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## Should India be called Bharat?

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*This research is based on the recent issue in the country to change its name from India to Bharat only. This demand has been made since the constituent assembly decides on the name. Although Article 1 of the Indian Constitution states that “India that is Bharat” the demand was and still arises to completely change its name to Bharat. This is due to, in every document and international meeting, the term India being used more often as compared to the term Bharat. Even the natives use the term India more frequently. This research aims to analyse all the historical facts and scrutinize the advantages and disadvantages of changing the name. Also in last the author will her point of view regarding the topic.*

**Keywords:** *bharatvarsha, constitution, historical facts.*

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### INTRODUCTION

‘What's in the name’ is a famous quote by William Shakespeare. Does this mean that names don't matter? Let's take an example- we all have heard about Agra's famous Panchi Petha Store. People from different places purchase Petha from that one particular store whenever they visit Agra, by seeing that store's growth and customers' beliefs in it, every store starts changing its name, and now if you visit Agra, you will see, that 3 out of 4 stores have named themselves as Pannchi Petha Store or Pannchi Store and it proves beneficial for them, they started to see a

drastic increase in their sales. This is not something rare, traders often do this to gain the trust of the customers, which they already have in the original store, and doing so will eventually increase their sales.

From the above example, we can say that just changing or putting a name to which people can relate or trust has given them a positive result on their trade. so we cannot deny the importance of the name. The name-changing thing is not only restricted to traders only, everyone does this be it actors, artists, families, districts, states, or even countries. In recent years there are a significant number of countries have changed their name, with valid reasons.

### **COUNTRIES THAT CHANGE THEIR NAMES**

Changing countries' names are not very uncommon as we may expect. From the past to the present, almost every country has changed its name, at least once. There are several reasons for this like avoiding confusion between the nations whose names sound similar. For example, in 2018 Swaziland changed its name to "Eswatini" because its name is usually confused with Switzerland.<sup>1</sup> Countries also change their name to give recognition to various ethnic groups especially to the indigenous population of the country for example- Bolivia has changed its name to Plurinational Bolivia in recognition of its diverse ethnic population.

But the most common reason why countries change their name is to get rid of the shackles of colonialism. There are plenty of nations that change their name after getting independence. Sri Lanka is the perfect example of this. Before its independence (before 1948), it was called Ceylon but later in the year 1972, the name changed to Sri Lanka. Another nation is the gold coast in Africa which became independent from Britain in 1957 and changes its name to Ghana. The name Ghana was decided because it was the first of the medieval trading empire of Western Africa (fl.7th-13th Century). Other colonies that changed their names are Mali which was

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Leahy, 'These countries changed their names, Here's how it worked out' (*National Geographic*, 29 November 2022) <<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/swaziland-changes-name-eswatini-other-country-name-changes-history-culture-spd#:~:text=%E2%80%9CAfrican%20countries%20on%20getting%20independence,as%20the%20Kingdom%20of%20eSwatini.%E2%80%9D>> accessed 04 November 2022

previously called French Sudan, Mexico was called New Spain and the Philippines were called Spanish East Indies.<sup>2</sup>

All of these countries have changed their names to detach from the colonial past. Changing names to something to which people can relate, somehow, to their history or their work will give them a sense of freedom in their minds as well as in the mind of other nations. Most of the country picks up those names to which people can relate and this discussion has been going on in India since its independence to change its name to Bharat. Recently a petition has been filed for the same

### **PETITION FOR CALLING INDIA BHARAT ONLY**

In the year 2020, a Delhi resident Mr. Namah filed a petition to change India's name to Bharat. He stated that the name India was given by the Britishers and it is derived from the Greek term "Indica" which is of foreign origin. Further, he stated that the name India is the "symbol of slavery". It is in the best interests of all citizens of this country to change the name to move past the colonial past and to build a sense of national pride. In addition, it will serve as a testament to the hard-fought freedom of our freedom fighters," the petitioner said.<sup>3</sup> The apex court said that India is already called Bharat in the constitution and the petition is transformed into a representation and forwarded to the ministries, primarily the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The Supreme Court in the year 2016 had also dismissed a similar petition. Justice TS Thakur said that every citizen has the right to call his country India or Bharat; the court cannot interfere in this. It is their choice to prefer whatever they want. *"If you want to call this country Bharat, go ahead and call it Bharat. If somebody chooses to call this country India, let him call it India"*.<sup>4</sup> Also in the year

