

A critique of BKWSU (Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University) philosophy

The purpose of this critique is manifold and is to

- 1) Try and provide a rounded critique of the BK philosophy to balance the mostly negative critiques currently available on the www. For example, see a copy of the original Google Answers page [here](http://answers.google.com/answers/main?cmd=threadview&id=206345) which has since been removed by the request of the BKWSU but is copied here; <http://answers.google.com/answers/main?cmd=threadview&id=206345>
- 2) Via the critique enable people to make an informed choice of whether or not the philosophy is suitable for them.
- 3) Stimulate the BK organisation into addressing the many of the unsatisfactory aspects of their philosophy.
- 4) Stimulate BKs into making informed life decisions

As the philosophy of the BKs is mainly taught through a “7 Day Course” the critique takes the form of an exposition of each of the 7 topics of the course followed by a de Bono PIN – Positive, Interesting and Negative analysis of the each topic. The 7 Days of the Course are

[Day 1 – Soul](#)

[Day 2 – God](#)

[Day 3 – Karma](#)

[Day 4 – The Cycle](#)

[Day 5 – The Tree](#)

[Day 6 – Brahma Baba](#)

[Day 7 – BK Lifestyle](#)

Unfortunately as the BK philosophy has not been published for public reference (considered by the BKs as too easily misunderstood), readers will have to bear with my summary of the philosophy. However, to address any shortcomings of the critique, feedback is welcome via [email](#).

Please note no references to scientific works are quoted in this critique as the sources are widely available e.g. popular science books, new scientist (magazine), etc.

For those readers who don't have the time to read all the critique there is an [executive summary](#).

Background to the critique

Having been a practising BK for 15 years I knew of the intellectual weakness of several aspects of the BK philosophy e.g. The Cycle. As such I promised myself that one day I would address these aspects and put my mind to rest. In the summer of 2001 I finally found the time to analyse the issues, however instead of resolving issues I discovered even more e.g. the basis for the Law of Karma. As such instead of reinforcing my belief in BK philosophy I actually demolished it and hence I am now no longer a BK. Having “naively” followed the BK philosophy for 15 years I do have some regrets and do occasionally kick myself for being so gullible. Nevertheless in the course of being a BK I did meet many wonderful people and on the whole enjoyed the interaction even though it was a waste of time and money.

Audience

The audience for this critique is people interested in the BK philosophy, seekers and BKs who have doubts about the philosophy. The critique may only be an amusement or irritation to BKs who have experienced significant personal benefit from the philosophy.

Andy Harangozo

A critique of the BK philosophy as presented in the 7 Day Course

Day 1 - Soul

philosophy

The teaching is that the soul is an immortal infinitesimal point of spiritual light that enters the foetus at some time after conception and departs the body at death. As such it is considered to bring life energy to the body and is believed to be the centre and source of consciousness.

The consciousness is said to comprise of a Mind the thinking faculty, an Intellect that evaluates the thoughts of the Mind and Sanskars that represent personality, memory, habituations, tendencies and sub/unconscious processing. As an example of how this model works consider what happens when a person becomes hungry i.e. on feeling hungry the Sanskars may bring about the habituated/subconscious action of going to a café, on walking to the café the Mind may think of possible things to eat, though on reaching the café the Intellect will decide what to eat based on price/taste etc and of course on the Sanskars i.e. what one habitually eats or remembers as being nice.

Stating that the soul is immortal forms the basis of a belief in reincarnation i.e. that on death/birth the soul moves on from one body to another taking with it most especially its Sanskars i.e. personality/tendencies/propensities which have been developed/conditioned during numerous lives.

Positive Aspects

The simple Mind/Intellect/Sanskars model of the soul is quite an effective model for explaining human behaviour and can be readily understood by most people including small children. It also points to a means of self development i.e. if the Intellect can be made wiser e.g. through spiritual study it can then determine the most positive thoughts/words and actions to perform and hence in the medium to long term overcome any negative conditioning that may reside in the Sanskars.

Interesting Aspects

Many religions have struggled to define what they call the soul. However, the BKs provide a simple and effective definition.

The definition of the soul as immortal provides the basis for the theory reincarnation i.e. if the soul doesn't die with the body it must "go" somewhere and so why not into another body?

The definition of the form of the soul as an infinitesimal point of spiritual light is a clever way of saying the soul is non-physical and yet has an energetic and ethereal nature.

