

PETERSON, INDIRA VISWANATHAN. *Poems to Śiva: The Hymns of the Tamil Saints*. Princeton Library of Asian Translations. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989. xvi+382 pages. Map, illustrations, appendices, glossary, bibliography, indices. Cloth: US\$57.50; ISBN 0-691-06767-8.

An anthology of hymns to Śiva from the *Tēvāram*, a significant South Indian scripture, has long been needed. One of three sacred texts familiar to the average Tamil Śaivite (18), the *Tēvāram* (Dēvāram) was previously available to readers unfamiliar with Tamil only through small snippets translated by KINGSBURY and PHILLIPS into English full of Christian devotional phrases (1921). While these conveyed to some a general impression of devotion to God, they were less than transparent to the particular flavor of Tamil devotion to God Śiva.

If "poetry is the *bhakti* experience made palpable" (49), these lucid renderings introduce us to a devotional experience at once familiar (to any lover of God) and strange (rooted so distinctively in South Indian landscapes and devotional-aesthetic sensibilities). The student of Tamil anthropology is helped with both aspects by an admirable Introduction (91 pp.) which could provide the germinal idea for a course on the origins of Hindu *bhakti* and its modern South Indian forms. The footnotes offer useful annotations on a wide range of resources for further study. (These are all listed in the bibliography, but the general index unfortunately does not cover authors or sources cited in the footnotes.)

The Introduction succeeds in providing both historical contexts for the poems and historical consequences of the hymns in later devotional traditions. Peterson dates the compositions of the poets Cuntarar (Sundarar), Appar, and Campantar (Sambandar) from the late sixth to the early eighth centuries c.e. (18). Since they draw on the Sanskrit praise-poems and court poetry as well as on the ancient classical tradition of Tamil literature, Tamil-speaker Peterson's considerable competency in Sanskrit scholarship enhances her study of this early and formative *bhakti* literature.

She deals with the background of the hymns (neither needlessly repeating nor omitting work done by others) and discusses the importance of temple and ritual for the poets' "devotional communities," which she says "cut across caste, sex, and other hierarchies of orthodox Hinduism" while they eschewed the "social protest" aspect found in later Kāṇṇāda *bhakti* (9). (Careful reading reveals that the inclusion of really lowly persons may have been quite rare, although examples do exist among the devotees revered as saints. It is true that Appar was a kind of Śūdra, a Veḷḷala; but these landowner peasants were quite high-caste both economically and ritually. Peterson, possibly mindful of the ideal-forming power of the hymns in modern society, stresses their egalitarian potential.) In marked contrast to a stereotype of Hinduism as broadly tolerant, the saint-singers are portrayed as vehemently opposed to Buddhists and Jains (10). It was against these rather than against hypocrites within Hindu circles that they directed their protestations.

Peterson covers many other aspects, such as the poets' mixture of personal, interior concerns with public, historical interests and formal praise of God, as of a king (23-24, 33-40). She proceeds to survey the religious history of the poems as a source of inspiration, extending down to the modern chanter-singer (*ōtuvār*) whose repetition of phrases and choice of ornamentation provide a kind of interpretation of the poems' meaning and emotional content for even the average modern worshipper (59-72; a cassette tape of examples is available from her [x, fn. 1]). Musical matters are not

neglected; nor are Tamil Śaivite theology and its parallels in Śri Vaiṣṇava tradition. Her thorough and excellent study leaves little room for criticism, but perhaps the biographical stories of Cēkkiḷār's *Periya Purāṇam* should be treated rather as a consequence of the hymns' veneration than as background material about the poets' lives, which may need to be left in obscurity rather than represented literally by admittedly legendary impressions. Perhaps only after the poets' impact is seen as urging the formation of such legends, can we feel something of their stature as historical figures.

The volume includes a representative map of *Tēvāram* sacred places and a note directing readers to a more detailed map (13 fn 22), which would also include a couple in Śri Lanka, whose history of *Tēvāram*-inspired *bhakti* is not covered (Peterson did her fieldwork in 1978, when it was perhaps already dangerous to be a Tamil in Śri Lanka). Appendices list sacred places, scales for the student of music, and sites of Śiva's great acts. Major myths of Śiva presupposed by the poets are summarized and a useful glossary has been provided as well as an index to the poems. Fifteen photographs assist the reader's imagination. The bibliography could flesh out a potential course or program of private study for which the introduction provides both an excellent synthesis of prior scholarship and insightful new material.

Although technical assessment of the translation of the poems is beyond my competency, the English renderings of over 250 selections are at once superlatively readable and reflective of the distinctive sensibilities of the poets. While Peterson's detailed work points scholars to further study, it also enhances an appreciation of the poems at a more introductory level.

REFERENCE CITED:

KINGSBURY, F. and G. E. PHILLIPS

1921 *Hymns of the Tamil Śaivite saints*. Calcutta: Association Press; London: Oxford University Press.

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PILLAI-VETSCHERA, TRAUDE, collector and editor. *Indische Märchen. Der Prinz aus der Mangofrucht. Bei Bhil und Mina gesammelt* [Indian folktales: The prince from the mango fruit. Collected from Bhil and Mina]. Das Gesicht der Völker, Dokumentation des Märchens, 55. Kassel/Germany: Erich Röth-Verlag, 1989. 220 pages. Index of tale types, selected bibliography. Hardcover DM24.80; ISBN 3-87680-353-5. (In German)

The book under this strange title is the latest product in the series "Indische Märchen" published by Erich Röth-Verlag in Kassel. It is a collection of fairy tales as they are currently told in the villages of the Bhils and Minas in southern Rajasthan and northwestern Madhya Pradesh. Traude Pillai-Vetschera, an anthropologist doing research in this region, recorded the stories on tape and had them translated and typologically analysed. Since the book has been published for a wider public, she has had to leave out the text in the local language and reduce the typological classification in her notes to a minimum.