

The Journey Of Mahimā Dharma Towards Inner Awakening And Healthy Life: The Path Of Knowledge, Devotion, And Social Consciousness

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Abstract

The first step on the spiritual path is consciousness. In the purified mind, the experience of Brahma unfolds like a continuous thread woven through the fabric of lived realization, as expressed in Mahimā Dharma. Various poets, saints, and sages affirm that all are originated from the same source, Brahma. The caste arises only from human ego and actions, as explained in the Bhagavad Gītā, Upaniṣads, and Biswanath Baba's scriptures. The union of Yoga, knowledge, devotion, and social conscience is observed only in Mahimā Dharma. These aspects united to form a divine path to the Param Brahma. Further, a saint has renounced unnecessary desires and remains established in the principle of Brahma. Such saints dwell in righteousness, and the Divine abides in their pure hearts. By integrating moral values, Yoga, devotion, and social-economic reform, Mahimā Dharma guides individuals toward spiritual illumination and the cooperative upliftment of humanity, liberation, communal harmony, and universal truth. Therefore, the Supreme Brahma is achieved only in a purified mind and health.

Key Word: Brahma, Devotion, Selflessness, Liberation, and Equality

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I. Introduction

The Mahimā Dharma comprises discipline and is based on idealism, socialism, self-realization, and the welfare of humans and the universe (1). Mahimā Dharma, a way of spiritual practice consists of knowledge, devotion, awaken internal energy that enables an individual to develop social consciousness for better health and life (2). Mahimā Dharma has been transformed and spread in India and abroad through various methods of Yoga *Sādhana*, Self-realization, and a caste-free society. The above principles prevented social discrimination among different categories of people and united all others. The Yoga in Mahimā Dharma emphasized the way of self-realization, physical restlessness, and developing a free space for the Supreme Brahma (3). This Yoga facilitates the followers' better health and mind, enabling them to access *śūnya* Brahma. On the other hand, *bhajan* and *jajña* have been utilized as household lore and gradually accepted by people in depth through emotional attachments and spread their thoughts and ideas among all. Mahimā Dharma is a spiritual tradition united by knowledge, devotion, and selfless action, which teaches that true devotion arises from the heart, beyond ego, desires, and rituals. Moreover, this promotes moral and social values, encouraging association with saints, service to the virtuous, and chanting the divine name (4). Through meditation, self-surrender, and selfless action, the mind becomes the sources to *Brahmadarśana*, integrating spiritual wisdom with social consciousness and inspiring personal and collective upliftment. Therefore, Mahimā Dharma principles glorify the righteous living, the importance of saints, and the transformative power of the divine. Moreover, this guidance helps humanity toward inner peace, liberation, and a society rooted in compassion and equality (5).

II. Background Of Mahimā Dharma

Mahimā Dharma was spread in the Utkala Pradesh from early 19th century and Mahimā Gosain is the founder of Mahimā Dharma. Bhima Bhoi has mentioned in his devotional literature that Mahimā Swami took birth to protect Dharma after witnessing the injustices and violence on earth. According to Bhima Bhoi's description of devotional literature, Mahimā Gosāin is described as the Supreme Brahma and unborn (6). Dharma fully believes in the manifestation of the Supreme Brahma. Believing in the complete form, Mahimā Gosain was an incarnation without form who took on human form through divine power. Consequently, Guru

Swami began to attract the people to the true religion by performing various miracles in Utkala Pradesh (Odisha) and Mahimā Dharma spread throughout Odisha. During this period, Guru Swami took yogic state of mind (*ātmayoga*) for seven days at Kapilasha in the state of Odisha. Further, at this time, Mahimā Swami opens up the eyes and eye pleasantly welcome the first disciple Govind Baba to the ashram (7). Mahimā Swami continued his journey and went to propagate Dharma among the people who are living in the territories of Patia and Khordha in Odisha. Moreover, Mahimā Swami preached the religion to Patia and Khordha. Gradually, Mahimā Dharma spread in various districts of Odisha like Dhenkanal, Keonjhar, Athgarh, Angul, Hindola, Boudh, Sonapur, Sambalpur, Cuttack, Puri and Ganjam as well as in abroad (8). During these time, Guru Swami took up a residence to live and prepared a *dhūni ghara* adjoining to residence for prayer and practice at two places namely Andharua and Daruthenga. Mahimā Gosain practice and spread the Dharma and performed many miracles. Assuming all the situation and circumstances, Guru Swami predicted that Joranda in Dhenkanal would be the place of eternal truth and afterwards established as Mahimā Gadi (9).

