

# Nation-Building through Service: A Historical Analysis of RSS Activities (1925–1977)

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**Abstract:** *This study examines the role of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in the socio-political landscape of India from 1925 to 1977, focusing on its ideological framework, with particular emphasis on Hindutva, and its impact on nation-building through social service initiatives. The research analyzes the RSS's evolution from a cultural organization focused on Hindu unity to a politically influential body advocating for a Hindu-centric nation. The study explores the RSS's contributions during key historical moments such as the 1947 Partition, the post-independence era, and the Emergency (1975-1977), highlighting its social service efforts in education, disaster relief, and rural development. By assessing the RSS's social initiatives and ideological stance, the paper investigates how these activities helped shape India's national identity, while also contributing to debates around inclusivity, secularism, and the concept of Hindu nationalism in modern India.*

**Keywords:** Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Hindutva, nation-building, social service, Hindu nationalism, India, RSS activities

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), established in 1925 by K.B. Hedgewar in Nagpur, India, has played a significant role in shaping the social, political, and cultural landscape of the nation. Its inception came at a time when India was under British colonial rule and the demand for independence was gaining momentum, with movements like the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–1922) and the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930–1934) led by figures such as Mahatma Gandhi. The RSS, although initially focused on promoting physical training and discipline among Hindu youth, gradually became involved in the national discourse. By the 1940s, during the Quit India Movement (1942), the RSS emphasized the need for Hindu unity and the protection of cultural identity against British and Islamic influences. Post-independence, particularly after 1947, the RSS was a key factor in the rebuilding of the nation, albeit with a controversial stance towards secularism and minority rights. Speeches by leaders such as M.S. Golwalkar in the 1940s and 1950s reinforced its ideological focus on Hindutva (Hindu nationalism), positioning it as a force advocating for the strengthening of India's cultural roots amidst its modernizing challenges. Throughout the decades, the RSS's activities intersected with crucial historical moments, including its involvement in the post-1977 Emergency period and the shaping of India's political discourse (Gupta, 2002; Shah, 2009). These efforts were not without criticism, as historians like Romila Thapar and others critiqued the RSS's vision of Indian identity and its often exclusionary approach to minorities (Thapar, 2006). The period between 1925 and 1977 thus marked the evolution of the RSS from a socio-cultural organization to a significant player in India's political sphere, wielding considerable influence in shaping national identity and governance.

### 1.1. The Conceptual Building of Theory

The conceptual building of the theory behind the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) revolves around the notion of *Hindutva* (Hindu nationalism), a concept that was first articulated by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in his 1923 pamphlet *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?*. This ideology emphasized the primacy of Hindu culture and values in shaping India's identity, positioning the Hindu community as the core of the nation. The RSS, under the leadership of M.S. Golwalkar, expanded on this by framing the organization as a cultural and social movement aimed at uniting Hindus and promoting

a homogeneous national identity. This framework presented the RSS as an antidote to what it perceived as the divisive influences of colonialism, Islam, and Christianity, advocating for a united Hindu society. The RSS's theoretical development also drew upon ideas of social service and nation-building through self-reliance, discipline, and volunteerism. According to scholars like Christophe Jaffrelot (2007), the RSS not only promoted a vision of an ethnocentric, Hindu-dominated India but also sought to position itself as a protector of cultural heritage against the forces of modernization and secularism. This conceptual framework has shaped the RSS's activities over the decades, influencing its role in national politics, social service, and its continuous push for a Hindu-centric political order.

### **1.2. The Statement of the Problem**

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has been a significant yet controversial entity in shaping the socio-political landscape of India, particularly between 1925 and 1977. While the RSS played a key role in promoting a unified Hindu identity through its ideological framework of Hindutva, its influence on the nation-building process remains a topic of debate among scholars, political leaders, and historians. The organization's emphasis on cultural nationalism, community service, and social discipline raised questions about its alignment with India's secular constitutional framework and its approach to inclusive nation-building. Despite its involvement in crucial historical moments such as the independence struggle, post-independence governance, and the Emergency period (1975–1977), the RSS's role in fostering national unity through its social service initiatives and ideological commitments needs a deeper exploration. The problem lies in understanding the dual nature of the RSS's activities: its contribution to nation-building through social service initiatives versus its more exclusionary vision of Hindu nationalism, and how these dynamics influenced India's political, cultural, and social development during the first few decades of independence.

