

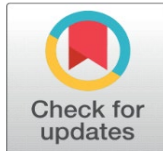
THE INCREASING PROMINENCE OF FEMALE LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE INDIAN SPIRITUAL DOMAIN: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE BRAHMA KUMARI SECT

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DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.3731](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.3731)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

The Brahma Kumari organisation embodies a significant spiritual movement marked by predominantly female leadership and extensive global outreach across 137 countries. This sect uniquely permits unmarried women to attain lifelong membership, called Brahma Kumaris (BKs). Traditionally, within Hindu culture, marriage is viewed as a crucial sacrament closely linked to vital life goals and spiritual objectives. However, in the contemporary context, the Brahma Kumari sect has gradually distanced itself from Hindu practices. Its philosophical framework suggests that marriage may hinder women's individual and spiritual advancement. Central to the Brahma Kumari belief system is the practice of Raja Yoga meditation, a transformative methodology to enhance interpersonal relationships and deepen one's connection to the natural environment. The organisation's approach integrates spirituality, psychology, philosophy, and ecological awareness, offering a holistic perspective on well-being. Research has revealed notable correlations and divergences in life satisfaction and social adaptation among practitioners of Brahma Kumari principles. Studies indicate that the spirituality nurtured within this framework positively correlates with increased happiness and life satisfaction among adherents. This spiritual paradigm facilitates significant personal transformations and holds the potential for broader societal impact.

Keywords: Brahma Kumari, Sect, Marriage, Raja Yoga Meditation, Life Satisfaction

1. INTRODUCTION

The establishment of the Prajapita Brahmakumari Ishwariya Vishwavidyalaya in 1936-1937 occurred during a tumultuous period in history, following the failure of the League of Nations and on the brink of World War II. The socio-political climate was characterised by moral decay and societal upheaval. In response to these challenges, the institution was founded by *Dada Lekhraj*, a prominent diamond merchant who underwent a significant spiritual transformation at sixty (Ramsay et al., 2012)¹.

¹ Ramsay, T., Smith, W., & Manderson, L. (2012). Brahma Kumaris: Purity and the Globalization of Faith. In Springer eBooks (pp. 51-70). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-2932-2_4

Dada Lekhraj's spiritual journey was marked by profound realisations concerning the nature of the self, the universe, and the Supreme Being—identified as the formless Lord Shiva, embodied as light. He envisioned a “golden world” characterised by love, peace, unity, health, and order—a vision he projected to materialise in the early decades of the coming century. Concurrently, he identified the impending destruction of the *Kaliyuga*, the current age marked by moral and ethical decline. Divinely inspired to renounce worldly attachments, Dada Lekhraj transitioned into a conduit for divine knowledge. He systematically encouraged others to embrace values, Raja Yoga, and comprehensive knowledge to prepare for the advent of a new golden age. The formal establishment of the institution in 1937 was accompanied by significant structural decisions: Dada Lekhraj divested himself of his diamond business, establishing a trust governed solely by women and placing his assets under their stewardship. This act elevated women's roles and positioned them at the forefront of promoting moral and spiritual values (Chander & Shubow, 2017)². The Brahma Kumari sect's teachings and practices have notably disrupted traditional Hindu family dynamics and the entrenched roles of women within these structures (Chowdhary, 1996)³.

Subsequently referred to as "Prajapita Brahma," *Dada Lekhraj's* teachings led to the spiritual rebirth of many, who became known as Brahma Kumaris and Brahma Kumar. What began as a familial endeavour in 1936 evolved into a formal educational institution focused on disseminating spiritual and moral education, emphasising Raja Yoga. The first chief administrator was Brahma Kumari Jagadamba Saravati, known as Jagat-Mata, followed by the current chief administrator, Dadi Janki Ji and co-chief administrator, Rajyogini Dadi Hriday Mohini Ji.

2. KEY TEACHINGS OF BRAHMA KUMARI

The Brahma Kumari organisation has expanded significantly, with over 8,000 branches in 110 countries and around 10,00,000 students involved in daily spiritual practice and moral education⁴. Key teachings of the institution include:

Meditation: - The Brahma Kumaris present a distinctive approach to meditation centred on cognitive purification and integrating meditative states into everyday interactions. Unlike conventional practices that typically mandate closed eyes and tranquil settings, this method is generally conducted with open eyes. This approach facilitates the cultivation of mindfulness and heightened awareness of one's environment, enabling a continuous meditative presence amidst daily activities.

