CHAPTER- VII
Espionage and Counter Espionage

The authorities on statecraft laid elaborate rules regarding wagging of war against opponents for self-preservation or conquest, whichever the case may be. However, they point out to the ambitious kings (vijīgīṣu) that the appeal to the arms should be avoided as far as possible. To avoid sudden outbreak of hostilities, the vijīgīṣu, during the time of peace, should adopt diplomacy. For this purpose he should send messengers. A messenger or ‘dūta’ would visit the foreign court(s) for a particular mission. The instructions given to the dūta in the Arthasastra indicate that the dūta was to reside in the foreign court(s) only till he felt that there was still a possibility of his mission being successful; otherwise he was to return before long.¹ On the other hand, spies (cāra) play an important role in both civil and military affairs. In the Vedic literature, the dūta figures prominently. It appears from various literary evidence that the dūta (ambassador)² is called a prahita

1. As. 1. 16. 29-32.
2. Ibid. 1.16.1.
(envoy)³ *spaśaḥ* (spies), ⁴ *cāraṇaḥ* (spies), ⁵ *vacoharah* ⁶ etc. There are varied duties prescribed for the spies to perform. They are to watch the conduct of government officials of all ranks; they are to keep contact with the general public and are to inform the king about the trend of public feelings in his kingdom. Looked at from the point of view of diplomacy, the institution of spies have to collect accurate information regarding the state of affairs in neighbouring kingdoms, and, in this way, espionage system has been given more importance than that the ambassadorial system.

It is to be noted that in ancient as well as in modern times an ambassador is regarded as a licensed and open spy; during his stay at the foreign court, he was to cultivate friendly relations with the officials with a view to extract clues to the internal policy of the government concerned. Apart from observing the maintenance of the terms of earlier treaties observed by the king to whose court he was accredited, the ambassador is to collect firsthand information from his own spies about the condition of

4. *Ṛgveda*. I. 24, 13; VIII. 87, 3; VI. 67, 5.
5. *kaccījñānapado vidvāndakśiṇaḥ pratibhānavaṇ / yathoktavaḍi dūtaste krto bharta paṇḍitaḥ // kaccidaśaṭdaśāṇyeṣu svapakṣe daśa pañca ca / tribhistrībhiravijñātaśvetaśi tirthāni cārakaṁ // -*Rāmāyaṇa*. Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa. 100. 35. 36.
the defence and the armed forces of that country. The person of the ambassador cannot be profaned in ancient as in modern times. He is to send his reports home in a cipher code (gūḍhalekha).\(^7\)

However, it is not known whether there were permanent resident ambassies in vogue in ancient times. It is found that Megasthenes resided at the court of Chandragupta Maurya and Deimachos at that of Bindusāra. It might be so that the Mauryas have sent their own abmassadors stay at the Seleukidan court, especially because the Buddhist missionaries had been dispatched there to preach dhamma of the Buddha. The embassies were found to be received at the court of Samudragupta from the king of Ceylon and at the court of the Chālukya ruler Pulakeśin II from the king of Persia. Of course, they were for specific purposes only. The Indian embassies that went to China or Rome were also something like the modern missions of good will, making some presents to the kings concerned, as also for requesting some commercial concessions.

According to Kautilya, ambassadors may be classed into three categories, viz., (1) nisṛṭārthah, ambassador with full powers of negotiations, (2) parimitārthah, who could not deviate from his

\(^7\) gitapāthyavādyabhāndagūḍhalekhyasaṅjābhivrā cāram nirhareyuh / -Āś. 1. 12. 13.
instruction and (3) śasanaḥaraḥ, who is entitled to deliver the message and take back the reply; he could not negotiate at all. In the Rāmāyaṇa also three classes of envoys are mentioned. One who performs an undesirable and insurmountable task, out of devotion and love, is regarded as puruṣottama, the best among men; one who does not perform the entrusted duty as per instruction to enlist the love and affection of the king, but does it in his own way is regarded as madhyamanara, the intermediate or second grade in status; and one who though ordained, does not carry it out in the proper manner, is regarded as puruṣādhamā, the lowest among men. In the Mahābhārata, Bhīṣma mentions seven essential qualities for an ambassador. These are: that the person to designate as ambassador should come of a noble line; he should belong to a high family, be skilful, eloquent of speech, true in delivering the message, and of excellent memory. A king must never sentence

