

THE NĀṬYAŚĀSTRA ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGIN OF DRAMA AND ITS BEARING ON THE IMPORTANCE OF A PLOT IN THE DRAMA

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When Bharata in his *Nāṭyaśāstra* (N.Ś. Ch.VI, p.272, GOS Ed.) says that without aesthetic taste (*rasād ṛte*) no dramatic matter can be fruitful (*kaś cid arthaḥ pravartate*), he actually means *rasa* to be the quintessence of the dramatic art. But elsewhere he says that the plot (*itivyṛtta = vastu*) is the very body (*śarīra*) of this art (N.Ś.XIX.1, GOS Ed.). This definitely signifies that without a proper plot no drama can stand. Consequently, Bharata deals with the topic of plot construction in detail (N.Ś.Ch. XIX. GOS Ed.). It may be noted that the importance of plot comes out from the very account of the origin of drama given by Bharata (N.Ś.Ch.I, GOS Ed.). Brahmā is said to have created *Nāṭya* (drama), the fifth Veda, for the entertainment of the downtrodden. It was created not in the Kṛta (Satya) Age, when everyone was merged in unmixed happiness, but in the beginning of Tretā, when agonies and conflicts in life crept in. This points to the need in the drama of a proper plot, without which conflicts cannot be delineated. The first drama, that was enacted, depicted how demons had been defeated by gods. This enraged the demons, who sent forth impediments (*vighnas*) to frustrate the performance. They had to be vanquished and ultimately pacified with the expedient of conciliation (*sāmanīti*). This is a story of conflict being overcome. Exactly this is what the drama does do in the process of the development of a plot. The demons were made to understand that the drama was the representation of the mental states (*bhāvānukīrtana*) of the three worlds (N.Ś.I.107, GOS Ed.). This representation of mental states leads to the development of aesthetic taste in the heart of the connoisseur. Thus the development of a plot and the aesthetic taste it produces make the dramatic art. The position is comparable with Aristotle's treatment of the tragedy where he gives highest importance to the plot, though for him pleasure is the end of tragedy.