

The Teachings of the Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Movement

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The Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Movement was founded by a prosperous Sindhi businessman named Lekhraj. It is probably significant however that his trade was in Jewellery.¹ After Dada Lekhraj's personal experience with God Shiva, he was used as a medium to reveal the mysteries of the self and the work order. These experiences brought about a tremendous change in him to whom God Shiva gave the name "Prajapita Brahma". In 1937 he laid the foundations of the Movement.²

After Dada Lekhraj's personal experience with God, he started a regular satsang (fellowship) in Hyderabad after laying the foundation of the Movement. The satsang came to be known as "Om Mandi".³ Around 300 devotees started gathering in the Satsang. After the Independence of India, many devotees left Hyderabad and shifted to India. On the request of many devotees in India the headquarters of the Movement was shifted to India in 1951.⁴ The Prajapita Brahmakumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya's Report upto 1983 at a glance is as follows.

Dedicated sisters (Kumaris)	=	1095
Dedicated brothers (Kumars)	=	200
Single sisters	=	15230
Single brothers	=	9150
Married sisters	=	51175
Married brothers	=	51575
Children	=	20000
Total number of devotees	=	1,49095
Spiritual Museum	=	110
Spiritual Centres	=	325
Overseas Centres	=	100
Sub-centres	=	825
Total number of centres	=	1350 ⁵

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In 1992 the Movement had over 3000 centres and sub-centres throughout the world in over 60 countries.⁶

In 1995 the number of devotees went upto 3,50,000.⁷ Today there are over 5000 centres and over 5,00,000 devotees in all over the world.⁸

Aims and Objects of the Movement

1. To impart moral and ethical education to the members of the society.
2. To impart spiritual, metaphysical and philosophical knowledge of the Creator and His creation.
3. To establish universal peace through the inspiration of spiritual knowledge.
4. To teach easy Raja Yoga so that an individual can forge his/her direct link with God.
5. To educate people to foster their consciousness and the universal brotherhood of man so as to develop a broader outlook.⁹

Administrative set up: In 1937 Dada Lekhraj formed a managing committee of eight young women. OM Radha, the eldest daughter of the founder, was appointed as the first chief Administrative Head of the Movement. After her death, Dadi Prakash Mani was appointed as the chief Administrative Head. Dada Lekhraj, the founder died in 1969.¹⁰ This Movement started by Dada Lekhraj (Brahma Baba) has become very popular. One important reason for the popularity is the teachings of the Movement. These teachings are primarily interpretations of Hindu belief. However, there have been teachings of the Movement on : God, world, soul, sin, ages (yugas), salvation and Raja Yoga.

1. The Concept of God

The movement teaches that God is the Supreme Father, Benefactor and Creator.¹¹ He is not subject to birth and death.¹² He is known as Shiva. He is formless. He is the Creator of all the deities namely, Brahma, Vishnu and Sankar. He is the Father of all souls.¹³ He is different from Shiva of Hinduism. Therefore the God preached by the movement is not to be described God's eternal attributes and functions which means Benefactor, Father, the seed of Creation.¹⁴

God, according to the Movement, is infinite and unlimited. He has the same form as the human souls. The only difference is in the qualities, not in size. He is not love but the source of love. He is not truth but the source of truth. He is a conscious being. He is all knowing. He is absolutely Just God.¹⁵

(a) *Omniscient God* : It is held that God knows the details of every atom and every thing in the universe. It is because of God's ultimate pervasive knowledge that he can be described as an ocean. He is complete in all respects. He is the Perfect 'blueprint'¹⁶

God, the sentiment light, as the Movement believes is eternally peaceful and blissful, loving and kind. He is the essence of beauty, the fountain of wisdom and truth, the infallible guide. He is all knowing and Almighty and full of love and peace.¹⁷

It teaches that, God creates with knowledge. Being the wisest of all, He has the power to change the intellects of human souls. By imparting to us the knowledge of Himself, He makes us understand about our true qualities of love, peace and bliss. He alone has the right

to impart knowledge to all. His knowledge is purely spiritual.¹⁸ He is also known as “Nirakar or bodiless” because He has no form like that of a man,¹⁹ He has an eternal, unchangeable, indestructible and self-luminous form which is like a point of divine light.²⁰

