# Personal Names of Pakistani Muslims: An Essay on Onomastics

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### Abstract

This article discusses beliefs about personal names and naming practices in Pakistan. It also touches very briefly upon nicknames and how they are used in the society. The focus of the article is how names are connected with several societal variables such as identity, power and belief-system. They are related to rural and urban perceptions of identity; ethnic identities; level of religiosity and its type and social class. Names may be changed with a view to concealing a problematic identity or to integrate with a desiderated group identity. Moreover, changing trends in naming may indicate changes in belief-systems such as increasing Islamization, Arabization or Westernization. In short, names are important indicators of identity and changes in identity construction.

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### Introduction

The Pakistani newspaper *The News* of 25 November 2012 carried an article saying that orphans cannot apply for an identity card in Pakistan because they cannot fill in their father's name. This means that, without certain names, one is a non-person—unable to drive a vehicle, to travel abroad, to get good jobs and to buy property.[1] But with the wrong name one might even be murdered. One of the anecdotes about the communal riots of 1947 when British India was partitioned into Muslims majority Pakistan and Hindu-majority India is a follows:

> *A man asked another his name. Upon being told he killed him*

Though not given in the literature on the riots it could well be true. In the Punjab alone between 500,000 to 800,000 people—Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs—were killed[2] and Sa'adat Hasan Manto's creative writings in

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[1]   Ammar Shahbazi, 'What's in a Father's Name?', *The News* (Encore) 2012.
[2]   Ishtiaq Ahmed, *The Punjab: Bloodied, Partitioned and Cleansed* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.XXV.

Urdu tell us that very often there was nothing to save or condemn a person except the name—the carrier of communal identity in this case. Indeed, as an informant told Ishtiaq Ahmed, 'East Punjab had become totally unsafe for anyone with a Muslim name. It was similar for us with Hindu many to leave West Punjab in 1947'.[3]

Personal names are badges of group identity, indicators of lineage, socio-economic class, level of modernization etc in Pakistan as in other countries of the world. Names often construct identities based upon the belief-system of the community in which they occur. They are products of history and embody layers of existence of a socio-cultural group for ages. In a sense, then, Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical construct 'habitus' describes them well. As Bourdieu says:

> The habitus—embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history—is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product. As such, it is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present. This autonomy is that of the past, enacted and enacting, which, functioning as accumulated capital, produces history on the basis of history and so ensures the permanence in change that makes the individual agent a world within the world.[4]

Thus the name 'Muhammad' (Arabic: one who is praised) is as much embodied history of Islam as is 'Ram' or 'Christina' of Hinduism and Christianity respectively. Names can, therefore, be used to proclaim a desiderated ideological position e.g. self conscious Islamization of names could indicate a stress on Muslim identity. Or, in some cases, the hiding of identity to counter perceived stigmatization e.g. a Pakistani Christian's use of Muslim names. Or, in many cases, to construct a higher or a more urban, modern social identity. In short, personal names are important constructions and signifiers of one's identity and one's place in the networks of relationships in one's society. They are often related to the belief system of a society and are, in the last analysis, directly related to historical, cultural and economic factors and how members of a society construct their social reality through them. They are very much part of the language—meaning not a formal code such as Urdu, Punjabi or Pashto—but a way of 'talking about' human beings

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[3]    *Ibid.*, p.42.
[4]    Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice, (*tr.), Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), Ist pub. in French 1980, p.56.

which actually helps us construct our reality—the way we look at those human beings and how we feel for them and treat them.[5]

## Review of literature

In a comprehensive review of scholarship on identity-construction Cerulo argues that 'Anti-essentialist inquiries promote the social construction of identity as a more viable basis of the collective self'.[6] Names, though not mentioned in Cerulo's article, are a crucial variable for one's own as well as other people's perception of one as a member of a group, or sub-group, of the human race. In most cases individuals, cocooned in the sustaining culture of their group, may never examine the relationship between their personal names and identities. However, as research on the psychological perceptions of identity show, they may be challenged to examine these perceptions–especially if the identity labeled by the name becomes problematic—and may overcome tensions by negotiating their identity.[7] When this happens by changing the name it is relevant for this study.

