

Personal Names as Cultural Texts: Sacred Meaning and Hybrid Identity in India

**Krishna Pillai
Taarina Therese Chandiramani
Shrimoyee Chattopadhyay**

Abstract

One's name is one's first possession. It is an integral part of one's identity, and yet, it is often overlooked. Although we rarely pay attention to it, personal names are ever-present in life. This article presents a qualitative analysis of personal names in the Indian context. It reads names as carriers of personal identity and personal heritage. The researchers created a mini-archive of personal names and the stories behind them. In doing so, stories of naming traditions, belief systems, narratives of migration, and personal experiences with one's names were revealed. The present research positions names as elements of portable sacredness. Through the survey conducted, initial results showed names being treated as symbols of a family's (or an individual's) religious and spiritual beliefs. The study utilizes such narratives to trace naming traditions in India, and to see how the name functions as an exhibition of the individual's hybrid identity and cultural history. By utilizing theories from sociology and postcoloniality, the study reads names not merely as a label for an individual but as a representation of their spiritual beliefs, rituals and personal histories.

Keywords: Anthroponymy, identity, personal heritage, postcoloniality, sacred spaces