

India Vs Bharat

It is evident that for the progress and development of the country, we need to bring about urgent administrative reforms. Some of the legal and administrative arrangements bearing the colonial stamp have outlived their utility. The nation has to improve its global image as some of the new and old laws are still repressive. We have amended the Constitution to give a push to decentralization but concomitant legal and administrative changes are yet to be made. The government should review and revisit some of the appropriate legislations in the light of our experiences gathered during the Covid-19 pandemic instead of wasting scarce national resources, valuable time and energy on relatively unimportant and settled issues



Argumentative 'India' seems to have risen up to debate inter alia a relatively unimportant and settled issue raised by a section of people, although the issue has both national and international repercussions. The debate centres round the question of renaming India as Bharat instead of retaining the two names in terms of Article 1 of the Constitution of India. Speculation is rife about the timing of raising the issue because the national election is due next year.

The issue was raised thrice before the apex court earlier by filing PIL petitions. In 2015, the petitioner emphasized the historical significance of the word 'Bharat'. The apex court reprimanded another petitioner in May 2016 for wasting the valuable time of the Court. In 2020 another petition was filed for amending the Constitution to retain only Bharat as it would instill a sense of pride among the new generation, and would justify hard-won freedom of our ancestors. The Court advised the petitioner to make a representation to the Government of India.

What were the perceptions of the architects of the Constitution? Dr B R Ambedkar moved an amendment to draft Article 1, proposing, "India, that is, 'Bharat' shall be a Union of States." Describing the proposal as 'clumsy', HV Kamath wanted the word 'Bharat' to precede India or alternatively, "Hind, or, in the English language, India, shall be a Union of States."

Seth Govind Das, Kamalapati Tripathi, Ram Sahai, and Har Govind Pant joined the debate in favor of 'Bharat'. Das emphasized that 'India' was a relatively recent term introduced after the arrival of the Greeks in the region, while 'Bharat' had deep historical and cultural roots in ancient texts like the Vedas, Upanishads, Brahmanas, Mahabharata, and Puranas.

Ram Sahai supported 'Bharat,' citing examples from various Indian regions where it was commonly used, including leaders who referred to the country as 'Bharat' in their speeches. Among others Kamalapati Tripathi recalled cultural and philosophical richness associated with 'Bharat,' evoking the Rig Veda, Upanishads, teachings of Krishna and Buddha.

Apart from referring to Kalidasa, he observed that India was an insulting word given by the foreigners. The last speaker Hargovind Pant wanted the name of the country to be Bharatvarsha arguing its daily significance in religious practices and historical usage. But all the amendments were rejected.

However, the present attempt of the Indian state has evoked sharp adverse reactions from different quarters including media, civil society and the political community. First, it is perceived as a calculated political move on the part of the ruling party to pacify Hindus for electoral gains. The

Ramjanmabhumi issue, which is likely to be raised again at the time of inauguration before the elections, will be creating an atmosphere with strong emotional appeal to the Hindus. Incidentally, Savarkar attempted to Hinduize the name Hindustan. To territorialize Hindu identity, Savarkar needed to associate the territory with the word Sindhua even when he called that territory 'Bharat'.

Second, another view is that the ruling BJP feels threatened and nervous following the formation of a new opposition front using the acronym I.N.D.I.A. It is presumed that cresting an emotional wave in the country by proposing that the country be renamed as Bharat will be a powerful counter move to take the wind from the sails of the opposition. It is believed to generate a new brand of nationalism and the voters will be

years ago indicating that the name India has a fairly long tradition.

Second, the change of name does not have any material value either nationally or internationally. But, the fact remains that it is not an unprecedented attempt in recent times. Mention may be made of Turkey renamed as Turkiye (2022), Zaire renamed as Democratic Republic of Congo (1997), East Timor renamed as Timor Leste. The government can bring about changes in the name if it so likes. But on highly sensitive public issues, the government should proceed deftly and dexterously.

Third, one may smell a hidden agenda in raising the issue which the architects of the Constitution were able to settle peacefully. The forward march of the country needs to be fuelled by social consensus but this move might create rift, division and dissension. Shashi Tharoor had recently said in a Post on X that the name India has 'incalculable brand value built up over centuries'.

This brand value assumes special importance when the country is moving ahead, and has been able to carve out a place for itself in the global map. The change of name might generate unnecessary confusions within and outside the country.

Fourth, it calls for making a series of changes in the legislations, public documents and the like. It will not only be a time consuming but also an expensive process. The nation spends Rs. 2.5 lakh for each minute of running Parliament during sessions.

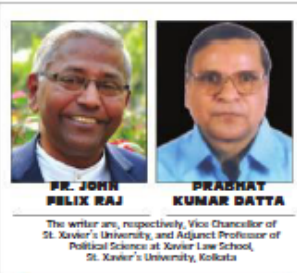
Fifth, the government does not have the mandate to change or restructure our Constitution in such a manner as to 'redesign our civilizational memory and its cultural software'.

Nor does it have the mandate to change the universal values of the freedom movement. As basic structure is still an undefined zone, one wonders if it attracts the provision of the basic structure. We should hold a national referendum to arrive at conclusions on some of the challenging issues.

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reminded of their glorious past. Thus the nationalist atmosphere with the Hindus at the centre-stage will be politically conducive for the ruling party.

Third, it is a diversionary tactic when the country is experiencing many challenges on social and economic fronts leading to discontent and sometimes disturbance. Rising inflation has been a matter of concern as it tends to worsen inequality or poverty by hitting income and savings harder for poorer or middle-income households.

Sectarian and ethnic strife in the Northeast is causing social tensions. One may recall the 2019 Balakot issue which helped the ruling party to reap some political dividends in the elections. It might also enthrone and boost the morale of the Sangh Parivar which plays an important role in mobilizing voters for the BJP in the electoral battle.

We have to carefully calculate the pros and cons before taking a final decision. First, historical evidence being presented in favour of retaining the word 'Bharat' instead of 'India, that is, 'Bharat' needs to be subjected to serious scrutiny and analysis. One finds the mention of the country known as India in the Old Testament, (Book of Esther: Chapter: 1, Verses: 1) written some 2,400