8. amatyaśaṁpadopeto nisṛṣṭārthāḥ / pādaguṇahināḥ parimitārthāḥ / ardhaguṇahināḥ śasanaḥaraḥ // -Āś. 1. 16. 2 - 4.
10. kulīnāḥ śilasaṁpanno vāṃ dri daksāḥ priyaṁvadaḥ / yathoktavādī smṛtimān dūṁ ṣyāt saprabhorgunāḥ // -Mbh. Śantiparvan, 85. 28.
or subject an ambassador to capital punishment. If he do so, will
go to hell along with all his ministers.11

The duties of an ambassador, as noticed in the Arthaśāstra of
Kauṭilya are many and varied. The very duties of an ambassador
as laid down by Kauṭilya show that he is a faithful follower of the
Dharmaśāstras. According to him the envoy should endeavour to
secure the friendship of the adversary’s officers, study his military
strength, forts, arsenals, army, and all his weak as well as favourable
points. He should ascertain the size and area of forts and of the
state as well as the strong-holds of precious things, and assailable
and unassailable points. The envoy should, through the agency of
ascetic and merchant spies, or through his disciples, or through
spies under the guise of physicians and heretics, or through the
recepient of salaries from two states (ubhayavetana),12 ascertain
the nature of the intrigue prevalent among parties favourably
disposed towards his own master, as well as the conspiracy of
hostile factions; and understand the loyalty or disloyalty of the
people to the enemy, besides any assailable points. Only with
previous permission should an ambassador enter the capital city
of his adversary. He must deliver the message exactly as entrusted

11. **na tu hanyāṃmrpo jātu dūtaṁ kasyāṇ cidāpadi /
   dūtasya hantar nirayamāviśet śacivaiḥ saha //** -ibid. 85. 26.
to him even at the risk of his life, carefully observing at the same time how and in what spirit the adversary king received it.\(^\text{13}\)

In the Sabhāparvan of the *Mahābhārata*, it has been stated thus: “seekest thou to know everything about the eighteen *tīrthas* of the adversary, and fifteen of thine own, by means of three spies unknown to each other. O Salyer of all foes, watchest thou all the enemies with care and attention, and unknown to them.”\(^\text{14}\)

Maṅgha, in his *mahākavya*, devotes a full chapter dealing with diplomacy. In canto XVI, Maṅgha states that Śiśupāla sent a messanger to Kṛṣṇa who made a speech in distinctly ambiguous words of praise and dispraise. The *dūta* is intelligent enough to express the desire of his master for wagging war against Kṛṣṇa.\(^\text{15}\)

\[\text{cf. damaghoṣasutena kaścana pratiśiṣṭaḥ pratibhānāvānathāḥ} / \]

\[\text{upagamya hariṁ sadasyadāḥ sputabhinnārthamudāharadvacāḥ} //\]

The *dūta* expresses his master’s praise for Kṛṣṇa in fourteen verses, finally saying that he (Śiśupāla) has overcome his anger and desires to meet Kṛṣṇa first.\(^\text{16}\) All these verses, however, indicate

\(^{13}\) ibid. 10-11.

\(^{14}\) kaccidastadaśānyeṣu svapakṣe daśa pāṇca ca / 
tribhīnisthibhirvijñātairvetsi tīrthāṁ cārakāḥ //

-Mbh. Sabhāparvan, V. 36.

\[\text{kaccid dvīṣaṃaviditāḥ pratipannaśa sarvadā} / \]

\[\text{nityayukto ripūn sarvān viśaye ripusūdana} // - ibid, 39.\]

\(^{15}\) Śīṣu. XVI. 1.

\(^{16}\) Vide Śīṣu. XVI. 1-15.
the strong urge of Śiśupāla for a fight with Kṛṣṇa, which is well replied by Sātyaki, the charioteer of Kṛṣṇa and otherwise an expert in diplomacy. He says, — “Cleverly you spoke sweet words, but they contain unpleasant meanings. However, we took them reversely.” cf.

\[
\text{madhurāṁ bahirantarapriyāṁ kṛtinā'vāci vacasthā tvayā / sakalārthatayā vibhāvyate priyamantarbahirapriyāṁ yathā} \]

In twentyone verses (vv 17to 37), the poet delineates the speech of Sātyaki. Sātyaki says that Śiśupāla has completed his hundred sins (āgasāṁ śatāṁ) against Kṛṣṇa, speaking ill by himself in the court of Yudhiṣṭhira at the time the agrapūjā, and the words of his envoy. cf.

\[
yadapūrī pūra mahīpatirna mukhena \\
svayamāgasāṁ śatāṁ / \\
atha samprati paryapūpurattadasau dūta \\
mukhena śārīriṇaḥ \]

In reply to the words of Sātyaki, the dūta declares in clear terms that he is sent for conveying his master’s desire for war.

