

nations of antiquity can claim a parallel progress in this area of culture. These elaborate rules did not result merely from the typically Indian genius for systematisation and elaboration of its fund of knowledge in all spheres. It arose out of a conscious appreciation of the significance of names and their great relevance for the cultural traditions. The rules about names prescribed in the grammatical works and the *Gṛhyasūtras* and the *Smṛtis* were elaborated in subsequent times and led to the composition of separate treatises on various aspects and problems connected with the giving of names.

The names can provide a reliable clue to the understanding of the socio-cultural life. They can serve as a barometer for recording the historical realities of culture in a particular period. A study of the name-patterns can be a useful measuring rod for a historian; but, it has been rarely used. A name can reveal the personal equipment of the bestowing parents and also their emotional concern for their child. Above all, it tells us about the gods and goddesses and their comparative popularity, the religious ideas and beliefs current among the people, the social structure and the differences in the various social groups, and the realities of the linguistic phenomenon. In view of the elaborate rules about the grammatical, astronomical, religious and social considerations, an analysis of the pattern of names in different historical periods can give us a vital indication of the extent to which the traditional rules were respected and of the influences which were introducing changes in the traditional beliefs and systems.

Considering the rich possibilities in a historical and comparative analysis of the name-patterns, it is surprising indeed that, with a few singular exceptions, historians have not paid to this area of study the serious attention it deserves. Obviously this type of study is more demanding in respect of the disciplines involved. The historian, who undertakes the work, has to possess a comprehensive knowledge of different aspects of an ancient society. He has to combine a knowledge of Sanskrit grammar and linguistics with a proficiency in palaeography and competence to handle the original texts bearing on the subject. Happily Dr. Tej Ram Sharma, one of my early research scholars, assiduously cultivated the qualities and acquired the