
TUEBINGEN HERITAGE AS REFLECTED IN THE DICTIONARIES OF GUNDERT AND KITTEL*

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The word Tuebingen is used here not only in *niitaartha* 'literal and definitive meaning' but also in *neeyaartha* 'interpretative meaning'. In other words, Tuebingen is considered as the name of a university town in Germany and as a verbal icon of a particular intellectual tradition in nineteenth-century Germany.

A brief but succinct introduction to Tuebingen is available in a recent scholarly article¹ of Dr George Baumann, the director of the oriental section of Tuebingen university library. As his presentation is addressed particularly to Indian academics, I would

like to introduce Tuebingen closely following his words. The city of Tuebingen lies in the southwestern corner of Germany on the eastern edge of the famous Black Forest. Tuebingen University founded in 1477 has always been a byword for the study of theology. In the first 300 years of the university library the oriental literature acquired consisted for the most part of works on and in the Hebrew language. There has also been a comparatively long tradition of oriental studies which developed from the theologians' interest in oriental biblical languages and missionary work. Many former students of Tuebingen

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university who were trained in protestant theology at Tuebingen stift, happened to work in India as missionaries. Hermann Gundert (1813–1893) studied in Tuebingen between 1831 and 1835 and took his doctorate in 1835. Gottfried Weigle (1816–1855) and Hermann Moegling (1811–1881) were Gundert's classmates in Tuebingen.

When these Tuebingen alumni worked as colleagues in Basel mission in South India, true to the oriental spirit of their alma mater they engaged in scientific linguistic work. They enjoyed being in India and learning through their daily experience. Only very few missionaries could maintain such a high intellectualism during their routine work.² Regarding Basel mission in India, their remarkable contributions were in the cultural and industrial fields. In cultural studies including linguistics major achievements were made by missionaries associated with Tuebingen.³ To understand the enthusiasm and intellectual stimulation of Gundert, Moegling and their colleagues, let us look at a letter they sent from Mangalore to a friend Oehler in Basel. Moegling wrote in his part: "Do you know something, dear brother, pack your books and papers, book a seat on the fast train to Marseille and get on board the next steamer to Alexandria. In six weeks you will then be amongst your old brethren in India on the threshold of a world of research, at the centre of a growing mission, under a warm sky and in a pure air, where your sick heart could heal itself. How often have we not already thought about you. You should immerse

yourself in the extraordinary treasures of Indian philosophy and mythology and create a deep fund of knowledge so that busy and restless people like us could have access to it and be able to utilise it for our purpose with ease."⁴

Ferdinand Kittel (1832–1903), who belongs to the next generation of Basel missionaries like most of his colleagues, did not receive any university education. But when he returned to Germany in 1892 and settled down in Tuebingen, he was awarded the PhD degree by the university of Tuebingen recognising his contributions to Dravidiology. Dr Stietencron, in his keynote address at the opening session of Dr Hermann Gundert Conference (1993) held in Stuttgart, described the intellectual stimulation the young Hermann Gundert, who studied in Tuebingen university, would have received from the milieu. German minds were excited over the disclosure of the existence of an Indo-Germanic (Indo-European) family of languages and the discovery of the close relationship between the ancient myths of India and those of Europe. This fascination of German minds developed as three branches of learning in German Universities: (1) the comparative science of language which developed later into linguistics, (2) the comparative study of mythology which developed into comparative history and science of religions, and (3) Indology. 'From them he (Gundert) learned that the cultural history of bygone times may be reflected in word forms; that the comparison of language and careful etymology make it possible to reconstruct the original

meaning even of words the signification of which may have been long since lost; and that social history and history of religions can be unveiled through the study of such words'. I hope this will help us to explain some of the striking common features of the dictionaries of Gundert and Kittel.

