Media Adaptations of Sanskrit Literature

Program in which it is offered: All UG Programs

Course Category: Minor   **Schedule of Offering: Semester IV**

Course Credit Structure: 3   **Course Code: LL161**

- **Lecture: 3**
- **Tutorial: 0**
- **Practical: 0**

Contact Hours per week: 3   **Instructor: Saurabh Singanapalli**

1. Introduction

As citizens of contemporary India, our earliest memories of Sanskrit epics and other classics from Sanskrit literature are most often through adaptations of these works in various forms. Given their critical role as mediators of works that shape our consciousness, our beliefs, and at times our very view of ourselves, there is a need to study these adaptations and analyse them critically. Each new adaptation adds to the original by introducing new ideas, new layers to characters, or new representations of either events or people. These are the result of a series of choices made by the creators of such adaptations, and the principal goal of this course is to enable students to study and understand these choices and how they affect the audience. Students of this course will thus undertake critical analyses of a number of different kinds of adaptations, primarily in the fields of film, drama, television, and graphic novels. This course will be especially useful for those interested in literary adaptations and intertextuality, those who intend to pursue a career in media criticism or adaptation studies, or those desiring to produce or create adaptations of their own.

This course will be conducted primarily in English; however, some knowledge of Hindi will be useful as some of the popular film and TV adaptations that will be studied are originally in Hindi. Adaptations of Sanskrit literature into plays in various regional languages will be studied as English translations. English subtitles will be provided for audiovisual media wherever possible.

2. Course Objectives

i.   To help learners to critically appreciate the nature of adaptations of literature in different media
ii. To allow learners to envision a path towards creating and producing adaptations of their own

3. Course Outcomes

At the end of this course, learners will be able to:

i.   Understand the broad concerns in the field of adaptation studies, and identify the ones specifically relevant to adaptations of Sanskrit literature

ii. Analyse adaptations in different kinds of media through a study of the characteristics of film, drama, television and graphic novels, and their effects on the adaptations created within them

iii. Discuss the visual nature of contemporary media and the multiple pictorial representations of people and events created as a result

iv. Conduct both a close textual as well as a contextual analysis of various kinds of media adaptations of Sanskrit literature

v.   Identify the role such adaptations play in shaping the consciousness of Indian society

4. Pre-requisites

Since this course will be taught in English, students taking this course must be comfortable with reading, writing, listening and speaking in English, that is, they must be able to read and understand papers and critical essays written in English, and be able to discuss and debate the ideas proposed therein. Some prior knowledge of Sanskrit epics and literature will be useful. Apart from this, the course has no other prerequisites.

5. Readings

There is no single primary text book for this course. However, a set of readings have been identified under each module of the course. Students will be required to access these reading materials from the library repository and assemble a set of readings for their personal use.

In addition, a number of books have been identified for subsidiary/supplementary reading (as listed below), which the students may look up to increase their own understanding of the subject, and to aid their participation in group discussions n class.

Recommended Reading:

1. Albrecht-Crane, C., and Cutchins, D.R. (2010). *Adaptation Studies: New Approaches*. Farleigh-Dickinson University Press.
2. Cartmell, D., and Whelehan, I., eds. (1999). *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*. Routledge, London.
3. Cartmell, D., and Whelehan, I., eds. (2007). *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*. Cambridge UP, Cambridge.
4. Hutcheon, L. (2006). *A Theory of Adaptation*. Routledge, New York
5. Sanders, J. (2006). *Adaptation and Appropriation*. Routledge, London.
6. Gokulsing, K. M., & Dissanayake, W. (Eds.). (2009). *Popular culture in a globalised India*. Routledge.

6. Module-wise topics

Module 1: Introduction (5 sessions)
- Defining adaptation studies
- Discussing intertextuality
- Major concerns in adaptation studies

<u>Readings</u>

1. Whelehan, I. (2012). What is Adaptation Studies? 18 April. Accessed March 25, 2017. https://blogs.utas.edu.au/adapt/2012/04/18/what-is-adaptation-studies/.
2. Corrigan, T. (2017). Defining Adaptation. *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies (ed. Thomas Leitch)*, pp. 23-35.
3. Martínez Alfaro, M.J. (1996). Intertextuality: origins and development of the concept. *Atlantis*, Vol. 18, No. 1/2, pp. 268-285.