Karma: - At the core of Brahma Kumari's philosophy is karma, which asserts that a soul's evolutionary trajectory and subsequent reincarnation are profoundly shaped by its actions in the present incarnation. This framework posits that every thought, verbal expression, and action has repercussions that influence the soul's destiny, establishing karma as a pivotal mechanism guiding personal experiences and future lifetimes (Ramsay et al., 2017)⁵.

Seven Virtues: The Brahma Kumaris identify seven intrinsic virtues of the soul: peace, joy, love, bliss, purity, power, and truth. These qualities are seen as fundamental characteristics that encapsulate the soul's essence. Their teachings promote nurturing and manifesting these virtues daily, fostering individual growth and facilitating spiritual advancement.

Five Elements: -According to Brahma Kumari's teachings, the human corporeal form comprises five elemental forces: ether, air, fire, water, and earth. This concept underscores the intrinsic interconnectedness of humanity and the natural realm, suggesting that a profound understanding of these elements can enhance one's appreciation of physical existence and spiritual identity.

² Chander, J., Trivedi, S., & Shubow, R. (1981). *Adi Dev: The First Man*. San Francisco : Published by the B.K. Raja Yoga Center for the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University.

³ Chowdhry, P. (1996). Marriage, Sexuality and the female “Ascetic”: Understanding a Hindu sect. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31(34), 2307–2321. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4404549>

⁴ Our history – The Brahma Kumaris. (n.d.). <https://brahmakumaris.org.au/new/about-us/our-history/#:~:text=Brahma%20Kumaris%20World%20Spiritual%20University%20now%20has%20over%208000%20Locations,to%20enhance%20a%20peaceful%20life>

⁵ Ramsay, T. (2017). *Custodians of purity: an ethnography of the Brahma Kumaris*. <https://doi.org/10.4225/03/5892a21620893>

Four Pillars: -The Brahma Kumaris framework for a fulfilling existence is built upon four critical pillars: gyan (knowledge), yoga (meditative practice), dharna (embodiment of divine virtues), and seva (selfless service). These elements are interdependent, encouraging individuals to pursue intellectual enlightenment, engage in meditative disciplines, cultivate moral attributes, and actively contribute to societal welfare through altruistic actions.

Environmental Initiative: - Aligned with their philosophical tenets, the Brahma Kumaris advocate for a lifestyle grounded in simplicity and ecological sustainability. Their principles promote conscientious consumption, responsible resource management, ongoing education, and a commitment to generosity. This initiative exemplifies a comprehensive approach to environmental stewardship, emphasising the importance of mindful consumption and ecological awareness.

Lifestyle: The Brahma Kumaris promote a lifestyle emphasising chastity and purity across all life domains. This includes adherence to a vegetarian diet, which emphasises health and compassion, while eschewing substances like alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and gambling. Their teachings advocate for a sober and clean way of life, which they posit enhances cognitive clarity, emotional equilibrium, and spiritual evolution (Today, 1995)⁶.

The concept centres on a formless, eternal deity embodying omnipotence and wisdom, acting as both the sovereign force of the universe and a nurturing guide for all souls. Embracing virtues like humility, tolerance, patience, contentment, and sweetness is crucial for personal growth and societal harmony. This preparation aligns us with the ideals of Satyug, an age of righteousness and unity. The evolution of the Prajapita Brahmakumari Ishwariya Vishwavidyalaya into a global educational network highlights its commitment to promoting moral and spiritual values. As *Kaliyuga* concludes, the Almighty imparts divine knowledge through human conduits, stressing the need for restoration towards *Satyuga* (Barrett., 2004)⁷.

Raja Yoga

Raja Yoga meditation is a versatile and inclusive practice that allows individuals from various backgrounds to engage in meditation without needing elaborate rituals. It is distinguished by its open-eyed practice, which helps maintain awareness of the external environment while achieving meditative benefits. The approach emphasises elevating consciousness and fostering spiritual empowerment, encouraging positive thought patterns and reflective decision-making instead of reactive instincts⁸. This shift leads to improved intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, promoting personal transformation, inner peace, and fulfilment. Additionally, Raja Yoga supports spiritual growth and character development by purifying past impressions (samskaras) and reducing mental tension, enabling practitioners to face challenges with resilience and a positive mindset (Singh & Pandey, 2015).

