



WORLD HINDU DEMOCRATIC FORUM

Responsible Democracy For All



MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to support democratic trends and institutions that will lead to the practice of responsible democracy. The World Hindu Democratic Forum builds support for democratic practices by tapping into the democratic propensities of the world's billion strong Hindu population and by encouraging Hindu populations around the world to assume a greater role in the political process.

INTRODUCTION

Hindu society has a long and glorious tradition of engaging in democratic institutions and traditions, particularly when the Hindu community was free of foreign domination. Hindu society is inherently an egalitarian society, and thus it has an inherent democratic disposition. Wherever Hindus are in a majority, democracy practices are on the whole thriving. The country of Bharat, where Hindus comprise a large majority of the population, has consistently held (with one notable interruption) the title of the "World's Largest Democracy" since gaining its Independence in 1947. Another shining example of a Hindu majority country where democracy has been firmly established and flourishing is the country of Mauritius. Wherever Hindus comprise a large part of the population, democratic tendencies are strengthened due to the support from the local Hindu population. In addition, Hindu populations have been at the forefront of strengthening democracy by encouraging pluralism as well as safeguarding

human rights of all citizens. Additional examples of democracies being strengthened by the efforts of Hindus are the countries of Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago and Guyana. Outside Bharat, wherever Hindus comprise a significant section of the population, they have always fought for the values of freedom, liberty and democracy unitedly with the non-Hindu population of the country. Hindus have had a long history of fighting against totalitarian and dictatorial regimes. From the various corners of the globe ranging from Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Fiji, Mauritius, South Africa, Trinidad & Tobago,

Guyana, Suriname, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, Hindus have worked in tandem with the local non-Hindu population to break the chains of dictatorship and colonialism, and replaced it with a democratic and pluralistic polity.

In many countries, however, where Hindus comprise a significant section of the population and also have a rich history of active contribution to societal welfare as well as living in peaceful co-existence with non-Hindu neighbours, their representation in the political arena is frequently far too small. Now, the Hindu society has established itself firmly in over 40 countries. In many countries, Hindus have produced Presidents, Prime Ministers, Ministers, Governors and Premiers, Parliamentarians, Diplomats, important government officials, etc. The participation of Hindus in the political process is slowly growing, but so far there has been no proper forum to bring Hindus from different parts of the world together to share their knowledge, expertise, and experience in politics. The World Hindu Democratic Forum has been especially established for the purpose of providing a global platform for Hindus presently involved in the political process. It aims to bring them under one roof and deliberate on political issues of importance to the global Hindu society as well as to the local Hindu populations. In addition, the World Hindu Democratic Forum aims to harness established and experienced members of the political profession to encourage aspiring young Hindus to become part of the political process, as well as share with them their experience and expertise

Shri Ashwin Adhin

Coordinator, Hindu Political Conference
WHC 2018, Chicago

Introductory Remarks

Shri Ashwin Adhin gave introductory remarks on the theme of 'Responsible Democracy for All'. He said that while the majority desires a democratic regime over other forms, some people feel that democracy is not working satisfactorily mainly due to differences in history, culture, and economic development. He raised three facts for the betterment of democracy: First, history and research tell us that democracy can have resilience, and it has the ability to renew itself to maintain the core values of freedom; Second, even in a democracy, the acknowledgment of constraint or force stays; and Third, that democracy by itself is a social construct. It ultimately depends on our conscience and principles of Dharma, not just limited to religious principles but to the entire world to elevate it to its godliness. He emphasized that by giving pre-dominance to Dharma above any other construct of governance, we will be able to achieve happiness, protection, and welfare for all. The fusion of governance and guiding principles of Dharma, and leaders acting accordingly can help in making democracy a responsible one for all.



SESSION 1: REASSERTING A STRONG HINDU POLITICAL VOICE IN GIRMIT COUNTRIES

Chairperson:

Shri Jagdishwar Goburdhun

Mauritius High Commissioner to Bharat

Introductory Remarks



Shri Goburdhun took pride in delivering the speech in Hindi, being a Bhartiya and a Hindu. He requested everyone to be proud of their identity. He said that Bharat and Hindu Dharma are not just for Bharat but for the entire world. He pointed out that modernization is rapidly growing, but in the words of Shri Rabindranath Tagore 'True modernization is the freedom of mind, thought, and action'. Lastly, he talked about one simple word, one relationship that everyone forgets: 'mother'. He says that we Bhartiya and Hindus are blessed to have six mothers. First, who gives us birth and introduces us to this world. Second, the Goddess of earth. Unfortunately, we have disrespected this mother by growing cancerous food in it. Third, Cow. Fourth, our mother tongue. It is our duty to preserve and protect our mother tongue. Fifth is Bharat Mata and the Sixth is our river, Ganga. It is our responsibility to protect and preserve it.



