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## ‘INDIA THAT IS BHARAT’: CONTEMPORARY OR ANCIENT?

*Legal Upanishad Journal (LUJournal.com)*

*Vol 1 Issue 3 / November 2023 / pp. 82-93*

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### ABSTRACT

*“The central government of India is about to bring a resolution to change the name of the country from India to Bharat.” This conspiracy was ignited during the G20 summit through the president's dinner invitation, which included “President of Bharat” instead of “President of India”. The opposition party, which named their alliance after the country's name, i.e., ‘I.N.D.I.A.’, negatively remarked on this move of the central government and alleged it was unethical. The question intensified here is on the use of the name ‘Bharat’ as a counter-political move in response to naming opposition parties their alliance ‘I.N.D.I.A.’. India is a democratic country with diversity and recognises two different names in its constitution as official names: ‘India’ and ‘Bharat’. This recognition gave birth to a political agenda, as both names were made official and legal to be used for juridical-political purposes. The question strikes: why does our country have two official names working simultaneously? What were the views of our constituent assembly behind this? Why did Dr. B.R. Ambedkar pass a motion for ‘India, that is, Bharat, shall be a union of states? Who moved the motion “Bharat or, in the English language, India, shall be a Union of States” in the constituent assembly, and why was this motion negated by the member? What is the real story behind the origin of the names ‘India’ and ‘Bharat’, and what are the conspiracies that are misguiding the general public? This paper answers all these questions. It focuses on the various aspects and perspectives, including the points of view of the chairmen of the constituent assembly to a common man. It also enumerates historical events and discussions that affect contemporary ideologies and approaches. The researcher has adopted a case study approach coupled with qualitative analysis to justify the matter. The materials have been collected from both legal and non-legal authorities, like Lok Sabha debates, reports, internet references, and the opinions of research scholars and experts who have dealt with the subject in depth.*

**Keywords:** *Bharat, Ancient India, Bharat, Constitution, G20 summit and Union of States*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

India hosted the 18th G20 Summit on September 9-10, 2023. It was the first G20 Summit in India. Lately, at this summit, all the invitations for the G20 Summit in New Delhi have introduced a noteworthy modification. Instead of what has always been going on with the conventional name 'President of India', all the invitations were addressed to 'President of Bharat', which led to a broader debate for the nation's nomenclature and its historical implications.

On the inauguration of the Group of 20 (G20) Leader's Summit, the Prime Minister of India sat behind a country name placard that unknowingly attracted the interests of many people in the country because that placard didn't say the accustomed word 'India' which is globally identified. Instead of that, 'Bharat', which is the Hindi name of the country, was written over the placard, implying that the government of India is planning to swap out the English' designation entirely. The use of a placard named 'Bharat' for the G20 inaugural address by our PM Modi ji became a headline in The Times of India, which is one of the largest English-language newspapers in our nation.

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1.4 billion people in India can use both the names India and Bharat officially and freely in the nation, which has a total of 22 official languages. The Bharat word is a Hindi version of India, which can be used interchangeably; for example, both feature in an Indian passport. But those changes were the core of a controversy that week, after dinner for the Group of 20 (G20) Leader's Summit, which swapped the name 'India' to 'Bharat', fueling a political row and public debate over what the country should be called, its past, and its colonial legacy.

The invites at the event marked a notable change on the international stage by changing the country's naming convention. Indian officials at the event were given badges that read "Bharat Official".

## 2. ORIGIN OF BHARAT

The term Bharat has deep roots in Indian history and culture. It has evident use in Indian Puranic literature, the Vedas, and epics like the Mahabharata. The Puranas describe Bharat as a land between the sea in the south and the abode of snow in the north. It signifies a religious

and socio-cultural entity rather than a mere political and geographical one. The Sanskrit word Bharat describes Agni. It means to be maintained, and it also means 'one who is engaged in search of knowledge'.

### 3. ORIGIN OF INDIA

India is derived from the Greek word indus. People living beyond the Indus, a river that flows through the north-western part of the Indian Subcontinent, were called 'Indians' by the ancient Greeks<sup>1</sup>. The Arabs and Persians used to refer to the land of Indus by the term hind or Hindustan. The Europeans adopted the name 'India' from these sources, and it became the official name of the country after their colonial rule.