While these missionaries were actively engaged in linguistic research in India, Rudolf von Roth (1821—1895) organized the Indology department and university library in Tuebingen in his dual capacity as the first Sanskrit Professor of the university and director of the university library. Roth, who had learned theology in the Tuebingen stift, attended to his academic assignments in Tuebingen from 1848 to 1895. He gained international reputation through his collaboration with Otto von Boehtlingk (1815—1904) in the preparation of the famous Sanskrit-German dictionary sponsored by the Imperial Academy of St Petersburg. In this monumental work Roth supplied Vedic literature and Botanical and Ayurvedic literature. It was during his official tenure of thirty-nine years that the Indological collection and studies developed in Tuebingen university. His missionary friends contributed a lot in the acquisition of books and manuscripts.

Roth and missionaries like Gundert and Kittel present two faces of German Indology. Roth, who had received training as a Protestant theologian, valued the linguistic labours of his missionary friends. He preserved the materials from modern Indian languages made available to him by the missionaries. When

compared to many of his contemporary Indologists he was open-minded to modern Indian languages and missionaries. But he never wanted to see India. As Dr Gabriele Zeller of Tuebingen university library has pointed out in a recent article⁵ on Roth, 'he wanted to extract out of India the knowledge of her philosophers, and was not much interested in, or even worse, he was disgusted by, the different way of life of the Indians'. But Gundert, Kittel and other missionary scholars, who learned through their life in Indian villages, valued regional languages and folk knowledge. Gundert and Kittel edited anthologies of Malayalam and Kannada literary texts. Gundert edited and published *Keralolpathi*, a legendary work about the origin of Kerala society. Kittel edited *Sabdhamanidarpana*. Both of them collected proverbs.

Gundert and Kittel were pioneers in identifying Dravidian vocabulary in Sanskrit. These papers were bold attempts to revolt against intellectual hegemony in India and Germany. The value they attached to the Dravidian heritage of India, much against the mainstream thinking prompted further developments in Dravidiology. Remember, their articles on this subject were published in the mainstream academic journals in Germany and India⁶. So the encounter of Indologists and missionaries in Tuebingen involves complex signs of stigmatization and destigmatization of intellectual labours in Indology. This is a problem worth pursuing but it is beyond the scope of this paper.

Gundert and Kittel are often praised for their 'German perseverance and scholarship' as manifested in their dictionaries⁷. Any attempt to interpret this so called 'German perseverance and scholarship' leads us to hermeneutical problems. Let us try to establish this expression as an 'event' with its own conditions and domains. Going by the dictum, 'reality is consciousness', we meet with the problem of the 'archaeology of knowledge'. Archaeology of knowledge, through discursive practices, involves a body of rules that governs one's manner of perceiving, judging, imagining and acting. It emphasises the link between perceiving, conceiving, saying and doing. This explanation tempts us to deconstruct the index or icon 'Tuebingen' to several domains.

In Germany, Indology in the nineteenth century, contributed to the development of romantic thought. The romantic ideals of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), Friedrich von Schlegel (1772–1829) and many others, were accompanied by studies on languages and wisdom of India. This romantic interest in the 'mysterious East' entered Christian minds of Tuebingen stift and many revelled in the tension created by the 'uniting opposites'. This developed as a mode of thinking. For Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg (1682–1719), the first Protestant missionary to India, who had compiled the genealogy of Indian gods and goddesses, the exposure to the chaotic variety of India in Tamil Nadu had been an experience worth considering in his homeland. Eminent professors of Chris-

tian theological faculties in various German universities like David Strauss (1808–1874) charmed young minds to new areas of religious thought and experience in tune with the contemporary romantic revolution. Remember, it was in Tuebingen that Strauss published his most celebrated book, *The Life of Jesus*, in 1835. In this context it is interesting to glance at a letter Gundert received in Tuebingen from his father.