Shri Ravindra Dev

Former MP and Columnist

Guyana Challenges faced in building a united political front between Caribbean Hindus and the Hindu Diaspora at large

Shri Ravindra Dev mentioned that challenges can be sought as opportunities to grow and bring change. He said that the first thing we need to confront is the mixing of politics with religion, which shouldn't happen. We follow Hindu Dharma which is not a religion. He specifically mentioned Caribbean Bhartiyas (Hindus) who are against their own men and believe that all of us are universal beings. He mentioned Pandit Deendyal Upadhyay's words that 'Dharma, Artha, Kaama, and Moksha are to be given due emphasis at every level of society but with the eternal guidelines of Dharma'. He also pointed out that though we talk big about 'Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam', unfortunately, we are still divided. Lastly, he talked about the Hindu diaspora. Every generation living and migrating to different countries of the world is a wave from Bharat.

Smt Santosh Kalyan

Member National Assembly, South Africa

Challenges faced by Hindu politicians in post-apartheid South Africa

Smt Santosh Kalyan said that South Africa has the largest Bhartiya population outside Bharat when compared to other countries, but this population is small enough to be ignored and not acknowledged but big enough to feel the pain. Being one of the Bhartiya delegates in a Parliament of 54 African countries is sometimes battling for identity, but she proudly continues doing that. In the past, people from Bharat who migrated to Africa collectively struggled to attain respect and identity in the country. Today too, they are struggling but in a lesser quantum. The challenge that we Hindus face is that we don't get enough funding from the government for our new projects. The greater initiative needs to come from the Hindu community and dependency on the Bhartiya high commissioner's office has to be reduced.



Shri Chandresh Sharma

Former MP/Cabinet Minister, Trinidad & Tobago

Complexities of religious dynamics in Caribbean politics

The first thing Shri Chandresh Sharma mentioned was the responsibility of self. Hindu Dharma at its very best says 'Develop Self to Develop Nations'. He shared how in 1990 he formalized a group called 'Hindu Institution of Trinidad and Tobago', went into different communities, and shared Dharma. He said that policymakers around the world refer to Hindu texts because they contain answers to all the questions. He shared how he won elections in Trinidad and Tobago by following Dharma. He said, "Dharma is engaging - an exchange of ideas sharing and listening". Complexities are opportunities to re-visit and re-examine and extract golden values from them. He pointed out that every Caribbean community has a Hindu presence. Dharma that we are following worships the flowers, water, and earth and all these resources are major concerns of the policymakers around the world. He said that we already know the value of these resources because our Dharma teaches us this. Dharma helps reduce challenges and complexities.

SESSION 2: EXPANDING AND CULTIVATING POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN WESTERN DEMOCRACIES

Chairperson:

Smt Swati Dandekar

Former Iowa State Legislator; USA

Introductory Remarks

Smt Swati Dandekar shared her experience with her great grandfather who had once advised her to respect others and their religion and ask for the same in the return. When she came to the USA, she never left her karma of 'Seva' that led to her entry into politics. She was a Hindu minority, representing a Christian majority in the Iowa House. She was one of those who made it possible for the Iowa Senate to open with Hindu prayers. She is of the view that we must be proud of our heritage and not to run away from it. At the same time, we don't have to be snobs about our heritage.



Shri Adi Sathi

Director of Asian Pacific American Engagement, Republican National Committee.

Participating in the political process to safeguard Hindu interests

Shri Adi Sathi shared his political journey. He had started his career during his university days by contesting elections at the University of Michigan. His first breakthrough came in politics when he was elected as the Vice-Chair of the Republican Party of Michigan, right after his grad school. It was really exciting for him to campaign and to approach people, and explain that we are all aligned with the same interests. He understood that whatever he said, people would think the same about the entire Hindu Community. He was lucky to get this chance of serving the Hindu community for whom he cares deeply.

