

**FOLK CULTURE
REFLECTED
IN
NAMES**

Court Poets of Iran and India
(New Book C., Bombay, 1938)

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(George Allen & Unwin, Second impression, 1954)

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Dadabhai Naoroji: The Grand Old Man of India
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Information & Broadcasting Ministry, Government of India, 1959)

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FOLK CULTURE REFLECTED IN NAMES

R. P. MASANI

Foreword by

S. M. KATRE, M.,A. Ph.D.



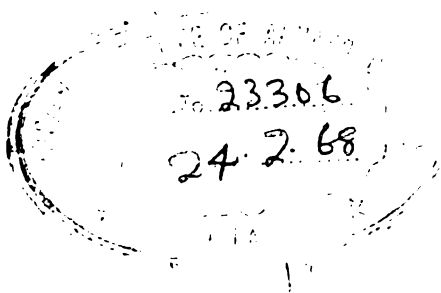
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ERRATA

*The following Errata was pointed out by the author
before his sad demise :*

<i>Incorrect</i>	<i>Correct</i>	<i>Page No.</i>
<i>Wohel</i>	<i>Cohen</i>	27 line 17
<i>Chhathia</i>	<i>Chhathina</i>	29 line 13
<i>asikh-ut- 'awarikh</i>	<i>in Nasikh-ut-Tawarikh</i>	30 line 13
<i>Naskh-ut-Tawarikh</i>	<i>Nasikh-ut Tawarikh</i>	32 line 31
<i>andhya</i>	<i>Sandhya</i>	37 line 5
<i>Kumkum</i>	<i>Kumkun</i>	44 line 16
<i>Kankoo</i>	<i>Kumkun</i>	44 line 31
<i>Enthovan</i>	<i>Enthoven</i>	61 line 31
<i>Genethliaeal</i>	<i>Genethliacal</i>	65 line 6
<i>demonaiical</i>	<i>demoniacal</i>	67 line 20
<i>golp</i>	<i>gold</i>	87 line 28
<i>3 I did</i>	<i>3 Ibid</i>	91 Footnote 3
<i>personages</i>	<i>abstractions</i>	94 line 19
<i>Universal</i>	<i>Celestial</i>	94 line 19
<i>interrogative</i>	<i>interrogatory</i>	98 line 10
<i>lon</i>	<i>long</i>	99 line 31
<i>Sacerdotall dignitie</i>	<i>sacerdotal dignitie</i>	108 line 10
<i>customs of</i>	<i>customs for</i>	114 line 31

FOREWORD

Names have exercised a profound influence on the mental and spiritual development of human beings, from the most primitive to the most advanced forms and types of civilization. Our concept itself of the physical world is circumscribed by our capacity to name things and by the structure of our speech, and this holds good even in the highest reaches of philosophical thought. While ultimate reality is beyond the reach of speech and thought, the formulation of that reality is limited by the nature of speech itself, and each linguistic stock has its own individual approach which is as much a linguistic scientist's field as that of the logician and of the philosopher. But one factor binds all different approaches and systems together: Man himself, and the anthropologist who interests himself in the study of Man is perhaps in a supremely interesting situation to analyse such common facets as may be shared by speakers belonging to different linguistic stocks. That Sir Rustom Masani has kept up his interest in the study and development of Anthropology in our country over six decades and made signal contributions to its different aspects will not cause any wonder to his many friends and admirers. During his many-sided activities in several fields to each of which he has added something of his own, he has kept his interest in the romance of words, as particularly restricted to "naming", the origin of "names" and the very human psychology that lies buried in the obscure names. The customs, superstitions, folk-etymologies, the secret power which is encoded in them, etc., make the study of "names" an exciting pastime which, in the case of Sir Rustom, has kept him ever young and active. It is a matter for congratulation that an interest which kept him busy over fifty-five years has at last resulted in a very lucid and attractive monograph which will entertain and instruct the lay reader as well as the specialist. Sir Rustom has the gift of making difficult subjects easy and

a style which instructs as well as keeps one's interest to the end. In fact the present study is so stimulating that it will not be outside the scope of research institutes to pursue it further and in greater detail in relation to individual languages or language-families.

Names, or "proper nouns", more pedantically known in the Latin form *nomen proprium*, have been the subject of continued research for many generations now, particularly after the modern discipline of Comparative Philology and Linguistics was established in Europe since the beginning of the nineteenth century. At the present moment more than a score of specialist journals are devoted to the study of names; place names, in particular, have several societies dedicated to collection and recording of such names and their attendant histories. For many languages special dictionaries exist for giving complete inventories of either personal or place or geographical names, and some Indian languages are no exception, either. One of the earliest efforts in this direction was made by Dr. Alfons Hilka in his *Die Altindische Prosenamen* in 1910 as part of a much bigger study devoted to the understanding of the Indian system of "name-giving". But this is primarily a linguistic exposition of the problem. A very much later "Dictionary of Pali Proper Names" by Dr. G. P. Malalasekera does not differentiate between personal and other names, and is primarily a dictionary giving useful historical information. No one, so far as I can see, has handled the subject of personal names with the approach which marks that of Sir Rustom.

Regarding the inherent power of names there is a particularly interesting story in the Mahabharata. Jaratkaru, a sage belonging to the Yayavara family, is exhorted by his manes, who were hanging in a large hollow by their feet, to propagate so that his son may save them and himself from a similar fate. Jaratkaru promises to do so provided he finds some one willing to give him a bride who also bears the name of Jaratkaru. He wanders about without finding a suitable bride, and when he is very dejected, Vasuki, the lord of the Nagas, offers him his

sister. On satisfying himself that her name is Jaratkaru he marries her, and in course of time she gives birth to a son who is named Astika. It is this Astika who succours his mother's clan during the "Snake-Sacrifice" of Janamejaya. The Great Epic indicates the magic significance contained in the name Jaratkaru (literally "ancient architect") in the birth of Astika who saves the serpents from total destruction. In consequence the name Astika is supposed to exercise power over serpents and a repetition of it is considered to grant freedom from any attack by crawling creatures. Hundreds of such examples may be gleaned from Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit literatures.

Sometimes folk etymology invests particular names with particular power. In the ancient Brahmana literature of the Veda the god Indra is supposed to derive his name from Indhana 'lighting, kindling' from which may be derived his power of 'lightning' or thunderbolt Vajra. This feature is highly specialised in the Tantric system where each particular phase of divinity has more than a hundred or thousand names qualifying it, each of which has a certain magical potency or power for good or bad. The seed letters or syllables, or the bija-mantras are supposed to evoke either spiritual or physical powers which can be actualised or realised by the successful aspirant. We have an account given by Shri Ramakrishna that when he practised certain Tantric rites and uttered particular syllables he could physically perceive the powers which those syllables were supposed to evoke. Every religion has its system of name-evocation, and it will, therefore, be no wonder that primitive man regarded the act of giving names and the names themselves as something on which to ponder in wonder and awe.

Regarding pseudonyms which are assumed for "protection" we may once again refer to the Mahabharata when the five Pandava princes with Draupadi have to remain incognito for one year. They go to Virata's kingdom and assume new names; Arjuna, for instance, becomes a dance teacher under the name Brhannada (lit,

“great dancer”) while Draupadi serves as a maid to Virata’s family under the disguised name Sairandhri. Yudhisthira assumes the name of Kanka (whose primary meaning is “heron”).

In his short monograph Sir Rustom Masani has dealt with so many different aspects of names which must find an echo in the minds of all scholars. What he has indicated is a pointer to what further investigations may unravel from the maze of names. Modern civilization is fast losing touch with what was an integral part of early civilization; modern naming has no contact with tradition or custom, and we in India find a happy (though from an anthropological point of view we are losing the tradition itself) pan-Indian system which will ultimately obliterate regional and sectional characteristics. Before that stage is reached we may yet uncover the working of primitive mind in this naming activity, for that is the fundamental on which a deep understanding of the subconscious can be made. I have personally enjoyed reading this stimulating work and every page has brought vividly to my mind parallels from my own language stock and recalled episodes from old Indian literature. Perhaps some day I may look with pleasure on some profitable research which may be conducted in my own Institute applying this approach to the study of personal names in Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit literatures.

Deccan College
31st January 1965

S. M. Katre

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

The object of this book is to call attention to a field of knowledge only casually, partially, explored and the need for systematic study, investigation and research concerning proper names current among the peoples of the world. Much attention has, no doubt, been paid to the study of nomenclature in its philological and linguistic aspects, but a good deal remains to be accomplished concerning the collection, examination and analysis of the traditions, beliefs and customs associated with names and name-giving rites and the sociological, ethnological and antiquarian lore gathered around those aspects.

Agreeably to her reputation for being the earliest in exploring the problem of existence in its spiritual, metaphysical, philosophical and ethical aspects, India was also one of the first countries to recognize the importance and significance of proper names, the rites for naming children and the choice of names. Her *dharmashastra* and *smritis* embody elaborate injunctions on the subject, not a few of them baffling and bewildering in their variations and varying interpretations.

That era of dazzling enlightenment was supervened by centuries of invasions of the country, her subjection, depression and gloom of ignorance and superstition. It was given to European scholars, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to bring about a revival of learning in India. A large number of them were British members of the Indian Civil Service. These scholars have shed a flood of light not only on the history, geography and topography of the people but also on their primitive notions, convictions, ritual observances, customs and traditions concerning varied aspects of the life of the people. Notable among these aspects are the prejudices and superstitions which dominated the minds of the people during the childhood of human society and which still survive in some form or other among incredibly large sections

of the people of the world. As yet, however, scant attention has been paid to the traditions and beliefs underlying various customs of naming children and the study of personal names as a repository of the culture of the forefathers of the human race reflecting their racial history, religion, philosophy and way of life, when their faculty of reason and analysis was undeveloped and their imagination unrestrained.

Behind the fascinating process of the evolution of human society lay centuries. The three principal factors in this process were racial descent, cultural drift and transmission of traits of culture at different stages by means of language, tradition and writing. With the first factor we are not concerned so much as with the other two which constitute the background of the study on which we are embarking. Throughout the wanderings of primitive man for centuries there was a steady development of intellect. The race as a whole was slowly emerging from the state of ignorance and unreason. But as ratiocination is a very, very slow process, instinct and emotion still dominated man's mode of thinking. Even so, those self-schooled, self-taught and self-scanned sires of the human race, living isolated in different parts of the world, drew more or less the same inferences and came to more or less the same conclusions concerning the mystery of human existence and the satisfaction of their needs, physical, mental and spiritual.

At a very early stage in his evolution the once nameless, vestureless, weaponless man manifested an intelligent curiosity concerning his needs and his surroundings. One of those needs was to call one's children, relations and friends by distinctive signs, or symbols, whereby they could be distinguished from one another. The need for names, when a mere gesture or an inflection of the voice was considered no longer sufficient, appears to have been felt almost simultaneously with the origin of speech. A man's name was his individuality. His personality and the rights and obligations connected with it would not exist without the name. Those who knew him, or heard

his name pronounced, connected it forthwith in their thoughts with the idea of his physical characteristics, mental make-up and moral character.

Although there was no objective resemblance between a name and the person bearing the name, the association of the two, in one's mind, engendered the belief that there was an intimate connection between them. It marked the same confusion in man's primitive mode of thinking as that which led him to establish a connection between an object and its image, between words and things or between symbols and realities, and made him attribute the qualities of things living to things not living. Just as the object and the image brought together in the mind were regarded as co-existing also in the outside world, so did the association of the name with the person distinguished by it induce the belief that there was a real connection between them. Unable to differentiate between the ego and the life itself, the primitive mind associated both in one. The nature of the name, its power and influence, as conceived by it, led to the conception that the name of a man was his very soul and it gave rise to quaint customs rooted in the fear and horror of evil spirits and sorcerers ready to cast their spells on persons through their names, to do harm to them and even to wipe them out of existence.

Deep-rooted, indeed, in the heart of man is the fear of malignant spirits. It was the nightmare of the forefathers of the human race in the days of ignorance and unreason and it still persists among people, savage or civilized. Living with nature, while commencing his career on earth, man found himself face to face with physical forces. Personifying them, he deified and adored the beneficent powers and dreaded and denounced the malevolent ones as demons. There was no end to the evil brought to mankind by the malignant spirits. The bewildering tricks they played to molest people, including thefts of babies or their illness and premature death, continued unabated for centuries. To counter their evil designs or to hoodwink them man had to resort to various stratagems. Some of these were, as we shall see in the following pages,

concealment, change, or exchange of names and taboo on the utterance of various categories of names.

Fifty-five years ago, the author of this book wrote for the Silver Jubilee number of the Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay a paper on "Naming Customs and Superstitions." Therein he pointed out that the names of the diversified people of India opened up for the student of ethnic and linguistic lore a vast field for investigation and research concerning the ancient organization of society in India and other countries, its early history and the course of its civilization. Not that the subject had remained unexplored. In his highly suggestive study, *The Early History of Mankind*, based on his pioneering synthetic research, Tylor had devoted a full chapter to Images and Names to illustrate the tendency of the unlettered mind to give an outward material reality to its own inward processes. He had embodied in that chapter several observances and beliefs amongst primitive people of Australia, the North American Indians, the Papuans, the Fijians and the Sumatrans, but he had very little information to give about the corresponding customs and traditions obtaining amongst different groups of people in the East. Fifty years later, Edward Clodd shuffled up together, round an old Suffolk tale, *Tom Tit Tot*, numerous curious western beliefs and customs having a bearing on the central idea of name-concealment on which the main incident in the story of that imp revolved. That essay on *Savage Philosophy in Folklore*, on which the writer of this monograph has drawn freely for parallels in Eastern and Western folklore, gave a few examples of the folk philosophy behind the names of some Asiatic people including Hindus and Muslims but very little evidence of the enormous influence exercised by personal names generally on their way of life. *The Imperial Gazetteer of India* dealt mainly with tribal names. Even in the standard list of queries in Risley's *Ethnographic Glossary* there was not a single question concerning personal names. Major Temple did, no doubt, give a luminous *Dissertation on The Proper Names of the Panjabis* but his efforts were mainly confined to examining and

collating a percentage of the names found in the Census Returns in 1881 and their distribution according to castes and classes and investigation as to their form, meaning and derivation. Temple was followed by Edgar Thurston who gave in his *Ethnographic Notes on Southern India* an interesting chapter on "Names of the Natives". Some entertaining bits could also be culled from William Crooke's volumes on *The Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India* and *Natives of Northern India*. Much, however, then remained to be done to extend the boundaries of knowledge on the subject, particularly in regard to Islamic concepts, customs and traditions, and to throw additional light on the origin of those beliefs and practices.

In the year 1949, the author reverted to the subject in a paper presented to the Anthropological Society of Bombay, incorporating additional material and recalling that in a rapidly changing world the need to collect and to sift the fast disappearing evidence was even greater than before. How far the conceptions, customs and ceremonies relating to proper names and other seeming vagaries of social life and analogous folk-beliefs and practices were influenced by animism, demonolatry and magic, whence they originated and how the working of the primitive mind and the philosophy behind those concepts could help to demonstrate the fundamental oneness of mankind, were questions which then demanded and still demand elaborate examination and explanation. For the student of history and sociology the importance of the study lies in its archaeological, antiquarian and ethnological aspects, in clearing up genealogies of beliefs and customs and other details of the early history, topography and folklore and in tracing the transmission of cultural ideas from one nation to another at different stages of their mental development. For the student of language its fascination lies in its philological, linguistic and literary aspects, in escaping the confusion caused by erroneously transcribed and translated words or names and in appreciating and expounding the play upon words and names and the folk philosophy reflected therein.

While there is always the temptation to theorize about the origin of some of the confusing traditional beliefs and customs and the resulting anomalies and to speculate as to the solution of some of the sociological puzzles such as the avoidance custom, the author of this book has tried to confine his survey to the limited task set before him, namely, to collect, classify and interpret the available data concerning man's early conceptions and beliefs concerning proper names and the resulting ritual observances and customs, providing, wherever possible, additional information obtained by personal enquiries. It may be hoped that what has been humbly attempted will stimulate among competent scholars interested in the subject the desire to survey the whole field scientifically.

The author is greatly beholden to his learned and esteemed friend Dr. S. M. Katre for the interest taken by him in the publication of this book and for introducing it to the general reader with his luminous Foreword. None could have spoken on the subject with greater knowledge and authority than this eminent Sanskritist and Indologist, who is now engaged, in addition to his duties as Director of the Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute, Honorary Professor of Indo-European Philology and Director of the Centre of Advanced Study in Linguistics, in the arduous task of editing the monumental Sanskrit Dictionary fostered by the Government of India. The thanks of the author are also due to Prof. H. D. Velankar, Bhandarkar Professor of Sanskrit and Head of the Department of Sanskrit studies in the University of Bombay, Dr. G. S. Ghurye, distinguished Professor Emeritus of Sociology, University of Bombay, and Dr. Mrs. Karve, Professor and Head of the Department of Anthropology-Sociology, in the Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute, Poona, for reading the script of the book and making helpful suggestions. To his ever-obliging, talented friend Mr. B. K. Karanjia, Editor, *Filmfare*, a *Times of India* publication, the author is once more grateful for reading the proofs of the book.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

WHAT is a name? What is in a name? Is it a mere label or title distinguishing one individual from another? Or is it a vehicle of some definite idea or a mirror in which one's self, or some trait of one's character, or the culture of the forefathers of one's race, is reflected? Or is it something more important, an integral part of one's personality, a vital element, though intangible, of man's composition, the very essence of his physical and mental make-up, his mana, influencing his future for good or evil? Or is it much more than all these, what is termed and universally recognized as one's soul?

"It is not hand, nor foot, nor arm, nor face, nor any other part belonging to a man," says love-sick Juliet in Shakespeare's immortal tragedy when she finds that her lover's name is an impediment to their marriage. Long before Romeo and Juliet appeared on the stage, the heroine of another famous play, Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, gave a different version when she told her sweet companion, "Ah, saucy girl, rightly have men named thee *Priyamvada* (one on whose lips spring gracious words)."¹ Herein, whilst implying that the silver-tongued damsel who was attending on her was using language far too flattering, she gave expression to the general impression that one's name is, or ought to be, a mirror reflecting one's personality and distinguishing traits of character.

Turning, however, from the realm of fancy to the world of reality, we find that the word and the object, the name and the person named, have always had a much closer relationship than that visualised by Kali-

¹ Act 1 Scene A Forest, translated into English by Monier Williams (6th Edition), p. 15.

dasa's sweet heroine. It was a general belief that there was an intimate connection between the meaning of the proper name and the character and destiny of the man who bore it. The philosopher and the common man alike shared this belief through the ages. Among nations, old and young, eastern and western, proper names had originally an appropriate meaning and great importance was attached to the selection and significance of names.

Who, where and when, first conceived the idea of differentiating individual human beings, history does not record. But we do know that long before philosophy was brought down from the skies to the earth and philosophers like Aristotle and Plato commenced their speculations and propounded their doctrines concerning the place of man in the universe and his future destiny, the mind of primitive man was busy drawing its own inferences on the problems which confronted later generations including philosophers and scientists. One of these problems was name-giving.

In its story of Creation the *Manusmriti* asserts that not only the specific functions of things and objects but also their names were fixed simultaneously by the Creator, God Hiranyagarbha. The biblical story of Creation, as related in the Book of Genesis, presents Adam as the giver of names to all living creatures. Hardly had the task of creation been completed when "out of the ground the Lord formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air and paraded them before Adam to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. "Later," the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam...and He took one of his ribs...and the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of man". We need not pause to concern ourselves with the language which Adam spoke and his voca-

bulary. What is for us a significant fact is that since the dawn of Creation the need for naming every living creature had been felt and that in later years people came to believe that the character and destiny of the person named was determined by the choice and significance of the name.

Was it mere coincidence that Moses (literally, "drawn out") was able to lead the people of God out of the land of Egypt? Or was it because a magic bias was given to his destiny by his name? Was not the same conception the basis of that world-famed prophecy, "Thou Art Peter (rock) and on that rock I will build my church".

Was there not the same philosophy behind the fiat of the Imam of Muscat who dubbed an Italian physician, by name Vincenzo, "Shaikh Mansur"?

"What is your name?" asked the Imam.

"Vincenzo," replied the candidate for the post of medical adviser to the Imam.

"Explain to me its meaning in Arabic", said the ruler.

"Mansur (victorious)," was the explanation.

A physician who could be depended upon to conquer disease was worth his weight in gold. Taking the name as a happy omen, the Imam appointed Vincenzo his medical adviser¹.

It was universally believed ever since the dawn of civilization that just as there are words of power there are names of power, each having a mystic property, its inherent virtue, its *shakti* (power), or *baraka* (blessing), commonly expressed as *barkat*. No wonder the concepts, customs and traditions concerning names current in one hemisphere accord strikingly with those prevailing in the other. With their anthropomorphic conception of the Creator of the Universe as a "non-natural, magnified man," to borrow the phraseology of Matthew

¹ *History of Names of Men, Nations and Places*, translated into English from the French of Eusebius Salverte by Rev. L. H. Mordaque, Vol. I, p. 7.

Arnold, people everywhere assumed that the relations between God and man were essentially the same as those subsisting between human beings, that God knew each individual by name and that He used to commune with His messengers on earth and address patriarchs by their names. For example,

“Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham, for a father of many nations have I made thee”. (Genesis XVII. 5).

“And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed”. (ibid XXXii)

“And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken, for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name (Exodus XXXii 17)

Almost every Hebrew name originally had some meaning. It either had a symbolical significance, says W. M. Feldman, in his book *The Jewish Child* concerning all the phases and aspects of Jewish child life, e.g. Isaac (because, said Sarah, “God hath made me laugh”), Immanuel (Emanuel) meaning “God is with us,” or it had a commemorative character, e.g. Jacob because he followed on the heels of Esau. Among other theophorous names he mentions Elemelech (“My God is King”), Elnathan (“God has given”), Michael, (“Who is like God”), Yedidjah (“Beloved of God”) and Raphael (“God heals”).¹

It will be seen that among various communities in India also there is a marked predilection for theophorous names.

The Bible and the Talmud give explanations of names, some of scientific value but many fanciful. Among names correctly explained may be mentioned Adam, “signifying a terrestrial origin”. Eve means “life” “because she was the mother of all living.” Eve’s first-born son was called Cain (meaning acquisition) because she “acquired a man from the Lord”.