The father wrote: "I will now explain further. Strauss had already begun to influence you in Maulbronn, in direct proportion to the lack of warmth and liveliness that the lessons deemed necessary. I did not want to deliver this ambrosia during the last semester because I saw that your soul had enmeshed itself in dead letters. I was therefore glad to consider Tuebingen and the benefits you would derive from instruction by older and experienced teachers. You would then learn the gospel, make philosophy adaptable and not the other way round. Now comes Strauss to Tuebingen, takes everything in his stride towards noble aims and thrusts them smoothly along Hegelian grooves. Even my dear son attaches himself to this vehicle of the Gods and transposes Brahma and Vishnu into Hegel and Goethe so that under their protection, he is secure against all attacks of the 'I' and the world (should I also mention the devil) and all evil forces. But when life appears to you in its true form, when you appear before your own self in all your naked being, when there is a tremendous downpour, when the waters come rushing in their tor-

rents, when the wind rages, then are you truly in a house built of sand"(2) (CD 389).

Many students of Tuebingen stift were charmed by Hegelianism, as accused by Gundert's father. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) himself had been a student of Tuebingen stift. Hegeliansim with its emphasis on 'phenomenology of the mind' and the search for truth through dialectic and teaching of Strauss had an unsettling influence on young minds of Tuebingen. Gundert notes in his diary on 24.7.1834: "To create a philosophy is no great art. But to put everything—what was and what is — in an orderly state, that is an art. Hegel mocked those who hung on every word of the Bible. But if one were to transmute organically only the words of the Bible that one had into oneself, would it not be called philosophy? Of course, there would still be a few points left, eg specialised areas of the philosophy of nature, etc. However, philosophers have still areas to tackle such things as freedom, a positive God, revelation and so on, without much hope of aligning them with the path of philosophy. The Bible philosophers on the other hand are quite hopeful of doing so"(2). However, as an intelligent student of theology with romantic sensibility he could not resolve completely the tension between the Bible and philosophy.

Gundert maintained his inner balance through all his experiences in life and took to writing to free himself. Sometimes he expressed his thoughts in poetry; at others through letters in

which he translated Greek poems and dramas. Gundert occupied himself with Greek poetry and philosophy as one of the focal areas of his studies. His labour is reflected, among others, in the translations of Sophocles' *Antigone* (CT 18) as well as *King Oedipus*, both appearing in manuscript (2).

However, Hegelian dialectic—the process of reaching the truth through change, whereby a proposition or idea (thesis) is transformed into its opposite (antithesis) and preserved and fulfilled by it, the ultimate synthesis being the mind or thought—was used by Gundert as an *Upaaya* 'excellent method' or discursive practice in his intellectual work including lexicography.

Christian missionaries were agents of scientific technique in the knowledge industry of nineteenth-century India. Printing, publishing and preparation of teaching materials including grammar books, lexicons and anthologies were taken up by Gundert, Weigle and Kittel. Anthologies and edited versions of classics and folk literature bear testimony to the dialectic operation of reason as concerned with reality as a whole. For missionaries like Gundert and Kittel, in the real sense of dialectical logic, contradictions were fruitful collisions of ideas from which a higher truth may be reached by way of synthesis. I must confess that by the nature of their vocation they could not apply this dialogical principle to their subjects of preaching. However, *Nalacarita Sarasodhana* of Gundert, which is a critique of the Nala episode in the Mahabharata, both in form and in content, reflects his liking

for the dialectic mode of discourse. In 'secular' intellectual labours, missionaries like Gundert and Kittel were Hegelians. Gundert's knowledge of Franz Bopp's (1791–1867) theoretical studies especially analytical comparison of Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and Teutonic languages showing the original identity of their grammatical structure, qualified him to be the best lexicographer in Indian languages.

The nature of the books edited and published by Gundert and Kittel will exemplify their Tuebingen heritage. The dictionaries of Gundert and Kittel contain mainly non-Christian literature as citations. In many cases, they did not evaluate indigenous works from Christian and Western point of view. Many British missionaries used to criticise the colonial government for prescribing native literary works with Indian mythology as textbooks. Gundert and Kittel compiled anthologies with typical indigenous literature and collected local lore including hymns and legends about gods and temples. We were just trying to interpret this openness as the iconicity of Tuebingen and as an extension of Hegelianism. A general survey of the writings of Gundert and Kittel, both Christian and secular, will bring to the fore several epistemological breaks. If understood in Foucaultian sense, this is the proof of their genuineness as intellectuals.