Philosophers have shown interest in names but their position has generally been that personal names are labels and do not indicate any attribute of the person with the name[8] and that they are, therefore, empty of all descriptive content. The examples given by philosophers—John, Mary etc—do, however, indicate a Western identity. These realities are taken note of by some philosophers. For instance, Mark D' Cruz argues that proper names are placeholders for sets of descriptions of an individual.[9] Gardiner, after giving a rather purist definition of proper names, qualifies it by saying that there 'are less pure proper names than the purest because of the assistance that, on rare occasions, they might give by their suggestion of sex, nationality, or country'.[10]

Likewise, linguists too take a purist approach by stressing how names are to be classified. Anderson, for instance, classifies them as determinatives. This category 'is characterized notionally as maximally

[5]   George W. Grace, *The Linguistic Contruction of Reality* (London: Routledge, 1987), p.3.

[6]   Karen A. Cerulo, 'Identity Construction: New Issues, New Directions', *Annual Review of Sociology,* Vol. 23, 1997, p.387.

[7]   Deborrah E. S. Frable, 'Gender, Racial, Ethnic, Sexual, and Class Identities', *Annual Review of Psychology,* Vol.48, 1997, pp.147-48.

[8]   Alan Gardiner, *The Theory of Proper Names: A Controversial Essay* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), edition used 1957.

[9]   Mark D' Cruz, 'A Theory of Ordinary Proper Names', *Mind,* 109: 436 (Oct. 2000), p.746.

[10]  Alan Gardiner, *op.cit.,* p.42.

referential and thus non-predictable'.[11] But some sociolinguists have moved beyond classifying names to their intersection with culture to their relationship with culture. Rymes, for instance, argues that names are 'indexical of a rich realm of cultural and personal associations'.[12] Taking the case study of a gang member of Los Angeles called 'Little Creeper', she shows that names may be criminalized and 'hold both implicit meanings and exploit referent'.[13] Bloch suggests in his study of Tekonymy in a tribe of Madagascar, that 'the usage of names cannot be separated from pragmatics and that names are therefore used to "do" an almost unlimited number of things'.[14] Such insights are very relevant for Pakistani names as same to have implicit meanings, these meanings can be used to do many things: to index a certain identity, to give respect, to insult, and so on.

Most of the relevant studies of personal names and naming practices, have, come from anthropologists and sociologists. Beginning from the pioneering work on naming systems in from the doyen of anthropologists Claude Levi-Strauss in his book *La Pensee Sauvage, The Savage Mind*,[15] one can name many others with similar interests. Levi-Strauss examines the basic issue of universalization and particularization in human societies. He refutes the claims of philosophers and linguists that names are meaningless labels as follows:

> We need to establish that proper names are an integral part
> of systems we have been treating as codes: as means of
> fixing significations by transposing them into terms of other
> significations. Would this be true if it were true, as logicians
> and some linguists have maintained, that proper names are,
> in Mell's phrase, 'meaningless' in signification?[16]

An overview of sixty such societies compares how names are given, who gives them, whether a ceremony is held when they are given,

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[11]   John M. Anderson, 'On the Grammatical Status of Names', *Language,* 80:3 (Sept. 2004), p.470.

[12]   Betsy Rymes, 'Naming as Social Practice: the Case of Little Creeper from Diamond Street', *Language in Society,* 25:2 (June 1996), p.246.

[13]   *Ibid.,* p.258.

[14]   Marice Bloch, 'Tekonymy and the Evocation of the "Social" Among the Zafimaniry of Madagascar', in Babara Bruck and Gabriellevom Bodenhorn, *'Entangled Histories': An Introduction to Anthropology of Names and Naming* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.98.