### 4. HISTORICAL ASPECT

#### 4.1 Ancient India

In former times, there was no explicit label for the place or people living around the banks of the Indus. Numerous establishments, civilizations, and cultures trace their roots to this site. The earliest amongst them were the 'Harappans', who brought an era of 'Indus Valley Civilization' that is, to date, regarded as one of the progressive civilizations of Neolithic times<sup>2</sup>.

The contention regarding the name of this place is as old as the time from which civilizations held their feet in the region. Distinct names were put forward at different periods of time to identify the areas near tributaries of the Indus. More often, the name has been substituted by dynasties and kings who conquered and ruled over this area on different occasions.

The prominent and popular origin of the name 'Bharata' in reference to the geographical area is described under "Vishnu Purana", which affirms that it was named after the king "Bharata" and his descendants, who dominated the land ranging from the Himalayas in the north to Kanyakumari in the south. Bharata is believed to be the son of *Dushyant* and *Shakuntala* and

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<sup>1</sup> Mansi Upadhyay, *Should India Be Called Bharat?*, 3 JUS CORPUS L. J. (2022)

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

an ancestor of *Kauravas* and *Pandavas*. Kuru Kingdom, one of the most prestigious of many kingdoms, had deep interrelatedness with the nomenclature of 'Bharatavarsha'.

As stated in the archives of the Vedas, the Bharata was a tribe comprised of people belonging to different communities, living harmoniously and cooperatively together with integrity. But subsequently, King Sudasa clashed with the Puru community, one among them, and the *Kuru* dynasty emerged from the Bharata lineage in which King Bharata was born<sup>3</sup>.

A separate name, 'Aryavarta' indicates the land of Indo-Aryans. Aryavarta, generally cited in the ancient Hindu texts, *Dharmashastras* and *Dharmasutras*, referred to the northern region of the Indian subcontinent, areas of the Indo-gangetic plain extending from Afghanistan in the west to parts of Bihar in the east.

In the literary text of *Manusmriti*, the geographical region between the Saraswati and Drishadvati rivers is contemplated as 'Brahmavarta'. The text defines this as an area where "good" people are born and translates the text into 'sacred land' or 'holy land'.

The sacred epics of Hindu mythology, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, narrate the stories of Indo-Gangetic plains [Madhyadesha], which manifest the valour of two epical heroes, Rama and Krishna, who were born and brought up here. The region witnessed the rise and fall of many powerful mahajanapadas, including Kuru, Panchala, Gupta, and Kushanas.

In Ashoka's Minor Rock Edict, the Sanskrit word '*Jambudwepe*', which literally means "land of jambu trees", refers to India. *Jambudwepe*, a historical name given before the British's advent on this land, is an alternate name used by many Southeast Asian nations to address India, which means 'berry-tree island'.

#### **4.2 Medieval Perspective :**

Another ordinarily used word is 'Hindustan', which refers to the people living adjacent to the Indus River [Sindhu Nadi], that is, in Persian terms, pronounced as 'Hindos'. Often, this word

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<sup>3</sup> Kanika Gauba, *India That Is Bharat: The Politics of a National Name*, 55 ECON. & POL. WEEKLY (2020)

is wrongly interpreted as a place where present-day 'Hinduism' is ingrained. Archaeological evidence shows the name 'Al-Hind' engraved on Umayyad coins since the period of the very first governor of Sindh, *Muhammad Ibn Qasim* [715 CE]. *Naqsh-e-Rustam* inscription of Sassanid emperor Shapur I [c. 262 CE] indicates the name 'Hindustan' for the Sindh<sup>4</sup>.

Indians started using this word 'Hindustan' to refer to themselves only after Persian Turks invaded this region and after the establishment of the *Malmuk Sultanate* in 1260 AD. However, it is not used for the entire subcontinent but only a part of the present-day north and north-western regions. Southern regions were under the command and control of local kings, who asserted power over their regional kingdoms and, from time to time, warred against foreign invaders.

Hindustan, in the words of Babur, was "On the East, the South, and the West, it is bounded by the Great Ocean", His phrases indicated rich flora and fauna and a peninsula surrounded by three edges. In the Arabic language too, 'Hind' was used to denote areas of the subcontinent like '*Tarikh-al-Hind*' or '*Hind Mahasagar*'.

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### 4.3 Modern Perspectives :

Currently, the modern and most frequently used name in and around the world is India. It is believed to have been designated by western colonisers, including Britishers, Danish, and Spanish. The Indus Valley is the core cause behind this subcontinent being named 'India'<sup>5</sup>.

