

textual researches of Professor Alexis Sanderson. He then goes into the "different meanings of Sparsa in Indian tradition," as a necessary background for the specific meanings in non-dualistic Kashmir Saivism.

The second chapter is devoted to important hermeneutical reflections. Here he elaborates on the difficulty of translation, or rather on the untranslatability of certain terms of the Sanskrit philosophical terminology. He analyses the most central concept of practically all Indian philosophy, *cit* (with its synonyms *caitanya*, *samvit*): "Is Cit 'Consciousness'?" Although I agree with his posing the problem, the solution to leave such terms untranslated does not really serve the purpose of mediating between two traditions (and that is what every translation tries to do). He also addresses the important term *vimarsa* in the philosophy of *Pratyabhijna*. Whether or not one agrees with the conclusions arrived, the importance of this chapter is to make the reader aware of the hermeneutical implications while interpreting such terms and texts of another tradition. The sharpening of the awareness of difference is essential.

Chapter three is the centre of the study: "The Touch of Sakti (*Saktisparsa*)" which he analyses in selected texts of Trika. This chapter shows the fruitfulness of the approach of the author, because he takes into account not only the philosophical or sensual meanings of 'touch' but its many other implications: linguistic, spiritual, sexual etc. The first section analyses the term in the *Sivastotravali* of Utpaladeva, along with its commentary by Ksemaraja (foremost disciple of Abhinavagupta and a prolific commentator). Here the word *sparsa* (and synonyms) assumes the mystical connotation, as Utpaladeva again and again prays for the bliss arising from the touch of the lotus feet of the Divine, an image based on the widespread tradition of touching the feet of the guru or the *murti*. However, this devotional meaning is interpreted in a non-dualistic way, where the 'feet' are understood as the divine energies or Saktis. The poetic and mystical beauty of the *Sivastotravali* is particularly present in the verses connected with 'touch'. In this connection the author also makes an excursus on the term *samavesa*, 'absorption'. A major section of the study is devoted to the Tantraloka of Abhinavagupta and its various uses of the concept of *sparsa*. In this text the manifold meanings of the term unfold, particularly in the Tantric and yogic sense. This chapter is particularly rich.

In the conclusion the author reflects on "The question of the liberating and critical potential of Trika Saivism." To quote from his conclusion: "Focusing on our topic, 'the touch of Sakti', we have found different contexts and meanings in which the word *sparsa* occurs in connection with Sakti, the divine power, revered as the Goddess.

An interesting conclusion is how significant is this experience of touch in the context of *kundalini yoga*, associated with the experience of 'the touch of ants'! The most important result of our study is that we found that *sparsa* denotes one of the highest stages of the spiritual process, of the rise of *kundalini*, even above the experience of enlightenment (*vijnana*). . ." (p. 248) He shows that the importance of *sparsa* in the spiritual ascent is connected with the centrality of Sakti in non-dualistic Saivism. "And every moment it can happen that one is touched by the rays of the Power and one's true nature of supreme light and joy (*ananda*) unfolds. . ." (p. 250)

The importance of "the touch of Sakti" lies precisely in the connection between the sensual and the transcendental, a connection which Abhinavagupta has presented in the most rigorous and consistent way.

The author ends with some reflections on the present-day relevance of such a study. This relevance is obvious when considering the problems and tensions humankind is facing at this juncture. One of the insights of Trika is precisely: "At the core of this Tantric Advaita tradition is the conviction or the experience of the interconnectedness of reality. . ." (p. 254), a connectedness which is essential for modern man to re-discover.

The present book is part of a thesis submitted at the University of Vienna. Unfortunately the second part has not been translated, which deals with a comparison with Western mysticism (Heraclitus, Plotinus, Augustine), and the metaphor or experience of 'touch' in these authors. This part would throw much light on how spiritual-philosophical and mystical traditions, each one seen in its own light, can also enrich and enlighten each other.¹

Anyone interested in the Tantric and Saiva traditions will profit from reading this book, and also those who are interested in mysticism in a wider sense.

NOTE

1. The German publication contains the entire thesis: *Verstehen durch Berühren. Interreligiöse Hermeneutik am Beispiel des nichtdualistischen Sivaismus von Kashmir*, Innsbruck-Wien: Tyrolia, 2006.

Bettina Bäumer
Former Fellow, IAS

A. R. Kidwai, *Literary Orientalism: a companion*, New Delhi: Viva Books, 2009. Pp. xix + 374, Rs. 895.

Said did not treat Orientalism as "a mere political subject matter or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship or institutions; nor ... a large and diffuse collection of texts about the Orient; nor is it representative

and expressive of some nefarious 'Western' imperialist plot to hold down the 'Oriental' world." (1979: 12). For him, it is the study of hegemonizing relations between West and East whose historical and social setting involves "a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world." (Said, 1979: 12) As a style of thought, based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between "the Orient" and "the Occident", it has allowed a whole range of writers to accept the basic distinction between East and West "as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient." (Said, 1979:2-3).