(b) *Omnipotent God*: The Movement teaches that there are three distinct and eternal operative realities each having its own power and functions. There is God, Souls and World. On the metaphysical level there is the interaction between souls and God. God has no direct influence on nature. The laws of nature are not have the laws of God. The laws that human beings are following at this moment are not the laws of God. He teaches us His laws but we human beings forget them easily.²¹ He does not have immutable Laws which govern the interplay of the soul, God and Nature. God will not infringe those laws. He will not grant favour to some and not to others. Not will he remove sins unless the devotee himself begins to make the efforts necessary.²² God’s greatness lies not in the ability to interfere with events when He chooses. It rather lies in the fact that He alone is the only one in the universe who upholds these laws perfectly and forever. His might is purely spiritual. This Supreme Father, Supreme Soul, uses His “potency” for the benefit of the World. He uses His qualities to transform it when it reaches extreme degradation.²³

Human souls enter the World and little, through births and rebirths, lose some of their original powers through the contact with the influence of matter. Because of losing their qualities, matter starts to dominate and defects appear in the soul..., causing one to depend more and more on “body—consciousness”. Values change, virtues change into vices and spiritual and consequently physical, atmosphere become darker. In this obscurity, we rightly believe that God is the One who can help set things right.²⁴

(c) *God is not Omnipresent*: The movement does not believe that God is Omnipresent. It teaches that the Sun though it is in one place yet its influence can be felt throughout the solar system of different degrees in different places, providing a source of heat and light. In the same way, the one who is the Ocean of perfect attributes, the source of all spiritual needs does not need to be Omnipresent in order to be with us wherever we are because the feeling of closeness to God is something that is beyond dimensions. It says, if God were literally Omnipresent, there would have been no sin in this World. If God, the giver of health and happiness were Omnipresent or have manifested in various human forms then why should a person be sick at all? Why should he/she pray to God for healing? If he were present, purity, peace and happiness ought to be found everywhere. But today we see that in all people, vices, strife and pain are present.²⁵

The Movement believes that if the mind is tuned totally to the gross world and physical activities, a man is unable to experience God personally and practically which can be compared with a radio transmitter when it broadcasts waves throughout the world the receiver will pick them up if it is turned in.²⁶

2. *World*

The Movement teaches that the World has no beginning and is a play between matter and souls (Prakriti and Purusha), matter and nature (Prakriti) has its own power and functions, and God, the Highest Being, has His own functions, different from these. God is the Creator, not in the sense as Christians believe.²⁷

It teaches that there are certain universal Laws which govern the functions of things. These laws of nature are uncreated and have always been existing and will continue to exist, for these are due to the inherent qualities of elements and substances which no one can change or make but are self-sustained.²⁸

All forces of nature, says the Movement, work according to certain eternal laws. All atoms have their specific nature of attributes and they come into contact with each other or act upon each other in accordance with these laws, which are known as laws of Chemistry or Physics or biochemistry or genetics etc. Besides these, there seems to be no need of a Creator of the gross cosmos or universe.²⁹ It also teaches that all things of nature arise by interaction of various natural forces and elements and "the world" is the name given to the whole constituting all these and such other beings and objects.³⁰

It would be proper to think that the word "Creation" has a different meaning than the one in which it is generally used. In philosophical sense, it means creation of a moral and enlightened man out of a sinner or a vicious person. It also means transformation of the world from Tamsic (dark) to Sattwick (holy). God is not Creator of the world in the sense a pot and make of it. When the world becomes anarchic, God Shiva brings a change in it. He gives a spiritual or a moral birth to living beings by imparting knowledge to them. He is the father of humankind in spiritual sense. The gross world is eternal. God brings about its transformation, renovation or renewal when it has extremely degenerated.³¹ The movement teaches that the world in which we live is known as the gross world because all living things have bodily forms. This very world is paradise in the Golden Age (Sat Yuga) and the Silver Age (Treat Yuga) and hell (Marka) in the Iron Age (Kali Yuag).³²

The Movement does not agree with those who say that the world is an illusion. It teaches that this world is eternal.

