

Department of Sociology
Faculty of Social Sciences, South Asian University - New Delhi

Sound and Sight in South Asia
(Optional Course for M. Phil)
Total Credits: 04

Objective of the Course

What is 'South Asia' other than the conglomerate of nation following the charter of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)? Departing from south Asia as a bureaucratic category, this course debates the possibility of (re)imagining the region as a socio-cultural entity with its distinctions of sounds and sights. This re-imagination problematizes the depiction of south Asia as a merely geo-political entity and questions the manufacturing of a region depending only on the modern nation states. The socio-cultural, performative, landscape of the region, presents ample materials in terms of sounds (Sonic expressions) and sights (Visual expressions). These contents, of socio-cultural as well as socio-political significance, are communicated through the means of modern mass media, such as cinema, theater, photographs, television and websites. The compact disc industry and audio cassette industry producing popular music, popular cinema, videos on websites, still photographs and cartoons available on the webpages, and oral rhetoric of the leadership from the regional states et cetera, disclose to the readers of the content a socio-cultural phenomenon with political bearings. This course aims at raising a discourse on the basis of the sonic and scenic materials, which have been in the traffic across the territorial boundaries. Hence, it enables to explore the region from within and beyond intending towards an alternative understanding of South Asia. In doing so, an emphasize would be given on the language, history, religion, rituals, social institutions, caste, organic everyday life, morals, literature, cinema, theatre, performative actions, visual art and various themes concerning sounds and sights of this region. Considering the demarcation between people-centric approach and state-centric lens, the course envisages enabling a new framework. It also envisages that students will grapple with the thematic issues as well as the tangible instances from the region to develop their own sense of the region as a cultural entity.

Unit One: Conceptualizing and Contextualizing Sound and Sight

What are the basic concepts in the conceptual and theoretical explorations on the idea of sound and sight? This unit of the course introduces the fundamental concepts, binaries and discursive themes in situating various cultural forms pertaining to sound and sight.

Readings:

Barthes, Roland. 1982. *Mythologies*. London: Vresco

Benjamin, Walter. 2008. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. London: Penguin

De la Fuente, Eduardo. 2007. The 'New Sociology of Art': Putting Art Back into Social Science Approaches to the Arts, *Cultural Sociology*, 1(3): 409-425.

Read, Herbert. 1963. *To Hell with Culture*. London: Routledge. p. 10-36.

Unit Two: Conceptualizing and Contextualizing Cultural South Asia

This unit aids in exploring the region from a socio-cultural viewpoint? How do we perceive the concepts for example art, aesthetic, performance, or folk-classic-popular in relation with South Asia? And what is indeed South Asia, as far as sound and sight is concerned?

Readings

Banaji, Shakuntala. 2012. *South Asian Media cultures: Audiences, Representation, Contexts*. New York: Anthem.

Bose, Sugata and Ayesha Jalal. 1998 [2011]. *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*. Oxon: Routledge. 3rd ed.

Kapur, Geeta. 1997. Globalization and Culture, *Third Text*, 11(39): 21-38.

Nandi, Ashish. 2007. The Idea of South Asia: A Personal note on the post-Bandung Blues. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 6:4, p. 541-545.

Schechner, Richard. 2001. Rasaesthetics. *TDR/The Drama Review*, Vol. 45 (3): 27-50.

Wolf, Richard. 2009. *Theorizing the Local: Music, Practice, and Experience in South Asia and Beyond*. London: OUP. (selected parts).

Unit Three: Instances in Sonic and Scenic of South Asia (Part- 1)

Maintaining the continuity from the previous unit, this section enables the students to think thematically on the idea of South Asia. It elaborates the thematic issues to argue for a cultural south Asia while challenges the merely geo-political readings of the region. Here students will engage with some of the themes or categories such as music, films, theatres, television, photography, news, performance etc to explore and re(imagine) south Asia.

Readings:

Bharucha, Rustam. 2009. *The Politics of Cultural Practices: Thinking Through Theater in the Age of Globalization*. Delhi: OUP. P. 1-28.

Chatterji, Roma. 2005. Folklore and the Construction of National Tradition, *Indian Folklife*, 19, page 8-11.

----- . 2009. *Writing Identities: Folklore and Performative Arts of Purulia, Bengal*. New Delhi: IGNCA & Aryan Books. P. 85-104.

Coomarswamy, A. 1994. *Art and Swadeshi*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Pub. (Selected Parts).

Dalmia, Vasudha. 2006. Poetic, Plays and Performances: The Politics of Modern Indian Theater. Delhi: OUP (select)

Greene, Paul. 2001. Mixed Messages: Unsettled Cosmopolitanism in Nepali Pop, *Popular Music*, 20: 2, p. 169-187

Manuel, Peter. 1988. Popular Music in India: 1901-1986, *Popular Music*, 7: 2 (157-176).

Qureshi, Regula Burckhardt. 1991. His Master's Voice? : Exploring Qawwali and 'Gramophone Culture' in South Asia, *Popular Music*, 18(1): 63-98.

Schandel, W. V. 2009. *A National Culture, in A History of Bangladesh*. Delhi: CUP. P. 251-267.

Unit Four: Instances in Sonic and Scenic of South Asia (part- 2)

This section continues with exploring instances from different parts of south Asia, in the domains of consumerist identification through brands, and national identifications through public art, and various issues emerging from the realm of regional cinemas.

Readings:

Dupree, Nancy Hatch. 2002. Cultural heritage and national identity in Afghanistan, *Third World Quarterly*, 23:5, p. 977-989.

Dwyer, Rachel. 2010. I am Crazy about the Lord: The Muslim Devotional Genre in Hindi Film, *Third Text*, 24(1): 123-134.

Egan, Eric. 2002. Pakistani Cinema: Between the Domestic and the Regional, *Asian Cinema*, 13:1, p. 27-38

Hoek, Lotte, 2010. Cut-Pieces as Stag Film: Bangladeshi Pornography in Action Cinema, *Third Text*, 24:1, p. 135-141.

Kellner, Douglas. 2014. Fashion, Advertising and Identity in the Consumer Society, In Nita Mathur edited *Consumer Culture, Modernity and Identity*, New Delhi: Sage, p. 168-203.

Kabir, Alamgir. 1979. *Film in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Bangla Academy (selected).

Kirkpatrick, Joanna. 2003. 'Metaphor and Motive in Bangladeshi Ricksha Art* A Burkean Reading' in Artricksha.com, <http://www.artsricksha.com/readings/reading.asp?ID=46>, Last accessed on 22nd April 2015.

Khan, Ali & Ali, Nabil Ahmad. 2010. From Zinda Lash to Zibahkhana: Violence and Horror in Pakistani Cinema, *Third Text*, 24(1): 149-161.

Mazzarella, William. 2014. Cultural Politics of Branding: Promoting 'Kamasutra' in India, In Nita Mathur edited *Consumer Culture, Modernity and Identity*, New Delhi: Sage, p. 204-238.