Foreword

Throughout the rich heritage of Indian literature, embodied in the Sanskrit, Tamil, and other languages, there are innumerable passages illustrating every known theory of government and temporal power. But it should not be forgotten that political thought is an integral aspect of Indian philosophy and that in Gandhiji's language there is no artificial separation into political, social, and religious affairs. Except in relation to such doctrines as rebirth and Karma, the meaning of the Indian heritage and the traditional Indian approach to world problems cannot be understood.

The Moslem invasion of India put an end for a time to Hindu creative literature and political speculation. The Sukraniti represents a final contribution to the classics of Indian political thought. A short-lived Hindu political revival inaugurated by the Maharashtra king Shivaji during the period of Moslem ascendancy did not result in any real intellectual ferment. Moslem rule, however, did not eliminate the older habits of thinking and action. The British occupation, again, introduced a viewpoint based on Western premises and precepts, but the foundations of the Indian tradition were not swept away even by this invasion of Occidental ideas and modes of life. The writings of modern Indian leaders prove the persistence of the ideals of the classic theorists.
The "White Umbrella," which gives the title to this book, was a symbol of sovereign political authority placed over the monarch's head at the time of the coronation. The ruler so inaugurated was regarded not as a temporal autocrat but as the instrument of Dharma or supreme law—although the ancient Hindu state was not thereby a theocracy. Despite certain Machiavellian forms of diplomacy recommended with respect to international relations, such policies were considered primarily as low expedients in comparison with the high ideals of the royal Dharma.

We have here a conspicuous example of the comprehensive and sympathetic appreciation of a differing and ancient civilization. It is not easy to enter into the spirit of a distant people, but the author has perceived that political consciousness in India is based on the realization that power is ultimately vested in the people collectively. It is, however, a trust to be fulfilled and implemented by the sovereign in accordance with those doctrines of the continuity of existence and the stability of supreme law which are the foundations of all Indian thought both sacred and secular.

Professor Brown presents the central core of Indian political thought, both ancient and modern, in a well-annotated account, in which an immense amount of material has been collected, collated, and analyzed. I have no hesitation in warmly recommending The White Umbrella to all who wish to obtain a well-documented study illustrative of the age-long development of Indian political speculation.

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