Westernization began in Iran when a group of Iranian students was sent to Europe to learn French language and other European arts during the reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shah Qājār (1848-1896) and the most capable Prime Ministership of Amīr Kabīr Mirza Taqī Khān (1869). As a part of his plan of Westernizing Iran Amīr Kabīr also employed a number of European teachers and professors for teaching Iranian students, translating books from European languages into Persian, and preparing the plan for the establishment of a Dār al-Funūn, a School of Arts (and Sciences) for educating the Iranians on Western lines, which, established after his dismissal, was inaugurated on 30th December 1851 (5th Rabi I, 1268). The late Sayyid Hasan Taqīzadeh, an anglophile politician, a leading intellectual, the first Speaker of the Iranian Assembly, an ex-Chairman of the Iranian Senate during Pahlavi regime and a strong advocate of Westernization has remarked in one of his addresses:

"The biggest, rather the foremost, step of all was certainly the establishment of the Dār al-Funūn in Iran."

(Taqīzadeh's Addresses, Tehran, Page 39).

The thirst for learning Western languages, arts and sciences was the result of the earnest desire of the Iranian intelligentsia to bring Iran abreast with the West in the field of advancement and material progress. There was a general feeling among the Iranian educated class that the East had lagged behind the West in the race of science and it was, therefore, only through learning Western arts and sciences that the Eastern nations could make good their backwardness.

It was not long before the desire to learn the Western arts and sciences engendered a full-fledged movement for aping the West in all walks of life: dress, language, literature, architecture, social customs and manners, in short, in all the various phenomena of social behaviour. This had a strong reaction from the sections of religiously oriented people who had an extreme aversion for the Western ways of life, and equated the Western civilization with lewdness, perversion and moral turpitude. In fact, it was a natural reaction to the free and unrestricted adoption of Western modes of life by the elite in the East. These extremist lovers of the Western civilization not only brought some drastic changes in
the old and hackneyed system of life infusing new life-blood to the decadent and stagnant society of the East, but were also responsible for creating a wrong impression about the Western civilization including the Western science and technology, among the masses in general and the religious segments of the Oriental society in particular. In many cases, however, the Western intelligentsia, also, partly contributed to the creation of such misgivings in the eastern mind by surreptitiously and, at times, openly attaching some Imperialistic tags to the knowledge imparted to the eastern students. They conspired to brainwash these students and indoctrinate certain unhealthy and irreligious attitudes and ideas into the simple and stupefied minds of their Eastern proteges who stood dumbfounded before the stupendous, rather miraculous progress of the West in all walks of material life.

The book contains some bitter and scathing criticism on the negative aspects of the wave of Westernization which pervaded the entire Iranian society. Initiated by the rulers, flabbergasted by the dazzling effulgence of the Western advancement, this movement was cherished vigorously and blindly by the intelligentsia and elite of the Iranian society who believed it to work wonders in the materialisation of their selfish ends of mundane progress and prosperity.

Referring to the glaring gulf existing between the developing nations and the industrialised West, the author has expressed his profound cynicism by calling all the international organizations like UNO and other allied agencies as the tools of colonization by Western Imperialism. He says:

"Our age is of two worlds: one producing and exporting machines, (and) the other importing and consuming them and wearing them out. The stage for this conflict is the global market. The weapons, apart from the tanks, guns, bombers and missile launchers, themselves products of the West, are UNESCO, the FAO, the UN, ECAFE and the other so-called international organizations. In fact they are Western con artists come in new disguises to colonize this other world: to South America, to Asia, to Africa. Here is the basis for the occidentosis of all non-Western nations." (p. 30)

The author is, however, not against industrialization and mechanization. Rather he laments the absence of these basic essentials for human progress (p. 30)

He exhorts us to realise the essence of Western civilization, instead of mimicking the West. At the same time, he warns against the possibility of dehumanization through mechanization, as has happened in the West. (p. 31)

He also cites the example of "mechanosis" of Japan in the East with a note of warning for the Eastern nations:
"Let us concede that we did not have the initiative to familiarize ourselves with the machine a hundred years ago, as Japan did. Japan presumed to rival the West in mechanosis and to deal a blow to the czars (in 1905) and to America (in 1941) and, even earlier, to take markets from them. Finally the atom bomb taught them what a case of indigestion (rather shivering cold) follows a feast of watermelons. And if the nations of the "free world" have now opened some of their treasure hoard of global markets to Japan's goods, it is because they have investments in all her industries. (pp. 31-32)