Thus, it appears from the above discussion that delivering the message entrusted to the dūta, respecting treaties, getting allies,
resorting to puzzle when necessary, sowing dissension among the enemy’s friends and associates, doing the work of spy occasionally, these in brief are the varied functions of an ambassador.

In the act of espionage, it appears that all methods like spying, lying, bribing, poisoning, woman’s wiles and the assassin’s knife etc. are admissible. Kauṭilya speaks of a number of spies in different disguises and professions who were entrusted with onerous responsibilities and obligations and on whose works rested the weal and woe of the conqueror’s kingdom. These description shows an elaborate network of the spy system who are responsible for ‘information’ only in war.

Like the ambassador, spies play an important part in military as well as political and diplomatic affairs of a state. The numerous duties which the spies have to perform from the viewpoint of diplomacy, are to collect accurate information regarding the state of affairs in neighbouring kingdoms; to keep watch on the conduct of officials; guard against conspiracy, and especially haunt the assemblies of priests, public meetings, cross-roads and market places.\(^\text{19}\) Under various disguises they are to roam about in foreign states and collect reliable information about them. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma enquired of Bharata if he was keeping an eye on the eighteen

\(^{19}\) *Mbh.* Śāntiparvan. 69, 8-12.
tīrthas of foreign countries through spies (cāraṇāiḥ). In the Śiśupālavadha, Māgha mentions about spies, called cārekṣāno. In the second canto of the Śiśupālavadha, Kṛṣṇa is advised by Uddhava to get the information about the eighteen tīrthas of the foe by means of spies. He says that the spies of Kṛṣṇa, having special training, should enter into the eighteen tīrthas of the foe and find out their strength.

Since ancient times persons occupying the highest positions in the administration of a state have been known as tīrthas. In the Arthaśāstra also, there is reference to eighteen tīrthas in 1.12.20, while a list of these eighteen appears to be given in 1.12.6.

Regarding the eighteen tīrthas in the Kākolukīya chapter (third tantra) of the Pāñcatantra, it has been stated that in case of enemies, the tīrthas are as follows: mantri (minister), purohita (priest), senāpati (commandar), yuvarāja (prince), dvārapāla (door-keeper), antarvāsika (attendants of the harem), prakāśaka (spokesman), samāharta (guard), sannidhāta (carrier), pradestā, sādhanādhyakṣa (head of the sādhana), gajādhyakṣa, kośādhyakṣa, kilādhyakṣa, kāradhyakṣa, sīmārakṣa, uddhata-bhṛtya (disobedient servant), and pāriṣada. The enemies can be controlled if differences among

21. kṛtvā kṛtyavidastīrthēsvantaḥ praṇidhayāḥ padaṁ / vidāṅkurvantu mahastalāṁ vidviṣaḍāṁbhāsāḥ // -Śiśu. II. 111.
these can be created.

In case of one’s own-side, the fifteen tīrthas are as follows: pāṭrāṇī, mātā, kañcukī, māli, sajyārakṣa, sparśādhyakṣa, jyotīṣī, rājāvaidya, jalavāhaka, tāmuli, ācāryya, aṅgarakṣa, sthānacintaka, chatradhara and vilāsinī.

Māgha also stated that politics has no charms without employment of spies. He says, ‘just like the knowledge of paspāṣā āhnikā, in the absence of which study on Patañjali’s Mahābhāṣya is meaningless, in the same manner, politics equipped with the qualities of Nītiśāstra seems charmless without employment of spies.’ The spies have been described by Māgha as the ‘eyes of the king’, who watched the movements of enemies and those of the king’s subjects and the aliens.