Shri Niraj Antani

Ohio State Representative, USA

Navigating race and religion in American politics

Shri Niraj Antani is the first and youngest Hindu American Republican in Ohio history. He recalled that when campaigning door-to-door he would receive some offensive questions, but he took them as an educational opportunity and made the white Christians aware of our tradition and culture. For him, being in politics has been a positive experience. He felt sad that within our own community there are people who sympathize with those against us. He emphasised that if there is ever a time for us to be politically active it is now. In 2013, a poll was conducted about the familiarity and favourability of different religions and the results showed that Hindu Dharma had the least familiarity and a neutral favourability. He urged people to open temples, conduct events and celebrations, and talk to the media because a huge part of politics is in this external focus.



Shri Rahul Kumar

State Councillor Frankfurt Kelsterbach, Germany

Impactful participation of Hindus in the political process

Shri Rahul Kumar began his talk by commemorating Swami Vivekananda who had given a historic speech in Chicago. He said that Hindu culture teaches us to respect and learn from other cultures and there is a lot to learn from Germany. It helps in a successful integration in the host community. Hindus living in Frankfurt or Germany require help from the Government. We need places and assistance to do business in Bharat as well as in Germany. Germans believe that Hindus are very peaceful and spiritual. They have a positive image of us. We must work today for tomorrow's future. All the Hindus must come together, celebrate festivals together, form more organisations and build this community stronger.

Shri Himanshu Gulati

Member of Parliament, Norway

How to make an impact in politics

Shri Himanshu Gulati spoke about his political career and said he joined politics at a very young age. In 2017, he became the first Bhartiya Hindu Member of Parliament. He said that politics is not about strategy, it is about integrity and what you stand for. Everyone should stand for something worth fighting for. Otherwise, you will fall for anything. At times, we will be tested for what we stand. He himself believes in the idea of liberty for which he has been tested several times. There is a lot of internal politics within families, communities, or organisations but we should be happy about each other's success. Politics is an operative model. It should never be mixed with religion. People should be themselves and be different because the problem we have in politics is that politicians are more and more similar. People are respected in politics if they have integrity and if they dare to be different.



SESSION 3: COLLECTIVE STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS ADVERSE AND COMPLEX POLITICAL ENVIRONMENTS

Chairperson:

Shri Gautam Bhattacharya

Minister Counsellor

Swedish Embassy, New Delhi

Introductory Remarks

Shri Gautam Bhattacharya said that Hindus do not face any oppression in Sweden, but the challenges are totally different in Nepal, Myanmar and Pakistan. The issue that needs to be addressed is that our Hindu community at the global level has not been good at mobilizing politically. He said that this conference could help in giving an impetus to build networks and methods to work together and put pressure on people, impact politically, work together and reinforce each other.

**Shri Ngodup Tsering**

Representative

Central Tibetan Administration

Importance of Free Tibet for religious freedom in the Himalayan Region

Shri Ngodup Tsering is the foreign representative of Dalai Lama in North America and to Central Tibetan administration in Dharamshala. He showed his gratitude towards Bharat for accepting Tibetans into its land for so many years. He also talked about the reasons behind invasion of Tibet by China. The first reason being population transfer, the second strategic military area provided by Tibet to China and lastly environmental resources, including water due to which China wants to occupy Tibet. He explicitly mentioned about the rivers flowing from Tibet and helping nations and people around them but unfortunately these are getting dirtier because of the dams being built upstream near China. He said that it's time that we all come together and fight against the foreign invaders and expansion of the colonies.

Shri Prem Kaidi

Politician and Journalist, Nepal

Protecting Hindu political interest in Nepal

Shri Prem Kaidi quoted the words of Saint Narahari Nath of Nepal, "Hindu is not a religion; it is a Dharma that we practice in our life". He lamented that although 82% of the population in Nepal is Hindu, the communists and socialists are dominating and destroying the socio-cultural system in Nepal. He spoke briefly on Hindu Dharma's history and its influence all over the globe. While the Western writers had distorted the real history of Hindus, Muslims had destroyed the Manu Smriti. Because of poverty and illiteracy, people in Nepal are falling prey to conversion-politics. The conversion rate is the highest in Nepal. In Nepal, there's no harmonization of Hindus. To defend our Dharma and for the rise of Hindus, there is a need to educate the young generations, beautify history and prepare people to be free from distorted history. To complete this task, we need strong global leadership and solidarity. He said that the platform of WHC can unite us and we all can fight against it.



