



# DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

THE DELHI SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

## SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH COLLOQUIUM

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> April 2026 | Time: 3:00 PM | Venue: M N Srinivas Hall

### Scientism and Familism Of body, mind and gender

Speaker: V. Sujatha



V. Sujatha is Professor at the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She specializes in the fields of sociology of knowledge and sociology of health and medicine. Sujatha's approach seeks to go beyond national boundaries, reverse the gaze in Eurocentric discourses and offer a cross cultural perspective on phenomena. She received the UGC-DAAD fellowship for fieldwork in Germany and the ICSSR-NIHSS fellowship for research at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. Sujatha's current international research projects in Japan and the UK seek to examine commodification food and herbs in the neoliberal era.

#### Abstract

Cultivation of scientific temper has been a laudable goal for societies of South East Asia and the culture of science is generally regarded to foster anything but rational thinking, but scientism is a less known phenomenon. Scientism is the entrenched belief that science is the one and only valid source of objective truth. While there are penetrating critiques of scientific objectivity in feminist scholarship, the effects of scientism on women have not been taken seriously. In this presentation, I engage with the asymmetries in women's participation in science and technology at the international level using data from surveys and reports and show that it is high time we go beyond vague terms like glass ceiling. When it comes to women's entry and career mobility in science and technology fields, neither is scientism an unmixed blessing, nor is familism a total obstructor. Rather, these cultures produce different patterns of social asymmetry. There is much more at stake if we adopt a comparative perspective across societies and the pattern of variation requires different explanatory factors. I conclude with another case of scientism in the form of hyperawareness about healthy food, namely, nutritionism, in which laboratory science comes to dominate the lifeworld.