III. Rituals For Inner Awakening Discussion

According to the theistic and non-theistic literature, both methods of worship have been reported and accepted. In theistic worship, an individual imagines the form of God. Subsequently, from the form, the imagination moves to the idol and then to the symbol. However, in non-theistic worship, all these imaginations have no place. Therefore, the practice of *aṣṭaṅga* Yoga is said to be the only fundamental principle in the non-theistic method of worship. Brahma is realized through the practice of yoga and Saints believe in *śūnya* brahma through love and devotion (10). Thus, in the Bhagavad Gītā, Achyutananda compares *saguna* with curd and *nirguna* with salt". While, Bhima Bhoi describes *nirguna* as the seed and *saguna* as the full fruit. Therefore, in *nirguna*, the original concept is emphasized which is formless, attribute less, timeless, and formless. There is no place for attributes in *nirguna* (11). The body undergoes the realization of Brahma through internal energy which is supported by non-theistic literature. The Vedas proclaimed the victory of both *nirguna* and *saguna* *Brahma*. The victory of the formless Brahma has been proclaimed only in *nirguna* Brahma (12).

Moral and social consciousness

Mahimā Dharma emphasizes realizing the formless Brahma through the union of knowledge, devotion, and selfless action. In the path of *Brahmajñānayoga*, combined with meditation and self-surrender, which guides the seeker towards liberation and Brahma *Darśana* (13). Bhima Bhoi and other saints have highlighted that true devotion arises from a purified and awakened heart, transcending ego, desires, and ritualism. Further, the devotional practices such as chanting the divine name *Alekha*, serving saints, and selfless action are central to spiritual growth. The tradition also promotes social equality, rejecting the caste system, superstition, and oppression, and in turn fosters universal humanism (14). The sum of the above traditional aspects leads to a common goal of achieving the Supreme through spiritual wisdom, moral and social consciousness, offering a holistic path to personal transformation, peace, and liberation in Mahimā Dharma (15).

Brahmajnana Yoga and the Glory of Devotion

According to the Mahimā Dharma mythology, a restless mind becomes empty of thoughts and, in doing so, is free from attachments, creating space for the vision of *Brahma* (16). In that state, only consciousness and divine power remain within the body, and the world assumes the nature of emptiness. Through this detachment and renunciation of extensive desires, true liberation is attained. Mahimā Dharma repeatedly emphasized that the path to *Brahmdarśana* lies in balancing inner restlessness with spiritual focus, guiding the seeker toward self-realization and ultimate freedom through *bhajana* (17).

Gratitude towards the Guru

In spiritual literature, there is a special section dedicated to discussing the reverence towards the guru. It presents various perspectives and opinions on the significance of the guru's influence, leading to a profound sense of admiration and respect.

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ଘର ବାର ଆଦି ସକାଳ ସମର୍ପି ଦାସ ପଣେ ଯୋଗାଇବ II (18)

āpaṇā vṛtti duḥkha sukha phalā guruśrī caraṇe deba I

ghara dvāra ādi sakāḷa samarpi dāsa paṇe yogāiba II (18)

One should offer the fruits of one's livelihood,
whether sorrow or joy, at the holy feet of the revered Guru. (18)

