

HSS Research Colloquium

Experience and Theory: Engaging with the Work of Professor Gopal Guru

Friday, 23 October 2026 | 9:30 AM – 6:00 PM

Venue: Room 5B, Academic Block 2, IISER Mohali

The Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IISER Mohali, is organising a **Research colloquium on the works of Prof. Gopal Guru**.

Date: 23 October 2026 (Friday)

Time: 2:00 PM

Venue: Room 5B, Academic Block 2, IISER Mohali

Concept Note

Modern theoretical discourse often assumes that theories constitute relatively autonomous systems of propositions, whose validity can be evaluated in terms of coherence, consistency, simplicity, and explanatory power. Within this understanding, theoretical statements are treated as meaningful in themselves, while lived experiences appear primarily as phenomena that theories seek to explain. But can theoretical statements be meaningful independently of lived experience?

Gopal Guru's work highlights that theoretical assertions are never entirely independent of the conditions of lived existence within which they acquire meaning. What appears to be an abstract, self-contained theoretical proposition already presupposes a particular experiential context. These experiential conditions often remain invisible, not because they are absent, but because certain forms of lived experience have come to be regarded as normal, standard, or universal. The apparent autonomy of theory may therefore rest upon the normalization of particular experiences. This relationship becomes especially significant when historically invisible lived experiences enter theoretical discourse. Their emergence does not merely provide additional experiences for existing theories to explain. It also reveals the particular experiential foundations of theories that were previously assumed to be universal.

Engaging with the philosophical contributions of Professor Gopal Guru, particularly his reflections on experience and theory, this seminar seeks to explore how lived experiences constitute the conditions of theoretical meaning and how the recognition of marginalized experiences may open new possibilities for theorization

Call for Presentations

We particularly welcome papers that critically engage with Professor Guru's work—whether by thinking alongside him, questioning or challenging his arguments, or extending his philosophical concerns in new directions—rather than merely summarizing or reproducing his ideas.

Faculties, Research scholars and students interested in presenting are invited to submit a brief proposal/abstract within 19th October. As presentation slots are limited, proposals will be selected on the basis of their relevance to the seminar and the strength of the question or argument they propose to pursue.

Prof. Gopal Guru will be present for the seminar and will offer brief comments on the presentations. Each presentation will be followed by an open discussion.

Those who do not wish to present are also welcome to attend and participate in the discussion.

Proposals may be sent to: philosophyiiser@gmail.com

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