

Advance Praise

Father Camille Bulcke was an exceptional missionary who devoted his entire life to serving Hindi. Bulcke's lifelong association with *Ramcharitmanas* and its remarkable creator, Tulsidas, brought some of the finest writings on the genesis and development of *Ramkatha*. As a distinguished lexicographer, Bulcke compiled an excellent English–Hindi dictionary, which is very useful even after so many decades. This book offers a fascinating account of Bulcke's life, his times and his contribution to India and the Hindi world.

Emmanuel Baxla

Director, Fr Camille Bulcke Research Centre, St Xavier's College, Ranchi
Translator of Bulcke's English–Hindi dictionary into Hindi–English dictionary

After my arrival in India in 1965, I lived in the same house (Manresa) as Father Bulcke's in Ranchi, and he directed me in my study of Hindi and Sanskrit. Once a week we went for a 20-kilometre cycle ride, regularly overtaken by dangerous trucks. He told me he would cycle in the middle of the road: 'You still have a longer life to live than me.' This *snehi*, loving and humane Father Bulcke emerges beautifully in this book, as much as the great scholar and the ascetic Jesuit. The backdrop descriptions of his native Flanders, his Allahabad *maika* and the Ranchi guru-ship are most interesting. His hearing impairment made his life at times lonely, but he found a firm footing in spirituality, both Christian and Rama-oriented, although some may argue that the juxtaposition of Christ and Tulsidas as the idols of Bulckeji is too simplistic. The synthesis of Bulckeji's life in the conclusion is a remarkable piece of balanced scholarship.

Winand M. Callewaert

Emeritus Professor, Centre for Advanced India–EU Studies,
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven)
Renowned Sanskrit scholar and author with over two dozen books on Bhakti literature

This critical biography of the remarkable Camille Bulcke is both an appreciative assessment of his extraordinary contributions to Ramayana scholarship, lexicography and inter-religious understanding and a nuanced appraisal of his complex and at times contradictory motivations as a devout Catholic missionary, born-again Indian and scholar and votary of Tulsidas, who served his adopted nation and its people with wholehearted devotion. In the polarised and politicised climate of twenty-first-century India, Baba Bulcke's unflinching commitment to

active *prem*—for *desh*, *bhasha*, *sanskriti* and *log*—transcending religious and class barriers, is inspiring even in its imperfections.

Philip Lutgendorf

Emeritus Professor of Hindi and Modern Indian Studies, University of Iowa
Author of *The Life of a Text: Performing the Rāmcaritmānas of Tulsidas*; translator of
The Epic of Ram (7 volumes, 1991)

This is a lovely book. It reveals, layer by layer, the profound forms of knowledge and respect that can connect people of very different religious traditions, through examining the life of Camille Bulcke, a Flemish Jesuit and scholar sent to India in the 1930s as a missionary, but whose embrace of Hindi and respect for Hinduism and the work of Tulsidas on *Ramcharitmanas* were transformative for both Indian and European audiences. Ravi Dutt Bajpai and Swati Parashar have not only provided a penetrating biography of this priest, his love for the Hindu saint and poet Tulsidas and the limitations of his cosmology, but have also brought the reader into the linguistic, theological, poetic and methodological forms that engage and enliven connections across worlds. The divinities must be pleased.

Cecelia M. Lynch

Professor, Political Science, School of Social Sciences, University of California, Irvine

Amidst the turbulence of today's world, where uncertainty looms large, the solace and enlightenment drawn from history are invaluable. Father Camille Bulcke emerges as a beacon from not-so-distant times, his life a testament to the virtues of compassionate transgression and intellectual endeavour. Hailing from Belgium, this Jesuit missionary transcended boundaries as a noted Indologist and *Ramkatha* exponent, leaving behind a legacy rich in social understanding. In an era marked by entrenched ideologies, figures like Father Bulcke are scarce. Their commitment to dialogue and understanding stands in stark contrast to prevailing hardline positions. Bajpai and Parashar's book pays fitting tribute to Father Bulcke, capturing the essence of his mission: fostering harmony amidst cultural diversity and divergent belief systems.

Priyankar Upadhyay

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A portrait of a charming man and engaged scholar who was a bundle of contradictions – devoted to Tulsidas but also to the idea that Christianity is the only path to salvation. His approach to Hindu texts and ideas has a lot to do with the Christianising of modern Hinduism.

