

29-X NEWS EDITORIAL

Promoting AYUSH Globally: India's Initiative to Enhance Traditional Medicine Awareness

The Ministry of AYUSH has embarked on a significant journey to elevate traditional Indian systems of medicine to a global platform. By launching a scheme aimed at promoting international cooperation, the Ministry is advancing the recognition of Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa, and Homoeopathy (AYUSH). This initiative underscores India's commitment to fostering global health and wellness through its ancient medical heritage. Central to this scheme is the establishment of AYUSH Chairs at five prominent foreign universities in Bangladesh, Australia, Mauritius, Latvia, and Malaysia. These Chairs serve as hubs for academic exchange, research, and public engagement, helping to integrate AYUSH systems into mainstream healthcare discussions. Indian experts stationed at these institutions bring a wealth of knowledge and serve as ambassadors of traditional medicine. The Ministry of AYUSH ensures their financial support, while host universities provide local hospitality, reflecting a balanced partnership. In a broader context, the Ministry has forged 24 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with foreign nations, including 15 with international institutes specifically for AYUSH Chairs. These strategic collaborations are part of a multifaceted approach to globalizing AYUSH. Additionally, scholarships for international students to study AYUSH in India and the establishment of 42 AYUSH Information Cells in 38 countries further strengthen this outreach. The objectives of the initiative are both ambitious and essential. By promoting international awareness of AYUSH, fostering academic and research collaborations, and supporting the development of AYUSH products and services, the Ministry aims to position India as a leader in traditional medicine. This effort also aligns with the increasing global interest in holistic and alternative healthcare systems, offering an opportunity to integrate AYUSH into modern health frameworks. India's vision extends beyond mere promotion; it seeks to build lasting relationships with global stakeholders. AYUSH Chairs are pivotal in achieving this by advancing research, enhancing educational opportunities, and advocating the scientific relevance of these traditional practices. As the world embraces holistic health approaches, India's efforts to globalize AYUSH come at a pivotal time. The initiative not only preserves and promotes India's rich heritage but also contributes to a healthier, more inclusive world. By bridging ancient wisdom with contemporary needs, AYUSH is well on its way to achieving the recognition it rightfully deserves on the global stage.

Blame it on Soros

The menacing spectre of the 'Soros network' and the wider 'foreign hand' has been gaining ground in the discourse of government functionaries

ASIMALI

After the 1920s and the 1930s, no era can be characterised as defined by the global right-wing as much as the present one. The present era arguably represents the high-water mark of the 'global Right' much more than the inter-war fascism of a century back. This is because right-wing movements now are not just ascendant in the Euro-Atlantic region but have also become deeply embedded in the governing structures of the rising middle powers: India, Israel, Turkey and, to a lesser extent, Brazil and Russia.

Among these middle powers, India definitely represents the pre-eminent case where right-wing forces have institutionalised their political and cultural dominance. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and the umbrella organisation, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, have integrated their everyday discourse within the discursive universes of the global Right, employing themes like 'Soros conspiracy' and 'cultural Marxism' against their political opponents.

In a recent book, *World of the Right: Radical Conservatism and Global Order*, a group of political scientists and international relations scholars have charted how this global right-wing upsurge "has transformed not only domestic politics but also international relations". These right-wing movements interact and learn from one another and, together, are shaping the global terms of engagement around powerful interpretative frameworks such as strategic autonomy, civilisational values, and multipolar orders. "While the various nationalist personalities and parties — from Trump in the US to Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Narendra Modi in India, to Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy, Marine Le Pen's Rassemblement National, and Viktor Orbán's Fidesz — are far from unified in their ideas and policies, a globally connected Right is emerging." The past week of the winter session of Parliament had become engulfed in a strident BJP offensive aimed at the Congress for 'colluding' with 'anti-India' forces backed by the American investor, George Soros, a favourite bugbear of the global Right, from the United States of America,



Turkey, Hungary to Russia, Brazil and beyond. This was the apparent answer to the Congress's questions on the relationship between Gautam Adani and the prime minister following the indictment of the businessman in a US court for allegedly orchestrating a \$250 million bribery scheme. The menacing spectre of the 'Soros network' and the wider 'foreign hand' has been gaining ground in the discourse of government functionaries. Last year, explaining the timing of the BBC documentary on Modi, the foreign minister, S. Jaishankar, told a friendly radio broadcaster: "I can't tell you if election season has started in India or not, but it has definitely started in London and New York." The vice-president, Jagdeep Dhankhar, similarly warned of a "sinister kind of politics that is sought to be practised from within and outside the country, to tarnish, taint the fair name of our governance, democratic polity and institutions." As the political commentator, Bharat Bhushan, had then observed: "The new narrative being enforced is that an envious world, upset with the regime's global influence, India's economic growth, and its military power, is trying for a regime change in 2024." The setback received by the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections has further supercharged the symbolic significance of the 'Soros conspiracy'.

