

DSE: Communicating Culture: Tellings, Representations and Leisure**Credit Distribution, Eligibility and Pre-requisites of the Course**

Course Title & Code	Credits	Credit Distribution of the Course			Eligibility Criteria	Prerequisite of the Course
		Lecture	Tutorial	Practical/ Practice		
Communicating Culture: Tellings, Representations and Leisure	04	3	1	0	Nil	Nil

Communicating Culture: Tellings, Representations and Leisure**Course Objectives:**

This course aims to explore culture through its intangible attributes that include traditions or living expressions inherited from our past ancestors. These attributes encompass oral myths, fables and folktales, artistic expressions, rituals and celebrations, knowledge practices, as well as activities in pursuit of leisure. Even though such aspects of culture lack physical presence and are elusive, nevertheless, these are crucial in determining ideas that inform tangible aspects of culture like objects, monuments, artifacts, and places. The interplay between the intangible and tangible markers of culture develops the collective identity of communities in any given society.

The intangible dimensions of culture, like its material indicators, are dynamic and constantly evolving as these are shaped by historical influences, social interactions, and technological advancements. Through this lens, the course aims to highlight the dynamic relationship between intangible cultural heritage and the tangible symbols it inspires. These intangible elements serve as the backbone for understanding how rituals, stories, and practices imbue objects and spaces with meaning, transforming them into cultural artifacts that resonate with identity and emotion. Such an approach invites learners to critically engage with the conceptual frameworks that define and shape cultural heritage, encouraging them to see beyond the surface and delve into the narratives and philosophies that drive cultural expression.

This course explores India's cultural traditions through its intangible components discussed over four themes that address diverse narrative traditions, multiple performances, processional displays, and leisure activities. Each theme is referred to through a set of selected curated articles. The readings represent ethnic and spatial range, across geographical space and time, and draw on diverse methodologies. The module

emphasises the importance of understanding intangible cultural heritage as an interconnected system rather than isolated practices. The four themes are closely linked. For instance, the diverse forms of storytelling are acts of narrative performance. Such performances may be further amplified through theatrical representation. For instance, the telling of *Pabuji* displays diverse methods of communication using the *phad* (cloth picture scroll) along with musical recitation and dance. While performance at once fulfills multiple functions of communicating the ancient past, ethics, religious ritual, practical wisdom and entertainment; the core purpose of this oral narration remains rooted in connecting people to their cultural identity. The pedagogy of interdisciplinary approach is inbuilt into the structure of this course. Readings and audio-visual material have been knitted into themes to encourage active participation and discussion in the classroom.

Learning Outcome:

At the end of the course, the students would:

- Identify significant features of the intangible cultural heritage of India.
- Comprehend the function of storytelling traditions as preserving and communicating history.
- Comprehend that such narratives are performed and communicated by specific caste groups in the community; and that textuality and performativity are not binary opposites but are mutually interactive.
- Gather that processions are about display, public space and domination, and communicate cultural identities.
- Understand leisure not only as 'rest, relaxation, recreation', but leisure has a philosophical dimension as expressed in the practice of 'yoga' that transforms the mind and body by cultivating 'thinking, acting, and sense of being'.
- Appreciate that culture can be understood as a constant process in a permanent state of change. In all societies culture fulfills a didactic purpose. It, however, evolves and is disseminated through various communicative strategies.
- Understand that the process of communicating culture is dynamic and leads to re-inventing tradition.
- Study cultural history using interdisciplinary methods, like that of cultural anthropology.

Course Structure:

- I. Tellings: Myths, tales and folklore (4 Weeks)
- II. Performance as communication: Theatre, puppetry and music (4 Weeks)
- III. Processions as display: *Yatra*, *barat* and *julus* (4 Weeks)
- IV. Leisure: Mind, body and nation (4 Weeks)

Essential Readings:

Unit I. Tellings: Myths, tales and folklore (Week 1-4)

This theme explores the meaning, form and function of storytelling in the Indian context. Oral traditions contain a variety of forms like epics, myths, legends, folktales, fables, proverbs, riddles, jokes and songs. Folklore includes oral traditions, material culture like handmade toys, and customary lore such as rituals. In all societies oral traditions present a primordial vision, validate culture when traditions are challenged,

encourage group cohesion and sense of belonging, and fulfill a didactic purpose. Such acts of telling are communication strategies for preservation, re-invention, and dissemination of culture.

