

Golden Jubilee of India's Independence Series-38

The Indian Theory of Aesthetics - a reappraisal

A. V. Subramanian



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Foreword

It gives me immense pleasure to place the present work "The Indian Theory of Aesthetics - a reappraisal" by A.V. Subramanian before our esteemed readers. This is the 38th volume being published under the "Golden Jubilee of India's Independence Series" of Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan. Dr. Subramanian is well known for his scholarship in the field of Sanskrit literature. He is the author of many research works and the present treatise is a new addition to the list.

The author of the book has elaborately discussed the theory of Aesthetics presenting the ideas of Bharata, Bhattalollata, Abhinavagupta etc. The whole work runs into three chapters. In the first, he wrote good introduction to the Indian Theory of Aesthetics, and in the second, he proposed a discussion on the Indian Theory of Aesthetics, ascribed to Bharata but elaborated by Abhinavagupta, in the light of scientific conclusions available today as verified by our own aesthetic experience. The last chapter places a new universal theory of aesthetics developed by the author himself.

I express my sincere gratitude to Sri Subramanian for having given the opportunity of publishing the book.

I also express my deep sense of gratitude to Sri Arjun Singh, Hon'ble Minister of H.R.D and chairman

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Chapter One

The Indian Theory of Aesthetics - An Introduction

The theory of aesthetics that has been ruling the field in India for nearly two millennia still reigns unchallenged and traces its origin to a work called the Nāṭyaśāstra ascribed to Bharata. Bharata was far more interested in laying down rules and regulations for the production of stage - plays than in propounding a general theory of aesthetics. The real credit for the forging out of a clearly defined theory of aesthetic should go to a number of brilliant thinkers of Kāśmīr who flourished around the 10th cent. A.D. the greatest of whom undoubtedly was Abhinavagupta.

Section 1 : The early thinkers :

The aphorism on how aesthetic enjoyment is generated, which we owe to Bharata reveals but little and has encouraged different thinkers coming after him to read very different meanings into it. The sūtra is as follows :

विभावानुभावव्यभिचारिसंयोगाद्रसनिष्यत्तिः (N.S)

Bharata does not mention the sthāyibhāvas (the permanent mental states) here, in the sūtra, but refers to them elsewhere. From the hints thrown by him in the work, we gather that he felt that rasa or aesthetic relish is developed through the action of the determinants, the consequents and the transitory mental