UN Recognition and Global Presence

The teachings of Prajapita Brahmakumari Ishwariya Vishwavidyalaya have gained widespread acceptance across the globe and have been recognised on an international scale for their positive impact. Operating as a non-governmental organisation, this esteemed institution is officially affiliated with the United Nations (UNO) and enjoys consultative status with prominent bodies such as UNICEF and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Its commitment to promoting peace and harmony has not gone unnoticed; the UN has honoured the organisation with the prestigious International Peace Medal. Prajapita Brahmakumari Ishwariya Vishwavidyalaya has been celebrated with five national Peace

⁶ Today, H. (1995, May 1). Brahma Kumaris: Conquering A Callous World with Purity - Hinduism Today. Hinduism Today. <https://www.hinduismtoday.com/magazine/may-1995/1995-05-brahma-kumaris-conquering-a-callous-world-with-purity/>

⁷ Barrett, D. V. (2004). The New Believers: A survey of sects, cults and alternative religions. *Nova Religio the Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, 8(2), 101–103. <https://doi.org/10.1525/nr.2004.8.2.101>

⁸ Raja Yoga Meditation. (n.d.). Brahma Kumaris. <https://www.shivbabas.org/rajyoga-meditation>

Ambassador awards from various countries, underscoring its significant role in advocating for global peace and well-being (Verma, 2011)⁹.

Initiatives for Societal Reconstruction: -

The university has established three additional organisations to foster societal improvement: the *Raja Yoga* Education and Research Foundation, the World Renewal Spiritual Trust, and the Brahma Kumari Educational Society. Within the *Raja Yoga* Education and Research Foundation, various specialised divisions cater to diverse sectors, including but not limited to scientists, engineers, healthcare professionals, educators, media specialists, entrepreneurs, women, youth, policymakers, social activists, legal professionals, administrators, artists, athletes, and personnel involved in logistics, security, and rural development. These divisions regularly conduct workshops, conferences, and large-scale gatherings to impart the principles of *Raja yoga* and promote moral values and divine knowledge across all strata of society.

Institutional Activities and Objectives: - The institution aims to promote societal transformation by reinforcing spiritual and ethical values through its curriculum, emphasising individuals' dignity and potential. It focuses on developing inner attributes and activating latent capabilities for holistic personal growth, addressing the challenges of a morally declining society. Practical methodologies, particularly yoga, enhance mental serenity, resilience, and positive interpersonal relationships. The goal is to facilitate self-discovery, improve self-awareness, refine judgment, and foster ethical conduct. Courses and seminars are designed to integrate cognitive and emotional intelligence, aimed at personal development and practical application of inner resources in various settings. Additionally, the BK critiques the systemic subordination of women, challenging traditional gender roles and the narratives that undermined their independence and potential for spiritual transformation. The organisation associates the subordination of women with the incorporation of sexual relations, advocating for empowerment through sexual renunciation and promoting celibacy as part of its ethos (Jeffery & Sharma, 1981)¹⁰.

In 2016, an organisation involved over 32,000 women in campaigns against female feticide under the "*Beti Bachao, Sashakt Banao*" initiative. In 2014, they conducted 45 regional campaigns that benefitted over 145,000 women through "*Nari Suraksha, Hamari Suraksha*." In 2022, the Brahma Kumaris launched seven initiatives for *Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav*, focusing on health, farmer self-reliance, and youth empowerment, and organised events like the "*Andekha Bharat Cycle Rally*" and participated in "*Swachh Bharat Abhiyan*." On January 3, 2023, they inaugurated the "*RISE—Rising India Through Spiritual Empowerment*" campaign, attended by President Droupadi Murmu, promoting *Raja Yoga* and aiming for a "*Golden India*" (Patil, 2024)."

