A Comparative Study: Itihāsa-Purāṇa, Greek and Sumerian Mythologies

Course Category: Minor	**Schedule of Offering:** Odd/Even Semester
Course Sub-category: Skill Development	**Course Credit Structure: 3**
Course Stream: Linguistics and Literary Studies	**Total Hours: 45**
Course Code: LL177	**Lecture:** 45hr**; Tutorial:**0**; Practical:**0
Instructor: Vishaka Venkat	**Maximum Intake:**

1. Introduction

This is a basic course, which introduces students to the critical understanding of the term "Mythology". Involving the study of myths, "mythology" from a Western perspective are imagined narratives that helped man in finding causes for natural phenomenon and other cultural events. This definition becomes an aberration, from an Indian perspective as Vedic Gods, Purāṇas and Itihāsas are not considered fictitious. Vedas, the sacred literature, Puranas, the ancient Sanskrit literature, and Itihāsas, the historical literature are considered as a medium which helps an individual in attaining the supreme truth, thus, they are taken to be divine, truthful and sanctified. Cautious of this variance, this course introduces students to the nuances of the term myth as it takes them through the Itihāsa-Purāṇa, Greek and Sumerian Mythologies.

Though divergent in its meaning, mythologies as such are allegorical narratives. Myths are the metaphorical narrations that make emotional connection with its audience. It provides myriad ways to interpret, thereby, rendering different morals and teachings to each individual. The underpinnings of these narratives resonate in the daily discourse right from the naming of a location to the rituals that determine one's routine. They also modulate the allusions in literature, the symbols in dreams, and even, the religion that serves as the bedrock of culture. Therefore, the intention of this course is to explore the common motifs and understand the power of these narratives as it dictates the functioning of society.

Course Objectives

i. To introduce learners to the critical understanding of the terms myth, itihāsa and purāṇa.
ii. To familiarise learners to a selection of stories, tales and legends from Itihāsas-Purāṇas, Greek and Sumerian Mythologies

iii.   To enable learners to understand the influence of the narratives.

Course Outcomes

At the end of this course, learners will be able to:
   i.   Identify and understand the critical terminologies such as myth, tale, legend, itihāsa and purāṇa.
   ii.   Identify and relate with the relevance power of these narrations in the present context.
   iii.   Evaluate the narratives from cross-cultural perspectives.

2. 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. The course will be assignment oriented, which would require the students to make presentations. Therefore, only those students who are willing to actively participate in discussions and assignments, are requested to opt for this course. As the final evaluation of the course requires a written project, students with an interest in writing can enrol for the course.

Apart from this, the course has no other prerequisites.

3. Readings

There is no particular text for this course. However, a few references have been recommended, which would help the students in the critical appreciation of the narratives.

Recommended Reading:

1. Adat, Dharmaraj and Reeja B. Kavanal. *Studies on Myth Philosophy and Culture*. Pratibha Prakashan, 2017.
2. Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Hill and Wang, 1972.
3. Campbell, Joseph. Ed. *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilisation*. Pantheon, 1946.
4. ---. *Myths to Live By*. Penguin, 1993.
5. ---. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton UP, 2004.
6. ---. *The Power of Myth*. Anchor Books, 1991.
7. Csapo, Eric. *Theories of Mythology*. Wiley and Blackwell, 2008.

8. Dowson, John. *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion*. D.K. Printworld, 2014.
9. Frye, Northrop. "Archetypes of Literature". *The Kenyon Review*, vol. 13 no. 1, 1951.
10. Jung, Carl. *Psychology of the Unconscious*. Dover, 2002.
11. Lang, Andrew. *Myth, Ritual and Religion*. Longmans, Green and Co., 1913.
12. Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Myth and Meaning*. Routledge, 2017.
13. Segal, Robert A. *Myth: A very Short Introduction*. OUP, 2015.
14. Vanucci, Marta. *Ancient Gods and Heroes of East and West*. D.K. Printworld, 2007.
15. Wilkinson, Philip, and Neil Philip. *Mythology*. Metro Books, 2018.

4. Module-wise topics

Module 1: Introduction (5 hours)

This module will provide an overall introduction to the theoretical understanding of myth, itihāsa and purāṇa. The lectures will sight examples from various narratives to explain its etymology, relevance and influences.

- Etymologies: Myth- Itihāsa-Purāṇa-Aitihya- Legend-Folktale
- Sources and structure of the narratives
- Narratives and Civilizations

Recommended reading:

1. Bhargava, P. L. "The Origin and Development of Purāṇas and their Relation with Vedic Literature." *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 58/59, 1977, pp. 489–498. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41691720. Accessed 20 June 2020.

2. Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. "Mahābhārata, Itihāsa." *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1937, pp. 211–212. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41688345. Accessed 20 June 2020.