¹ *The Jewish Child*, pp 222-223.

Among the other names the explanations of which are given by the Rabbis, partly warranted by philology and partly fanciful, are the following well-known women's names:

Iscah so called because every one looked at her beauty (sacah meaning "look").

Acsa, so called because "on account of her beauty," all men who saw her became cross with their wives (the root caas meaning angry).

Zapporah, meaning "come and look" (at her beauty).

Esther was so called because she was bright as a star. According to another explanation, because she concealed the meaning of her words (esther meaning concealment).

It is not, however, merely the meaning, significance, or inherent mana in names that gives the study of personal names its peculiar charm. Our interest in the subject is heightened by the evidence which comes from far-flung regions of the world of the belief prevailing among many people that one's name is an integral part of one's personality, one's vital self. The evidence of folklore is reinforced by that of philology. "If we may judge from the evidence of language," says Sir James Frazer, "this crude conception of the relation of names to persons was widely prevalent, if not universal, among the forefathers of the Aryan race". He adds, on the authority of Professor John Rhys, that an analysis of the words for name in various languages of "that great family of speech" points to the conclusion that at one time it was the general belief among the Aryans that the name was "that part of man which is termed the soul". Before, however, we proceed to study this evidence of language, it is necessary to realize the idea underlying the belief that one's name was an integral part of one's constitution.

Nowhere was this concept so vividly and so categorically expressed as in the ancient Egyptian doctrine concerning the composition of man. According to this

1 Golden Bough; Part II, *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul* p. 319, edition of 1911.

doctrine man consisted of a spiritual body, a double, a soul, a heart, a shadow, a halo, an ethereal casing of the spiritual body, a form, or a personified power of the man, and a name, all bound together indissolubly.

The same conception concerning the importance attached to the name as a vital factor in the composition of man is exquisitely reflected in a dialogue between the Greek King Milanda or Menander of Sakala, and Nagasena the Buddhist saint. Therein we find confirmation of a corresponding belief among the people in the East concerning the composition of a human being, varying in some respects but corroborating the popular belief that the name is an integral factor in the composition of a human being. The King asks the anchorite: "What is your name?" "I am called Nagasena", says the holy man, "by my parents, the priests and others. But Nagasena is not a separate entity." He takes as an illustration the chariot in which the King had gone to him and says: "As the various parts of a chariot, when united, form the chariot, so the five *skandhas*, When united in one body, form a being or living existence," The five *skandhas* are *Rupa* (physical constituents), *Vijnana* (self-consciousness), *Vedana* (feeling of pleasure or pain), *Samjna* (name) and *Samskara* (love, hatred, infatuation). These five constitute the human being.¹

When the angel of death knocks at one's door and everything that belongs to one is snatched away from him, there is one thing that does not leave one and that is one's name. "The name", we are told in the Upanishad, "is endless and by it one gains the endless world." It is on this conception, namely, that the name is bound up inseparably with one's soul and that it accompanies the dead to the other world, rests the belief in the efficacy of funeral rites and ceremonies. In all such rituals recital of the name of the deceased is the essence of the spiritual relationship of God with man and of man with his departed forbears. Speaking of the Iranian branch

¹ *Collected Works of Sir R. G. Bhandarkar*, Vol. 1 p. 8.

of the Aryan race, Dr. Jivanji Modi points out in one of his Anthropological Papers that "a name is essentially necessary for the performance of all ceremonies of one's living soul (*zindeh ravan*) and of his soul after death (*anoushe-ravan*)" "If you want to perform any religious ceremony or prayer for the good of a child, the child must be named and all possible care taken to select a good name. In all the ceremonies of one's life, the name of the person is important. The very ceremony of betrothal, which begins marriage, is spoken of as *nam zad shudan* 'being struck with a name'. Even if the husband dies after betrothal and before marriage, the name of that betrothed husband is recited with that of the wife in all ceremonies. That is the case even after re-marriage."¹

This belief in relating, if not equating, one's name with one's soul was not merely the fancy of the child mind in its struggle to find an explanation of the unknown when it was not clear as to the distinction between an animate and an inanimate object. It was also the belief and conviction of relatively civilised people in India and other parts of the world when there was as yet no rational understanding of the relation between cause and effect. As a creature swayed by emotion, particularly by the fear that has conjured up a universe overrun by dreaded spirits, ghosts and godlings, man is millions of years old. As a reasoning being, he is only an infant of yesterday crying for the light and with no language but a cry. It would be helpful, therefore, if we try at the outset to understand the ancient Egyptian ontology, with the help of Clodd's running commentary thereon, so as to realize how one's name came to be equated with one's soul from the earliest time and how that belief spread to all parts of the world and intensified the fear that one would come to grief if one's name were

¹ Paper on *The Indian Custom of a Husband and Wife not calling each other by Name*, *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay*, Vol XII, No. 3; pp-307-8.

discovered by sorcerers or other malevolent agencies.

According to the Egyptian doctrine the component parts of a human being were (1) the *sahn*, or spiritual body; then (2) the *ka*, or double (other-self) which, although its normal dwelling-place was the tomb, could wander at will, and even take up its abode in the statue of a man. It could eat and drink, and if the sweet savour of incense and other real offerings failed, could content itself with feeding on the viands painted on the walls of the tomb. Then there was (3) the *ba*, or soul, about which the texts reveal conflicting views, but which is usually depicted as a bird with human head and hands. To this follows (4), the *ab*, or heart, held to be the source both of life, and of good and evil in the life, and, as the seat of vital power, without which there could be no resurrection of the body, and jealously guarded against abstraction by the placing of heart-shaped amulets on the mummy. Next in order is (5) the *khaibit* or shadow; then (6) the *Khu* or shining covering of the spiritual body which dwelt in heaven with the gods; (7) the *sekhem*, or personified power of the man. Last, but not least, was (8) the *REN* or name; that part of the immortal Ego, without which no being could exist. Extraordinary precautions were taken to prevent the extinction of the *ren*, and in the pyramid texts we find the deceased supplicating that it may flourish or "germinate" along with the names of the gods.

"The basal connection between this practice," observes Clodd, "and that of the importance attached to the record of the name in 'Lamb's Book of Life' as ensuring admission to heaven, which as 'a canon of popular modern belief,' is too obvious for comment." "Among the Pacific races," says he, "the name assumes a personality, it is the shadow or spirit or other self of the flesh-and-blood person." Another instance of civilized and savage being at one in their concept of the name.

Turning once more from folk philosophy and ancient tradition to language and philology for an answer to the question what particular part of a man the name was

believed to be, we find that in every language the word for spirit and for breath is the same. Hence the unsubstantial "name" falls into line with the general nebulous conception of spirit. "As regards the Aryan nation", says Professor Rhys Devis, "we seem to have an interesting group of words from which I select the following: Irish *ainm* "a name", plural *anmann*; Old *anmund*; Old Welsh *anu*, now *enw* also a name; Old Bulgarian *ime*; Old Russian *emnes*, *emmens*, accusative *emnan*, and Armenian *anwan* — all meaning "a name." To these may be added the Avestan *ravan*, the English word *name* itself, the Latin *nomen* and the Sanskrit *naman*. So close is the similarity between the word for "name" and "the soul" in some of the languages, as for instance, Welsh *enw* (name) and *enaid*, (soul), and the Irish word *ainm* (name) and *anim* (soul), that it would tempt one to conclude that the direct teaching of the Celtic vocables is that they are all to be referred to the same origin in the Aryan word for breath or breathing, which is represented by such words as Latin *anima*, Welsh *anadl*, breath, and Gothic *anan* "blow" or "breathe", and that the whole Aryan family at one time believed that the name was that part of a man which was termed the soul, the breath of life!¹

Indian history furnishes a striking illustration of the identification of one's name with one's soul and of the belief based thereon that whoever gets hold of a man's name acquires absolute control over him and that just as a man could be blest, cured of disease and his spirit beatified through his name, he could likewise be cursed, his existence blotted out and his ghost molested at the will and pleasure of an enemy if he could find out the real name of the victim of his hostility and evil design. Among the despatches intercepted by the British forces during the Nepal War there was a letter from the Goorkha Commander to his General as follows:

¹ *Nineteenth Century*, October 1891. Welsh *Fairies*, p. 566-67. Quoted by Clodd, *Tom Tit Tot*, pp. 236-37.

"I have consulted the Shastras; until the 15th day of Bysak you will be greatly distressed; afterwards your fortune will turn. Do this: form an iron sheet and make upon it the picture of Bhimsing and the Hanooman and the moon and the sun; put it, upon a Sunday, into the eastern tower of the fort: by this, fortune will turn. Find out the name of the Commander of the British army, write it upon a piece of paper, take it and some rice and turmeric, say the great incantation three times; having said it, send for some plum-tree wood and therewith burn it."¹

Even to this day many people regard the name as part and parcel of one's personality. Hence the widespread fear that if any one gets hold of a man's real name, he would be directly under the influence of the discoverer of the name and its corollary that it should be concealed from foes and friends alike so as to protect one from the evil designs of the former and avoid exciting the jealousy and envy of any one of the latter. Hence also the various quaint customs governing the selection, avoidance, perversion, change and exchange of names. Hence, likewise, the fantastic code of etiquette requiring husbands and wives to abstain from mentioning or calling one another by name. How widely extended such conceptions and customs were and how they persisted for centuries is exquisitely reflected, whether by design or by accident, in the simple English game-rhyme:

"What is your name?
 Pudding and tame,
 If you ask me again,
 I'll tell you the same."

During his childhood the author used to amuse himself, like his elders, with a similar evasive reply to the question "what is your name?". Put in Gujarati language,

¹ Fraser, *Journal of a Tour through part of the Survey Range of the Himalaya mountains to the sources of Rivers Jamuna and Ganges*, p. 530 (quoted by Edward Clodd in *Tom Tit Tot*, p-86).

the answer was "Khato Pito", one who eats and drinks. He had yet to learn that at the back of that evasive expression then in vogue was the fear of harm to one's self in revealing one's name.

What has been briefly stated in this preliminary chapter will, it may be hoped, be regarded sufficient to formulate an answer to the question posed at the outset "What's in a Name?" The answer is "Lots". On it depends one's future and one's fortune. It is, besides, a repository of folk culture, and is, so to say, stamped on the forehead of individual human beings reflecting the traditions and usages of the community to which they belong and the level of culture attained by it. For understanding the processes of the mind which established such a vital connection between the name and the bearer of the name it will be necessary for us to make in the following pages a joint appeal to religion, history, psychology and folk philosophy.

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TIME FOR NAMING CHILDREN

WHEN should a child be named? Before or after birth?

If after birth, within how many days after the innocent little one is ushered into this penitentiary? Fanciful though it seems to be, a great deal of thought and ingenuity was bestowed on this question by the ancestors of the human race before and after the dawn of civilization. In primitive belief one was not taken to be really a human being until one was given a name. Name-giving, therefore, was a solemn ceremony with a fixed ritual. In India, particularly, law givers, both Hindu and Muslim, attached considerable importance to the duty of naming a child within the prescribed period and in consonance with recognized injunctions and traditions. Nay, one of the informants of the author of this book gave him, about fifty-five years ago, an extract from an Arabic book of Islamic traditions sounding a warning against delaying the performance of the duty until the birth of the child!

It is related from Amiru'l Mu'minin (Ali, son-in-law of Muhammad, the Prophet of Arabia), says Muhammad Bakir Majlisi in his book *Hulyatul-Muttaquin*, a *vade mecum* for pious Muslims, that names should be given to children whilst in the embryonic stage, "otherwise there is danger of miscarriage and the victim of such default on the part of the father would, on the day of Resurrection, demand an explanation from him as to why no name was given to it in time." Quaint as is the warning and fanciful the injunction, the authority behind them was an eminent theologian. The manuscript of his book which is now in the Asiatic Society's Library, (Calcutta) was lithographed several times during the last two centuries in Iran for faithful Shi'tes.

According to the same authority, the Prophet him-

self selected the name Mohsin for the third son of his daughter Fatimah before the child was born. Although this precedent does not appear to have been followed by the Muslims, among the Andamanese every child is named for life immediately upon knowledge of conception by the mother after one of about twenty conventional names, irrespective of sex. Almost every community in India appears to have had varying elaborate regulations, traditions and customs concerning the time for naming children, the choice of names, the taboo on names and the number of names a child should have.

Obviously, a good turn that parents, rich or poor, might be expected to do their children, the earliest, if not the very first after birth, is to give them a name of good omen. Prospective mothers are never weary of musing on the subject months before the eagerly awaited advent of the little ones. Other more romantic members of the fair sex dream, even before they are married, of the cherubs with whom they hope to be blest and the sweet names they would like to give them. There are, on the other hand, not a few unimaginative persons for whom the selection of a hat or an umbrella is a question of greater concern than the choice of names for their children. In order that the duty of giving a good name to a child may not be overlooked or lightly discharged, the learned author of *Akhlaq-i-Jalali* (Transcendental Ethics), a monumental work of the Middle Ages on the practical philosophy of the Islamic people, considered it necessary to advocate caution in the selection of names for children as one of the solemn obligations of parents.

"Since we are recommended by the traditions to give the name on the seventh day," he observes, "the precept had better be conformed to. In delaying it (till the seventh day) there is this advantage that time is taken for deliberation to select an appropriate name. On the other hand, if in a hurry we give the child an ill-assorted name, the life of the little one is embittered for ever".

The Muslim traditions concerning the time for naming children are not many and are somewhat elastic, but the injunctions laid down for Hindus, varying in their application to different castes, are more elaborate and rigid. The earliest reference to the ceremony of naming a Hindu child is found in the *Shatapatha Brahmana*. It indicates the stage at which, in the course of the ceremony, a name is given to a new-born child, but prescribes no limit of time within which it should be given. That question was left to be treated by later writers such as Manu. The commentator Narayan, son of Garga, lays down that the name should be given after the *jatkarma* (birthday) ceremonies are performed.

Manu may be regarded as the oldest and the foremost authority on the subject. According to his code, *Manusmriti* one should have his naming (*nama-dheya*) on the tenth or the twelfth day after birth on an auspicious lunar date and at an auspicious moment and "under a propitious lunar asterism." This implies that no name can be given before the tenth or the twelfth day. The emphasis on the auspicious day and the moment to be selected for the ceremony precludes inauspicious names, as we shall notice later.

Different authorities give varying injunctions but Manu's authority is generally accepted. He lays down that the ceremony shall be performed in a Brahman family on the 10th or 12th day, in a Kshatriya family on the 13th day or 16th day; in a Vaishya family on the 16th or 20th day and in a Sudra family on the 22nd day or at the end of the month. Convenience, however, now overrules injunctions, especially among the backward classes. Only the Brahmans have kept strictly to the traditional dates and modes. In course of time the tendency among the different castes was to follow the example set by the most superior caste, the Brahmans. They, therefore, adopted the twelfth day after birth for naming children. As a rule, however, the specific injunctions for specific castes are still observed and it is

generally the family astrologer who determines the name to be given to the child.

The backward classes obey no rules. In South India various distinct customs have grown up. The Koils of the Godavari district, for example, perform the name-giving ceremony on the seventh day. In the north the Purbias and the Shikkarpur Hindus name their children on the sixth day.

Amongst the hill tribes the Todas defer the function until the face of the child is uncovered. Amongst them the child has its face covered while in seclusion with its mother and for some time after. None except the mother is allowed to see the face until the end of the third month, when it is uncovered, at a ceremony called *mokh mutar terithi*. According to another account the ceremony takes place on the fifth day after birth. If the child is a boy, he is taken by his father early in the morning to the front of the dairy where the child is put on the ground with his forehead touching the threshold. While the face is uncovered, the father shaves the middle part of his head and holds the child facing the sun so that, when the covering is removed, his eyes should turn towards the sun. He is then given a name by his maternal uncle. If, however, the child is a girl, she is taken by the mother to the place where women go to receive butter milk from the dairyman and the mother uncovers the child's face at that spot."¹ The name of the girl is generally given by the father's sister.

In reply to his questionnaire the author of *The Keys of Power*, J. Abbott of the Indian Civil Service, was informed that if successive children born in a family died during their infancy it was the practice to put off the ceremony of naming the next child in the hope that, having no name at the age when the lives of the former children were prematurely cut off, it might escape their fate. As, however, a child not named was not taken

¹ W. H. R. Rivers: *The Todas*, pp. 331-332.

as a member of the family, it was provisionally given a random name until the real name was given later. The name usually given in such cases was Maruti, the name associated with longevity, in consonance with the general belief that a theophoric name brings a child into the closest relation with the deity whose name it bears.¹

Parsis enjoy full freedom in respect of naming customs and other social usages. They usually take months to name a child. So did the ancient Iranians, whose descendants the modern Parsis are. According to Firdausi's *Shahnama*, Feridun, the ancient famous Iranian monarch, did not name his sons "until they had reached the age at which the chief traits of their character had become manifest."

"We know nothing," says Geiger, in his book *Civilization of the Eastern Iranians in Ancient Times*, "of the giving of names amongst the Avesta nation and the ceremonies usually connected therewith." We find, however, from Dr. B. M. Gai's interesting monograph of *Life in Pre-Islamic Iran*, that there exists a mine of material on the subject in the *Shahnama* and other *namas*, particularly regarding the christening of children born of royal parents².

"At times," says Dr. Gai, "the babe was named immediately after the news of birth was conveyed to the royal father; at times later, owing to the belief in sympathetic magic and the fear that "injury done to anything in the remotest way connected with their own person would affect them injuriously, even the knowledge of their name might be turned to their undoing." Herein the pre-historic Iranian belief corresponds to similar primitive beliefs in Egypt and India referred to in the preceding pages of this book. In the case of daughters another reason for delaying the naming of children was the "fear of talk."

1 Pp. 41-42.

2 Pp. 55-57; The author of this book is indebted to Dr. Gai for allowing him to peruse the script of his monograph.

As a rule, as stated by Herodotus, parents waited for some time after birth so as to have time to judge the natural as well as physical characteristics of the child and give it a connotative name. The *Shahnama* gives several illustrations. For instance, "if the babe happened to be of open visage, it was named Manuchehr. If the infant showed fighting spirit, it was named Tur, a brave lion. If it adopted the prudent man's middle course between dust and fame, he was named Iraj."

The East Indians and Goans are generally unfettered by injunctions on the subject. The latter, however, are believed to prefer the eighth day after birth for naming their children. The Burmans hold a feast on the name-giving day, usually a fortnight after birth.

A Jewish lad is generally given a name at the circumcision ceremony on the eighth day, immediately after the operation. The *wohel* offers a benediction over a cup of wine and gives the child its name. Nowhere in the Old Testament is a definite date mentioned, but according to some, the child is named at the ceremony in memory of the change in the name of the patriarch from Abram to Abraham¹. In the New Testament we find that Jesus was given His name at this ceremony.² A girl is named after she is three days old.

The first-born son of a Jewish mother belongs to God and it is the duty of the father to redeem him. "Sanctify unto me", runs the sacred text, "all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb...the males shall be the Lord's". The ceremony of redemption is performed when the lad is thirty days old. If the thirty-first day happens to fall on the Sabbath or on a festival, it may be postponed till the next day. If for any reason, there is a default, the son has to redeem himself when he grows up³.

This injunction is, as we shall see presently, more

¹ *The Jewish Child*, p. 204 and 218.

² *Luke* ii, 21.

³ *Kiddushin* 29b.

rigid than that enjoined in the case of redemption of Muslim children and the ceremony more solemn than the expiatory ceremony called *aqiqa* in consonance with a tradition emanating from the Prophet. Feldman's description of the Jewish ceremony runs as under:

"The table is laid and the guests sit down to a meal. The father brings in the child especially nicely dressed for the occasion, and presents it to a Cohen (who is supposed to be a direct lineal descendant of Aaron the priest), and makes the following declaration: 'This my first-born son is the first-born of his mother, and the Holy One, blessed be He, hath given command to redeem him'. The Cohen then asks the father 'which wouldst thou rather, give me thy first-born son, the first-born of his mother, or redeem him for 5 selaim (in English money 15s.), which thou art bound to give according to law?' And the father answers, 'I desire rather to redeem my son, and here thou hast the value of his redemption'.

"Then the Cohen takes the money and returns the child to his father, whereupon the latter says the following blessing: 'Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God-King of the Universe who hast sanctified us by Thy Commandments and given us command concerning the redemption of the son.' The Cohen, holding the money over the child, then declares it redeemed, and says, "May it be God's will, that even as he has been admitted to redemption, so may he enter into the Law, the nuptial canopy, and into good deeds. Amen!"

If the father is a poor man, it is the custom for the Cohen to return the money after the ceremony, but it is not permissible to arrange for such refund before the ceremony. If, however, the father is well off, it is the custom to select a Cohen who is poor, so as to accomplish two good deeds at the same time, namely, "redemption" and "charity".

There is a widespread belief among Hindus generally, shared by Parsis and also by Muslim neighbours, particularly in the Punjab, that a child's whole future is

decided early in the morning of the sixth day after birth when the Goddess of Destiny, Vidhata, secretly visits the house of the new-born child to inscribe in letters invisible on the forehead of the child what sort of fortune would attend the little one. On the preceding night a stool is placed in the acouchment room covered with a piece of white cloth. On it are placed a pen and a lamp lit with melted butter. Before the members of the family retire to rest, one of them takes the baby on her lap, covers its head and worships the stool with the things placed thereon. When all is quiet, the goddess comes secretly and writes according to the general belief what fortune is destined for the child. It is called *Chhathia Lekh* the writing of the goddess who is called *Chhathi*.