The idea that the memory, personality and propensities are contained with the Sanskars also offers an explanation for how some people are able to remember previous births and how even infants can have well developed personalities and abilities e.g. artistic and musical.

Negative Aspects

The idea of a non-physical soul suffers from the "Dualistic" paradox i.e. how can a non-physical soul interact with a physical world. The BK's offer no explanation to this paradox even though they claim that God, the Ocean of Knowledge, is their teacher. The problem with the idea of a distinct soul is that modern neuroscience and associated fields have been very successful in accounting for a great deal of what we call consciousness, in terms of electro-bio-chemical brain functioning i.e. what we experience as mind is a product of the complex functioning of the brain. In fact the question has to be asked, "What aspect of the BK Soul cannot be explained in terms of brain function?" Oddly the BK teaching is that the soul cannot do anything including thinking without a body, which infers that the Mind/Intellect is a property of brain function. This is also borne out by real life experience in which we know that infants cannot immediately speak a language and in old age people often lose their mental capabilities. So the BKs belief in a soul, which is Mind/Intellect/Sanskars, is contradicted by the above belief leaving the soul to be only possibly comprised of Sanskars. If we now bring in biological behavioural inheritance i.e. Nature and marry that with brain development through interaction with the world i.e. Nurture our conditioning/habits/skills/propensities/memory/personality then even Sanskars can also be explained in

terms of brain development.

Summary

Even though the BK philosophy of the soul is simple/easy to understand and from a human behaviour aspect quite a good model. The idea of the soul being immortal, distinct from the body/brain and comprising of Mind and Intellect and Sanskars is strongly undermined by the dualistic paradox and modern scientific understanding. In fact the only problem scientists face is the “Hard Problem” i.e. to explain how seemingly qualitative properties, such as sense of individuality, emotions, vision etc are produced by the brain, a physical organ.

At best the soul can only be defined as a spirit which may have an existence independent of the body and which may reincarnate, at worst it is simply the manifestation of the complex workings of the brain.

Day 2 - God

philosophy

As with the definition of the soul, God is also considered an infinitesimal point of spiritual light. However God is also defined as the Param Atma – Supreme Soul, Param Pita – Supreme Father and Sat Guru – Supreme Teacher. With respect to Hindu mythology God is called Shiva and is normally referred to in the male sense due to one of his main roles as Supreme Father, even though the soul is defined as having no gender.

Shiva is referred to as Supreme Soul in that he is said to be the Ocean of Love, Ocean of Peace, etc, i.e. an ocean of all virtues. He is referred to as Supreme Father in that all souls are considered his spiritual children and referred to as Supreme Teacher in that he is considered the Ocean of Knowledge.

According to the titles given to him, Shiva also plays the respective roles. In the role of Supreme Father, he at a certain time (see The Cycle) acts on behalf for his suffering spiritual children by taking on the role of Supreme Teacher by channelling the spiritual knowledge of how to become like himself i.e. all virtuous. In role of Supreme Soul, Shiva covenants to remove the burden of negative karma (sin and negative conditioning) from souls through their practice of meditation upon him, see below.

The channelling of Shiva occurred/s mainly through two instrument souls, Brahma Baba the founder of the BKWSU and Dadi Gulzar one of the senior sisters. As such Shiva does not incarnate into a body rather he is said to reside in Paramdham - the Supreme Regions beyond the physical world and as such is considered to be Ajanama (without birth), Abhogta (without sin) and Akarta (beyond influence).

Two-way communication with Shiva occurs via channelling and trance, however, as mentioned this is restricted to typically 2 persons. For the most part, one-way communication (to Shiva) occurs via a type of mediation called Raja Yoga (Supreme Union). In Raja Yoga meditation Shiva is visualised as a point of light and his qualities become the focus of the meditation e.g. Ocean of Love, Ocean of Peace, etc. The purpose of the mediation is two fold, firstly the removal of negative karma through the remembrance of Shiva and secondly the positive conditioning of the soul by the experience his divine qualities.

Positive Aspects

Whether or not Shiva exists, meditation on qualities such as love, peace, serenity, patience will bring about a relaxed and calmed state of being and if the meditation is practised regularly bring about a positive conditioning of the personality and a greater appreciation/understanding of virtues and values.