[15]   Claude Levi-Strauss, *La Pensee Sauvage,* 1962, edition used: *The Savage Mind* (Letchworth, Herfordshire: The Gordon City Press, 1966), pp.172-216.

[16]   *Ibid.,* p.172.

whether nick names are used or not, how and why are names change and so on.[17] Another valuable study of onomastics is Bruck and Bodenhorn's edited volume entitled *The Anthropology of Names and Naming.*[18] Yet another book entitled *Framing My Name*[19] not only gives an anthropological perspective on names from many developing societies but also looks at the way foreign students in Australian higher education experience their names as part of their identities. Although names are related in numerous and complex ways with identity, a few examples may be helpful. For instance, patrilinealism may be reflected in names. This was true for the Ju/ 'Hoansi people of Botswana and Namibia during the 1950s and 1960s[20] and is true for Pakistan where the children belong to the father's family and names are one way to indicate this aspect of their identity. Personal qualities which go into identity-construction—bravery, generosity, intelligence—may also be reflected by names. Thus, in Cheyenne society man 'might take a name in addition to his present one' reflecting such positive qualities.[21] Name-changing, indeed, symbolizes 'the emergence of new characteristics or a new identity'[22] and males take up new names in 10 societies at puberty while women adopt new names in 11 societies at marriage precisely because these are seen as emergent identities'.[23]

In some cases collectivities use names in a bid to emphasize one or the other identity. For instance, the Afro-Panamanian residents of the island of Bastimentos have an official Spanish-derived and an ethnic Creole-derived name. They use the latter for in-group solidarity.[24] The Meithei-speaking people of Manipur in India, who accepted Hinduism in the 18th century, use names as a site for contestation between political

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[17]  Richard D. Alford, *Naming and Identity: A Cross-Cultural Study of Personal Naming Practices* (New Haven, Connecticut: HRAF Press, 1988).

[18]  G.V. Bruck and B. Bodenhorn, *op.cit.*

[19]  Margaret Kumar, Supriya Pattanayak and Richard Johnson. *Framing their Name: Extending Educational Boundaries* (Altona Victoria: Common Ground Publishing, 2010).

[20]  Patricia Draper and Christine Haney, 'Patrilateral Bias among a Traditionally Egalitarian People: Ju/'hoansi Naming Practice', *Ethnology,* 44:3 (Summer 2005), pp.243-59.

[21]  John H. Moore, 'Cheyenne Names and Cosmology', *American Ethnologist,* 11:2 (May 1984), pp.291-312.

[22]  Richard D. Alford, *op.cit.,* p.85.

[23]  *Ibid.,* p.86. For construction of identity also see Michael Aceto, 'Ethnic Personal Names & Multiple Identities in Anglophone Caribbean Speech Communities', *Language in Society,* 31:4 (Sept. 2002), p.582.

[24]  Michael Aceto, *ibid.,* p.601.

ideologies. Those who choose pre-Hindu indigenous names want to break with India while those who use Hindu names want integration.[25] In such cases one constructs a politically oriented group identity. In other cases, however, as in the Gaelic communities of East Sutherland in the Highlands of Scotland by-names rather than formal names are used for in-group solidarity.[26]

In-group solidarity presupposes out-groups. These 'others' may see a collectivity as a monolith because of its use of ethnic, religious and racial labels as part of their personal names. Thus, in present-day Western countries Muslims, though differentiated by citizenship (Turkish, Iranian, Saudi, Pakistani, Indonesian etc), sect (Sunni, Shia) or sub-sect (Ismaili, Deobandi, Barelvi, Wahabi etc) are perceived as a group[27] and maybe discriminated against in employment as they evoke negative stereotypes.[28] Such situations have an effect upon the use of names. In most cases immigrants (and not necessarily Muslims) adopt names which enable them to pass for a local.[29] This, indeed, is the usual practice of workers in call centres who have to interact with Western clients who use short Western names (Bill, Jill etc) to present an integrative Western identity. In some cases foreigners might want to retain the correct pronunciation of their names as it is part of the identity they want to maintain and privilege.[30] But such discrepant responses are related to the personal or group-power of the persons in question. The call centre worker cannot insist even on the name let alone its correct pronunciation while a foreign professor, ambassador or business tycoon can. In short, the study of names (including alternative names can provide insights into the beliefs, power-structure and identity in a