Among the Muslims of North India also, who have borrowed the custom, a tray is placed in the confinement room containing small oil (fairy) lamps, a coconut, a plaintain, some betelnut leaves and a pen and ink and a sheet of white paper for inscribing the fate of the child. To welcome the deity, who, it is believed, comes accompanied by Jiwati, controller of good fate, their pictures are drawn in a primitive style on the doorway and on the floor in front of the house. A little sea-sand, a few Jujub leaves, a bit of *nindung* or *euphorbia nerifolia*, a few grains of *nachni* or *eleusine coracana* and a small bow of bamboo chips, enough to cover a span, are also placed there.¹

According to Islamic traditions an expiatory sacrifice called *aqiqa* was made on the seventh day after a child was born. At one time every Muslim household observed the tradition. It was commendable on that occasion to name the child, shave off the hair on its head, make an offering to the poor and kill a ram. There were variations according to varying interpretations, but the main features of the ceremony were the same. According to one of the traditions Imam Sadick is reported to have laid down: "Whenever a son or a daughter is born to you,

¹ William Crooke, *Natives of Northern India*, p. 198.

you should offer on the seventh day *aqiqa* (sacrifice) of a goat or a camel, name and shave the child and give in charity the equivalent of the down of the child weighed in silver or gold." The Prophet himself, however, is reported to have named each of his two grandsons on their birthday. In a tradition from Imam Reza it is related that on the day of the birth of Hasan and Husain the prophet shouted the *adhan* (call to prayer) in their ears, offered *aqiqa* on the seventh day from their birth and gave the loin of the goat sacrificed on the occasion to the midwife with an *ashrafi* (gold coin). This tradition is also recorded in greater detail, as we shall notice presently,

1 asikh-ut-Tawarikh.

There are thus two varying Muslim traditions for naming children. *Nawawi* in his *Azkar* says that "for each of these recommendations there are reliable traditions and adds that it is *sunnat* that a child should be named on the seventh day or on the birthday.¹ Muslim divines, however, could not submit to two conflicting recommendations without a satisfactory explanation. We have, therefore, in Bukhari's Collection of Traditions, authoritative interpretations of the traditions to the effect that the recommendation for naming children on the first day had to be observed only in those cases in which no sacrifice was offered. If it was intended to offer the regular sacrifice of a goat or a camel, for which the seventh day was fixed, the name should be given on the seventh day. This interpretation of the varying traditions by the Shia author of *Sahih Bukhari* was, doubtless, ingenious but not convincing. Despite the fact that a sacrifice for Hasan was offered on the seventh day, the name had been bestowed by the prophet himself on the first day.

For our present purpose, however, we are concerned more with the general practice than with exceptions. There is, moreover, much misunderstanding concerning

¹ The book was published in Egypt and edited by Abdul-Hamid Hanafi, pp. 242-44.

the traditions and the precedents set by the Prophet himself regarding the naming of his grandsons. Some western writers on Islam have grossly misunderstood it and inferred from the accounts thereof that spittle, prized as a charm against all sorts of fascination, particularly against the evil eye, played a prominent part in the ceremony. It seems, therefore, desirable that the two traditions be related in full as recorded in *Nasikh-ut-Tawarikh*.

"Salma wrapped Imam Hasan in a piece of yellow cloth, and Fatima, turning to Ali, asked him to give a name to the child. Ali said he could not forestall the Prophet of God in naming the child. The child was thereupon taken to the Prophet, who said he had prohibited the use of yellow cloth. The child was therefore wrapped in a piece of white cloth. The Prophet then took the child in his arms and recited in his right ear the *adhan* (formula for the cry for prayer) and in his left ear the *Iqamat* (formula recited just before prayer). He then put his holy tongue in Hasan's mouth which the child began to lick. The Amir-ul-Muminin (Ali, the father) asked the Prophet by what name the child should be called. He replied he could not forestall Allah in the matter. The Almighty then inspired Gabriel to go to the Prophet and give him His greetings and felicitations and tell him 'Ali is to you what Harun was to Musa' and that the child should, therefore, be named after the son of Harun. Gabriel delivered the message accordingly and the Prophet enquired what the name of the son of Harun was. 'Shabbar' was the reply. The Prophet observed that his language was Arabic, whereupon Gabriel said the child should be named Hasan, the equivalent of Shabbar. The Prophet accordingly dubbed the child Hasan, and gave him an additional name, Abu Muhammad' (according to another tradition, 'Abul Qasim) as his *kunyeh*" On the seventh day after the birth of the child the Prophet sacrificed a goat for him¹.

In the same book, a similar tradition is related about

the naming of Husain, the second son of Ali. In this case also the Prophet placed his tongue in the infant's mouth, and the inspiration as to the choice of the name was received in the same way as in the case of Hasan.¹ The act of placing the tongue in the mouth of the child appears to have been understood by European authors as equivalent to spitting. Hence we find the following statement in Ockley's *History of the Saracens*: "Of Hasan they relate that he was very much like his grandfather Mahomed who when he was born, spat in his mouth and named him Hasan." This was enough to mislead other writers. The error crept even into the *Dictionary of Faiths and Folklore*. Referring to customs connected with spittle Clodd shows how widely it was regarded as a charm against all kinds of fascination and employed as a vehicle of blessing or cursing, of injury or cure, by peoples intellectually as far apart as the Jews, the mediæval Christians and the Central Africans. For instance, the custom of nurses lustrating children by spittle which was one of the ceremonies used on the *Die Nominalis*, the day the child was named "derived from the heathen nurses and grandmothers". In his enthusiasm for searching parallels Clodd, however, erred in presenting the aforesaid statement of Ockley as an illustration from Islamic traditions. "Ockley tells, says he, when Hasan was born, his grandfather Mohammed, spat in his mouth as he named him", thus connecting spittle directly with naming whereas Ockley's words were "and named him Hasan", not "as he named him".²

It can, however, be easily shown from *Nasikh-ut-Tawarikh*, the same book that appears to have misled Ockley, that the tongue was given in the mouth of the infant merely as a mark of endearment with the idea of quenching the thirst of the child. It is stated in the tradition about Husain that the child seemed to enjoy the

¹ *Nasikh-ut-Tawarikh*, Vols. V and VI, Bk. II.

² *Tom Tit Tot*, p. 75.

tongue so much that Safia, the Prophet's aunt, thought His Holiness was feeding the child with milk and honey. He kissed the forehead of the child and gave him back to her. There the tradition ends. It shows no connection with the naming of the child, an account of which is given by the same author separately in another place.

Another tradition about the birth of Ali confirms this interpretation. When Ali was born, the prophet said to Fatima, the mother of the child, "Go, carry the good news of the birth of Ali to Hamza" (uncle of the prophet). "Were I to go", said Fatima, "who would give milk to the child"? "I shall quench his thirst," replied the prophet. Fatima went to Hamza and the prophet put his tongue in the mouth of Ali, whereupon from the holy tongue flowed twelve springs. When Fatima returned, she found the countenance of Ali glowing brighter than before.

Incidentally, it may be mentioned that spittle is actually an essential feature in the name-giving ceremony of the Mandingo people who name their children on the seventh or eighth day after birth. The ceremony commences with the shaving of the head. The priest offers a prayer, solicits the blessings of God upon the child and all the persons assembled on the occasion, and then, whispering a few words in the child's ear, he spits three times in his face, after which, pronouncing its name aloud, he returns it to its mother.¹

In Mecca, Madina, Morocco, Sumatra, Malaya, even in China, the *aqiqa* rite is well-known. In Morocco on the morning of the name-giving ceremony the father or the nearest relative slaughters a sheep, exclaiming, as he cuts the animal's throat, "In the name of the Mighty God, for the naming of so-and-so. It reminds one of the Old Testament doctrine of sacrifice and teaching regarding the redemption of the first-born and the prayer accompanying the sacrifices.

"Who can fail to see", asks Samuel Zwemer, "that

¹ Brand, *Popular Antiquities*, p. 229.

the Moslem custom is borrowed from Judaism, however much there may be mingled in the latter of early Semitic practice, the origin of which is obscure".¹

To revert now to the question concerning the time within which a Muslim child should be named, we find that in practice the seventh day, as a rule, is more in favour than the first day, particularly amongst the Shias. On that day the child is shaved and named and the *aqiqah* ceremony is performed, a goat is sacrificed and the child's safety assured. But there are many departures from the general rule. Some Suni Muslims informed the author that they named children a month and a quarter after birth. Others, Memons for example, told him that they preferred the first day; the Konkansis obey no rule save that of convenience.

Speaking of Punjabis, Major Temple states that a Moulavi is sent for three days after birth to name the child. He gives the name after taking a *faal* from the Koran and three days thereafter, or on the sixth day after birth, the family holds a feast entirely among themselves, at which they kill some animal. No outsider can partake of any part of this and what is left must be buried. During the feast, they shave the child's head.²

The mingling of two birth rites, one, Muslim *aqiqah* and the other, Hindu *Chhatti* and other inaccuracies led the author of this book to consult a Muslim hailing from Punjab as regards the accuracy of the account given by Temple. His reply was to the effect that he had never heard that the Muslims of that part of the country held the *aqiqah* feast on the sixth day or that the name was given on that day. It was true, said he, that several Muslims called the Moulavi immediately after the birth of a child but that it was for reciting the *adhan* (call for prayers) in the ears of the baby so that it might know that it was born in a Muslim household, and that

¹ *The Influence of Animism in India*, p. 104.

² *Proper Names of Punjabis*, p. 75.

in such cases the name might have been given on the same day.

What the informant told the author seemed to harmonize in many respects with the practice prevailing amongst the Muslims of Baluchistan, the next-door neighbours of the Punjabis, as related in the *Ethnographic Survey of 1913*. Here, too, the first thing done after the third or seventh day after the birth of a child was to shout the *adhan* in its ears, thereby entitling it to be called a Musliman. The Mulla then opened the Koran at random and the first letter of the first word of the first page was taken as the key to the choice of the name of the child.

In Turkey on the first day after birth, as soon as the father of the child is allowed to enter the room where his wife is lying, he greets her, carries the babe in his arms behind the door, and after a short prayer, shouting three times into its ear the name chosen for it, quietly quits the room.¹

A marked feature of the name-giving rite current among Muslims in several parts of Asia, since the days of the prophet, is its association with the feast in which the sacrifice of an animal is considered indispensable. It is nowhere laid down that the two should go together. As, however, according to Muslim religious law, the expiatory sacrifice after the birth of the child used to be made on the seventh day and, as it was considered commendable to have the child named and its head shaved on the same day, the two functions came to be combined.

¹ *People of Turkey, by A Colonel's Daughter*, Vol 1, p. 3.

PLURALITY OF NAMES

“HOW many names should a child have?” A question difficult to answer categorically owing to varied beliefs and customs among people at different stages of culture. Strictly, according to the Hindu view, plurality is the attribute of Divinity. God is invoked by a Hindu in his daily prayers by twenty-four of his names but for special occasions a hundred or a thousand names are prescribed for the invocation. Confining our survey mainly to India, Hindus, Muslims and Parsis, we find that a Hindu lad has more than one name, generally at least two. One of these is given, for ordinary use, on the sixth, seventh or twelfth day after birth, called the *prataksh* (apparent) name. *Dharma Sindhu* refers to the custom of giving a child four names — the first relating to the family deity, the second relating to the month in which the child is born, the third relating to the ruling star at the time of birth and the fourth, the ordinary name, for daily use.

In addition, a Hindu in nine cases out of ten, gets, while yet a child, a pet name, often an opprobrious name, as we shall see in another chapter, to avert the envy of friend and foe alike, or the wrath of the spirit of a deceased ancestor, or of a deity, or the mischief of malevolent agencies generally.

The most important event in the life of a Hindu lad born in a Brahman family is his investiture with the sacred thread, *Upanayana*, which entitles him to a place in the charmed circle of the twice-born. A girl is not usually given the sacred thread but in Vedic times, she, too, was held entitled to the investiture at the same age as a boy. For a Brahman boy, a secret name was and still is considered a necessity. It is given at the time

of the thread ceremony. At a certain stage of the ceremony, it is muttered by the officiating priest in the ear of the novitiate as his real name affecting his well-being. It is his baptismal name, duly registered in heaven, and he has to offer his daily *andhya* prayer in that name. It must, however, be kept to himself and must not be mentioned any time except during the daily worship. Speaking of the doctrine of the eternal soul, J. G. Frazer refers to the *Upanayan* ceremony as a relic of the primitive rites of initiation and supposed death and resurrection amongst people practising totemism. "The simulation of death and resurrection," says he, "or of a new birth at initiation appears to have lingered on, or at least to have left traces of itself among peoples who have advanced far beyond the stage of savagery. Thus after his investiture with the sacred thread, the symbol of his order, a Brahman is called twice-born."¹ The idea underlying the primitive rites referred to by Frazer might have been that of extracting the youth's soul in order to transfer it to his totem, the resurrection being an infusion of fresh life drawn from the totem. But the question whether the concept of rebirth of the Brahman after his thread ceremony at all corresponds to those sham deaths and resurrection, referred to by him and whether the secret name received by a Brahman lad on the occasion has any trace whatsoever of totemism, demands further investigation.

The evidence on this point, much more direct among the Dravidians than among the more Hinduized races, comes to us from all parts of the country, particularly concerning the organization of several of the most primitive tribes and castes. R. E. Enthoven, at one time President of the Anthropological Society of Bombay, drew special attention to it in the course of his presidential address delivered by him in the year 1909 on the study of Ethnography². He pointed out that the

¹ *Golden Bough*, Part VII, Vol. II, pp 276-77.

² *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay*, Vol. VIII, No. 6, pp. 438-44.

most primitive of the tribes and castes in the Bombay Presidency appeared to be those which till then were organised on a system of totemistic divisions known as *Balis* and that it was not difficult "to trace throughout the history of social evolution in the Bombay State the progress from ancestor worship in the guise of plants, trees, and animals, to a system of family stocks where the human progenitor had displaced the totem of the earlier stages, to be himself replaced in time by the eponymous rishis of a Gotra."

Tribal names, however, do not fall within the purview of this work, and as regards traces of totemism in certain personal names, it seems doubtful whether the choice of such names amongst different communities was at all influenced by totemistic considerations. Although these appellations appear to have been freely drawn from the names of flowers and trees, birds and animals, the cautious investigator will not fail to notice that the parents of a Hindu child *Gulab* or a Muslim *Bulbul*, are as little or as much in the totemistic stage as the parents of a Christian *Rose* or *Nightingale*. We shall have to revert to this aspect of personal names in the following pages.

The author once asked a Brahman friend, a High Court Vakil, to reveal to him, if he had no objection, his ceremonial name. He solemnly averred that he had forgotten it himself, not having performed the daily devotional ceremonies since his childhood and not having had any occasion to recall that name! Had he remembered the ceremonial name, he added, he would surely have had no hesitation in mentioning it. Several other friends also stated, in reply to the same query that they did not apprehend any risk in divulging the name but that among the orthodox population in the districts, in Southern India particularly, there was a strict taboo on that name of great mystical virtue.

In her graphic life story of a Brahman, based on first-hand knowledge after prolonged residence in Gujarat,

Mrs. Sinclair Stevenson relates her own experience which seems to corroborate these statements. "The new name given by the *guru* on the occasion of the thread ceremony," she observes, "is promptly forgotten, the old one alone being daily used. Not one of the writer's friends, Brahmans or former Brahmans who had become Christians, could remember the special name that he had been given at this ceremony."¹

Until recently, every Hindu girl who lived to get a husband received a new name just to signify that she had become a member of the husband's family *de facto*. When she entered the husband's household, the mother-in-law invested her with a new name which completely superseded the old one. This practice, too, is dying out gradually amongst the educated classes. In Kanara, during the *Griha Pravesh* ceremony, the ceremony performed at the time the newly married bride enters the bridegroom's house, she receives four names inscribed on rice by the husband. One of these is that given by the mother-in-law which supersedes her mother's house name. The other three are known to the husband alone, even the recipient thereof remaining as ignorant about them as any one else!

Amongst Parsis also a new name was occasionally given to a girl after marriage, but generally the mother's house name found acceptance in the mother-in-law's realm unless there happened to be a sister-in-law or any other member of the family having the same name. In such a case Nawazbai became Jerbai so as to avoid confusion.

A Hindu does not carry his son's name with his personal name as is the custom among some Muslims and other people. The clue to his pedigree is his father's name and his surname, if any, appended to it. But the Arab always had two names, the personal name and a family name denoting relationship of paternity or filiation. For the names denoting sonship there are well-known

¹ *The Rites of the Twice-born*, p. 34.

Christian parallels in Johnson, Robinson, Mackison, McDonald and several other surnames, but the names denoting paternity are peculiar to the Muslims.

Recent discoveries have, however, brought to light a similar style of naming children among certain savage tribes. But there is an essential difference as to the time of assumption of such a name. The Arab calls himself Abu Abdullah, father of Abdullah, when himself an infant, whereas amongst those primitive tribes a personal name current for years is given up by a man for another denoting paternity, after a son is born to him. For instance, we find it stated, on the authority of Warneck, in John Robertson's work, *Pagan Christs*, that amongst the Battas a man becoming a father of a boy N. N. is thenceforth known only as "father of N. N."¹

In a treatise on the Indian Tribes of Lower Mississippi Valley and Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico by John Swanton, we find two other illustrations. According to the law of the Atacapas a man ceases to bear his own name as soon as a son is born to him and calls himself father of the boy as named by him. If the boy dies, the father assumes again his own name. The Chitimachas, another neighbouring tribe, follow the same practice. This would indicate far more tender paternal feelings among those tribes than the assumption of the *Kunyah* by the Arab before the birth of a child. Does it not suggest that as soon as a man becomes a father, his own individuality ceases and is merged in that of the child and that he exists thereafter not for himself but for the child? No conception of paternity could be loftier than this, but, oddly enough, the custom obtains amongst people too low in the scale of civilization to warrant such an interpretation.

Returning to the system prevailing among the Muslims, we find that some of the Arab patronymics are the despair of the uninitiated. Here is an illustration: Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ismail ibn Ibrahim ibn Mughirah

¹ Bulletin No. 43 of the *Bureau of American Ethnology*.

al Ju'fi al Bukhari (Muhammad, father of Abdullah, son of Ismail, son of Ibrahim, son of Mughirah of the Tribe of Jufi, born in Bukhara). For parallels for such prodigious patronymics tracing the relationship of a man with his ancestors we may turn to Welsh nomenclature.

Ap in Welsh is equivalent to *ibn* in Arabic. There is an amusing story about the multiplicity of *ap* in a single name. An Englishman riding one night among the mountains heard a cry proceeding from some one who had fallen into a ravine near the highway. "Help! master, help!" cried the man in distress. "Help!" ejaculated the traveller, "What are you?" Sharp came the reply, "Jenkin-ap-Griffith-ap-Robin-ap-William-ap-Ross-ap-Even." Counting six names, the horseman exclaimed, setting spurs to his horse, "Lazy fellows that ye be, to lie rolling in that hole, half a dozen of ye! Why in the name of common sense don't ye help one another out?"¹

In their fondness for patronymics, the Welsh beat the Muslims. Here is an illustration of their genius for tracing the genealogy of even an inanimate object such as cheese. "Adam's own cousin by its birth, Ap-Gud, ap-Milk, ap-Curd, ap-Grass, ap-Earth!"

Besides the proper name and the family name, a Muslim may have (1) the *laqab* or honorific title such as *as-shafi*, the noble; (2) the *ansab*; name of denomination such as Salim Chishti, Salim, the Chishti; (3) the *'alam*, the royal title such as An-Nasirullah, the helper of God; (4) the *inwan* or title of honour such as *Hujjat-ul-Islam* the Testimony of Islam. and (5) *takhallus* or *nom-de-plume*, such as Hafiz, the defended of God.

The forest tribes of India give two names to children, one that of the Devi (the tribal goddess), the other that of the tree under which the child is born or some hill on which the family dwells. Among the Nicobarese the child is named immediately after birth by the father and an additional name is conferred as a mark of favour by

¹ Quoted by S. Baring Gould, as related by M. A. Lower, in *Family Names and Their Story*, p. 41.

a friend. This favourite name is frequently changed in after life and causes confusion when identity is sought. The principal reason for the change is the taboo on the names of deceased relatives and friends for a generation. Underlying the taboo lies the fear of summoning their spirits. Another reason for the change is the obligation devolving on individuals to assume the name of the deceased grandfather by men and of the deceased grandmother by women.

Parsis of the present generation generally obey no injunction or custom in naming children. Until recently they used to give their children two names, the horoscope or genethliacal name and the other for ordinary use if the initial letter of the name for daily use was not the same as the first letter of the astrological name. It will, however, be shown in a subsequent chapter that among them also, as among other people, names were changed and new ones assumed, including opprobrious names, by a section of the community in case of illness or death or other incidents in the lives of individuals.

"Man has three names", runs an inspiring Hebrew saying, "one by which his fond parents call him, another by which he is known in the outside world and a third, the most important of all, the name which his own deeds have procured for him (Tanchuma, Vayakhel)."¹

The first category of names chosen by Jewish parents from various sources and in consonance with various beliefs will be noticed in the next chapter; the other two categories of names referred to in the saying do not appear to have been assumed as additional names. The Jewish people do not draw a distinction between a real name generally kept secret and another name for the outside world. Nor do they assume names procured by good deeds.

¹ *The Jewish Child*, p. 218.

NAMAKARANA: THE NAMING CEREMONY

VARIED as are the name-giving ceremonies performed by different castes of the Hindus, as regards essentials there is a strong family resemblance between them as we shall see during our two visits to two different households. The essential features of the ancient Hindu ceremonial are mentioned by Gobhila as follows:—

“Then he who is to do this (the name-giving) takes his seat, facing east, to the west of the fire (and) on darbha grass whose ends point north. Then the mother, having covered the child with a clean garment, gives it from the south to the officiant with its face upward and its head to the north. Going round behind (the officiant’s) back, she seats herself to the north on darbha whose ends point north. Then he (the officiant) sacrifices to Prajapati, the lunar day, the lunar mansion, and its divinity. . . . He mutters this mantra: “Who art thou? Who (of many) art thou? Enter into the month of the lord of the day; and at the end he gives the name. . . . and tells it to the mother first”¹.

There was, however, according to *Sanikhayana*, a preliminary rite, the *jatakarman*:—

“Breathing thrice upon the new-born child, he (the father) breathes after: ‘Breathe in with the *Rg*, breathe with the *Yajur*, breathe out with the *Saman*.’” Having mingled butter and honey, curds and water, or having rubbed together rice and barley, he should make (the child) taste gold thrice, saying, “To thee I offer honey for the rite, wealth produced by *Savitr*, the bounteous. Long-lived, protected by the divini-

¹ *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol ix, p. 162.

ties, live thou a hundred autumns in this world.' So saying, he gives his name... That the father and the mother know; on the 10th day (is given) an appellation (*vyavahaikar*) pleasing to the Brahmans."