It has been misunderstood due to ignorance by those who believe that the world is not real.³³ The existence of this world continues from eternity to infinity both in space and time.³⁴

The Movement teaches that beyond this world there is another world. It is known as "Paramdham" or "Brahmaoka" (soul world). It is also known as the "highest heaven" There is perfect calm and purity in this region. After having the physical body, having attained liberation a soul goes to the Paramdham. There is neither pain, nor pleasure, neither birth nor death here in this region. There is peace and peace alone.³⁵

There is another beyond the sun, moon and stars called the subtle world where the three deities—Brahma, Vishnu and Sankara abide in light. In each one of these regions is divine light, present every part of each region. There is thought as well as action in these deity regions but there is no sound although there is speech. These regions are also angelic regions. In each region dwells one deity or angel.³⁶

The act of destruction of the Iron-Aged sinful world is carried out through Sankara. The righteous world is sustained through Vishnu corporeal representatives—Shri Narayan, Lakshmi and Sita. Through Brahma God transforms human beings and elevates them spiritually,³⁷ there is divine light, present everywhere. There is thought as well as action in this deity regions but there is no sound or voice there although there is speech.³⁸ These are

three zones subtly wrapped around the physical plane and performing the task of creation, sustenance and destruction.³⁹ The ideal stage is to stay in the middle region while acting so that when necessary the soul can go into the incorporeal state and be completely recharged. At the same time the soul remains a detached observer of the events taking place around it in the physical world.⁴⁰

Heaven is not anywhere in the upper regions. It is from the standpoint of the conduct of life and happiness that we compare the Golden Age and Silver Age on the one hand with the Copper Age and Iron Age on the other and find the former higher than the latter, and therefore call it heaven which is also named "Vaikuntha." People in the Copper Age and the Iron age are degenerate and unhappy, and the world in these Ages is called hell.⁴¹

Who created this world? According to the movement, God has neither hands, feet *i.e.*, He has no organs or instruments of action. To create any material things, organs or instruments are required to give things their proper form. So keeping these basic facts in mind we can speculate that God is not the Creator of this material world. Therefore, according to the Movement, this world was not created in any gross sense. This world has not beginning and is a play between matter and souls (Prakriti and Purusha). Matter and nature has its own functions, different from these. God, according to the Movement is creator but not in a sense as the world thinks about it.⁴²

The insentient objective world or the material universe is the modification or effect of material elements which are unborn and eternal. Matter itself is not the product, for it is eternal.⁴³ The dissolution of the world never takes place. God brings about its transformation after 5000 years.⁴⁴

(3) Concept of soul

The Movement believes that the soul is a living or a sentiment thing. It is said to be conscious or living because it can think and reflect and can experience pleasure and pain.⁴⁵

The soul, according to the movement, is not separate from the mind, the intellect. Mind (mana) is the name given to the soul's own faculty or function experiencing the pleasure or pain of desiring and will. Intellect, is the name applied to the soul's own ability to reason out things or to take decisions. To regard the mind, the intellect (Budhi) and the predispositions (Samaskaras) as unrelated to the soul, would mean that regarding the soul as an insentient and incoherent thing. This would be wrong, in fact, the major point of difference between the conscious soul and unconscious matter is this that matter does not have characteristics of desire, thinking, sensation, feeling, cognition, effort or experience, whereas the soul possesses all these characteristics. The soul which uses its will, experience and efforts to good purposes and in righteous ways is regarded by the movement as an elevated or holy soul (mahatma), the soul which has bad will, ill-feeling is called a sinful or fallen soul.⁴⁶

The movement teaches that the soul (atman) is the conscious, eternal energy which gives life to the body, moving it into action and expression. Without the soul, the body has no life and without the body the soul can not express life.⁴⁷ The soul is not an invisible or ethereal duplicate of the physical body. It is something which has no physical size and can not be destroyed.⁴⁸ It is considered to be a subtle entity that cannot be measured by any physical process. The non-material part of each one of us exists and is in fact the true self or

what we simply call “I”. This ‘I’ or soul is perceptible only at the level of mind and intellect. There is no difference between ‘I’ (ahamkara) and atman (soul)⁴⁹

According to the movement, in the state of liberation the soul does not merge into God, who has His own separate identity. If souls were one, all beings would have common propensities, similar, inclinations, identical views and actions. There is not one soul to all beings as a string is to pearls strung on to it. If one soul animated all bodies, then one being would be stirred by the same influence. Some souls are engaged in more evils and less virtues while others are devoted to knowledge. Therefore it is a fact that souls are numerous.⁵⁰