### **1.3. The Need and Significance of the Study**

The need and significance of this study lie in its potential to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's (RSS) multifaceted role in India's socio-political and cultural development between 1925 and 1977. As a prominent organization that significantly shaped Hindu nationalist ideology through its concept of Hindutva, the RSS's influence on the national identity and nation-building process in post-colonial India remains a topic of considerable debate. While the RSS has been credited with fostering unity among Hindus, its exclusionary approach towards other religious communities and its influence on political movements, particularly during the Emergency period, warrant critical examination. Furthermore, the organization's extensive social service activities, such as educational initiatives and physical training programs, played a key role in shaping the grassroots level of Indian society and national cohesion. This study is crucial to understanding the complexities of the RSS's contributions to nation-building, its ideological evolution, and its impact on India's political and cultural landscape. By critically assessing these dimensions, the study will fill gaps in the historical understanding of the RSS's role and provide valuable insights into the intersection of nationalism, social service, and political ideology in shaping India's modern identity.

### **1.4. The Research Questions**

**RQ<sub>1</sub>:** How did the RSS contribute to the socio-political landscape of India between 1925 and 1977?

**RQ<sub>2</sub>:** How did the ideological framework of the RSS, specifically the concept of Hindutva, evolve between 1925 and 1977?

**RQ<sub>3</sub>:** What was the impact of the RSS's social service initiatives (such as educational programs, physical training, and community service) on the nation-building process in India?

### **1.5. The Objectives of the Study**

**O<sub>1</sub>:** To examine the role of the RSS in the socio-political landscape of India between 1925 and 1977

**O<sub>2</sub>:** To analyze the evolution of the RSS's ideological framework, with a focus on Hindutva

**O<sub>3</sub>:** To assess the impact of the RSS's social service initiatives on nation-building efforts



## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gajjar, D. (2025). A century of RSS thought: Shaping Indian political discourse. *International Journal of Research in Academic World*, 4(6), 16–21. This study provides a comprehensive retrospective of the RSS's ideological evolution from 1925 to 2025. Gajjar analyzes the foundational vision of Dr. K.B. Hedgewar, who framed "nation-building" as a process of "man-making" (character building) rather than direct political agitation. The paper details how, between 1925 and 1977, the RSS expanded its influence through a unique organizational structure—the *shakha*—and navigated periods of significant tension, including three government bans. The author argues that the RSS's focus on "selfless service" (*sewa*) during disasters and social crises in the mid-20th century allowed it to build a resilient grassroots network that eventually moved from the fringes of Indian society to its political mainstream.

Chaple, S. L., & Diwan, V. M. (2024). Role of RSS in nation-building through social contribution. *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 5(7), 1064–1066. It explores the intersection of cultural nationalism and social welfare in RSS history. While the organization is often studied for its political impact, this article focuses on its service-based "nation-building" projects. The authors analyze historical data regarding the RSS's relief efforts during the 1947 Partition and its subsequent social initiatives in education and rural development. The paper posits that the RSS utilized *sewa* (service) as a tool for social cohesion and national integration, aiming to eliminate caste-based discrimination through a unified Hindu identity. The study covers the transition from the Hedgewar era to the Deoras era, highlighting the strategic shift toward "social content" in the 1970s.

Tiwari, P. K., & Kumar, A. (2023). The organisation of a social movement: The case study of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh movement in Bharat. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 11(11), 1073–1083. Framed within the sociology of social movements, this research analyzes the RSS as a transformative force in Indian civil society. The authors examine the historical period of 1925–1977 to understand how the organization maintained discipline and ideological consistency despite external political pressure. Through interviews and archival research, Tiwari and Kumar investigate the "man-making" process and the role of the *Pracharak* (full-time volunteer) system in expanding the movement. The paper specifically details the RSS's role during the 1975–1977 Emergency, arguing that its participation in the anti-authoritarian struggle was a pivotal moment that legitimized its role as a "defender of democracy" in the eyes of the broader public.