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review is crucial for researchers, allowing them to deeply engage with their subject area, construct a solid theoretical foundation, and critically assess existing research. In her study of the Brahma Kumaris sect, Paul van der Velde (2003) analyses its origins and teachings, tracing its roots back to its founder, Dada Lekhraj, who established the movement in 1936. Van der Velde emphasises the sect's contemplative nature, deeply intertwined with various New Age philosophies that emphasise themes such as renunciation and spiritual rebirth. After Dada Lekhraj's death, questions arose about the legitimacy of his teachings and messages from Sister Gulzar, complicating the sect's narrative. Smith and Ramsay (2008) highlight the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU) as a hierarchical organization active in 128 countries, reflecting its global commitment to spiritual growth. The BKWSU focuses on various societal programs and promotes *Raja Yoga* meditation as a means to achieve inner peace and self-awareness.

Whaling (2012) urges a reassessment of the Brahma Kumaris movement's identity within Hinduism, exploring its historical and philosophical aspects to highlight its societal implications and transformative potential. Ramsay et al. (2012) state that the primary mission of BKWSU is to promote a culture of purity and virtuous living globally, linking this purity to the essence of the individual soul and the world's overall fabric. Further emphasizing the practical benefits of this spiritual practice, Gupta et al. (2014) present compelling evidence highlighting the health advantages of *Raja Yoga*

⁹ Varma, P. (2011). *Being Indian: Inside the real India*. Arrow Books Ltd.

¹⁰ Jeffery, P., & Sharma, U. (1981). Women, work, and property in North-West India. *RAIN*, 43, 15. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3032053>

meditation. Their research demonstrates significant improvements in pulmonary function among practitioners, illustrating the profound impact that these meditative practices can have on physical health alongside their spiritual benefits.

Siddappa Naragatti (2016) emphasises the overall health benefits of Raja Yoga meditation, highlighting its role in fostering mental tranquillity and promoting positive behaviours. Pandya (2018) Explored the impact of Raja Yoga meditation on life satisfaction and happiness in older adults, finding that regular practice significantly enhances perceived meaning and well-being. The study emphasises the need for a personalised approach considering cultural and health contexts. Wallis (2018) analysed the evolution of the Brahma Kumaris from a 'world rejection' stance to 'world ambivalence', highlighting the organisation's global outreach and reinterpretation of millenarian principles through an ethnographic lens. Bernard (2019) discussed the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University's focus on spiritual education for sustainability and individual accountability in promoting environmentally friendly behaviours while fostering a respectful relationship with nature. Sharma et al. (2020) investigated the neurophysiological effects of Raja Yoga meditation using EEG, showing changes in brain activity linked to cognitive processes. Further studies on the meditative process and brain activation patterns are recommended.

Banerjee (1985), in her article, reveals that Lata Mittal was sent to the Brahma Kumari ashram in Calcutta at age thirteen, where she experienced exploitation and restrictions. After ten years, she left but faced rejection from her mother and difficulty finding a job. Following family tragedies, she contested her family's traditional property dynamics, becoming a symbol for her younger sister. Lata's case highlights how patriarchal families use religious institutions to deny women's inheritance rights and points to the practice of surrendering girls to such sects in lower middle-class families, undermining legal age restrictions and normalising early commitments.

Saryal and Saryal (2023) Emphasised the role of faith communities in environmental stewardship, noting that spiritual values influence ecological behaviours. Highlighted the Brahma Kumari community's approach to global change through individual self-transformation and positive thinking for sustainable environmental practices. NV and Naragatti (2023) explore Brahma Kumari's philosophy in their study "Sacred Symbiosis," focusing on balancing spiritual growth with personal autonomy amid life's challenges. They introduce the concept of "sacred symbiosis" for achieving spiritual equilibrium, which has implications for the organisation and individual practitioners. Jasleen Kaur (2023) examines mental health and life satisfaction among married and unmarried women in the Brahma Kumari community, finding that unmarried women report higher life satisfaction and better mental health. This challenges common assumptions about marital status and suggests that spiritual practices may benefit their well-being. In their study, Saini et al. (2024) investigated the benefits of Raja Yoga meditation, linking meditation to reduced hypertension, cholesterol, and stress and improved overall well-being. Their findings support the integration of Raja Yoga into holistic health practices.

Theoretical perspective:

This study analyses the socio-religious dynamics of the Brahma Kumari sect by applying various sociological theories of religion. Conflict theory provides a critical framework for analysing the function of religion within societal structures, positing that it serves as an institution that perpetuates social inequality. This perspective indicates that religion often reinforces disparities among social classes. A noteworthy example is the pronounced wealth disparity between the Vatican and the average Catholic parishioner, which exemplifies how religious institutions can contribute to systemic inequalities. Additionally, sectarianism surfaces as a divisive ideology that can instigate violence between disparate religious factions. It manifests as discrimination, animosity, and prejudice among different sects or ideologies, often culminating in sectarian violence; the civil war in Iraq in 2006 stands as a prominent illustration, driven by tensions between rival Muslim sects (Haddad, 2013).