Our first visit takes us to the residence of the host, Shri Chimanlal Parikh, the President of the Municipality and the first citizen (Nagersheth) of Ahmedabad, who combines banking with trade and industry. A large number of friends and relatives have gathered together to share his joy on the occasion of naming his son. In the good old days, the entire gathering used to go together, before the commencement of the ceremony, for ablutions. Today, however, only the father of the child and near relatives have taken the ceremonial bath. They return wrapped in a couple of unsewn clothes with a red *kumkum tilak* (mark drawn on the forehead).

The son, twelve days old, is resting on the lap of the mother. It is not, however, the mother but the sister of the father who is the mistress of the ceremony and is by right entitled to select the name for him. The father worships Ganesh, the elephant-headed god who wards off all obstacles. Other prayers are also offered. The aunt has brought with her a silk frock, a gold embroidered cap and gold wristlets for the infant. These are placed in a copper sieve with a seer and a quarter of wheat, a coconut, seven pieces of turmeric and a rupee. On a selected spot a swastik of wheat is formed and a leaf of a pipal tree, a copper coin and a betel nut are placed over it. Above these are held by four children the four ends of a *patola* (silk cloth) with four pipal leaves, marked with a *kankoo swastik*. The wheat, the coconut, the seven pieces of turmeric and the rupee brought by the aunt are then put into the *patola*. The lad is swung up and down this *patola* six times. This is called *zoli poli*. He is then placed in the *patola* by the aunt. She puts a tiny bit of molassis in his mouth; the children rock the baby to and fro and the aunt gives a name, chiming the following couplet:

Oil joli pipal pan,
Phoie padyun Mangal nam.

Swing, swing, with the pipal leaves,
Thy auntie gives thee Mangal nam.

This couplet is repeated four to seven times and the aunt is given presents in return. Betel and sweets are distributed and the day is spent in merriment and entertainment as sumptuous as the parents' purse permits or vanity dictates.

This narrative, however, does not give one an idea of the elaborate ceremony as it should be performed according to the religious texts. Perplexing varieties of detail are noticeable amongst different groups and the original injunctions are almost forgotten. Our second visit is, therefore, paid to another family where the main features of the ceremony, as laid down in the collection of Brahmanical Ceremonies of the Ashwalayana sect, are closely followed.

After the usual worship, ghee, boiled rice, and several other things are lavishly offered to the god Agni (fire). The host (father of the child) after sipping water and restraining his breath, says, mentioning the time and place, "I perform this ceremony of naming in order that it may please God and lead to the long life of this child that is born of me. For that purpose, after duly worshipping god Ganapati I recite the Swasti *Sunyaha Vachan* (Swasti prayer), worship the Matraka deities and perform the *Nandi Shraddha*."

After the recital, the portion of the *Swasti* prayer, upto the triplet *Punyaha*, four names previously selected are mentioned and the officiating priests are requested to say that *Swasti* (good luck) might attend the names. Thereupon they pronounce the benediction and the host finishes the remaining portion of the *Swasti* recitations and expresses his desire to the priests that the child be given those names. After having obtained the assent of the priests that the names be given, the host writes the *Devta nam* (the name meaning devotee

of such and such a family god) with a golden pencil on rice spread in a *Kansya* (bell metal) dish. This is followed by the *Masa nam* (the name denoting the month of birth), Krishna, Anant, Achut, Chakri, Vaikuntha, Janardana, Upendra, Yadnapurush, Vasudev, Hari, Yogisha, Pundarikakha, the twelve names corresponding to the twelve months. Then follows the *Abhivandaniya* (ceremonial) name which should be known only to the parents until the time of the thread ceremony (of the child). It may be a name derived from the name of a deity or any other name of one's choice. One desirous of fame takes a name with two syllables. Another, coveting Brahmanical learning, selects a name with four syllables. The names of Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras should, as will be noticed in the chapter on "Choice of names", respectively end in *sharma* (or dev), *varma* (or raj), *gupta* (or datta), and *das* (servant). The fourth, the *Vyavaharik*, name (that by which one is to be ordinarily known) is given according to one's own liking.

Offering obeisance to the deities (presiding over the names) the host whispers in the right ear of the child, still lying on the lap of the mother, seated on the right side of himself, that it would be henceforth called by such and such a name. The priest presiding over the ceremony then recites the *Mitra Varuna* and other mantras and declares that the name is duly conferred. Addressing the priests, bowing to them, the host says, "you have given such and such a name to the child", whereupon they pronounce the benediction that such and such a Sharma be long lived. Finally the host pays his homage to the gods, the Brahmans, and the elders, entertains the priests and gives them *dakshina* (perquisites).

In this Brahmanical ceremony¹ the father's sister, who has, in some parts of India, a determining voice in

1 *Ashwalayan Brahma Karma Samuchhaya*
(Ceremony No. 102).

the selection of the child's name, and who, if perverse, may even over-rule the wishes of the parents, enjoys no such privilege.

In Northern India, says Crooke, two special rites are performed; the first to name the child, and the second to introduce it formally into the circle of its caste. On the day of the name-giving ceremony, says Crooke, "for the first time the child is allowed to see the sun and he is made to plant his foot on a coin, while the gods are invoked to grant that he may be rich enough in after life to regard money as the very dust beneath his feet"¹. What a tranquil place this war-torn world would be, if not merely those who are "rich enough" but also the middle classes and the poor could thus regard money as the very dust of their feet! No war for conquests, no struggle for self-determination or for combating aggressors, no border dispute, no regional squabble, no economic warfare, no cut-throat competition, no conflict between capital and labour, no debt to worry nations, 'developed or under-developed, disturbing the peace of individuals and nations!

¹ *Natives of Northern India*, p. 199.

CHOICE OF NAMES

AT the outset may be noted two preliminary scriptural injunctions for Hindus concerning the linguistic aspects of the name to be chosen for a child. One of the chapters in the *Asvalayana Grihya Sutra* on the initial letter to be selected for the child's name lays down that soft letters should be preferred and that a name should consist either of two or four syllables, the names of boys consisting of an even number of letters and those of girls having 'an uneven number.¹ We may take it that this ancient canon is now more honoured in the breach than in the observance. What, however, could have been the object underlying these injunctions in favour of the softness of letters and odd or even number of the letters? Mere symphony and music of 'the name cannot be the object. A name, as we have seen, is looked upon as a *mantra*, a charm. As it is pronounced, it produces vibrations, varying according to the phonetic property of the letters composing the name, to the inherent virtue of which the oriental mind attaches great value. Possibly, there may be other reasons.

Another injunction, now practically a dead letter, is in regard to the selection of name suffixes. Distinctive terminations have been prescribed by Manu for the four principal castes. According to that high authority the names of Brahmans should end in *sharma* (or *dev*) and those of the Kshatriyas in *verma* (or *raj*).² Seldom does one come across names with such suffixes in modern times. Only while performing religious ceremonies the Brahmans add the appropriate suffixes to the names re-

1 Kandika, 15.

2 11, 31-33.

cited during the ceremonies. As regards the Kshatriyas, we know that the warrior has long ere this abandoned the sword for the pen and the camp for the counter, so that among the descendants of those heroes of old, the Bhatias and the Luhwanas, there are now many a Vallabhdas, and Laxmidas, the suffix *das* denoting subjection and allegiance instead of sovereignty and domination. The names of Banias, according to Manu, must have suffixes connoting wealth, such as (*gupta* or *datta* but they also, like the Kshatriyas, now prefer the suffix *das* originally intended only for the lowly Sudras. For instance, Gopaldas, Ishwardas, Manmohandas.

As regards names of the gentle sex, Manu's instructions were not so emphatic as in the case of males. He enjoined that their names should be "soft, charming, blessing-giving" and should end in a long vowel like *a* or double *e*. He also laid down certain instructions about the selection of a bride in which, among other things, her name played an important part. To a young man choosing his mate his advice was that he should avoid a girl whose name was that of a constellation, a tree, a river, a hill, a bird, a snake, or of a servant and choose one with a soft and sweet name. But in the case of women, too, as in that of men, his injunctions had hardly any influence in naming them, as several names of girls in Hindu society are river names, such as Krishna, Kaveri, Godavari, Narmada, Ganga and Yamuna.

In the scriptural lore of Hinduism, there are two interesting stories demonstrating the sovereign merit and glory of Rama nama, the sacred name chanted, according to tradition, even by Lord Parameshwara at Kasi. The first, entitled "*Sakuntaraja Upakhyanam*" relates how a *Rama Bhakta* (devout worshipper of Rama) was saved from annihilation by Hanuman, the chief village god in Maharashtra, by chanting incessantly Rama nama all the twenty-four hours of the day without a moment's break. The story runs that once Sakuntaraja saw an assemblage of sages performing a *yagna* (sacrificial

rite) and prostrated before the gathering, offering his *pranams* (salutations) to Vashishthadi Maharshis. At the instigation of sage Narada, sage Viswamitra, who was also there, took it as an affront to him as it implied the superiority of Vashishtha over him. He went straight to Ayodhya and having obtained from Sri Rama a promise to grant him a boon, without telling him what he was going to demand, asked that before sunset, the next day, the head of Sakuntaraja must be at his feet.

Greatly embarrassed, Rama felt that he must fulfil his promise, although it involved the sacrifice of a devotee, and deputed his brothers younger than himself to fight Sakuntaraja. In the meantime, Narada, who was staging the whole drama, went to Sakuntaraja, informed him of the developments and instructed him how he could seek the assistance of Hanuman's mother to save his life. As advised by Narada, she went on weeping till her son promised to save the life of Sakuntaraja. To cut the story short, Hanuman sat in front of a cave inside which Sakuntaraja had been asked to take refuge and went on chanting Rama nama. All the arrows aimed at Hanuman could not injure him so long as he was chanting the holy name. At last, sometime before sunset, Sri Rama himself went there and aimed at Hanuman his Rama-bana which had never failed to hit the target. But it fell as a wreath of flowers at the feet of Hanuman, thus establishing the fact that the name of the Lord was more powerful than Himself.

At that psychological moment, appeared sage Viswamitra to demand the head of Sakuntaraja. Narada, too, was not slow to appear and called upon Sakuntaraja to come out of the hiding place and fall at the feet of sage Viswamitra. This, however, was not what that sage had expected, but Narada contended that all that Viswamitra had been promised by Sri Rama was that the head, not severed head, of Sakuntaraja should be at his feet. Viswamitra realised the force of this contention and the glory of the Great Name was thus emphatically de-

monstrated.¹

The second story with the same moral is related by J. Abbott in his book *The Keys of Power*. Once Hanuman was building a bridge, whereby he might cross to Lanka (Ceylon), by throwing into the sea stones on which he had inscribed the name of Rama with a view to preventing them from sinking. Rama, who was watching this fantastic enterprise with keen interest, himself threw a stone into the sea but without his name written on it. It sank forthwith, whereas the other stones kept floating. He turned to Hanuman for an explanation. "Because," said Hanuman, "Rama's name has more power than Rama Himself."²

Cognate instances abound in the Shastras supporting the tradition that *punya* (merit) is obtained by the recital of the names of gods and saints. For instance, the story that a fallen woman who had taught her parrot to say "Rama" thereby won *punya* for herself. Ajamal acquired *punya* because he called his son Narayan and when addressing him constantly pronounced the holy name. Valmiki was a Koli, a murderer and robber. He prided himself on the murders he had committed by keeping a record thereof, placing in seven earthen vessels a pebble for every murder committed. Even he lost his sin when he muttered "Rama", "Rama", and eventually became a sage.

We have already noted the belief that just as there are words of power, there are names of power. Of these the most potent are theophoric names. It is a belief universally held that to pronounce constantly the holy name of God is to insure health, happiness and good fortune in this world and salvation and spiritual bliss in the next. An analysis of Hindu names reveals, therefore, a marked predilection for the names of family or village gods. If this general practice is ignored and if

¹ Article on *The Glory of Rama-Nama* by R. Lakshmanan in Bhavan's Journal, March 31, 1963.

² 40-41.

any calamity befalls the family, it is attributed to departure from the established practice and the child's name is changed so as to gain the protection of the particular family deity. The nomenclature of the Hindus, therefore, abounds in Narayans and Krishnas, Ram Autars and Ramdases, Ishwardases and Gopaldases, Hareshwars and Moreshwars, Suraj-Rams and Adhit Rams, Bhanu Shankars and Ravi Shankars. The last four names are derived from the Sun which, being the propagator of animal life, is regarded as the highest deity. In some places, the names of corresponding male and female deities are coupled together in a single name, such as Radhakrishnan, Sitaram and Gaurishankar. If there be merit in consecrating temples, mosques and tabernacles of clay to the sacred memory of saints and seers, there must, surely, be all the greater virtue in investing the living temples of God with the blessed names of the sanctified.

Parsis, too, build fortresses for the protection of their children by giving them adorable and sacred names of the Creator-Governor of the Universe, *Ahura Mazda* (Hormuz), angels and archangels. For instance, Hormusji, Bahmanji, Kharshedji and Behramji — the Gujaraticised forms, respectively, of the Iranian names Hormuzd, Bahman, Khurshid and Behram. Herein they merely reveal the tendency discernible in the nomenclature of all communities, eastern as well as western, to favour names of hallowed memory.

Dr. Modi, as ardent exponent of folk philosophy as of the philosophy of Zoroastrianism, has compiled a list of 74 names of the Creator, denoting their attributes and virtues and we have noticed in Chapter I how enthusiastically the Prophet of Iran demonstrated his faith in the miraculous power of the names of the Creator. Each of these sacred names is believed to be a spell in itself. Whoever takes it on his lips and is engrossed in meditation of His attributes equips himself with the best of armours to protect himself against the

inroads of the Evil Spirit.

A number of Egyptian Pharaohs from the Middle Empire onwards are known to have had or adopted names which meant "blessed by or protected by a particular god of the Egyptian pantheon." The most widely known illustration is the name of the most controversial king of antiquity, commonly considered to be the first monotheist of some kind, Ikhnaton, about 1300 B.C.

Great as is the veneration of Muslims for the name of God, none of them would name a child Allah, as it would, they believe, be positively profane to call any one by that most exalted name. The most objectionable name that could be chosen for a child would be Malik-ul-muluk (King of Kings), as none could claim that title save the Almighty. Barring this exception, the predilection of the Muslims for the name of the Creator is no less than that of other communities. Their faith in its virtue is reflected in authentic Islamic traditions. For instance, the belief that whosoever recites the ninety nine names of God sacred to the Islamic world will enter Paradise. Recital of the names of the prophet and his successors and saints is also commended.

The feeling of reverence which these hallowed names evoke amongst the devout followers of Islam is most impressive. A classic illustration is given by Jafar Sharif in *Qanun-i-Islam* translated by G. A. Herklots. It is related by the author that the veneration of Sultan Hamayun of Delhi for the holy name of God was so profound that once when he wished to send for Mir Abdul Haiy (Slave of the Eternal), he merely called him "Abdul" (Slave of) leaving out "Haiy". As an explanation for this omission, it is stated that as Humayun had not yet had his bath that morning, it would have been sacrilegious on his part to pronounce the sacred name before ablutions.

In one of his Anthropological Papers Dr. J. J. Modi gives another illustration. He states that he came across a Mughal title deed of the era of the grandson of Huma-

yun, Emperor Jehangir, in which wherever it was intended to mention the words *gaz-i-ilahi* (the divine gaz), standard of measurement, the word *Ilhai* (divine) was omitted and a little space kept blank, after the word "gaz". Similarly, where the name "Jehangir" was to be mentioned, a blank space was left, leaving it to the reader to infer from the context what word had been omitted out of respect for the Emperor.¹

The scriptural as well as the literary lore of Islam is full of traditions, anecdotes and episodes indicating how the hearts of the faithful were thrilled and their minds enthralled on hearing the names of God and the Prophet and his successors and how fervidly they believed in the mystic property of those sanctified names.

It is related that once Jabir accompanied Imam Muhammad Bakir to a house. A child accosted them on the steps.

"What is your name?" asked the Imam.

"Muhammad," said the proud possessor of the holy name.

"What is your *kunyah* (patronymic)?"

"Abu Ali," said the little one.

"The child," observed the Imam, "has guarded himself in a strong enclosure against *Shaitan* (Satan) for, verily, when *Shaitan* hears any one called by the name Muhammad or Ali, he melts away like mercury, whereas he is in exultation when he hears persons called by the names of our enemies."

The same conception concerning the magic in names underlies the saying ascribed to Imam Musa that poverty does not enter the house inhabited by a person named after Muhammad, Ahmed, Ali, Hasan, Hussain, Jafar, Talib, Abdulla, Fatima and Khadijah, the last two being the names, respectively, of the Prophet's daughter and first wife.

In Sind, says Abbott, a Muslim disciple of a spiritual teacher ties two knots in his hair, the while he utters the

¹ *Anthropological Papers*, pp. 116-17, part III.

names of saints whose protection he invokes. Whenever in difficulty, he ties knots in his clothes and utters, if he be a Sunni, the name of Piran Pir of Jilan, the chief Pir. A Shi'ah likewise ties a coin in a knot in his clothes, as a safeguard against all evil, invoking the power of Imam Zamin, one of the twelve *Imams*, through his name.¹

According to a fascinating tradition coming from the Prophet himself, if there be in the midst of an assembly a person bearing the name Muhammad, Hamid, Mahmood or Ahmed, it is sure to arrive at a felicitous decision on the question under discussion. While Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the gifted leader of the Muslim League in India during the British regime, was regaling his followers with what then appeared to be a fantastic dream, a separate homeland for Muslims of India, Pakistan, the writer of this book used to amuse himself with the reflection that the League had reason to congratulate itself on the fact that its President combined in his name the names of two of the holiest and most revered figures in the history of Islam and that its members could, therefore, look up to him as a leader on the magic power of whose name no less than on the vigour of whose intellect and the charm of whose eloquence they could confidently rely for fruitful decisions. Whether the decision ultimately arrived at under his guidance, rendering inevitable the partition of India, was felicitous or not, will remain for some time yet a controversial issue. But this much is certain that, bearing the two names of great mystical virtue, Muhammad Ali Jinnah had entrenched himself exquisitely against the onslaughts of all opponents, howsoever powerful.

What accounts for the popularity of the names of the prophet and saints among the Muslims is not merely the sentiment of devotion and dedication but also the positive belief and faith in the intrinsic worth and miraculous power of these names, next to that of God. There is not, it is believed, a house containing a man

¹ *The Keys of Power*, p. 41.

named Muhammad that is not purified and rendered holy day after day and we have it on the authority of the Prophet himself that "every family that has within its fold a man named after him has an angel sent by God every morning and evening to pray for the purification of the household." The name is supposed to possess a personality; to pronounce it is to conjure the prophet or the saint who bears it.

We noticed in Chapter I that the Jews also had and still have the custom of giving their children theophorous names such as Elnathan (meaning "God has given), Immanuel (God is with us), Michael (one who is like God), Raphael (God heals) and Yedidjah (beloved of God). They also give commemorative names calling them after the names of patriarchs and other Jewish celebrities. The underlying belief is that the child so named is brought thereby into close relationship with the deity or the celebrity whose name it bears and has its future and its fortune influenced accordingly.

Next to devotional names, in order of priority come names of celebrated kings and heroes, religious leaders, saints, patriots made famous in history, and ancestors of revered memory. Major Temple has given a formidable list of the names of the Kings of the Lunar and Solar dynasties current in the Punjab such as Dasaratha, Janmijaya, Pandu, Keshavadeva, Vijaya, Raj Pal, Hari-singh and Indersingh. Parsis love to give their children the names of the ancient kings and queens and heroes of Iran immortalised by Firdausi in his *Shahnama*. Whether the spirits of those celebrities of yore at all feel honoured by the homage thus paid to them is a question that can be answered only by those gifted with occult power to communicate with the spirits of the dead. But the incongruity of such names, particularly those of heroes, is often painfully brought home to those named after them. The name of the author of this book may be cited as an illustration. According to his horoscope cast by a Parsi priest, the initial ruling letter of his astrologi-

cal name was N but the tendency to hark back to the glorious days of the ancient Iranian heroes led his parents to dub him Rustam. Never was he made so embarrassingly conscious of the absurdity of a pygmy named after a giant as he was when introduced to the famous ruler of Iran, Shah Reza Shah Pehlavi, in the year 1932, by Aga Muhammad Ali Foroughi, Minister for Foreign Affairs. Hearing the name Rustam Masani, Reza Shah fixed his penetrating eyes for a few moments on the pygmy standing before him and exclaimed, "Rustam-esani (the Second Rustam)!" His witticism made every one present burst into laughter including the dwarfish namesake of the renowned hero of Iran.

At one time the custom of casting the *kundali* (horoscope) and ascertaining the genethliacal (*janmarasi*) name of a child, having regard to the position of the stars at the exact moment of birth, was almost universal in India. The Brahman called to cast the *janmapatrika* consulted his almanac and gave the child a name after having ascertained what the position of the astral bodies was at the time of birth and what planet ruled at the moment. Roughly, the moon passes into a new mansion once in every twenty-four hours and the moment of ingress and egress is shown exactly in the almanacs. According to the Hindu almanac the day of 24 hours from 6 a.m. to 6 a.m. is divided into 60 *gharis* of 60 *pals* each, and each *nakshatra* or lunar mansion into 4 portions, called *aksharas*, or ruling letters, of 15 *gharis* of 6 hours each.

Parsis borrowed this custom from Hindus along with other social customs and it was believed and is still believed by some that a child would not thrive if he were called by any name other than the astrological one. In this respect even the stern religious conservatism of Muslims has not proved impregnable. Among them it was the general practice to name children after the Kazi had taken a *faal* by opening the Koran at random so as to determine the initial letter of the name from the letter

or the passage that first caught the eye. According to some accounts the first letter of the first word in the first line of the page formed the initial letter of the name. While Islamic traditions did not warrant even that simple practice of taking *faal* from the Holy Book, a regular table of astrological names used to be given in some Muslim calendars for Muslims in India. One such table is given by Major Temple in his book *A Dissertation on the Proper Names of Panjabis*.¹ In the calendar Takweemi-Akbari for the year 1910, which the author of this book had to refer to, about the year 1910 while writing his article on "Naming Customs and Name Superstitions", a table of names for boys and girls was given, "having been selected in view of the position and nature of the planet and the day of the week."