Interesting Aspects

Up until now the above has been referred to as BK philosophy but in fact it is actually Shiva's teachings in that all BK philosophy is based on the channelled teachings of Shiva i.e. the supposed words of God, scripture and not just the thoughts of the BKs. As such when appraising the philosophy there need not be given margin for error i.e. the teaching of Shiva, the Ocean of Knowledge ought to be the truth. However, some margin for error is granted due to channelling interference from the less than perfect mediums e.g. Brahma Baba. However, even though a great deal of spiritual knowledge has not been revealed by Shiva the main teachings and hence focus for this critique have been expounded numerous times and are clear and unequivocal.

The definition of God Shiva as being Supreme Soul, Father and Teacher provides a great deal of comfort and hope for people i.e. the belief that there is supreme being watching over and guiding them, a spiritual guardian.

Through the application of the teachings to daily life and the practise of meditation, the BKs believe that souls will become angelic beings (i.e. completely virtuous) and that when a sufficient number of souls become angelic the combined positive effect on the world will bring about Satyug – The Golden Age – Heaven.

With respect to the above, Shiva is not actually considered the “Creator of the World” as in other religions and hence the problems associated with mechanics of creation are avoided. Rather he is referred to as the Liberator and Creator of the Golden Age in that he facilitates the liberation of souls from suffering, teaches them to become angelic and in so doing creates the Golden Age.

The definition of God as simply an infinitesimal point of spiritual light, Supreme Soul, Father and Teacher is typically not at odds with the concepts of God held by other religions. In this respect, Raja Yoga, as the teachings and the practice of meditation is generally called, is claimed to be the one true religion from which other religions have branched (see the section on The Tree).

Negative Aspects

With reference to the section on the soul, though the teachings say that without a body a soul cannot perceive, think or act, apparently Shiva who has the exact same form can, in that he is able to receive and send communication, observe souls and remove sin. A coherent philosophy would either claim that all disembodied souls can or can't perceive, think and act.

Sin/bad karma is defined as being removed through meditation on Shiva. Whilst it is plausible that negative conditioning can be removed by meditation on virtues and positive values as symbolised by Shiva, no explanation of how sin or bad karma is removed has ever being explained in spite of Shiva being called the Ocean of Knowledge.

Another stated aspect of meditation, in order for sins to be removed, is that it needs to be the accurate remembrance of God in the form of a point of spiritual light. This appears to be an unnecessary restriction in that it automatically devalues other forms of remembrance e.g. prayer as a means for sins to be forgiven/removed. This then begs the question “What is it about Raja Yoga meditation that makes it far superior to prayer?” One may say that prayer in the form of asking things of God is meaningless and hence worthless, however, a great deal of prayer is offered with sincerity and love which surely ought not to be considered worthless in comparison to Raja Yoga meditation.

As mentioned, meditation is only considered to be a one-way form of communication i.e. to Shiva. Why should this be so? If Shiva is the Supreme Father and Teacher why is it that he doesn't/cannot communicate with his children? The explanation put forward by the BK's is that the mind has to be made very still and quiet in order for it to hear the communication of Shiva. However, this doesn't bear much credence, as it is actually quite easy to still the mind for short periods whilst focusing attention on Shiva. In fact, strangely enough it is actually somewhat frowned upon for an individual to claim that God has “spoken” to them through meditation as the general opinion of the organisation is that any such communication is simply an individual's imagining.

With respect to the teachings of God Shiva being the truth, the critique of Shiva's teachings of the Law of Karma, The Cycle and The Tree in later sections will demonstrate that the teachings are patently untrue thus completely undermining any assertion that Shiva is actually God.

Summary

As with the definition of the soul, the simple and positive definition of God and his role is very appealing and in fact meditation on God as the symbol of values and virtues will have a positive effect on the spiritual development of an individual. However, the assertion of the forgiveness/removal of sins only through Raja Yoga meditation and the assertion of a coming Golden Age and other teachings as the truth are unfounded and in certain cases completely incorrect thus undermining the definition of Shiva as God.

Day 3 - Karma

philosophy

Though the philosophy of karma is common to a number of religions, the BKs actually have a Law of Karma i.e. a law that governs the effects of thoughts, words and actions. The Law of Karma can be stated simply as

Every thought, word or action will have an equal reaction

or

Every karma will have an equal reaction

The consequence of this is that any good karma will beget an equal amount of good karma in return and likewise any bad karma will beget an equal amount of bad karma in return. However unlike with physical karma in which physical reactions are instant, e.g. if you stab your toe, a cascade of physical actions and reactions lead to you feeling pain, in the case of the non physical karma the reactions can be time delayed e.g. if you make a financial donation you may not see the positive return till perhaps sometime in your next life.

