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Notice for the PhD Viva Voce Examination

Mr Titto Thomas, Registration Number: 1980505, PhD Scholar at the Department of English and Cultural Studies, School of Humanities and Performing Arts, CHRIST (Deemed to be University) will defend his PhD thesis at the public viva-voce examination on Wednesday, 13 May 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** : **Transformative Role of Sacred Sound: A Comparative Study of Mantra (Japayoga) and Orthodox Hesychast Tradition**
- Discipline** : **English Studies**
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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: 25 April 2026

Registrar (Academics)

ABSTRACT

The popularity of many mystical traditions points to their universal nature and the accessibility of their practices. Orthodox Christian Hesychasm and Hindu Japa (Mantra) Yoga are among such traditions that reveal striking similarities in their disciplined use of sacred sound as a means of spiritual transformation. The central assumption of this study is that, both traditions structurally use similar modes of chanting that function progressively upon different levels of human consciousness, though their theological and cultural contexts are distinct. Accordingly, the focus of the thesis is not a detailed comparison of doctrinal differences, but an exploration of how sound operates in both traditions as a transformative medium affecting gradation of consciousness. This research undertakes a comparative textual analysis of Hesychasm and Japa Yoga, examining the working of sacred sound through two interrelated fourfold frameworks. First, it employs the fourfold theory of sacred sound; Vaikhari, Madhyama, Pashyanti, and Para, rooted in Upanishadic and Tantric metaphysical thought, to analyze the progressive interiorization of sound from vocal utterance to transcendental resonance. Second, it correlates these sonic gradations with the Catuspād doctrine of consciousness, namely jāgrat (waking), svapna (dream), suṣṭi (deep sleep), and turīya (pure transcendence), in order to demonstrate how structured chanting facilitates movement across successive states of awareness. Methodologically, the study relies exclusively on textual analysis, drawing upon primary mystical texts, doctrinal commentaries, and critical scholarship. Interpretation is guided by Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics of threefold mimesis; prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration, while the comparative dimension is shaped by Arvind Sharma's methodology of reciprocal illumination, allowing each tradition to illuminate the other without collapsing their distinct identities.

Keywords: *Hesychasm, Mantra, Japa yoga, Sacred sound, mystical literature, Consciousness*

Publications:

1. **Thomas, Titto**, and Bidyut Bhusan Jena. "Intersections of New Age Spirituality and Urban Planning in India: Cultivating Well-Being and Harmony in City Landscapes." *Interstices of Space and Memory: Retelling Metropolitan Chronotope*, CSMC, 2025. Taylor & Francis, doi:10.1201/9781003606666-51.
2. **Thomas, Titto**, and Bidyut Bhusan Jena. "Tracing the Mystical Ascension of Khalil Gibran in The Prophet: An In-Depth Analysis." *Agathos: An International Review of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2025, doi:10.5281/ZENODO.15162833.
3. Sebastian, Rajat, and **Titto Thomas**. "Literary Symbolism of Wolf and Its Howl in Paulo Coelho's The Devil and Miss Prym." *Literary Voice*, Sept. 2023. Web of Science, Accession no. WOS:001114276300022.
4. Sebastian, Rajat, and **Titto Thomas**. "Literary Symbolism of Mountain in Paulo Coelho's The Fifth Mountain." *Literary Voice*, Sept. 2022. Web of Science, Accession no. WOS:000891144000043