Interestingly, the name depends on the person using it and the context in which it is used. English was certainly not a language used before the advent of Europeans. So, before the 17th century, India was never a recognised word by people living here. Even today, Bharat is taken into consideration when referring to the Hindi language, and India is used when referring to the English language.

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<sup>4</sup> Mansi Upadhyay, *supra* note 1

<sup>5</sup> Catherine Clémentin-Ojha, '*India, that is Bharat*': *One Country, Two Names*, 10 IDEAS OF SOUTH ASIA (2014)

Sindhu was, in Greek, pronounced as 'Indu' or 'Inde', from which came the word 'India', and people living in Inde were known as Indians. In the words of the famous historian Herotodus, "Eastward of India lies a tract that is entirely sand. Indeed, of all the inhabitants of Asia, concerning whom anything is known, the Indians dwell nearest to the east, and the rising of the sun". The discovery of India by Vasco da Gama was also the discovery of the east and eastern natural resources.

Moreover, throughout the time of Alexander, the Greeks were conscious of the Northern Subcontinent [356–290 BCE]. Megasthenes wrote a book, INDICA, on his first-hand experience of diplomacy with India during the Mauryan era. In the book 'Discovery of India[1942–1945 AD], Pt. Nehru repeatedly put emphasis on the word 'India', the thing that clarifies the usage of the term 'India' in contemporary perception<sup>6</sup>.

## 5. CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

Part I, Article 1, of the Indian Constitution defines the name and territory of the Union. Article 1(1) states that India, that is, Bharat, shall be a union of states. The Hindi constitution of India is called 'Bharat ka Samvidhan', and its first ever Article 1 expresses "Bharat, arthat India, rajyon ka sangha hoga". The Indian Constitution uses both the words India and Bharat interchangeably<sup>7</sup>.

The Preamble of the Indian Constitution begins with "the People of India," but in the Hindi version, Bharat is used in place of India, depicting the interchangeability of both words. Additionally, some government institutions have already adopted the Hindi variants, including Bhartiya, as the official name of those institutions, like Indian Railways.

Article 1 of the Indian Constitution recognises both names as official and allows them to use any one of them freely and openly. The question arises: is the central government trying to amend the constitution to make Bharat the sole official name of the country while removing India?

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<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> INDIA CONST. art.1

## 6. CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ON ARTICLE 1(1)

On September 17, 1949, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar proposed Amendment No. 130, incorporating Amendment No. 197. This moved Article 1(1) to "India, that is, Bharat, shall be a Union of States." Maulana Hasrat Mohani showed grievances about the use of the term 'union of states'. He proposed adjournment based on the do quorum, which was negative.

H.V. Kamath, on September 18, 1949, proposed 'Bharat, or, in the English language, India, shall be a Union of States' of Amendment No. 130, to be substituted by 'Hind, or, in the English language, India, shall be a Union of States.' In his speech, he addressed India as a 'newly born baby'. He proposed to follow the custom of 'Naamkaran', which is a ritual to name infants. There were a variety of suggestions for the name, and the prominent recommendations were 'Hind, Bharat, Hindustan, and Bharatvarsh or Bharatbhumi'. In corroboration, he expressed his wish to refer to the 'Irish Constitution, which has been in force since 1937. There, the formation of the sentence is different from what has been proposed in clause (1) of this article. In the Irish constitution, it says, "The name of the state is Eire, or, in the English language, Ireland."<sup>8</sup> He felt that the expression under Article 1(1) "India, that is, Bharat" is supposed to mean "India, that is to say, Bharat"—and that in a constitution it is somewhat clumsy; it would be much better if this formation was modified in a constitutionally more acceptable and correct form<sup>8</sup>.

Kamalapati Tripathi expressed a very deep gratitude towards Kamath's proposal. He expressed that a country loses its soul in and after bondage. According to him, it would have been very proper if Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had accepted the amendment, which states, "Bharat, as known in the English language, 'India', to preserve the prestige of the country. By including the name 'Bharat' and accepting it, it is possible to give back and protect this country's lost soul<sup>9</sup>. The revolutionary movements of Mahatma Gandhi made us recognise our true form and our lost soul. Bharat will be a great nation and will be able to serve humanity on a world-wide scale. During the slavery of more than one thousand years, our country has lost everything. We lost our prestige, history, humanity, culture, self-esteem, and soul. This country has lost everything in this one thousand years. Now is the time to regain what belongs to

<sup>8</sup> Kanika Gauba, *supra* note 3

<sup>9</sup> Catherine Clémentin-Ojha, *supra* note 5

us. Today, this country, which was freed after slavery, is going to regain its name. Hopefully Bharat will regain its consciousness and begin to act in its own soul, which has been in a sort of sleep. Renaming the country Bharat is the first step towards its reconstruction. Even after undergoing the amount of repression, insults, and prolonged slavery that our country had to pass through for more than thousands of years, our country is still known as 'Bharat'. The name Bharat still signifies an image of greatness, culture, and peacefulness.