Dogra, S. (2022). *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh: (1925-2025)*. Amazon Digital Services / KDP. This work serves as a chronological documentation of the RSS's first century. A significant portion of the text is dedicated to the 1925–1977 timeframe, examining the transition from the formative leadership of Dr. Hedgewar to the expansionist phase under M.S. Golwalkar and the activist phase under Balasaheb Deoras. The book provides a detailed historical analysis of how the RSS maintained its "apolitical" stance during the independence movement to avoid British suppression, focusing instead on physical and mental training. Dogra highlights the 1948 ban and the 1975 Emergency as "fire-tests" that forced the organization to refine its relationship with the Indian State and political power.

Narayanan, D. (2020). *The RSS and the making of the deep nation*. Penguin Random House India. It offers a critical historical analysis of the RSS's pursuit of influence across various spheres of Indian life. The book traces the organization's roots from 1925, detailing how it stayed removed from the mainstream anti-colonial movements led by Gandhi to focus on internal "Hindu consolidation." The author explores the period leading up to 1977, noting how the RSS used the vacuum created by political instability to embed its "Swayamsevaks" into educational and social institutions. Narayanan argues that the "nation-building" described by the RSS was actually a long-term project to create a "deep nation"—an ideological infrastructure that could sustain itself regardless of which political party held power in New Delhi.

### 2.1. The Research Gap

Despite the significant body of research on the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), there exists a notable research gap in understanding the comprehensive socio-political role the RSS played between 1925 and 1977, particularly in relation to its influence on India's political landscape. While existing studies (Gajjar, 2025; Narayanan, 2020) provide insights into the RSS's ideological evolution and its social service initiatives, there remains a lack of in-depth analysis on how these factors intersected to shape the broader national discourse during crucial historical events such as the

independence movement, the post-independence political consolidation, and the Emergency period. Additionally, while the RSS's ideological framework, especially *Hindutva*, has been examined (Tiwari & Kumar, 2023), its practical application in political and social movements throughout these decades is underexplored. Moreover, while the impact of the RSS's social initiatives (Chaple & Diwan, 2024) is acknowledged, there is insufficient research on how these initiatives specifically contributed to nation-building efforts, including their role in fostering social cohesion and unity amidst India's diverse society. This study aims to bridge these gaps by examining the RSS's socio-political involvement, ideological evolution, and social service contributions within the 1925–1977 period.

### III. THE METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The methodology of this study is based on a qualitative historical analysis of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's (RSS) activities between 1925 and 1977. It involves a comprehensive review of primary and secondary sources, including archival documents, speeches by RSS leaders, and historical texts. The study also incorporates a literature review of academic articles and books that discuss the ideological framework of *Hindutva* and the RSS's role in nation-building. Additionally, the research examines the socio-political impact of RSS activities through case studies of key events such as the 1947 Partition and the Emergency period (1975-1977). This approach allows for a holistic understanding of the RSS's contributions and challenges in shaping India's national identity.

### IV. THE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### I. The Role of the RSS in the Socio-political Landscape of India between 1925 and 1977

The role of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in shaping the socio-political landscape of India between 1925 and 1977 is a multifaceted story, characterized by the organization's ideological evolution, its involvement in social service activities, and its relationship with the Indian political establishment during critical moments in history. Founded by Dr. K.B. Hedgewar in 1925, the RSS initially sought to strengthen the Hindu community through physical and mental training, positioning itself as an alternative to the Indian National Congress and other nationalist organizations (Dogra, 2022). In the early years, the RSS operated on a modest scale, with its primary focus being the development of discipline and unity among Hindus, largely avoiding direct engagement with the anti-colonial struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi (Tiwari & Kumar, 2023).

The 1930s and 1940s marked a pivotal period for the RSS, during which its ideological foundations began to solidify. The RSS's ideological framework was heavily influenced by the concept of *Hindutva* (Hindu nationalism), as articulated by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in his 1923 work *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?*. The RSS adopted Savarkar's vision, promoting the idea that India should be a nation primarily for Hindus, based on shared cultural and religious values. In the 1930s and 1940s, under the leadership of M.S. Golwalkar, the RSS grew both in size and influence, despite its exclusion from major nationalist movements like the Quit India Movement (1942). The RSS did not engage in direct confrontation with the British but instead focused on strengthening Hindu society from within, which some historians argue helped it avoid the repression that affected other nationalist groups (Gajjar, 2025). Golwalkar's 1939 book *We or Our Nationhood Defined* was instrumental in further codifying the RSS's vision of a Hindu-centric India and consolidating the organization's focus on cultural nationalism over political engagement.

