
Book Reviews

The Home of Dancing Śivan: The Traditions of the Hindu Temple in Citamparam. By Paul Younger. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. ISBN 0-19-509533-2. Pp. 256.

The Home of Dancing Śivan is a thorough study of the religious, political, economic, and literary activities connected with the South Indian temple of Cidambaram. Not only is the Cidambaram temple one of the most important Śaiva temples in South India, but it is the only Indian temple in which the presiding deity is Naṭarāja, "the dancing image of Śiva." Through his weaving of the changes in the temple into the larger tradition of this temple, Younger is able to show the broader role of the Hindu temple in Indian culture and history.

The book is well-structured and the contents flow smoothly. It is divided into three parts consisting of two chapters each. The first part is concerned with the daily ritual and elaborate festivals of the temple, including a discussion of the community of the *dikṣitars* (temple priests). The second part is a historical survey of the development of the temple structure and patronage (based on an analysis of temple inscriptions), including an inquiry into the roles of the regional kings and saints in the development of the temple and its culture. The final part provides a survey of the local legends, Śaiva devotional hymns and Śaiva philosophical literature connected with the temple.

Younger draws on a wide variety of sources and ingeniously blends textual, anthropological, and art-historical studies. He enhances our appreciation of the Cidambaram temple as a living tradition by including many contemporary photographs and diagrams throughout the text, which provides a lively dimension to the study. Although the book is very informative about the tradition of the Cidambaram temple, I would have liked to see more analysis on how this study contributes to a more global understanding of the religions of South India.

Furthermore, despite the overall excellence of the study, there are some minor flaws. Younger is, at times, prone to be judgemental and to use interpretive language that seems inappropriate. For instance, continuous with the Western scholarly tendency to emphasize sexuality, in his observations on worship during a festival Younger describes the tone of the procession as "erotic craze" (60). At times he seems to cross the boundary between concrete evidence and interpretation, and re-construction based on the available material.

One can certainly appreciate the desire to emphasize the crucial role and impact of South Indian religious traditions on Indian civilization at large (often overlooked or underplayed). However, it seems rather pedantic and un-

necessary to force clearly Sanskrit terms into Tamil transliteration (*ditcitar/dikṣitar*), or to provide Tamil forms for more popularly known Sanskrit words (Citamparam/Cidambaram), even though the Tamilization of Sanskrit terms is common practice in the philosophical literature of the Tamil-based *Śaiva Siddhānta*. This tendency of Younger's is likely to confuse both Western and Indian Indologists.

Notwithstanding these critical observations, the book is both informative and intellectually stimulating, and an important step in the concrete demonstration of the interface between specific religious traditions in the land of the Tamils. It is a comprehensive study suitable for a general audience of Indologists.

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Mysticism: Experience, Response, and Empowerment. By Jess Byron Hollenback. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996. ISBN 0-27-101552-7. Pp. x+646.

The notion that visionary experiences are an inadequate type of mystical consciousness has been a persistent theme throughout twentieth-century studies of mysticism. Thinkers such as Otto, Forman, and Stace have considered paranormal phenomena such as visions, locutions, and illuminations to be of little or no importance to our understanding of mysticism. Hollenback's *Mysticism: Experience, Response, and Empowerment* has been designed to correct this slight.

Furthermore, a broad comparative, historical, and transcultural account of mysticism has been sorely needed. The wealth of scholarly material created over the last several decades has made such seminal works as Underhill's *Mysticism* and James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* outdated. More recent studies of mysticism suffer from narrow confinement to one theme in mysticism, inadequate comparative analyses, or are fraught with ethnocentric biases. However, Hollenback's work avoids these shortcomings.

Hollenback defends a modified version of contextualism. Contextualists believe that mystical experiences are largely dependent on cultural and historical factors within the mystic's religious environment. In contrast, the essentialist position states that there is a common universal core of mystical experience that transcends the cultural, historical, and religious milieus. Essentialists believe that such environments enter the picture only after the mystical experience, and are in no way relevant during the experience. Hollenback is not willing to go so far as to say that all types of mystical experience are culturally conditioned (607); he believes that there are common patterns to mystical experience and that there are universally applicable methods or techniques for achieving mystical levels of consciousness.

Hollenback outlines five objectives for his study. The first is to "present a broad comparative historical treatment of mysticism" (24) of interest to schol-