

Shift II Meeting June 2-6 2017, Schauen, Germany

The Shift 2 meeting took part in June 2017. It was designed as a Think Tank, to stimulate open sharing of ideas, reflecting visions of newness and change. What we share here and offer for an exchange are our personal views and experiences.

Shift I (2016) meeting in Peter's house in Bad Harzburg left a positive impact for us, so we organised it again. The intention was to create a warm atmosphere of openness, trust and friendship, being together in a beautiful surrounding and talk about the topics from the Survey (2014) and to see which ones we find still important, that connect to our spiritual life. As a group of 11 we enjoyed being together. We had some great walks in nature together, delicious vegan food, times of silence and Qi-Gong in the garden, music and inspiring sharings every day. As we looked back to the Survey and the Shift I report, we felt that some changes, a kind of Shift, has already happened. Between 2013 and 2016 some of the key queries have been about the Centres:

Why are the Centers largely empty? Why are senior BKs not happy and why are there so few new and/or young people coming? What is the future of BK organisation? These questions were also partly answered by the pioneering Yagya Community Survey 2013-2015, which we discussed last year. This year we started with a fresh outlook and shared what we are experiencing now.

It is visible that most BKs don't feel the need any more to go to a center to study every morning. They prefer to use technology to listen to the Murli by phone or Skype, or read it at home whenever they feel it is appropriate instead of rushing in the morning before work through the town and back. Many are also not so young any more or have worldly responsibilities and some also have health issues. The habit of pushing oneself to prove ones depth of surrender is now over for many.

- 1) BKs often feel that it would be good for the Centers to be renewed.
- 2) Culturally Indian and hierachically organised, centres are often strict, and not really a place of family-feeling, where one feels supported and a sense of belonging. It was felt that the style of an Inner Space seems to fit much better into our western culture and lifestyle. The threshold for people to just come in is less high: they don't have to adopt a hindu millenarian worldview encased in Indian culture. They can come, listen to the universal fundamentals of gyan, learn to meditate, take a course, book a workshop, look at books and CDs and find someone to talk to if they wish. For those who are interested in spirituality – todays world is like a spiritual supermakret. In this context we will have more to offer others if we loosen our boundaries and expectations.

3) BKs have the desire and need to meet with other BK friends, have a space to exchange experiences, clarify questions, enjoy the company of others and have the real feeling of a community. BKs reported that these needs were largely unmet by the existing Centers and only partially met by coming to a Center on Sundays, when there is no work and people have time to relax, have breakfast together and talk. It is important for BKs to relax, enjoy friendship and recharge their batteries. Many felt that they were only welcome if there was work to do and help needed. Talking to others was not supported very much by Center Residents and very often labeled as a waste of time. As a consequence they started to meet outside of Centers.

4) Retreats and weekends are looked at as a very good way to engage in community, spiritual refreshment and also as a time to go deep within. Exchange among peers from the same cultural background was considered more helpful than having classes from teachers with Indian cultural backgrounds. It was felt that those from Indian cultural backgrounds often don't have access to everyday life as we live it, and so therefore do not understand the challenges we encounter.

Reflections

How do we feel? What has changed? What are our themes?

Since acquiring the **Retreat Place in Moringen**, something has changed in Germany. It seems to be a place which can fulfill many needs: meeting peers, working together in the house and on projects, community, retreats, Silence weekends, a space for deep spiritual experiences, the feeling of coming home and meeting the family and the opportunity to organise retreats and weekend workshops. Many have come here to help in the garden or in the house. A vision has started to become a reality. What is still left is the wish of planning together on eye-level. And also the vision of living together as a community, sharing resources and supporting each other. We know that BKs in France and Portugal are trialling this.