Ruth Vanita

Author of *Love's Rite* (2005), *Memory of Light* (2020) and *The Dharma of Justice in the Sanskrit Epics* (2021)

Camille Bulcke

This is the first English biography of the Belgian Jesuit, Padma Bhushan recipient and renowned scholar of Hindi, Awadhi and Sanskrit: Father Camille Bulcke (1909–1982). Father Bulcke came to India when it was still a British colony, found spiritual inspiration in the life and compositions of the great Indian poet Goswami Tulsidas, and emerged as one of the renowned exponents of the *Ramkatha* (The Story of Rama) and the Hindi language. This book attempts to read and critically examine his life, while also analysing his writings on comparative religious studies. In doing so, it provides a brief overview of the world of Hindi literature and its development in postcolonial India through the contributions of Father Bulcke, and highlights the cultural and religious encounters between the West and the East, Europe and India, Christianity and Hinduism.

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Camille Bulcke

The Jesuit Exponent of *Ramkatha*

Ravi Dutt Bajpai
Swati Parashar



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or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
remain, accurate or appropriate.

The inspiration for this book comes from Father Camille Bulcke's Christ and Goswami Tulsidas' Rama, both of whom are the finest examples of the human-divine, inspiring the most outstanding and universally recognised standards of public welfare, personal integrity, ethical living, moral values, and love and compassion for all humans.

One was an 'avatar' of God, a humble king who embraced the hardship of exile as self-sacrifice and devotion to his family, and later ruled over his kingdom with great sense of love and justice for all his subjects. The other was the 'son of God', an ordinary shepherd who embraced the suffering of people, extending compassion, generosity and kindness to all.

We dedicate this book to seekers of knowledge and the divine in every tradition who work to mitigate differences among humans based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, creed and caste – and who teach that empathy, compassion and justice are the only redemption for humanity.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

—Mark 10:45, Bible

परहित सरिस धरम नहिं भाई।
पर पीड़ा सम नहिं अधमाई॥

There is no better *dharmā* (religious duty) than benevolence; nothing more sinful than malevolence towards others.

—Goswami Tulsidas, *Ramcharitmanas*

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Foreword

Of the numerous scholars of Hindi among the British administrators and European missionaries who came to India over the last two hundred years – most notably John Gilchrist, George Grierson, F. W. Keay and Edwin Greaves – and lately among the post-colonial ‘South Asianists’, only Camille Bulcke seems to have the distinction of becoming a household name in the extensive Hindi-speaking areas of the country.

That is because one can find in countless Hindi homes a copy of his *Angreji–Hindi Kosh* (English–Hindi Dictionary), first published in 1968, in its third revised edition by 1981, and reprinted altogether 19 times already by 1991 when I belatedly acquired my copy. As Bulcke explained in his preface, he intended it for the use of those who already had English but wished to learn Hindi (like himself) and hoped that it might prove useful ‘also to those whose mother tongue is Hindi, especially those engaged in translation work’ (like myself). But he also added a third category of people to whom this work might be of help: ‘Indian students who wish to improve their knowledge of English’. One may suspect that it is this last category which has benefitted the most from Bulcke’s triple-function dictionary, for it nicely supplements or even supersedes the usual English–English dictionaries, where the explanation given is, for many early learners, nearly as challenging as the words they look up.

Bulcke also provided the correct pronunciation of each word in the Devanagari script, which is incomparably more phonetic than the Roman script. Moreover, he cut out the frills which needlessly complicate the life of a language learner. For example, the title of his work has for its first word not the English word ‘English’ but the Hindi word ‘Angreji’, which is here spelt not as ‘Angrezi’ with a *z* but as ‘Angreji’ with a *j*, the common pronunciation of the word without

the non-native sound *z*. Bulcke had obviously learnt his Hindi well enough to know what is indigenous to it and what is not (Bulcke 1968, vii). Here and there he also indicated a personal predilection as when he defined ‘Christianity’ as not only ‘Isai dharm’, which is common usage (following the Arabic name for Jesus which is common among Muslims), but alternatively also as ‘Khreest dharm’ or ‘Khreestiyata’, which are unmediated approximations of the name ‘Christ’ though hardly commonly used (Bulcke 1968, 106).