Not only in the Śiśupālavadha, but the activities of spies both internal and external affairs of the state are graphically depicted in some other dramas and kāvyas composed from the Gupta period onwards. Of these, special reference may be made of the Viśākhādutta’s Mudrārākṣasa, Bhāravi’s Kirātarjunīyam (1.19), Bhavabhūti’s Uttara-Rāmacarita, Sudraka’s Mrčchakatika (Act

22. anuṣṭṛtrapadanyāsā sadvṛttiḥ sannibandhanā / sabdavidyeva no bhāti rājanītiraspaspā / -ibid. 112.
23. buddhiśastraḥ prakṛtyāṅgo ghanasaṁvṛtikāñcukāḥ / cārekṣo dūtamukhāḥ puruṣāḥ ko’api pārthivāḥ // -ibid. 82.
VII.8) etc. In the second Act of the *Mudrārākṣasa*, we find Āhitunḍikah as an emissary of Rākṣasa. In the fourth Act, one may find the games played by Cāṇakya’s spies. Similarly, in the fifth Act, it is seen that the spies produced an artfully worded letter incriminating Rākṣasa as conducting treasonable negotiation with Chandragupta. Daṇḍī, in his *Daśakumāraracarita*, relates how a spy wandered about in the guise of an ascetic, and ultimately returning to Rājaharīsa, the Magadha king, supplied him with all necessary information regarding the Mālva kingdom. The Parivrājikā, in the *Mālavikāgnimitra* of Kālidāsa, shows the existence of female spies. The *Rājataranginī* of Kalhaṇa makes frequent mention of tīkṣṇa spies. They were often employed for the secret assassination of the enemy.

According to the *Manusamhītā*, consultation with ministers on the information obtained through agents should be a part of the king’s daily routine. According to it, the king should keep his own queen under surveillance, i.e., under close observation through the security personnel, and for this reason he must employ some trusted maidens as constant companions of the queen. In the *Arthaśāstra*, there is a reference to the appointment of a dūta or an envoy, when a policy decision has been taken after consultation
with ministers (1.16.1). Manu speaks of five classes of spies$^{24}$ and of their various disguises.$^{25}$ According to him the spies are to detect crime,$^{26}$ keep watch on the conduct of officials in the districts,$^{27}$ and constantly ascertain the king’s and his enemy’s strength.$^{28}$

Regarding employment of $dūta$ Manu says, ‘Let the king appoint an ambassador who is versed in all sciences, who understand hints, expressions of the face and gestures, who is honest, skilful and of noble family.’

\[
dūtāṁ caiva prakur̥vīta sarvaśāstraviśāradam / \\
ingitākāraçeṣṭajñām śuci dakṣaṁ kulodgataṁ \\
\]

In respect of qualities of ambassador he says, ‘Such an ambassador is commended to a king who is loyal, honest, skilful, possessing a good memory, who knows the proper place and time for action, who is handsome, fearless, and eloquent.’

\[
anuraktah śucirdakṣaṁ smṛtimān desakālavīt / \\
vapūsmaṁ vītabhīrvāgni dúto rājñāḥ praśasyate \\
\]

In this way Manu mentions the qualities of a good ambassador.

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$^{24}$ MS. VII.1.54
$^{25}$ ibid. IX. 261.
$^{26}$ ibid. 256
$^{27}$ ibid. VII. 122
$^{28}$ ibid. IX. 298.
$^{29}$ MS. VII. 63.
$^{30}$ ibid. 64.
In the first instance, an ambassador must be loving - which means that he must have affection for the people. In view of this he will not be disfavoured by a rival king. Secondly, the ambassador must be incapable of being won over by any kind of gift and allurement. Thirdly, he must be very clever. Fourthly, he must have good memory so that he does not forget his message. Fifthly, he must have the power to study time and place so that if required he may change the message and deliver it to the person for whom it is meant. Sixthly, he must possess an impressive personality so that his words are accepted by a rival king. Seventhly, he must be fearless, so that he does not hesitate to communicate even an unpleasant message. Lastly, he must be a good orator, so that his speech can impress even those who hold different opinions. Manu also speaks of the part that an ambassador may play in establishing peace and prosperity or in creating trouble and disorder. It is through the efforts of an efficient ambassador that impending wars may be avoided and lasting peace may be secured. When two or more countries are involved in war the successful mediation of an ambassador may avert the catastrophe.