We also observed that many of the old Indian style Centers in Germany, France, Australia and other countries are closing now. This is not seen as negative but rather as common sense, as they were not effective any more. Circumstances have changed, so the regional community cannot pay the costs any more, not many students are coming, and there is not that much support from contacts. In some towns they rented new spaces, where nobody resides, and which are used to organise meetings, classes, workshops, and meditations according to the need of the time. Many BKs have started to organize as teams with not so much hierarchy- this seems to fit better to the western way of communicating. There is also a kind of tendency to reduce to the essence and concentrating on what is really needed, like renting a space outside for evening or weekend programmes when needed. Also wearing white clothes as a demonstration of BK

identity has become less. We see that as very important, as in many cases the public see it as sectarian behaviour, if a group of people are seen in only white clothes all the time. This should also be taken seriously for new places like Moringen.

We also agreed that the pilot themes generated in the Survey, which was taken up in small groups within the broader BK family and subsequently discussed in Shift 1, are still broadly relevant to the family. BKs are talking about all these themes more openly and also officially now. It has entered the management structure which is very positive. It is becoming more broadly accepted that a spiritual maturing is needed to adapt to being a BK in the west.

Starting with a dream

As we sat down for our first conversation, Veeke told us a dream she had the same night. We opened our talks with this image. Dreams can be quite revealing. Veeke shared: *“Just before I woke up, I had a dream about a young girl. She was very skinny and did not get any attention. Her name was Eva and she suffered from anorexia. She looked at me, the feeling was that she had not been properly nourished. I really felt deeply impacted and a bit sad by that dreampicture. It felt significant.”*

We used Veeke’s dreampicture as a spring board for our meeting. It was interesting to hear how the brothers in particular were deeply impacted by the dream and felt a resonance with the undernourished feminine energy in their BK lives. From this we went deeper to discuss the **female principle in the BKs** which we collectively, but through our own individual experiences, felt **was undernourished**. Creativity, openness, spontaneity, affection, emotion, friendship and intimacy were not encouraged, and were often considered tangential to the very masculine attitude of working a lot, not sleeping, “feelings are failure” “just be obedient” “don’t ask questions” “bow, die, learn” “past is past” , “never be tired” approach, which can be misunderstood by students and mis-used as a teacher. We BKs are – like all humans - longing for warmth, understanding, resonance, emotional feedback, and a sense of belonging and safety. The yagya teachings give us this. But the cultural overlay on the teachings, and the hierarchical approach with which those teachings are disseminated, does not serve the deeper Gyan, we feel. Although it is an organisation which puts women in front, the organisation is energetically and structurally very masculine now. Feelings are widely neglected and suppressed, creative methods to open conversations are appropriated and the original creators marginalised, and so-called negative feelings and/ or experiences are not really talked about. Also the body and everything connected to the needs of the body and human life, like relationships and caring for ourselves and others are not well considered.

For a long time, we have generally – in the Brahma Kumaris – looked upon emotional and physical needs as issues to overcome. To be an ideal BK, one had to be strong, conquer sleep, eat less, always be ready for service, do whatever was asked of you, and never speak out, all to improve one's own fortune. (These are actually classical ascetic Sadhu as well as Monk Ideals!).

The organizational reach somehow became more about the power of expansion, rather than filling souls with peace. We conquered more and more countries in a missionary attempt to spread the message. Personal issues and relationships are often secondary and sometimes seen as signs of weakness. Friendship, closeness, play, spontaneity, and silence are undernourished. As are the space and time to develop, to share, to feel, to grow. These are the undernourished aspects within us. Classes are given which we no longer connect to, because our everyday reality looks different. Also we are tired of just listening. We have little interest in big service projects, prestigious objects and encounters with VIPs. In everyday life, we feel very often left alone with our worldly issues. Old BKs who gave all their money in service and did not save for their future, now have financial problems, and the question of what to do as they age – some have neither children nor money. Destruction was always just around the corner. The teaching was not to plan for the future but to “use everything in a worthwhile way,” which often translated as give towards organizational expansion. Many BKs are also sick from not taking care of their body and health, being immobile and consuming a diet high in refined sugar and wheat, and dairy (animal products).

