Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Hofrath Prof. Dr. Johann Georg BÜHLER, LLD, CIE (henceforth ‘GB’) was a German Sanskritist and Indologist who lived in the 19th c. He has 13 books, over 300 articles and 36 review-articles to his credit. With his writings encompassing almost every branch of Indology, he played a major role in furthering scientific research in the field. The present thesis intends to investigate this phenomenal scholar’s work which stands even after almost 116 years as a guiding star, not only because the results he got were everlasting, but because his approach was unique and judgment unbiased.

1. Selection of the Topic

I began to work in the Manuscripts Library of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute in May 2003 as a contractual worker. I happened to read at the instance of Dr. Shreenand L. BAPAT, the then Assistant Curator and now Curator In-charge, the exhaustive Introduction by Prof. S. K. BELAVALKAR to the first volume of the descriptive catalogue of Manuscripts (MSS) deposited in the Bhandarkar Institute and the Report of Search of MSS for the period 1875-76 by GB. Through BELAVALKAR’s Introduction I came to know how the MSS collection of the Institute came into existence and because of the report of 1875-76 arose in me interest regarding the history of the searches of MSS and specially GB’s work in that direction. I, then, read the other Reports, out of which, besides that of GB, PETERSON’s reports made a great impact on me. Before that, GOUGH’s book entitled “Papers related to the Collection and Preservation of the Records of Ancient Sanskrit Literature in India” where GB is the most frequently mentioned scholar and which contains 7 out of 10 reports submitted to the Government by GB, introduced me to GB as a collector of MSS. It occurred to me that it probably
would yield a good research paper, or if the scope turns out to be greater, then it should make a good topic for a doctoral dissertation. When I discussed this with Prof. G. U. THITE, the then Curator of the Bhandarkar Institute, he at once suggested me to consider not only the collections of MSS, but the entire works of GB and take this up as a topic for my PhD.¹

2. Primary Objectives and their Evolution

When the idea of investigating about GB and his works was conceived, it was his work regarding MSS that was in my mind. I talked to Prof. THITE regarding the subject and he suggested that I should consider GB’s whole work for a thesis. It was decided to give a kind of brief survey of his work.

Considering the magnitude of GB’s writings, there was a high probability that I would not achieve a hundred percent success, but then there was a hundred percent probability that it will add tremendously to my own knowledge.

So while a large gain in the personal knowledge was possible, there was a danger of ‘no gain’ or ‘very little gain’ for the field (which was hardly realized by then).

But it was not too long before the possible ‘little gain’ result was recognized. It was decided to discuss in detail along with the contents of his writings, the ‘destiny’ of GB’s views in the history of Indology, and where do they stand presently, for instance, his theory of the origin of Brāhmī from the North Semitic alphabets. How it was viewed by his contemporaries, what were the later theories and what are the recent investigations on the topic.

GB has contributed to almost every branch of Indology. Since hundred and thirty years or so, GB is being referred to in almost every branch of Indology and his contributions are already widely recognized. With the above scheme, to discuss his contribution in every field and to judge the ‘destiny’ of his every piece of writing was to invest great amount of time with comparatively small gain in knowledge.

¹ Knowing the German language was a prime qualification to deal with such a topic. Fortunately, I already knew a little bit of it.
The No Problem Stage:

Basically there was no ‘Problem’. The ‘thesis’ was merely to elaborate contents of his writings, his views on various aspects of Indology and where do they stand with the progress of the science. Thus the dissertation was initially intended to be descriptive in nature. At this stage, Prof. Thomas OBERLIES guided me to find out and ‘develop’ a further problem. This was like to write lyrics when the tune was already composed.

I read on “Orientalism”; SAID, JENNIFER JENKINS, POLLOCK and GRUENENDAHL. This helped me to find other ‘paths’ and more ‘avenues’. Dr. Jone KEUNE helped me to realize that there are two broadways, on either of which my topic can be lead, one is to concentrate on Sanskritic aspect and the other is to investigate the ‘Orientalism’ germ of it.

This was the cloud phase as it is termed by ALON (2009: 2), who describes two types of schema i.e. mental picture for a project, the objective schema and the nurturing schema. In the objective schema one starts at a point A and straight away moves towards the goal at point B. Here there is no flexibility in objectives which can lead to failure if assumptions go wrong. According to ALON it is better to adopt the second schema, i.e. the nurturing schema, in which this ‘cloud’ phase is overcome by finding a new problem C. If C is more interesting and feasible than B, one can choose to go toward it (ALON 2009: 3).

Similar process took place in case of the present topic. Prof. OBERLIES asked me several questions to help me to find an interesting as well as a feasible problem.