***Ramkatha* and Christian Faith**

The status of this dictionary as Bulcke’s best-known work is ironic and illustrates the vagaries of fortune and fame for his life’s work was not this useful pedagogical device but a scholarly treatise which was unprecedented in Hindi in terms of scope, ambition and erudition. This magnum opus of his was titled *Ramkatha: Utpatti Aur Vikas* (The Rama Story: Its Origin and Development, 1950). It was the outcome of his doctoral dissertation, undertaken at the University of Allahabad and completed in a period of just over two years from 1947 to 1949. The research that Bulcke conducted for it was as original as it was extensive, for he ranged beyond Hindi over other major Indian languages, beginning with Sanskrit and the Vedas, down to the languages of South-East Asia. His erudition looks highly impressive even now and was in his own pre-internet age simply phenomenal.

This was just the beginning of a long and rich scholarly career in which Bulcke produced a large number and variety of works. Besides these two outstanding works, he authored and edited several works centred on his favourite Hindi poet, Tulsidas, and on Hindi and its propagation as a national language, a cause of which he was a dedicated champion. On the other hand, he produced an even larger number of books rendering into Hindi several key Christian texts, including a Hindi translation of the New Testament under the title *Naya Vidhan*. He created an immensely popular account of the life of Christ in which he hit upon the innovative idea of amalgamating the four different Gospels into one; this was published in English as *The Saviour* and in his own Hindi version as *Muktidata*. (Incidentally, this self-translation seems to elide the theological question that someone who saves souls from damnation, as in Christian belief, may be thought to perform a function quite different from someone who grants liberation, *mukti*, to souls from the cycle of rebirth, but such are the ever-present perils of translation.) Bulcke also produced a Hindi version of the psalter, and in his last years he undertook a new translation of the Old Testament, which

he had nearly completed when he passed away at the age of 73. Indeed, as in the case of *The Saviour*, all these translations may be studied for the ways in which Bulcke sought to achieve theological and cultural equivalence between the source language and the target language.

Altogether, of the 29 books or booklets that Bulcke published in Hindi and English, 9 were related to Hindi language and literature, 19 were on Christian themes, and 1, titled *Hindi Christian Names*, could be classed under either category. Of the 65 articles he wrote, those in English were often about some aspect or the other of the story of Rama while those in Hindi provided authoritative information about Christian subjects. And of the 85 chapters or entries in books that he published, as many as 76 were contributions to a single publication, *Hindi Vishvakosh* (Hindi Encyclopaedia, 1965), mostly on Christian figures or themes: from ‘Abraham’, ‘Archbishop’ and ‘Augustine’ to ‘Jesuit’, ‘Tritva’ (the Trinity) and ‘Vatican’.

But in a double distinction, the same Hindi encyclopaedia also invited Bulcke to contribute entries on ‘Ramkatha’, ‘Ramkavya’ and ‘Rambhakti’! This was perhaps the unique achievement of Bulcke: to be honoured equally as an expert with an encyclopaedic and authentic knowledge of Christianity, which was the faith he lived by, and as an expert on the Hindu cult of devotion to Rama, which was the subject of his dedicated lifelong scholarship. This may seem to some readers like a paradox, but Bulcke’s life and works are a living testimony that one can lead a doubly worthy life at two distinct levels. He stood between two religious faiths, languages and cultures as a bridge, promoting mutual understanding between them not only literally as a dictionary does or even a translation, but also at a deeper cultural and religious level as only a true and sympathetic interpreter can. Born in Belgium and brought up and educated there as an engineer, he decided in his youth to turn a new leaf to lead a life of an exile and a missionary in a strange far-away land. His life is thus as fascinating as it is challenging to comprehend and interpret.

This Biography

The authors of this first-ever biography of Bulcke, Ravi Dutt Bajpai and Swati Parashar, thus had their work cut out for them, and it would be immediately clear to any reader that they have conceptualised and executed their task with assiduous erudition and scrupulous objectivity. In this full and fair account, they provide a wealth of information about the life of Bulcke while also analysing

several of his major works as they proceed. And they finally arrive at conclusions which are the more persuasive for being appreciative and unremitting at the same time.