(4) *Sin*

The movement teaches that just as darkness is absence of light, negativity which manifests as vice, is merely the absence of spiritual light. It believes that as darkness is not created by any source rather is the absence of light so also the negative forces (sin) or evil forces do not stem from the real nature of the self, but are simply symptoms of lack of spiritual power. Sins are symptoms of individual ignorance and loss of spiritual power which can be regained only when we turn our mind from body consciousness to soul consciousness.⁵¹

It says that light has source but darkness does not. As spiritual power declines symptoms of malaise appear as anger, greed, ego, lust, attachment and other related vice.⁵² The negative forces have often been personified as “satan” or “maya” but in fact there is no such being whom we can blame.⁵³ In other words, the root cause of sins is “body-consciousness. And a person has, therefore to bear in mind, in order to live righteously one need not renounce one’s home and kith and kin, but give up only one’s body consciousness and to be the true communion with the supreme God in Yoga. The cause of human misery, as taught by the movement, is rooted in one’s mind. When a person becomes soul—conscious, vices (sins) leave him/her and he is able to stabilize himself/herself in God-consciousness and thus have bliss or peace.⁵⁴

The movement believes that the soul has within itself latent bondages to matter and the potential to obtain liberation.⁵⁵ The movement does not agree with those who believe that they have inherited sins from the time of Adam. It is of no use to blame any one for it. The soul becomes pure and impure by its own action. The Devil is a symbolic personification of negative forces which are at work in every human being. Therefore the account of impure actions can only be balanced by pure actions or good deeds (Karmas) of each soul.⁵⁶

Due to the good or bad deeds (karmas) every soul has to pass through different cycles. There can be no beginning nor end to any soul or existence because everything exists within the limits of the physical universe and the framework of time. The soul goes through this cycle performing actions which consolidate as sanskaras and which determine the future condition of the soul. At the end of each cycle or age we are emancipated from the bondage of negative actions by God. The Wheel of creation spins endlessly transcending the bonds of birth and death. In order to understand God’s Divine acts and the condition of the souls we have to grasp the essential facts about the different yugas (ages) and the situation of souls within the cycle of the yugas.

(5) The Concept of Ages (Yugas)

Hindus originally believed that the world cycle comprises four Ages, namely, the Golden age, the Silver Age, the Copper age and the Iron age. They have different opinions about the lengths of these ages. In general it is believed that they are of 4000, 3000, 2000, and 1000 years respectively.⁵⁷ However, the movement has a different view. Each age, according to them, is 1250 years long.⁵⁸

During this time, the wheel of creation spins endlessly, without pause, transcending the bounds of birth and death. The changes within the souls are reflected in changes in the phenomena of the material world. We will deal with the concept of ages in the following paragraphs.⁵⁹

(a) *Golden Age (Satya Yuga)* : It is the age of the truth. In the beginning there was only one religion and one dynasty of the holy souls. This age lasts for 1250 years. In this age the souls take only 8 births. The movement believes that the concepts such as value, profit and loss, misery, poverty, sorrow of death do not exist in this age.⁶⁰

The Movement teaches that the system of the golden age is not a conscious philosophy in practice but rather a natural manifestation of a society whose members are in the highest state of natural soul consciousness.⁶¹

The movement teaches that people in this age live viceless lives. Even as death approaches them, they willingly give up the body when they reach a ripe old age. The people in this age instinctively feel their realities as souls and not as bodies. This age is the peak of the human civilization in every field of human endeavour, teaching, music and science. The soul is in perfect balance with all others. Every one enjoys good health. There is no need of Laws and Law-Courts.⁶² There is no thought of competition. Family life is in perfect unity because relationships are not based upon greed, ego or attachment, but on mutual respect and equality. There is one way of life, one language and one tradition. There are no temples, scriptures, gurus etc.⁶³ Shiva does not dwell on this earth but in Puramdham.⁶⁴