Whether warranted by tradition or not, astrology has played a great part in influencing the beliefs, customs and fortunes of several Muslim monarchs and their subjects. Those potentates would not embark on any project or go out riding or build a palace or declare war without consulting the court astrologer. A classic example of the importance attached by Muslims to what the stars foretold and how they influenced the fate and fortune of individuals is that of Emperor Akbar. It is narrated that immediately after his birth, he was named *Badraddin*, "Full Moon of Religion", as he was born on full moon day of the month of Shaban. His relations, however, apprehended that the name giving a clue to the position of heavenly bodies at the time of his birth would make the prince an easy target for the black art and machinations of hostile astrologers. To frustrate their calculations and to protect the prince a new official birthday was chosen, the fifth of the month Rajab, and the child of destiny was renamed Jalaluddin, the Splendour of Religion.

The theory of metempsychosis governs the entire life-philosophy of the people of India, particularly Hindus.

¹ P. 78.

Little wonder it influences the choice of names. Several communities name their children after deceased ancestors whose souls are supposed to be re-incarnated in the family. It will, however, be noticed in the chapter on "Avoidance Customs" that there is a taboo on the names of deceased ancestors among some primitive groups of the population who are mortally afraid of calling their children after deceased ancestors lest their ghosts should revisit their old haunts and molest the living.

Barring such exceptions, the practice of giving names of deceased ancestors to children prevails among the people generally. Boys are named after grandfathers and girls after grandmothers. Although it is now looked upon merely as a form of filial devotion, it is not improbable that the belief in re-birth had originally something to do with the adoption of the custom. During his childhood the author saw on several occasions, Parsi mothers tracing with ecstasy the likeness of deceased ancestors in the lineaments of new-born babes and naming them accordingly. Such Parsi names as Bapai (father's mother) and Mamai (mother's mother) given to girls marked directly the relationship of the child to the deceased grandmother.

The Lingayats name their children after their ancestors, especially after grandparents. As long as the latter are living, the children are called after the gods. They assume the names of those ancestors only after their death. The Koli names the eldest son after his grandfather but not without an ordeal to ensure that the name is not unlucky. It is referred to by Crooke as the rice ordeal and is, it appears, the same as that obtaining amongst the Central Indian Kandhs who select names by means of omens. Whilst reciting ancestral names, they throw grains of rice into water and if any one of these floats at a particular ancestor's name, that name is chosen. The rice-name is current among Singhalese also. At the new-born child's rice-feast, when some grains of rice are placed in its mouth, an astrologer

selects for the little one a name connected with the name of the planet ruling at that moment. This name he mentions only to the father, who whispers it in the baby's ear. None else must hear it.

Among the Khasis the grandmother of a child selects three names. The diviner spreads turmeric on a plantain leaf on which, chanting an incantation, he lets fall three drops of spirit, one for each of the three names. The drop which takes the longest time to fall determines the selection of the name.

Another quaint custom of naming a child is recorded in George Scott Robertson's account of *The Kaffirs of the Hindukush*. Among these people, says he, "the moment an infant is born it is given to the mother to suckle, while an old woman runs rapidly over the names of the baby's ancestors, or ancestresses if the babe is a girl, and stops at the moment the babe begins to feed." The name on the reciter's lips at the moment becomes the infant's name for life.¹ As a consequence of this custom, it not infrequently happens that several members of a family are compelled to bear one and the same name but "are distinguished from one another by the prefix senior or junior as the case may be."

A curious variant of the conception underlying the assumption of ancestral names is to be found amongst the Andamanese. When a child dies amongst these people, they name the next baby after it. The belief in reincarnation is there, but the idea of giving such an inauspicious name to a second child is wholly repugnant to a bereaved parent amongst Hindus, Muslims and Parsis alike. Whilst the ominous suggestion of the fate of the first bearer of the name makes the parent shrink in such a case from repeating the name of the lost child, the fear lest the ghosts of the dead should haunt them makes several North India tribes avoid mentioning the names of deceased relatives for at least a generation. But, curiously enough, among the same people there is

¹ *The Kaffirs of the Hindukush*, p. 596.

no inhibition against assuming the name of a grandfather or grandmother when either of these crosses the bar.

In addition to the animistic aspect of ancestral names there is, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, a totemistic aspect also. Instances of stocks named from trees, plants and animals have been brought to notice by different writers such as Herbert Risley in his book *People of India*, by Crooke in *Folklore of Northern India*, by J. A. Saldanha in a paper on *Balis and Totems in Kanara*,¹ and by Rao Bahadur Artal in a paper on *An Account of the Hanabar*.² The evidence on this point, much more direct among the Dravidians than among the more Hinduized races, has also been noticed in the preceding pages.

Among the primitive elements in the population of India generally the worship of trees, animals, weapons and implements of industry on the occasion of marriage is widespread in such fashion as to warrant the inference that the object worshipped is regarded as an ancestor. These objects are known as *devaks* in the Deccan and as *balis* in the Karnatak and are a common feature of many tribes and castes in the Deccan, Konkan and Karnatak. A large number of the *devaks* and *balis* can be found in the pages of *Tribes and Castes of Bombay* by Risley, under the article on Marathas. Among the trees and plants may be mentioned mango, babul, bor, chinch, nim and banjan. Among birds and animals figure horse, buffalo, peacock, tortoise, eagle, cobra, goat, monkey, wolf and tiger. The system of surnames derived from trees, plants and animals prevailing in the Deccan, Konkan and Karnatak, says Enthovan, seems to be connected with the totemistic custom.³ Thus we note in Marathi-speaking districts names such as Landaga (wolf), Wagh (tiger), Dukre (pig), Mhas (buffalo), Popat (parrot) and Salunkhe (cormorant). Persons bearing these surnames hold themselves to be descended from the animal after

¹ *Journal of the Anthropological Society* Vol. VIII, No. 5.

² *Ibid*, Vol, VIII, No. 6.

³ *Bombay Folklore*, p. 235.

whom they are named. A common allied practice is to bestow on children such names as Kagdo (crow), Kolo (jackal), Bilado (cat) and Kutro (dog) if any one of these animals is heard to utter a cry at the time of the birth of the infant.

The following names are taken from the names of the months or seasons of the year during which children are born: Baisakhi (born in April-May), Bhadia (born in August-September), Cheti-Chetana (born in March-April), Kakkru (born in cucumber season June-July), Phagun (born in January-February).

Besides the sources of selection of names mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs, personal names are derived, throughout India, from the days of the months of the year. In Bombay State, we meet in large numbers Somjis (Som—sun, standing for Monday), Mangaldases (from Tuesday), Budhias (from Wednesday), Ravi Shankars (from Sunday). In Madras, the Sukrias (from Friday) predominate and in Sind the Jumos (from Friday). Saturday is avoided as a day of ill omen, but the Agri and Kunbi castes of Bombay and the people of Kanara are not afraid of rearing amongst them Shanwarayas and Thamyas. So also the Punjabis have Somwaras and Sanicharas.

Among Kolis and some other classes of people in Maharashtra girls are often named after the day of their birth and one comes across many a woman named Somi, Mangali, Budhi, or Shanvari.

Among the Muslims also one accosts a few Mangalos, Budhos, Jumos, or Jummu Khans (derived respectively from Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday). Names are also derived from seasons such as Muharram Ali, Rajabaim, Shahban Ali, Shubrati, Ramzani, Eidoo, Eadan and Bakridan. A somewhat different role is assigned to the days of the week in Burmah. With the Burmans it is a rule that a child's name must begin with one of the letters assigned to the day on which it is born. The letters of the alphabet are apportioned to the days of the week, Sun-

day has all the vowels to itself and the consonants divided into groups are assigned to the different days.

Names of numerous objects in daily use have also found their way into the nomenclature of some people. The vegetable kingdom enriches it with the names of trees, flowers, fruits, herbs and plants, such as aloo (potato), mulo (radish) ambo (mango) and gulab (rose). Thus Champaklal is derived from Champa (jack tree), Sakerchand (from saker, sugar), Kapurchand (from kapur, camphor), Kesarbhai (from Kesar, saffron), Gulabdas (from gulab, rose) and Tulsidas and Tulsibai (from tulsi, the sweet basil). From the mineral kingdom are derived the names Motichand (pearl) and Maneckchand (ruby). Coming to the animal kingdom, several animals and birds also influence the choice of names. For example, Popatlal (parrot), Hathi-bhai (elephant), Vaghjibhai (tiger), Nagjibhai (snake), Langur (monkey), Morbhai (peacock), Hansraj (goose) and Kutra (dog).

Muslims too have drawn freely on most of these sources. From the vegetable kingdom they derive names such as Gulshan (garden) and Gulzar Ali from flowers, Gulcher, Gulab and Gul Muhammad also derived from gul, rose. From the seasons they derive the names Bahar, spring, Naseema and Shameena, and from the mineral kingdom Ferozekhan for boys and Feroza and Neelum for girls.

From the animal kingdom, the lion, the tiger and the elephant figure prominently in the selection of names for Muslim boys. Names of girls are derived from birds, e.g. maina, nightingale and ghazal, from deer, because of its beautiful eyes. The hawk (baz) presents two imposing names, Shah Baz and Baz Bahadur. Even the dog is not ignored, e.g. Kalbe Ali, wherein both, the master Ali and his dog, are closely associated. The dog is, however, generally spoken of as unclean and even identified by poets such as Attar with human beings who remain for ever slaves to their lower instincts and passions.

It is stated by Enthoven in *Folklore of Bombay* that the dog is not touched by high class Hindus. However, it is believed by not a few among them to be an incarnation of God Khandoba and the pet animal of god Dattatraya, in whose temple dogs are worshipped. It is also believed that the dog has divining vision enabling it to see the otherwise unseen emissaries of the god of death. This belief seems to correspond to that of the Parsis and it has probably something to do with the peculiar custom prevailing among them till this day of showing the dead body during the *Geh Sarna* (funeral) ceremony, performed before it is taken to the Tower of Silence, to a dog with two eye-like spots (*chathru charma*, literally the four-eyed) supposed to have the faculty to discern whether life is extinct or not. If life is extinct, it stares steadily at the dead body. If not, it does not even look at it.¹

Among the Jewish names taken from animals may be mentioned Rachel (lamb), Kaleb (dog), Zeeb (wolf), Achhora (mouse), Diborah (bee) and Jonah (dove). From the plants are derived Hadassa (myrtle) and Tarnar (date) and from inanimate objects are taken Rebekah (cord used for tying sheep), Showhano (precious stone) and Penninsh (coral).

Among almost all communities names are derived from physical or mental peculiarities such as bodily perfection or deformity, vigour of intellect and shrewdness or mental aberration. For example, Karia (Black), Dhuria (dusty), Baudha (mentally deranged), Kubbe Singh (hunchback) and Langda (lame). Sita Ram (inoffensive). Sawai (from sawa, one and a quarter), i.e. beyond the usual run of mortals, the name that has been rendered famous as being the name or title of the celebrated royal astronomer Raja Jai Singh Sawai, founder of Jaipur.²

Necessarily inexhaustive as is this study of the

¹ Masani, *The Religion of the Good Life: Zoroastrianism*, p. 148.

² *Dissertation on the Proper Names of Panjabis*, p. 35.

choice of personal names, we have covered in this chapter the following categories in which they fall:—

1. Names of deities, seers and patriarchs
2. Names of kings and heroes
3. Names of deceased ancestors and relatives
4. Genethliaeal names
5. Names derived from those of sacred rivers and mountains
6. Names taken from superstitious beliefs and customs
7. Names derived from the animal kingdom
8. Names derived from the vegetable kingdom
9. Names derived from the mineral kingdom
10. Names derived from the objects of daily use
11. Names derived from the days of the week and the months
13. Names descriptive of personal peculiarities of mind and body.

Only one more category, opprobrious names, remains to be investigated. So widespread is the custom of giving disgusting names to children as a spirit-scaring and spirit-deluding device, that it is necessary to allot to it a separate chapter indicating its origin and the varied concepts and beliefs underlying it.

OPPROBRIOUS NAMES

"MY Lord," said counsel one day, in 1927, in opening a journalist's libel case in the Bombay High Court, "this Dobraji (meaning broken pot) is on the face of it a fictitious name and if one searches all the Parsis of the world, one would not find among them a man of the name Dobraji."

"Because", gravely observed his Lordship, nodding his head to signify assent, "no one would like to be called a broken pot."

In that obiter dictum, however, entirely contrary to the prevailing folk philosophy and customs, his Lordship betrayed lamentable ignorance of the fact that it was a common practice in India to give contemptuous names to children, such as pot, stone, dirt and dungheap, in the belief that thereby they were protecting the little ones from the envy of the evil eye or illness and untimely death. Delivering his judgment in a court located in Western India, he might have been expected to have heard of the custom widely prevalent in Gujarat, Deccan and other place, of giving opprobrious names to children, particularly in families in which new-born babes were short-lived or constantly ailing. Nay, it was a general belief among people, civilized as well as uncivilized, that if their children were called by such disgusting names, they would improve in health and would be saved from the jaws of the demon of death and other evil spirits. Three such notable names in vogue in Maharashtra were those of the well-known mathematician Keru Nana Chhatre (keru meaning rubbish) and of his son Kondopant (kondu meaning pot) and of Maharshi Bharat-

ratna Dhondopant *alias* Annasaheb Karve (dhondu meaning stone).

It needed no special study of the cultural history of the people or of their ethnic or linguistic lore to discover that it was the conviction of a large number of people that, regarded as being of no value, or impure, children bearing deprecatory names would be left unenvied and unharmed by friend and foe alike. "Name your child rubbish, cownie, bhikra, fool, and you insure it for ever against the envy of the evil eye and the spell of the sorcerer" was the maxim of folk philosophy cheerfully accepted by many a fond parent. Indeed, they could not think of any antidote for all ills of infants so simple and so potent as this; children accordingly named adhered to their names redolent of rubbish, dirt, defect and destitution, as though their very existence depended on being known and called by such names.

Conversely, sweet names attract the attention and jealousy of envious people and evil spirits and expose infants bearing such names to demonical influences. Parents are, therefore, in constant fear that any expression of admiration of the charm and beauty of a child or even an allusion to it would attract maleficent agencies ever on the watch to pounce upon the little one.

In the East and West alike the belief is common. In modern Greece, any allusion to the beauty or strength of a child is scrupulously avoided. If such words slip out, they are at once atoned for by one of the traditional expiatory formulas.¹ The fear of evoking jealousy and inviting the evil eye to cast its baleful spell also accounts for the custom prevailing in East and West of dressing boys as girls and of giving them a girl's name to deceive the evil spirits. Pausanius tells the story of young Achilles wearing female attire and living among maidens.² "To this day," says Clodd, peasants of Achill Island on the north-west coast of Ireland dress their boys

¹ Rennell Rodd, *Customs and Lore of Modern Greece*, p. 111

² Book I. 22.6.

as girls till they are about 14 years old, hoping thereby to deceive the boy-seeking devil".¹

Of all countries in the world India probably furnishes most striking evidence of the belief in the efficacy of opprobrious names as a spirit-scaring device. Throughout the country there is a marked resemblance in the names given to children as a safeguard against inimical influences or apprehended misfortunes. Globe-trotters and folklorists record numerous cases in which the devil and a host of other evil spirits and agents of death have been beguiled by this device. If there is any category of Indian names that has been extensively, though not yet exhaustively, discussed, it is this.

The first to introduce to the student of folklore the darlings of the Indian nursery endowed of necessity with deprecatory, disgusting, names was G. A. Grierson. Giving a formidable list of thirty-seven names of men and twelve of women, in the columns of *Indian Antiquary*, he demonstrated that the custom of giving derogatory names to children born after the death of the little ones carried away in their infancy was universal in Bihar. While the Biharis were not ashamed to own among them Bankas and Andhras, the dumb and the blind, Bhikhras and Bhuchwas (beggars and fools), Machias and Kirwas (flies and worms), Chhuchhunries and Chilris (mice and lice), Karias and Dhurias (the black and the dusty) and Dukhita and Nirsis (the afflicted and the despised), from Bengal hailed the Bhutos (Ugly ones) and Gobardhans (dungmade). The Kap-paswamis and Gundappas (dungheaps and rocks) and Kallas and Tippas (stones and dunghills) of Madras and Mysore were not slow to put in their appearance. Major Temple then brought to light the dungheaps (aruras) of the Punjab and a host of Billas and Chuhas (cats and rats). Mendkas and Tiddas (frogs and grasshoppers), Chhittars and Gudars (old shoes and rags) Jharus and Kadus (brooms and mire), Mirchis and Mulas (pepper

¹ *Magic in Names*, p. 100.

and radish), Alus and Baingans (potatoes and eggplants), Langurs and Magars (monkeys and alligators).¹

The Fakiras and Bhikus (beggars and mendicants), the Dhulias and Dongras (dust and stones), Gandabhais and Ghelabhais (fools and lunatics), Khotos and Juthos, Amathos and Mafatios (the false and the worthless) of the province of Bombay, however, remained unintroduced until Jackon, Enthoven and Abbott of the Indian Civil Service brought to notice the spirit-bamboozling names current in Gujarat, Deccan, Konkan and the Karnatic. In *Bombay Folklore* Enthoven gives the following formidable list of the English equivalents of opprobrious names generally given to boys:

Useless, False, Refuse, Nose-bored, Black, Mad, Stupid, Eccentric, Sewed, Hill, Worthless, Bower, Creeper, Small, Lamé, Fool, Dunghill, Parasite, Old, Lord (ironical) Recluse, Handsome (ironical), Peacock, Parrot, Fastened, Ragged, Not loved, The croaking of a frog, Fat, Bald-head, Womanish, Crying, Basket-hidden, Cowdung-hidden, Manure, Beggar, Shameless, Coward, Noise, Poisonous, Stony, Immoral, Negro-like, Hollow, Bitter, Deaf, Panther, Tiger, Meddlesome.

Similar names given to girls are: White, Small, Refuse, Black, Light as a flower, False, Fat, Mad, Useless, Bitter.

Enthoven goes on to say that the idea of giving such contemptuous names to children is almost Asiatic. In the Deccan the child is sometimes placed in the lap of a woman who has sons surviving and she gives it an opprobrious name. Often, however, children are placed in the laps of low caste women such as Mangs, Bhils, Mahars and Kolis in the hope of ensuring long life and the urchins thus protected are named Mangia, Bhilya or Maharia. In some other cases a stone named after the child is deposited with the village deity and recovered after the child grows up with thanks offerings to the deity. The existence of many a Fakira and Bhikya among various

¹ A *Dissertation on the Proper Names of Panjabis*, pp 24—25.

communities proclaims the belief that by naming children paupers and beggars they ensure longevity for them. In some cases until children attain the age of five years they are dressed in clothes obtained by begging. Some bore the nose of a boy, treating him as a girl. Hence the name Natha (nose-pierced). In the Deccan the nose was pierced with the thorn of the *bor* tree (*Zizyphus Jujuba*) growing on a grave.

In some places, says the same author, a relative on the mother's side presents the child with a necklace of gold beads shaped like large black ants. When it attains the age of eight or ten years this necklace is offered to some god or goddess. The child is named Sankalio in commemoration of the *Sankali* (chain) round the neck. Some weigh the child against corn and give the name of the corn to the child. The corn is then distributed among beggars, which is supposed to ensure long life to the child. A carpenter's children in Gujarat used to die in infancy so he named one of his sons (Pithad) and he lived. Since then parents whose children did not live named their new-born son Pithad. Some name their children Jivo (live), hoping that they may live long.

Among Muslims of India also the custom of giving contemptuous names prevails, as most of them were originally Hindus but later converted to Islam. Even among the Iranis and Arabs boys are given such names as "The Stolen" and "The Black". Sometimes, people arrange that their children be actually stolen and some next of kin, generally the aunt, is made to commit the kindly felony. She afterwards returns the child for a stipulated amount in cash or clothes. This custom reminds one of the story as old as the Jewish scriptures about the aunt of Joseph alluded to in the Quran. It relates how little Joseph during his childhood was made to steal some garment of his aunt and was claimed as a forfeit by her. Speaking about Levy, the elder brothers of Joseph say to the Egyptian soldiers, "If he hath stolen the King's goblet, verily the

brother of his too did (formerly) steal."¹

Some people in Gujarat throw a new-born child on a dung-hill and take it back as if it were discovered and taken from the dunghill, the underlying conception being that a child of such low origin cannot be snatched away from its parents by fate or destiny. A collection of dust or kachra (sweepings) serves the same purpose. In reply to the author's enquiries concerning certain opprobrious names current even during the third decade of the twentieth century in Gujarat, one of his informants, hailing from Baroda, Mr. Kantilal Trivedi, related how a child in his family was put in a corner of a room where the sweepings of the floor were collected and was brought back and bathed and named Kachu (brought from kachra). The story may be given in his own words:

"A nephew of mine was married to a girl who was the only surviving child of her parents out of seven dead brothers and sisters. As one after another the new baby died, her mother at the time of her birth, on the advice of old relations, put her near the corner where dust was collected daily after sweeping the house. The new baby was left there for some time and then brought back and bathed. Because she was deliberately put on the dust, in order to ward off the Messenger of Death (Yama-dut), she was named *Kachu* (meaning 'brought from kachra'). She also died young at the age of 24 years, after child-birth. But even those 24 years of her life were, her mother believed, due to the ceremony performed at the time of her birth."

Just as deprecatory names are generally given to children born after the premature death of the earlier offspring, second wives are given opprobrious names such as Huchchi, "mad woman", Mudiki "old woman" with a view to protecting them from the fate of the first ones

In Sind a Muslim father protects his son by calling

¹ *Bombay Folklore*, pp. 233—35.

him Gudbi (dunghill) and a daughter by naming her Ghudasab, or by giving either of them the name of a slave. Amongst disgusting names forming part of the nomenclature of the people of Sind, Abbott mentions the following:¹ Gundappa, Dundappa, Dagadya, Dagdia, Dhondia or "stone"; Tirkappa, Fakkira, Bhikari, "beggar"; Tippanna, Tippa, "inhabitant of the dung-hill"; Giriya, Guddapa, Dongaria, "mountain or hill"; Sedappa, Arlappa, Dhulappa, Mannapa, "dirt, mud, dust"; Hadakia, "a bone"; Heggappa, Dodo, "rope"; Kenthapa, Kanthewa, "thorn"; Kenchappa, "simpleton"; and Huchappa, "madman"; Adivappa, Kadappa, "Jungle", Sudugadappa, "Cemetery"; Bhutia "ghost"; Cindappa, "rags"; Norjappa or Norjawa, "fly"; Hegappa, Undria, "rat"; Munjri, "cat"; Kutria, "dog"; Tukdia, "a Piece of bread"; Menasava, "pepper"; Musya, "black monkey"; Mugappa, "nostril" and Mukarapa, "nose-ring;" as also Nathia; Kariyapa, Kalia, "black"; Budapa, "ash"; Huligapa, "fire"; and Ambia "mango".