Seth Govind Das addressed the assembly and expressed his grievances on Article 1(1), 'India, that is, Bharat'. He expressed that we try to name somebody under auspicious stars and focus on the beauty of the name. The very ancient name 'Bharat' is a gem, but the manner in which constituent assemblies give names is not beautiful. The assembly shall substitute this with 'Bharat, known as India, also in foreign countries' in respect of the ancient name and its beauty. In a corroboratory sense, he further states that there is not a single mention of the word 'India' in our ancient book. It was initially used by Greeks when they came to India. The Greeks named the Sindhu River Indus, and simultaneously, India was derived from Indus. It is clearly mentioned in the Encyclopaedia Britannica. On the contrary, we find mention of the name Bharat in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Brahmanas, and our great and ancient book, the Mahabharat<sup>10</sup>.

Kallu Subh Rao heartily supported Seth Govind Ram's Kallu Subh Rao heartily supported Seth Govind Ram's expression for the word "Bharat" and provided references to the 'Bharat' name in the Rig Veda: "Oh, Indira, all this progeny of Bharata". Along with that, he mentioned the boundaries of Bharat given in the Vayu Purana, i.e., "Idam tu madhyamam chitram shubhashubh phalodayam, Uttaram yatsmudrasya hima vana dakschnam chayata." Which means that the land to the north, to the southern ocean, and to the south of the Himalayas is known as the Bharat. This shows the ancientness of 'Bharat'. Moreover, he signified that, as the Indus River accompanied Pakistan, we can address Pakistan as Hindustan. Kallu Subh Rao was one who requested the constituent assembly name the national language as 'Bharati'.

Ram Sahai expressed in the assembly that the union of Gwalior, Indore, and Malwa named itself Madhya Bharat. The people of the Republic of India are proud of them; this could be an

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<sup>10</sup> Mansi Upadhyay, *supra* note 1



occasion of greater elation for the constituent assembly by naming 'Bharat' to the country. The Bharat word is a very glorious word and gives a sense of pleasure to its members. Moreover, the leaders of the country call this land Bharat instead of India.

Hargovind Pant acknowledged the world-famous poet 'Kalli-Dass' and his immortal work in the field of literature, representing the story of two main characters, 'King Dushyant' and 'Queen Shakuntala'. They named their son 'Bharat', and his empire was named 'Bharat', who used to play with lions. We are all acquainted with the glories of Prince Bharat. He expressed that if the assembly is accepting the gloriousness of the name 'Bharat', then why are we reluctant to accept it in the name of our country?

M. Gupte supported the 'Bharat' name, but he identified 'union' in the second half of the article as problematic. He submitted that Dr. Ambedkar perceived that the word 'Union' was deliberately used to negative the right of secession, but there is no warrant for this inference either in the dictionary or political meaning. Therefore, if it is necessary to expressly provide that the right of secession should be negated, he further added that it leads to the argument of whether the country is a Federation or a Unitary State<sup>11</sup>.

Brajeshwar Prasad introduced an amendment to substitute 'union of states' from article 1(1) of the amendment number 130 with 'one integral unit' with the prospective that there was a controversy in the U.S.A. on the question of the constitutionality of the constituent units, and it is possible to be in India also. This was objected to by K. Santhanam, who said that the assembly has already passed the Constitution defining the Constitution of the States. Therefore, they cannot change the Constitution by definition<sup>12</sup>.