The law also provides the foundation for the BK belief that a better world can be created and indeed that eventually a Golden Aged world or perfect world can be created. This is because the implication of the law is that if souls act positively with themselves they will develop spiritually and eventually become the embodiment of all virtues, if souls interact with everyone positively then eventually divine relationships will be established and if souls interact with their environment in a positive manner then eventually the world will become a much better place.

The law of karma can also be said to be a law of responsibility in that whatever future befalls an individual will be the result of the individuals past and present thoughts, words and actions, i.e. an individual's future is their own responsibility.

Positive Aspects

Even though the "Law of Karma" may not exist we do live in a world created by consequences. For example the physical world that we live in is the end result of a vast number of consequences and at present many people are concerned of the consequences of global warming. Similarly our relationships with other people are the consequences of our and their attitudes, beliefs, habits, likes, dislikes etc. Likewise we ourselves are the consequences of our genetic inheritance, upbringing, education etc. So thinking of consequences will help us make more positive decisions in life.

Interesting Aspects

The Law of Karma is actually the basis for the belief in a "Just World" i.e. a world in which the good are rewarded and the evil are punished. In fact the Law of Karma does away with the troublesome construct of a separate Heaven and Hell in that the consequence of the law is that life in this world can be either heavenly or hellish depending on whether a person performs good or evil actions.

Negative Aspects

In our world all actions do have reactions i.e. consequences. However, though all physical actions have instantaneous and equal reactions according to the laws of physics, "non physical " actions are thought to have typically "time delayed" actions. Take for example the spiritual crime of a killing, according to the law of karma the killing would need to be exactly compensated i.e. the killer will have to experience in recompense the exact amount of suffering and loss experienced by the killed. How would this occur? When would this occur? Some eastern philosophies refer to "Akashic Records" i.e. a spiritual recording/accounting system, however this would need to be a phenomenally complex system to keep track of all karma and its appropriate and timely recompense. No the simplest explanation is that there is no law of karma merely consequences e.g. in the case of the killing, the person killed dies due to physical consequences and the killer may or may not leave sufficient incriminating evidence and therefore as a consequence may or may not be punished by a criminal justice system.

Summary

Though is very beneficial to contemplate the consequences of our every thought, word and deed in order to make the most positive decisions in our lives and though we know that the world is governed by actions and their consequences there is no support/explanation for a “law of karma” beyond that of the currently understood physical laws.

Day 4 - Cycle

philosophy

The BKs believe that the world goes through a social/political/religious “cycle” comprising 4 ages i.e. Satyug -Golden Age, Tretayug -Silver Age, Dwapur -Copper Age and Kaliyug -Iron Age each lasting 1250 years. As such each cycle lasts 5000 years and more significantly the cycle is believed to repeat identically each time in much the same way as a film can be repeatedly screened. In addition, the BKs believe that a soul can only take a maximum of 84 births in the duration of any one cycle.

The Golden Age is considered to be an entirely positive age in which all beings live in happiness, health and prosperity. The Silver Age is considered to be similar to the Golden Age though slightly less so in quality as negativity starts to creep into affairs. The Copper Age represents a period when negativity reaches a level when suffering is experienced and people start turning to religion for solace. Finally the Iron Age represents a time when appreciable negativity and suffering is experienced in all forms of life. In addition to these five ages, at the end of the Iron Age there is a short age called Sangumyug – Confluence Age lasting only approximately 100 years. It is in this age that God-Shiva is said to incarnate to teach souls the knowledge of God (himself), the Soul, Karma, the Cycle, and the Tree and hence facilitate the re-creation of the Golden Age. As such for most souls this will be their last birth before the ensuing Golden Age.

Positive Aspects

Perhaps the only positive aspect is that though it may not be possible to bring about a new Golden Age it is well worth striving to bring about at least a better world for all mankind.

Interesting Aspects

It is interesting to note that recorded Indian history does not stretch back much more than 2500 years. This fact coupled with the Hindu belief in deities such as Krishna, Rama, Sita, Laxshmi, Narayan, etc probably gave rise to the idea of the Golden and Silver Ages i.e. that there were “heavenly” periods in the world’s history.

As we see for ourselves, a lot of nature and affairs of the world are cyclical in nature e.g. the seasons, stock markets, etc. However it is a bold claim to say that the entire geography and history of the world is cyclical let alone identically cyclical!