Two other sources of opprobrious names are (1) despised castes and (2) lowly occupations. Abbott mentions Maharia, Dhedia, Bhilia, Cambharia, Dhangar, Bhangia, as the names of such castes, and Jekkapu, carrier, Totappu, gardener, Gopal or Dhorkia, cowherd, as the names connoting lowly occupations. Other contemptuous names mentioned by him are Naktia, deep-nosed, Ranjania, an earthen water-pot, Rumalia, turban, Bandepa, rock, Kattepa, the raised platform in front of a house, Kotepa, fort, Gadigepa, platform, Supli, winnowing-fan, and Amavasyappa, "as black as a night of no moon."²

People in Europe do not have disgusting names, but in an article in *The Spectator* of February 4, 1928, the writer, Noel Cornish, mentioned three opprobrious names "suggesting a desperate thought". In the wail of another parent, in the *Register* for 1886, one found "That's-it; who'd-have-thought-it?" "Will there ever be a society,

¹ *The Keys of Power*, p. 48.

² *Ibid* p. 49.

asked the writer of the article, "formed to prevent cruelty in the naming of children?"

The main interest in the study of opprobrious names centres in the indication that they give of varied quaint customs prevailing amongst different people. Thus the *Chhiddas* (nose-pierced) of the North-West Provinces and their namesakes *Nathu* and *Natha*, scattered over various parts of India, point to the general custom of boring the nose. Similarly, the names of *Bur* and *Buran* (crop-eared) were derived from the practice of boring the ears of boys. As a device to hoodwink evil spirits, people treat the male child as a girl and bore his ear or pierce his nose. Similarly, parents blest with an uninterrupted succession of daughters feared that they were destined to get girls only until they gave the last one a deprecatory name such as *Arna* (no more) and *Chhichhi* (dirt). They also feared that they would never get a son by merely praying for a male child, unless they simultaneously made vows to dress as a girl the son and heir they might get, or to pierce his nose or bore his ear, as evidence of his conversion into a girl, the pierced nose or ear being *par excellence* the mark of a girl.

Along with the Hindu population the Parsis and Muslims in India resort to this device. During his school days the author used to have as school friends Parsi nicked-ears carrying the mystic ring in each ear without a blush!

In some parts of India the process of mutilation does not stop at the boring of the ear. There the mother chops off a piece of the child's ear and eats it! Believing that perfection evokes the envy of even the gods and that unblemished children are the special victims of the wicked fairies who walk off with them or of the demons who possess them, the proud parents of such children are faced with the expedient to spoil their perfection as a dire necessity.

Some parents dedicate their sons to gods and saints and dress them as fakirs, beggars. Hence the Hindu *Bhikaras* and *Fakiras* and Parsi *Fakirjis*. Major Temple

gives the instance of a well-known citizen of Ambala, named Maulavi Ghulam Bhik. Before his birth his parents had lost several children and had vowed that if the next child happened to be a boy, they would dedicate him to Sayyid Bhik, a saint of local celebrity, whose shrine was situated about 14 miles from Ambala. When a boy was born, he was accordingly dedicated to the saint and named, after him, Ghulam Bhik (the slave of the Beggar).¹ Some childless parents in Negapatam make vows to the Muslim saint Miran and name after him the children with whom they are blest after the vow.

A few Christian names are also requisitioned. Thurston cites Bade Sahib and Rapsan (corruption of Robertson). Irrespective of the idea of averting uncanny influences, mere fashion seems to have dictated the choice of English names. The Madras bouquet of names specially gained in *aroma* by the introduction of flowers from foreign stocks. They have, or had some years ago, their Victorias (named after Queen Victoria), Munrolappas (after Sir Thomas Munro, the Governor of Madras), Brodies and Longleys. In the Nasik district of India one seldom came across such celebrities. But in July 1910, when Lord Minto was the Viceroy of India, the author of this book had the honour to greet a Minto at Deolali. He was sitting with friends under a tree when a stout, well-clad Hindu lad, about 10 years old, approached him for alms. "What is your name?" asked the author. "Minto" was the reply to the amusement of the company. Obviously, he had received the name as an additional one during the regime of the Viceroy. He, however, would not admit, or perhaps did not remember, that he had any other name.

Among the curious customs connected with the practice of giving opprobrious names is that of giving away a child, immediately after birth, to somebody and buying it back at a nominal price varying from one to nine cowri shells. Hence the names Ekkaudi and Tinkaudi.

¹ *Proper Names of the Panjabis*, p. 30.

As a rule, the price is paid in odd numbers of cowries; even numbers were considered inauspicious. The Punjabis, however, appear to have no aversion to even numbers, for we find among them Chhadammis, i.e. children bought for six mites, then equivalent to three pies or one pice.

According to another custom a boy is handed over to a beggar and then begged back as alms. Clad in clothes given by friends or relatives, he is then called Fakir or Bhikari. Another variant is to weigh the lad against grain and to give the grain to a sweeper as his price before he received the name Bhangi. In some cases, nine times the weight of the grain, with nine four-anna pieces are given to a Brahmin as alms. This accounts for several Chuhrs and Chuhris, male and female sweepers, among the Punjabis. Sometimes these names are given when, according to an allied custom, a child is given to a sweeper woman to suckle. The belief that a child would be saved if given for suckling to a woman of inferior position, contact with whom ordinarily would mean pollution, is so common amongst certain sections of the Hindu population, that sometimes high caste mothers who cannot bear the idea of placing their children in the hands of sweeper women, get Muslim women to suckle them. In some places, a new-born child is thrown on a dung-heap and taken back. It is thereby assumed that the child was found on a dung-hill. A child of such supposedly low origin, it was believed, could not be snatched away from them by Fate. A portion of a dung heap is occasionally brought into the lying-in room for this ceremony.¹

The Dungheaps abounding throughout the land owe the origin of their name to the custom of taking a little quantity of rubbish from a dung hill, putting it in a sieve and placing the child in it in the belief that this act of humiliation would avert the evil eye. The custom is generally prevalent in Madras and a variant of it is found in the Punjab and in the North West Provinces, where a child is put in a winnowing basket or Chhaj, with the

¹ *Bombay Folklore*, p. 233.

house sweepings, and then dragged out of the house into the yard. It enriches the nomenclature with the names *Chhajju* (winnowing basket) and *Ghasita* (dragged). According to another allied custom a hole (koni) is dug under the framework of the entrance door of the house in which the child is born. Through this hole the baby is passed from the outside into the house and the name *Ghasita* is pronounced. Sometimes, leaves (*pulliakalu*) which are used as plates for food, are thrown out in a heap and when the keenly awaited child is born, some of the leaves are brought back and the child is laid on them. The name *Pulya* and *Pullania* are derived from this source. Another custom, prevailing particularly in the south, is to bring ash from an ash heap and sprinkle it on the infant whilst bathing the child. There was another custom of burying the umbilical cord in the field boundary or embankment or in a dung pit as a preventive from evil. Hence *Ghurai* (dung-pit) and *Mendu* (embankment).

How could fond parents suffer themselves to give their child such a disgusting name as *Kirwa* (worm), *Dhulia* (dust), or *Teppia* (dung hill) ? The stock answer given to this question is "Let it live as an insect in the dunghill".¹

¹ Abbott: *The Keys of Power*, p. 49.

CHANGE AND EXCHANGE OF NAMES

WE have seen in the preceding pages that in the concept of primitive man the universe was perpetually haunted by evil spirits and that people in various parts of the world had, therefore, need to be ever on the watch against all sorts of malignant agencies and had to resort to various stratagems to protect themselves and their children. The simplest and the oldest of these was to change one's name or one's child's name and confound the dreaded spirits. As this custom was more common among the people of the West than in the East, it attracted special attention of western folklorists. It was hoped that the practice would gradually die out, but it appears from the posthumous work of Isaac Gidberg, *The Wonder of Words*, published in 1937, that the long lease of life enjoyed by it is not going to come to an end so soon. "The custom is still so common," says the author, "that I have known it to be practised in recent years."

In Borneo, the name of an ailing child used to be changed repeatedly as a charm against the mischief of the spirit of disease. When a Lapp child fell ill, its baptismal name was changed. At every illness it was rebaptized, relying on the stupidity of the maleficent agent to be thus decoyed. When the life of a Kwappa Indian was supposed to be in danger from illness, he at once tried to get rid of his name and sent for another member of the tribe, who went to the Chief and bought a new name which was given to the patient. With the abandonment of the old name, "the sickness was thrown off". Moreover, on the reception of the new name the patient became "related to the Kwappa who purchased it." Any Kwappa could change or abandon his personal

name four times, but to attempt to resort to the device for the fifth time was to court disaster!¹

Influenced by the same belief, the Rabbis recommended that a new name be given in secrecy, as a means of new life, to a patient who was in danger of dying. In a family in which several children died successively, says Feldman, "it is the custom in Europe for the mother, before she gives birth to another child, to go to an old man whose children and grandchildren are all alive, and to sell him her unborn child for a certain sum which the old man agrees to pay. The old man is then called "the grandfather of the child". The name thus given to the child is suggestive of old age, Alter (old man) or Alte (old woman), Zeidel (little grandfather) or Bobel, (little grandmother).

Such names are usually added to or substituted for the real name in case of serious illness with the idea of deceiving the Angel of Death, who is believed to summon persons by name. "This custom", says the author, "dates from the time of the Talmud. One of the names given in such cases is Chayim (or Vivian), meaning life."²

In all parts of Arabia, Christians as well as non-Christians believed that if any child "should seem sickly or of unfirm understanding, or if other children in the family had died before it, the most efficacious remedy was to put upon the child a wild beast's name (especially wolf, leopard, or wolverine) so that their human fragility may take on, as it were, a temper of the kind of these animals."³ The following story is related by Clodd, on the authority of Rev. Hilderic Friend, as having a significant bearing on the continuity of savage and quasi-civilized ideas.

1 Quoted by Clodd in *Magic in Names and in Other Things* from the American Folklore Journal, Vol. viii, p. 133.

2 *The Jewish Child*, pp. 225 & 371-72

3 Trumbull, *The Blood Covenant*, p. 337

"In the village of S——near Hastings, there lived a couple who had named their first born girl Helen. The child sickened and died and when another daughter was born, she was named after her dead sister. But she also died and on the birth of a third daughter the cherished name was repeated. This third Helen died, and no wonder, said the neighbours, it was because the parents had used the first child's name for the others. About the same time a neighbour had a daughter, who was named Marian because of her likeness to a dead sister. She showed signs of weakness soon after birth, and all said that she would die as the three Helens had died, because the name Marian ought not to have been used. It was, therefore, tabooed and the girl was called Maude. She grew to womanhood, and was married; but so completely had her baptismal name of Marian been shunned, that she was married under the name of Maude and by it continues to be known to this day."¹

Among the Brazilian Tupis the father was accustomed to take a new name after the birth of each son. It was also customary to take the name of an enemy on killing him to make sure that with his body his name, too, was annihilated. The Chinooks changed their names whenever a near relative died, owing to the fear that the departed spirits would be attracted back to earth if they heard familiar names. The Lenguas of Brazil changed their names on the death of any one as they believed that "the dead knew the names of all whom they had left behind and might return to look for them." Hence they changed their names, "hoping that if the dead came back they could not find them."²

There is little recorded evidence to show that the agents of disease and death are also thus outwitted by the various communities in India except in the case of illness. Dr. Rivers, however, furnishes a few illustrations of

¹ *Folklore Record*, Vol IXI p. 79

² Dorman: *Popular Superstitions* p. 154.

the prevalence of the custom among the Todas for reasons other than illness. "One of my guides, Kutadri," says he, "had changed his name twice. His original name had been Okeithi 'or Okvan, but as there was another Okvan of Kedar, he became Tagarsvan. Later, he fell ill and, on the recommendation of a diviner, Tagarsvan changed his name to Kutadri, and I never heard him spoken of or addressed by any but this name during my visit". "If two men have the same name," he adds, "and one of the two should die, the other man would change his name, since the taboo on the name of the dead would prevent people from uttering the name of the living". There were two men, named Matovan, one of Pan and the other of Kwadrdoni. The Kwadrdoni man died. "Matovan of Pan thereupon changed his name to Imokhvan and it is this name which will be found in his pedigree."¹

In the year 1932 an inhabitant of Hyderabad, Sind, informed the writer that in that part of the country when a child took ill or got restive for any other reason, the practice in vogue amongst the women of the household was to call the child after one of its grand-parents. If that name had a soothing effect, the child was called by that name and it stuck to the recipient for ever.

Instances of name-changing among the followers of Islam in India, except in case of illness, are not known. But there is one historic instance of a court poet, Ni'mat Khan Ali, reporter of daily events in the court of Aurangzeb, a satirist famous for his verses in Persian. In his case the change of an inauspicious pen-name into an auspicious one brought good fortune. His nom-de-guerre was Hakim (philosopher). One day he discovered to his horror, says he in his preface to the collection of his poems, that the orthographical skeleton of that word in Persian characters resembled that of the word *chekunem*, meaning "what shall I do?" As that word

¹ The Todas, pp. 625-26.

spelt helplessness and bewilderment, the pen-name was altered to Ali (the exalted name of the son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad).

Another instance is that of a Muslim poet of Iran whose fortune turned on the abandonment of an inauspicious name for an auspicious one while he was a student. His name was Na-awari, meaning one who possessed (literally, brought) nothing. His teacher however, discerned in him something far more precious than riches—transcending intellect. It is related that by the transposition of the first two letters of his name, he converted the youth's name from Na-awari to Anwari (meaning brilliant). This change, which in itself was a flash of genius, thenceforth illumined the career of the youth. Under that auspicious name he regaled the court of Sultan Sanjar as the best Kasideh-writer, panegyrist, in the galaxy of Perian poets of the day and flourished.

Allied to the custom of changing names is that of exchanging names. It is known to have existed among the tribes in the West Indies at the time of Columbus and manifested itself in a civilized form among these people. If any one of them, say A, adopted a stranger, say B, as a friend, A took B's name and B adopted A's name. It was presumed that the persons exchanging names established some sort of participation in each other's being. A became B and shared B's fortune; B took the place of A and shared his destiny. It may seem to reflect a pleasing and refined sentiment of friendship among primitive people as has never been shared or dreamt of by civilized society in this sordid world. In this respect, at least, it may be said that primitive man stood on a higher spiritual plane than his civilized successor who, after centuries of education and culture, is as yet a slave to manifold forces of selfishness and self-aggrandizement inherited from a stormy past, dispelling the ideal of human brotherhood and world community.

Exchange of names is considered more complete and more effective when the ceremony of changing names is

accompanied by the mingling of blood. By absorbing each other's blood, says Herbert Spencer, men are supposed to establish actual community of nature¹. Underlying this assumption was the belief that the persons thus exchanging names would, as intended, recognize completely mutual rights and obligations and would no longer be aliens to each other. It must be admitted, however, that the exchange of names was as a rule confined to members of one's own tribe. Blood relationship was the only bond that united primitive men into clans and tribes. The fatherhood of God was implicit in their anthropomorphic conception of the deity, but the concept of the brotherhood of man yet remained to be evolved.

In the South Seas, Captain Cook and a native called Oree made the exchange whereby Cook became Oree and the native became Cookee. "The first time I was among the Mohawks," says Cadwallader Colden in his *History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada*, "I had this compliment from one of their *Sachems*, which he did by giving me his own name *Cayenderongue*. He had been a notable warrior, and he told me that I now had a right to assume all the acts of valour he had performed and that now my name would echo from hill to hill over all the *Five Nations*." When Colden went back into the same part, ten or twelve years later, he found that he was still known by the name he had thus received, and that the old chief had taken another².

When a Shastikan chief made a treaty with Colonel M'kee, an American officer, for certain concessions, he desired some ceremony demonstrating brotherliness to make the covenant binding, and after some parleying, proposed an exchange of names, which was agreed to. Thenceforth, he became M'kee and M'kee became Tolo. But after a while the Indian found that the American was shuffling over the bargain, whereupon M'kee angrily cast off that

¹ *Principles of Sociology*, Part II. p. 21.

² Tylor, *Early History of Mankind*, p. 128, quoting from Colden's '*History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada*', Part I, p. 10 (1747)

name and refused to resume that of Tolo¹. He would not answer to either name, and to the day of his death insisted that his name was lost and with it his identity. It is, indeed, a pathetic story, the assertion of the moral sense of a primitive Indian against what appeared to him a white man's trickery. In the confusion of his mind the simple man, conscious of the sanctity of the spoken word, did not know who he was and what he had become!

¹ Quoted by Dr. Trumbull from Powers' article on *Tribes of California* in *Contributions to North American Ethnology*, Vol. III, p. 247.

AVOIDANCE CUSTOMS AND INHIBITIONS

THE student of history is familiar with the names and narratives of aggressors and tyrants who have made themselves notorious in human history. None has, however, as yet written the life history of the dread tyrant that has since the beginning of the organisation of the human society dominated, and still dominates, more than any other tyrant, multitudes of human beings all over the world. The name of that ubiquitous tyrant is Taboo.

Originally, an interdict of religious origin, enjoining total prohibition of intercourse with, or use of, or access to, a person or thing, under the guise of social institutions and customs, taboo now regulates the social life and observances of many a people. By laying down rules of social intercourse, it controls simple acts of individuals, imposes manifold quaint prohibitions and secures allegiance thereto under the threat of dire consequences and calamities, including death and damnation.

At the root of the inhibitions one discerns the primitive man's belief in the existence and potentiality of evilly disposed spirits and agencies and the dread of dangerous consequences resulting from placing oneself at their mercy. This has given rise to various avoidance customs, which are still in vogue among several people in the lower stages of culture and even among civilized races in a modified form, prohibiting persons related in certain degree by blood or marriage from calling one another by name, or even uttering their names, or seeing one another. The tyranny underlying these customs is, however, nothing compared to that inflicted by a series of inhibitions on the utterance of names of gods and supernatural beings, kings and priests, deceased ancestors and the dead generally.

In this chapter we shall notice several strange

avoidance customs generally observed, and the taboo between relatives particularly, reserving subsequent chapters for separate analysis of various other quaint beliefs and customs tabooing the names of gods, priest-kings, church dignitaries and the dead, and even words signifying corpses, biers and coffins. If, as we have seen in the preceding pages, in pronouncing a blessed name one is believed to set in motion its inherent power or influence conducive to the well-being of a person, the avoidance of a reprobated name may as well be considered essential to avert the consequences of unwittingly evoking its power to do harm to people. "Have you ever seen a person who named his son Pharaoh, Sisera, or Sennacherib?" The Talmud poses this question whilst recommending the naming of a child after a patriarch or a celebrity, and adds, by way of reply, "but he calls him Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Reuben and Smeon."¹ No wonder names of ill omen and detestable names are avoided everywhere, whereas auspicious names of sages among Hindus, or angels amongst Parsis, and of saints (pirs) among Muslims and other nations are invoked either as a safeguard against evil or to set in motion their *kudrat* (power) for the well-being of individuals and society. For instance, Narada, a name presaging strife and trouble, is avoided lest quarrels ensue if the name be uttered. "An orthodox Hindu", it is said, "rinses his mouth with water to remove the defilement of having mentioned by chance the name of a wicked man."² Irrational as it seems, it is not unnatural for one professing a faith which enjoins utmost importance and attention to purity and stresses the need for elaborate ablutions and purification of one's body and one's self if there be any chance of defilement.

On this point the following note by Dr. G. S. Ghurye of his own observations is most interesting:

"I know that as late as my youth in Maharashtra, orthodox people used to avoid uttering the word Mahara,

¹ *The Jewish Child*: p. 219

² Abbott: *The Keys of Power*, P. 41

the designation of a polluting caste, to avoid pollution or an inauspicious association. Periphrasis used to be in evidence if it was quite necessary to refer to that caste. Similarly, one variety of gourd which is named in the Konkan Mahrasduhdi was tabooed at night because the first member of the word is the name of that polluting caste. But these cases I do not think to be parallel with such as the avoidance of naming one's wife or husband except under pressure and in a veiled manner."

The names of animals are also avoided and in their place some complimentary or cajoling word or euphemism is used in addressing them. In Bombay, the writer as a lad, eighty years ago, used to hear the tiger mentioned as maternal uncle (*mama*). The same cajoling name for the wild creature was in use in Bengal. We are told that in Annam the tiger is called "grandfather" or "lord". In northern Asia and Sumatra the same device of using some bamboozling name is adopted. The Laplander speaks of the bear as the old man with the "fur coat" and the Finns as "beautiful honey claw".¹ A snake is seldom called by its usual name. When the jungle folk of India meet a snake, they do not name it or speak about it directly in any way. Other tribes and castes of India allude to it in devious euphemistic terms. It is called *pan* or *pandhara* "white", though it may be really of another hue, especially at night, or 'ox', or 'ghost' or 'the live thing', *Jivanu*. In Kanara it is called *hula* or 'insect or worm'. Marathas call it 'the long thing', *lambda* or merely *janavar*, 'animal'. Sindi Muslims call it *rasi* or 'rope'. "When a person is bitten by a snake, one says, "the insect (*hula*) has touched him." The ordinary word for an owl is *gugi*, but in Karnatak it is usual to speak of this ill-omened bird as *hakki*, or merely 'bird'; the Sindi calls it the 'night-bird,' the 'bad animal', or 'that whose name one would not utter'. A donkey is called *lambkane*, 'long-eared', instead of *gadav*. In the Panch Mahals the Bhils speak

¹ *An Introduction to Folklore*: p. 206.

of the panther as a dog.¹

As the Jews were forbidden swine's flesh, the word 'pig' was shunned by them altogether, and it was called *dabehar acheer*, "the other thing". So, too, the porpoise, or river-pig, was looked upon in Canton as a creature of ill-omen and its name was tabooed.² The Swedes avoided to tread on a toad, lest it might be an enchanted princess.²

The fox is called 'blue-foot' or 'he that goes in the forest', or 'grey-coat', or 'long-tail'. The name of the unfortunate creature is considered so unlucky that the Gladdagh folk of Galway would not go out to fish if they saw a fox. The same superstition prevailing from the north of Europe to the south accounts for the fear of Livonian fishermen to endanger the success of their nets by calling even harmless animals such as the hare or the dog by their common names. Similarly the Esthonians fear to mention the hare lest their crops of flax fail².

