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## Notice for the PhD Viva Voce Examination

Ms Albeena Stephen, Registration Number: 2290026, PhD Scholar at the Department of English and Cultural Studies, School of Humanities and Performing Arts, CHRIST (Deemed to be University) will defend her PhD thesis at the public viva-voce examination on Tuesday, 19 May 2026 at 10.30 am in Room No. 044, Ground Floor, R&D Block, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru - 560029, Karnataka, India.

- Title of the Thesis** : **Narrativizing Psychological Distress during Isolation and Lockdown: A Discourse Analysis of Select COVID-19 Comic Anthologies**
- Discipline** : **English Studies**
- External Examiner - I** : **Dr Sathyaraj Venkatesan**  
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- Supervisor** : **Dr Reshma Jacob**  
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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:** 07 May 2026

**Registrar (Academics)**

## ABSTRACT

Biomedical and psychological literature show that the COVID-19 pandemic and consequent lockdowns and isolation have been a peritraumatic event. Capturing a period of contagion, chaos, and uncertainty, this thesis explores the nature and process of narrativization within COVID-19 comics from a graphic medical conceptual lens. COVID-19 comics are seen as a material, multimodal, and iconographic process that furthered the cultural and historical documentation of the chaotic and uncertain event, which rethought the boundaries of health and medicine. Viewed as distress narratives, the multimodality within comics is analysed in terms of stylistic features and narrative arcs to trace the newly emergent iconography of COVID-19 through these comics. The study also attempts to theorise how the comic form has been used to narrativise tales from HCWs and non-HCW perspectives and dismantle the traditional healthcare binaries. Three primary texts under study were published in 2020 and 2021, two critical pandemic years: *COVID Chronicles: A Comic Anthology* (2021) edited by Kendra Boileau and Rich Johnson; *Covid Chronicles: True Stories from the Front-Lines of COVID-19* (2020) by Ethan Sacks, Dalibor Talajić, and Lee Loughridge; *The Quarantine Life: A COVID-19 Era Comics Anthology* (2020) edited by Steven Walker and Greg Follender. The study draws on the frameworks of literary trauma studies, narrative medicine, and narrative hermeneutics for multimodal discourse analysis, framed by the graphic narrative theories of Thierry Groensteen and Scott McCloud. The research contributes to the theoretical and practical positionality of the concept of ‘narrativisation’ within scholarship, such as graphic medicine, in a post-COVID-19 world and beyond.

**Keywords:** *Graphic Medicine, COVID-19 Comics, Narrativisation, Iconography, Distress Narrative*

### Publications:

1. **Stephen, Albeena,** and Reshma Jacob. “narrativizing Chaos via Narrative Agency: COVID-19 Comics as Narrative Meta-Control.” *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, Sept. 2025, pp. 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21504857.2025.2563031>.
2. **Stephen, Albeena,** and Reshma Jacob. “Covid-19 Comics as Graphic Networks of Non-Emergent Healthcare: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Pandemic Comics.” *Studies in Linguistics, Culture, and FLT*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2025, pp. 38–57, <https://doi.org/10.46687/QJOT5514>.
3. **Stephen, Albeena.** “Politics of Indian Migrant Labourer Migration during COVID-19: A Visual Discourse Analysis of Liminality and Communitas through Cartoons.” *AGATHOS: An International Review of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 15, no. 2(29), 2024, pp. 395–405, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13950261>.
4. **Stephen, Albeena.** “Indianness Within Superhero/Heroine Protagonists in COVID-19 Health Literacy Comics: A Graphical Exploration from a Gendered Lens.” *Indian Journal of Natural Sciences*, vol. 14, no. 82, 2024, pp. 70341–70347.