Bhima Bhoi advised the devotees and disciples to surrender themselves upon seeing the *Brahmaniṣṭha* Guru and they accepted the blessings for joy (19). Further, he says that the word "*ājñā*" (command sir) should

be used in the words of the Guru and should be "*śirodhārya*" (respected) (20). The Guru shows the true path which remove the ignorance and illusion of the disciple. The Guru conveys the knowledge of Brahma *jñāna* to the disciple. When the disciple takes refuge, the Guru removes all the sorrows from the disciple's heart and simultaneously provides the knowledge of *ātma-tattva*, creating a sense of Brahma. The practice of Mahimā Dharma accent Guru Bhakti as a manifestation of surrender. Therefore, the practice of sixfold surrender before the Guru and worshipping *Gurubrahma* is prevalent in Mahimā Dharma. Mahimā Swami knows within the living beings the inner thought of others so known as inner guidance (*antaryāmī*), also being the Supreme and exist in the form of human (21). Bhima Bhoi says that Guru is considered the highest and *Parambrahma* and glorified as the Supreme Guru with special emphasis on the Dharma guru tradition. *Brahmavadhuta Siddhi Sannyāsī*, in Mahimā Dharma embodied and recognized as guiding Guru.

The Vision of Light

The seeker perceives a subtle and divine light that distinguishes among various levels of emptiness. When the seeker's mind reaches the ultimate emptiness, they behold a well-known sound flowing from a thousand-petaled lotus. Then, the seeker's inner and outer spaces become illuminated with radiant light. On this staircase, the devotees can be uplifted, and nothing tangible remains to be known; the apprehender and the acknowledged become one. This realm of consciousness lies within the *sāadhanā* (22).

Awakening the dormant Kuṇḍalini' energy

A profound awakening of consciousness is essential to awaken the Brahmic light. When the *kuṇḍalini* is awakened in the innermost recesses of the mind, the seeker's mind merges with the universal consciousness, accompanied by a thousand-petaled lotus of the soul. At that moment, the union of the individual soul with the Supreme occurs in the luminous *maṇipura* chakra. It has been discussed in the spiritual literature that the *kuṇḍalini* energy resides coiled like a serpent at the base of the spine. If it ascends, the seeker's entire life becomes futile. To maintain the *kuṇḍalini* upward movement, explicit instructions have been provided in spiritual texts (23). Therefore, great importance is being placed on it in spiritual practices.

IV. Rituals: Important Benefit For Health And Life

Mahimā Dharma is based on several kinds of principles that maintain equality and social harmony in society. The revolutionary spirit of Mahimā Dharma has rejected caste divisions, emphasizing the unity of humanity. Among various poets, saints, and sages affirm that all originate from the same source, Brahma; caste arises only from human ego and actions, as explained in the Bhagavad Gītā, Upaniṣada, and Biswanath Baba's scriptures. Ordinary humans, inflating their own caste, have caused discrimination and suffering in society. In Mahimā Dharma, the glory of religion transcends caste: those who seek caste find no progress, and those who seek progress recognize no caste. All are children of Brahma, equal in essence and spirit (14). The true magnanimity lies in seeing everyone with equal vision. All are worship Brahma and urged to recognize this equality, reflecting the universal spiritual health.

Yoga Practice in Mahimā Dharma

It is a well-known phrase, "From Selfless Mind to *Brahmadarśana*: A Yogic Path". In Mahimā Dharma, the path to *Brahmadarśana* is the direct vision of Brahma, which lies in a selfless and disciplined mind. A prominent renouncing of selfishness, pride, and deceit, and taking refuge at the feet of the true Guru, the seeker significantly moves toward liberation. True realization arises from detachment from any desires; it unfolds only through surrender and devotion. There is a delicate space outside the typical domain of cognition that the mind cannot access on its own. Attempts to grasp Brahma from there stir inner restlessness. Yet it is this very restlessness that directs the mind toward the Divine.

Various Yoga postures and benefits according to Mahimā Swami:

1. *Sādhū* perform eighteen (18) different Yogic postures during the morning and evening for their physical fitness, good mental state, and remain stress-free.
2. Improve physical fitness and strengthen workability Yogic practices (*Śaraṇa Darśana*).
3. The *Śaraṇa Darśana* (Posture-*āsana*) physical mobility and weight management calms down the mind, reduce stress, and improve quality of health and life.
4. Regular systemic Yogic practices keeps the body more energetic, improved attentiveness, promote proper health conditions and emotional well-being.
5. Yogic meditation for prolong in *siddhi āsana* (Meditative posture) (25).

