

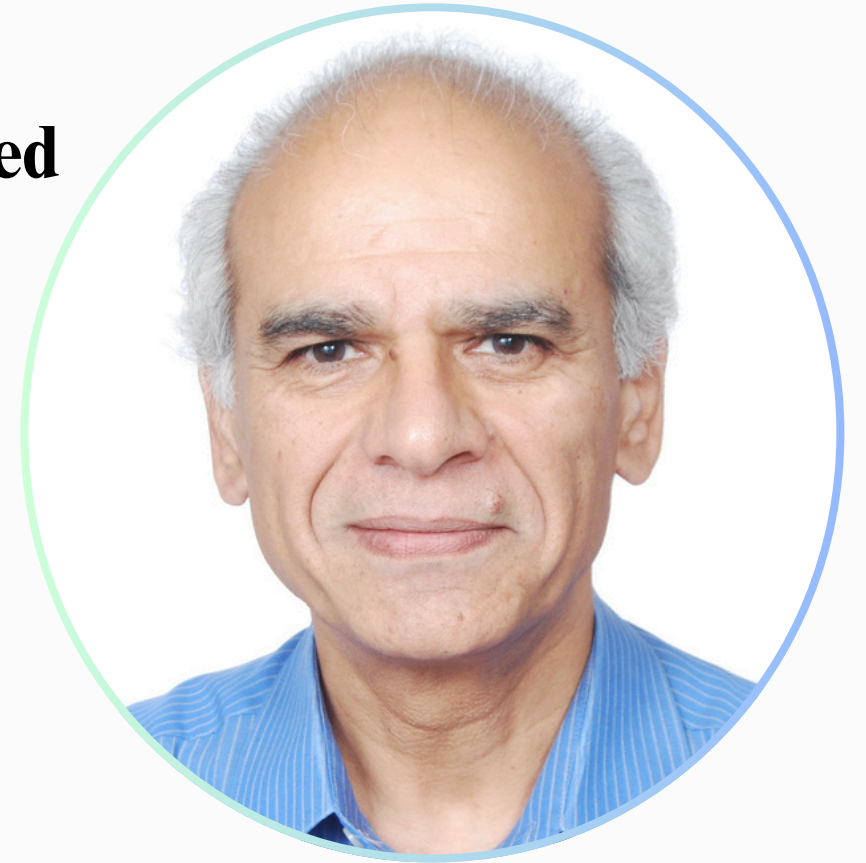


School of Humanities and Social Sciences Indian Institute of Technology Indore

SHSS Seminar Series

Blurring Narrative Boundaries: From Fact to Fiction and Fiction to Fact

Dr Kalpana Swaminathan & Dr Ishrat Syed



Date: February 24, 2025

Time: 10:15 am-12:30 pm

Venue: 1C 301, SHSS Seminar Hall

Abstract:

For noted authors Kalpish Ratna, science has its true place in the humanities, and understanding the body is the essence of creative expression. The evolution of medical thought is inseparable from social and elemental pressures, and this intriguing nexus advises their approach. Fiction liberates thought and expression, and it is but natural to pursue ideas beyond the constraints of established fact. The interface between fact and fiction is an event horizon that no writer can look away from, and Kalpish Ratna often fixates on it. This lecture explores this dynamic interplay where boundaries are blurred to reimagine historical events, medical discoveries and human resilience with a narrative-driven lens. As Kalpish Ratna craft narratives where scientific inquiry and literary exploration are inseparable, their works render the body as both a site of knowledge and a narrative force, challenging rigid distinctions between empirical truth and creative interpretation. In doing so, Kalpish Ratna enable a transformative dialogue between fact and fiction.

Bio-Note:

Surgeons Kalpana Swaminathan and Ishrat Syed write together as *Kalpish Ratna*. Their special interest is the emergence of disease and its relation to the environment. Medieval medicine is a special interest, and this has led them to explore India in the 16th century, around the time of colonial contact. Ishrat is also a photographer. *Palimpsest: The Erasures that made Bombay* is his continuing project. A preview, *The Persistence of Memory*, was exhibited at the CSMVS Museum in 2011. Kalpana also publishes fiction under her own name. Her detective series *Lalli* involves ten novels. Her book of short fiction *Venus Crossing* won the Crossword Fiction Prize in 2009. Kalpish Ratna's titles include: *Bahadur* 2024, *Gastronama—The Indian Guide to Eating Right* 2022, *A Crown of Thorns—The Coronavirus and Us* 2020, *Synapse* 2019, *The Quarantine Papers* 2010, *Uncertain Life & Sure Death—Medicine & Mahamaari in Maritime Mumbai* 2008. Their upcoming project is *Dholavira: A Signboard in the Dark*.

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10: 00 AM
-10: 15 AM

Welcome Address: Prof. Ruchi Sharma

10:15 AM -
12: 15 PM

Session Chair: Prof. Nirmala Menon
Lecture: “From Fact to Fiction and Fiction to Fact” by Kalpish Ratna

12: 15 PM -
12: 30 PM

Q&A

Lunch Break (12:30 PM - 2:00 PM)

02: 00 PM -
03:15 PM

PhD Interactive Session