

Mattoo Center for India Studies
Distinguished Lecture Series — Two talks by
Professor H.S. Shivaprakash, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi

The Impact of Bhakti on Indian Arts and Aesthetics
Wednesday, October 16, 2019, 1 pm – 2:20 pm
Center for Italian Studies, East 4340, Melville Library

Ancient India saw the rise of two important traditions of poetics and aesthetics. The first was the Sanskrit tradition which created seminal concepts like *rasa* and *dhwani* which have great explanatory power whereas the south Indian Tamil tradition expounded the concept of *tinai* (poetic landscapes) which relates poetry to a specific place and time. However, the rise of bhakti traditions first in Tamil Nadu and then in the rest of India, inspired new kinds of artistic expressions whose form and content cannot be explained in terms of the concepts of the two classical traditions. Whether these expressions are based on a different system of concepts is a very important question. Though art practices changed in a very profound way during this period, the bhakti period did not produce explicit texts on poetics and aesthetics.

It is my contention that though bhakti expressions dominated the Indian cultural scenario for well over a millennia, they did not produce any major text on aesthetics. It is possible to extract the concepts and principals of bhakti aesthetics by examining the inbuilt poetics and aesthetics in these traditions.

My presentation will demonstrate the existence of a consistent set of theories and concepts in bhakti arts. I will discuss this in light of three great texts of bhakti poetry: *Shivastrotavali* by Utapal Deva to the Tamil text *Tiruppavai* by Andal and a selection of Vachanas from Karnataka. I will argue that these works brought about a radical change not only in respect of the nature and purpose of art but also in terms of poetics.

Name and Nature of Translation in Pre-Modern India
Tuesday, October 22, 2019, 10 – 11:20 AM, Javits 101

Though a great deal of pre-modern Indian literature consists of translation there is no word synonymous with translation in our languages before the colonial period. My contention is that, in pre-modern Indian literatures, the practice of translation was more akin to what we now call adaptation. It didn't involve any fidelity whatever to source texts. Poets/adapters in spite of basing the work on earlier works they took from the source text what they wanted and made something completely new out of it.

These points will be discussed in the light of translations in Hindi, Tamil and Kannada. The specific texts I will be taking examples from are those of Pampa and Kumara Vyasa, the two major translators/adapters of *the Mahabharata* into Kannada. In order to examine the relevance of these insights in the modern period, I will also briefly discuss Indian translations and adaptations of Shakespeare in 19th and 20th centuries.

Professor H.S. Shivaprakash is an internationally known poet, playwright, scholar and critic. He just retired as professor in the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He was director of the Tagore Cultural Centre in Berlin, run by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. He has published seven anthologies of poems, twelve plays, and several other books. His works have been translated into English, French, Italian, Spanish, German, Polish, Hindi, Malayalam, Marathi, Tamil and Telugu. His plays have been performed in Kannada, Hindi, Meitei, Rabha, Assamese, Bodo, Tamil and Malayalam. Shivaprakash is also a well-known authority on vachana literature, Bhakti movements of India, and Sufi and other mystic traditions. He is a member of the Mattoo Center's consortium translating the 15th century Kannada Mahabharata being published by Harvard University Press.

All are cordially invited. For more information, please call 631-632-9742.