

Foreword

'What is there in a name?' There is definitely much more in a name than may appear to be the case on a superficial survey. Names may appear to be quite casual, so much so that the man bearing them has hardly any say in the matter. We find some people adopting new names or adding aliases. In many cases the name does not have any equation with the personal qualities of the man concerned. The titles assumed by a man may reflect something of his inner personality, his ambitions, and his emotional complexes; the epithets bestowed by others, if not created by greedy flatterers, reveal his assessment in the eyes of others. Whereas the surnames may often depend on the accident of birth in a given family or a social group, the personal names are labelled long before any of the recognisable attributes begin to emerge. The story of names would have assumed a highly romantic colour if the names had been assumed by people and had not been thrust upon them.

The names may not reveal the man, but they do provide penetrating peeps into his family, his society and his times. The name-patterns have a vital connexion with the social realities and cultural values of the group to which they belong. There is a distinct individuality in them and they reflect in a microscopic miniature the traditions and values of the people concerned. People do not take to names in as casual a manner as they are sometimes taken to do. Of all the people the Indians seem to show a much serious concern for the question of names and to have set down definite rules governing their formation. These rules are not mere grammatical ones to cover the linguistic forms of the names. There are prescriptive norms and prohibitive rules in accordance with the socio-cultural traditions and the advancements made in various fields of knowledge. Not many