"Literary Orientalism" is a shade that emerges from this all encompassing perspective of Orientalism. It is accommodative because it can easily accommodate poets and writers from Chaucer (1343-1400) to Doris Lessing (1919-). Despite being fairly accommodative, Literary Orientalism is a rather unknown field of English studies. Readers are confronted with a host of questions regarding the genesis of the term "Literary Orientalism", its significance, present status, scope and relevance. Answering these questions is not simple. It poses a formidable challenge and, therefore, demands deft handling. The challenge assumes more significance because it is located in the backdrop of ecumenically accepted though much debated term "Orientalism", which has a historically problematized past and a controversial present. Prof. Kidwai is indeed not shy of facing this challenge. He takes upon himself the task of informing readers about "Literary Orientalism" and he does so in a manner which is both academic and informative. *Literary Orientalism: a companion* is an attempt towards finding answers to a host of uncomfortable questions by "way of listing and classifying relevant material," which comprises bibliographic details of more than 300 critical books, 900 articles, conference presentations and 400 dissertations. This *Companion* is the first of its kind that charts out the genesis of Literary Orientalism and brings into sharper focus the contributions of 45 select British men of letters to this strand of English studies.

The book is spread into six chapters. Chapter I titled "Samples of Literary Orientalism: Writers, Works and Critical Studies" starts with Joseph Addison (1672-1719) and ends with W. B. Yeats (1865-1939). Chapters II, V, and VI have been titled as "Critical Books on Literary Orientalism", "Role of the *Arabian Nights* in the Development of Literary Orientalism" and "Role of the Oriental Tales in the Development of Literary Orientalism", respectively. Inasmuch as Literary

Orientalism has gathered wider currency and scholarship, the remaining two chapters provide testimony to this recent spurt and interest in this sub-field reflected in the burgeoning number of articles and dissertations dealing with Literary Orientalism. Hence, "Articles/Conference Presentations on Literary Orientalism" and "Doctoral Dissertations on Literary Orientalism" form the basis for Chapters III and IV, respectively. Each chapter in the book provides a detailed bibliographical survey, which will, indeed, be of immense help to researchers and scholars. An illuminating and crisp Preface and a lucid Introduction makes this little-known sub-field of English literature accessible to students.

European attitude towards oriental inferiority is quite well known. Macaulay's infamous Minute of 1835 denigrating literature in Arabic and Sanskrit language is a confirmation of such attitude. However, most specific has been the European perception of Islamic Orient which was, as Said has rightly pointed out, "regularly associated in England either with the problems of empire or with the corruption of fancy." (Said, 1983: 270) Its focus was never on highlighting the prestige of high culture or systematic learning, rather with intrigue and debauch, difference and hostility. Writing *Literary Orientalism: a companion* also stands for "the depiction of the Orient/Oriental in Western literary texts" with the professed aim of treating 'Orient' as referring to "the lands to the east of the Mediterranean and stretching through Asia, mainly Turkey, Arabia, Persia, China, Japan, India and also covering Africa ...[with] strong and unmistakable religious, sociocultural and emotional overtones." (Kidwai, 2009: xiv)

Certainly Europeans have a long history of coming to terms with the Orient, and this justifies Kidwai's assertion that "Literary Orientalism as a subfield of English studies had come to the notice of critics and research students much before the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*...[and] even these pre-1978 critics seem familiar with the tropes of representation, cross-cultural encounter, empathy and of employing the Oriental setting as a pretext for grappling with or interpreting some wider or sensitive issues closer home." (Kidwai, 2009: xv) In fact, one can find the trace of orientalism in philological tradition. The traditional philology was interested in research into ancient writing. As Al-Dabbagh (2010) has rightly observed, the traditional philologists "believe that philological studies, which consisted of the collection of ancient writings and the establishment and interpretation of true texts, appeared both in the West (where they corresponded to the Hellenistic period) and in the East (where they

corresponded to the time of the Han Empire). Therefore, in spite of the fact that orientalism, as a term, became widely used only in the nineteenth century, it goes back, in practice, to Antiquity..." (Al-Dabbagh, 2010: 21) But there is more to the phenomenon of orientalism, for it principally deals "not with a correspondence between Orientalism and Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient ... despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a 'real' Orientalism." (Said, 1979) The Literary Orientalism of the pre-1978 critics is accommodative and equally sympathetic in its portrayal and treatment of cultures of the East discernible in the classics of the English literature and European-authored literary texts, but in dealing with this term in ideological and specific sense the methodological problems that one may encounter in such a broadly construed field as this are or will be difficult to handle.

There is definite and unmistakable foregrounding of one religious group in this companion. As Kidwai points out, "This companion to Literary Orientalism focuses on the treatment of only Islam and Muslims in Western literary Orientalism, to the exclusion of other religious, ethnic, linguistic or racial groups in the Orient, who otherwise happen to be equally important." (Kidwai, 2009: xv) Notwithstanding the positive side of this focus which Literary orientalism with "religious, sociocultural and emotional overtones" can bring in providing a better human understanding of 'Other' cultures, the religio-cultural determinism may also lead to its being a self-

validating and hermetic occlusion. Also in the exclusivity of the treatment of Islam and Muslims some prominent members falling in the league of literary orientalists, such as Renan and Louis Massignon, have been inadvertently missed out. Renan's 1883 speech that he gave at the Sorbonne entitled "*L'Islamisme et la science*" is a positively chilling and provocative statement on Islam and Science. Massignon, like Renan, must be seen "within the great structure of French cultural, political, and colonial domination of the Muslim world." (Said, 1983: 282) But unlike Renan, he had a passion for Islam. To quote Said (1983), "Renan's epistemological attitude toward Islam ... is one of divestiture and judgement, and Massignon's of sympathetic assumption and rapprochement." (1983: 282) And both should have found place in the *Companion*.

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S. IMTIAZ HASNAIN
Professor of Sociolinguistics
Aligarh Muslim University

LOVE AND GENDER IN THE RIG VEDA AND THE MEDIEVAL PUNJABI LITERATURE By J.S. GREWAL

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