

Priestess Bairavee Balasubramaniam
Politics and International Studies, PhD
Spiritualist, Orator, Researcher, Priestess (and other things)

Duties:

I conduct in-depth research on spiritual, religious, metaphysical and other faith-based issues and write about them, presenting them to a wider, international audience. At times, these articles touch upon and critique existing social practices and/or legislation which target, exclude or vilify forms or practice of spirituality that are deemed 'alternative' (The Goddess Movement, the cause of re-legitimizing the role and function of female Priestesses within religious domains, changing social taboos surrounding perception of 'filthiness' associate with women's bodies and its relationship with the sacred, and so on).

I am also a Priestess, serving the needs of an international community aligned with a similar vision - of realizing Self-Awareness through the Awakening of Consciousness and a realization of importance of integrating different aspects of Divinity in our current understandings of what it means to be 'spiritual'. It is complex task and these are just some aspects of it.

How did you find this job?

I created it

How (if at all!) did your PhD help you in getting this job?

During my PhD, I conducted fieldwork in India whilst studying the Indian Parliament. One of my case studies was the Women's Reservation Bill - a legislative proposal to reserve 1/3rd of seats in the Indian Parliament on a rotational basis for women. The Bill has yet to be passed since its initial introduction in September 1996. Whilst studying that debate, I realized that the ritual significance of female goddesses in Hindu theology was being equated (somewhat controversially) with social and political gains made by real, human, women. Therefore, an MP might argue that 'we have given all the rights to women and respect them as goddesses, why do they need reservation?'

I realized then that the boundaries between the sacred and the political needed to be untangled, and in a way that could both honor the spiritual heritage and political aspirations. It is in that 'middle space' that I found myself and my life's calling.

In a more direct sense, I also took some time for myself (after finishing my research, of course) and conducted spiritual pilgrimages in the South of India whilst on my field trip. These only furthered my resolve, and set me on a career trajectory I didn't expect to find myself on.

PhD skill transferability:

In my work I have to juggle roles between the critical, analytical scholar and the more empathic, intuitive priestess. My work has to be thoroughly researched, well-through through and infused with the kind of life-affirming energy which I associate with spirituality. Too many spiritual teachings are dismissed as being 'airy-fairy', unrealistic or disassociated from 'reality'; Too many archaic spiritual traditions carry on in the name of the past and dishonour the present. This is an imbalance that, in my capacity, I work towards redressing.

My PhD guided me towards this path in many ways: For instance, my 111,000 word thesis is held together by the concepts of 'performance' and 'ritual' - concepts and practices that easily feed into my occupation and role in life. The scholarly study of 'rituals' began with anthropological and sociological studies of ceremony or religious life, or the day to day activities of so-called primitive societies. In my work on the Indian Parliament, I adapted the

concept to be applicable to modern-day settings, and political institutions - drawing on the works of other scholars who have already done so.

Thus, using that adapted/modified understanding, I am better able to draw upon my intellectual understanding of the concept and re-interpret and present rituals, ceremonies and other performances of the sacred - and their intersections with the political - as I address in my writings.

Employment advice:

My advice for PhDs seeking to find their place in the world is essentially to follow their Heart, Feet, Gut, whatever they feel comfortable working with. Too often we are pressured into 'acting a certain way' or 'doing a certain thing' because we have 'such and such' qualification. Whilst the PhD prepared me for a line of work I (that at the start of my studies, would have never imagined myself doing so publicly), I realize that - this title, this experience of intellectual refinement and analytical development - is One, just One aspect of who I am, as a person.

Our minds and intellect are honed by the work we do in the 3-5 years that we take to do it, but there is so much more in our passions, our dreams and our boundless imagination that we owe to ourselves to equally honour. For that reason - I go by the title Priestess Bairavee Balasubramaniam, PhD.

Blessings to All.