

South Asia in the Popular Imagination

Course Objective

This course seeks to unravel a sense of South Asia through some select popular sources, such as literature and cinema. How does South Asia appear in contemporary popular cinema and contemporary short stories from the region? In other words, what are the key motifs underpinning the popular art forms in South Asia?

Course Credits: 2

Course Content:

Unit I

The first part of this course outlines a case of South Asia through select cinematic narratives to arrive at the idea of a melodramatic region, in sync with performative traditions, interventions of modernity, and historical encounters. The answers to the above question thus enlist various recurrent emotions that cinemas have played within the region. To name a few, they could be love, loss, and revenge! These motifs could be embedded in the national frameworks, but cinemas in the region narrate emotions crossing the territorial boundaries too. The crossing over of boundaries as well as affirmation of the same thereby becomes two poles between which emotions unfold.

Against this backdrop, the curated course, will adopt an interactive pedagogy, to make sense of the following issues:

- *Melodrama and Myths*
- *Within and Without Nation*
- *Politics of Identities*

To discuss these, the course will dwell upon an eclectic medley of clips from a variety of cinemas from across the region. And meanwhile, students would be oriented to think through cinemas.

Evaluation

Evaluation will consist of one class presentation and one written assignment for both the units.

Readings

Dev N Pathak, 2017. Melodramatic South Asia: In Quest of Local Cinemas in the Region, Journal of Human Values, Volume 23, Issue 3, 2017

Dev N Pathak, 2017. On Another of South Asia, in Dev Pathak edited, Another South Asia, Delhi: Primus Books

Unit II

The second part of this course will explore some distinctive South Asian literary forms – the myth, the folktale, the *quissa*, the romance and the contemporary short story around the concepts of love, romance and mystic eroticism as visualized in South Asian cultures. Considering that patriarchy sees in eros a potent opponent, very often love finds its most powerful expression not in life but in literature and religion, making poets and writers its most eloquent interpreters.

This part of the course will also enquire into narratives as meaning making devices, examine narrative strategies, narratives within narratives and why we need to tell so many stories.

Students will be encouraged to bring to class significant and well-loved writers and writings for elucidation and discussion.

Readings

Khair, Tabish and Sebastian Doubinsky, *Reading Literature Today: Two Complementary Essays and a Conversation*, New Delhi: Sage, 2011.

Ray, Rajat Kanta, *Exploring Emotional History: Gender, Mentality and Literature in the Indian Awakening*, New Delhi: OUP, 2001, rpt 2009.

Kakar, Sudhir and John M. Ross, *Tales of Love, Sex and Danger*, New Delhi: OUP, 1986, rpt 1995.

Pattanaik, Devdutt, *Myth = Mithya: Decoding Hindu Mythology*, New Delhi: Penguin, 2006.