



# DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

THE DELHI SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

## SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH COLLOQUIUM

Date: 24 April 2026 | Time: 3:00 PM | Venue: M N Srinivas Hall

### **Mediated Traditions: Exploring Rurality and Community through Indian Digital Food Narratives**



#### **Speaker : Prof. Kiranmayi Bhushi**

Prof. Kiranmayi Bhushi is a sociologist trained at Jawaharlal Nehru University. She works on identity, consumption, diaspora, and food culture in India, and has taught in India and abroad.

#### **Abstract**

Food is a multidimensional cultural artefact that bridges the material and the symbolic. In contemporary digital culture, Indian food blogs—specifically those focusing on rural cooking—serve as more than platforms for culinary exchange; they function as visual ethnographies and archives of a curated rurality. In the Indian context, where food and feasting are central to identity and community, these digital spaces have become powerful sites for placemaking, allowing urban and diasporic audiences to "re-place" themselves within a romanticised ancestral landscape. This presentation explores how rural food blogs operate as dynamic visual archives that construct a "digital pastoral"—a mediated version of village life defined by open-air kitchens, traditional tools like the chulha, and communal feasting. I argue that these curated images do not merely document existing practices but actively produce a standardised authenticity that equates rurality with "purity" and "truth," contrasting it against the perceived artificiality of urban life. Through the performance of "slow living and the use of sensory cues—such as the sounds of woodfire or manual grinding—these blogs "make" a place significant, transforming generic rural geographies into sacred sites of heritage and belonging. Ultimately, this study investigates how the feedback loop of digital aesthetics and algorithmic curation recreates the meaning of tradition. By analysing Indian rural cooking shows, I examine how these archives facilitate a performative return to "roots," where the practice of cooking and feasting becomes a site of negotiated belonging in a market- and media mediated landscape.