In the past, there were a lot of misunderstandings about what being “body-conscious” meant. In an effort to be soul conscious we were often encouraged to neglect bodily care in a deep-hearted wish to not be body conscious, and these are the results now.

Returning to the Dream Picture of Eva, the anorexic young woman, after these discussions, we revisited the Dream Picture and felt it was showing us this:

There is, collectively and in the BK community a spiritually undernourished state of yearning for fulfillment, for being seen, being understood and being accepted. It was taught that once we did the seven days course, and surrendered our body, mind and wealth, that there would automatically be a state of divine realisation. We were not encouraged to address topics that are born out of being souls living human lives and develop maturity. Therefore, what we experienced was not fulfilling us but rather strengthening the feeling of “not being good enough”, and not being okay the way we were. “Make effort to become worthy” and “transform yourself” were the teachings. We felt deprived and undernourished in relation to friendships, feelings, connectedness with the world, and other people. We all pretended to be “holy”, but inside we felt different.

Now Madhubhan also has become crowded and loud. For many the sacred feeling of that place is in the past. People text in Baba's room and take phone calls in Baba's meeting. The places where we received nourishment – through the Dadi's and the sacred appeal of Madhuban and Baba's meeting – are no longer there. Even our spiritual home has changed. For some it has the feeling of nostalgia and history, but with a fondness of the past not the present. Nowadays, we go there mostly to meet friends. Rather than being squeezed into a big hall with 20,000 people, we prefer to watch Baba's meeting on the screen sitting comfortably at home.

Meetings like this one in Schauen are a rare opportunity for real and open exchange. It is possible to speak in a circle freely about what really matters to us and what is moving us inside. Nothing is forbidden. And there are truly no expectations, and deep trust amongst everyone. And, therefore, it is nourishing.

The main topics around which our talks were crystallizing:

- How do we see the Brahma Kumaris (institution)? Where do we fit within this?
- What is the aim of service if not to proselytise?
- What does it really mean today to be spiritual?
- What can we learn about the present by understanding the past (the real Yagya history)?
- How does our spirituality apply to everyday life in the west?
- What vision do we have of being a BK in the west?
- How do we deal with hierarchy, leadership in a deeply liberal and democratic country?

Image, identity and service

By looking inwardly, and exploring how we feel in connection with the BK institution we found out that: We love meditation, silence, Raja Yoga, Baba, the Yagya and our spiritual family.

We also feel ashamed and cannot really stand behind some organisational things that do not fit well within western cultures, and are widely considered negative. At the foundation of this is:

A very hierarchical system which prioritises service positions over trusting relationships and tasks over inner development and care. People have suffered a lot in the past because of this. A position within BK now is seen as connected to a future status in Golden Age in the next birth and therefore causes a lot of competition and jostling for power. The next life seems to be more important than this life. We feel that there is a misunderstanding and Baba did not mean it that way. He talks about becoming number one. It means for us that everyone has to become his own number one, not in comparison to others. Also the way in which people are being used in service, and some missionizing approaches to get big names as a "Mike" for the organisation is sth. we feel uncomfortable with. We understand this is a focus of service in India. However, the

thinking behind this approach is considered (in the west) as an exploitation of name, money, fame and is- in fact - very materialistic. We can call it “spiritual materialism”. We cannot stand behind it. For many of us, it is completely against our cultural, ethical and spiritual understanding.

Because of this feeling that something is not right, we find that we tend to hide the name Brahma Kumaris. Even the name we feel is quite strange, uniquely Indian and not a good or helpful name to use in the west. It creates too many questions and has no good references on the internet - and this will not change. There are now many associations with people in white and the image of being an Indian Hinduistic cult. If we are honest, we only use the name of Raja Yoga or Om Mandali but not “Brahma Kumaris”. Nobody wants to be officially connected with that name. These are reasons why we are ashamed of being a BK and are not showing our connection openly. It causes a blockage in service. We want to promote spirituality and Raja Yoga but not the organisation. Inside, we love the Yagya, the history, our experiences and the people, but outside we cannot be proud of this organisation because of all this.

