

'The peace of old India will return'

A sprightly 92, spiritual leader of Brahma Kumaris says getting old is not an option



SATISH BATE/HT

Dadi Janki, head of the Brahma Kumaris, is in the city to inaugurate a spiritual fair in Dadar.

Barney Henderson
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DADI JANKI is one of the world's foremost spiritual leaders. She has had *chai* with the Mahatma, put out fires (literally and metaphorically) with the Dalai Lama, shared wisdom with Mother Teresa and Nelson Mandela and lectured Tony Blair on what the Middle East needs — a little less conversation and a little more action.

At 92-years-old, Dadi still travels the world as the head of the Brahma Kumaris, promoting peace, spiritual development and pioneering 'Raja Yoga' with youthful energy. She is in Mumbai to inaugurate a spiritual fair in Dadar, taking time out to tell *Hindustan Times* of her hopes and fears for India's future.

"In today's India, the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer," says Dadi — her keen eyes and sharp observations belying her age.

"I first came to Bombay 80 years ago, when it was hugely different to the city we see today that has garbage everywhere and defaced monuments."

"Gandhi showed us how Mother India should be," Dadi explains. "The problem is that Indians don't realise that we should be working together to make a heaven in India. Instead everyone is obsessed with what the rest of the world thinks — even our gurus and spiritual leaders move

DID YOU KNOW?

- Prajapita Brahmakumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya, a spiritual institution and movement, was founded by Lekhraj Kripalani in Sindh Hyderabad (now in Pakistan) in 1937. A spiritual trust was constituted of a committee of nine young women with Om Radhe as head.

- Kripalani, known as 'Dada Lekhraj', 'Om Baba' or 'Brahma Baba' to his followers, was a diamond merchant. He retired from his business in 1932 with assets of Rs 10 lakh to turn to spirituality.

- In April 1950, after the Partition of India, the Brahma Kumaris moved to Mount Abu in India, saying that they had been instructed by God to do so.

- The Brahma Kumaris was initially founded for the upliftment of women. There are currently 8.25 lakh students and over 8,500 Raja Yoga centres in 100 countries and territories.

abroad to teach."

"The television screens are full of violence all the time and all people are concerned with is having more than their neighbour. However, I am confident the original peace of the Old India will return

in time."

She recalls meeting Tony Blair three years ago — while the former British Prime Minister was under fire at home and abroad for the invasion of Iraq — telling him that he should be more positive in his objectives.

"I told him that what mankind needs are real thoughts and real speech, not unnecessary talk," she remembers with a smile. "Any negative thoughts are just a waste, whereas if your thoughts are good, you win in the end."

On another occasion, Dadi was walking with the Dalai Lama, and they saw a fire in the valley and decided to practise what they preach.

"Everyone told us to stand aside and that the fire engine will come, but if you can't help someone when they need it, then what is left? If you feel something is right and good, do it immediately."

Dadi exudes the energy of someone half her age and is just as committed to her work, as she was when she joined Prajapita Brahma in 1937. The secret: Don't spend too long in the bathroom.

"I never think I'm getting old. If I did, I would never be able to do what I do. Throughout my whole life, I have never spent more than 20 minutes in the bath — that must be the trick to staying young at heart!"

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