The RSS was founded on the day of Vijayadashami in 1925 and the annual Vijayadashami address by the RSS sarsangchalak has since evolved into an event of central significance where the supreme guide reformulates the doctrine of the organisation in light of the present priorities of the RSS and to lay out its

stand on issues of contemporary politics. In his last two speeches, the RSS chief, Mohan Bhagwat, has begun focusing on the 'cultural Marxist' theme.

Drawing on the discourse of the global far-Right, Bhagwat last year defined "cultural Marxists or woke" as "deceitful and destructive forces" who claim to be working for "lofty goals" but whose "modus operandi involves taking control of the media and academia, and plunging education, culture, politics and social environment into confusion, chaos, and corruption." This year, Bhagwat delivered a wide-ranging exposition on the 'woke' phenomenon, drawing on protest movements from Bangladesh to the Arab spring and connected them to "similar evil attempts all around Bharat — especially in the border and tribal areas."

"Words like 'Deep State', 'Wokeism', 'Cultural Marxist' are in discussion these days. In fact, they are the declared enemies of all cultural traditions... Direct conflicts are created by finding fault lines in the society. An atmosphere of anarchy and fear is created by intensifying distrust and hatred towards the system, laws, governance, administration etc. This makes it easy to establish one's dominance over that country," said Bhagwat.

At a deeper level, the Hindu right-wing borrowing its conceptual signifiers from European right-wing/fascist vocabulary is hardly a new phenomenon. In 2022, the Italian researcher, Marzia Casolari, detailed the embryonic and extensive linkages between the European and the Hindu Right in the 1920s and in the 1930s in the book, *In the Shadow of the*

Swastika: The Relationships Between Indian Radical Nationalism, Italian Fascism and Nazism. Casolari's extensive research, conducted across archives in Italy, India, and the United Kingdom, brings to life the extraordinary influence Italian fascism exerted on the worldview of the Marathi press of the 1920s and the 1930s. Fascism was seen as a model that could transform India from a predominantly agrarian society into an emerging industrial power, much like Benito Mussolini had in the prevailing fascist propaganda through the instilling of discipline and order in a deeply divided society.

The stream of glowing articles on Mussolini and fascism, Casolari suggests, would have also influenced the RSS's founding figures. After all, the pre-eminent figures of both the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha, K.B. Hedgewar, M.S. Golwalkar, V.D. Savarkar and B.S. Moonje, all had Marathi as their mother tongue. Indeed, in 1931, Moonje famously went to Italy to study the functioning of the fascist mass organisations from where, Casolari suggests, the RSS drew several of its organisational ideas such as the structure of its basic units (shakhas). In Rome, Moonje met Mussolini himself and, later, praised the charismatic qualities of Il Duce (Great Leader). Thus, as Casolari writes, "by the late 1920s, the fascist regime and Mussolini had many supporters in Maharashtra. The aspects of Fascism, which appealed most to the Hindu nationalists, were, of course, the supposed shift of Italian society from chaos to order, and its militarization. This patently anti-democratic system was considered a positive alternative to democracy, seen as a typical British institution."

A key difference between inter-war fascism and the present, global right-wing ascendancy is that countries like India have now outgrown their European forebears and now constitute the more powerful historical force. Unlike the 'national populists' of the Western world, the right-wing regimes of middle-power nations like India, Turkey, Israel and Russia (to some extent) have more successfully grafted their Manichean depiction of the 'good people' and the 'evil elites' onto a shared religious symbology and a tangible arc of historical narrative.