[25]   Shobhana L. Chelliah, 'Asserting Nationhood Through Personal Name Choice: The Case of the Meithei of Northeast India', *Anthropological Linguistics,* 47:2 (Summer 2005), pp.169-216.

[26]   Nancy C. Dorian, 'A Substitute Name System in the Scottish Highlands', *American Anthropologist,* 72:2 (April 1970), pp.303-19.

[27]   Diane S. Lauderdale and Bert Kestenbaum, 'Asian American Ethnic Identification by Surname', *Population Research and Policy Review,* 19:3 (June 2000), pp.283-300.

[28]   Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan, 'Are Emily and Greg more Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination', *The American Economic Revenue,* 94:4 (2004), pp.991-1013.

[29]   Moa Bursell, 'Name Change and Destigmatization among Middle Eastern Immigrants in Sweden', *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 35:3 (2012), pp.471-87.

[30]   Ilse Lehiste, 'The Attitudes of Bilinguals towards their Personal Names', *American Speech,* 50:1:2 (Spring-Summer 1975), pp.30-5.

society.[31] Changes in names—as among the Zulus[32] are related to the identity of societies as a whole.

Despite the significance of personal names in understanding the complex issues of identity, power and belief-system, there is no study of personal names in present-day Pakistan. Indeed, there are no major studies of Muslim names in South Asia though there are several studies of the names of other Indian communities,[33] including a book-length study of ancient names of Hindus which does, however, contain much information on their naming practices. The only reference to Muslims in this book is in the form of a footnote about the importance of certain letters as derived from sacred books but for this the author refers to Richard Temple whose work will be referred to below.[34] References to Muslim names, however, are found in onomastic studies both by colonial scholars as well as later ones. The tone of the British colonial officer-scholars is condescending and arrogant towards Indians but they have provided valuable information nevertheless. The pioneering study of Punjabi names is Richard Temple's *Dissertation on the Proper Names of Punjabis* (1883) which is based on data gathered in the 'Ambâlâ District and neighbourhood, where the Hindu element largely predominates'.[35] However, Temple devotes a whole chapter (IV) to Muslim names[36] which is partly relevant even today for a scholar of Pakistani names. W. F. Sinclair's essay, though lacking detail, mentions that prestigious titles (or 'caste' names) such as Syed (A: the best), Khan (Turkish: chief) and Sheikh (A: chief, venerable)—all proclaiming foreign descent—have

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[31] See George A. Collier and Victoria R. Bricker, 'Nicknames and Social Structure in Zinacantan', *American Anthroplogist,* 72:2 (April, 1970), pp.289-302; Yvonne Treis, 'Avoiding Their Names, Avoiding their Eyes: How Kambaata Women Respect their in-laws', *Anthroplotical Linguistic,* 47:3 (Fall, 2005), pp.292-320; R. H. Barnes, 'Hidatsa Personal Names: an Interpretation, *The Plains Anthropologist,* 25:90 (Nov. 1980), pp.311-31, and T. O. Beidelman, 'Kaguru Names and Naming', *Journal of Anthroplogical Research,* 30:4 (Winter 1974), pp.281-93.

[32] Susan M. Suzman, 'Zulu Personal Naming Practices', *Language in Society,* 23:2 (June 1994), pp.253-72.

[33] M. B. Emeneau, 'Towards an Onomastics of South Asia', *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* 98:2 (April-June 1978), pp.113-30.

