

# Literature and Poetry

## An Introduction to Kannada Literature

### Course Outline:

Kannada literature has a history of over a millennium and is one of the flourishing Southern Indian literary traditions. An analysis of a regional literature like Kannada can offer a strong alternative world-view by engaging with issues and ideas different from those dealt by dominant literatures. Kannada Literature right from the beginning has critically engaged with social issues and this trend found its fullest expression in the 12th century literary movement which fought for a caste-less society (Veershaivism). More recently, Bandaya or rebellious literary tradition has been a driving force behind movements for social justice. Studying these rich and varied developments in a comparative perspective can offer creative insights into contemporary issues such as inequalities, gender discrimination and environmental degradation.

### Profile: Dr. U.R. Ananthamurthy

The Late Dr. U.R. Ananthamurthy was a distinguished Kannada writer and public intellectual. His numerous publications include novels, short stories, poetry and essays in literary and cultural criticism. The Jnanapith Award was conferred on him in 1994 and the Padma Bhushan in 1998. His major works include the novels, Samskara, Bharatipura, Avasthe and Bhava.

## Contemporary Hindi Poetry

### Course Outline:

"Sahitya Samaj ka darpan hai - Literature reflects the society (social processes) – wrote Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi a hundred years ago. Like all creative endeavours of human mind, poetry tells us, at a surface level, about the times we live in, the conflicting world-views, etc. At a deeper level, it records and exposes the non-formal epistemological approaches we use to comprehend and demystify the world around us.

An exposure to contemporary poetry will add to a holistic learning that an educator or a development practitioner must possess. In particular, vernacular expressions relate us directly to the people at the receiving end of our exercises.

**Profile:**

Harjinder Singh, aka 'LALTU (लाल्टू)' is a well-known poet and writer in Contemporary Hindi literature. He is a Professor teaching sciences at IIIT-Hyderabad. He visited the Azim Premji University, Bangalore for a year during 2013-14. He also worked with EKLAVYA, MP, as a UGC teacher fellow for two years. His work in Hindi literature is mainly as a poet with five collections of poetry, one short story collection and a few works for children and neo-literates. He has received his education from Presidency College, Kolkata, IIT-Kanpur and Princeton.

## **Love through the Centuries - Readings from Classical Indian Literatures**

**Course Outline:**

Typically, Indian students do not have the opportunity to explore classical Indian literatures in a class room setting. If at all, some of them choose to read classical texts out of interest. However, these readings tend to be whimsical and unsystematic and are usually not located in any context -- either literary or historical. As a result, knowledge of our own literary traditions is incomplete and can be distorted. Also typically, young people tend to read within their own linguistic traditions, unaware of such phenomena as inter-textuality and citation and a larger literary universe created and inhabited by these texts.

This course will introduce them to a number of texts, themes and ideas from a millennium of Indian writing -- starting with the late epic period (circa 200 CE) to the end of the age of classical poetry (circa 1200CE). The readings (in translation) and discussions will be linked by ideas and expressions of love, covering such texts as the Ramayana, Sanskrit, Prakrit and Tamil poetry and the Bhakti period. Students will be exposed to religious as well as secular expressions of love in the various classical languages of the sub-continent. Our readings and discussions will explore these facets, allowing students to gain a fuller understanding of these tropes and themes.

**Profile:**

Arshia Sattar's translations of the Valmiki Ramayana (1996) and Tales from the Kathasaritsagara (1993) are published by Penguin Books as is her collection of essays on the Ramayana, "Lost Loves: Exploring Rama's Anguish." (2011) which was short-listed for the Crossword Non-Fiction Award in 2012. She has also written three books for children, most recently, "Adventures with Hanuman" (Red Turtle, 2013). Her latest book, "The Mouse Merchant: Tales of Money in Ancient India" (Alan Payne, Penguin 2013) is a compilation of stories from

Sanskrit texts about attitudes to money. Arshia teaches classical Indian literatures at various institutions across the country and along with DW Gibson, is the Founder and Director of Sangam House, an international writers' residency program located outside Bangalore.

