

Liberec, March 30th, 2022

Subject: Supervisor's recommendation letter for Arvind S. Kaushik, M.A., concerning his Ph.D. thesis submission.

Dear Madam/Sir,

I have known Arvind S. Kaushik for six years. We have worked together within the larger international team of newly conceived Comparative Science of Cultures, sometimes referred to as Gent school. Let me state in the beginning that it has been pleasure to supervise this student. In the doctoral seminars I was conducting at the University of Pardubice, Arvind Kaushik was very active, hard-working student who always wanted to grasp the wider context of discussed topics. I consider his approach to research inspirational and thought-provoking. Arvind Kaushik conducted research in India over the period of three months, supported by the Erasmus Plus project for mobility between programme and partner countries, University of Pardubice (2017 – 2019). He presented papers at two international conferences (the 8th EUGEO Congress in Prague, Czech Republic 2021, and the Conference *Diversity Management: Visions from India and Europe*, organized by CIRHS, SDM Educational Institutes, and Department of Law, Queen Mary, University of London, Ujire, India 2018). Arvind was also teaching a course for B.A. students and helped in the Religious Studies programme at the University of Pardubice in other ways.

The topic of the student's dissertation is perhaps more important today than in the previous decades, because the intelligentsia of large and smaller Asian countries questions seriously the basic concepts inherited from their colonial past. Nation and nationalism are among the most important concepts which were introduced and implemented by the Europeans during the colonial era. Arvind Kaushik debates problems with formation and rise of Tamil nationalism in order to show several fundamental problems with the concepts and connected practices, introduced in India in the 19th century. However, there is a larger framework of the background religious assumptions about the question what makes a group of people into a nation. Concern with this framework led the student to J. G. Herder and several other European thinkers, whose ideas about nation formed this background assumptions. One of the contributions of this thesis is a set of examples which shows how these originally European ideas were accepted and distorted by the Tamil reformers, such as M. Adigal. The doctoral student explains Adigal's different concerns and very different understanding of what constitutes a group of people which became called a nation. There are several other connected topics that were dealt with to a different depth, such as the Aryan vs. Dravidian division, or problems with understanding *bhakti* traditions and caste.

To conclude, I think that the submitted Ph.D. thesis is of relevance for the larger concerns of research on nationalism and the role a religious thought plays in its formation and development. It contains original research, interesting insights and it opens promising path to new understanding of long-term exchanges between cultures. I recommend to accept the submitted Ph.D. thesis for the planned defense very much.

Yours sincerely,

Associated Prof. Martin Fárek, Ph.D.

Department of Geography, Faculty of Science, Humanities and Education

Technical University of Liberec