3. Segal, Robert A. *Myth: A very Short Introduction*. OUP, 2015.

Module 2: Power of Narratives (5hours)

This module particularly looks at the significance and influence of the Narratives by analysing the association of Narratives with:

- Ecology
- Language-Society
- Sources-Literature

- Rituals-Culture
- Temples and Landscapes

Recommended Reading

1. Mathur, Nita. "Myth, Image and Ecology." *Indian Anthropologist*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2001, pp. 19–28. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41919881. Accessed 20 June 2020.

2. Segal, Robert A. *Myth: A very Short Introduction*. OUP, 2015.

Module 3: Nature and Deities (15 hours)

The module will compare the stories and legends of various deities from itihāsa-purāṇa, Greek and Sumerian mythologies. Their weapons, attires and appearances will be analysed to understand the similarities and divergences. Animal symbolism will also be discussed to understand the common motifs.
- Indra-Zeus-Marduk-Agni-Girra -Hestia- Hephaestus- Surya-Helios-Utu-Prithvi-Ninhursanga-Gaia
- Cosmic Tree-Lion-Snakes-Cow-Swan-Dove-Vulture

Recommended Reading
1. Daly, Kathleen N. and Marian Rengel. *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*. Facts on File, 2004.
2. Dowson, John. *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion*. D.K. Printworld, 2014.
3. Kramer, Samuel Noah. *Sumerian Mythology: A Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement in the Third Millennium B.C*. U of Pennsylvania P, 1961.
4. Mani, Vettam. *Purāṇic Encyclopaedia. A Comprehensive Dictionary with Special Reference to the Epic and Purāṇic Literature*. Motilal Banarsidass, 1975.

Module 4: The Concept of Protagonist (10 hours)

As the narratives unfold narrating the heroic deeds of a character, the concept of protagonist is significant in interpreting them. This module will discuss the characteristics of a protagonist.

- Archetype of the Hero
- Central characters: Gilgamesh-Hercules- Rama-Krishna- Prometheus-Enmerkar-Achilles
- Kali-Inanna-Artemis

Recommended Reading
1. Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton UP, 2004.

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2. "For the Jungians, the hero's journey is a journey within." Jordan Peterson. TheArchangel911. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_7 ZEybvApE.
3. Kluger, Rivkah Schärf. *The Archetypal Significance of Gilgamesh: A Modern Ancient Hero*. Daimon, 2015.
4. Vanucci, Marta. *Ancient Gods and Heroes of East and West*. D.K. Printworld, 2007.

Module 5: Narratives and Rituals (10 hours)

Narratives are elementary in understanding rituals and tradition. The last module discusses how narratives mould rites and rituals of different cultures.

- Narratives of Creation and Destruction
- Fertility Rites and Rituals- Death and Funeral rites
- Rituals and theatre

Recommended Reading
1. Burkert, Walter. *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*. U of California P, 1979.
2. Lang, Andrew. *Myth, Ritual and Religion*. Longmans, Green and Co., 1913.

5. Pedagogy

The course will be taught through classroom lectures, discussions and assignments. The lectures will introduce the concepts and themes and prompt the students to think about the significance of mythology in daily life. The course is student-driven and they are required to make presentations on their observations.

6. Evaluation Pattern

Individual progress will be evaluated through quizzes, assignments and presentations. Instead of an end-term examination, the students are required to submit a project on a critical analysis of the narratives. This is an important assessment component and is expected to enhance their critical and analytical abilities.

- Quizzes - 20% [Every Class CIA]
- Weekly Group Discussions/Presentations/Activities- [20% CIA]
- Individual Assignments – 2 [10% CIA- 5% each]
- Written Project and Presentation- [50%]

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APPENDIX 1: Notes for this course when running as a Special Minor (in online mode)

In online mode, majority of the classes will be taken through live sessions. In between recorded sessions will be given for homework. The live session will be a combination of lectures, quizzes in between, activities and discussions.

It is tentatively planned to take place between 5-6 weeks, requiring roughly 9 contact hours each. The classes will be happening between 5.30 to 7 pm (Weekdays). The guest lectures will depend on the availability and convenience of the speaker. The tentative schedule is as follows:

- Session 1: Monday: Live session (1.5hours)
- Session 2: Tuesday: Live session (1.5 hours)
- Session 3: Wednesday: Live session (1.5 hours)
- Session 4: Thursday: Live session (1.5 hours)
- Session 5: Friday: Individual project discussion and work/Class presentations (1.5 hours)
- Session 6: Saturday: Guest lectures (1.5 hours)

The 'Final Project' is an important assessment component of this course. The discussions on Friday will help students in planning their projects.

REQUIREMENTS

In order to join and fully benefit from this course online:

- Students must have access to a reasonably good internet connection, which allows them to attend all the live sessions.
- Students must have good internet access to watch the YouTube videos and the recorded sessions for assignments.
- Students must complete the reading tasks or assignments on time, which would ensure smooth running of the class.
- Students may be required to join Whatsapp/Gmail discussion groups to facilitate group discussion via chat, beyond class hours.

READINGS

The research articles and books will be shared in a google drive to which students will be given access.

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