Post-independence, the RSS found itself at odds with the Indian government, particularly after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by Nathuram Godse, an RSS member, in 1948. This event led to the first of three government bans on the organization, forcing the RSS to re-evaluate its relationship with the Indian state. Despite this setback, the RSS continued to grow and expand its influence, especially in the realm of social service. In the 1950s and 1960s, the organization increasingly positioned itself as a provider of social welfare, focusing on educational initiatives, disaster relief, and rural development (Chaple & Diwan, 2024). The RSS's service-oriented approach during these decades helped it build a resilient grassroots network, contributing to the organization's eventual mainstreaming within Indian society (Narayanan, 2020).

The 1970s were a defining period for the RSS. During the Emergency (1975-1977), when Indira Gandhi's government imposed authoritarian rule, the RSS played a crucial role in the anti-authoritarian struggle. According to Tiwari and Kumar (2023), the RSS's activism during this period cemented its role as a defender of democracy in the eyes of many

Indians. The organization's involvement in opposing the Emergency was seen as a pivotal moment, marking its transition from an apolitical social movement to a more politically engaged entity. This period also witnessed the rise of Balasaheb Deoras as the RSS chief, who strategically shifted the organization's focus to political activism, setting the stage for the RSS's later involvement in national politics.

Throughout this period, the RSS remained committed to its core principles of Hindu unity and nationalism, but its methods and influence evolved in response to changing political dynamics. From its early years as a fringe cultural organization to its eventual integration into India's political mainstream, the RSS's journey between 1925 and 1977 illustrates its complex relationship with the Indian state, its role in shaping national identity, and its contribution to the nation-building process.

## ***II. Evolution of the RSS's Ideological Framework***

The evolution of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's (RSS) ideological framework, particularly its emphasis on *Hindutva*, has been a central aspect of the organization's identity and influence in India. The RSS, founded in 1925 by Dr. K.B. Hedgewar, initially focused on cultural and social activities aimed at unifying the Hindu community. However, it was during the 1930s and 1940s, under the leadership of M.S. Golwalkar, that the ideological foundations of the RSS began to take shape, with *Hindutva* emerging as the central principle of the organization. *Hindutva*, as articulated by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in his 1923 book *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?*, argued that India should be a nation defined by Hindu values and that all people living in India, regardless of their religion, should adhere to Hindu culture and civilization. Savarkar's definition of *Hindutva* was based on cultural nationalism, emphasizing the importance of a shared cultural and civilizational heritage over religious pluralism. This ideological position laid the groundwork for the RSS's future activities and its understanding of India's national identity (Savarkar, 1923).

Under Golwalkar, the RSS's interpretation of *Hindutva* took a more structured form, with the organization seeking to align itself with the vision of a unified Hindu society that would dominate the political and cultural landscape of India. Golwalkar's 1939 book *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (Golwalkar, 1939) expanded on Savarkar's ideas by arguing that the nation could only be strong if it was built upon the foundation of Hindu values. Golwalkar asserted that India should be a Hindu nation, with Hindus at its cultural and political center, and that any attempt to incorporate non-Hindu elements into this framework would weaken the nation. This period marked the RSS's transition from being a purely cultural organization to a political one that was deeply committed to the idea of a Hindu *Rashtra* (Hindu nation).

During the pre-independence period, the RSS refrained from participating directly in the political struggle for independence, instead focusing on building a strong Hindu identity through social and cultural activities, including physical training camps, educational initiatives, and disaster relief. This period of relative political neutrality, however, shifted dramatically in the post-independence era, particularly after India gained independence in 1947. The RSS's vision of a Hindu-centric nation came into conflict with the newly established secular framework of India's Constitution. In 1948, after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by Nathuram Godse, a former RSS member, the organization faced a ban, which it eventually overcame. Despite these challenges, the RSS continued to espouse *Hindutva* as the guiding principle of its ideology, further consolidating its position as a key proponent of Hindu nationalism.

