

Winand M. Callewaert and Bart Op de Beeck: *Nirgun-bhakti-sāgar: devotional Hindī literature*. (South Asia Institute, New Delhi Branch, Heidelberg University, South Asian Studies XXV.) 2 vols. pp. 1076. New Delhi: Manohar, 1991. Rs. 1000.

Winand M. Callewaert and Peter G. Friedlander: *The life and works of Raidās*. pp. 335. New Delhi: Manohar, 1992. Rs. 600.

These two works, the product of the continuing tireless researches of Winand Callewaert (here in collaboration with colleagues), makes available an important body of *nirguṇa* devotional literature. The first work is described in a sub-title as 'A critical edition of the Pañc-Vāṇī or Five Works of Dādū, Kābir [sic], Nāmdev, Raidās, Hardās with the Hindī songs of Gorakhnāth and Sundardās, and a complete word-index'; a selection of Siddha texts (*caryāgīti* and *dohās*) should also be mentioned. The computer-generated word index occupies the whole of the second volume, viz. pages 589-1076 of the continuous pagination, and constitutes an enormously useful reference tool for research in pre-modern Hindi language and literature; it is a 'global' index, i.e. a consolidated listing of all the words occurring in the texts of the first volume, with line references. The *mūla* texts are from a variety of different sources (whose provenances are not all made adequately clear, the introduction being often inscrutable on this point). The *padas* of Dādū are taken from Monica Thiel-Horstmann's 1990 edition; Dādū's *sākhīs* are from Parśurām Caturvedī's 1966 edition; verses from the Kabīr *Bījak* are from the 1961 *Kabīr granthāvalī* edition by Pārasnāth Tivārī; the *padas* of Nāmdev, Raidās and Hardās are edited by Callewaert himself on the basis of manuscripts described in a brief introduction; Gorakhnāth's *padas* and *sākhīs* derive from P.D. Barathval's 1960 edition; the Sundardās text is from Hari N. Śarmā's edition of 1936; the introduction to the text of Raidās refers the reader to 'Callewaert 1990' (not listed in the bibliography), and the Raidās *mūla* reappears in the Callewaert/Friedlander volume reviewed below; the Siddha selections appear to be taken from Rāhul Sānkṛityāyan's 1957 edition of the *Dohā-koṣa*. Greater clarity on the question of provenance would have made the book more accessible to the reader.

This voluminous anthology does not aim to analyse the text it contains, but rather offers readers the opportunity to investigate on their own terms some 429 double-column pages of indexed (although rather poorly formatted) *nirguṇa* material; supplementary data included to this end comprise concise textual histories, a concordance of 'key words' and 'unique occurrences' within each corpus, and a first-line index.

The second book is the work listed in the Callewaert/Op de Beerck bibliography (p.129) as forthcoming under the title *The Hindī songs of Raidās*; its *mūla* text is for the most part that already given in the earlier work, though this most recent episode of Raidās's textual history is nowhere overtly revealed. Minor differences between the two printings, such as changes in the representation of compounds, are not readily to be understood. An unfortunately high occurrence of textual inconsistencies and infelicities has also to be reported.

Callewaert and Friedlander's useful monograph opens with an analysis of the available hagiographic materials, in which a familiar miscellany of eulogies and tantalisingly uninformative allusions can yield only the vaguest idea of who Raidās was or when he lived. All that can be said with any certainty on the life of one of the most influential of the early *nirguṇa* poets can be accommodated within a single sentence (p.34): 'Raidās was a Chamār from Benares whose *floruit* was sometime between AD 1450-1520; he became a famous devotee after he had a vision of Hari; he came into conflict with the Brahmans of Benares and he initiated a woman from the royal family of Chittorgarh'; and even this bald summary is achievable only by accepting the dubious mathematics of the formula 'hagiography minus miracles equals historicity'. The two authors survey texts of the *Bhaktamāla* genre, sometimes citing the original texts but otherwise giving us only translated versions; these texts themselves are often open to various interpretations (amongst which the alleged epithet in the translation 'He followed the practices of the Lord of Prabhutā...' for Nābhā's line *prabhutā pati kī padhati pragāṭa kūla* [sic] *dīpa prakāśī* (p. 15) hardly recommends itself), leaving the historical picture almost entirely obscure. One feels, however, that Callewaert and Friedlander's comprehensive survey of the material leaves no major stone unturned, and that a more complete biography of Raidās is unlikely to emerge.

The textual position itself is hardly more straightforward than the biographical one. The present edition (which, as already noted, appears to derive from the book reviewed above) is based on twelve manuscripts, dating from AD 1582 to 1698, from four discrete and widely differing traditions: *Pāc-vāṇī* anthologies of the Dādū Panth; other Dādū Panth sources; the Nāth-Siddha tradition; and the *Ādi Granth*. An additional source, the so-called 'Fatehpur manuscript', is the oldest used here, although a note on p.49 describes a *Pāc-vāṇī* manuscript of AD 1636 discovered in Jaipur too late for inclusion in the edition. The poet's *bhaṇitā* appears with a suspicious variety which goes rather beyond so-called 'minor variants' (p. 21), since it includes not simply the predictable 'Rayadās' and 'Ravidās' but also 'Raudās' and even 'Remdās'.

Given the fact that this literature almost certainly had an oral origin, there is no question of editing back through the manuscripts to an Ur-text. Comparing the

Nāth Siddha, Dādūpanthī and Panjabi recensions, the editors conclude (p. 79) that 'each of the three...represents an augmented or edited version of an original Raidāsī core tradition' (the common core consists of only seventeen *padas*) with the new accretions reflecting respectively the theological stance of the particular tradition. This process of organic expansion adds to the difficulties of establishing a critical text, and the editors are forced to edit not according to 'the stemmatic relation' but rather by adopting the 'best reading' (p.80), with the *Pāc-vāñī* manuscripts being given the greatest weighting in the making of editorial choices. The resulting text has ultimately to be regarded as a representative manifestation of literature typifying the 'Raidās tradition', rather than the authoritatively established original corpus of an individual poet. Full details of the manuscripts, concordances of the *padas*, *rāga* allocations, and the characteristics of the discrete recensions are clearly laid out in the introduction. The edited text includes *Ādi granth* versions alongside *Pāc-vāñī* versions where applicable (and the former are clearly labelled as such here, though not in the Callewaert/Op de Beeck presentation of the Raidās text); it is preceded by an English translation, and is followed by a complete listing of manuscript variants. A computer-generated word index is again a particularly useful feature of the work.

The introduction includes an account of the religious position emerging from the edited text (some mention of the vibrant Raidās traditions in contemporary India and the diaspora might have been appropriate here), and identifies the poet's use of such characteristic Sant concepts as *sahaj*, religious experience ('*anabhai*') and the theological centrality of God's Name. This treatment contributes to making the book a useful compendium of the available data on an historically obscure text and author. Given the depth of that obscurity, however, it would have been useful to attempt a detailed structural analysis of the text itself, since a careful consideration of such factors as grammar, style, verbal collocations, textual formulae, metre, and the 'time-theory' implications of *rāga* order would surely have yielded clues as to the integrality or otherwise of this devotional work. Though such information would seem a necessary complement to the conclusions that the editors have drawn from the manuscript data, this stage of the research awaits a later hand, who will be grateful for the fact that the word index provides an excellent tool for detailed textual analysis; a rapid perusal shows how stylistic elements might be identified by, for example, a collation of the formulaic uses of words such as *sakala*, *mili* and a very particular conjunctive use of *tāthai* 'therefore'.

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