Perhaps everyone would like to wish that a “Golden Age” world could be created. The thought of a Golden Age appeals to our romantic nature and in itself is a harmless and positive thought.

Negative Aspects

There is no explanation by the BKs of

- a) What is the mechanism by which the world “degrades” through the passing of the cycle? Though the immediate answer would be that it is due to sin i.e. the performing of negative actions, this cannot be the reason for the degradation of the Golden Age into the Silver as the Golden age is defined as an age entirely free of negativity.
- b) How was it that, according to various historical timelines e.g. Assyrian/Egyptian/Greek, wars and hence considerable suffering was actually experienced in times corresponding to the Golden and Silver Ages i.e. in contradiction to the definition of these ages?
- c) What is the mechanism by which the nature of this world, which has always been “red in tooth and claw” can be changed to an entirely peaceful one in the Golden Age?
- d) What is the mechanism by which the cycle can repeat identically every 5000 years even down to the smallest aspect?

Summary

The cycle would appear a wonderful model for the history of the world, giving great hope for wonderful times ahead even though things would inevitably deteriorate. However, there is absolutely no physical evidence of the cycle ever occurring and not even any explanation of how it can possibly occur. As such the cycle with its golden and silver ages can only be considered an alluring romantic vision.

Day 5 - Tree

philosophy

The Tree represents the religious/spiritual history of the world. At the roots are the BKs and God-Shiva representing the source and basis of spirituality. The trunk of the tree represents "The Eternal Deity Religion" i.e. the spiritual state in the Golden and Silver Ages, the times in which divine beings/deities lived. The branches then represent the spiritual state of the Copper Age and early to middle Iron Ages in which the main religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam came into being and finally the twigs represent all the sects and other isms derived from the main religions. At the very top of the tree are the BKs a "twig" of Hinduism, that in connection with the BKs at the roots represent the cyclic nature of spirituality/religion as per The Cycle.

Positive Aspects

The branches and twigs of the tree offer a good simple depiction of how the various religions have developed, but only from the time of Abraham.

Interesting Aspects

By taking on the mantle of the roots/foundation of the spiritual history of the world, the BKs have actually put themselves in an extremely responsible position. Indeed the BKs are often referred to, by Shiva, as the spiritual ancestors and spiritual law makers.

Negative Aspects

As with the Cycle there simply isn't any physical evidence or record of any spirituality advanced systems/cultures prior to the development of the main religions i.e. no evidence of any "Eternal Deity Religion"

As is plainly depicted in the model of the Tree, spirituality is shown to be steadily declining over the period of the Cycle, however, the BKs offer no explanation of why this should be so.

Summary

As with the philosophy of the soul etc, the Tree offers a delightfully simple model of spiritual development. However beyond the correct symbolic depiction of the development of the main religions there are no grounds whatsoever to claim that the main religions were preceded by a culture with a superior spirituality.

Day 6 - Brahma Baba

It is said that in 1937 at the age of 60 Dada Lekhraj (1877-1969) a jeweller living in Hyderabad, received the first communications from God-Shiva. These were primarily in the form of visions of a forthcoming Golden Age and the suffering that souls would have to go through as the world is transformed/purified and karmic accounts settled at the end of the Iron Age. To bring about the Golden, Shiva gave Dada Lekhraj the spiritual task of enlightening the souls of the world as regards the spiritual knowledge of God, Soul, Karma and Reincarnation, Cycle and Tree so that all souls could be given the opportunity to liberate themselves from sin and hence experience the Golden Age. From 1937 to 1969 Dada Lekhraj, who in time was referred to as Brahma Baba became the main medium through which God-Shiva revealed spiritual knowledge in the form of discourses called murlis. Though in the privileged position of being God-Shiva's medium, Brahma Baba was never considered a Guru i.e. teacher, instead

he was simply considered an instrument of Shiva and the foremost student of the spiritual knowledge. As such he founded the present day movement called the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University. In 1969 at the age of ninety three Brahma Baba is said to have reached his “angelic stage” and to have ascended to the “subtle/angelic” regions to continue the service of world transformation from a higher more unlimited plane.

Positive Aspects

Despite the negative critique of the Shiva/BK philosophy, there are some purely positive aspects of the philosophy which if practised will bring benefit to people's lives. In this respect Brahma Baba, who apparently became the “living embodiment” of the philosophy, inspired many others to follow a more spiritual path in life.