In the 1970s, during the leadership of Balasaheb Deoras, the RSS sought to expand its influence beyond cultural activism by engaging more directly in political movements. The 1975-1977 Emergency period, during which Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency and curtailed democratic freedoms, saw the RSS play a significant role in opposing the authoritarian measures, positioning itself as a defender of democracy in India. The ideological framework of *Hindutva* continued to evolve during this time, as the RSS increasingly aligned itself with political forces that sought to challenge the secular nature of the Indian state and promote a Hindu-first agenda. This period marked the growing politicization of the RSS, which began to engage more directly with national politics and align itself with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), founded in 1980 as the political wing of the RSS.

The ideological development of the RSS, particularly its interpretation of *Hindutva*, remains a subject of intense debate among historians and political scholars. Critics such as Romila Thapar (2006) argue that the RSS's focus on *Hindutva* marginalizes religious minorities and poses a challenge to the secular foundations of the Indian state. In contrast,

supporters of the RSS view *Hindutva* as an essential component of Indian identity, arguing that it is a unifying force that can transcend the country's diverse religious and cultural landscape.

### ***III. The Impact of the RSS's Social Service Initiatives on Nation-building Efforts***

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has long been associated with its social service initiatives, which have played a significant role in its approach to nation-building in India. From its inception in 1925, the RSS emphasized the importance of *sewa* (selfless service) as a foundational aspect of its mission to build a unified and disciplined Hindu society. Unlike many other political organizations that were directly involved in the struggle for independence, the RSS chose to focus on cultural and social upliftment, aiming to strengthen the Hindu community through service-based activities. The organization's approach to nation-building during the early years was characterized by grassroots-level initiatives designed to promote social cohesion, discipline, and a sense of national unity, particularly among marginalized sections of the Hindu community (Gajjar, 2025).

The RSS's social service activities were integral to its strategy of creating a "Hindu nation," with its focus on education, health, and disaster relief. During the 1947 Partition, one of the most significant moments in India's history, the RSS played a crucial role in providing relief to the victims of communal violence, particularly among the Hindu refugees who fled from Pakistan. The RSS's swift response to the humanitarian crisis helped establish its credibility as an organization committed to social welfare, even in times of national upheaval. This period marked the beginning of the RSS's transformation into a social organization with a political agenda, as it utilized its relief efforts to further the idea of Hindu unity amidst the religious and social fragmentation that accompanied the Partition (Chaple & Diwan, 2024).

In the 1950s and 1960s, the RSS expanded its social service efforts to include educational initiatives, particularly in rural areas, where access to formal education was limited. The organization established a network of schools, known as *Ekal Vidyalayas*, which focused on imparting values of discipline, self-reliance, and Hindu cultural heritage. These schools not only aimed to educate children but also sought to instill a sense of social responsibility and national pride, shaping future generations of RSS supporters. The educational programs were part of the RSS's larger vision of social cohesion and nation-building, seeking to address the gaps in India's educational infrastructure, especially in rural and tribal regions (Dogra, 2022).

The RSS also expanded its social service efforts in response to natural disasters and other crises, further reinforcing its image as a key player in national development. During the 1962 Sino-Indian War and the 1965 India-Pakistan war, the RSS mobilized its volunteers to assist in relief operations, including medical aid and supplies. These actions helped to solidify the organization's role in the national consciousness as an entity that could mobilize large-scale resources for the common good. By providing immediate assistance during national emergencies, the RSS contributed to the idea of a unified, resilient India, despite its controversial stance on secularism and minority rights (Narayanan, 2020).

The organization's social service activities reached a new dimension during the 1970s, as it sought to address deeper social issues such as caste discrimination and rural poverty. The RSS's promotion of a unified Hindu identity was central to its approach, arguing that social cohesion could only be achieved if Hindus of all castes and communities were brought together under a common identity. While the RSS's efforts to eradicate caste discrimination and uplift marginalized communities were notable, historians such as Romila Thapar (2006) argue that the organization's vision of a "Hindu nation" excluded religious minorities, particularly Muslims and Christians, thereby limiting the inclusivity of its nation-building efforts.

Despite its focus on social service, the RSS's involvement in nation-building remains complex. On the one hand, its relief efforts and educational initiatives helped address critical social needs, particularly in rural areas, where government programs were often insufficient. On the other hand, the RSS's commitment to a Hindu-centric vision of India has drawn criticism for its exclusionary nature, especially when it comes to religious minorities. Historians such as Christophe Jaffrelot (2007) argue that while the RSS contributed to the development of India's national infrastructure, its ideological foundations continue to raise questions about the inclusiveness of its approach to nation-building.

