

The Paradigm Shift in *Rasa* Realization: Bharata to Viśvanātha

Guest Speaker: **Prof. Muraleemadhavan Puvathur Chelichery**
(Kantaloora Sala Research Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala)

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Venue: Room 3.08, Nauklerstr. 35

or via Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/98862385129?pwd=5tG3cynFbvaTbYJUudvD9rUbgecvRPX.1>



The concept of *rasa*, as we know it today, originated with the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata, but it has undergone tremendous change since its original formation. Remaining a core subject of discussion in Sanskrit poetics, it has transformed from *nāṭyarasa* to the doctrine of *kāv्यarasa*. Even the number of *rasa(s)* has never witnessed unanimous, with later poetics adding to the eight *rasa(s)* Bharata outlined. It is not only the definition or number of *rasa(s)* that has drawn speculation from Indian poetics, but also the purpose of *rasa* as illuminated by Bharata, which has undergone diversions. What Bharata spelt out as *rasa's* purpose is this lecture's subject; in later criticism, the debate narrowed to whether *rasa* is the soul of poetry.

Viśvanātha's views are generally accepted by Sanskrit poetics, yet they contrast sharply with Bharata's own elaboration. Later poetics held that *rasa's* pleasure is *alaukika* (transcendental), whereas Bharata envisioned pleasure that is *laukika* (worldly); later doctrine placed *rasāsvāda* in the intellectual and spiritual realm, while Bharata saw *rasa* as easing the physical fatigue and worldly worries of spectators. Later thought restricted *rasa* pleasure to a blessed few, whereas Bharata intended the common man as its true beneficiary. Among the eleven items of *Nāṭyasaṅgraha*, Bharata considered *rasa* the *aṅgi* (principal), nourished by the other ten *aṅga(s)* (auxiliaries).

A dilution occurs, in depicting *rasa* and its auxiliaries, since in *Sravyakāvya*s (poetry) they are experienced only through *varṇanā* (the poet's fiction), making the realization *parōkṣa* rather than direct. This lecture examines *rasa* from all these angles. Stage manuals like *āṭṭaparakāra(s)* and *kramadīpikā(s)* of *kūṭiyāṭṭam* likewise illuminate these *rasa(s)* and their eleven *vyañjakās*. Ultimately, the lecture addresses the deviation of *rasa's* concept from Bharata's vision, and its gradual detachment from the common man across the ages.

About the Speaker: Prof. P.C. Muraleemadhavan is Director-in-Chief of the Kantaloora Sala Institute for Higher Learning and Research in Ancient Indian Wisdom, Kerala. A distinguished Sanskrit scholar and former Professor and Head at Central Sanskrit University and Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, he specializes in Sanskrit literature, Indian poetics, aesthetics, and hermeneutics. He has published extensively and received prestigious honours, including the Rashtrapati Puraskar from the President of India.