[34] Alfons Hilka, *Die Altindischen Personennamen* [German: Old Indian Personal Names] (Breslau: Verlag von M. & H. Marcus, 1910), p.43.

[35] Richard Temple, *Dissertation on the Proper Names of Punjabis: With Special Reference to the Proper Names of Villagers in the Eastern Panjab,* London: Trubner (Bombay: Education Society Press, 1883), p.2.

[36] *Ibid.,* pp.40-51.

actually been appropriated by local Muslim converts because they
facilitate claim to a high social states.[37] Unfortunately, the only study
purporting to be on Muslim names—Colebrooke 1881[38]—merely adds to
the literature on Muslim (mostly Arabic) names on which there is a lot of
contemporary material: Jordan,[39] Kuwait,[40] Turkey,[41] Central Asia[42] and
nicknames as family names among the Arabs.[43] Colebrooke, therefore,
does not add to our knowledge of Indian Muslim names.

There is, indeed, more to be gained by reading scholars working
on Hindu names in India if one is trying to understand Indian Muslim
names. For instance, M. B. Emeneau in his article on Hindu names tells
us that the Islamic heritage languages contribute linguistic components to
Hindu names in north India such as Ram Baksh and Jawahar Lal
(Jawahar= P: pearls; Lal= Hindi-Urdu: red, precious stone).[44] Francis
Britto in his study of personal names in Tamil society tells us that
Muslims do not use traditional Tamil names 'since most indigenous
names have some connection with Hinduism'.[45]

The only major study of Muslims names which also looks at
South Asian names, though in passing, is Anne Marie Schimmel (1989).
However, Schimmel's study is actually on Arab (and some Turkish)
names and most of her observations are about the incorrectness of South

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[37]   W. F. Sinclair, 'Indian Names for English Tongues', *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland,* 21:1 (Jan. 1889), pp.171-2.

[38]   J. Colebrooke, 'On the Proper Names of Mohammedans', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Soceity of Great Britain and Ireland,* 13:2 (April, 1881), pp.237-80.

[39]   Hassan Abd-el-Jawad, 'A Linguistic and Sociocultural Study of Personal Names in Jordan', *Anthroplogical Linguistics,* 28:1 (Spring 1986), pp.80-94.

[40]   M. Aziz Yassin, 'Personal Names of Address in Kuwaiti Arabic', *Anthroplogical Linguistics,* 20:2 (Feb. 1978), pp.53-63.

[41]   Robert F. Spencer, 'The Social Context of Modern Turkish Names', *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology,* 17:3 (Autumn 1961), pp.205-18.

[42]   Rafis Abazov, *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007).

[43]   S. D. Goitein, 'Nicknames as Family Names', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* [JAOS], 90:4 (Oct.-Dec., 1970), pp.517-24.

[44]   M. B. Emeneau, *op.cit.,* p.117.

[45]   Francis Britto, 'Personal Names in Tamil Society', *Anthropological Linguistics,* 28:3 (Fall 1986), pp.349-65.

Asian Muslim names on account of their ignorance of Arabic.[46] But there are other aspects of naming which Schimmel does not touch upon.

For instance, the concealment of identity is an important subject, but there is only one article, Theodore Wright's, on name-changing among Indian Muslims in order to merge with the Hindu majority.[47] The other studies, both of minor significance, which are indirectly relevant to Pakistani Muslim names are about Bengal[48] and Afghanistan.[49] In short, there is a gap in our knowledge of Pakistani names. In order to fill in this gap, the present writer intends to write a series of articles upon personal names in Pakistan. The aim of this particular article is to describe Pakistani Muslim names, naming practices and beliefs. The article will also look briefly into practices such as no-naming and the use of nicknames. The relationship of names with identity—religious, ethnic, class and regional—will be the focus of another study. However, change of names as it relates to the avoidance of persecution or negative bias will be given attention. This information, it is hoped, will provide insights into the way names are given and relate to the belief systems in Pakistan. The article leaves out the names of Pakistan's minorities—Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis, Zikris, Kalasha etc—which are the subject of another article.