Is GB still important today? Is he still relevant? such questions are important. While reviewing history of any Indological topic, be it Dharmaśāstra, epigraphy, palaeography, manuscriptology, historical literature, Jainism, Sanskrit and Prakrit lexicography consulting GB’s work is still found necessary. In a conversation with Prof. Kenneth ZYSK, he described GB as “phenomenal scholar”. Why was he so much phenomenal? What made him phenomenal? The expression phenomenal suits GB the best than any of the scholars of his generation. Why is it so? What was the difference which made him stand distinct from his contemporaries? This led me to think on a different line.
To answer these questions would be more interesting than to present his research mostly referred to and commented upon by the last century authors.

It was observed that GB’s writings are devoid of cavalier attitude and any imperial or colonial approach. At the same time, boasting of European critical attitude is hardly traceable in his writings. Thus there is a difference in his approach.

A typical method to approach a problem can be gleaned from his writings. This methodology distinct from 19th c. philological and historical methods has made him unique and phenomenal. The approach towards the sources of Indian Studies has helped him to perceive ‘the other’ in the right context. To understand the ‘foreign’ concepts by abolishing the predetermined frameworks is the real contribution of GB to Indology.

Thus the evolved objectives of the project are:

(1) To demonstrate this peculiar methodology adopted by GB.
(2) To deduce some of the basic principles that worked behind his researches would help to achieve the said aim.
(3) To show with examples how these principles have played a key role in the treatment which GB gave to various sources of ancient Indian history.
(4) To describe various features of historical Kāvyas enumerated by GB and to illustrate the principles adopted by him while deploying these Kāvyas for the history.
(5) To state GB’s approach about historical consciousness in ancient India and its effect on his researches.

A brief survey of his writings brings forth his major achievements in research and his position in the coeval academia. On this basis, it is aimed to delineate further, how his specific approach towards the sources of Indian Studies, methods to deal with these sources and his knowledge of contemporary India have helped him to gain an insight into the ancient past of the land.
Scope of the Work:
GB’s works are viewed here in comparison with those of his contemporaries and the 20th c. researches, wherever necessary. However, the scope of the present thesis is focussed primarily on the path followed by GB for exploring India’s political, literary and cultural past. This includes his efforts to unearth the sources and to use them with balanced understanding and discernment.

The dissertation shall strive to take a fresh overview of the life-mission and the century-old, path-breaking, multi-dimensional work of Prof. Bühler, which symbolizes an epoch of Indological studies.

3. Survey of Literature on GB
My task would have been almost impossible if two contemporary accounts of GB’s achievements were not available. The one is a biography of GB written by Julius JOLLY and the other is an obituary of GB written by his pupil Moriz WINTERNITZ.

There is a separate section in the Indian Antiquary Vol. 27 (1898), titled “In Memorium: Georg Bühler”. It comprises sixteen articles written by sixteen scholars in memory of GB.

Besides Jolly’s work there are eight more biographical writings of GB. They are all more or less brief accounts of GB’s career appeared in biographical works like “Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie” or “Neue Deutsche Biographie”.

Biographical Sketch by JOLLY:
This detailed biographical account was published in the following year after GB’s death. It was published under “Grundriss der Indo-arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde”, the series conceived and founded by GB.

Along with GB’s writings the other important source available to JOLLY was letters of GB sent to his brother-in-law and the others sent to his close friend NÖLDEKE. His has presented a detailed picture of GB’s career.
Obituary by WINTERNITZ:

This has a little more personal touch to the account. Since WINTERNITZ was greatest pupil of GB he presents a vivid description of his personality while describing his literary and scientific achievements. He describes the qualities of GB as a researcher, as a person, as a teacher. He narrates GB’s approach towards India and Indians. His inclination towards languages, history, historical literature, epigraphs and more prominently towards Indian culture and people has been illustrated by WINTERNITZ. He hints at how GB “brought his extensive knowledge of modern Indian life to bear on” his researches (1898: 348). In this obituary lies a seed or germ of my thesis.

The fondly and intimate words of WINTERNITZ for GB, his ‘Doctorvater’ (literally ‘Research-patron’, or Supervisor), never fail to create deep impact of GB’s personality on readers’ minds.

I was also fortunate to get access to some personal letters of GB during my recent sojourn in Germany.

All this material, however, renders the outer and ‘material’ sketch of the scholar. These accounts provide facts and figures of his life, about his work and his writings, and that he was a profound scholar. But, it cannot be ascertained from these sources why he was a profound scholar, in what way his approach or methods were different than others.

Thus the time span of a century and a decade after GB’s death offers the benefit of hindsight towards the life and works of GB, the stalwart of all times.

4. Methodology

(1) Chapter II: Life and Work of GB

For this chapter, I have chiefly relied on Jolly’s biography as also the obituaries written by Winternitz and other scholars in the Indian Antiquary. His life-sketch is brief and the work, apart from ‘writings’ has been dealt with separately.
Chapter III: Writings: A brief survey

Chapter III presents a brief survey of GB’s writings. It is classified under ten major subject-heads. The subjects of less prominence, e.g. Vedic literature, Buddhism or Archaeology are dealt with in the last ‘Miscellaneous’ section.