Commentator Kalluka speaks on the verse 66-67 of VIIth chapter of Manusarinhita that there are some more duties of the

ambassador. First of all, he should try to understand the facial expressions, gestures and movements of the enemy king. Secondly, in order to win over such people in the enemy’s kingdom who are dissatisfied, and are insulted, the king should instruct his ambassador to study the attitude of the enemy king towards them from the gestures and actions of officers closely associated with him.

In the *Arthaśāstra*, there are four important chapters (Book I. Chapter 11, 12, 13 & 14) on the institution of secret service. Spies according to Kautilya, are primarily divided into two classes, viz., local agents (*saṁsthāḥ*) and wandering or roaming agents (*saṁcarāḥ*). To the *saṁsthā* belongs the spies under the guise of a ‘fradulent disciple’ (*kāpaṭika-chātra*), recluse (*udāsthita*), householder (*grhapatika*), merchant (*vaidehaka*) and ascetic practising austerities (*tāpasa*), as described below.

Kāpatika: Courageous and sharp students are trained to be intelligence officers. After training they swear to be loyal to the king and the Chancelor. They are well rewarded with honours and money, and sent out with instructions to report back any activity against the king. (I.11.2-3)

32. *upadhabhiḥ suddyāmātyavargo gūḍhapuruṣānapādayat kāpaṭikok- 
dāsthitagrahapatikavaidehakatāpasaṃvyaṭjanān*

   *sattritkṣparasadabhikṣukīśca* - As. 1. 11. 1.
Udāsthita: Honest and intelligent persons are recruited to act as spies according to the cover of monk (udāsthita), who has relinquished his vocation, but pretends to be one after recruitment;

House holder: an impoverished farmer;

Merchant: an impoverished merchant (I. 11. 4, 9, 11);

Ascetic: An authentic ascetic with shaven head or matted locks, who wants to earn money is to be established as an agent, near a city, along with many disciples with shaven heads and matted hair like him. Agents, acting under the cover of merchants, shall come to worship him seeking their prosperity with the help of his occult powers. His own disciples shall proclaim his accomplishments. When the people come to him, praying for wealth, he is to make predictions with the help of palmistry, and in this way, if he finds among the visitors someone with spirit, intelligence and eloquence, he predicts for him good fortune; he is then appoint the recommended person in a Government post (I. 11. 13-20).

Under the samcāra category come spies, called secret agent, (sattrī), assassin (tikṣṇa), poisoner (rasada), a wandering nun (parivṛājikā), one seeking a secured livelihood (vṛttikāmā), poor
(daridrā), widowed (vidhavā), bold (pragalbha), brāhmaṇa, shaven nun (munda) etc.\(^3\)

Secret agents: secret agents shall be recruited from orphans who have to be looked after by the state (1.12.1).

Assassin: These are recruited from the bravest in the land, particularly those who, for the sake of money, are willing to fight wild elephants and tigers, in total disregard for their own personal safety (1.12.2).

Poisoner: Those who are cruel, lazy and devoid of any affection for their relatives is to be recruited as poisoners (1.12.3).

Wandering nuns: a wandering nun may be a brahmin or from another sect. Such agents are to be recruited from poor but intrepid widows, who need to work for their living (I.12.4, 5).

The king should employ these to spy in conformity with their loyalty and capability, on the council or, the chaplain, the commander-in-chief, the crown-prince, the chief palace usher, the chief of the palace guards, the director, the administrator, the director of stores, the magistrate, the commandant, the city-judge, the director of factories, the council of ministers, the

\(^{33}\) parivrājikā vṛttikāmā daridrā vidhavā pragalbha brāhmaṇyantahpūre kṛtastakāra mahāmātrakulānyabhigacchet // etaya munda vṛṣalyo vyakhyātāḥ // iti saṁcārāḥ // -Aś. I. 12. 4-5.
superintendents, the chief of the army staff, the commandant of
the fort, the commandant of the frontier-fort and the chieftain, in
his own territory. Spies were to put on an unlimited variety of
disguises. Moreover, as far as practicable, they were not to be
known to each other. The king must, on no account, rely upon the
report of a single spy. Any information corroborated by three
different spies shall be taken to be true. Kauṭilya stated in Book 1.
12. 15 that ‘trayaṁāmekavākye saṁpratyayah.” The spies must
sent information by making use of signs, or writing (saṁjñālīpi)
to the officers. Intelligence was also conveyed through cipher
writing (guḍha-lekhyā). Spies had to collect exact news, or
information regarding the state of affairs in neighbouring kingdoms,
discovered and puzzled the tricks of the other side and neutralise
its success.