Smt Santosh Kalyan

Member National Assembly, South Africa

Hindu unwillingness in political affairs

Smt Santosh Kalyan said that it was a shocking indictment that Bhartiyas abroad are not willing to take up public offices. Very few Bhartiyas are in politics in South Africa mainly because of the apartheid system. After 1948, blacks were excluded from the main city and Bhartiyas had to go through the same. The only benefit that it gave us was that people came together and lived together. After apartheid, the younger generation started moving out for earnings. Its major disadvantage was the disconnect. Smt Kalyan said that after apartheid, a new dimension has come up which is called racism in reverse. The conversion of religion prevails in her country too, mainly because of poverty. There is a fragmented approach in dealing with the challenges faced by the Hindu community. The solution to these challenges should first be for the short term and then we should look at the longer term.

SESSION 4: STRATEGY FOR PROTECTING HINDU HUMAN RIGHTS

Chairperson:

Shri Sradhanand Sital

Chairman

Global Human Rights Defense, Netherlands

Introductory Remarks

Shri Sradhanand Sital gave the introduction to the session about human rights issues. He said that Hindus have failed in human rights because we let go of our rights and just continued doing 'Dharmic' things. We have never represented our community at any international organisation. We Hindus have always felt that it's not our responsibility. There is no global support from Hindus themselves. He pointed out that we Hindus are good speakers but don't have good leaders. The other religions, irrespective of any nation, come together when needed, unlike Hindus. He showed a video about the terrible condition of Hindus in Pakistan, especially girls who are kidnapped, abducted, and forced to change their religion. We should soon get up and fight against all this.



Shri Sanjay Kaul

KOA, USA

Kashmiri Hindu community seeks to survive

Shri Sanjay Kaul was sad to share that the Hindus in Kashmir were kicked out of their own land and he was one of them. This paradise had turned into a hotbed of terrorism. He shared his own story that started in the 1990s. People were forced out of their homes based on religion. The reason for leaving was fear, rape and killing. Hindus had to live in inhuman conditions. Government did nothing to safeguard their interests, instead just helped Muslims and terrorists by throwing money at them. The only good thing was that all the Kashmiri Hindus were able to stand on their own. People fought hard to send their children outside. Now, government is helping Kashmir economically. He said that Kashmiri Hindus should be recognized as internally displaced people and each displaced family should be awarded compensation. He hoped that he would be able to go back to Kashmir as conditions improve.

Shri Gautam Bhattacharya

Minister Counsellor

Swedish Embassy, New Delhi

Safeguarding Hindu minorities in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan

Shri Gautam Bhattacharya talked about safeguarding Hindu minorities in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. He shared that Afghanistan (eastern) was a Hindu country before Jayapala Shahi lost the throne in 997 C.E. There is still a lot of Hindu architecture left in countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. He said that there is a need to care for fellow Hindus because they have nowhere else to turn. He showed how the Hindu population in these three countries has come down over the years. There is widespread discrimination, an indifferent official environment, and no Hindu media outlets or schools, or basic network of community volunteers in these countries. According to him, the need of the hour is to engage and empower them. All the pillars of the WHC should coordinate among all these countries and make a change.



Shri Sanjesh

Hindu Activist Pakistan

Ensuring the welfare and safety of Hindus in Pakistan

Shri Sanjesh spoke about the condition of Hindus in Pakistan. The Hindu population is just 1.96 million in Pakistan. Major problem is faced by the Scheduled Caste Hindus. The other problem in Pakistan is forced religious conversions. There are a lot of attacks in Pakistan against Hindus. After Partition in 1947, there was the mass genocide of Hindus living in Pakistan. The condition of Hindus in Pakistan is politically worse. They are treated as anti-state and anti-Islam elements. He requested WHC and other Hindus across the globe to come together and help his fellow Hindus in Pakistan.

SESSION 5: EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF POLITICAL LEADERS - TRAINING, MENTORING, AND DEVELOPING SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Chairperson:

Smt Swati Dandekar

Former Iowa State Legislator, USA

Introductory Remarks

Smt Swati Dandekar introduced the session. She said that it is important to have passion for something. She shared her life story. She had a passion for education and 'sewa' and she would tutor kids in science who could not afford it. Seeing this, the State sent her to different leadership programs. Her passion for this gave her different opportunities and this way she built a support system for herself. She requested everyone to help people who are passionate about something by becoming their support systems.



