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INDIA'S DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

with

THE WEST

by

BHASKER ANAND SALETOR

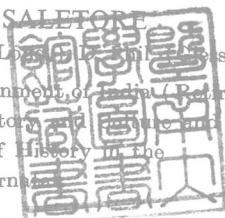
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INDIA'S DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS
with
THE WEST

TO THE MEMORY
of
MY PARENTS

PREFACE

In the Introduction I have explained the need for treating the subject under review in a manner different to the one usually adopted by the historians of India. But here I may mention its nature and limitations. I wish to make it quite clear that I am not describing in the following pages diplomatic history as understood in the modern times, that is, "the story of endless negotiations and intrigue, of memoranda and diplomatic conversation." Nor am I aiming to present the biographical approach to diplomatic history, which has for its object the lives of Foreign Secretaries and Ambassadors. Neither approach is possible while referring to the ancient times, particularly of India. In the first place, Indian history as we know it, and as explained by me in the Introduction, is yet far from being full or perfect in all its details. An account of the negotiations and memoranda from the point of view of diplomatic history of ancient India, would be impossible, because of the dearth of source materials on the subject. Equally futile is it at the present stage of historical research to glean the details of the lives of the Foreign Secretaries, or, as they were called, Ministers of Peace and War in those days. The scanty available sources enable us to give only an account of the embassies that were sent from India to the various courts in the West. It is these which form the subject matter of this work. Even in this respect this is the first attempt made by any scholar, Eastern or Western. No doubt, we do come across a few embassies mentioned in some standard works on ancient Indian history by modern scholars. But nowhere has any attempt been made either to present a fairly connected and detailed account of the diplomatic theory of the ancient Indians, or to make a comprehensive study of as many diplomatic missions as possible based on the background of Indian history as well as on that of the history of the Western countries, or to make a comparative estimate of the diplomatic practice as prevailing in the Western countries and

of the diplomatic theory as understood in those countries and as elucidated in the ancient Indian classical texts. This work, which presents these and other aspects of Indian history, therefore, may be considered as a departure from the usual topics dealt with by the historians of India. In unfolding one prominent side of the history of this country, it is felt that it may perhaps throw some light on the international behaviour of modern India. At any rate, it definitely represents the quantum of India's contribution to the maintenance of cordial Inter-State relations without appreciating which it would be idle to talk of the part played by India in the history of the ancient world.

While the following study will reveal the close contact of India with the Western world, it will also make it clear that for a proper understanding of the ancient diplomatic history of this country, its own annals are as much important as those of the West. Indeed, it would not be too much to maintain that, leaving aside the question of the diplomatic theory in ancient India, in regard to the rest of the subject, particularly that dealing with the diplomatic missions from the rulers of this country to the Western lands, we have to depend solely on the Western sources on the basis of which alone we could arrive at reasonably accurate conclusions. The history of the Western peoples serves, therefore, as an indispensable aid in the elucidation of our subject. This would justify the rather detailed treatment given in the following pages of some phases of Greek, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman history which helps us to understand the isolated references to Indian diplomatic missions on which no light whatsoever is thrown by the Indian sources.

The history of ancient diplomatic theory,—the existence of which, as pointed out by me in the notes towards the end of the book, seems to have been denied by scholars !—, which is given for the first time in this work, needs some clarification. It will be evident from the following pages that the ancient Indian diplomatic theory was purely indigenous, owing little or nothing to the contemporary Greek or Roman world either by way of inspiration or guidance. To what extent it was indebted to the earlier

theories of the Babylonians and the Egyptians, I have not ventured to examine, since such an investigation would have led me to a different treatment of the subject. Neither have I thought it proper to probe in this volume into the question of the applicability of the ancient diplomatic theory to the actual conditions prevailing in ancient India. But there seems to be no doubt that the ancient Indians had only one set of diplomatic rules and conduct which were applicable as much to the many kingdoms within their borders as to those outside India.