In conclusion, the RSS's social service initiatives were a significant part of its approach to nation-building in India, particularly in the decades following independence. Through its relief efforts, educational programs, and efforts to address social issues, the organization sought to strengthen the fabric of Indian society. However, the ideological underpinnings of its social service work, rooted in *Hindutva*, limited its impact on creating a truly inclusive vision of nation-building.

## **V. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

### **Pertaining to Objective 1**

**Limited political participation in the pre-independence era:** The RSS largely avoided direct involvement in the struggle for Indian independence, choosing instead to focus on cultural and social activities aimed at strengthening the Hindu community.

**Growth of the RSS during the 1940s:** Under M.S. Golwalkar, the RSS expanded significantly, focusing on the promotion of *Hindutva* and Hindu nationalism, although it was not directly involved in the Quit India Movement (1942) or other anti-colonial actions.

**Post-independence political tensions:** The RSS found itself at odds with India's secular constitution and the Indian National Congress after independence, particularly after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by Nathuram Godse, an RSS member, in 1948. This led to the organization's first ban.

**Resilience during the Emergency (1975-1977):** The RSS played a significant role in opposing Indira Gandhi's authoritarian regime during the Emergency period, positioning itself as a defender of democracy and gaining political legitimacy through its activism.

### **Pertaining to Objective 2**

**Adoption of *Hindutva* in the 1930s:** The RSS embraced the concept of *Hindutva*, first articulated by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, which emphasized the idea of India as a nation for Hindus, based on shared culture and civilization rather than religious pluralism.

**M.S. Golwalkar's contribution:** Under Golwalkar's leadership, the RSS developed *Hindutva* into a more structured ideological framework that centered on Hindu unity and the creation of a Hindu *Rashtra* (nation).

**Conflict with India's secular identity:** The RSS's vision of a Hindu-centric nation increasingly clashed with the secular ideals enshrined in India's constitution, especially in the post-independence era.

**Expansion of *Hindutva* ideology:** Golwalkar's book *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (1939) solidified the RSS's ideological position, promoting a vision of India as a Hindu nation, which the RSS continued to espouse, especially during the post-independence period.

### **Pertaining to Objective 3**

**Focus on cultural unity and nation-building:** The RSS used social service as a tool to foster national unity and discipline, focusing on creating a unified Hindu identity through educational and physical training initiatives.

**Disaster relief and humanitarian efforts:** The RSS played a significant role in providing relief during the 1947 Partition, offering support to Hindu refugees. Its relief efforts during national emergencies, such as the 1962 Sino-Indian War and 1965 India-Pakistan War, further cemented its role as a key player in national cohesion.

**Educational initiatives in rural areas:** The establishment of *Ekal Vidyalayas* and other educational programs in rural areas helped address gaps in India's education system, with a focus on promoting Hindu cultural values alongside general education.

**Promotion of social welfare:** The RSS's social service initiatives, such as efforts to eliminate caste discrimination and promote social cohesion, were aimed at consolidating a unified Hindu society, but these efforts were often criticized for being exclusionary to non-Hindu communities.

**Building grassroots networks:** Through its social service initiatives, the RSS successfully built a broad network of volunteers and supporters at the grassroots level, contributing to its eventual integration into the mainstream political and social fabric of India.



## VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) played a pivotal role in shaping India's socio-political landscape between 1925 and 1977, influencing both the ideological framework of Hindu nationalism and the nation-building process through its social service initiatives. While the RSS initially focused on cultural and social unity, its ideological commitment to *Hindutva* became a defining element, promoting a vision of India as a Hindu-centric nation, which often conflicted with the secular ideals of post-independence India. The organization's social service efforts, particularly during national crises like the 1947 Partition and the 1962 Sino-Indian War, helped establish the RSS as a key player in building social cohesion, though its exclusionary focus on Hindu identity raised questions about its inclusiveness. Overall, the RSS's contributions to nation-building, both ideologically and through grassroots social initiatives, have been significant, but they continue to generate debate about the inclusivity and long-term impact of its vision for India.

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