Dr Vindhya Vasini Persaud

Member of Parliament and President of the Guyana Hindu Dharmic Sabha, Guyana

Political eco-system for young women

Dr. Vindhya Persaud shared that before coming to deliver a speech here, she read through the historic speech of Swami Vivekananda which she found liberating. She said that she believes in mutual respect and understanding. She said that being a future leader, one needs spiritual upliftment along with passion and other elements. Young leaders face problems as they must fight against age-old traditions and perspectives, but they can succeed with patience, explanations, perseverance, and humility. It is important to make space for next-generation to voice their views and speak the truth. As a woman politician herself, she believes that there should be space for women, as every voice matters in the political world. For being a good political leader, one needs to be balanced, calm, mature in thinking, reasonable, and rational.

Shri Pranav Bhanot

Young Politician, UK

Challenges faced by young Hindu politicians in post-colonial UK

Shri Pranav Bhanot shared how in his childhood, he used to go for Ramayana lectures every weekend in the UK. Shri Rama had all the core qualities of a politician, yet Hindus do not want to involve themselves in politics. The Hindus want themselves to be represented by Hindus in politics but don't want to hold public positions themselves. There is a need for a paradigm shift in the definition of success. It should be valued in terms of the changes you make in people's lives and not in the money you own. A challenge faced in politics by Hindus is that they are not united. The other challenge is the Hindu inferiority complex. Politicians are not confident in declaring themselves as Hindus. The next generation should be trained in the principles of Hindu Dharma and they should be given political mentoring.



Shri Jitendra Diganvker

Republican Congressional Candidate, USA

Establishing a balance between a strong Hindu voice and viability as a political candidate

Shri Jitendra Diganvker said that it does not matter who you are, but it matters on what grounds you stand and how you protect it. One's passion is his asset. That is why he followed and entered politics in his college days. He shared that in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, nobody is there to help Hindus who suffer from ethnic cleansing but in the USA, we have the chance and we should grab the opportunity of entering politics and do something for the Hindu community. Global Hindu existence is needed. We need to stand up for our own community. We must think collectively and work individually to increase the political presence.

SESSION 6: WAY FORWARD

Chairperson:

Ambassador Pradeep Kapur

School of Public Policy,
University of Maryland, USA

Introductory Remarks

Ambassador Pradeep Kapur introduced the last session of the conference. He outlined how significant Bharat had been for the world - spiritually, politically, philosophically, administratively, and financially. South East Asia is completely influenced by Bharat. The places, culture, traditions are all Bharat oriented. The report by IMF said that Bharat has contributed the most to the world economy in terms of purchasing power parity. He claimed that Bharat is the second largest diaspora in the world that we should be proud of. What is to be done is implementation of all the discussed solutions for the problems, that can help make the Hindu community stronger, globally.



Shri Himanshu Gulati

Member of Parliament, Norway

Establishing political priorities for Hindus across the globe

Shri Himanshu Gulati talked about establishing political priorities for Hindus across the globe. He was of the viewpoint that people should not vote for him just because he is a Hindu but for the good service of his community. Politics is not about right or wrong, but it is about governing and taking care of interests. He said the best politician is the one who can get things done even when he is not in power. He said that politics and religion are two separate models. Politics is for nation-building and religion for character building, however, a politician should bring good principles and policies from the religion to politics. All Hindus in political positions have the responsibility to safeguard the interest of the community globally.

Shri Mahesh Bindra

Former MP, New Zealand

Strategic political placement of Hindus for high impact

Shri Mahesh Bindra said he has taken up the responsibility of inspiring a youngster every month to come out of his comfort zone and enter politics and serve the community because not many people see politics as an opportunity in New Zealand. He discussed how and why he entered the politics of New Zealand. The Deputy Prime Minister of New Zealand made efforts to make the conditions better for the Hindu community. It was all possible when the Deputy Prime Minister saw him stand up for his own people. After being elected to Parliament, he took the oath from Shrimad Bhagwat Gita. He made sure that every upcoming Hindu MP can do the same.



Smt Niermala Badrisingh

Ambassador of Suriname to Washington DC

Establishing a task force to realize future priorities

Smt Niermala Badrisingh started by defining a task force, which is a temporary group of people formed to carry out a specific mission or a project. She suggested that the composition of the task force for strengthening the Hindu community should be geographical and based on the population of Hindus in different continents and countries. It should comprise long-term thinkers who serve the purpose of furthering the advancement of Hindus. The task force members should be from different disciplines including academia, parliamentarians, etc. It should be time-bound and outcome-oriented. It is important to engage a stronger transnational networking endeavors to attain sustainable development and prosperity for Hindus globally. Regular follow-ups by the task force should be done by midterm reporting. All this can help impact the common good of the Hindus.