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HST100
Primary Source Assignment #6:
The Art of Party-Crashing

In previous units, we see writing with a purpose often developed first in society, business documents, manuals, and guidelines. In Vedic India, there were manuals on how to live a good life. Later in China, there where historical recordings, manuals on being a gentleman, and manuals on tea and the tea rituals. Here we see a very different genre of writing, writing for entertainment. This excerpt from is "The Art of Party-Crashing," a comedic retelling of lighthearted tales. It also contains elements of high society gossip.

The writer Starts of by justifying the existence of literature serving no purpose but for entertainment. The mention of judges, scholars, religious people, and so on gives us insight into society's structure at the time. We also see the idea of a time to work, time for personal affairs, and time for entertainment. In ancient societies, people's lives were often dedicated to one sole purpose but we see a work-life balance more akin to modern life.

The extensive hospitality shown here to tolerate strangers who show up uninvited at parties or for meals speaks of a wealthy and opulent society where there is no shortage. It suggests that the preparation for such occasion was done with such excess that there was plenty to go around even with unannounced guests.

The way jokes are made about invitations shows that it is known to be bad etiquette to come to someone's party without an invitation, but it is none the less tolerated with some even embracing it. Some mention of women's quarters shows that, even at personal events, women's lives are lived very much separate from men's in this society.

The entire piece speaks of an opulent and wealthy society that has time and money to indulge. In such an environment, literature is written for entertainment and to make people laugh.