In Sweden the seal is "brother Lars" and throughout Scandinavia the superstitions about wolves are numerous. In some districts during a portion of the spring the peasants dare not call that animal by its usual name, Varg, lest he carry off the cattle, so they substitute the names Ulf, Grahans, or gold-foot, because in olden (therefor golden) days, when dumb creatures had the faculty of speech, the wolf is reported to have said:

If thou callest me *Varg*, I will be wroth with thee,
But if thou callest me *of golp* ' I will be kind to thee³.

The same avoidance custom governs names of diseases. In India small-pox is spoken of as *mata* (the goddess causing the disease). Leprosy is spoken of as 'the great disease'. The word for convulsions, *satabyani*, must not be uttered. The word for consumption, *ksaya*, must be avoided. Periphrases are used when speaking of death; the direct

1 Abbott: *The Keys of Power*, p. 44

2 *Folklore Record*: Vol. IV, pp: 77 and 98.

3 *Tom Tit Tot*: p. 128.

word for 'he died', *mela*, is never used, save in a curse, and, in lieu of it, one says *varala* or *devadnya jhali*, 'God's command has come', or *gamavala* (is lost).¹ Similarly, in China and many parts of Europe the words death and coffin are tabooed. In England undertakers advertised "boards of old age" or "clothes of old age".

Reverting to name-avoidance customs, including name-concealment, we have already noticed that their origin could be traced to the amazingly widespread belief that if a man's name were known to another, he would be placed at the mercy of the other, and subjected to his influence. There are, however, other reasons, too, for the taboo on certain names. For instance, the names of deceased ancestors, the names of gods and spiritual beings held in high esteem and affection or reverence and awe, and regarded as too dear or sacred to be allowed to be on everybody's lips and exposed to the evil influence of malignant agencies.

One of the most fantastic, grotesque and perplexing avoidance customs in India and other parts of the world is that which interdicts the *nam* (name) of wife or husband or father-in-law or mother-in-law. In India, among Hindus, the name of a husband is taboo to his wife. She speaks of him as *Sheth* (master) or simply 'he', or 'father of so and so', never by name. She would take her meal separately. Similarly, she would walk behind him in streets and public places. The custom is dying out gradually under the influence of western education, but among the majority it still holds sway.

Among the Muslims of India, (mostly converts from Hinduism), too, the wife as a rule does not pronounce her husband's name, but calls him by some ejaculation. Among the Parsis, particularly those living in villages, until recently, she refrained, and still refrains in some cases, from calling her husband by name. Whenever she has to call him, she ejaculates, *sahambloch ke* (do you hear?) If she speaks to a third party about her husband, she mentions him as *aivan*, an honorific expression for the third

¹ *The Keys of Power*: p. 44

person singular. Here, too, it is respect, not dread of calling him by name and thereby exposing him to the spells of evil spirits and sorcerers.

The Todas dislike uttering their names. When anyone of them is asked what his name is, he requests some one else to mention it. Among them it is forbidden to utter the names of one's mother's brother, grandfather, grandmother and wife's father. The names of these are taboo'd whilst they are alive. After death the restriction applies to the names of all deceased relatives. If a man wishes to give a clue to the person whose name he cannot pronounce, say his maternal uncle, he would give the name of the place at which he lived, e.g. "my uncle who lives at such and such a place."¹

In *Magic in Names and Other Things* Clodd gives instances of similar practices in western countries. "An old-fashioned Midland cottager's wife," says he, "rarely speaks of her husband by name. The pronoun 'he' supplemented by 'my man', or 'my master', is sufficient indication." Among the Amazulu, too, separated from Indians by oceans, a woman cannot call her husband by name. While speaking of him, she will say, "father of so and so," meaning one of her children.² In East Africa also, among the Barea, the wife never utters the name of her husband nor eats in his presence; and even among the Beni Amer, where women have extensive privileges and great social power, the wife is nevertheless not allowed to eat in her husband's presence, and mentions his name only before strangers. These inhibitions are readily accepted by wives as inculcating or evidencing a wife's sense of respect. To ascribe the practice, now in vogue among savage and civilized alike, to the anxiety to conceal the name from evil spirits and evilly disposed persons seems altogether unwarranted.

A few additional instances, given by Clodd, regarding the general system of taboo, may be given in this context

1 Rivers: *The Todas*, p. 624-25

2 Tylor: *Early History of Mankind*, p. 143

to show that the feeling of respect that makes people in India refrain from uttering the names of gods and kings accounts also for the taboo in various parts of the world on names of husbands and wives and other relations. The Dyak of Borneo cannot utter the name of his father-in-law. Among the Omahas of North America, the father-in-law and mother-in-law do not speak to their son-in-law or mention his name. Among the Central Australians a man may not marry or speak to his mother-in-law. He may speak to his mother at all times, but not to his sister, if she be younger than himself. The father may not speak to his daughter after she attains womanhood.¹ The Indians east of the Rockies regard it as indecent for either fathers-or mothers-in-law to look at or speak to their sons-or daughters-in-law. It was considered a gross breach of propriety among the Blackfoot tribe for a man to meet his mother-in-law. If, by mischance; he happened to accost her, or, what was worse, to speak to her, he had to pay a heavy fine. In New Britain a man must never speak to his mother-in-law; he must go miles out of his way not to meet her. The most stringent and humiliating penalty one had to pay for breaking an oath was to be compelled to shake hands with his mother-in-law.²

In some parts of Australia the mother-in-law does not allow the son-in-law to see her, but hides herself at his approach, or covers herself with her clothes if she has to pass him. "Even Pund-jel, the Australian Creator of all things, has a wife whose face he has never seen."³ Sometimes circumlocutory phrases are used; these are more usually applied to supernatural beings. Gregor says that "in Buckie there are certain family names which fishermen will not pronounce. The folk in the village of Coull, speaking of spitting out the bad name." If such a name be men-

¹ Horn's Expedition to Central Australia, *Report on Anthropology*, p. 166

² Romilly: *Western Pacific and New Guinea*, quoted in *Tom Tit Tot*, p. 117.

³ Brough Smyth: *Aborigines of Victoria*, Vol I. p. 408.

tioned in their hearing, they spit, or in the vernacular "chiff", and the man who bears the dreaded name is called a "chifferoot". When occasion to speak of him arises, a circumlocutory phrase is used, as "the man it diz so in so", or "the ladd it lives at such and such a place." As further showing how barbaric ideas linger in the heart of civilization, there is an overwhelming feeling against hiring men bearing reprobated names as hands for the boats in the herring fishing season; and when they have been hired before their names were known, their wages have been refused if the season has been a failure. 'Ye hinna hid sic a fishin' this year is ye hid the last', said a woman to the daughter of a famous fisher. 'Na, na! faht wye cud we? We wiz in a chifferoot's 'oose, we cudnae hae a fishin'.

In some of the villages in the east coast of Aberdeenshire, it was accounted unlucky to meet anyone of the name Whyte when going to sea. Lives would be lost or the catch of fish would be poor.¹

In the "Story of Tangalimbibo" the heroine speaks of things done 'knowingly by people whose names may not be mentioned', upon which Theal remarks, no Kaffir woman may pronounce the names of any of her husband's male relatives in the ascending line; she may not even pronounce any word in which the principal syllable of his name occurs.² In one of the folk tales conforming to Kaffir custom, the heroine in it refers to her husband's relatives as the people whose names are unutterable.³

The origin of these whimsical avoidance customs prevailing in widely separated places had been for a long time a perplexing problem, and the interpretation put on the customs were varying and conflicting. A gossipy story was given by Herodotus on this matter. He stated that "some of the old Ionian colonists brought no women with them, but took wives of the women of the Carians whose fathers they had slain." The women, therefore, "made a law to themselves and handed it down to their daughters

¹ *Folklore of the North-East of Scotland*, pp. 200—201.

² *Kaffir Folk-Lore*, p. 58.

³ *I did* p. 202.

that they should never sit at meal with their husbands and that none should call her husband by name."¹

There is another theory, more plausible but altogether untenable, by which the avoidance custom among the Indian wives may be explained. As we have seen before, it was a general belief that to know one's name, to have it in possession, so to say, is tantamount to having that person's soul in possession. Could it be that this primitive idea was carried a little further in the Indian household? An Indian mother is queen absolute in her home. It is her privilege to possess, dominate and rule over her son. The daughter-in-law counts for nothing and can never dream of exercising any influence over her husband. If, however, the daughter-in-law were allowed to pronounce her husband's name, she might be able to exert some power over his soul. Therefore, the mother-in-law decrees that her son's wife shall not call him by his name.

None of these theories could, however, be accepted as correct, if one were to consult the wife herself who abstains from taking her husband's name on her lips. What is the reason that makes her refrain from uttering her husband's name? Her reply probably will be that it is due to shyness. The natural instinct is to hold the name in such affection and veneration as to regard it sacrosanct, too sacred to be taken on one's lips. Familiarity even with a husband was not to be dreamt of by a large number of women in India during the prolonged era of submerged womanhood. But, oddly enough, the custom as it prevails among the Hindu community prohibits even the husband calling his wife by her name, despite the superiority assigned to him during that era.

To indicate what part one's natural instinct to hold a name too sacred to be pronounced plays in some of these avoidance customs it seems worth noting that in his *History of Dharmashastra*, Dr. P. V. Kane mentions several names which are tabooed. Speaking of qualifications and rules of conduct of a student, he points out

¹ 1-146.

that one of the rules laid down was that he was not to pronounce the name of his teacher, even when he might not be present, without prefixing or suffixing an honorary title such as Shri, Bhatta or Acharya. He quotes also a verse from the Mahabharata enjoining that one should not mention one's own name, the name of one's *guru*, one's wife, and one's eldest child.¹

1 Vol II, pt. 1, pp. 333-34.

TABOO ON NAMES OF DEITIES

ONE of the most remarkable features of avoidance customs is the observance of secrecy not merely in regard to one's own name or of one's relations or friends but also in regard to the names of gods, spiritual beings, kings, church dignitaries and deceased ancestors. Although, according to the teaching of the principal religions, a recital of the names of gods is considered a meritorious deed, folklore as well as history bears testimony to the fact that the Supreme Ruler of the Universe imposed the taboo on the utterance of His own name. The higher the rank of the deities, superhuman entities, or individual members of the spiritual hierarchy, the greater was their power and influence, and the more rigid, therefore, the inhibition on the utterance of their names. As the power of these hallowed names, the virtue inherent in them and the merit in uttering them were believed to be the greatest, they had to be most closely guarded. For a human being to know the names of those sacred personages and universal beings, and to be able to recite them meant not only the knowledge to invoke their presence and to obtain their blessings but also to have influence over them through their names, with the possibility of the power thus acquired being abused. Hence the extraordinary precautions enjoined by tradition and custom to keep those names secret.

Starting with the earliest chapter of legendary lore concerning the oldest of the gods, let us listen to the story of the great god Ra who ruled over men as the first King of Egypt. That remarkable, awe-inspiring story is preserved in a Turin Papyrus, dating from the twentieth dynasty. Having regard to the sublimity of the theme and the solemnity of the story, rendered

into English by Dr. Wallis Budge, Keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities, British Museum, Clodd gives it with slight abridgement in *Tom Tit Tot*. Prolix though it is, it seems necessary to reproduce it, further abridged.

"Now Isis was a woman who possessed words of power; her millions of the gods, but she esteemed more highly the millions of the *Khus*. And she meditated in her heart, saying, 'Cannot I by means of the sacred name of God make myself mistress of the earth and become goddess like unto Ra in heaven and upon earth?'

"Now, behold each day Ra entered at the head of his holy mariners and established himself upon the throne of two horizons. The holy one had grown old, he dribbled at the mouth, his spittle fell upon the earth and his slobbering dropped upon the ground. And Isis kneaded it with earth in her hand, and formed thereof a sacred serpent in the form of a spear; she set it not upright before her face, but let it lie upon the ground in the path whereby the great god went forth, according to his heart's desire, into his double kingdom. Now the holy god arose, and the gods who followed him as though he were Pharoah went with him; and he came forth according to his daily wont; and the sacred serpent bit him. The flame of life departed from him. The holy god opened his mouth, and the cry of his majesty reached unto heaven. His company of gods said, 'What hath happened?' and the gods exclaimed, 'What is it?' But Ra could not answer for his jaws trembled and all his members quaked; the poison spread swiftly through his flesh just as the Nile invadeth all his land. When the great god had established his heart, he cried unto those who were in his train, saying, 'come unto me, O ye who have come into being from my body, ye gods who have come forth from me, make ye known unto Khepara that a dire calamity hath fallen upon me . . . I am a prince, the son of a prince, a sacred essence which hath proceeded from God. I am a great one, the son of a great one, and my father planned my name; I have multitudes of names and multitudes of forms, and my existence is in every god. I have been proclaimed by the heralds Imu and Horus, and my father and my mother uttered my name but it hath been hidden within me by him that begat me, who would not that the words of power of any seer should have any domination over me. I came forth to look upon that which I had made, I was passing through the world which I had created, when, lo, something stung me, but what I know not. Is it fire? Is it water? My heart is on fire, my flesh quaketh, and trembling hath siezed all my limbs. Let there be brought unto me

the children of the gods with healing words and with lips that know and with power which reacheth unto heaven.'

"The children of every god came unto him in tears, Isis came with her healing words, and her mouth full of breath of life, with her enchantments which destroy sickness, and with her words of power which make the dead to live. And she spake, saying, 'What hath come to pass, O Holy father? What happened? A serpent hath bitten thee, and a thing which thou hast created hath lifted up his head against thee, and a thing which thou verily, it shall be cast forth by my healing words of power, and I will drive it away from before the sight of thy sunbeams.'

"The holy god opened his mouth and said 'I was passing along my path when lo, I was bitten by a serpent All my flesh sweateth, I quake, my eye hath no strength, I cannot see the sky.' Then said Isis unto Ra, 'O tell me thy name, holy father, for whosoever shall be delivered by thy name shall live.' And Ra said, 'I have made the heavens and the earth, I have made the water, I have made to come into being the great and wide sea, I have stretched out the two horizons like a curtain, and I have placed the soul of the gods within them. I am he who, if he openeth his eyes, doth make the light, and if he closes them, darkness cometh into being. At his command the Nile riseth, and the gods know not his name. . . . I am Khepara in the morning, I am Ra at noon, and I am Imu at even.'

"Meanwhile, the poison was not taken away from his body but it pierced deeper and the great god could no longer walk. Then said Isis unto Ra, 'What thou hast said is not thy name. O tell it unto me, and the poison shall depart for he shall live whose name shall be revealed.' Now the poison burned like fire and it was fiercer than the flame and the furnace and the majesty of the god said 'I consent that Isis shall search into me and that my name shall pass from me unto her.' Then the god hid himself from the gods and his place in the boat of millions of years was empty. And when the time arrived for the heart of Ra to come forth, Isis spake unto her son Horus, saying 'The god hath bound himself by an oath to deliver up his two eyes (i.e. the sun and the moon).' Thus was the name of the great god taken from him and Isis, the lady of enchantments, said 'Depart poison, go forth, from Ra. O eyes of Horus, go forth from the god and shine outside his mouth. It is I who work, it is I who make to fall down upon the earth the vanquished poison; for the name of the great god hath been taken away from him. 'May Ra live and may the poison die, and may Ra live!' These are the words of Isis, the great goddess, the queen of the gods, who knew Ra by his own name. But after he was healed, the strong rule of the old sun god had lost its vigour and even mankind

became hostile against him; they became angry and began rebellion."¹

In the legend of the descent of Ishtar to the underworld, when the infernal goddess Allat takes her captive the gods make vain effort to deliver her and in their despair beg Hea to break the spell that holds her fast. Then Hea forms the figure of a man, who presents himself at the door of Hades, and awing Allat with the names of the mighty gods, still keeping the great name secret, Ishtar is delivered.²

There are varied traditions illustrating the power of the divine name.

The story of Solomon's magic carpet, spun for him by the Jinn, provides another illustration of the magic in the divine name engraved on his seal ring. By virtue of the august name he subjected the birds and the winds, and with one exception, all the jinn whom he compelled to help in building the Temple at Jerusalem. "By pronouncing it, his minister Asaf was transported in a moment to the royal presence. Sakhr was the genie who remained unsubdued, and one day when the Wise King, taking a bath, entrusted the wonderful ring to one of his paramours, the demon assumed Solomon's form and securing possession of the magic jewel usurped the throne, while the king, whose appearance was forthwith changed to that of a beggar, became a wanderer in his own realm. After long years the ring was found in the stomach of a fish, Sakhr having thrown it away on his detection, and Solomon came to his own again."³

Coming to historic times, a striking illustration of the belief in the power which mortal human beings could secure over the immortal gods by obtaining knowledge of their names is given by Plutarch, "How cometh it to passe," he asks, perplexed by the concealment of the name of the tutelary deity of Rome, "that it is ex-

¹ Budge, *The Book of the Dead: The papyrus of Ani in the British museum*, p.p. Lxxxix-xci.

² Lenormant, *Chaldean Magic*, p-42.

³ Clouston, *Group of Eastern Romances*, p. 163.

pressly forbidden at Rome, either to name or to demand ought as touching the Tutelar god, who hath in particular recommendation and patronage the safetie and preservation of the citie; nor so much as to enquire whether the said deity be male or female? And verily this prohibition proceedeth from a superstitious feare that they have, for that they say, that Valerius Soranus died an ill death because he presumed to utter and publish so much."¹

Continuing the interrogative strain, Plutarch poses another question by way of explanation, "Is it in regard of certaine reasons that some Latin historians do allege, namely that there be certain evocations and enchantings of the gods by spels and charmes through the power whereof they are of opinion that they might be able to call forth and draw away the Tutelar gods of their enemies, and to cause them to come and dwell with them; and therefore the Romans be afraid lest they may do as much for them? For, like as in times past, the Tyrians, as we find upon record, when their citie was besieged, enchained the images of their gods to their shrines, for feare they would abandon their citie and be gone, and as others demanded pledges and sureties that they should come again to their place, whensoever they sent them to any bath to be washed, or let them go to any expiation to be cleansed; even so, the Romans thought, that to be altogether unknowen and not once named was the best meanes and surest way to keepe with their Tutelar god."

Pliny says that Verrius Flaccus quotes authors, whom he thinks trustworthy, to the effect that when the Romans laid siege to a town, the first step was for the priests to summon the guardian god of the place, and to offer him the same or a greater place in the Roman pantheon. This practice, Pliny adds, still remains in the pontifical discipline, and it is certainly for this reason that it has been kept secret under the protection of what

¹ Romane Questions, 61.

god Rome itself has been, lest its enemies should use like tactics.¹

The greater gods of the Roman pantheon, referred to by Historians, were of foreign origin. The religion of the Romans was wholly designed for use in practical life and the gods who ruled human affairs in minutest detail from the hour of birth to that of death and burial were shapeless abstractions. *Cunina* was the guardian spirit of the cradle; *Rumina*, the spirit of suckling. *Educa* and *Potina*, the spirits of eating and drinking, watched over the child at home; *Abeona* and *Iterduca*, the spirits of departing and travelling, attended him on his journey; *Adeona* and *Domiduca*, the spirits of approaching and arrival, brought him home again. The threshold, the door, and the hinges each had its attendant spirit, *Limer-tinus*, *Forculus* and *Cardea*; while *Janus* presided over door-openings, guarding the household from evil spirits. Agriculture being the main occupation, there were spirits of harrowing, ploughing, sowing, harvesting and threshing, while *Pecunia*, the spirit of money, attended the trader¹ and *Portunus*, the harbour-spirit, guided the merchant vessel safe to port. These vague *numina* are known as *Di Indigetes* and it was part of the duty of the pontiffs to keep a complete register of them on lists called *indigitamenta*.²

In one of the Penitential Psalms of the Babylonian scriptures which, in the opinion of Professor Sayce, date from Accadian times, and which in their rigidity and depth of feeling and dignity bear comparison with the Psalms of the Hebrews, the worshipper pleads:

How lon O god, whom I know, and know not,
shall the fierceness of thy heart continue?

How long, O goddess, whom I know, and know not,
shall thy heart in its hostility be (not) appeased?

¹ Tylor, *Early History of Mankind*, p. 127.

² Mommsen, *History of Rome*, Vol. 1. pp. 34, 111.

Mankind is made to wander; and there is none that
 knoweth;
 Mankind, as many as pronounce a name,
 what do they know ?

As pointed out by Professor Sayce, the belief in the mysterious power of names is still strong upon the worshipper. "In fear lest the deity he had offended should not be named at all, or else be named incorrectly, he does not venture to enumerate the gods, but classes them under the comprehensive titles of the divinities with whose names he is acquainted and of those of whose names he is ignorant." It is the same, he adds, when he refers to the human race. Here, again, the ancient superstition about words shows itself plainly. If he alludes to mankind, it is to mankind "as many as pronounce a name," as many, that is, as have names which may be pronounced.¹

In the Book of Judges² Manoah says unto the angel of the Lord, "What is thy name that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour?" The angel of the Lord says unto him, "Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret (or wonderful, as in the margin of the Authorized Version)?"

In holding such beliefs how little did the Roman of that era differ from the barbarian! And how nearer is the modern worshipper, observes Clodd, to the ancient Roman and Chaldean and to the barbarian of the past and present time than he suspected! Every Christian religious assembly, he adds, "invokes the Deity in the feeling that thereby His nearer presence is the more assured. And although undue stress might be laid on certain passages in the Bible which convey the idea of the integral relation between the Deity and His name, it is not to be questioned that the efficacy of certain rites, notably that of baptism and of exorcism, or the casting-out of demons, would be doubted if the name of the Deity was omitted."³

¹ *Hibbert Lectures*, 1887, p.p. 350, 353.

