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## Our Cultural legacy and Bharatvarsh

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To understand the cultural heritage of the sub-continent one needs to look into the etymologically derived meaning of Bharat which is rooted to the Sanskrit verb 'Bha' which means light and the term 'Rat' that means immersing or devoted. The term 'varsh' which means country was added with Bharat and therefore the meaning of the complete word Bharatvarsh is a country where people are deeply immersed to Divine Light. Since the natives of this region were considered then as noble beings, they were called Aarya. Anyone addressing elders used to call them as Aarya.

### **The Country of Aaryavart:**

Therefore, this land of nobles was also known as Aaryavart (country of noble beings). In fact irrespective of their varied caste, sect, region, local customs, food habits, costumes, professions and languages, they believed in polytheistic Sanatana Dharma that originated from the liberal Vedic texts – EKAM SADVIPRAH BAHUDHA VADANTI (He is one, wise men call Him differently) and the spiritual voices of their ascetic ancestors that permitted complete freedom to worship the deities of one's choice without any ill-will against any other faith. With such spiritual strength and freedom they maintained the cultural unity of their country and gradually contributed to the internationally acclaimed civilisation, as its people were deeply immersed to the roots of Bharatvarsh.

The spiritually rooted Vedic name Bharat was the foundation stone of the socio-cultural history of this sub-continent. The hymn “Bramhmidam rakshati Bhartam janam” from Rig-Veda suggests that the name Bharat dates back to Vedic period. With a view to carry forward the legacy of the name Bharat, the people began all the Vedic rituals with chanting the invocatory mantra namely ...swetvarah kalpe --- kaliyuge jambudwipa bharatvarshe ... and so on.

The ancient scripture Vishnu Puran while referring to the geographical boundary of this country says: “?????? ?????????????? ?????????????????? ?????????? ? ?????? ??? ?????? ??? ?????? ?????? ?????? ??????” (The country (varam) that lies north of the ocean and south of the snowy mountains is called Bh?ratam; where dwell the descendants of Bharata known as Bharati. It also says: “????? ?????????????????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ??????, ?????? ??????????????????” (Rishabha was born to Marudevi, Bharata was born to Rishabh, Bharatvarsha (India) arose from Bharata, and Sumati arose from Bharata (Ibid.). Apart from the son of the ancient saint Rishabhdeo who is believed to be the first Tirthankara of Jainism, two more Bharatas namely the younger brother of Lord Rama in Treta Yug and son of King Dushyant in Dwapar Yug are believed to be the root to the name Bharat. However, of the three, the last one that is the son of Dushyant has been more popular behind this name.

Eulogising this country the Vishnu Puran further says: "Gayanti devah kil Geetkaani, Dhanyaastu te Bharat bhumi bhaage, Swargapavarga aspad margabhutei Bhavanti bhooyah purushah suratvaat" ..... (Bharat is the way of all of the heavenly pleasures and even salvation. It's a very welcome piece of fortune to be born as a human being on this soil of Bharat in spite of being a deity).

### **Then Came the Islamic Invaders and attempted destruction of ancient culture:**

Against the backdrop of such a spiritually rooted name of this sub-continent, the Islamist invaders while indulging in mass conversion under the shadow of sword wanted the subjugated people to forget the name of their motherland and replaced it with Perso-Arabic name Hindustan which they used to call the territory across the river Sindhu (Indus). This name was however, neither known to the locals nor had any reference in the ancient scriptures and literature of this region. The idea behind such an attempt was to eliminate the national identity of the locals as they did in Persia, Egypt and other Central Asian Countries.

In fact, after destroying the temples and traditional educational institutions like the ancient universities of Nalanda, Takshshila and Vikramshila, the Islamists even sidelined Sanskrit the ancient language of this land which was also the language of administration. Philologically, with its unique grammar, semantics and diction, Sanskrit happens to be the mother of most of the Indian languages. Known as ‘Devavani’ (the language of God), Sanskrit was the language of Vedic rituals, scriptures and literature which were the cultural heritage of Bharat. Hence with a view to completely eliminate the cultural heritage of this land, the alien rulers sidelined Sanskrit by replacing this language of administration with Persian. Their cultural invasion to liquidate the indigenous culture was to de-Bharatise its people and Arabise them permanently. “Islam has had a calamitous effect on converted people. To be converted you have to destroy your past, destroy your

history. You have to stamp on it, you have to say – my ancestral culture does not exist, it does not matter”. (V. S. Naipaul in Half a Life by Azim A. Nanji, ed; Muslim Alma, 1996, page 58).

The cultural past of the sub-continent, Bharat survived despite destructive invasions as the larger majority of the natives even after facing the trauma and stigma of the hate crimes perpetrated on them did not succumb to their brutal assault and saved their cultural past including the name Bharat. Another irony followed and like the Islamists before the British continued to sideline Sanskrit and brought in the word “India” to replace Hindusthan.

### **The British were No Better:**

Like the Islamists, the British also sidelined Sanskrit the traditional official language of the country. While the Islamist rulers replaced Sanskrit with Persian in administration, the British introduced English as the official language and medium of education.

Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859), a British historian, politician, and an inaugural member of a governing Supreme Council of India imported English form of education through his famous Minute on Indian Education of February 1835. He believed in creating a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect and thus successfully created a sizeable group of Anglicised native elite. The British used them as interpreters between the Empire and the subject. Popularly known as Macaulayism, the objective behind this policy was to sideline the indigenous culture and impose the Western cultural ethos on the natives. He was so confident about his plan that he wrote the following letter dated October 12, 1836 to his father: "Our English schools are flourishing wonderfully.... The effect of this education on Hindus is prodigious. No Hindu who has received an English education ever remains sincerely attached to his religion. It is my firm belief that if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respected classes 30 years hence. And this will be effected without our efforts to proselytize; I heartily rejoice in the prospect."

Distortion of the cultural history of our country which is still preserved in Vedic texts and its associated scriptures like Ramayana, Mahabharat, various Upanishadas, Puranas, philosophy, astronomy, medical science, economics and literature all in Sanskrit language was also carried out by the British by utilising the services of paid European and Marxist historians who declared this rich cultural history as myth and discovered a unique bogus theory of Aryan invasion. They even portrayed the historical heroes of Muslim Era like Mewar ruler Maharana Pratap (1540-1597), Maratha king Shivaji (1627-1680), Chatrashal (1649-1731) of Bundelkhand, and many other Jat leaders as rebels. In fact these nationalist icons had actually fought against the Moguls for defending their Kingdoms.

Apart from it, the British also won over the loyalty of a significant section of English educated Muslims under the leadership of Sir Syed Ahmad (1817-1898), scion of a Mogul family. Syed believed that the British would continue to rule India for generations and accordingly propagated among the Muslim elite that the community should be loyal to the new Empire.

## **The Emergence of Indian National Congress:**

Similarly, sensing a new awakening among the natives brought out by social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), Swami Dayanad (1824-1883), Vivekanand (1863-1902) and others as a danger to the imperial throne, A.O.Humes (1829-1912), a retired British Civil Servant in confidence of the Governor General formed Indian National Congress (INC) in 1895 as a platform for a dialogue between the educated Indians and the British Raj. The idea behind this move was to win over the English educated intelligentsia from the religious majority group to ensure that the dialogue between the INC and the British Government would consolidate the hold of Empire on the colony and also facilitate the transformation of the colony into the Western cultural ethos.

A section of the native leaders of the INC understood the game of the British and the party got divided into moderates (soft towards the British) and the radicals (forceful in their nationalist approach) popularly known as "Naram Dal and Garam Dal".

Although, the British patronised the moderates to sideline the nationalist voices raised by the radicals the slogan - "Freedom is our birth right" raised by Tilak gradually became the key word of the freedom movement for full independence of the country.

Death of Tilak was a big jolt to the nationalist forces as a result a group of anglicised left-liberal intellectuals and the political class that had no emotional attachment to the cultural wealth of this country took over the command of freedom movement and offset any chance of restoring the unique culture based national identity of the country.

## **Country was named India and not Bharat as it should have been:**

After Independence, the nationalist forces within the Congress strongly argued in Constituent Assembly debate for restoration of the ancient name of Bharat on the ground of its antiquity. During a long debate in Constituent Assembly on 18 September 1949 over naming of the newly born republic of Bharat prominent suggestions like Bharat, Hindustan, Hind, Bharatbhumi or Bharatvarsh came up for discussion. Leaders like K.M.Munshi, H. V. Kamath, Sampurnanand, Kamalapati Tripathi and many others strongly argued in favour of the ancient name Bharat, Bharatbhumi or Bharatvarsh which dates back to the Vedic era. Arguing in favour of restoring the sole name of Bharat in the constitution, Kamalapati Tripathi said, "There is no country in the world which has been able to preserve its name and its genius even after undergoing the amount of repression, the insults and prolonged slavery which our country had to pass through. Even after thousands of years our country is still known as 'Bharat'. (Constituent Assembly Debate on 18 September, 1949 Volume IX OF Constituent Assembly. (<http://www.indiankanoon.org/doc/1314788/>)).<sup>[1]</sup>

However, the saner argument of the nationalist members failed to convince the members who were committed to the flawed vision of European and Marxist historians about Bharat and therefore, "Bharat, or, in the English language, India, shall be a Union of States" was put

to vote by show of hands. Thus the name India, that is, Bharat was declared as the official name of the country.

### **To destroy People, destroy Their History:**

Perhaps George Orwell (1903-1950) a noted British political writer and journalist rightly said, "the most effective way to destroy the people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history." This is what happened in post-independence India when the legacy of destroying the culturally rooted name Bharat that began in the Islamist era, continued by the British and allowed to continue in the name of vote bank politics by the left-liberal 'secular' parties until this day!

Instead of following the footsteps of our ancestors who carried forward the legacy of the struggle all through the ages to defend the cultural and civilisational history of the country successive governments ignored the cultural heritage of this country to ensure its death. Arnold Joseph Toynbee (1889-1975), the British historian of civilisations` rightly observed that "Civilisations die from suicide, not murder" (The way to save Hindu civilisation by J G Arora.)

### **The need is to bury the flawed history:**

This brings us to the unseemly controversy over the slogan of Bharat mata ki jai. If AIMIM President Assaduddin Owaisi tries to revive the failed legacy of his masters like commander Rizvi, one should understand that his attempts are to revive the deep rooted Islamist designs of past rulers who had tried to eliminate our country's legacy. The foreign invaders had not succeeded and Owaisi will not succeed either.

But the need to make an honest national effort to review the flawed history of the country imposed by intruders and invaders is an urgent necessity and needs to be taken seriously at all levels.

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