

Executive Summary



The image above of visibly Muslim men being lynched is a tweet posted on an RSS official account. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is an India-based organization that sits at the core of a large network of groups seeking to remake India into a country run by and for Hindus first at the expense of the country's dizzying slew of minority groups. It has domestic and international organs that seize political power, perpetuate its supremacist ideologies, and actively participate in communal violence. This outlook is commonly known as **"Hindutva."**

But it's vital to remember that the RSS's modernist and ideological summation of thousands of years of Hindu practice and thought in no way represents the diversity of the hundreds of millions of Hindus who have no interest in adopting the Hindutva ideology. The RSS, which presents itself as the authentic unifying voice of the Hindus, is just one fundamentalist group that seeks to justify its exclusionary vision and communal violence against India's minority groups.

This exclusionary vision is grounded in ideological frameworks propagated by founding RSS figures such as Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, and Madhavrao Sashivrao Gowalkar, whose works cite Nazi Germany as an aspirational example:

“If we Hindus in India grow stronger, in time these Moslem friends of the league will have to play the part of German-Jews.”

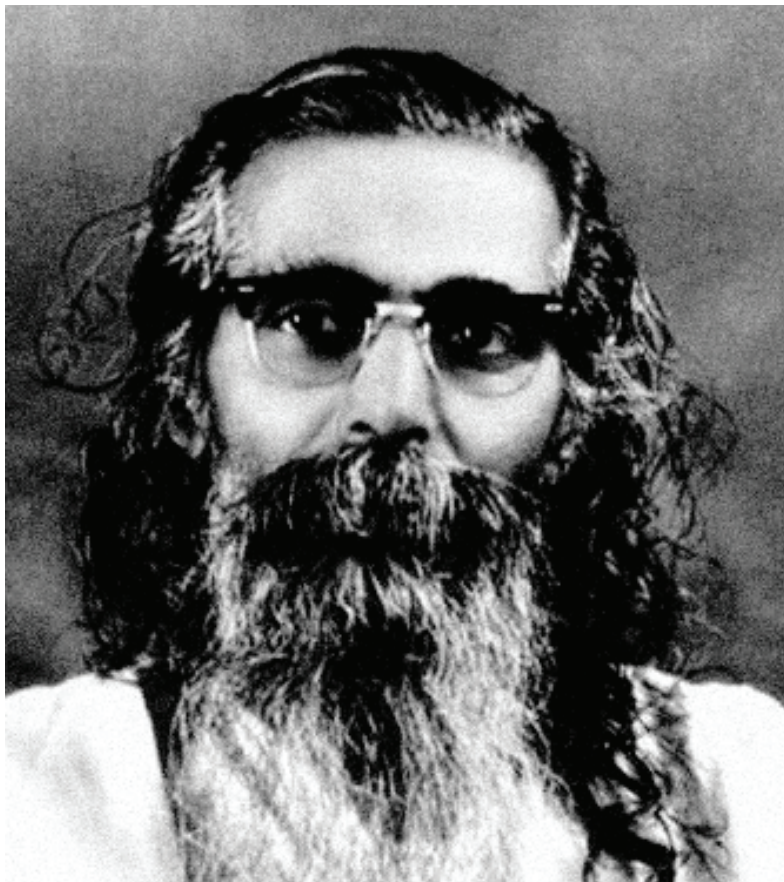
— V. D. Savarkar



Vinayak Damodar "Veer" Savarkar
(Taken from: <https://tinyurl.com/2p89k7nu>)

“To keep up the purity of the race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the Semitic races – the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated to one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindusthan to learn and profit by.”

— M. Z. Gowalkar



Madhavrao Sadashivrao Golwalkar, Hindutva ideologue and second ever chief of the RSS. (Wikimedia Commons, taken from: Indian Express <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/m-s-golwalkar-gurujirss-6272945/>)

Though India's largest religious minority is Muslim, the RSS network has victimized a host of other non-Hindu groups such as Sikhs and Christians, along with members of Dalit communities (pejoratively known as "untouchables"). Although Muslims are a central target of the RSS's supremacist actions, they are, as this report shows, by no means the network's only target in India and across the world.

It is therefore vital that law and policy makers around the world who guard the stability of liberal, multicultural democracy, become aware of the RSS's global machinations and networks, as well as how its overall apparatus extends into Canada while posing challenges to our commitment to tolerance, understanding, and peace.

This paper raises concerns about the following aspects of the RSS's activities in Canada:

Humanitarian Relief, Social Services, and Fundraising : The RSS is the core, parent member of a network of related organizations known as the Sangh Parivar. A significant segment of the network is devoted to "sewa," (sometimes written as "seva") or service, the term used for both humanitarian relief efforts abroad as well as social and health services provided within India, particularly in its remote and tribal regions. These sewa-related organs help legitimize and perpetuate the RSS's ideologies, while entrenching its wider presence under the guise of an ideologically neutral humanitarian network. Various sewa organizations abroad exist primarily to fundraise for efforts linked to the RSS in India. (Many groups outside of the RSS and Sangh Parivar perform legitimate and non-politicized sewa, including many Sikh relief agencies who also use the term to describe their own aid efforts. Our focus here is on the RSS's use of sewa to further its Hindutva ideologies.)

Education, Ideology, Shakhas: Various Sangh (RSS-related) organizations are operational in countries across the world, including Canada. Chief among this effort are educational chapters, or shakhas, that prepare both youth and adults through ideological training, ceremony, and religious instruction—all linked to the supremacist ideas of the RSS's founders and ideologues.

Global Political Influence: Much of the RSS's progressive drift from the margins of Indian and Hindu society towards the mainstream has to do with its main political organ, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s two successive federal election wins in 2014 and 2019, when the Hindu nationalist party captured majorities in Parliament. The BJP also projects its interests abroad through a network of lobbying organizations called the Overseas Friends of the BJP (OFBJP), among other strategies and tactics.

Islamophobic, Anti-Sikh, and Casteist Rhetoric: Sadly, yet predictably, the presence and entrenchment of the RSS and its affiliates in Canada has already resulted in a litany of Islamophobic, anti-Sikh, and casteist incidents that resemble the communal tensions being exploited and exacerbated by the RSS in India. This report includes a detailed list of these incidents, which represent only a sampling of a disturbing trend that illustrates the effects of RSS ideology in Canada, as well as those who these ideologies seek to victimize.