² Chapter XIII, pp. 17-18

³ *Tom Tit Tot*: p. 179

The western belief that the mysterious power of the name, leading to hesitation in pronouncing it, if not positive avoidance, lest evil befall on any one uttering it, has led some writers to look for parallels in Eastern religions, particularly in Islam and Hinduism. Clodd quotes Lane as stating that it is a Muslim belief that prophets and apostles to whom alone was committed the secret of the "Most Great Name of God" (*Ism-e-Azam*), could by pronouncing it transport themselves on Solomon's magic carpet from place to place at will, can kill the living, raise the dead and work other miracles.¹ He goes on to say that the three great gods of the Hindu pantheon, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva have their symbol in the mystic word OM or Aum, the repetition of which is the most efficacious in attaining the knowledge of the Supreme Being." We have, however, seen in the Chapter on the Choice of Names that there is no taboo on the use of the name of the Creator in Hinduism, Islam or in Zoroastrianism. The only exemption in the case of the followers of Islam, mentioned in that Chapter, is that while names denoting attributes of Allah, or devotion and allegiance to Him, are commended, it would be blasphemous for a Muslim to adopt the most sacred and revered name of the Almighty. If the great name is not pronounced or mentioned in books and documents in some cases, it is, as we have seen, due to the feeling of reverence for Allah, the great name sacred to Muslims.² Similarly, whereas the significance of the word of power, OM, is correctly understood by the foreign writers, it is not correct to assume that it is considered to be a substitute for the names of the gods and that there is a taboo on a Hindu adopting or pronouncing the names of the three gods, mentioned by Clodd.

The Chinese, however, provide a parallel worth noting in the use of the word *Tien*, the abode of God, for *Shang-te*, the nature of the Supreme Ruler of the Universe. It is

¹ *Modern Egyptians*: Vol. 1.

² *Vide pp. 33-34 ante.*

related that, in a conversation with Wingrove Cooke, Commissioner Yeh observed: 'Tien means properly only the 'material heaven', but it also means *Shang-te*, 'Supreme Ruler', 'God', for as it is not lawful to use His name lightly, we name Him by his dwelling place which is in Tien."³

Herodotus shares the same feeling of reverence in describing the avoidance customs. In his references to Osiris, he remarks in one place where he speaks of the exposure of the sacred cow, "At the season when the Egyptians beat themselves in honour of one of their gods whose name I am unwilling to mention in connection with such a matter".¹ In another place he observes "on this lake it is that the Egyptians represent by night his sufferings whose name I refrain from mentioning."² The father of history here gives expression to a feeling dominant throughout every grade of culture. "He differs no whit," aptly comments Clodd, "from that typical savage, the Australian black-fellow, into whose ear, on his initiation, the elders of the tribe whisper the secret name of the sky god Tharamulun, or Taramulun a name which he dare not utter lest the wrath of the deity descend upon him."³ The comparison with "that typical savage" may be jarring to some ears, but it brings vividly to mind how difficult it is to draw a line in such cases between the savage and the civilized mind.

3 *Folklore Record*: Vol. IV, p. 76.

1 11. 132

2. 11. 171

TABOO ON NAMES OF PRIEST-KINGS

Until Frazer demonstrated by an array of illustrations that in ancient times the priest-king was venerated as the incarnation of supernatural powers, on whose unhampered dispensation and working hinged the well-being of mankind, the significance of the taboo as applied to the names of priest-kings, kings and prelates was a puzzle to the student of the science of man. Before the publication of his book, *The Golden Bough*, none had given so convincing, or at least so plausible, an explanation, as he did, for the utmost care and precaution of mortals to protect the exalted entity in whom superhuman and supernatural powers were presumed to have been inherited.

Three miles from Aricia, an old town on the Abban Hills, a few miles from Rome, so runs the story as given by Frazer, there was a famous grove and temple dedicated to Diana. The priest of that temple, held in high repute throughout Italy, was called Rex Nemorensis, or "King of the Grove", and, at least in later times, he was always a runaway slave. The strangest feature of the business was that he must be a murderer because he could obtain the priestly office only by killing the man who held it and, when he had secured it, he had to be always on the alert against being attacked.

This priest-king kept special guard over a sacred tree, and if any runaway slave could succeed in breaking off a branch from it, the priest was compelled to fight him in single combat. The existence of this custom within historical times is proved by the fact that the Emperor Caligula gave orders that the Rex Nemorensis, who during his reign had long been left unassailed, should be attacked and killed. But its origin and reason had been forgotten, and it was only during later years that its

connection with the groups of rites and ceremonies gathering round certain phases of nature worship, notably tree worship, was established. In the general application of the barbaric conception of life indwelling in all things, and especially active where motion was apparent, and where growth, maturity and decline marked the object, the tree was believed to be the abode of a spirit, while the priest was regarded as an incarnation of the tree-spirit on which the fruitfulness of the soil depended. In this conception of the incarnation of the tree-spirit we find a clue to the belief that if the Rex Nemorensis were suffered to live on until he became decrepit by age, the carth would become old and feeble, also the trees would yield no fruit and the fields no harvest. To prevent such a catastrophe the priest-king, as an incarnated god, was not allowed to reach old age. When his waning strength was proved by his inability to hold his own against an aggressor, he was killed, and the divine spirit, with its power and vigour unimpaired, was believed to pass into his slayer and successor. The sacred tree, from which the runaway slave sought to break off the Golden Bough, was, suggests Frazer, probably an oak, the worship of which was general among the Aryan-speaking peoples of Europe. Tradition averred that the fateful branch which Aeneas plucked at the Sybil's bidding before he essayed the perilous journey to the underworld, was the Golden Bough.

In his poem "Battle of Lake Regillus" Macaulay refers to this curious custom of slaying the priest-king in the following verses:

"From the still, glassy lake that sleeps
 Beneath Aricia's trees,
 Those trees in whose dim shadow
 The glossy priest doth reign,
 The priest who slew the slayer,
 And shall himself be slain."¹

¹ *Lays of Ancient Rome*, quoted by Clodd in *Tom Tit Tot*, p. 149.

Old-world traditions furnish numerous examples corresponding to the story of the Rex Nemorensis. Clodd mentions, as an instance, Mikado, now shorn of the halo that in ancient time surrounded him. He was regarded as an incarnation of the Sun and all the gods repaired once every year to spend a month at his court. He was required "to take rigorous care of his person," and "to do such things as would be considered ridiculous and impertinent." As in the case of the high pontiff of the Zapotecs in South Mexico, his feet must never touch the ground and the sun must never shine on his naked head. He was required to sit motionless all the day so that tranquillity might be assured to his empire; and such holiness was ascribed to all the parts of his body that "he dare not cut off his hair, nor his beard, nor his nails". But that he might not grow too dirty, he was washed in his sleep, because "a theft at such time did not prejudice his holiness or dignity."¹ The pots in which his food was cooked and served were destroyed lest they should fall into lay hands; his clothes were fatal to those who touched them — for taboo is extended from the tabooed person to "the things he wears, or tastes, or handles, even to the objects on which he looks" as illustrated by the Samoan high priest and prophet Tupai. "His very glance was poison. If he looked at a coco-nut tree, it died, and if he glanced at a bread-fruit tree, it also withered away."²

In Tahiti, if a chief's foot touched the earth, the spot which it touched became taboo thenceforth: none could approach it. Chiefs were therefore carried in Tahiti when they went out. If they entered a house, it became taboo. In ancient Greece, the priest and the priestess of Artemis Hymnia amongst the Orchomenians, and the Rechabites among the Jews, might not enter a private house.³

China also presents a parallel. There lived in the third century B.C. a mighty emperor who assumed the title *She Hwang-Ti*. He succeeded to the throne of China at the

¹ *Golden Bough* Vol. 1, p. 110.

² Rev. G. Turner, *Samoa*, p. 23.

³ Dr. Jevons, *Introduction to History of Religion*, p. 62.

age of thirteen, and, following up the career of conquest initiated by his tutor, he was able to found a new empire on the ruins of the Chinese feudal system, and in the twenty-sixth year of his reign declared himself sole master of the Chinese Empire. He was superstitious, and his desire to be considered great shows itself in the manner in which he destroyed the classics of his land, that his name might be handed down to posterity as the first Emperor of China. His name was Ching, and that it might be ever held sacred he commanded that the syllable "ching" be taboo'd.¹

Korea affords another interesting illustration. No Korean dare utter his king's name. "When the king dies, he is given another name, by which his royal personality may be kept clear in the mass of names that fill history. But his real name, the name he bears in life, is never spoken save in the secrecy of the palace harem. And even there it is spoken only by the privileged lips of his favourite wife and his most spoiled children."²

Polack says that as a New Zealand chief was called 'Wai', which means 'water', a new name had to be given to water. Another chief was called 'Maripi', or 'knife', and knives were therefore called by another name, 'nekra'. In Tahiti, "when a chief took the highest rank, all words resembling his name were changed." The custom is known as *tepi*, and in the case of a king whose name was Tu, all words in which that syllable occurred were changed: for example, *fetu*. star, becoming *fetia*. or *tui*, to strike, being changed to *tiai*. Vancouver observes that at the accession of that ruler, which took place between his own visit and that of Captain Cook, no less than forty or fifty of the names, most in daily use, had been entirely changed. As Professor Max Muller remarks, "it is as if with the accession of Queen Victoria, either the word *Victory* had been tabooed altogether or only part of it, as *tori*, so as to make it high treason to

¹ *Folklore Record*, Vol. IV, p. 73.

² *Times*, August 30, 1894, quoted by Clodd, p. 158, *Tom Tit Tot*

speak of *Tories* during her reign."¹

On his accession to royalty, the name of the king of the Society Islands was changed, and any one uttering the old name was put to death with all his relatives. Death was also the penalty for uttering the name of the king of Dahomey in his presence. "His name was, indeed, kept secret lest the knowledge of it should enable any enemy to harm him; hence the names by which the different kings have been known to Europeans are aliases — in native term, "strong names."²

The London newspapers of June 1890 reprinted extracts from a letter in the *Vossische Zeitung* relating the adventures of Dr. Bayol, Governor of Kotonon, who had been imprisoned by the King of Dahomey. "The king was too suspicious to sign the letters written in his name to the President of the French Republic, probably through fear that M. Carnot might bewitch him through it." An interesting comment on the foregoing examples is supplied by a painting on the temple of Rameses II. at Gurnah, whereon Tum, Safekht, and Thoth are depicted as inscribing that monarch's name on the sacred tree of Heliopolis, by which act he was endowed with eternal life.³

Returning to Rome, we find the Flamen Dialis, who was consecrated to the service of Jupiter, and who, therefore, was probably the incarnated sky-spirit, tied and bound by rules governing the minutest details of his life. He might not ride or even touch a horse, nor see an army under arms, nor wear a ring which was not broken, nor have a knot in any part of his garments; no fire except a sacred fire might be taken out of his house, he might not touch wheaten flour or leavened bread; he might not touch or even name a goat, a dog, raw meat, beans, and ivy; he might not walk under a vine, the feet of his bed had to be daubed with mud, and iron was put at the head of it as a charm against evil spirits; his hair could be

1 Clodd: *Tom Tit Tot*, pp. 159-60

2 Ellis, Ewe — *Speaking Peoples*, p. 98.

3 Wiedemann, *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 156.

cut only by a free man and with a bronze knife, and his hair and nails, when cut, had to be buried under a lucky tree; he might not be uncovered or annoint himself in the open air; if a man in bonds were taken into his house, he had to be unbound, and the cords had to be drawn up through a hole in the roof and so let down into the street. His wife, the Flaminica, had to observe nearly the same rules, and others of her own besides, and when she died, the "Flamen or Priest of Jupiter had to give up his Priesthood or Sacerdotall dignitie."¹

In Lower Guinea, the priest-king who was a wind god was not allowed to quit his chair to sleep, because if he lay down, no wind could arise; while, in Congo, it was held that if the incarnated priest-king died a natural death, the world would perish. Therefore, like the Rex Nemorensis, he had to be kept in vigour at the risk of his life, worshipped as a god one day and killed as a criminal the next. As these wind and weather gods are held responsible for droughts and bad harvests, it is not suprising, observes Clodd, to whose keen interest in the subject and phenomenal energy to cross the seas for parallels we owe these examples of persistence of primitive ideas through the ages, that "there is no rush of candidates for vacant thrones with their miserable restraints and isolation and that the tactics of the press gang have sometimes to be resorted to in order that the succession of the incarnated may be broken."²

With the gradual differentiation and sub-division of functions during the evolution of society, there was a separation of the priestly and kingly offices. The powers of priesthood, temporal as well as spiritual, thenceforth tended to increase and went on increasing. The sanctity and supremacy enjoyed by the priest-king was gradually arrogated by the priest who held the keys for the admission of man to heaven. The king reigned by the grace of

1 Plutarch, *Romane Questions* 40 and 50.

2 *Tom Tit Tot*, p. 156

God but it was the high priest to whom he had to look for performing the ceremony of consecrating him to his office.

The prerogatives which the Church then claimed in Europe have a striking resemblance to those arrogated by the Brahman, the highest church dignitary, in India. He was the first to claim for himself the privilege of the highest caste in the organisation of society in Ancient India and advanced claim after claim to superiority and supremacy. Without his help even a monarch's offerings were not acceptable to the gods; nor was a ruler's safety during his regime, or victory on the battlefield, assured without his prayers. He added, moreover, to the King's *punya* (merit). The sixth part of the *punya* accumulated by him by prayers, sacrifices and good deeds went to the credit of the ruler of the land. It was even suggested that the king ruled by the authority delegated to him by the Brahman. Such an ascendancy of the sacerdotal class was obviously due to the Hindu's concern for personal salvation and spiritual bliss which, he believed, could not be secured without the performance of the religious rites and recital of the Vedic formula by the Brahman.¹ He was also, perhaps, the first civilized man and religious teacher on earth who imposed the taboo on his name and enjoined every follower of his faith to maintain strict secrecy concerning the name given to him at the time of the thread ceremony by the officiating priest.

In Europe, the taboo on names gained in extent, force and rigidity when applied to priests in their ascending degrees. The customs, attaching to the holy and hidden name of the priests of Elusis, afford a striking example.

"Some years ago, a statue of one of these hierophants was found in that ancient seat of 'the Venerable Mysteries of Demeter, the most solemn rites of the Pagan world.' The inscription on its base ran thus: 'Ask not my name,

¹ Ghurye: *Caste and Race in India*, pp. 42-43

the mystic rule (or packet) has carried it away into the blue sea. But when I reach the fated day and go to the abode of the blest, then all who care for me will pronounce it.' When the priest was dead, his sons added some words, of which only a few are decipherable, the rest being mutilated. 'Now we, his children, reveal the name of the best of fathers which, when alive, he hid in the depths of the sea. This is the famous Appollonius.'¹

The name which the priest thus desired to keep secret until his death was the holy name — usually that of some god — which he adopted on taking his sacred office. Directly he assumed that name, says Clodd, it was probably written on a tablet so that, as symbol of its secrecy, it might be buried in the depths of the sea; but when he went to the abode of the blest, it was "pronounced" and became the name by which he was known to posterity.

In this custom of the Greek priesthood there was the survival of the barbaric taboo which concealed an individual's name for the same reason that it burnt or buried his material belongings.²

¹ W. B. Paton: *The Holy Names of the Eleusinian Priests*, International Folklore Congress, 1891, Papers and Transactions, pp. 202 ff.

² *Tom Tit Tot*, pp. 163-64.

TABOO ON THE NAMES OF THE DECEASED

One of the curiously confounding avoidance customs is the taboo on the names of the dead. The train of thought that governs the primitive mind in arriving at conclusions concerning natural phenomena and problems of human existence is necessarily vague and sometimes contradictory. It is, however, particularly conflicting and confounding in regard to conceptions concerning the names of those "whom God hath taken". Of such conflict we have noted a few examples, in Chapter V, whilst dealing with the choice of names of deceased ancestors in naming children. Apart from the belief that the souls of departed ancestors are re-incarnated in the family, there is a vague worship of deceased ancestors, a sense of filial duty that prompts people to name their children after sires, so as to keep their memory green. There are not a few, however, to whom, as we have noticed, ancestors' names are taboo. To name them is to disturb them or to summon them to return to their earthly haunts and molest the living.

Among primitive tribes in the West and the North-West ancestral names are not uncommon, but there are also among them not a few who eschew the names of those who have gone to the abode of the blest. Clodd gives several examples. When a member of a tribe died, says he, the Tasmanians abstained ever after from mentioning his name, believing that to do so would bring dire calamities upon them. In referring to a person bearing such a name, they would use great circumlocution. For example, if William and Mary, husband and wife, were both dead, and Lucy, the deceased sister of William, has been married to Isaac, also dead, whose son Jemmy still survived, and they wished to speak of Mary, they

would say, "The wife of the brother of Jemmy's father's wife."¹

The Tasmanian circumlocution is equalled by that of the Australian native from whom Dr. Lang tried to learn the name of a slain relative. "He told me", says he, "who the lad's father was, who was his brother, what he was like, how he walked, how he held his tomahawk in his left hand instead of his right, and who were his companions; but the dreaded name never escaped his lips, and, I believe, no promises or threats could have induced him to utter it."² Lumholtz remarks that none of the Australian aborigines utter the names of the dead, lest their spirits should hear the voices of the living, and thus discover their whereabouts."³ George Grey says that the only modification of the taboo which he found among those people was a lessened reluctance to utter the name of anyone who had been dead for some time.⁴ In this they differ from some folk nearer Britain, for the Shetland Island widow cannot be induced to mention the name of her husband, although she would talk of him by the hour. "No dead person must be mentioned for his ghost will come to him who speaks his name."⁵

Dorman gives a touching illustration of this superstition in the Shawnee myth of Yellow Sky. She was a daughter of the tribe, and had dreams which told her that she was created for an unheard-of mission. There was a mystery about her being, and none could comprehend the meaning of her evening songs. The paths leading to her father's lodge were more beaten than those to any other. On one condition alone, at last, she consented to become a wife, namely, that he who wedded her should never mention her name. If he did, she warned him, a sad calamity would befall him, and he would

1 H. Ling Roth: *The Tasmanians*, p. 74

2 *Queensland*, p. 367

3 *Among Cannibals*, p. 228

4 *Tribals in N. W. Australia*, Vol. II, p. 232

5 Tylor: *Early History of Mankind*, p. 144

for ever thereafter regret his thoughtlessness. After a time Yellow Sky sickend and died, and her last words were that her husband might never breathe her name. For five summers he lived in solitude, but one day as he was by the grave of his dead wife, an Indian asked him whose it was, and in forgetfulness he uttered the forbidden name. He fell to the earth in great pain, and as darkness settled round about him a change came over him. Next morning, near the grave of Yellow Sky, a large buck was quietly feeding. It was the unhappy husband.¹

Conversely, points out Clodd, in Swedish folklore, the story is told of a bridegroom and his friends who were riding through a wood, when they were all transformed into wolves by evil spirits. After the lapse of years, the forlorn bride was walking one day in the same forest, and in anguish of heart as she thought of her lost lover, she shrieked out his name. Immediately he appeared in human form and rushed into her arms. The sound of his Christian name had dissolved the devilish spell that bound him.

Among both the Chinook Indians and the Lenguas of Brazil, the near relatives of the deceased change their names, lest the spirit should be drawn back to earth by hearing the old name used; while in another tribe, "if one calls the dead by name, he must answer to the dead man's relatives. He must surrender his own blood, or pay blood-money in restitution of the life of the dead taken by him."² The Abipones invented a new name for anything the name of which recalled the dead person's memory. Among certain northern tribes, when a death occurred, if a relative of the deceased was absent, his friends would hang along the road by which he would return to apprise him of the fact, so that he might not mention the name of the deceased on his arrival. Among the Connecticut tribes, if the offence of naming the dead was twice repeated, death was not

¹ *Popular Superstitions*, p.155

² *First American Report of Bureau of Ethnology*, p. 204

regarded as a punishment too severe.

In 1655, Philip, having heard that an Indian had spoken of his deceased relative, came to the island of Nantucket to kill him, and the English had to interfere to prevent it. If among the Californian tribes the name of the dead was accidentally mentioned, a shudder passed over those present. An aged Indian of Lake Michigan explained why tales of the spirits were only told in winter by saying that when the deep snow is on the ground the voices of those who repeat their names are muffled but that in summer the slightest mention of them must be avoided, lest in the clear air they hear their own names and are offended. Among the Fuegians, when a child asks for its dead father or mother, it will be reproved and told not to 'speak bad words,' and the Abipones would use some periphrasis for the dead, as 'the man who does not now exist.'

Clodd adds: "My friend Louis Becke tells me that 'in the olden days in the Ellice Islands, it was customary to always speak of a dead man by some other name than that which he had borne when alive. For instance, if Kino, who in life was a builder of canoes, died, he would perhaps be spoken of as 'teaura moli', the perfectly fitting outrigger, to denote that he had been especially skilled in building and fitting an outrigger to a canoe. He would never be spoken of as Kino, though his son or grandson might bear his name hereditarily.'" Among the Iroquois, the name of a dead man could not be used again in the lifetime of his oldest surviving son without the consent of the latter.¹

To this list might be added examples of similar customs of avoidance of names of the dead among Ostiaks, Ainos, Samoyeds, Papuans, Masai, and numerous other peoples at corresponding low levels of culture, but it is scarcely necessary to swell the list in view of the world-wide evidence of customs rooted in the dread of the spirits of the dead and the awe of the human mind at the separation of the soul from its physical frame and the mystery

¹ L. H. Morgan, *Ancient Society*, p. 79.

of the hereafter, the leap in the dark in space or sphere unknown.

During our sojourn in a fascinating region of folk philosophy we have traversed long distances and found that the set of facts gathered from one quarter is complementary to that gathered from another. Howsoever wide the zones separating groups of human beings may be, at the same intellectual level they observe and explain the same phenomena in much the same way, demonstrating the psychical as well as the physical unity of the human race. Therein lies the hope that this attitude of the human mind will enable in due course successive generations of mankind, adequately trained and equipped, to attain homogeneity and concord conducing to world understanding, world co-operation and world peace.

For this optimistic outlook on life we feel primarily indebted to the ancestors of the race, primitive as well as civilised, who have left behind them a legacy of a vast storehouse of information and knowledge, and secondly to those scholars who have called our attention to the treasure, placed it within our reach and taught us to profit by it.

Paying to them our heart-felt homage, we may now bring this survey to a close. What has been gathered has its limitations but admittedly incomplete though our study of the subject has been, it is time the writer of this monograph bids good-bye to the reader, leaving it to other students of folk philosophy and antiquarian lore to regale their audiences with the results of further study and research.

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