Bhajan, Jaṇāṇa and Dhūni

According to the Mahimā Dharma, the devotee emphasized that recalling and worshipping the divine name “Alekhā” leads to liberation with ease. The auspicious and holy name Alekhā embodies the essence of spiritual greatness. Bhima Bhoi says and practiced that only through the path of direct experience can one attain the realization to the Supreme. In this neglected and ignorant universe, Mahimā Dharma advises abandoning the worship of worldly deities and embracing the principle of self-knowledge. Moreover, Mahimā Dharma, as a humanist and supreme spiritual path, imparts moral guidance, draws all beings toward devotion, and establishes the practice of pure spiritual knowledge. Every day, in the evening time, devotees in groups perform *bhajana* (traditional song) using several musical instruments such as *khañjaṇi*, *gini*, *jhāñja* and clapping. Moreover, all the pilgrims and visitors also take part in the *bhajana*. All the individuals present encircle the temple (deity) for seven times as per rituals (Figure 1 A, B). By transcending all limited opinions, it upholds devotion surrender and the path of supreme philosophy. Dhuni a sacred principle is conducted by saints and devotees during in special occasions (26). In *dhūni*, the objectives are purification of environment, welfare of the society and the universe, to give up the ego and negative thoughts through which a soul become purified. In this procedure, they use dry wood, cow *ghee*, camphor, incense stick, tree terpenes, coconut and *guggula* (Figure 2).



Figure 1 (A, B) Representative photograph illustrates the conduct of *bhajana* at Mahimā Gadi, Joranda, Odisha. During the evening time, a group of devotees is performing *bhajana* (traditional song) using various musical instruments like *khañjaṇi*, *gini*, *jajña* and clapping. Afterwards, all the attendees encircle the temple (Deity) seven times. Visitors are also allowed to participate and follow the rituals way of worship at that time.



Figure 2 Representative photograph depicts the conduct of Dhuni (Warship) in the evening time at Mahimā Gadi, Joranda, Odisha. A group of devotees is performing *dhuni*, a holy fire (traditional *homa jajña*) every day and prominently in *magha purnimā* prays for peace in entire universe. All the devotees bow down in front of the Dhuni for peace of all. Afterwards, all the visitors are also allowed to worship and take blessings from the Supreme.

Purification

All the saints and devotees wake up regularly at 2:45 AM regular, which is generally known as *Brahma muhurta*. During this time, all the saints and devotees are required to complete bathing and attending to personal hygiene (*śauca*) before the rituals. The cow dung and urine are collected before sunrise from a female calf and mixed together with water in a pot at a ratio of 5 %, 20 % and 25 % respectively. The prepared mixture of cow dung, urine and water is called *pabitra*. They drink this mixture 21 times and sprinkle it all over their body. This process is called body purification (*kāyā śuddhi*) and is believed to cleanse both the body and soul. All of them apply the above mixture all over their body. Moreover, they also brush their teeth using clean soil. Afterwards, they take a bath with clean water to wash off the cow dung and soil from their body. After they become free from their daily routine, they pray to the Supreme. Afterwards, from 3:20 AM to 3:40 AM, they practice eighteen-18 steps of Yogic *āsana* for seven-7 round or times. Following this, they engage in their morning prayer (*prataha abakāsa*), which includes twelve, 12 *bhajana* and two-2, *cautiśā mālā*-17. In spiritual *sādhana*, the Indian concepts of "*kāyā tattva*" and "*kāyāyoga*" are perceived as the ultimate expressions of omnipotence. The essence of this principle lies in the omnipresence of the divine. This symbolizes the entirety of existence. It provides a glimpse of the holistic nature of the universe. This cannot be perceived through the senses. To behold its true form, one needs the eyes of wisdom, not the protection of skin or the assistance of ordinary vision. Through extraordinary means, seekers may directly experience the divine presence within. In Mahimā Dharma sadhana, this concept of the body as the universe and the quest for understanding the body are extensively described (Figure 3). It is rightly said that this bodily perception has profoundly influenced spiritual practices (27).