In contrast, symbolic interactionism elucidates how individuals engage with their faith and navigate their religious communities. This approach accentuates the dynamics of faith practice and personal experiences in moulding social contexts. Symbolic interactionists investigate how shared meanings and interactions related to religious beliefs can enhance psychological and physical well-being, effectively transforming quotidian experiences into avenues for support and relational connectivity (Kovačević et al., 2021). Functionalism, another sociological paradigm, scrutinises the interrelated roles of various societal elements, emphasising how they collectively maintain social stability. From this viewpoint, religion is perceived as a conservative force promoting social order and fostering collective value consensus. Beyond its stabilising role, religion confronts profound existential inquiries, addressing questions about cosmology, suffering, and the afterlife. It provides emotional solace during crises, facilitates social cohesion, and regulates behavioural norms. In this context, sects can be understood as sub-societal entities adhering to belief systems that

diverge from mainstream cultural norms, often leading to social isolation from broader networks, including familial relationships (Burhenn, 1980). A deeper exploration of these theoretical foundations highlights the pivotal contributions of Émile Durkheim in advancing the concept of functionalism. Durkheim's insights illuminate religion's role in establishing societal moral authority. This concept aligns with the work of anthropologists such as Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard, who investigate the psychological dimensions of religious rituals, revealing that these practices address communal needs while aiding individuals in coping with emotional and psychological adversities.

Moreover, the discourse introduces Viktor E. Frankl's logotherapy, a transformative psychological approach that emerged in the 1930s. Frankl's framework centres on the "will to meaning," emphasising the intrinsic human desire for purpose. Core principles of logotherapy include the inherent freedom to shape one's life trajectory, the fundamental pursuit of meaning, and the critical importance of living purposefully. Collectively, these elements underscore the significance of meaning in fostering mental health and achieving personal fulfilment. This exploration of diverse sociological themes reveals that pursuing meaning is essential to enhancing psychological well-being and overall life satisfaction (Devoe, 2012).

Research Objectives:

- What is the socio-economic and educational background of women who become full-time members of the Brahma Kumaris?
- What are the attracting and repelling factors for joining Brahma Kumaris?
- What is the probation period before full-time commitment, and what is the education and initiation process?
- What samskara process do they follow while being full-time Brahma Kumaris?
- How does their lifestyle change after becoming full-time Brahma Kumaris?

Research Methodology:

This paper adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating primary and secondary data sources to address its research objectives. The researcher employs empirical methodologies to conduct a comprehensive analysis, including an extensive literature review drawing from various scholarly articles and existing studies. Furthermore, the study incorporates multimedia resources, such as videos, interviews, and other critical empirical evidence. Through systematic data collection and rigorous examination, the researcher aims to uncover significant patterns, trends, and relationships relevant to the scope of the investigation.

Result:

In Abu Road, Sirohi district, over four hundred young women committed to the Brahma Kumaris organisation during a traditional ceremony involving circumambulating a Shivling. This choice reflects a shift from career advancement to humanitarian service. The event, held at the Brahma Kumaris Institute, was supported by families and highlighted the participants' educational backgrounds, with many holding qualifications like MA, MPhil, and CA. Some women gave up lucrative career paths for a life of spiritual discipline and altruism, raising questions about motivations and societal values regarding personal success versus community service (Rathore, 2023). In Haryana, a noteworthy transition occurred as five young women chose to dedicate themselves to the Brahma Kumaris' spiritual path during a ceremony held at the Brahma Kumaris Anand Sarovar in Sirsa. Among these women, four hail from Haryana and one from Uttar Pradesh, all of whom possess advanced educational credentials, including Master's degrees and MTech qualifications, as well as ITI diplomas (Rana, 2024).