In presenting the facts of Western history, we are confronted with certain difficulties. I realize that it is rather hazardous to depend upon translations of the Greek, Roman, and Persian accounts. But the writing of a work like the one undertaken by me would have had to be indefinitely postponed, or perhaps never undertaken at all, if we were to wait for an Indian scholar who would be versed in Indian history as well as in all the foreign languages and the history of the West. The available translations into English of the Greek and Roman historical narratives and biographies, do enable us to draw a fairly accurate picture of the diplomatic missions of the ancient times, although they contain some disparity in the presentation of facts. I have discussed this part of the subject in some detail in the course of the book. There is another difficulty which faces us here. This relates to the lack of uniformity in the rendering of some technical terms to which also I have adverted in one or two places. Further, there is the divergence in the rendering into English of Greek, Persian, and Macedonian proper names. There seems to be no uniformity among Western scholars in regard to this detail. Consistency in transliterating these names, therefore, is a matter of some difficulty. The use of abbreviations, particularly of Roman names, comes in the way of our proper understanding of the nomenclature prevailing among the ancient peoples of the West. In this regard I have followed the system of abbreviations as given by Dr. Henry G. Liddell's in his classical *History of Rome* (second impression, as revised and partly re-written by P. V. M. Benecke. Publishers: John Murray, London, 1902).

It now remains for me to acknowledge with pleasure my indebtedness to a number of people. Of these first come the learned authors whom I have mentioned at every step, as will be evident from the notes at the end of the book. It has been both a pleasure and a rare privilege to have received inspiration from them, and to have, at the same time, disagreed with them on certain issues. To the many publishers whose works I have consulted, I am equally grateful. In this connection I may mention in particular the following who have so readily responded to my request for permission to cite passages from their publications:— the Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, U. S. A., for citing passages from pages 16–17, 65, and 149 of their *Arrian*, and from page 401 of their *Plutarch*; Edward Arnold (Publishers), Ltd., London, for citing passages from pages 137 till 139 of their publication entitled *Everyday Life in Babylonia and Assyria*; and the Estate of the late Professor Dr. Bedrich Hrozný, care of Dilia Czechoslovak Theatrical and Literary Agency, Prague, for citing passages from page 138 of that eminent scholar's work styled *Ancient History of Western Asia, India, and Crete*. My obligations are also due to the British Museum, London, for supplying me with illustrations. The illustrations of coins have been based on V. A. Smith's *Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum Calcutta* (Oxford, 1906). I acknowledge with thanks the permission from the Trustees of the Indian Museum Calcutta, in this regard.

Among those who have helped me in various ways, I have to mention the following:— Mr. A. N. Krishna Aiyangar, M. A., Librarian, National Archives of India, New Delhi, who has himself ably edited the Edicts of Asoka, and whose discussions on some aspects of that Mauryan Emperor's history have been most fruitful; Vaidya Ratna, Capt. Dr. G. Srinivasa Murti, B. A., B. L., M. B. & C. M., of Madras, who was good enough to give me a reference to a valuable plant that helped me to solve a riddle in the history of the same Mauryan monarch; Mr. K. S. Deshpande, Librarian of the Karnatak University, Dharwar, who has offered me useful hints of a general nature; my younger brother Dr. G. N.

Saletore, M. A., Ph. D., Keeper of Records of the Uttar-Pradesh Government, Allahabad, who was good enough to go through some portions of the Ms. and give me valuable suggestions; Mr. K. S. Podar of Sreenivasa & Co., Dharwar, who has made good blocks; and Mr. V. Y. Jathar, General Manager of the Samyukta Karnatak Press, Hubli, who has taken a personal interest in the printing of the work in which his staff have also been diligently helpful.

In the preparation of one of the two maps, that relating to Alexander the Great, I have received considerable help from the maps in Professor J. B. Bury's *History of Greece to the death of Alexander* (Macmillan & Co., London, 3rd ed., 1951), and Professor E. I. Robson's *Arrian* (two volumes, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, U. S. A.). This map as well as the other one dealing with Emperor Aśoka's Diplomatic Missions was prepared under my directions by Mr. K. S. Upadhyaya, Photo Artist of the Kannada Research Institute, Dharwar, to whom my obligations are also due.

Trade restrictions have necessitated the elimination of a bibliographical list but I have indicated in the notes all the authorities I have cited, so as to leave no doubt in the mind of the reader as to the sources upon which I have based my statements. I have omitted references to some modern works which, while they undoubtedly display much diligence, have neither advanced on past errors nor widened the range or depth of scientific historical knowledge.

Finally, I may add here that the publication of this work, which was planned and written about six years ago, was delayed because of the exacting duties demanded of me as Director of National Archives, Government of India, New Delhi, which did not permit me to see it through the press. I propose to bring in the near future the story of India's Diplomatic Relations to the end of the eighteenth century in the succeeding volumes.

My wife has helped me at every stage—in getting ready the Ms. for the press, in seeing through the proofs, and in preparing the index. My son went through the proofs at the earlier stages.

But I take entire responsibility for all the shortcomings in the work.

10th April, 1958
Saraswatpur, Dharwar

B. A. Saletore

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