Among other things, Bajpai and Parashar offer an especially sensitive and nuanced discussion of a vexed question as to where precisely Bulcke stood vis-à-vis Christianity and Hinduism. They show how Bulcke believed that 'Tulsidas' Rama is not a historical figure and that Tulsidas himself nowhere claimed this to be the case. On the question of the 'authenticity' of the Hindu gods, Bajpai and Parashar tell us, Bulcke 'embraced the standard approach of a civilising mission'. A cardinal difference here, in Bulcke's view, was that the Hindu gods did not suffer for the sins of humanity as Jesus did in Christian belief. Bulcke also held that some Hindus who believed that all religions were the same were mistaken for, as he put it, 'one of us is wrong' (see pages 217 and 223). Altogether, this biography presents a clear, coherent and consolidated account of Bulcke's long and productive life in the many locations where his quest took him. In doing so, it supersedes all previous accounts of Bulcke, which were often memoirs based on partial personal knowledge or a discussion of any one particular phase of his life or work.

Of these, the foremost is *Dr Bulcke Smriti Granth* (Dr Bulcke Commemoration Volume, 1987), edited by Dineshwar Prasad and Shravan Kumar Goswami, a voluminous tribute which in its 440 pages comprises 98 contributions. These include memoirs of Bulcke as a man, assessments of his published works, learned essays providing information about his motherland, Belgium, accounts of his arena of action in and around Ranchi in the state now named Jharkhand, and a final section of miscellaneous essays. Another similar volume is *Father Camille Bulcke: Bharteeyata Ke Prakash Punj* (Father Camille Bulcke: A Beacon Light of Indianness, 2015); it was commissioned by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and edited by Suresh Rituparna. By arrangement with the editors of the former volume, this collection reprinted several of its essays so that these might have a wider circulation now while also including many other contributions which were new or collected from different sources. Most valuably perhaps, it includes a 20-page interview given by Bulcke in 1976 to Dineshwar Prasad, in which he candidly answered many questions regarding Christianity vis-à-vis Hinduism, and a selection of nine essays written in Hindi by Bulcke. To these two primary sources may be added a more popular and often overlooked source, a one-hour documentary film titled *Baba Bulcke*, made by the government-owned Rajya Sabha TV channel in the series *Virasat* (Heritage) and anchored and narrated by Rajesh Badal in 2017. A special feature of this film is the inclusion of

several clips of Bulcke speaking in Hindi; he may sound slightly accented but is always meticulously correct (Rajya Sabha TV 2017).

The present biography by Bajpai and Parashar goes beyond all these previous accounts not only in being more substantial, consecutive and authoritative but also in several other respects. To mention first the most obvious difference, while the aforementioned sources, including the documentary film, are all in Hindi, this book is in English and thus addresses a different and potentially wider readership. It also follows a different scholarly protocol by being objective and critical rather than adulatory as memoirs in Hindi tend to be. It is critical not in the sense of being carping or nitpicking but in assessing Bulcke and his contribution in an unbiased and impartial manner. In the process, Bajpai and Parashar present a new portrait of Bulcke, warts and all, which is the more attractive because it is more realistic and credible. In situating Bulcke ‘as a product of specific times’ (see page 18), the biography facilitates, paradoxically, a better understanding of the man on our own terms and in our own times now.

Issues and Future Directions

As if not content with setting up through this biography a scholarly monument to Bulcke, Bajpai and Parashar raise questions at various points in their narrative which may signal new directions for future scholars of Bulcke. A few of these, which may be thought to be particularly significant, are briefly highlighted as follows.

The first such question concerns the very heart of the matter. What precisely was it that attracted Bulcke to India, to *Ramkatha* and to the poet Tulsidas, whose *bhakta*, or devotee, he professed himself to be, just as Tulsidas was a *bhakta* of Rama? Bulcke himself often cited a couplet from Tulsidas’ *Ramcharitmanas*, which he first read in Belgium in a German translation, as having caused for him an epiphany and inspired his love for Tulsidas even before he arrived in India. This couplet, beginning ‘धन्य जनम जगतीतल तामू’, is aptly cited in this biography as many as three times in different places (see pages 56, 64 and 107). But it may be suggested that in its original context of Rama’s banishment by his father, Dashratha, this couplet perhaps does not sound particularly felicitous or pious for though Rama happily obeys his father and says in the couplet that he feels blessed for doing so and thus being a cause of happiness to his father, the father himself is far from happy. As depicted by Tulsidas, he has been coerced by the queen Kaikeyi to banish Rama against his own will and in fact dies shortly afterwards

of regret and grief. (There might have been a deep psychological reason as to why Bulcke liked these lines for he and his father never derived much joy from each other, but this can be nothing more than a surmise.) Bulcke never got around to writing a whole book on Tulsidas which might have shed more light on this matter, though he nurtured that ambition till his last years. In the situation, all that Bulcke ever said about Tulsidas in different places needs to be closely collated to account for his devotion to the poet.