Enumerating the characteristics of Occidentosis, the author says:

"Occidentosis thus characterizes an era in which we have not yet acquired the machine, in which we are not yet versed in the mysteries of its structure. Occidentosis characterizes an era in which we have not yet grown familiar with the preliminaries to the machine, the new sciences and technologies. Occidentosis characterizes an era in which the logic of the market-place and the movements of oil compel us to buy and consume the machine." (p. 34)

As regards the English translation, it is simply wonderful. Inspite of a very difficult text, abounding in colloquial and local jargon, together with purely Iranian idioms and proverbs, at times bearing an entirely local character, the able translator has accomplished this task creditably and successfully. It is only here and there that we find a few errors in translation, which might have been mostly due to his ignorance of the real connotations and hidden meanings of the words, phrases and idioms peculiarly Eastern or Iranian in character, and therefore most baffling to be translated into Western idiom.

Likewise, on page 32 (F.N.), and page 66 (F.N.) he has erroneously translated the words "Majallah-i-Firdausi as "Firdaus magazine", and on page 32 (F.N.), he has given "Paris, 1959" instead of "Paris, 1958". On page 50, the translator has translated "liman al-mulk (guyân)" as "Where now are those kings"? instead of "Whose is the sovereignty"?, used in the Qur an (XL:16), the English translation of the verse reads as follows:

"The day when they come forth, nothing of them being hidden from Allah. Whose is the sovereignty this day? It is Allah's, the One, the Almighty". (XL : 16)

It is better that in the Second edition of the book, the translator may also give reference to the above-cited verse under his Notes at the end of his translation.

Likewise, the translator has translated "hasteh" as "fruit" (p. 25) instead of "nucleus or kernel", the word "daqtq" as "exacting (work)" (p. 28) instead of "minute (work)", "gandum" as
"grain" (p. 29) instead of "wheat", "har bachchah-i maktabī" as "many" (p. 29) instead of "every schoolboy", and "lārsī" as "indigestion" (p. 31) instead of "shivering cold", etc.

At times, the translator seems to have deliberately deviated from the text, sacrificing the original in view of a better replacement, found more advisable in the scheme of words adopted by him. We have, for example, the word "tuberculosis" (p. 27) which is certainly not a translation of the words "garmāsāde-ghi" or "sarmāsādeghi" given in the original, but it is a beautiful replacement in view of the word "occidentosis" for "gharbrādeghi" preceding the word "tuberculosis".

Sometimes, the translator has summarised the contents of a passage, e.g., vide "If we define....adjuncts". (p. 34)

The translator has left some of the Persian or Arabic terms and phrases used in the original unexplained, although their literal translation is not comprehensible for the Western readers. For example, on page 100, he has translated "Imām-e-Aer" as "Imam of the Age", which does not make its sense clear, as it means "Imām Mahdi, the Twelfth Imām of the Shias". On the same page, he has simply transliterated the word "Shaykh Pashmuddin Kashkulī", while it could better be put as "any fictitious or unimportant shaykh or religious person".

In his translation or under "Notes" at the end of the translation, the translator has corrected some of the versions and statements of the author given in the original text. For example, on page 32 (P.M.), the author has given the correct name of the American who piloted the Enola Gray over Hiroshima in World War II as "Colonel Paul W. Tibbits" instead of "Claude Attirley" as given by the author in the original text. So also, the translator has pointed out the author's errors under his "Notes" at the end of the translation, vide Notes Nos. 7, 9, 23, 26, 29, 31, 32, 42-50, 56, 57 and 99.

In the end, we cannot help expressing our appreciation of this successful work. Despite some rare errors or omissions in translation which are in many cases quite excusable, as Persian is not the mother-tongue of the translator, his efforts for rendering such a difficult book into English so faithfully deserve our special commendations. We recommend this translation to all the English-knowing readers who are interested in knowing about the real sentiments of the Eastern (Muslim) intellectuals about "Occidentosis". We also sincerely hope to have more of such English translations of contemporary Persian books by the able translator and other scholars of his calibre in future.

ALI RAZA NAQVI