

PM Modi urges Brahma Kumaris to assist in govt programmes

Abu Road, March 26: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday maintained that though there may be different forms of worshipping God, India had always believed that God was one.

"In India, God is not different for Hindus, Muslims and Parsis. The truth is one, only different people may express it differently. We are such a country which does not believe in imposing our views on anyone. We are such people who believe that knowledge has no limits, knowledge has no timing, knowledge is not bound by anything, knowledge does not need any passport, knowledge does not need a visa," the PM said through video conference on the inauguration of the 80th anniversary celebrations of the Brahma Kumaris at their campus in Abu Road, Rajasthan.

Modi urged the Brahma Kumaris to use their large network of centres and volunteers to aid the Government's efforts in the areas of renewable energy, nutrition and health, and for ushering in a cashless economy.

The PM lauded the institution for working with unity and dedication over eight decades to spread the light of India's spiritual knowledge all over the world.

Addressing more than 6,000 prominent persons from India and abroad who have gathered for the four-day celebrations, the PM noted that the Brahma Kumaris have more than 8,500 meditation centres all over the world. This large network and Brahma Kumaris volunteers, he said, can be used to bring about major change in the country by the year 2022, when India will be celebrating 75 years of independence.

"Is it not our responsibility to do something to fulfil the dreams of the founders of this nation", he asked.

"Under the leadership of the Brahma Kumaris, we can bring about an energy revolution and a revolution in human lives", he added.

Noting the extensive use of solar power by the Brahma Kumaris, including a 1 MW solar thermal power plant set up by the institution, and its use of solar steam cooking systems to prepare up to 30,000 meals three times a day, he said India had set the target of producing 175 gigawatts of energy from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030.

In addition, 22 crore LED bulbs had been supplied by municipalities and other local bodies all over the country, resulting in savings of Rs 11,000 crore. He urged the Brahma Kumaris to spread awareness about LED bulbs to help reduce the country's dependence on fuel imports.

Referring to the demonetisation move of the government, he also asked the Brahma Kumaris to ask their volunteers to use the Bhim app and help small traders in their locality do the same in order to speed the transition to a cashless economy.

Turning to health, the PM said women volunteers from the Brahma Kumaris can aid the government's immunisation programme to ensure a healthy future for the millions of children who otherwise fall victim to serious illnesses.

This, he said, was a part of empowering women, and added that India had recently become one of the few countries in the world to grant 26 weeks of maternity leave, up from 12 weeks previously.

He also suggested that the institution launch an online certificate course on nutrition, about which there is little awareness in the country. All universities in the country could be made a part of this effort, he said. Students in classes 9th to 12th would particularly benefit from better nutrition, which would help them when they later start families or their careers, he noted.

The PM began by congratulating the Brahma Kumaris on completing 80 years of service. Eighty years has special significance in India, as a person is said to have seen 1000 full moons in that time span, he said.

He also greeted the gathering on the coming Hindu new year and Cheti Chand.

B K Nirwair, Secretary General of the Brahma Kumaris, assured the PM of the institution's support in the initiatives mentioned by him. He also requested the PM to include spiritual knowledge in the curricula of schools and colleges, which would help create a better future.

Dadi Janki, the head of the Brahma Kumaris, said the institution had taught her to use her mind, body and wealth to serve humanity, and told the PM that he could use spiritual knowledge to conserve his thoughts and time.

The guest of honour of the inaugural session, Justice Shahibul Hasnain of the Lucknow Bench of Allahabad High Court, said the founder of the Brahma Kumaris chose women to lead the organisation because the role required the qualities of kindness and gentleness along with determination and firmness.

Mr Gulab Kothari, Editor-in-Chief of Rajasthan Patrika, said the Brahma Kumaris had expanded all over the world only because of woman power. He said the institution had established a unique identity in the world.

