

CRITIQUE OF THE INDIAN BHAKTI MOVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The pieces in this collection offer a sense of what such a readiness entails, even if, in terms of my personal preoccupations, some show more willingness to listen than to suspect, and others to suspect than to listen. In contrast, most Indian intellectuals and their Western counterparts have, by and large, lost any capacity to listen. Where they offer any opposite signal, it is only by separating the small tradition from the Great. To the Indian people, on the other hand, that little tradition with which bhakti is linked is a way of life. It is a continuing tradition. They simply listen to it while the intelligentsia just suspect it. I hope that this critical introduction and the articles from which it draws its argument will be regarded as a beginning towards bridging that gap. If a genuine, conscious rising towards the achievement of community goals is to include the people, it is unlikely to emerge through the transplanting of symbols of foreign or dead traditions. Symbols of freedom will have to be found from inside, by people who will bear the weight of revolutionary activity. These symbols, although similar to both sterilised intellectual abstractions and ritualised daily behaviour, cannot be rediscovered in any of these isolated contexts. That has always been the message of bhakti and therein lies its modernity.

KEYWORDS: *Bhakti, Intellectuals, Indian, Social, Tradition.*

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