Interesting Aspects

Curiously the founding of the BK movement was not actually based on the spiritual knowledge but on visions and trance experiences, as a great number of the early students received visions of Brahma Baba as Krishna and experienced the “Golden Age” in trance states. As such in the early days of the movement it was these experiences that founded a belief in the teachings. Indeed it was only the discourses of Shiva from 1963 onwards that have formally been disseminated as the “scripture” of the movement. All records of the spiritual knowledge prior to 1963 have either been destroyed or are off limits to all but the senior members of the organisation. The reason given is that the teachings prior to 1963 are not sufficiently coherent in structure/content. However, it seems very strange that 26 years of Shiva's teachings should be considered of no value to current students. After Brahma Baba died in 1969, a new medium was chosen for Shiva and Brahma Baba, collectively referred to as BapDada (Father and Grandfather) in that it is taught that both Shiva and Brahma now come together to impart the spiritual knowledge. Curiously the new medium was not appointed by Shiva but selected, after trials with other mediums, as the medium least likely to interfere with the channelling process. After 1969 it was thought that the BK movement would soon disintegrate due to the loss of the founder Brahma. However from 1969 the nature of the spiritual discourses changed considerably in tone and content and actually provided a considerable source of strength enabling the movement to continue and actually grow. Why the discourses changed so abruptly in nature, considering the source was still the same, is a mystery. To this day BapDada still comes, though typically now only about seven times a year through the medium of Dadi Gulzar at the movement's head-quarters in Mount Abu, Rajasthan, India.

Negative Aspects

Surprisingly the discourses are not actually the sole teachings of Shiva. In fact Brahma Baba was actually allowed by Shiva to add his own comments and in the discourses between 1963 and 1969 one can readily believe that it was actually two different souls that were speaking. Why should this be the case? The BKs readily admit and believe that Shiva used the “worldly experiences” of Brahma Baba as the basis to communicate more effectively during the discourses. However, this reliance on Brahma Baba simply does not tally with the title given to Shiva as the “Ocean of Knowledge”. Indeed it is also readily admitted that BapDada is restricted in worldly ability to the ability of the medium e.g. BapDada can only communicate fluently through the language of Hindi and requires translation if questions are put to him in other languages. Another curious aspect is that the discourses take the form of a monologue often lasting several hours and there is no opportunity for students to ask questions of BapDada. Instead students are only encouraged to pose questions about the teachings to the seniors teachers who unfortunately don't themselves know the answers to simple and yet profound questions e.g. “How does the Law of Karma actually work?” or “What is the soul actually comprised of?” Strangely, even these innocuous questions have not been answered by BapDada. As such even though Shiva claims that the movement is based on true spiritual teachings and not blind faith, this claim is grossly absurd as so many spiritual questions have been left unanswered leaving the movement primarily based on the blind faith that Shiva through Brahma has actually spoken the truth.

Summary

Due to the very patchy quality of the discourses up to 1969 and the unsubstantiated claims of the teachings e.g. the definition of Shiva, Law of Karma, the Cycle, The Tree etc, a more rational explanation for the phenomenon of Shiva and the teachings is that there is no being called God-Shiva and thus the so called teachings of Shiva are simply the inspired thoughts of Dada Lekhraj who thought that God had incarnated in him. However, this explanation will not appeal to those BKs who have experienced visions/trance states or have simply experienced greater spirituality by following the

teachings.

Day 7 - BK Lifestyle

philosophy

The BK lifestyle has four main aspects Gyan – Study of the Spiritual Knowledge, Seva – Spiritual Service, Yoga – Meditation on Shiva and Dharna – Righteous Conduct.

Gyan

As recognition of the importance of the study of the spiritual knowledge imparted by Shiva, BKs meet everyday at a local centre, normally around 6am, to meditate and then listen to an excerpt of the knowledge. This “spiritual breakfast” is considered good preparation for the challenges of the day ahead. If there is time in the day BKs are also encouraged to study the knowledge for the purposes of self-development.