Service without proselytising?

We have so much love for the origin of Om Mandali but not for what the institution has become now: **a big business**, serving a mission that does not seem so connected to its internal origins any more. We respect the people who are in the hierarchy, and how it works in India. The hierarchy is built on the extended family system of love. However, our Western worlds are different, we live in postmodern, liberal and democratic cultures in where administrative hierarchies of power such as BK are increasingly under suspicion.

What is spirituality?

To be spiritual does not mean to become a BK and to be a BK does not mean to be spiritual. We know that only a very small minority of souls belong to BK as their spiritual origin. However, we share **the truth of being souls in a human life** with the entire world. Our original nature of peace, purity, happiness and power is a commonality we share with everyone. Spirituality is universal and beyond the ego. It is basically the path of returning to ones original nature, Sanathan Dharma. It is not a consciousness of being the “chosen” ones. The subtle ego is infused within the organisational structure. It results very often in an attitude of arrogance versus an attitude of love and compassion with all other living beings on this planet, seeing oneself and all others as part this great Drama. Everyone has a special role to play, no one is worth less or more than any other. We wish to relate to each other as peers, and to work in teams, to inspire each other, share and offer our ideas, knowledge and wisdom. We see ourselves as beings in the process of becoming and developing. We can learn from others – we are interconnected and we work together for the transformation of the world. There are many who are busy in this task – not only BKs. We feel that truth can only be explored by ones own experiences, not by speaking

about it and pointing it out to others. We all need meditation to touch and access the underlying undivided reality hidden in deep silence. Then we can become active to manifest what we have experienced as truth.

"You will bring the beautiful world".

- Avyakt Bapdada 1987

Learning from the Yagya history

We imagine that In the times of Om Mandali there was a lot of enthusiasm on the basis of shared inner experiences. There were many years of visions and much of the knowledge was gained through visions. Baba spoke at length and learned from those who had the gift of going into trance. Bit by bit Gyan was built up. It was not ready-made, neither was it all clear in a moment, but rather it took years during which the understanding changed a lot. There are photos of Brahma with young girls all around him which had such a spirit of innocence and magic in the beginning. When we recall all that we know about those days through the stories we have heard, and the pictures we have seen, we can feel that magic. But unfortunately these pictures are rare, and the real stories are not told any more. There is a tendency to only narrate one version of the story as the "true story" which dismisses a lot of our history. It seems that maybe there is fear among leaders that the full story will destroy the reputation of the organization as a serious, respectable organisation. That it will challenge its impeccability. The beginning was characterized by great courage. It was filled with life and magic. Now perhaps the organization is impeccable but it also untouchable, delicate. Something is different now. We experience a tiredness and a lacklustre today, coupled with denial that things have changed. Most of our Dadi's have gone, Baba's meetings are strange and confusing, but it is never discussed. Those who are responsible pretend that nothing has changed, when it is clear that so much has changed. We all know how it was: It was very different than today. There was the spirit of a living, vivid and powerful community, vibrating with joy, laughter, shared deep experiences and feelings. It seems later to have become more dogmatic and religious in attitude. So many forces influenced our transitional days (from Om Mandali to our organisation). In the early days of gyan there were powerful influences of the Muslims (in Pakistan), the Sikh community (in India), the British notions of Christian virtue, and even the Freemasons. The earliest days were born during a time and place where there were no rights for women, a very narrow view of moral conduct, a caste system and very limited individual freedom. After the early tumult, what others were saying about the Brahma Kumaris and how the organisation was seen by society as very important. Brahma Baba was not the only Indian guru who was accused of hypnotising others - mainly girls. But this early concern we feel led to a kind of strict organizational protection at all costs. Over the times Spirituality has been confused with following rules.