Gundert and Kittel as German Protestant missionaries carried with them the Lutheran heritage of translation theory and practice. Martin Luther (1483–1546), as Eugene Nida⁸ points

out, 'insisted upon the importance of full intelligibility in translation and worked out the implication of his translational principles in such matters as (1) shifts of word order, (2) employment of modal auxiliaries, (3) introduction of connectives when required, (4) suppression of Greek or Hebrew terms which had no acceptable equivalents in German, (5) use of phrases where necessary to translate single words in the original, (6) shifts from metaphors to nonmetaphors and vice versa and (7) careful attention to exegetical accuracy and textual variants'. This heritage and their own experience in translation work equipped them for rigorous semantic analysis. Both Gundert and Kittel were convinced that a work is not a point of meaning, but rather an area of meaning. They were also convinced that arbitrary limitation of meaning as found in dictionaries of Bailey (1846), Reeve (1832), and Rottler (1834) was artificial. They believed that a dictionary should be a description of usage, as the meaning of a word or of any grammatical form has to be defined in the linguistic situations in which such a word or form occurs. This was a major breakthrough in Malayalam and Kannada lexicography and it won immediate approval. In 1874, two years after the publication of Gundert's dictionary, Dr Caldwell praised it as the best dictionary in any Indian vernacular. 'It will then be evident that Dr Gundert has not only performed a most laborious task, but also that he has done it in a manner corresponding to the requirements of modern linguistic science, with the

latest results of which he is perfectly at home⁹. Dr Caldwell explains this point in the preface to his Comparative Grammar, and he wished similar works to be done in other Dravidian languages. It seems Caldwell was all the more impressed by the etymological part of Gundert's dictionary. A note of Kittel¹⁰ from Esslingen dated 13 November 1878 mentions that he was asked to prepare a similar dictionary for Kannada. So the lexicography of Gundert which was the cumulative product of aforementioned trends in German intellectual world was further refined by Kittel as we find it used in his famous Kannada-English dictionary. This lexicographical heritage, which may be named Tuebingen, remains almost unsurpassed even after one century.

Notes

¹ "A Short History of Indology and Indological Librarianship in Tuebingen," *Tuebingen University Library Malayalam Manuscript Series*, vol 1, 1994: XXIII-XL.

² Many Basel missionaries who came to India were from villages in Wurttemberg and most of them were committed to a life close to the soil or small workshops. In religious fervour they were Protestant pietists insisting on weekly prayer meetings and Bible study.

³ "Language, Nations and People: Hermann Gundert and the Trends of His Time," *Tuebingen Univer-*

sity Library Malayalam Manuscript Series, vol 2, 1994: XXV-XXXIV.

⁴ A letter dated 16.2.1839 preserved in the Archives of Marbacha. Many letters and notes of this kind can be gathered from the biography of Gundert compiled by Albrecht Frenz from original sources. For an English translation of this work, see Frenz and Zacharia, *Dr Hermann Gundert and the Malayalam Language*, 1993: 49-151. For particular references see also 56, 57, 61, 62 and 87.

⁵ cf Dr Gabriele Zeller. On Manuscripts and Letters of Rudolf von Roth's Estate, 1993 (unpublished).

⁶ *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlaendischen Gesellschaft*, Leipzig 1869, and *Indian Antiquary*, 1872.

⁷ See review of Gundert's dictionary published in *The Indian Evangelical Review* 1874: 383-385. Reprinted in full as part of the critical introduction to the DCB edition (1991) of Gundert's Dictionary (HGS vol 1).

⁸ See Eugene Nida. "Linguistics and Missions," in *Language Structure and Translation*, (Stanford, 1975) 232.

⁹ *Indian Evangelical Review* 1874: 383-385.

¹⁰ This note of Kittel was published in *Indian Antiquary*, February 1879.

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