- i. Kanak Mital, "A Santhal Myth, Five Elements", *Prakrti, The Integral Vision*, Vol. 1 (Primal Elements – The Oral Tradition, edited by Baidyanath Saraswati), pp. 119-125.
- ii. Aleksandra S. Turek, "The Three Jewels of the Desert. The Dholā-Mārū Story: A Living Narrative Tradition of Northern India," Warsaw: Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, 2012, pp. 13-23, 245-254.
- iii. Stuart H. Blackburn, "The Folk Hero and Class Interests in Tamil Heroic Ballads", *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (1978), pp. 131-149.

Unit II. Performance as communication: Divine-play, bardic storytelling and puppetry (Week 5-8)

A traditional point of view suggests that in the West culture was preserved in texts and artifacts, while in the East culture was communicated as performance. The following essays suggest that it is counterproductive to define textuality and performativity as binary opposites even for heuristic purposes.

- i. Varsha Rani, "The unforgettable magic of the Ramnagar Ramlila", *Indian Horizons*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (June 2014), pp. 12-27.
Documentary on World Famous Ramleela, Ramnagar | विश्वप्रसिद्ध रामलीला, रामनगर | Project Varanasi
- ii. Jyotindra Jain, "The Painted Scrolls of the Garoda Picture Showmen of Gujarat" in *Marg*, Vol. 49 No. 3, March 1998, pp. 10-25.
- iii. Elizabeth Wickett, "The epic of Pabuji ki par in performance", *World Oral Literature Project. Voices of Vanishing Worlds*, Occasional Paper 3, University of Cambridge, 2010, pp. 1-27.
* Short documentary https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4EiAdeKi_E
- iv. Sarama M. Nagabhushana, "The Shadow Puppet Theatre of Andhra Pradesh", New Delhi: Sangeet Natak Akademi, 1990, pp. 15-28. The shadow puppet theatre of Andhra Pradesh | INDIAN CULTURE
For illustrations <https://www.sahapedia.org/tholu-bommalata-show-adishakti-theatre>

Unit III. Processions as display: Yatra, barat and julus (Week 9-12)

There are many types of processions in India that are organized on various occasions like military parade, political procession, protest marches, and religious processions that mark weddings, festivals and pilgrimages, funerals, temple processions, Christian, Sikh and Jain processions, and *taziya* during Muharram. These events interact deeply with cultural notions of space and sound and often intertwine with performance arts to create a layered sense of auspiciousness and ritual significance. Processions have historically been tools for expressing display, occupation of public space and domination, and communicating collective cultural identities.

- i. Hermann Kulke, "Rathas and Rajas: The car festival at Puri", reprinted with "Art and Archaeological Research Papers, (AARP, London) vol. XVI, Dec. 1979, Dec. 1979, on "Mobile Architecture in Asia: Ceremonial Chariots. Floats and Carriages", pp. 19-26.
- ii. Dash, K. C. (1996). "A Study of the Origin of Ratha Yātrā in the Puruṣottama Kṣetra", *East and West*, 46(1/2), 117–125. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29757257>

- * For illustrations Rath Yatra | Sahapedia
- * A clipping of the Ratha Yatra <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/videos/news/explained-the-significance-of-puris-jagannath-yatra/videoshow/65095341.cms>
- iii. Gregory D. Booth, "Space, sound, auspiciousness, and performance in North Indian wedding processions", Knut A. Jacobson, ed., *South Asian Religions on Display: Religious Processions in South Asia and in the Diaspora*, Routledge: London, New York, pp. 63-76.
 - iv. J.R.I. Cole, Chapter 4, "Popular Shi'ism", *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722-1859*, Berkley: University of California Press, 1988, pp. 92-119.
जे. आर. आई. कोल "लोकप्रचलित शीया धर्म", मध्यकालीन भारत का इतिहास, संपादक, मीनाक्षी खन्ना, अनुवाद उमाशंकर शर्मा 'ऋषि', नयी दिल्ली: ओरिएंट ब्लैकस्वान, 2007, पृष्ठ 76-104.
 - v. Suchitra Balasubrahmanyam, Chapter 6, "Imagining the Indian Nation: The Design of Gandhi's Dandi March and Nehru's Republic Day Parade", Kjetil Fallan, Grace Lees-Maffei, eds., *Designing Worlds: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization*, Berghahn Books, 2016, pp. 108-124.

