brings out the main thematic cores around which fundamental concepts such as time, death, the afterlife and sleep develop over time, which allows her not only to discern the essential characteristics of the ancient Indo-Aryan culture, but also to successfully compare it with other great ancient cultures while critical evaluate it and critically evaluate modern theories about the unique exclusivity and originality of ancient Indo-Aryan ideas and show convincingly that they are part of the common Indo-European substratum. Finally, I cannot but point out the significant translation activity of Gergana Ruseva, to whom we owe the translations of important texts from the Upanishads and other important works, all translations that fill a huge void in Bulgarian culture and which eloquently testify to the complete mastery of Sanskrit, and comments on her deep immersion and understanding of ancient Indian culture, which are the subject of this competition.

If I summarize: the articles and studies presented for the competition are original and innovative studies that cover the linguistic, religiological and cultural fields of ideology, examining some of their most significant and essential aspects and problems. The research activity of Gergana Ruseva clearly and unequivocally shows the systematicity and purposefulness of her scientific research, the depth and maturity of her linguistic and cultural thinking. Prof. Ruseva is one of our prominent and internationally established Indologists with clearly expressed interests and already proven contributions in the field of Indology.

After familiarizing myself with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition, based on the analysis of their significance and contributions, I find it completely justified to give a positive assessment to the candidature thus presented and to recommend convincingly to the respected Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of The Faculty of Classical and New Philology of the University of St. Kliment Ohridski" to elect Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gergana Rumenova Ruseva to the academic position of "Professor" in a professional field 2.1. Philology (Sanskrit – Language and Culture).

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Prof. Dr. Vladimir Gradev