There is neither knowledge of evil, nor potentiality for it in this age. Each individual manifests sanskaras of purity, peace and happiness and so each action is perfect. The collective result of the actions here in this Age is that there is complete harmony in the social fabric. There is no charitable activity, nor acts of sin because of the one side no one needs upliftment or any sort of moral, financial or physical support since all inhabitants have sufficient to eat. There are no beggars in this age. The people are at full strength and full illumination. This is called earthly heaven. At the end of this age commences the Silver Age.⁶⁵

(b) *Silver Age (Treta Yuga)* : The movement teaches that the Silver Age also lasts for 1250 years. The soul takes 12 births.⁶⁶ The pure souls discharge their original power and qualities through their actions which effect the whole kingdom. Pure love is found among all the inhabitants. The population increases and the kingdom expands. With the passage of time the purity of souls starts diminishing. The average age of people also lessens from 150 years to 125 years. There are no wars, no crime or litigation and no sorrow or sufferings. People do not die at an early age nor is there an old age death, as takes place in the Iron Age due to disease or accident.⁶⁷

In this age, material resources are being spread more thinly over a wider area to meet greater demand. The human beings who enter this age gradually become attracted to the things of the senses. Material beauty first allures the soul more and more in each successive birth, into the world of the senses and sensual desires. There is a difference in the degrees of bliss, power, purity and prosperity.⁶⁸

According to the Movement, there is perfect peace and happiness prevalent in this age too. No human endeavours can in any way diminish the glory of this age.⁶⁹ During the Silver Age, there is one language, One God-religion and one world sovereignty. The world is without sin and corruption. People are still completely non-violent and vegetarian. The souls in this age are said to be eternal because there is then no death as we know it today. During the last years of this age, the decline of virtues starts taking place. Each person is an act to God. God Shiva has bestowed the kingdom of paradise, the Golden and Silver Age on humanity.⁷⁰

(c) *Copper Age (Dwapur Yuga)* : This age is the beginning of recorded history. The virtuous state, or the ability to perform truthfully, has been lost and that missing gap has to be filled in.⁷¹ It teaches that the beginning of the Copper Age is not only the period of division of the human race but it is the commencement of the period of worship, prayer, search for God, writing of Scriptures, construction of temples and places of worship.⁷²

It was during this period that Abraham is believed to have established his religion which is called Judaism.⁷³ The idea of God being Omni present is given weight by these movements. The population continues to grow. The soul takes 21 births. From one birth to another, because of different Karmic accounts with other souls, some souls take birth in other religions where they feel completely out of place. All souls seek to establish a relationship with God or with some beings higher than them. Instead of worshipping one God, deities become the object of worship.⁷⁴

This period was believed to have been a very fertile period from the point of Bhakti (worship), religious contemplation, metaphysical thoughts, spiritual practices, like yoga etc. The stage of bhakti gets a force but spiritual stage of people deteriorates.

(d) *Iron Age (Kali Yuga)* : The movement teaches that the Iron Age is the Age of Satan. Every one is unhappy here.⁷⁵ One's life and relationship with others become devoid of real love, peace and happiness. Life is controlled by Vice. The status of women is demeaned and they are treated as objects of sexual indulgence. People become slaves to their desires. Material calamities increase day by day. Disease, premature death, accidents, poverty, the gap between rich and poor and mental suffering make life a veritable "hell". Though people become enslaved to their sense organs, yet they pray to God to remove the not a fairy underground pit. Both heaven and hell are period of history.⁷⁷ There are many demonstrations and revolutions. This age is known as the age of utmost decline in moral, ethical and spiritual values. The world is divided on the basis of language, culture, religion and wealth. Science is worshipped as God which reduces everything to material values. Perverse thinking permeates all levels of society.⁷⁸

(e) *The Confluence Age (Sangam Yuga)* : It is called the age of illumination. It begins when there is absolute decline of practised truth. The soul in this age, is able to balance its accounts of negative actions and becomes light through the good deeds. It is called the Sangam Yuga

because it is the meeting of both the Iron Age and the Golden Age. It is also believed to be the starting point of the Golden Age and the end of the Iron Age.⁷⁹ The soul takes only one birth. The total population of the world by the end of this age and the beginning of the Golden Age will be 900,000.⁸⁰ During this age, the message of God spreads to all souls of all religions. God Shiva adopts a body. He descended into the body of Brahma Baba, an elderly experienced person whom He used immediately for the transmission of knowledge. Through Brahma Baba, God Shiva, the Supreme Soul gives human souls a spiritual birth.⁸¹

(6) What Comes After Death?