Spirituality in the west

In western cultures we have gone through several revolutions. Both of these have brought personal freedoms, equal rights for all regardless of age, caste, background, gender, nationality and – increasingly - species. We can be proud of such achievements and of course we do not want to reverse those. Western European and nations of the global north have developed very differently to Eastern societies and the global south. They are not better. They are not worse. They are different, and this difference really has to be understood:

In the West our cultures are based more on the individual, and an understanding that identity grows authentically and internally and is not so much imposed by outside in relation to the group.

To have real value and impact in the West, any spiritual teaching can only be an offering on voluntary basis. People are searching for authentic experience, truth, inner freedom, wisdom, compassion and community. The spirit of the Brahma Kumaris is today very often connected with hierarchy, strictness, dogmatism, having answers to everything, never saying “I don’t know”, the attitude of exclusivity (we are the chosen ones), wanting to impose “the truth” and forcing people to accept a lifestyle which is not only contra their own culture but also a backlash towards the achievements of enlightenment: personal freedom, individual choice, the right to follow one's own way which can differ from others and from any general accepted truth.

We live in a societies of multiple identities and multiple challenges in our professional and private lives. Society is not as homogenous as in many Eastern countries. If we want to add something of value and benefit to the Western societies in which we live, we first have to accept that fact. Although we all remember them fondly, during our Shift II no-one suggested that we return to the “good old times” and nobody wants to live BK lives as we did in the past (which often involved adopting a completely different culture in all its elements). We do not see Indian culture as better or superior, although it is often put forward that way within the Brahma Kumaris. The East has much to offer from its ancient past. The West has achieved a lot within the last 200 years. Neither is better. If both come together in our yagya, then something new can grow. **Brahma Baba's vision was not to create a worldwide Indian culture but a very new society based on universal spiritual principles: transreligious, transcultural and transnational.**

*We conclude that we need a new vision for being a Raj Yogi in the west.
There are no role models so far - except those we create ourselves. We are
the ones we have been waiting for.*

What are spiritual principles?

We agree that it is probably **not a life driven by the Maryadas**. Maryadas have been considered as God-given fixed principals, although they are meant as helpful guidelines for the path. The systems and customs we have, including the maryadas, were created primarily by Mama, partly to ensure they garnered the respect of local spiritual communities in their new home of Hindu India. The small group adopted elements from Indian (wearing Saris) Hindu (offering bhog), Muslim (traffic control), Sikh (amrit vela) and Christian (notions of vice and virtue) communities. Of course, many of these also come from the Vedas and are common sense and good for a healthy lifestyle. We recognize that many of them like Brahmacharya, no substances addiction, and lacto-vegetarian (increasingly vegan) diet, are widely accepted and are rules in many spiritual communities. But they are suggestions, and cannot be imposed on people as a lifestyle. During retreats and seminars of course it is selfunderstood that participants follow them as rules during that period of time. However, anything outside of this context must remain subject of free choice of the individual. If one feels the benefit of them, naturally one will adopt them. However, a “must follow” approach is creating resistance and negative feelings. It is connected to established Guru-Systems and religion, People are not attracted to it. A lot of abuse has happened and is happening within authoritarian groups. This becomes more and more open and visible in the media now. We also have all seen the effects of this “religious” approach, and how people who love the teachings, the connection with God and the meditation have separated themselves from it.

We also feel we are individuals on a spiritual path, which unfolds naturally in our professional and personal lives. It is not something we have to demonstrate by wearing special “spiritual” clothes, using a special vocabulary, getting up at a certain time, behaving in an so called “angelic” way (but was is often artificial, not authentic and just performed for approval).