Unit IV. Leisure: Mind, body and nation (Week 13-16)

Leisure is a basic human activity that can be defined by "rest, relaxation, or idleness", while transformative leisure involves the cultivation of "thinking, acting, and being". This framework does not inherently oppose labour and work activities. Yoga and sports are specific to transformative and leisure activities within various cultural traditions. Games and sports often travel from the point of origination to influence other cultural traditions. For example, cricket has been adopted at the national level in India, and yoga has been embraced globally as wellness practice.

- i. Miranda Thurston and Daniel Bloyce, "A quest for relaxation? A figurational analysis of the transformation of yoga into a global leisure time phenomenon", *Sport in Society* 2020, VOL. 23, NO. 10, 1615–1629 <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2020.1814574>.
- ii. Stephan Hillyer Levitt, "Chess—Its South Asian Origin and Meaning", *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Vol. 72/73, No. 1/4, Amrtamahotsava (1917-1992), pp. 533-547.
- iii. Phillip B. Zarrilli, "Three Bodies of Practice in a Traditional South Indian Martial Art", *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 28, Issue 12 (1989), pp. 1289-1309.
- iv. Ramchandra Guha, "Cricket and Politics in Colonial India", *Past and Present*, Vol. 161/1", pp. 155-190 (is available in Hindi).

Suggested Readings:

- i. Bradford Clark, "Putul Yatra: A Celebration of Indian Puppetry", *Asian Theatre Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Autumn, 2005), pp. 334-347.
- ii. Aleksandra S. Turek, "The Dhola-Maru in Rajasthani Folk Theatre," *"Rocznik Orientalistyczny"*, vol. LX, part 2, 2007, pp. 368-379.
- iii. Frank J. Korom, "Introduction: locating the study of folklore in modern South Asian studies", *South Asian History and Culture*, 2017, pp. 1-10.

- iv. Induja Awasthi, "Ramlila: Tradition and Styles", *Quarterly Journal for the National Centre for the Performing Arts* 8, no. 3: 23–36 accessed on 19 May 2019 from the *Sahapedia An open online resource on the arts, cultures and heritage of India* <https://www.sahapedia.org/tag/dashavatara>
- v. Induja Awasthi, "Rāmlīlā, paramparā aur śāliiyām", Delhi: Radhakrishna Prakashan, 1979.
- vi. Jim Masselos, "Audiences, Actors and Congress Dramas: Crowd Events in Bombay City in 1930", *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 8:1-2 (1985), pp. 71-86.
- vii. Niels Roed Sorensen, "Tolu Bommalu Kattu: Shadow Theater Re: Andhra Pradesh", *Journal of South Asian Literature*, Vol. 10, No. 2/4, THEATRE IN INDIA (Winter, Spring, Summer 1975), pp. 1-19.
The shadow puppet theatre of Andhra Pradesh | INDIAN CULTURE
- viii. Kathy Foley and Dadi Pudumjee, "India", *World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts* called "WEPA" or "EMAM" for Encyclopédie Mondiale des Arts de la Marionnette, a project of International Unima.
Available in English <https://wepa.unima.org/en/india/>
Available in Hindi at <https://wepa.unima.org/en/india/#>
- ix. Komal Kothari, "Myths, Tales and Folklore: Exploring the Substratum of Cinema", *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Indian Popular Cinema: Myth, Meaning and Metaphor (MARCH 1981), pp. 31-42.
- x. Susan S. Wadley, "Singing for the Audience: Aesthetic Demands and the Creation of Oral Epics", *RESOUND, A Quarterly of the Archives of Traditional Music*, Vol. VII, No. 2, April 1988.
- xi. Shaw, A., & Kaytaz, E. S. (2021). Yoga bodies, yoga minds: contextualising the health discourses and practices of modern postural yoga. *Anthropology & Medicine*, 28(3), 279–296.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13648470.2021.1949943>

Additional reading material may be provided by the Department.

Assessments:

Examination scheme and mode shall be as prescribed by the Examination Branch, University of Delhi, from time to time.