Module 2: Discussing media and literary adaptation (5 sessions)
- Visual media and their implications for adaptation from literature
- Narrative choices: retelling and rewriting stories
- Managing expectations
- Evaluating Storytelling: Analysing agendas and rhetorical analysis

<u>Readings</u>

1. Sreedharan, C. (2016). "How the Mahabharata was retold on Twitter." Huff Post. 15 July. Accessed April 27, 2017. http://www.huffingtonpost.in/dr-chindu-sreedharan/how-the-mahabharata-was-r_b_6660648.html.
2. Chatman, S. (1980). What Novels Can Do That Films Can't (And Vice Versa). *Critical Inquiry, Vol. 7, No. 1, On Narrative*, pp. 121-140.
3. Hernadi, P. (1980). On the How, What and Why of Narrative. *Critical Inquiry, Vol. 7, No. 1, On Narrative*, pp. 201-203.
4. Chatman, S. (1980). Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film. Cornell University Press, pp. 109-160; 184-205.

Module 3: Adaptations of Sanskrit literature into Film (5 sessions)
- Source vs Audience: whose story is it anyway?
- Social concerns in film adaptations of Sanskrit literature
- Case study 1: *Raja Harishchandra*

<u>Readings</u>

1. Kramer, L. (2017). Adaptation in Bollywood. *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies (ed. Thomas Leitch)*, pp. 251-266.

2. Devika and Gupta, P. (2015). Studies in Aesthetic Delight (Parmananda) in Hindi Film Adaptations. *The NEHU Journal*, Vol XIII, No. 1, pp. 1- 20.
3. Sathaye, A. (2009). Why Did Hariścandra Matter in Early Medieval India? Truth, Fact, and Folk Narrative in the Sanskrit Purāṇas. *The Journal of Hindu Studies*, 2, 131–159.
4. Aklujkar, V. (2007). Family, Feminism, and Film in remaking Ramayana. In Pauwels, H.R.M. (ed.) *Indian Literature and Popular Cinema: Recasting Classics*. Routledge, pp. 42-54.

Module 4: Adaptations of Sanskrit literature into Television (5 sessions)
- "Death of the author"?
- Commercial and economic concerns in TV adaptations
- Case study 2: *Vikram aur Betaal*

Readings

1. Pasricha, Anjana. (2014). *Hindu myhtologies rule Indian television*. Yahoo News. Accessed May 1, 2017. https://uk.news.yahoo.com/hindu-mythologies-rule-indian-television-092108926.html.
2. Rahman, M. (1988). A political statement. India Today. 31 October. Accessed April 29, 2017. http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/b.r.-chopras-serial-mahabharat-promises-to-be-another-bonanza/1/329897.html.
3. Sengupta, Roshni. (2017). Iconography of violence in televised Hinduism: the politics of images in the Mahabharata. *Continuum*: *Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* (Routledge) 31 (1), pp. 150-161.
4. Rajan, C. (1995). *Śivadāsa: The Five-and-Twenty Tales of the Genie.* Penguin Books.

Module 5: Adaptations of Sanskrit literature into Graphic novels (5 sessions)
- Accuracy and Faithfulness: do they matter?
- Panels: The idiom of comics and graphic novels
- Case Study 3: *Amar Chitra Katha ('Abhimanyu' and 'Hitopadesha')*
- Case Study 4: *Ramayana 3392 A.D.*
- Appearances and representation: protagonists, antagonists, events

Readings

1. Arora, Kim. 2013. *Religion, mythology still big in Indian comics*. Times of India. Accessed April 30, 2017. http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Religion-mythology-still-big-in-Indian-comics/articleshow/18448814.cms.

