

Chairing the Hindu Trust

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RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat addresses the 'One World One Humanity' event, in New York on 29 August. ANI

How the RSS is turning into a global holding body for [Hindu](#) causes.

For over a hundred years, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) built itself on a paradox where they had continental aspirations for Hindu civilization, but had the cautiousness of a village [organization](#). Founders of the RSS would describe Hindu society in dharma, sanskriti, and rashtra, but the real structures of the RSS, the shakha, pracharak, the annual Vijayadashami address, would still be domestic. Even with the massive growth of the Hindu diaspora in North America, Britain, the Gulf Region, and Southeast Asia, the RSS would consider its overseas affiliates like the HSS, the numerous Hindu Swayamsevak Sanghs outside of India, as auxiliary chapters of the RSS instead of as the fronts of a truly global organization. The RSS would be reluctant to take on the role that its ideology suggests, which is that of a trust focused on the interests, anxieties, and aspirations of all [Hindus](#) everywhere and not just Hindus of India.

That posture is now visibly changing. The centenary year of the RSS, spanning 2025 and 2026, has been an opportunity for the organization to launch a novel approach to outreach abroad, which is now much more expansive, to say the least. In April 2026, ten days were spent by Sarkaryavah Dattatreya Hosabale in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Germany, interacting with those who shape the opinion of the West, not the diaspora, but rather institutions such as Chatham House in the UK, Stanford University and the Hudson Institute in the USA, and the policy circles in Berlin. This was followed in August and September 2026 by a threenation tour of the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom by Sarsanghchalak Mohan Bhagwat, where he addressed a gathering of over 5,000 people at Madison Square Garden and addressed leaders of various faiths

during his stay in London. This was the first visit by an RSS chief to the United States since 2018, and unlike the last, lower-profile visit to the World Hindu Congress in Chicago, this was an overt diplomatic outreach on behalf of Hindus around the world.

What makes this event important is not that senior RSS functionaries went abroad, as pracharaks have travelled abroad before to look after HSS branches. What is important is that for the first time the RSS openly states its reason for doing so. The reason for Bhagwat's travel has been stated in the RSS General Secretary's office in three parts. First, to present what they term a factual and positive account of India, Hindu society and the Sangh against what they call global misrepresentations and propaganda. Second, to extend the message of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam to other nations. Third, and most importantly, to engage in dialogue with what they term "mainstream societies" of many nations concerning the rights and challenges of Hindus and people of Indian origin residing there.

This is important. It means that the RSS believes that it has a right to speak for the Hindu community outside the territorial limits of the Indian Union. This is the language of a holding trust—a body where practitioners looking after different interests of the community within different jurisdictions, come together—as opposed to the language of a cultural organization of a nation with sister concerns abroad.

This reading is further supported by venue choice. Hosabale did not use his ten days to speak to Swayamsevaks on diaspora shakhas alone. He also spent those days at Chatham House and the Hudson Institute. These think-tanks give the West the tools it needs to analyse India, Hindu nationalism, and other topics focused on the subcontinent's religious freedom and minority issues. It was an effort to take on the intellectual infrastructure that produces the "propaganda and misconceptions" that the RSS believes it is up against. This method is a shift away from solidifying the diaspora at the grassroots level to a higher-level engagement of the "civilizational discourse". Bhagwat's itinerary combined the mass spectacle of Madison Square Garden with what is arguably a more significant and more subtle engagement: a multifaith leader meeting in New York with 175 participants of different [religions](#), and more interfaith work in London. The RSS is not exclusively rallying its own; it is seeking out the larger [religious](#) and political landscape of the countries where large Hindu populations reside.

Events occurring overseas cannot be dissociated from those occurring within India in the same centenary year. Simultaneously with the overseas turn, the RSS has organized what they call the Griha Sampark Abhiyan or door to door contact program in order to engage with tens of millions of households, in addition to more than a hundred thousand [Hindu](#) Samaj Sammelans at the mandal and basti levels, and thousands of social harmony meetings all over India. In Hosabale's words, the aim is to organize Hindu society as a coherent, confident, and a harmonious society, an aim he has noted is a difficult task given the vastness and diversity of Hindu society, yet one he now feels is possible. The campaigns at home and abroad, if we may call them that, are two fronts of the same project.

The consolidation of Hindu society at home is a prerequisite for representing it abroad, and the external projection of the concerns of the Hindu society is meant to enhance the civilizational self-confidence the RSS wishes to nurture at home. A resolution from the RSS's Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha calling for the support of Hindus and minorities in Bangladesh also shows a readiness to speak about the conditions of Hindus beyond

India in the way that was previously the domain of the diplomatic circuit or independent activities of the diaspora, formally and as an organization.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the BJP have come to a similar understanding with the latter's increasing jurisdiction in India. As the party and its ideology expand, there are increasing antagonistic pressures in different regions. In New York, Zohran Mamdani, the Mayor, protested against Bhagwat's speech before the speech was delivered, and after it, about 100 Democrats signed a petition saying that American Hindus' donations should be investigated.

The RSS does not have the structure of becoming a unified command structuring world Hindudom in a formal or informal sense. The diaspora Hindu organizations that the RSS communicates with have their professional organizations, leaders, and responsibilities. The RSS has framed its role within the context of dialogue and moral persuasion. The RSS has this posture, which was practically defined until recently. The sense was that the RSS would be issuing a global coordination, which would give it the same criticism that it has received for years, that of transnational political ambition. The RSS has concluded through this that the global process has the capability of dissolving all boundaries, and therefore, silence regarding international goals will be less beneficial than an intentional and planned articulation of them.

Better to say it now than to let others think, distort, or deny it later. It seems better to Hindus for BJP to state its position of advocating the interests and rights of Hindus around the world, as opposed to leaving everyone to guess. How this position will be perceived—be it positively, negatively, or in a different way—by the societies and by the Indian diaspora, which is not at all unified in its relations to the RSS, as it will greatly define the next years of RSS activities, especially its centenary programs in India. One thing is for sure, the direction is clear: one hundred years after its foundation as a completely Indian cultural organization with no intention to operate outside India, the RSS for the first time states that as a global organization, it intends to have a role to defend the interests of all Hindus.

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