Eye on England: Joe Root heaps praise on newcomer Harry Brook

'Brooky is by far and away the best player in the world at the minute. He can absorb pressure, he can apply it. He can whack you over your head for six. He can scoop you over his head for six. He can smack spin. He can smack seam'

AMIT ROY

Too much praise

With 36 centuries in 152 Tests, the 33-year-old Joe Root has been England's highest run scorer. But the former England captain has been toppled as his country's best batsman by the prolific newcomer, Harry Brook, who scored 171 and 123 in the first two Tests against New Zealand. Brook, who is 25, had scores of 153, 108, 11, 186, 109 and 317 in 24 Tests.

Root heaped extravagant praise on the young player who had seized his crown: "Brooky is by far and away the best player in the world at the minute. He can absorb pressure, he can apply it. He can whack you over your head for six. He can scoop you over his head for six. He can smack spin. He can smack seam." Such was the burden created by the extravagant praise that Brook was out on the first ball in the first innings in the third Test which England lost. In the second innings, he managed 1 from 6 balls. Root, meanwhile, scored 32 and 55, respectively.

On a separate issue, Sir Keir Starmer's Labour government has been condemned for slapping 20% value added tax on private school fees, making them unaffordable especially for aspirational Indians. As a consequence, a Labour critic has

pointed out that "many private schools will scale back or remove sports scholarships & bursaries. Look at the England cricket team who have just won a series in New Zealand most of whom had free or greatly reduced fees at private schools. Zak Crawley (Tonbridge), Ben Duckett (Stowe), Jacob Bethell (Rugby), Joe Root (Worksop College), Harry Brook (Sedbergh). Just to name the top five batsmen."

Festive treat

All religious festivals are celebrated at India House in London. Last week, there was a party where the high commissioner, Vikram Doraiswami, happily mixed Christmas with commerce. The Guest of honour was Pope Francis's most senior representative in the United Kingdom, Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendi. Tenor Anando Mukerjee from Calcutta led the singing of "Silent Night" and other carols. Refreshments included not only vegetable and lamb biriyani, but Indian mulled wine, single malt whisky from India, snacks such as Bombay Mix, and coffee grown in Coorg, Chikmagalur and Baba Budangiris in Karnataka.

There were also magnums of Chaliol & Charmetant champagne from a vineyard is owned by Rajiv Singhal. The label, which has writing in Devanagari, "dates back to the 19th

century when it was selected to be presented at the Calcutta International Exhibition in 1883 in honour of Queen Victoria".

Another England

The old Fleet Street, once home of Britain's national newspapers — still called the "Street of Shame" in Private Eye — has long disappeared. 135, Fleet Street was the home of The Daily Telegraph. Its two most senior reporters when I joined in my early twenties were Guy Rais, who passed away in 2015, and R Barry O'Brien, who died on December 3 — his news stories were always two columns in length. I meet former colleagues mostly at funerals now, as I will at Barry's, but Fleet Street was part of a now-vanished England.

Name it right

Sheela Banerjee says that when her father, Balaji Prasad Banerjee, arrived in Wolverhampton from West Bengal in 1959, aged 22, locals mangled his name. Some called him "Bill". She has now written a book, *What's in a Name: Friendship, Identity and History in Multicultural Britain*, looking at names that Indian parents in Britain give their children.

I discussed with her the latest findings from the Office for National Statistics that the most popular name for boys born in 2023 was Muhammad, with 4,661 children given

this name. "It's brilliant that parents have felt confident enough to give their kids an obviously non-British name," says Sheela. This was followed by Noah (4,382); Oliver (3,556); George (3,494); Leo (3,416); Arthur (3,387); Luca (3,195); Theodore (2,666); Oscar (2,632); and Henry (2,490).

For girls, the top 10 names were Olivia (2,906); Amelia (2,663); Isla (2,337); Lily (2,290); Freya (2,086); Ava (2,050); Ivy (1,997); Florence (1,899); Willow (1,833); and Isabella (1,795).

"Names are about power," argues Sheela. "How much of an effort people make to pronounce the name correctly is dependent on the power that exists between the majority and the group giving that name."

When the British went over to colonise India, you didn't find them changing their British names into variations of Indian names. And power has changed in this country in the last 50-60 years. We are now in the second, third and fourth generation of Asians and they won't tolerate having Balaji anglicised to Bill, for example."

The House of Lords last week suspended an uppity Englishwoman, Lady Catherine Meyer — her late husband was the British ambassador in Washington — for three weeks for referring to the Indian Lord Navnit Dholakia as "Lord Poppadom".