Regarding restraint according to the deeper principles of purity, it is important to understand what restraint really means, because it lies at the very heart of our spiritual practices. We must be careful not to confuse restraint with repression or avoidance. Restraint of mind does not mean pushing something away and denying its presence. It does not mean being judgmental or having an aversion toward certain aspects of our experience. When we suppress or avoid certain aspects of ourselves, the ignorance of not acknowledging what is present creates more tension and pain in the mind. With restraint, we are open to everything that arises, but we see it with discriminating wisdom, without becoming lost or forgetful. Everyone has his/her own way which is different, individual and unique, but we have an authentic longing for living in truth,

peace and joy, being authentic in common. Also a shared interest in finding answers to the global crisis of our time and not just be passive observers of a coming destruction, is something which connects us, which we are all responsible for.

BKs in the West - Putting spirituality into daily life

VISIONS OF MEMBERS OF THE SHIFT MEETING

In Schauen we have cultivated the magic of just meeting each other, being together, listening to each other and share our visions. The intention was to create a place for friends and family. For healing, clearing emotions and and the integration of all parts of the personality. The company of good spiritual friends and meetings in an open atmosphere like this is important for all of us. We saw it as a meeting of enlightened souls it is about letting go of the Ego. Some of us are promoting vegan food as a contribution of reducing animal suffering and supporting better health for everyone, to promote vegan ethics of non-violence as something absolutely aligned with Baba's core principles., envisioning the organisation becoming vegan. The world has changed drastically since Baba's time, and our understanding of non-violence and purity has deepened. With this increasing clarity, we can see the fundamental exploitation and cruelty that is required to take a calves milk. We teach being double-non-violent. We must have courage to live it. The organization will increasingly be held to account on this issue as time goes on. We can create a great impact through real nonviolence. In Global Functioning, the 2011 topics were authenticity, depth and beauty - the flames of the Yagya. But where are they? The Yagya Community Survey conducted by Patrizia and Tamasin (2013) generated such rich answers. For the first time, BKs were able to answer freely, about anything they wanted, in any way they wanted. There was no pressure to conform, or to be a "good BK" in any way. The organisation could have benefitted greatly, and used the results in a positive and constructive way. Our experiences are that the BK culture is one that does not truly acknowledge or utilise the gifts of their students and members unless it fits into a very narrow view through which the organization must be promoted and seen to be an exemplar. Newness is not really encouraged, although Baba requests it. We are further away from what Baba created, he wanted us to return to our true nature and to blossom as unique flowers - not to advertise a Brahma Kumaris institution. To get to a deeper level of silence and meditation some BKs now go to Vipassana and other communities and organizations because it is not really the focus of the BKs. We seem to be more interested in self-promotion. If the organizational structures are not supporting us, it might be necessary to search for what supports us and rebuild them. One intention is also directed to the liberation of the female aspect of society which we see as suppressed, also in BK. Even if women are in charge, the female side is not very represented. It means we are not showing our feelings and just meeting in our service role not from heart to heart. We like really deep and meaningful friendships not just simply operating on the basis of us all being in the

same organization. In small groups there can be a family feeling but not in identifying as a BK in a organisation. We no longer want to be told what we should or should not do. BK life and normal life should not be so separate and also not just superficial. Most of us find it difficult to do service in the name of “Brahma Kumaris”, as it so often creates suspicion and difficulties. We only use the name Raja Yoga not Brahma Kumaris and do not want to be on any website or list connected to the organisation as it can be harmful to professional life. We see that Mental Health is an issue also. Very often spirituality and meditation are used in a wrong way, which is rather supporting sickness and mental health problems, by bypassing challenges for inner growth. For dealing with difficult emotions we can use different tools from psychology and spirituality like “Mindful Self Compassion”. We have no answers from seniors on how we can act in the world while being “not from the world”. We have to find out ourselves, and have to have the courage and power to manifest something new. Many people have spiritual wisdom, experiences and practise today. They know what they want and turn away immediately if they find something inauthentic, dogmatic and not in harmony. We need new models for living as spiritual people in western cultures and develop a certain lifestyle connected to those values. **It is the same task now as the Yagya had when they moved from Pakistan to India.** They had to reinvent themselves and adapt to new circumstances in their Exile. This was the birth of the institution as we know it. It was a process and also involved long periods of silence, meditation, self reflection and very simple life. We miss this. **And we wonder why we haven't reinvented Raja Yoga for Western people up to now?** Om Mandli reinvented themselves continually in the beginning. But since Brahma Baba passed away, we have lost the courage to do this and have become static. We feel this is the reason the organization has lost its life energy. To re-energise ourselves, we must find out: How was everything before it became an institution? **What is the Inner Core truth of Raja Yoga practise? Where is that spark?** How can we reconnect with it and express it in our very life now?