2. Ricoeur, P. (1980). Narrative Time. *Critical Inquiry, Vol. 7, No. 1, On Narrative*, pp. 169-190.
3. McCloud, S. (1993). *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*.

Module 6: Adaptations of Sanskrit literature into Drama (5 sessions)
- Dramatic adaptations in regional languages
- Exploring indigenous theatrical forms
- Local flavours and additions; changes with technology
- Case study 5: *Rāmlīlā*

Readings

1. Avasthī, S. (2001). *Performance Tradition in India*. National Book Trust, India.
2. Grady, S. A., & Zarrilli, P. B. (1994). "... It Was like a Play in a Play in a Play!"" Tales from South Asia" in an Intercultural Production. TDR (1988-), 38(3), 168-184.
3. Karnad, G. (1995). Performance, Meaning, and the Materials of Modern Indian Theatre. New Theatre Quarterly, 11(44), 355-370.

Module 7: Images of the times (5 sessions)
1. Pictorial portrayals of characters, society and nature
2. Representational choices in visual media

Readings

4. Newell, K. (2017). Adaptation and Illustration: A cross-disciplinary approach. *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies (ed. Thomas Leitch)*, pp. 477-493.
5. Hassler-Forest, D. (2017). Roads not taken in Hollywood's comic-book movie industry: *Popeye, Dick Tracy*, and *Hulk. The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies (ed. Thomas Leitch)*, pp. 407-423.
6. Chatterjee, G. (2007). Sakuntala: the look and the image in literature, theatre, and cinema. In Pauwels, H.R.M. (ed.) *Indian Literature and Popular Cinema: Recasting Classics*. Routledge, pp. 57-75.

Module 8: Comparative Studies: Across Time and Space (5 sessions)
- Comparing adaptations
- '*Kalyug*' and '*Rajneeti*'
- '*Sita's Ramayan*', '*Sita Sings the Blues*' and '*Ravanayan*'
- '*Stree*' and '*Mudrarakshasam*'

Readings

1. Mathur, D. (2015). Making the Ramayana relevant: Some Thoughts on Modern Adaptations in 21st Century America. *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities*, 2 (10), pp. 199-209.
2. Hegarty, J.M. (2011). *Religion, Narrative and Public Imagination in South Asia: Past and Place in the Sanskrit Mahabharata*. Routledge, London, pp. 192-198.
3. Malinar, A. (1995). The Bhagavad Gita in the Mahabharata TV serial: Domestic drama and Dharmic solutions. In Dalmia, V. and von Stietencron, H. ed. *Representing Hinduism: The Construction of Religious traditions and National Identity*, Sage, Delhi, pp. 442-467.
4. Sutherland, S.J. (1989). Sītā and Draupadī: Aggressive Behavior and Female Role-Models in the Sanskrit Epics. Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 109, No. 1, pp. 63-79.

Module 9: Conclusion and Review (5 sessions)
- Adaptations of Sanskrit literature into mass media: paths yet to be taken
- Towards creating satisfying adaptations
- Review and wrap up

Readings

1. Scholes, R. (1980). Language, Narrative, and Anti-narrative. *Critical Inquiry, Vol. 7, No. 1, On Narrative*, pp. 204-212.
2. Smith, B.H. (1980). Narrative versions, Narrative Theories. *Critical Inquiry, Vol. 7, No. 1, On Narrative*, pp. 213-236.

7. Pedagogy

The teaching in this course will be mostly through lectures and classroom discussions. The instructor's role will be primarily to introduce concepts and generate questions of interest, but the discussion around these questions is expected to be mostly student-driven, with some minor assistance and prodding from the teacher.

8. Evaluation Pattern

Analytical and critical ability, as well as the ability to express opinions clearly and concisely, are extremely important for this course, and hence group discussions and debates constitute a crucial evaluation component here. Individual progress will be measured through assignments, a term paper and a mid-term examination.
- Mid-semester exam (25%)
- Group discussions/debates (5) (25%)
- Individual Written Assignments (2) (20%)
- Final term paper (30%)