

“Petition to Rename ‘India’ as ‘Bharat’: A Way Forward”

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1.1. INTRODUCTION

India is a land of diversity harbouring various religions, colours, race, castes together in national affinity. It has for a long time, shackled by bruising chains of colonisation that plundered India of its national heritage and endeavoured to strip of ancient cultures and traditions for which the country its known and praised for.

The Struggle for Independence includes myriad actions, uncountable sacrifices, and above all the never-dying feeling of patriotism that helped the nation gain its independence and make its status sovereign freed from clutches of the colonialism. India got its independence in 1947 and became a sovereign state in 1950 but the colonists' impression continues to haunt to date because of the deep and pervasive control the British had over the administration and management. The time of colonialism is known as British India. While the most influential of British can be seen in laws formulated for Independent India including the most precious and supreme, Our Constitution, the indentation of colonist rule can be observed in the quotidian lifestyle. Since the departure of Britishers and the attainment of independence, our nation has covered a long journey in becoming a self-sufficing and self prosperous nation. Being the largest democracy in the world, we have accomplished quite a dominant position amongst third world countries. We have constantly strived to make India more reliable and outcast all the evils rooted in the society since ancient times and make advancement and progression in a way that it embraces the indigenous culture and traditions while respecting the need for accommodation of values.

1.2. RECENT DEVELOPMENT

Amid the outbreak of pandemic of COVID 19 which put the daily routine and work schedule at a halt due to its highly contagious nature and fatality rate, the lockdown was imposed nationwide to practice social distancing and self-isolation. The period witnessed oceans of PILs and petitions filed in the Supreme Court and High courts about different issues touching the contours of hardships faced by the people due to lockdown and pandemic. The most interesting yet controversial petition was filed in the Supreme Court seeking renaming of India as “**Bharat**” exclusively. The petition was filed by a person named “**Namah**” in which the Union of India is made the party. The petition was listed for hearing before the Apex Court on 2 June 2020. However, the similar petitions were filed before the Supreme court in the year 2016 seeking a change of name wherein the then Chief Justice T.S. Thakur reprimanded the petitioner saying that

“Every Indian has the right to choose between calling his country 'Bharat' or 'India' and the Supreme Court has no business to either dictate or decide for a citizen what he should call his country”.

In the instant petition, it was contended that the name India is derived from the Greek word “Indica” and argued that change in name was sought to the exclusion of India.

It was stated before the court that now the time has come that country be recognized by her original name especially when the names of cities and states are undergoing changes to conform with Indian ethos. Further, it was argued that the name change would signify that the citizens of the country get over the colonial past and that the removal of English name will serve “instilling a sense of pride in our nationality”. It was said that the word BHARAT signifies the freedom struggle and would justify the hard-fought struggle for independence.

It was claimed the cry of “**Bharat Mata ki Jai**” (Long Live our Motherland) was an inherent emotion that gives rise to the patriotism and evokes the feeling of pride in one’s motherland.

The argument put forth before the bench of the Supreme Court comprising of the Honourable Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and A.S. Bopanna and Hrishikesh Roy J.J. was solid so far as they justify the petition but urging to the present requirement and the already existing provision in the constitution, the bench refused to entertain the petition and remarked that, “*India is already called Bharat under Article 1 of the Constitution which reads as India that is Bharat shall be the Union of States*” thus there remains no need to make change the name in the exclusion of the other. However, on the request of the petitioner and his counsel the petition was allowed to be treated as the representation before the concerned Union Ministries primarily the Ministry of Home Affairs.

1.3. IMPACT

The matter about the petition does not ends with the supreme court refusing to entertain the petition. It is to be examined in the light of historical view. It is correct India is called as Bharat in the very first article of the constitution but the times are changing, the world is at brink of restarting, reshaping and re-modifying itself now that we as in humanity are at war with the unsighted virus wreaking havoc and claiming lives. Our country has in past some decades adopted and inculcated western lifestyle and culture in so much of our learning that it would not be hype to say that some people won’t even name or acknowledge the Indian tradition even if they want to, because that’s how much we found western culture and traditions accessible and available. Undoubtedly, the globalisation has opened the gates for every culture to embrace and accept one another’s but it appears that ours have withered in the mist of draining western ethos. There is remembrance and memoirs of the things that colonial rule provided to India and the way the imperialism has developed India. The debates and the incessant struggle that lead to these events are becoming easy. It may sound absurd that how come a changing of name could transform people at once. No, it may not at once

change the trend but a baby step in right direction would open ways to learn and know more about our ancient history and culture and how have we embraced and accepted others to be known in the world as the **“Great Diverse Nation”**.

1.4. ANALYSIS: A CALL FOR AN ACTION

The petition in its underlying idea does not pertain merely to the change of name but a call for an action to substantiate the need for renaming which is to enrich the citizens with country’s own germinated nationalism.

India has most demographic dividend in terms of population, it is the time that we hark to upgrade of Human Resources. The rural population of India is greater in number than that of urban population and the migration of the latter towards former requires bridging of gaps so that a given populace in an area does not feel alienated just because their ideology, the image of their country they carry in their minds differ from what can be rightly termed as vigorous westernisation. In these testing times while the Honourable Prime Minister of India has appealed and urged the nation to be **“Vocal for Local”**, the phrase carries within it wide arrays of interpretation. The pandemic has taught us that our needs are best provided and taken care by local market, indigenous products. It is by this solemn resolution we should appreciate, come forward to help and should learn the value of local business, our own Indian made products, our own cultures, the teachings that have been delivered upon us since the times of Vedas and way back. Indians have back then during the time of British Era showed the teeth when Swadesi Movement was launched to boycott imported goods and promote the local industry to sustain workers and farmers. **“Make in India”**¹ campaign reflects exactly what was then swadeshi movement with advanced modification of course to maintain track of economy and open employment opportunity in India.

Today the call for **“Atmanirbhar Bharat”** i.e., Self-Reliant India can be achieved only when people be made aware of their nation holistically, the utilisation and importance of local and indigenous products, the services and the talent getting wasted in a race of moving out from the country to serve others or to live life of their dreams while abdicating the very duty towards our motherland. The programmes such as **“Dekho Apna Desh Webinar”** launched by Ministry of Tourism are essential in imparting knowledge about the country, its natural resources and places to encourage citizens to travel within the country and explore the beauty of the nation. **“Swachh Bharat Abhiyan”**² (Clean India Mission) is another one with mission to make Country clean by making every citizen participant to help achieve the goal. The hangover of colonialism may be removed but the dazzling desire of leaving country to settle and reside elsewhere to do better and achieve more has made people ignorant of their traditions and values.

¹. <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/swadeshi-movement-286966-2015-08-07>

². <https://www.india.gov.in/swachh-bharat-abhiyaan-clean-india-mission>

1.5. CONCLUSION

The changing of names occurring and the requests being made should not be merely reduced to incantation. The name within it carries the identity, the source and a history which it reflects. It was envisioned by the constitution makers that they opted for names like **“Bharat, Hind, Hindustan”** to be kept along to signify the intention of making the country’s tradition as its identity.

The onus does not rest once the name is changed, it would amount to mere mutation, the need for it has to substantiate by the actions. Government is expected to take steps in this direction to secure the lives and health of people particularly when the country is going through the pandemic along with the world. It is our duties as a citizen to give respect to the nation respect its heritage and advance in a inclusive manner. After all **“Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam”** which implies *“the world is one family”* evolved from India which shows the epitome of fraternity to the world.

1.6. REFERENCES

1. The Hindu.
2. The Times of India.
3. The Constitution of India.

Petition : *Namah v. Union of India.*