On the same day, i.e., September 18, 1949, the president of the constituent assembly moved the motion of item no. 130 of List IV, that '(1) Bharat, or, in the English language, India, shall be a Union of States' Should substitute for the proposed of Article 1 (1). The assembly was divided by a hand count of thirty-eight in respect of ayes and a hand count of fifty-one in respect of noes, which negated the motion. Subsequently, the president moved the motion for

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<sup>11</sup> J SAI DEEPAK, INDIA, THAT IS BHARAT: COLONIALITY, CIVILISATION, CONSTITUTION (Bloomsbury India 2021)

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

'(1) India, that is, Bharat, shall be a Union of States, and (2) The States and the territories thereof shall be the States and their territories for the time being specified in Parts I, II, and III of the First Schedule.' Which was adopted by the assembly by a majority.

## 7. VIEW OF THE APEX COURT

The Supreme Court has declined to entertain petitions seeking to rename the nation multiple times. According to petitioners, the name 'India' is derived from the Greek word 'Indica'. It was said that the change in the name was to ensure the exclusion. Further, they stated that "the time had come to recognise our country as Bharat, which is her original and authentic name, to justify the hard-fought war for freedom. The petitioners also claimed it was the duty of the government to amend Article 1. Further, the fundamental right under Article 21 entitles every citizen to the equal right to call a country by the name of Bharat<sup>13</sup>.

Moreover, in March 2016, the Supreme Court dismissed a similar PIL, strongly objecting to the petition. U.U. Lalit, apprise the petitioner that such pleas would not be entertained. Justice Thakur expressed, "You want to call it Bharat? Go right ahead. Someone wants to call it India; let them call it India."

After four years, in 2020, the Supreme Court once again refused to entertain a similar plea seeking a name change from India to Bharat. The apex court at that time suggested converting the plea into a representation and forwarding it to the union government for an appropriate decision.

## 8. CONCLUSION

India that is Bharat' or 'Bharat that is India' is a term often used in dual senses or is of dual nature, representing both its modern identity, i.e., India, and its traditional, rural, and cultural identity, i.e., Bharat. India, which is home to a huge diversity in religion, language customs, and usage, This diversity is an ingredient that provides nutrition to the roots of this debate and controversy.

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<sup>13</sup> INDIA CONST. art.21

Here are some points to conclude this concept:-

- **Social Diversity** :- Our nation is diverse and has a rich cultural heritage. Social acceptance of a thought in India is based on various factors such as region, religion, norms, and caste. Lack of uniformity deprives people of unity and results in conflicts of interest. Achieving complete social acceptance of any thought or initiative is not impossible, but an endless process. The thought of having a Hindi name for a country might hurt south Indian communities, as they don't like the supremacy of Hindi over their local languages.
- **Language barrier** :- A significant aspect of India's cultural fabric is linguistic diversity. We can witness linguistic change over every 50 kilometres as hundreds. Hindi and English are widely accepted languages among the 22 constitutionally recognised languages under the 8th Schedule of the Constitution. Sometimes this diversity creates hindrances and challenges in terms of social acceptance, especially for those who are not speaking these dominant languages. Efforts are being made to resolve such issues and minimise the lingual gap between people.
- **Reluctant to accept** :- Reluctance to accept India, often referred to as 'Bharat', can stem from a variety of factors, including cultural, social, or political differences. It's essential to recognise that different individuals or groups may have various reasons for their reluctance. People from different backgrounds may find it challenging to accept or understand customs and practices that totally differ from their own. People belonging to the same region find it difficult to acknowledge anything from another region within the country. Sometimes, they might find the customary practices or beliefs of someone else taboo. In this mentality of hesitation, it's hard to expect the adoption of a different political or social ideology.
- **Historical Significance** :- The word "Bharat" represents a sense of cultural continuity and heritage, connecting ancient roots with modern India. Over centuries, "Bharat" has been used in various Puranic literature and epics like the Mahabharata, Vedas, etc. It contains great mythological importance. As we are aware, Indian people are very religious; these are all an essential part of their cultural life. In post-independence India, 'Bharat' was chosen as the Hindi name for the nation, which reflects a connection to maintain a balance between its rich history and culture and modernity.

- **Constitutional Provisions** :- The Constitution of India, or Bharat ka samvidhan, under Article 1, which officially states that India is a union of states, and it is written in Article 1 that India in English and Bharat in Hindi should be recognised as the official name of the country. The Constitution itself provides for the name of the country in Hindi and English to respect the linguistic diversity of our country.

Hence, we are constitutionally liberal to use Bharat as well as India. It's not a conflict of names, but a conflict between languages. Article 19 of the constitution states that every person in the country is free and can openly use any name to denote the country, but he or she should respect the country in every possible manner<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> INDIA CONST. art.19