The Movement believes when the body has become unserviceable due to age or disease or accident, the soul leaves the body. The type of body and the condition of births are determined by both thoughts and actions—performed previously and by the accumulated account of giving and taking with other souls.⁸² The death of the body is a great shock to the soul, especially if there was great attachment to that body. The new set of circumstances in the new body is bewildering because as the body and brain are not developed, the soul cannot express its memory of its past life. By the time the body is developed, the soul forgets its memory of the past life and becomes accustomed to the new conditions and the new parents. The predominant sanskaras developed in past lives soon begin to manifest themselves with new details.⁸³

The Movement teaches that the soul takes several births on this earth according to its actions. It does not believe that the soul would be born as a bird or as an animal as people popularly believe. It rather teaches that soul will be born as a human being only. It also does not agree with those who believe that the dead person's soul will go to heaven immediately at death. The idea of hell underneath earth is also not accepted by the movement. It rather teaches that both heaven and hell are on this earth and the human soul continues to take on human bodies on earth till the 5000 years cycle of Yugas ends.⁸⁴

(7) Salvation

The movement says that the soul itself creates its accounts, good and bad, so it must balance them by itself. No human soul, whether Christ or Buddha, or even some Gurus, can settle some one else's account of sins. In this respect many souls are being misled by those who claim to be able to alter or interfere with the working of the Law of Karma.⁸⁵ The degree of liberation is relative to each soul's part. Real perfection is achievable on earth.⁸⁶ It also teaches that salvation (Mukti) is that state of the soul, in which it is purged of sins, has been released of all its bondages and its subjugation to births and deaths has ceased for a period. Sahaz Raja Yoga is the major source of liberation.⁸⁷

The basis of freedom or liberation (Mukti) from vices is the love of the incorporeal, the *Eternal*. No devotion, pilgrimage, occult power or exercise is greater than the purifying effect of love for God, spiritual endeavours further binds.⁸⁸

(8) Raja Yoga

Yoga has been defined by many scholars in different ways. Some have defined Yoga as “the practice of stabilizing the mind in the self. Others have defined Yoga as the establishment of

a link between the self and God by means of consciousness or mind. Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root “Yog” which means “link” or “union”. Raja literally mean King.⁸⁹ So, Raja Yoga signifies the King of unions or the link between the soul and the Supreme Being through which the soul controls its own mind, intellect and sanskaras and consequently of its physical body. While the devotees practice Raja Yoga, the object on which they fix their eyes or mind is a dot of light.⁹⁰

The Movement uses Raja Yoga as a means to re-establish a wholesome relationship and bond of love with God. A devotee has to be constantly conscious of God. Yoga purifies the soul. The fellowship of God who is the holiest of holy, makes the soul also holy. Thus, a rational, intellectual communion with God brings about a change in him/her and enables him/her to score a final victory over sins.⁹¹ Yoga lights such a divine fire that even the deep-rooted sins of the soul melt away. Through Raja Yoga the soul regains the pristine glory of its divine attributes lost during past years.

It also teaches that godly knowledge is of utmost necessity to enlighten the soul and to enable it to establish wholesale relationship and bond of love with God. A devotee has to be constantly conscious of God as his/her father. Unless one has the consciousness that he/she is a soul, he/she cannot contemplate any relationship with God, for God is related to him/her not because of any physical tie but as the supreme soul to a human soul.⁹³ To be body conscious is to turn away from God and to be soul conscious is to turn toward God. Soul consciousness forms the basis. In other words, the knowledge of God the Father, faith in the knowledge and remembrance of God the Father, form three main pillars on which the practice of Yoga rests.⁹⁴

Yoga purifies in soul; the fellowship with God, who is the holiest of holy, makes the soul also holy. A devotee who practices Raja Yoga, rises above the barriers of caste, creed, colour etc. His/her religion is the religion of peace and purity. He/she will not have bitterness towards anyone on the basis of religious doctrines, cults, provincial boundaries, and social differences⁹⁵. The movement teaches that Raja Yoga alone is the efficacious, real and useful means for birth-control to solve the problem of over population and freedom from sins.⁹⁶

Conclusion

It is found that the Movement has re-interpreted the teachings of Hinduism. In Hinduism all the three deities, *i.e.* Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma, are of equal power. But the Movement has made the God Shiva superior to other deities. If the Shiva of the Movement is different, then, can this Shiva be similar to the Shiva of Shiva Sidhantha. In Shiva Sidhanta also Shiva is the supreme Reality.