The excerpts above highlight that full-time members of the Brahma Kumaris often originate from robust economic and educational backgrounds. Many of these individuals are drawn to the Brahma Kumari sect after finishing their formal education or while pursuing advanced studies, captivated by the profound teachings and philosophies promoted by the organisation. Upon expressing their interest, they embark on a demanding journey involving a five-year commitment, a pledge, and a probationary period. This dedication is crucial before they can officially become recognised members of the Brahma Kumari community, reflecting their serious intent and alignment with the sect's values.

The Brahma Kumaris organisation attracts a diverse demographic, comprising individuals often grappling with existential uncertainty and seeking a defined sense of purpose. Many of these seekers experience a pronounced alienation from mainstream society, prompting a desire for a community that fosters a sense of belonging and interconnectedness. The allure of the sect is often magnified by aspirations for social standing and influence, alongside an intrinsic longing for familial connections that may be lacking in their current lives.

Several critical factors attract individuals to the Brahma Kumaris community. A profound interest in spiritual development often compels individuals to explore their inner selves and discern their existential purpose. Many are particularly inclined towards meditation practices, which serve as a conduit for achieving psychological tranquillity and emotional equilibrium. The community's philosophy of self-realisation appeals to those committed to uncovering their authentic selves, while adherence to a celibate lifestyle facilitates concentrated personal growth. The endorsement of a vegetarian diet reflects a commitment to altruistic principles and ethical living, consistent with their values of compassion. Emphasising selfless service allows members to enact positive change within their communities. Furthermore, the nurturing atmosphere in Brahma Kumaris centres cultivates a strong sense of belonging, all underpinned by the teachings of "Shiv Baba," regarded as the supreme soul in their doctrine.

In certain instances, parents wishing to mitigate their social and economic responsibilities permit their daughters to join the Brahma Kumari community at notably young ages. This decision may function as a strategic evasion of parental obligations, effectively transferring the burden of adaptation to the girls, who are then thrust into a demanding environment characterised by strict discipline and unwavering commitment. Consequently, these young women often encounter pressure to fully assimilate into the Brahma Kumari lifestyle, sometimes conflicting with their ambitions and desires.

The factors motivating individuals to engage with the Brahma Kumaris are multifaceted and rooted in a complex interplay of personality traits, unconscious drives, and formative experiences that render them particularly receptive to the sect's compelling narratives. For many, meditation serves as a vital coping mechanism, providing respite from emotional distress and the pressures of contemporary life. While a subset of members may have ulterior motivations, the primary impetus for the majority is a sincere aspiration to assist others and positively influence the human experience. Their collective dissatisfaction with the prevailing conditions of the world, coupled with a search for alternative spiritual frameworks, significantly contributes to their attraction to the Brahma Kumaris. Through their involvement, they seek to transform their individual lives and catalyse broader societal change.

The newly initiated Sadhvi, Ruhani, articulated her long-held aspiration for a spiritually oriented life, emphasising the transformative benefits she has experienced through meditation. Rajyogini Sudesh Didi provided an in-depth explanation of the rigorous process involved in becoming a Brahma Kumari. This entails a commitment to reside at a service centre for a minimum of five years, during which adherents must follow a series of structured routines designed to foster discipline and spiritual growth. Sudesh Didi underscored that this path, characterised by celibacy and sacrifice, represents a profound and honourable commitment to a higher purpose (Rana, 2024).

Daily Schedule for Spiritual Practice and Self-Development

- 03:30 AM - 04:00 AM: Morning meditation and mindfulness (Amrit).
- 04:00 AM - 04:45 AM: Group yoga session focusing on alignment and breath control.
- 04:45 AM - 05:45 AM: Individual yoga practice in Baba's meditation space, emphasising personal spiritual connection.
- 05:45 AM - 06:30 AM: Raj yoga class (Scriptural study and contemplation on the Murli).
- 06:30 AM - 07:30 AM: Spiritual knowledge session, delving into philosophical teachings and their application.
- 08:00 AM - 10:00 AM: Breakfast followed by Karmayoga, engaging in selfless service as part of the morning routine.
- 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM: The sermon focused on developing virtuous qualities and their significance in spiritual growth.
- 12:30 PM - 01:30 PM: Brahma Bhojan (community meal), fostering communal harmony and collaboration.
- 02:00 PM - 04:30 PM: Reserved for self-study, personal reflection, and restorative practices.
- 05:00 PM - 06:30 PM: Gyan-yoga class concentrates on integrating knowledge and meditation practices.
- 06:30 PM - 07:00 PM: Evening excursion designed for light physical activity and nature appreciation.
- 07:00 PM - 07:30 PM: The evening yoga session focuses on relaxation and mind-body integration.
- 07:30 PM - 08:15 PM: Dinner, incorporating mindful eating practices and social interaction.
- 08:45 PM - 10:00 PM: Evening class covering spiritual service initiatives, updates, and collective progress.
- 10:00 PM: Rest and restorative practices (Goodnight).