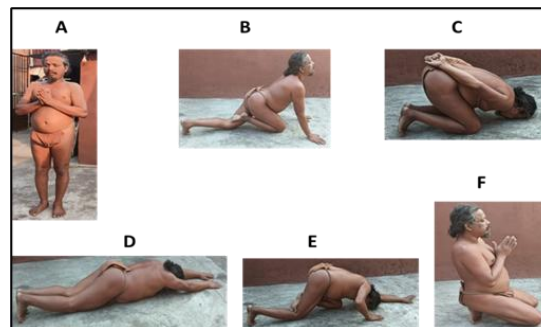


Figure 3 (A-F) Presentation of some of the postures and gestures obtained during a devotee performing the regular Mahimā Dharma rituals, *śaraṇa darśana* (Supreme). This is linked to Hatha Yoga Pradīpikā and is subsequently beneficial to health and life. A: *Namaskārāsana* B: *Āsvacālānāsana*, C: *Sasāṅkāsana*, D: *ṣaṣṭāṅga prāṇipātāsana*, E: *Chanda bandhāsana*, F: *Praṇāmāsana*.etc.

Meditation: Tranquility on the Path to Brahmadarshan

The spiritual path begins with mastery over the mind. Control of the mind is possible only through solitude, and without solitude, *Brahmadarśana* (the realization of the Divine) cannot be attained. In solitude, the first and foremost discipline is the regulation of the mind, for all spiritual means operate through it. Within the body, the mind governs all the senses; if it remains uncontrolled, it becomes an obstacle to meditation and inner realization. On the path of experience, the Supreme Brahma is directly realized within the field of consciousness. The mind plays a crucial role in this journey, as it becomes the cause of both bondage and liberation for the individual soul. An unstable mind cannot comprehend Brahma; therefore, steadiness of mind is the foremost requirement for attaining pure knowledge and devotion. Stabilizing the mind is one of the most effective techniques in meditation. Spiritual and devotional thoughts repeatedly emphasize meditation, especially focused meditation on the Divine, as central to a devotee's daily practice. Regardless of the form of meditation, its true purpose is to bring stability and clarity to the mind. The mind is described as having five states, all centered in the heart, which is regarded as the seat of the soul within the body. When the heart becomes pure and free from impurities, the experience of the immortal essence becomes attainable with ease (28).

Teaching and learning in Mahimā Dharma

Mahimā Dharma, a philosophy of moral teachings, focuses on associating with saints for liberation from the world's illusion. Bhakta Kabi Bhima Bhoi emphasized that through association with saints, one attains liberation from the universe. This approach helps individuals to understand the temporary nature of life of the world. Moreover, according to Biswanath Baba, service to householders is a duty, and Mahimā Dharma considers saints as honoured guests. Additionally, it is repeatedly emphasized that serving saints leads to great merit (29).

V. Conclusion

Mahimā Dharma presents a holistic spiritual vision that unites knowledge, devotion, meditation, and selfless action as the path to liberation. Mahimā Dharma emphasizes realizing the formless Brahma through the union of knowledge, devotion, and selfless action. The path of *Brahmajñānayoga*, combined with meditation and self-surrender, guides the seeker toward liberation and Brahma *darśana*. Bhima Bhoi and other saint-poets highlight that true devotion arises from a purified and awakened heart, transcending ego, desires, and ritualism. Devotional practices such as chanting the divine name, serving saints, and selfless action are central to spiritual growth. The tradition also promotes social equality, rejecting caste, superstition, and oppression, fostering universal humanism. Through devotional literature, Mahimā Dharma integrates spiritual wisdom with moral and social consciousness, offering a holistic path to personal transformation, peace, and liberation.

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