The concept of Yogas was already there in Hindu Puranic, mythologies. The Movement re-interpreted it and fixed the number of years for each age which differ from other Hindu views of Yugas. The Movement teaches that the history of the world occurs in 5000 years cycle of moral and physical decline, each divided into four ages of 1250 years each. The Hindu notion of time is cyclical as opposed to the notion of time is the Semitic religion. Each Yuga is associated with a virtue, the satyugā (golden Age) of 4800 divine years, the Treta Yuga of 3600 years, the Dwapara Yuga of 2400 years and the Kali Yuga 1200 years. In special cosmology, the life of Cosmos is divided into four yugas with dimensions of Krta

(Golden Age) 172800, Treta 129600, Dwapara 86400 years, and Kalyuga 43200 years.⁹⁷

The Movement gives importance to celibacy which is not surprising since the God Shiva is believed to be the presiding deity of the universe. God Shiva is the divine archetype of the sexual renouncer. It seems there is nothing erotic about Shiva as the Movement pictures Him. He is represented not by the more overtly phallic conventional linga but by a red egg-shaped emblem. Some Hindu Movements give importance to sex. This concept of celibacy is not found in Hinduism, though some gurus in Hinduism may have observed celibacy.

The Movement tries to fit Christ, Buddha, Allah, Yehova in Hindu teachings which may not be accepted by other religions. But it definitely offers a striking illustration of the richness of the Hindu tradition and also of the ways in which elements of a religious culture can be re-ordered to serve goals ostensibly quite remote from traditions. It respects all religions. It accepts the members of all religions without making caste or position distinction.

The Movement also re-interprets the concept of world. It teaches that this earthly world is eternal. It has no beginning, but many other religions believe that the world has a beginning and end. Even the Hindu mythology believes that the world was created. It believes that the history of the world occurs in 5000 years cycles of moral and physical decline. Every cycle believed to be a duplicate of others like a movie that is screened again and again. The world is perfect at the beginning and totally degraded by the end, at which point the cycle begins a new. The living beings will die but the earth will remain as it is. It is a re-interpretation of the teaching of Vaisesika Sutra of Kanada on the universe.

Salvation in Hindu religion is permanent. Once a soul is liberated it becomes one with the Brahman. It does not take any new body. But the Movement teaches that the soul after liberation goes to the house of eternity. But it does not stay there forever. When the new cycle begins the liberated souls descend into the material world and they become entrapped in the rigidly determined historical cycle. The Movement also teaches that the soul will take on human body and not of the animals, plant or insects while in Hindu teachings the soul can take any form (animals, insects, plants etc.) in the next birth according to the Karma (actions). Dayananda Sarasvati also agree to some extent with the Movement. He also teaches that the soul after death may not remain there eternally. It may come back on this earth in any form.

The Movement's effort of bringing about liberation to women is quite appreciable. It is based on a critical analysis of the position of women in Hindu society and seeks their liberation in accord with the Movement's idea of freedom. It seems that the liberation is possible when the attitude of male towards females is changed. In this context so many factors apart from Raja Yoga meditation need to be involved to bring about liberation to women. The idea of attaining autonomy and freedom by reclaiming premarital virginity has a context in the symbolism of the Hindu Pantheon. A Kanya or an unmarried girl, is considered a kind of goddess in a ceremonial period known as nine nights (navaratra). It put great emphasis on the fact that one of the ways the goddess is worshipped during this festival, is by paying homage to unmarried girls, which is offered just as it would be to an Icon of the goddess on the altar. And a married woman is not worshipped like this. The movement is deadly against divorce, dowry and any kind of woman exploitation. It gives equal rights to woman which is lacking practically in Hinduism.

THE TEACHINGS OF THE PRAJAPITA BRAHMA KUMARIS MOVEMENT

NOTES

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BED SINGH

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