A corollary of this, for which Bulcke himself was not as responsible as are some of his overzealous Indian admirers, is the widespread misunderstanding that Bulcke was himself a Rama *bhakt*, a devotee of Rama. Throughout the numerous tributes to Bulcke paid by his friends and admirers in the Hindi literary sphere, this belief is casually purveyed as being the undisputed truth, including by the anchor of the aforementioned documentary on Bulcke. Even the poet Harivansh Rai Bachchan seems to subscribe to this wishful view in a poem he wrote as a tribute to Bulcke, which is given a place of honour in both the commemoration volumes mentioned earlier by being printed (in his own handwriting) immediately after the title page. He wrote: 'Isai sanskar liye bhi / Pujya hue tumko Shri Rama' (You grew up adhering to the Christian faith / Yet Shri Rama was for you an object of worship). Among a host of over-pious and over-eager Hindi admirers, the poet and novelist Agyeya stands out as clearly stating that Bulcke's erudite study of *Ramkatha* is 'a shining example not of his Rama-bhakti but rather of his love of scholarship and his dedication to research work' (quoted in Rituparna 2015, p. 64).

To their credit, Bajpai and Parashar do not subscribe to this widely prevalent fallacy and are not ready to convert Bulcke to Hinduism or to deify him! But perhaps a further philosophical discussion is called for on how Bulcke could worship a worshipper (Tulsidas) without worshipping what that worshipper worshipped (Rama). On the other hand, Bajpai and Parashar note that Tulsidas does not figure prominently at all in Bulcke's great study of *Ramkatha* as does Valmiki, and they call it an 'anomaly' or even a 'contradiction' (see page 105). But a partial explanation for this may lie in the fact that though Bulcke had initially set out to write his dissertation on the subject 'Tulsi Ki Rambhakti' (Tulsi's Devotion to Rama), the introductory chapters on the origin of the Rama story of Valmiki and numerous other sources prior to the rise of the Bhakti movement grew so voluminous in themselves that Bulcke had in fact to stop there and give his dissertation a revised title: 'Ramkatha Ki Utpatti Aur Vikas' (The Rama Story: Its Origin and Development).

In his preface to the first edition of his book *Ramkatha: Utpatti Aur Vikas*, Bulcke readily admitted that his work remained incomplete. He promised that in a subsequent volume, he would focus on the development of Rama *bhakti*, basing his study especially on the Rama-centred literature in Hindi (*visheshkar Hindi Ram-sahitya*). He said he would publish it ‘within a year or two’ and would go on after that to undertake further comparative studies encompassing both the *katha* and the *bhakti* in Hindi (Bulcke 2020 [1950], pp. 19–20). But his priorities obviously changed after he returned to Ranchi in 1950 to take up his pastoral duties, and the next few works he published were all to do with the propagation of the Christian gospel.

Incidentally, it may also need to be conclusively established whether Bulcke functioned only as what was called an ‘educational missionary’ or whether he also ventured into the ‘field’ – that is, among the local Indian people to seek to convert them to Christianity – as many of his colleagues and predecessors in the Jesuit mission in Ranchi had done for decades before him. These included Bulcke’s fellow Belgian, Father Constant Lievens, who had in the late nineteenth century converted the local tribals by tens of thousands, bringing virtually ‘a whole people to Catholicism’ (see pages 56; 236–237; see also the entry on Lievens on the website of ‘Ranchi Jesuits’, <https://www.ranjesu.org/biographypub/view/6>). Bulcke often said that Allahabad was his *maika* (mother’s home, where he had grown up) while Ranchi was his *sasural* (in-laws’ home, where he lived after getting married – only metaphorically of course). This pregnant phrase needs to be unpacked fully to disclose all its connotations, and never mind the complete omission of Belgium in this two-part formulation. Bulcke spent five years in Allahabad, from 1945 to 1950, and thereafter 33 years in Ranchi, from 1950 until his death in 1983, and though Allahabad glowed bright in his memory, it was Ranchi which was his *karma bhumi*, or arena of action.