Vanamala Vishwanathan is a Faculty Member at the Azim Premji University. Her profile may be viewed at: <http://www.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/people>.

## Modern Indian Literature

**Course Outline:**

The impact of the West has resulted in new forms and themes in Indian literature, marking a sharp break from traditional Indian literature. This course seeks to understand and appreciate novels, poetry, and short stories written in India primarily post-independence. The aim is to enjoy them for their literary merit, and also ascertain what they might tell us about ourselves and the society we live in, in a world connected by common historical events.

**Profile: Athena Kashyap**

Athena Kashyap's poetry books, Crossing Black Waters (2012) and Sita of the Earth and Forests (forthcoming, also by SFA Press, Texas) explore issues related to the concept of home and women in India. She has an MFA in Poetry and Certificates in the Teaching of Post-Secondary Reading & Writing from San Francisco State University, an MA in English from UC Davis, and a BA from Mount Holyoke College. She has taught English at City College of San Francisco. She is the primary editor for the online literary journal at Jaaga, Bangalore and is also a literary editor at the journal, All Roads Lead You Home.

## **Ramayana and Mahabharata in Our Times**

### **Course Outline:**

It is increasingly the case that students have not read the Indian epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata, having experienced them only as oral tales or as television serials. Since these epics continue to provide a cultural vocabulary for contemporary society, it is important that students acquire not only a familiarity with these stories but also appreciate the many ways in which they are told. The course will use standard texts of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata as a base and then explore, primarily through film, contemporary retellings and multiple versions of these timeless stories. The course thus aims to not only give students a familiarity with the Ramayana and the Mahabharata but to introduce students to the diversity within the Ramayana and the Mahabharata traditions.

### **Profile:**

Arshia Sattar's translations of the Valmiki Ramayana (1996) and Tales from the Kathasaritsagara (1993) are published by Penguin Books as is her collection of essays on the Ramayana, "Lost Loves: Exploring Rama's Anguish." (2011) which was short-listed for the Crossword Non-Fiction Award in 2012. She has also written three books for children, most recently, "Adventures with Hanuman" (Red Turtle, 2013). Her latest book, "The Mouse Merchant: Tales of Money in Ancient India" (Alan Payne, Penguin 2013) is a compilation of stories from Sanskrit texts about attitudes to money. Arshia teaches classical Indian literatures at various institutions across the country and along with DW Gibson, is the Founder and Director of Sangam House, an international writers' residency program located outside Bangalore.

## **Read and Write Poetry**

### **Course Outline:**

Poetry lets you look at the world with fresh eyes, helping you free your deeper thoughts and feelings. By both learning to "read" and write poetry, students will gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of the art. They will be exposed to poets of international stature, and also

learn to critique their own and other students' writing in a safe, welcoming atmosphere.

Fieldtrips to art museums, poetry reading venues will give them insight into the world of a poet.

**Profile:**

Athena Kashyap's poetry books, *Crossing Black Waters* (2012) and *Sita of the Earth and Forests* (forthcoming, also by SFA Press, Texas) explore issues related to the concept of home and women in India. She has an MFA in Poetry and Certificates in the Teaching of Post-Secondary Reading & Writing from San Francisco State University, an MA in English from UC Davis, and a BA from Mount Holyoke College. She has taught English at City College of San Francisco. She is the primary editor for the online literary journal at Jaaga, Bangalore and is also a literary editor at the journal, *All Roads Lead You Home*.

## **Introduction to Modern Crime Fiction**

**Course Outline:**

Most people have read some crime fiction as children and young adults – many will be familiar with Agatha Christie, James Hadley Chase and more recently Dan Brown or Stieg Larsson. As with any literary genre, the evolution of crime fiction has a specific history. This course traces the evolution of the genre in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and explores some of the major themes of interest to our students such as gender, class, urbanization, modernity etc. We will explore the important milestones in the evolution of the genre and the authors who have contributed new ideas, characters and literary forms through a reading of some of the most popular and important examples of crime fiction.

**Profile:**

Shreelata Sheshadri is a Faculty Member at the Azim Premji University. Her profile may be viewed at: <http://www.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/people>.