

THE ABODE OF PEACE

RARELY has there been any place as spiritually uplifting as the abode of the Brahma Kumaris atop the Aravali Hills in Mount Abu in Rajasthan. It is the kind of place where man or woman can be virtually lost in a state of perfect bliss. For a moment, the world and its chaos are forgotten as only peace and happiness reign in the heart.

PICTURE
THE NEWS - BLITZ
APRIL 4, 1998

The 67- year institute of the Brahma Kumaris in the Aravali Hills of Mount Abu Propagates spiritualism as the only path to eternal peace and happiness, Writes
SHRIPADA P.BHAT

The spiritual aspirant and the peace seeker find this and more at the 67-year Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Is warily Vishwa Vidyalaya, the headquarters of the Brahma Kumaris. Affiliated to the United Nations, the Vidyalaya, named after its founder Dada Lekhraj or Prajapita Brahma, is the nucleus of a vast hi-tech global village whose only offering to the immortal world is peace through spiritualism. In fact, the vidyalaya celebrated its Diamond Jubilee at the August Kranti Maidan in Mumbai on March 22,1996.

The abode of the Brahma Kumaris is one of the world's largest international spiritual, social and secular networks with more than 6,5000 study centers and sun-centers in over 85 countries. Founded in Hyderabad(Sind),in modern-day Pakistan, in 1936_37, the institution shifted to Mount Abu in 1950. Though a 60-year- old man founded the institution, it is today managed entirely by women (the Brahma Kumaris) in the service of God. But Dr. Dadi Prakash-mani, head of the Brahma Kumaris, refuses to take credit for the success of the spiritual edifice: " I am just an instru- ment, everything is done with the blessings of the Almighty." She says.

A typical day of the Brahma Kumaris and other inmates begins at 3-4 am when they sit for intense meditation for one hour followed by spiritual service and self- study classes.

Interestingly, except for the HQ, none of the dozen-odd complexes are named after the founded. Three of this unique complexes-Sativa, Madhuban and Guan Sarovar- have much in common. They have assembly halls with facilities to interpret in 16languages (mostly foreign), mass meditation halls, and private rooms for intense meditation. A public address system periodically blares out announcements, lectures, programme details.etc. Every empty space is covered with gardens, flower plants, trees, lush lawns and concrete pathways. Slogans advocating the values and virtues adorn the walls. Hundreds of volunteers help out vegetables and cook satvic food in large modern kitchens. The dining halls accommodate thousands of people at one time. Eco-friendly solar and wind energy is widely used to cook or supply hot water. An underground tank supplies seven lakh liters of water and another overhead tank five lakh liters.

Some of the other facilities include well-organised in house transportation (via fleets of cars, buses and jeeps), ticket booking offices, clinics (with every branch of medicine). Communication centers, circuit TVs, multimedia, e-mail and the Internet, departments of

photography, audio, video and art, laundries and a library. The institution also produces its own spiritual literature.

Sativa or the Forest of Peace is located on a sprawling 60-acre land at the foothills of Mount Abu, a mere 10-minute walk from Abu Road Station. Its peculiarity is the 34-door Diamond Hall (built in 12 months), which accommodates over 20,000 people. Residential buildings house half that number. Meditation takes place in a lotus-shaped room called tapasya dham.

Madhuban or the Forest of Honey is the HQ of the institution. Here, a hut made out of bamboos (where founder Dada Lakhraj lived till his last) is worth a visit. The main attraction is the 3000-seat capacity, pillar less hall. Universal Peace Hall, where a donation box asks devotees to get rid of vices like beedis and cigarette smoking, instead of money. People actually drop chits in the box pledging to quit bad habits. The Hall also hosts national and global conferences.

Gyansarovar or the Lake of Knowledge is a spiritual cum-international training cum-conference house. It contains the Academy for a Better World from where the Rajyoga Education and Research Foundation functions. The main auditorium, Universal Harmony Hall, accommodates 1,800 delegates and another 200 in the gallery; there are 13 seminar halls and a Spiritual Application Research Centre. A spiritual art gallery takes one through a historic journey of the four yugas with a final message of "establishing a new Golden Era (Deity World) in the near future".

Interestingly, Gyan Sarovar was virtually put together by nearly six lakh members from ordinary workers to doctors and engineers—who dropped rupee each daily in donation boxes kept at the service centers. Says Dr. Dadi Prakashmani, "The members contributed through their mind, body and wealth so that the academy came up in the shortest possible time". Others donated money and material.

This Gyan Sarovar academy also hosts seminars, conferences and workshops, the most recent being a multi-professional meet early February. A series of such activities have been scheduled from April to June. It may well be called the "Nalanda of the 21st Century."

Some of the other important features of the institution are the **Peace Peak**, where visitors are introduced to the innate beauty of the soul through a short Raja yoga video clipping followed by practical mediation, culminating with a picnic; a multi-purpose global hospital which treats the rural populace free of cost; and, meditation through laser show where, Brahma Kumaris claim, light is thrown on the self (soul) and the supreme soul.

"The actual foundation of this abode of peace is the 14 year intense meditation and rigorous spiritual study, followed by self transformation, by its 300 founding members, who followed the highest levels of purity, sacrifice, service and other guiding spiritual principles," Dadi Manohar Indra says of the institution.