Finally, the life and works of Bulcke provide a fertile subject for a sustained comparative study between Christianity and Hinduism in theological as well as literary terms. Such a book was published by a younger contemporary of Bulcke, Roger Hooker, a Protestant missionary who lived in Agra, Bareilly, Varanasi and Allahabad from 1965 to 1978 (the last being the place where Bulcke had lived too) and acquired, like Bulcke, high competence in Hindi and Sanskrit. Though he focused in his dissertation not on a medieval Bhakti poet but on a (then) living Hindi writer mentioned earlier, a comparative theological focus was at the heart of his book, titled *The Quest of Ajneya: A Christian Theological Appraisal of the Search of Meaning in His Three Hindi Novels* (1998).

A point of departure for such a discussion of Bulcke may be found in Kesri Kumar's essay in the commemoration volume, in which he suggested that Bulcke's work on *Ramkatha*, though highly laudable, is conditioned 'by a Christian vision and a colonial approach'. Bulcke's erudite treatment of a large number of versions of the Rama story and of the differences between them may also be thought to be comparable to some later radical scholarship along similar lines, especially the essay 'Three Hundred Ramayanas' by A. K. Ramanujan, collected by Paula Richman with other similar studies in her *Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia* (1991).

With regard specifically to Tulsidas, there are many comparative possibilities to explore. In chapter 4 of this biography, the longest chapter in the book, Bajpai and Parashar provide an illuminating commentary of their own on the selections made by Bulcke from Tulsidas' *Ramcharitmanas* in his *Manas Kaumudi* (An Exposition of the *Ramcharitmanas*), in which Bulcke provided footnotes but no commentary. It may be worth exploring what broad criteria or predilections lay behind the choice of passages in this anthology, perhaps by comparing Bulcke's selections with any other selections made in his own times, or indeed made more recently by Rupert Snell, a secular Western scholar, in his *Reading the Ramcharitmanas* (2022).

If Bajpai and Parashar had not already accomplished so much in their biography, these hints and suggestions of themes to explore in future studies of Bulcke may possibly not have arisen. They have laid a solid foundation of Bulcke studies on which a grand edifice of many dimensions can gradually be erected. As well done as this biography is, it is valuable also beyond itself in indicating in one way or another how much more can be done. All readers of this work will be enlightened as well as stimulated by it.

Harish Trivedi
University of Delhi
Delhi, April 2024

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स्वान्तःसुखाय तुलसी रघुनाथ गाथा
भाषानिबन्धमतिमञ्जुलमातनोति॥

Swantah sukhaya Tulsi Raghunath gatha
Bhasha nibandh mati manjul matnoti

Tulsidas wrote the *Ramcharitmanas* not for greater glories, but for his personal satisfaction, for the joy that he felt such work would bring him. That spirit of Tulsidas and his devotee (also the subject of this biography) are what inspired us to undertake this ambitious project – documenting the life of an extraordinary personality who not only traversed diverse geographies and sociocultural contexts, between Belgium and India, but also made many inward journeys balancing his Christian missionary life with his devotion to Tulsidas and the *Ramkatha*. The Covid-19 pandemic and several other personal situations delayed this project, and we are so pleased that it will see the light of day.

This book is spiritually owned by everyone who has contributed in any way to make it a reality. Our heartfelt thanks to St Xavier's College, Ranchi; Xavier Institute of Social Sciences, Ranchi; the Camille Bulcke Research Centre, Ranchi; and Manresa House, Ranchi, for supporting this project and giving us access to their rich libraries and resources. A very special thanks to Father Emmanuel Baxla, director of the Camille Bulcke Research Centre, Ranchi, who gave us abundant time, guidance and material during the writing of this book, and to Father Emmanuel Barla, the former principal of St Xavier's College, Ranchi, who first enabled our access to the library at Manresa House. Mridula

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All mistakes and shortcomings remain ours alone, and we hope, dear readers, that the book will provide some insights into the life of an extraordinary Jesuit Indologist, whose story deserved to be told long time ago. Many other stories about Father Bulcke need to reach us from sources closer to him than we can ever claim to be, and ours will not be the only or even remotely authoritative voice. We will rest assured that we made an honest, albeit imperfect, attempt in bringing Father Bulcke's story to all those who wish to understand his life and mission and are seeking knowledge and inspiration from his works to address the angst, violence and also hope of contemporary times.