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## Notice for the PhD Viva Voce Examination

Ms Atmaja Acharya, Registration Number: 2170051, PhD Scholar at the Department of Economics, School of Social Sciences, CHRIST (Deemed to be University) will defend her PhD thesis at the public viva-voce examination on Monday, 11 May 2026 at 11.00 am in Room No. 05, Ground Floor, R&D Block, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru - 560029, Karnataka, India.

- Title of the Thesis** : **The Intersections of Vulnerabilities and Agency: A Case of Kolkata Sex Workers**
- Discipline** : **Economics**
- External Examiner - I** : **Dr Nayanatara S Nayak**  
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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:** 30 April 2026

  
**Registrar**

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the lived experiences of female sex workers (FSWs) in Kolkata, focusing on three intersecting questions: how stigma affects the daily lives and social relationships of the FSWs; how structural and interpersonal violence affect the well-being of the FSWs and their sense of agency; and how the current legal systems impact the lives of the FSWs in terms of their rights and access to justice. The study is framed using the intersectional approach and employs Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to interpret the lived experiences from 52 in-depth interviews that were conducted in Hindi and Bengali and were subsequently translated and transcribed in English. The results show that sex work as a form of labour is highly stigmatized in the moral and social hierarchy, and thus compelling the women to negotiate multifaceted identities of dignity, motherhood, and survival. The research also reveals the layered dimensions of violence, which are domestic, occupational, and institutional, and demonstrates how the mobilization of the masses offers an important means of resistance and empowerment. By situating sex work in a wider context of debates on labour rights, legality, and social justice, the research contributes to envisage sex workers not merely as passive victims of the circumstances but as active agents who promoting dignity, protection, and recognition.

**Keywords:** *Sex work, Stigma, Violence, Law*

### **Publications:**

1. **Acharya, A., & Azhar, S. (2024).** "we are treated as outsiders in our own city": Lived experiences of intersectional stigma against sex workers in kolkata, india. *Sexuality Research & Social Policy: A Journal of the NSRC.* <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-024-01054-8>
2. **Acharya A., & Azhar, S. (2025).** "I Was Scared That He Might Kill Me or Stab Me If I Said No": Violence Against Sex Workers in Kolkata, India. *Violence against women*, 4(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012251362233>