Seva

The BKs believe that the spiritual service of the self, family, friends and public is the best way of bringing benefit to oneself and also the best way of accumulating the good karma necessary to guarantee a happy, healthy and prosperous life. As such as well as the spiritual service of the self through study and meditation, BKs are encouraged to provide various courses to the public and also aid the organisation. As a result the BKs have grown from a founding group of 300 to a worldwide organisation comprising approx 400,000 members. The main course offered is the “7 Day Course” in which the seven main aspects of the BK philosophy are outlined in seven sessions i.e. Soul, God, Karma, Cycle, Tree, Brahma Baba and Lifestyle. However, as the 7 Day Course is typically too extreme for most people not familiar with eastern belief systems, other more readily acceptable courses are offered on subjects such as Meditation, Positive Thinking, Stress Management, and Self Esteem. Other activities organised at a local level including lectures, exhibitions and festival programmes. As the BKs form a global organisation they have also taken part in worldwide projects such as the Million Minutes of Peace Appeal and Global Co-operation for a Better World. At present they are promoting a project called “Living Values in Education”.

Yoga

BKs are encouraged to spend as much time as possible in mediation for the purposes of reducing any negative karmic burden and to also benefit from the contemplation of the virtues Shiva.

Dharna

The BK philosophy encompasses non-violence and as such the BKs follow a vegetarian diet. However, they go a step further than most vegetarians in that they also abstain from eating eggs (not considered a foodstuff) and onions and garlic (due to their odour), however, they do eat dairy products. As the BKs believe that this is the last birth before the Golden Age it is considered that a great deal of spiritual and positive karmic development needs to be done in preparation. As such in order to concentrate on spiritual study, service and meditation, BKs believe that there is no purpose in dedicating themselves to relationships or family. As such the BK philosophy advocates a single and a celibate life as a means of maintaining the best spiritual focus and avoiding the commitments/complexities associated with relationships/families. However, those BKs who are already in relationships or have families are encouraged to honour their respective commitments.

With respect to the theme of spiritual focus, BKs also abstain from alcohol and hence do not expose themselves to any of its potentially negative effects.

Positive Aspects

The only totally positive aspect of the BK Lifestyle is the contemplation of the value of virtues, all the other aspects, though seemingly positive, are based on ill-founded beliefs.

Interesting Aspects

As with any other organisation the BKs bring together a great number of like- minded people. As such being a member of BKs can be a socially very enjoyable experience.

Unlike Christian, Buddhist and Hindu religions in which a life of meditation/prayer, spiritual study and

service of humanity is only considered for nuns/monks/priests, all BKs are encouraged to follow such a lifestyle. As a reflection of this all practising BKs are referred to as Sisters or Brothers even though most have not actually taken any vows.

Negative Aspects

A fact of life is that some of life's opportunities only present themselves at certain times in one's life. In the case of the BKs, they believe that this is the only time in the Cycle in which God Shiva comes and that time is best dedicated to the task of preparing oneself spiritually for the Golden Age and hence the rest of the Cycle. In deference to this aim most BKs relinquish personal relationships, starting a family, career development, personal wealth creation, further education, holidays, health care, general socialising, etc. That is they relinquish most of the opportunities afforded to everyone at some time in their lives. Therefore, with reference to the above critique of the BK philosophy, BKs give up most of life's opportunities for "pie in the sky". Though the loss of such opportunities would be small for older BKs i.e. those you have already had careers, relationships, families, etc the losses can be very considerable for younger BKs.

In addition the very high ideals of the philosophy though supposedly attainable are simply unattainable and so the inevitable lack of progress towards these ideals often leads to depression and loss of self-esteem.

Executive Summary

The 7 Day Course is a concise discourse covering the entire philosophy of the BKs. As such it deals with topics such as The Nature of the Soul, God, Meditation, Karma, Reincarnation, the Spiritual History and Future of the world, Brahma Baba the Medium of God and BK Lifestyle. The main purpose of the philosophy is to provide a means by which a "Golden Age" i.e. a purely positive age can be brought about.

As with many other New Age Movements though the philosophy is superficially positive in intent, it is profoundly flawed and if followed for any significant length of time can be socially and financially detrimental to the individual. Unfortunately the philosophy is quite complex and so not easy to immediately refute and as such can draw in the open minded or non-critically minded individual for undue amounts of time. The philosophy is also very appealing to romantics, to those seeking spiritual enlightenment and to those seeking a refuge from the harsh realities of life i.e. to gullible people and to varying degrees vulnerable people.

Links

www.xbkchat.com - Forum primarily for xbk's

www.wikipedia.org - People's Encyclopedia with an entry on the BKWSU

www.skeptdic.com - Skeptic Dictionary

www.skeptic.com - Skeptic Magazine

www.brahmakumaris.info - Independent Information Service for the BKWSU