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Haviland, 'Sri Lanka erases colonial name, Ceylon' (BBC, 1 January 2011) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12099596>> accessed 05 November 2022

<sup>3</sup> Prabhaskar K Dutta, 'Should India be renamed as Bharat only? Supreme Court to hear plea tomorrow' (India Today, 01 June 2020) <<https://www.indiatoday.in/news-analysis/story/should-india-be-renamed-only-as-bharat-petition-in-supreme-court-1684283-2020-06-01>> accessed 05 November 2022

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

2014, a private member bill was introduced by the then MP Yogi Adityanath, to change the name India to Hindustan and propose Bharat as the primary name of the country.<sup>5</sup>

### CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY'S DECISION

On September 18, 1949, the constituent assembly planned to name the newborn nation. Various suggestions were given by the members of the assembly like Hind, Hindustan, Bharat, Bharatvarsh, and Bharatbhomi. But the assembly ended up choosing India and Bharat i.e., Article 1(1) of the Indian constitution states- India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of states.<sup>6</sup> Before the official adoption of the constitution, there was some dissent regarding article 1(1). Many constituent members have different opinions on selecting the name. HV Kamath, a member of the assembly, wanted some rephrasing of article 1(1) and wanted 'Bharat' as the primary name of the country. According to him, it must be read as "Bharat or, in the English language, India, shall be a Union of States."<sup>7</sup> Seth Govind Das, a well-known member of the assembly, also oppose the language and said, "India, that is, Bharat" are not beautiful words for the name of a country. We should have put the words "Bharat known as India also in foreign countries."<sup>8</sup>

Das gave references to Vedas, Mahabharat, a couple of Puranas, and writings of Hiuen-Tsang, a famous Chinese traveller, to prove his point that Bharat was the real name of the country. At the end, when Rajendra Prasad put the amendments to vote, all of them failed. Article 1 remained intact as "India that is Bharat". However, the debate has continued.<sup>9</sup> From the above facts, we can say that every member of the constituent assembly was not satisfied with the preference given to the name India. Many want Bharat to be the primary name and India the

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>6</sup> Constitution of India 1950, art. 1(1)

<sup>7</sup> Krishnadas Rajagopal, 'Plea for renaming India as 'Bharat' can go to Centre as representation: Supreme Court' (*The Hindu*, 03 June 2020) <<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-name-plea-can-go-to-centre-as-representation-sc/article31737391.ece>> accessed 05 November 2022

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>9</sup> Samanwaya Rautray, 'Supreme Court dismisses plea to change India's name' (*The Economic Times*, 04 June 2020) <[https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/sc-dismisses-plea-to-change-indias-name/articleshow/76184669.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/sc-dismisses-plea-to-change-indias-name/articleshow/76184669.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)> accessed 06 November 2022

secondary name and other members don't even want to use the name India instead they suggested other names in which Bharat was almost everyone's choice.

## **HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF THE TERM BHARAT**

Since ancient times our nation has been termed, Bharat. Many ancient scripts have mentioned the term Bharat in their shlokas or hymn. Some of the examples are-

### *According to rig Veda and the Battle of ten kings (Dasharajan)*

According to the History of India's Geography; the land of seven rivers, Rig Veda's 18th hymn of the seventh book describes the terrible war which is known as 'Dasharajna' or battle of ten kings. This battle was fought between the ten powerful tribal kings against king Sudasa of the Bharat tribe of the Trtsu dynasty, to overthrow his kingdom. the battle took place on the bank of river Ravi in Punjab. Even though king Sudasa was fighting against all ten kings, he achieve a landslide victory. As a result, people eventually start associating themselves as a member of the Bharat tribe. The name 'Bharat' stuck in the mouth of the people and was ultimately named 'BHARAT VARSHA'.<sup>10</sup>

### *According to Mahabharata*

According to Mahabharat the name of India was 'BharatVarsha' which was named after the legendary king *Bharat Chakravarti*. Bharat was the son of king *Dushyant* of Hastinapura and the ancestor of *Pandavas and Kauravas*. He was the founder of the '*Bharat dynasty*' which conquered all of greater India and named it "Bharatvarsha".<sup>11</sup>

