

INDIA THAT IS BHARAT: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON A NAME GAME

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India and Bharat have both evoked the same emotions among patriots for decades, but these labels of pride have now been weaponised for narrow political ends. The Bharatiya Janata Party government at the Centre has decided [to use Bharat instead of India in some official communication and documents](#), a practice that its representatives say will now expand. 'India, that is Bharat,...' is how the [Constitution of India](#) names the country, and the use of one or the other has been largely contextual all this while. The cultural echoes of Bharat have never been in doubt, and the current hype around it is more about a campaign to discard the use of India, as if both cannot exist in harmony. India, according to this telling, is a foreign imposition, and hence unsuitable for national dignity. Bharat, linked as it is to various ancient sources, goes beyond the geographical and cultural landscape that constitutes the modern republic of India. In that sense, both names are an outcome of India's nation-building journey. Labouring to tease out the foreign from the native in the expanse of this nation that hosts a multitude of ethnic, linguistic, and genetic diversity and that has been formed as a result of millennia of migrations and cross-currents of human interactions serves no purpose other than creating new flashpoints in society.

This farcical hubbub hoisted upon the country should have been allowed to dissipate and recede, but the knee-jerk reaction of the Opposition gave it the aura of a fundamental identity question before the nation. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has been asking for privileging the use of Bharat over India for long, but the Opposition bloc's decision to label itself INDIA as an acronym also might have influenced the BJP's hurry in the naming exercise. Far from demonstrating a nation's strength and pride, the government's name game undermines the confidence and soft power of the nation. Bharat has been part of popular culture, political and cultural idioms, and literature across many Indian languages. Similarly, India is also used by millions within and outside the country who yearn for its progress. It is possible that contexts and constituencies of these proper nouns might vary, but that is the very reason to desist from attempting to impose the use of one and edge out the other. Whether it is India or Bharat, the essence of the meaning that it conveys remains the same. The needless juxtaposition of the two names should not affect the bonding of the inhabitants in the pursuit of a misplaced cultural combat. Let India and Bharat coexist as they have always been.

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