

President's Speech by Nirmal Choubey

Dear fellow Brahmans,

As you are aware, the Brahman community is facing many challenges today, be it from within or without. I want to share with you some of my thoughts on these challenges, and what WBF is doing to address them. I believe, it is the responsibility of the learned scholars and the rest of the community to resolve the issues, and that we must, before it is too late.

Who is a Brahman is a constant question, not only within our community but also outside. Our children are asking this question more and more everyday. It is no longer enough to simply say that we are a Brahman just because our parents identified themselves as Brahmans. The idea that you are predisposed to something simply by dint of birth, is not compelling to them. Then, there are those who are not happy with birth alone. They want more. They want you to perform certain rituals (or samsakaras in the mind of some) on a daily basis as well as be experts in Hindu scriptures. Over and above that, they want you to follow some dietary as well as personal behavioral restrictions, both before and after marriage. I believe, it is a very important issue, and the community must work together to find answers. We just simply can not wash our hand saying that our children do not listen to us.

Here in America , in a pluralistic society, there are special challenges for minority religions. It is important that the Brahman community becomes more active to ensure that the next generation understands that there are numerous religious communities represented in America . While we do that, we must also be vigilant of those who write our history books or about us not with an open mind but a built in bias.

I am sure you have run across people who blame Brahmans for every thing that went wrong with India . I ask, how so. How a group of people with no kingdom, no army and no wealth could do so much to harm to a country they call their own. As you are aware, Brahmans main preoccupation was volunteering for community causes. Mainly, they were educators or family priests, and that is largely true even today. You look at the temples in America , and you will find that most likely there is a Brahman involved right from conceptual stage to its completion, and upkeep. The same is true in the field of education. The point is that Brahmans have made important contributions in India and here as well, and some how this fact is being ignored.

As the secular India continues to evolve so are the challenges to the community. The reservation system is a prime example. It denies its best and the brightest equal opportunity in the field of education as well as jobs. Recent treatment of our religious leaders is also quite appalling; when one compares it with the treatment other religions give to their leaders all over the world. All these things are creating challenges in an area that were unthinkable before. Our brothers and sisters in Kashmir live under constant threat from terrorists and many have become refugees in their own land. May I ask why? Is it a crime to be born as a Brahman, in a secular India ?

As you are aware, the World Brahman Federation was founded to bring the community together worldwide to address these issues as no single community can address them alone. WBF has units in India , Nepal , Mauritius , and now also in Canada . It will soon establish units in Europe and the rest of Asia and Africa . The process of bringing the community together within North America irrespective of linguistic origin has already begun, and you are a prime example of that effort.

WBF has adopted several initiatives and we ask you to volunteer for those. These initiatives take us right into the heart of the issues that I mentioned earlier. The initiatives are:

1. Educational Initiative- Through this initiative we hope to imbibe in our children awareness as to what does it mean to be a Brahman, and why it is important that we do not lose this identity. Within this Initiative, through Omkar Foundation we are providing opportunities to the students to learn about Hinduism and practice them as well.
2. Priest Status Improvement Initiative- Through this initiative we want to make it attractive for the best and brightest amongst us to opt for priesthood profession. We would like this profession to be involved in the total development of a Hindu family, not just be around at the time of birth, death or marriage.
3. Brahminic Matrimonial Initiative- Through this initiative we want to facilitate marriage of our young adults within the community and educate them the responsibilities that go with the marriage.
4. Government & Media Relations Initiative- Through this Initiative we want India to adopt a policy that will allow admission to schools and colleges to only the deserving students, and abolish the quota raj in the admission policy and also employment.
5. Kashmir Initiative- Through this Initiative we want the safe return of Kashmiri Hindus to their homes in Kashmir , and ensure their safety and

security. We believe this Initiative will ensure territorial integrity of India and world peace.

6. Organizational Initiative- Through this initiative we give WBF a shape that is responsive to the needs of the community. The most immediate task under this Initiative is a new constitution that will preserve an umbrella structure with individual membership.
7. Global Convention Initiative – Through this Initiative we put together conventions throughout the world that provide us an opportunity to meet and discuss issues under one roof with no fear of reprisals. The next world meet is scheduled for December 20, 2007 , in Mauritius .

Please volunteer for those Initiatives as your support is essential to success.

To summarize, the community is facing many challenges, and the time is now to work together to address them.

Thank you and God bless you,