



Notice for the PhD Viva Voce Examination

Ms Riswana B, Registration Number: 2090156, PhD Scholar at the School of Psychological Sciences, Education and Social Work, CHRIST (Deemed to be University) will defend her PhD thesis at the public viva-voce examination on Wednesday, 11 February 2026 at 10.00 am in Room No. 044, Ground Floor, R&D Block, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru - 560029, Karnataka, India.

Title of the Thesis	:	Life in the Refuge on the Inner Psyche: Narratives of the Sri Lankan-Tamil Refugees
Discipline	:	Psychology
External Examiner - I	:	Dr Vaishali Raval Professor Department of Psychology 308, Psychology Building Miami University Oxford, OH 45056, USA
External Examiner - II	:	Dr Poornima Bhola Professor Department of Clinical Psychology National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences Bengaluru - 560029 Karnataka
Supervisor	:	Dr Baiju Gopal Professor School of Psychological Sciences, Education and Social Work CHRIST (Deemed to be University) Bengaluru - 560029 Karnataka

The members of the Research Advisory Committee of the Scholar, the faculty members of the Department and the School, interested experts and research scholars of all the branches of research are cordially invited to attend this open viva – voce examination.

Place: Bengaluru
Date: 07 February 2026

The signature is handwritten in black ink and appears to read "Dr. Baiju Gopal".
Registrar (Academics)

ABSTRACT

Exile is a forcible displacement from one's homeland to a world of uncertainties and predicaments, representing a shift from a core of existence to complex realities that alter every aspect of life. Sri Lankan Tamil refugees (SLTR) were exiled to India intermittently between 1983 and 2009 due to ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka. This study fills a gap in literature by exploring the inner psyche of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in the context of life in refuge through their narratives. Thirty-three SLTR from three generations, living in ten rehabilitation camps in Tamil Nadu, were in depth interviewed and the data were analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis. Intergenerational comparison of the themes carried out with matrix query function, and life history grids for three generations were constructed and thematically analyzed. Life in the refuge, characterized by a distressed psychosocial environment, serves as a sustained catalyst for changing the inner psyche. Social dynamics including victim-perpetrator dimensions were restructured in refugee life and it is a state of limbo, featuring intergenerational and multidimensional trauma. Refugee identity is a condensation of displacement defense and participants who faced significant crises exhibited a heightened sense of refinement of their toxic sense of nostalgia, and those who experienced greater relational and economic losses were more engaged in rehabilitation services as a form of psychic adaptation. Resilience through adversities, rhizomatic resistance, reconceptualization of peace, and the quest to renounce refugee identity are the significant attributes in refugee life.

Intergenerational differences in Psychic Restructuring (PR), Ego Resilience (ER), and metaphorical transmission along with gender-specific trajectories for exilic experiences and yearning for the homeland were significantly highlighted. The study highlighted that the homeland symbolizes the mother, the LTTE functions as a paradoxical agent in restoring psychic equilibrium, the self undergoes fragmentation and reunification in refugee life, the 'boat' is a symbol of both hope and agony, and that metaphors serve as tool for transmitting Sri Lankan culture, exilic life, and indigenous acceptance. The study argues that inner psyche is a dynamic and context dependent system restructured through refugee experiences. It defined PR in the context of life in refuge, and redefined ER in terms of intrapsychic skills and defences, marking unique contributions in both psychoanalytic and refugee research. To facilitate the effective social integration of SLTR, the study suggests the potential of effective psychic restructuring (EPR) and advanced ego resilience in promoting their intergenerational global psychic development.

Keywords: *life in refuge, ego resilience, inner psyche, psychic restructuring, social integration, Sri Lankan Tamil refugees*

Publications:

1. **Riswana, B., & Gopal, B.** (2024). Experience of psychic restructuring among refugees in the context of life in refuge, *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy*, 38(1), 62-81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02668734.2023.2291182>
2. **Riswana, B., & Gopal, B.** (2025). *Mobilization of Effective Psychic Restructuring: A Workable Solution for the Social Integration of Refugees in India* (Patent No. 202541049339). Indian Patent Office, Chennai. <https://iprsearch.ipindia.gov.in/PatentSearch/PatentSearch/ViewApplicationStatus>.