

## **HIST01-GE1**

### **UNDERSTANDING EARLY SOUTH ASIAN CULTURES**

#### **UG-I, SEMESTER-I**

**Course Worth: 6 credits (100 Marks)**

#### **Mode of assessment**

Mid-Semester Examination: 20 marks

End-Semester Examination: 80 marks

#### **Course description:**

The aim of this course is to familiarise non-history students with a nuanced understanding of ancient South Asian cultural traditions often obfuscated by ahistoric and presentist presumptions. This course intends to blur the artificial boundary between indology, philosophy, archaeology and art history. It invites undergraduate students across all disciplines to engage with the ancient Indian past in interesting ways. *The exact course content may change from Semester to Semester, depending on the availability and academic interest of the course instructor(s).* The themes and the units to be taught by specific course instructors are given below. The units provide an overview, explanatory and analytic content, as well as nuanced insights into the dynamics of ancient South Asian history and historiography. The course also provides bibliographic readings related to each unit

#### **Unit I: Religious Traditions**

Tradition overrides almost every aspect of life in India. Religious traditions and cultural norms and political functioning are intertwined in such a manner that it is difficult to disentangle them. So it is only natural that any serious attempt to understand the early Indian society and polity should entail a study of its religious traditions. That is what this module is dedicated to doing. It promises to provide a comprehensive understanding of the genesis of the major religious traditions of early India and how they continue to impact our contemporary society.

#### **Unit II: Hinduism: The Use and Abuse of Early South Asian Cultural and Political History**

In this section we will begin with an overview of the chronological structure of the dynastic history of ancient India from later Vedic times to the fall of the Gupta Empire. We will consider the influence of geographical factors, regional shifts and other social issues. Then we will

examination in some aspects of ancient Indian society and politics, which remain relevant even at present owing to their role in the identity formation of the Indian people.

**Sub-Units:**

The Aryan Debate

Understanding sovereignties and regional political-cultural traditions

Re-visiting the 'myth' of the Gupta 'golden age'.

**Unit III: Narrative Traditions:** This unit will introduce the students to a variety of oral and literary narrative texts and traditions, and highlight the complex interconnection between oral, literary, religious, poetic, historical and imaginative narrative traditions. It will include new modalities and analytic perspectives on readings and re-involutions of epic threads (the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*), and consider how these impact, and have relevance for understanding specific strands of contemporary Indian cultures, politics and everyday life.

**Unit: IV: Heritage and History: Flows, Continuities and Contemporary Relevance**

This unit will explore avenues for understanding the ways in which tangible heritages in the form of monuments and objects, as well as intangible heritages of the mind travel (have travelled) across time and space. This theme is analysed with a view to seeing how heritage is selectively appropriated, memorialised, used, legitimised and valorised in tandem with shifting political and cultural matrices and patterns of quotidian life. It will also focus on 'cultural artifacts', as well as representations in art forms (paintings) which are an integral part of understanding the dynamics of historical heritages, objects, and sacred-secular architectural creations. A cultural artifact is any artifact or item that sheds light on the way a particular [historical] society lived, thought or otherwise expressed itself. The unit will focus on (1) genealogies of cultural artifacts, including the political, social and cultural milieu in which they came to be crafted; (2) intersections between the sacred and the secular reflected in such artifacts; and (3) their legacies for contemporary India.

**Sub-themes:**

Sculpture: Mauryas, Sungas, the Gandhara and Mathura schools

Early Indian Temples: Historical evolution, types and accomplishment under the Guptas

## Art in Ancient India: Sacred and Secular Portrayals

### Essential Readings:

Romila Thapar, *Early India* (New Delhi: Penguin & Allen Lane, 2002)

Upinder Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India* (New Delhi: Pearson, 2007)

Romila Thapar, *Talking History: The Ramayana and the Mahabharata* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018)

A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India* (Volume 1) (London, 1954)

John Brockington, "The Sanskrit Epics", in Gavin Flood (ed.), *Blackwell Companion to Hinduism* (Oxford:Blackwell Publishing, 2003)

Thomas Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, India, 2005)

R.C.Majumdar (ed.), *The Vedic Age* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidyabhavan, 1996)

D.N. Jha, *Ancient India in Historical Outline* (Delhi: Manohar, 2000)

Vinay Lal, *The History of History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003)

Julius Lipner, *Hindus: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (Library of Religious Beliefs and Practices) (Routledge, London and New York, 2010)

Gavin Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge University Press, 2004)

G. D. Sontheimer, "Hinduism: The Five Components and Their Interactions", in G. D. Sontheimer and H. Kulke eds., *Hinduism Reconsidered* (Delhi, Manohar, 2001), pp. 305-324

Hirakawa, Akira (translated and edited by Paul Groner), *A History of Indian Buddhism: From Sakyamuni to Nagarjuna* (Asian studies at Hawaii) (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990)