The administrative head of the Brahma Kumaris, Dadi Janki, said one should know who I am and who is mine. She said she had served God for 80 years and He was her father and mother. "If we are patient, we experience peace and love, and then nothing is difficult", she said.

Mr N K Singh, General Secretary of the Broadcast Editors Association, said it was not easy to teach values in a commercialized world, but the Brahma Kumaris were carrying out this task admirably. He said it was a matter of concern that while India's GDP was growing every year, its rank in the global happiness index was falling, and added that only the Brahma Kumaris could improve the country's happiness ranking.

Mr Sanjay Kulshreshtha, Editor-in-Chief of News Nation, said people needed to remove the frame of negativity from their minds, which took them away from spirituality.

Mr S Venkat Narayan, President of the Foreign Correspondents Club of South Asia in India, said India's parliament needed the kind of peace prevailing in the Brahma Kumaris campus, and expressed the hope

that the institution would give a message of peace for countries wracked by conflict, such as Syria and Iraq.

The speakers from the media world were felicitated on the occasion for their services to society.

Earlier in the day, senior BJP leader L K Advani led a host of luminaries in paying tribute to the work of the Brahma Kumaris. Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman P J Kurien and Bollywood star Raveena Tandon were among the other dignitaries who lauded the Brahma Kumaris for serving society and setting an example of women's empowerment.

Members of Parliament, state legislators, senior judges, industrialists and media personalities are attending the celebrations.

Speaking during the reception session inside the cavernous Diamond Hall, Asia's largest pillar-free hall, Advani said Brahma Kumaris was the only institution of its kind in the world that had been founded and expanded by women.

"Just as the mother plays the key role in a family, women have played the main role in the growth of the Brahma Kumaris", he said.

Recalling how he had seen the institution grow since its early days in Karachi, before the partition of the subcontinent, Advani said the Brahma Kumaris were a source of moral guidance for the world and everyone could learn honesty and discipline from them.

Speaking of his association with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Advani said the RSS had helped mould his character, and he had learned discipline from the Sangh.

"I learned from the RSS never to be dishonest in my dealings with anyone. This may be a small thing, but it has helped me serve society," the BJP leader said.

Praising the idealism of the Brahma Kumaris, he noted that behind it were the ideal qualities of the institution's members. Pointing to Dadi Janki, the 101-year-old head of the Brahma Kumaris, he said her long and active life was no ordinary achievement; it was a divine gift received only by those who lead exemplary lives.

Besides Dadi Janki, Dadi Hirdaya Mohini, the additional head, and Dadi Ratan Mohini, the joint head of the Brahma Kumaris, were present on the occasion, as were Mr Devjibhai Patel, MP from Jalore, and Mr Amara Ram, Rajasthan Revenue Minister.

Dadi Janki was earlier extolled by Mr P J Kurien as an example of women's empowerment. He said the progress of the country should be measured by Gross Domestic Happiness (GDH), not Gross Domestic Product, and the Brahma Kumaris were contributing to India's GDH.

Brahma Kumaris epitomize India's great culture and their message is a beacon of light in today's world of extremism and terrorism, he said.

Noting the leading role played by women in the Brahma Kumaris, Raveena Tandon said it was an institution full of maternal love and care. “We sometimes worry about what kind of world our children will live in, but there are still organizations such as the Brahma Kumaris that are spreading love in the world, and this gives us hope”, she said.

A highlight of the proceedings was the felicitation of several prominent media figures for their services to society. They included Mr Gulab Kothari, Editor-in-Chief, Rajasthan Patrika; Mr Deepak Chaurasia, Editor-in-Chief, India News; Mr Sudhir Chaudhary, Editor-in-Chief, Zee Media Group; and Mr Sanjay Kulshreshtha, Editor-in-Chief, News Nation.

Mr K Vaidhyanathan, Chief Editor, Dinamani; Mr Reghu Ramachandran, Channel Head, Asianet; and Mr R Bhagwan Singh, Executive Editor, Deccan Chronicle, were also felicitated.

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