In the Śiśupālavadha also, mention of ubhayavetana and
kūṭalikhita is found (in canto II. 11.2) wherein Uddhava advises
Kṛṣṇa to appoint spies who are to be sent to enemy’s kingdom for
secure employment; they are also to be paid from the Home
Department itself, thereby, giving them incentive to furnish
secretely first hand information relating to the other side of the
border. These ubhayavetana officials, i.e., the recipients of salaries
from two states at a time are to create division among the kinsmen,
ministers, sevants of the adversary king by showing false or trickish writing secretly. In its twentieth canto also, Māgha mentions about the ubhayabetana spies and compared the weapons of Lord Kṛṣṇa, which differentiated the weapons of enemy just as the ubhayabetana spies, who create divisions between the enemy king and ministers etc.

It is found that during the Maurya period, a complete system of espionage was established in the ancient India. A class of men was engaged to supervise all that was going on and they were to report privately to the king. Some were entrusted with the inspection of the city and other with that of the camp. At the outset the institution of spies were engaged to look after the home officials, including those of the royal household as well as to report on the movement and activities doings in the enemy kingdoms. Later on the spies were sent to foreign countries to gather information about the movements of the enemy king and his army and so on.

Ancient writers are of opinion that the king must not merely employ spies to findout the secrets of the enemy, but simultaneously safeguard his own secrets against foreign spies. Kauṭilya states in

34. agyātadośaśairdoṣagñairuddūṣyobhayavetanaiḥ / bhedyāḥ sātrorabhivyakta sāsanaiḥ sāmavāyikāḥ // -Śisū. II. 113.

35. tamakunṭhamukhāḥ suparṇaketoriṣavāḥ kṣiptamisuivrjaiḥ pareṇa / vibhidāmanayanta kṛtyapakṣa nṛpaterneturivāyathārthavaranāḥ // -Śisū. XX. 23.
the *Arthaśāstra* that secret agent, prostitutes, artisans and actors as well as elders of the army should ascertain, with diligence, the loyalty or disloyalty of soldiers.

"sattrināscāyudhīyānāṁ veśyāḥ kārakuśīlavāḥ /
dandavrddhāśca jāniyuh śaucāsucamatandritāḥ //" \(^{36}\)

According to Kautilya, the king should employ the roving spies with a credible disguise as regards country, dress, profession, language and birth, to spy, in conformity with their loyalty and capability, on the councillor, the chaplain, the commander-in-chief, the crown prince, the chief palace usher, the chief of the palace guards, the director, the administrator, the director of stores, the magistrate, the commandant, the city-judge, the director of factories, the council of ministers, the superintendents, the chief of the army staff, the commandant of the fort, the commandant of the frontier-fort and the forest chieftain, in his own territory.

Kautilya in his *Arthaśāstra* mentioned about counter espionage also. In order to uncover enemy agents, operating in his own territory, the king employs his own roving and non-roving, i.e., wandering and non-wandering spies, who adopts disguises or covers similar to those of enemy agents and act with great security. The king should also post at the frontiers high officials of unquestioned

\(^{36}\) As, V. 3. 47.
loyalty but acting as if they had a reason for acting disloyally in order to attract approaches from every agent.

In conclusion, it may be stated that to find out the secrets of not only of the enemy but also of his allies, the king must employ spies, and simultaneously by employing such spies, safeguards his own secrets against foreign spies. Both Kautilya as well as Maqha appear to be aware of the importance of the role of spies in civil and military affairs of the country, and thus advocate the need of building a network of spies for his own good as well as his people. It appears from their writings that spies are to practise all kinds of fraud, artifice, incendiarism and robbery. They are to demoralise enemy's troops by circulating false news etc. Moreover, it is the responsibilities of the spies to keep the strong neighbours so preoccupied with domestic troubles as to make it impossible for that ruler to launch upon any aggressive designs.(As. Bk. XII).

It may be stated that the office of the dūta is not an independent office; it is a special duty entrusted to someone who is already occupying some other office, the assignment of his duty being temporary.