Burnouf, Eugene, *Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism* (University of Chicago Press, 2015)

Cort, John E., *Open Boundaries: Jain Communities and Cultures in Indian History* (SUNY Series in Hindu Studies) (State University of New York Press, 1998)

Bimal Matilal, “Krishna: In Defence of a Devious Divinity” in *The Collected Essays of B K Matilal: Ethics and Epics*, (ed.) Jonardan Ganeri (Delhi, 2002), pp. 91-108

Robert P. Goldman and Sally J. Sutherland Goldman, “Ramayana”, in Sushil Mittal et al, *The Hindu World* (London: Routledge, 2014), 75-95

K. Ramanujan, “Three Hundred Ramayanas: Five Examinationples and Three thoughts on Translation” In Paula Richman ed., *Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*, (Delhi, 1992), 22-49.

Shledon Pollock, “Ramayana and Political Imagination in India”, *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 52, No.2, 1993: 261-297

James R Fitzgerald, “Mahabharata”, in Sushil Mittal et al, *The Hindu World* (London: Routledge, 2014), 52-75

Velchuri N. Rao, “Purana”, in Sushil Mittal et al, *The Hindu World* (London: Routledge, 2014), 97-117.

David Shulman, “Poets and Patrons in Tamil Literary Legend” in *The Wisdom of the Poets: Studies in Tamil Telegu and Sanskrit*, (Delhi, 2001), 63-102.

Susan L. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India* (Weatherhill, 1985)

D. Lowenthal , *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

Anne Eriksen, *From Antiquities to Heritage: Transformations of Cultural Memory* (Berghahn Books: 2016)

E. B. Havell, *Indian Architecture* (London, 1913) Chapter 1

Peter Harvey, “The Symbolism of the Early Stūpa”, *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, Volume: 7 (2), 67-94 (1984)

Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu Periods)*, D. B. Taraporevals Sons & Co. Private Ltd., Bombay, 1959. Chapters 8, 9 13, 19 and 21

Karl Khandalavala, *Indian Sculpture and Painting: An Introductory Study* (D. B. Taraporevala Sons and Co., Bombay, 1938)

Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temples* (University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1946)

James Fergusson, *The Rock Cut Temples of India* (John Murray: London, 1864)

Pramod Chandra, *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture* (American Institute of Indian Studies, New Delhi, 1975)

Krishna Deva, *Temples of North India* (National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1969)

George Michell, *The New Cambridge History of India, I:6- Architecture and Art of Southern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

### **Suggested Readings**

A.K. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Shiva* (Harmondsworth, 1973), Introduction

Sanjeev Sanyal, *Land of the Seven Rivers* (Delhi: Penguin, 2012)

Rajesh Kochhar, *The Vedic People* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2000)

David N. Lorenz, "Who Invented Hinduism?" *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1999, pp. 630-59.

A.K. Ramanujan, *Hymns for the Drowning* (Delhi, Penguin, 1993), pp. 4-6, 22-27, 54-57.

Laurie L. Patton, "Veda and Upanishad", in Sushil Mittal et al, *The Hindu World* (London: Routledge, 2014), 37-52

Iravati Karve, *Yuganta: The End of an Epoch* (Hyderabad, Disha Books, 1974)

Uma Chakravarty, "The World of Bhaktins in South Indian Tradition – The Body and Beyond" *Manushi*, 50-2, 1982, pp. 18-29. Reprinted in Kumkum Roy (ed.), *Women in Early Indian Societies* (Delhi: Manohar, 1999) pp. 299-321

A.K. Ramanujan, *Folk Tales from India: A Selection of Oral Tales from 22 Languages* (New York, 1991), Introduction pp. xiii-xxxii

Romila Thapar, *Shakuntala: Text, Readings Histories* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1999).

Subhas Kak, 'Early Indian Architecture and Art', in *Migration & Diffusion*, Vol. 6/No. 23, 2005, pp. 6-27.

Rajesh Singh, *An Introduction to the Ajanta Caves with Examinationples of Six Caves* (Hari Sena Press Private Limited, Vadodara, 2012)

Scialpi, *Glimpses of Indian History and Art: Reflections on the Past, Perspectives for the Future*, (Sapienza Universita Editrice, Roma, 2012), pp. 101-125.

Mulk Raj Anand and Stella Kramrisch, *Homage to Khajuraho*, Marg Publications, Bombay, 1962)

Dundas, Paul, *The Jains*, Second Edition (Routledge, 2002)

Flugel, Peter, *Studies in Jaina History and Culture: Disputes and Dialogues*, First Edition, (Routledge, 2006)

Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teaching, History and Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991)

Uma Chakravarti, "The Social Philosophy of Buddhism and the Problem of Inequality" *Social Compass*, 33(2-3) 1986, pp. 199-221.