A ‘complete list of GB’s writings’ classified subject-wise, is appended at the end. It will help the reader gauge the expanse of his writings on each of the subjects. I have mainly relied on the data obtainable from the writings of GB which is the primary source for the present study.

Chapter IV: Insight and Investigation:

While I read GB’s writings I could delineate some noteworthy features. His efforts to see the ‘other’ in their context were apparent. Various events of his life pointed towards his ‘motto’ ‘Be the other to know the other’. He applied his knowledge of the contemporary India to solve the problems of the past. He did not take a detached approach merely as an indifferent observer of the society and culture which he was studying.

5. Data Collection

I procured the necessary material in physical and digital format. It consists of more than 340 articles published in more than 41 different journals.

The work of data collection got impetus when GBs biography, penned by Jolly, became known. It contained a bibliography of GB’s works. However to ‘decode’ it was not an easy task. It is noted in the beginning of this about three and half page long list of works that the abbreviations used are as they appear in the “Orientalische Bibliographie” – Abkürzungen im Allgemeinen wie in der “Orientalischen Bibliographie”. The task seemed simple when I got the Volume of the Orientalische Bibliographie for the year 1897. However, there were some inconsistencies and no means to verify them. The journey from guessing the probable full form, finding the correct title and reaching to any book was a long one. The abbreviations like ‘Monatschr. Berl. Ak.’, ‘Wien. Phil.-Vers.’, or ‘Alm. d. k. Ak. d. Wiss.’ sounded not less than some magical formulae. The Athenaeum Journal was unknown to me and it was not until February 2013 that I could
decode the abbreviation “Verh. d. 32. Vers. d. Philol.” meaning Verhandlungen
der zweiunddreizigsten Versammlung deutscher Philologen. One of the most
challenging apocope comprised just two, otherwise easily decodable letters ‘Ac.’
meaning Academy. Which ‘Academy’ was the question, which was answered by
the accidental discovery on internet of the Journal bearing that name. There were
few printing mistakes in Jolly’s bibliography which converted the task into a
riddle. The last ‘Samasyāpūrtī’ was the letters “Weber I. Lit² 322-8, 367”, which
finally turned out to be “Akademische Vorlesungen über Indische Literatur-
geschichte, zweite vermehrte Auflage, Berlin (1876) 332-338, 367.”

To give an idea about the task, a small portion of Jolly’s bibliography is
cited here along with the corresponding portion in the final bibliography of this
thesis:

JOLLY (1899: 22):
Congr. (1883) 1, 120 f. WZ. 9, 44—66. Sitzb. 132, 5, 1—90 (Indian Studies No.
III), cf. Anz. 1894,87—91. 1895, 24. Japanische Sanskritss.: MAX MÜLLER,
Buddhist Texts from Japan (Oxf. 1881), Appendix 63 — 95, 6 Tafeln (1884). Ö.
JRAS. 1891, 689—94. Andere Hss. aus Kaschgar: WZ. 7, 260—73. Wiener
»Faullenzer«: Anz. 1897, 48—52.

JOLLY (1899: 22) expanded in the present thesis:
9. Palaeography and Numismatics
(270) On the Ancient Nāgarī Numerals by BHAGVĀNLĀL INDRAJI, Translated
from Gujarati along with a ”Postscript”, IA 6 (1877) 42-48.
(271) On the Origin of the Indian Alphabets and Numerals, IA 11 (1882) 268-
270.
(272) Memorandum by Professor G. BÜHLER, JRAS (1882) 339-346.
(273) Indo-Pāli Alphabets, Leidener Oriental Congress (1883) 1, 120-121.
The Origin of the Kharoṣṭhi Alphabet, WZKM 9 (1895) 44-66; IA 24 (1895) 285-292, 311-316.


Ein zweites Sanskrit Palmblatt-Manuscript aus Japan, ÖMO 11 (1885) 68.

A Note on a Second old Sanskrit Palmleaf Manuscript from Japan, IA 14 (1885) 228-229 (Translated from ÖMO 11, 68).

The New Sanskrit MS. from Mingai, WZKM 5 (1891) 103-110; JRAS (1891) 689-694.

A further Note on the Mingai or Bower MS. WZKM 5 (1891) 302-310.

The New Sanskrit MS. from Mingai, Academy 40 (1891) 138-139.

New Manuscripts from Kashgar, WZKM 7 (1893) 260-273.

New Manuscripts from Kashgar, Verhandlungen der Zweiundvierzigsten Versammlung Deutscher Philologen und Schulmänner in Wien, 24-27 Mai 1893, Leipzig, (1894) 504. [A small paragraph mentioning the paper read by GB].

The Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions on the Indo-Grecian Coins, WZKM 8 (1894) 193-207.

Specimina der Faullenzer, AKAW (1897) 48-52.

I have been able to add to GB’s bibliography 14 articles that were not accessible to Jolly.
Volumes of some journals, such as the Indian Antiquary, Journal of the Royal Asiatic, and Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society are available in Pune. However, most of the other sources, especially the German ones, are not available there. Moreover, there were practical limitations on the accessibility of the materials available.

A student exchange scholarship under the ‘Erasmus Mundus Action 2 Experts II Project’, a project for South and South-East Asia funded by the European Commission, was awarded to me in May 2012 and I had a privilege to study in the Seminar für Indologie und Tibetologie, University of Göttingen under the guidance of Prof. Thomas Oberlies from 14th August 2012 to 30th September 2013. I could avail all library facilities including inter-library loan. Without this opportunity it would have not been possible to prepare even a detailed bibliography of GB’s writings.

The required old journals, proceedings were easily available and accessible in the Historical Building (Historische Gebäude) of the library of the University of Göttingen. Frau Mund, the Librarian of this section was very helpful. 7,323 pages of various journals including reference works have been scanned. Out of these a few were scanned in Vienna during my week long stay. Prof. Karin Preissendanz of the Institute for Southasian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, Vienna University and Dr. Sylvia Stapelfeldt, the librarian of the same Institute kindly guided me there in all academic matters.

The internet was another major source of the data. There are various websites where volumes of journals like Indian Antiquary, Journals of various societies are available in pdf-s or DjVu file formats. All old volumes of ZDMG are available in fully searchable file format on the website of the Society. The other useful websites include www.archive.org, the Digital Library of India and the Jstor. Twelve articles including three reports of search of MSS of GB are available on the GRETIL website. The advantage of these files is that they are fully searchable. Dr. Gruenendahl who supervises the GRETIL project made it a point to inform me about these files. Thus, in all 79 volumes of different journals having GB’s articles have been downloaded. Here, I have taken into
consideration GB’s articles only. Other innumerable reference works have been downloaded through the internet.

The two German articles of GB “Indische Erbauungsstunden” and “Eine Reise durch die Indische Wüste” are printed in the fraktur style that was in vogue till the 19th c. in Europe and particularly in Germany. The internet again came to my help. The ‘Abbyfine reader OCR’ software has an online facility to convert such documents into usual script which saved time and I could directly take up the translation task.

Included in the thesis is the yet-unnoticed handwriting of GB from the MS. of the Vikramāṅkadevacarita (50/1873-74) deposited at the BORI, copied by him at Jaisalmer with the help of Hermann Jacobi.

The writings not available to me:
In spite of all efforts I could not find the Report of search of MSS for the year 1879-80. It might have been published after GB left India in 1880. It has been referred to later at some places by GB himself, but not referred to by anybody else including S. K. BELVALKAR.

6. Style
(1) Reference to GB’s writings has been given differently for the books, the articles and the review articles, in the following manner:

a. Book:
Roman capital letters have been used in alphabetical order along with the publication year of the particular book i.e. ‘A’ for the book published first in the chronological order.

  e.g. The Digest of Hindu Law is second in the chronological order hence letter ‘B’ is used. While the year of the edition used by me is 1884. Thus it has been referred as (1884B: 1) i.e. first page of the 1884 edition of the Digest.
Where there is no continuous pagination for two volumes/parts of a single text, small a, b, c are used along with the capital A, B, C.

e.g. (1891Cb: 1) refers to the first page of part 2 of the Pañcatantra’s edition where, ‘1891’ is the year of the edition used by me, ‘C’ denotes that chronologically it is the third published work of GB and ‘b’ denotes the part 2 of it.

b. Article:
Articles have been arranged chronologically and alphabetically. Multiple numbers of items in a year have been denoted by letters ‘a’, ‘b’, ‘c’, etc. Since the number of articles pertaining to the year 1892 crosses 26, the articles have been denoted by ‘aa’, ‘ab’, ‘ba’, etc.

e.g. (1892as: 45) refers to page number 45 of “Some remarks on "Beiträge zur Erforschung der Geschichte des Mahâbhârata", AKAW (1892) 45-51”.

c. Review Article:
They have been arranged chronologically and alphabetically. Multiple numbers of items in a year have been denoted by letters (a), (b), (c) put in the round brackets.

e.g. (1895(b): 246).

(2) As is shown in the above examples, while referring to GB’s articles, his name is not mentioned in the bracket. The names of authors other than GB are put in the brackets as usual while referring to their works.

(3) The words like Brāhmaṇa, Śāstrī which occur very often are used without diacritical marks as Brahmana, Shastri.