Reinventing organisation

The trend for tomorrow is towards flattening organisational structures, finding better and more democratic ways of working together and sharing resources in the best possible ways. Shared intuition can also be something we can use to find new ways if we don't want to follow blindly and hide behind old-fashioned rules and regulations. People want to live normal lives and have the company of other good people. We find there is really a deeper need to accept each other fully in her/ his differences. Leadership is a verb, not a noun. It is a function, not a position. It is also important to care for and support the weaker and older ones. What does the group coming together here now want to manifest? If hearts and minds come together in such resonance, a Shift is happening. Then there is a kind of Inter-Being. Being ready to let go, and making death our friend. Once we are free of these constraints, transformation of the world will follow. It is

about not being fearful if change is to happen. Everyone has his her own evolution and responsibility for herself/himself. And what can I do in addition? I should be living a healthy life, have good work life balance that incorporates my spiritual life. From there, we can consider how we may create an impact and make a difference. However, can transformation be smooth? In the West things are not prescribed. We have no Guru System that dictates (as in Hinduism): what to eat, how to sit, when to pray, at what times etc. In religions there are many rules and restrictions, as there are in the Brahma Kumaris. The way they are implemented now makes it seem that what once was the spiritual revolution of Om Mandli has become like an outdated religion today..

The West became emancipated from religion. Western cultures are very liberal in that way - we do not have to do something if we see no meaning in it. We trust in our inner wisdom, intuition as something to reconnect to, to find our personal right way. Yet we were discouraged from using our intuition, as it was labelled “manmat”.

It is interesting that the Hindu scriptures are very rigid but the attitude is nonetheless liberal and tolerant. We in the West have Sanskars of strictness from Christianity, and that is why we wanted to follow seniors and the murli very strictly and to the absolute letter. This put far too much pressure on ourselves and we now have to liberate ourselves from that tendency, because it was never meant like this. Most of the rules come from a Hindu Indian environment. BK adopted regional influences. It was quite eclectic, taking bits and pieces from here and there. Mama was very practical in this. Also Jagdish had a lot of influence on the formation of the Yagya – the seven days course, the contents of the course, and how it would be taught. He was a high school teacher, a little intellectual and he knew the Gita very well. In 1959 through discussion with Brahma Baba, it was suggested that God could be jyoti bindu (point of light), not jyoti lingam (the oval form of bhakti). Before Jagdish came, the knowledge was *Aham Braham asmi*, we all are God. In Japan the BK group at the Congress of World Religions in 1955 still talked about Trimurti God, there was no Shiva. There was Trimurti God manifesting as Vishnu (Laxmi and Narayan) in Golden Age. God was a ball of light, not a point. Trance sisters were confirming this. We know that Gyan developed over time, it was a process and not a revelation that was instantly articulated. So it is not static - but in a flow, developing further.

Essentially, we all feel connected with that Yagya seed of Om Mandli, which was a fluid, dynamic, courageous and constantly evolving sacred fire, with the energy of God at its core. This is why we meet, and this is our vision for when the organization ultimately dissolves, that everyone will see the unique band of illuminated beings we have become.

Participants: Jan and Veeke (Belgium), Tamasin (Australia), Patrizia, Uschi, Simone, Michael, Surya, Frank, Peter, Hermann (Germany).