This structured daily routine facilitates physical well-being, spiritual advancement, and community engagement.

During the five-year probation period, individuals are expected to cultivate a lifestyle rooted in discipline, celibacy, and strict adherence to the profound teachings of the founder. This transformative journey culminates in the dedication ceremony, a significant event symbolising an individual's commitment to divinity and social service. Unlike conventional rituals that can be rigid and formal, the dedication ceremony embraces flexibility and personalisation. It can manifest through simple yet meaningful acts, such as circumnavigating the revered Shivling — a symbol of divine energy— or adorning it with beautifully crafted garlands. Participants may also engage in more interactive practices, like exchanging garlands, sweets, and gifts with relatives, creating a sense of community and festivity (Rana, 2024)¹¹.

This ceremony is not just an obligation but a jubilant celebration akin to a festival, embodying the spirit of joy and togetherness. While the specific rituals may vary based on individual preferences and cultural nuances, a vital aspect of the ceremony is the issuance of an identity card from the Brahma Kumari Ashram in Mount Abu. This card is a powerful emblem of complete dedication to divine principles and a commitment to serving the community, marking the recipient's transition into a life devoted to higher ideals.

Embracing the lifestyle of a Brahma Kumari opens the door to a transformative journey characterised by a highly disciplined routine. This journey begins in the tranquil early hours of Amritvela, a sacred time revered for its spiritual significance. During these quiet moments before dawn, individuals engage in deep meditation and reflection, setting a serene tone for the day ahead. Grounded in Guruji's profound teachings, this lifestyle emphasises key values such as discipline, simplicity, and celibacy. By consciously distancing themselves from the distractions and chaos of the outside world, Brahma Kumaris cultivate an environment that allows for heightened focus and a sense of purpose. Their daily practices are meticulously structured, reflecting their unwavering commitment to spiritual growth and self-improvement and the core guiding principles instilled by their esteemed Guruji. Such routines may include meditation sessions, study of spiritual texts, and community service, all of which foster a deep, abiding sense of connection with themselves, others, and the divine. Through this dedicated approach, Brahma Kumaris often discover a profound fulfilment that transcends the ordinary, enriching their lives with meaning and a heightened sense of inner peace.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the above facts, it can be said that full-time members of the Brahma Kumaris predominantly emerge from robust economic and educational backgrounds, often opting to join after the completion of their academic pursuits, motivated by the sect's profound philosophical tenets. Their initiation involves a rigorous five-year probationary period, characterized by a formal pledge that signifies their deep-seated commitment to the community's core values. Individuals are drawn to the Brahma Kumaris seeking avenues for spiritual development, emotional stability, and self-realization. The organization promotes a celibate lifestyle, adheres to a strictly vegetarian diet, and fosters a supportive atmosphere heavily influenced by the teachings of Shiv Baba. Motivations for joining can span a spectrum from a quest for purposeful living and a sense of belonging to a reaction against societal discontent.

Daily practices are anchored in early morning meditation (referred to as Amritvela), complemented by group yoga sessions, Rajayoga classes, and activities centred on selfless service. Members partake in communal meals, engage in Gyan-Yoga dialogues, and prioritize self-study as a means of strengthening community bonds. Throughout the probationary period, individuals cultivate a disciplined celibate lifestyle congruent with the founder's teachings. This culminates in a personal dedication ceremony, symbolizing their commitment to divine principles and social service, thereby facilitating their spiritual advancement and fostering inner tranquillity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

None.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

¹¹ Rana, M. (2024). एमए और एमटेक की डिग्री. . फिर भी ये 5 युवतियां बनीं ब्रह्मकुमारी, अपनाया आजीवन ब्रह्मचर्य - mobile. Punjab Kesari. <https://m.haryana.punjabkesari.in/haryana/news/haryana-news-5-girls-became-brahmakumari-in-sirsa-2066207>

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