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PAPERBACK PICKINGS

Key probes

■ **THE DIFFICULTY OF BEING HEATHEN: ESSAYS IN DE-ORIENTALISING INDIA** (Orient BlackSwan, ₹1,280) *edited by A.P. Ashwin Kumar and Vivek Dhareshwar* asks how much of what passes for common sense about India began as a European visitor's impression. The essay on caste poses the sharpest question in the collection. What evidence would make someone change his or her mind about how caste works? It is a question worth pondering.