### *According to vishnu puran:*

**उत्तरं यत्समुद्रस्य हिमाद्रेश्चैव दक्षिणम् ।**

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<sup>10</sup> Shikha Goyal, 'Do you know how India got her name as "Bharat"' (*Jagran Josh*, 14 August 2019) <<https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/do-you-know-how-india-got-her-name-as-bharat-1470660123-1>> accessed 07 November 2022

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*

**वर्षं तद् भारतं नाम भारती यत्र संततिः ॥**

This shloka means: “The country (Varsam) that lies north of the ocean and south of the snowy mountains is called “*Bharatam*”; there dwell the descendants of *Bharata*. Therefore, from the above points, we can say that the term Bharat is not assigned to this land by the constituent assembly but it was used since the Vedic period. Even though during some periods the use of the term was not direct, especially in the Mughal era, but still there are enough facts to prove that the term Bharat was used to refer to the land which is west of the Sindhu river for ages.<sup>12</sup>

**EFFECTS OF CHANGING NAME**

The Supreme Court has not dismissed the petition filed by Mr. Namah in the year 2020, it has made a representation to the concerned ministry of the government. According to the current demand for changing the name, if the government decides to do so, there will be a lot of debate and discussion and there will be many positive and negative effects associated with changing the name.

**Economical effects-** Changing the name of a state or district has been the most prominent practice in India. Renaming the state is a complex procedure and it takes an enormous amount of money. Millions of rupees will be expended to change the name. If this much amount is spent just to change a district name, imagine the amount of money that will be burnt out to change a country’s name. From passports to currency, from official documents to books, and the constitution of India, every stamp needs to be changed. The changing name might rise some debates on an international level, some countries may appreciate this step while others may dislike this, which may lead to some disadvantages.

**Political effect-** India has a colonial history more than of hundreds of years, the name ‘India’ was given to us by the Britishers. Changing its name to ‘Bharat’ may lead to some disagreement among other nations, some may support it others may criticize this idea. This decision may affect the embassy of India as well as diplomatic relations. The party which takes this step will face

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*

the wrath of some citizens as well as acknowledgement from other citizens. It will affect their election results.

**Sociological effect-** When it comes to emotions people are connected with the word Bharat more if we compare it to the word India. If we look at history, every slogan as well as every war cry uses Bharat instead of India, because people are connected with this word and the rich history, that this word carries. The highest honorary award in India is the 'Bharat Ratna

**Physiological effect-** When Africans were traded to the UK, the first thing they did was to change their name to something which doesn't have any meaning. They take this step, to make them feel inferior on the psychological level. It is scientifically proven that names have psychological effects on the mind. A name that has a strong meaning has a different impact on the mind.

In Sanskrit, Bharata is the official name of the country. The word Bharat means Agni in Sanskrit. The term is derived from the Sanskrit root meaning "to carry" or "to be maintained" (the fire). Also means "One who seeks Knowledge". Whereas the term India means land of Hindu (the word 'and' was taken from the Indus river which was known as the Sindhu river but in Greek. The word 's' is pronounced as 'h' and 'ias' is a woot word, meaning 'the land of). If we compare these two words Bharat is the word that has an affirmative as well as strong meaning.

## CONCLUSION

The constitution of India in Article 1 gives two names- India and Bharat, this decision was made by the constituent assembly but it was not unanimous in nature. Many debates took place to decide the name. Several names were recommended by the members of the constituent assembly, but in the end, these two names were finalised. Discussion over the name were going on since independence but for a few years, the demand for changing India's name to Bharat has been rising drastically. One of the most important reasons behind it is that people start to understand and embrace the history as well as the culture of India.

Even though the name India was given by the Britishers, it reminds of centuries of slavery, torture, humiliation, and infirmity, whereas the word Bharat represents the rich history of ancient India, and reminds people of the sacrifices of the bravest rulers who protected the nation. There is no emotional connection between Lord Dalhousie and Lord Warren Hastings, but everyone has an emotional attachment to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj or Maharana Pratap Singh. Taking into consideration all the historical facts and the current situation, it will be advantageous for the nation to change its name to Bharat. However, the government must develop a strategy for implementing this change otherwise chaos will ensue. This change will cost a lot of money but it will send a very powerful message to other countries.