

ISSN 0976-6634

JOURNAL OF

SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

© Kamla-Raj 2013

J Sociology Soc Anth, 4(1-2): 117-129 (2013)

DOI: 10.31901/24566764.2013/04.1-2.12

The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, South Africa: “Self Transformation is World Transformation”

Gerelene Jagganath

Department of Anthropology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

E-mail: pattundeeng@ukzn.ac.za

KEYWORDS Brahma Kumaris. Ethnography and Spirituality. New Religious Movement. Gyan. Yoga. Dharna. Seva

ABSTRACT The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU), a relatively new global spiritual movement, was founded in India by Dada Lekhraj or Brahma Baba and arose from a Hindu cultural base known as Om Mandli in the 1930s before becoming known as BKWSU in the 1960s. It emerged as a spiritual force in South Africa in the 1980s. The movement is becoming more significant in a post-apartheid South Africa, where its non-dogmatic, non-ritualistic embracing of non-cultural and non-religious beliefs appeals to a society that has had to endure generations of racial, religious and class distinction. The movement's strong focus on the spiritual empowerment of women through an understanding of the soul and its connection to God, appeals to South African women who appreciate a spiritual approach which is non-sectarian and non-doctrinaire in nature. This article traces the history and the role of the Brahma Kumaris movement and its contribution to South African society.