## Methodology

Some information about names is found in Urdu literature which has been used here. However, for the major part of the article the ethnographic method has been used. This means that information on naming practices, beliefs and the structure of names for both Muslims and Christians was obtained through unstructured interviews from main informants and other interviewees. Only some of these interviewees and informants have been identified in the section on references. Most are not mentioned individually because the information was volunteered in the midst of normal, spontaneous conversation in which many people participated without being recorded as that would have made them less

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[46]   Anne Marie Schimmel, *Islamic Names* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 2005), pp.25, 28, 62.

[47]   Theodore P. Wright, 'South-Asian Muslim Naming for Identity vs. Name-Changing for Concealing Identity', *Indian Journal of Secularism,* 10:1 (Apr.-Jun. 2006), pp.5-10.

[48]   Afia Dil, 'A Comparative Study of the Personal Names and Nicknames of the Bengali-speaking Hindus and Muslims', in W. M. Gunderson (ed.), *Studies in Bengal* (East Lansing, 1976), pp.51-71.

[49]   A. H. Waleh, 1964, 'Names and Titles in Afghan Families', *Afghanistan News,* 80:7 (1964), pp.4-6.

communicative. It is hoped that the use of these methods will help identify naming patterns, practices and beliefs which, in turn, provide insights into how Pakistani society is organized and how it functions.

**General structure of Pakistani Muslim names and beliefs about them**
Pakistani Muslim names (97 per cent of the population) neither follow the Arabic structural pattern described by Annemarie Schimmel (*kuniya* [father, mother of]*, nasab* [son, daughter of]*, nisba* [place] *and laqab* [defining feature, nickname based on a quality])[50] nor the European one with a family name. Like the Tamils[51] and the Hindus of North India,[52] they have varying surnames and the 'caste name'—the use of this concept for Muslims will be explained later—may be optional. This, as in North India, 'the notion of a particular surname as patronymic is not well established, and it is not unusual for the "surname" of father and son, or of brother and brother, to differ'.[53] Christians too exhibit inconsistent usage of family names especially as the name Masih (Messiah or Jesus) is falling into disuse as it declares the religion of its bearer too openly in an increasingly biased society.

Names are chosen from the internet among the urban computer-literate people, from books on childrens' names which are widely available in Pakistan's cities and from elders, clergymen (*maulvis*) etc in the villages. While such books, inspired by the stringently monotheistic philosophy of Wahabism, discard all local practices and local names, mystical beliefs about names influencing life and personality prevail. In some cases these are used to counter bad luck. Ghulam Jilani Barq, an intellectual and writer of pre-partition Punjab, writes in his autobiography that a Pandit told him that, being born on a Saturday, he was unfortunate. There was a Hindu antidote to this presumed bad luck but he preferred an Islamic cure which was to take out the numerical value of his own name through *Abjad*[1] and then find names of God with the same value and then repeat these names as frequently as possible.[54] Another widespread belief is that certain names are inauspicious or 'heavy' (*bhari*). The bearers of these fall ill and meet with mishaps. Such names are often changed.

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[50]   Anne Marie Schimmel, *op.cit.*, pp.1-13.
[51]   Francis Britto, *op.cit.*, p.349.
[52]   Sylvia Vatuk, 'Reference, Address, and Fictive Kinship in Urban North India', *Ethnology,* 8:3 (July 1969), pp.255-72.
[53]   *Ibid.,* p.256.
[54]   Ghulam Jilani Barq, *Meri Dastan-e-Hayat* [Urdu: My Story of Life] (Lahore: Sheikh Ghulam Ali and Sons, 1982), p.178.

Yet another belief is that if a daughter is named 'Bushra' or 'Naveed', both meaning good tidings, the next child will be a male. Another onomastic device to procure male children, reported from South Punjab (Multan area), is to call a girl '*bhiravan*' (brothers). A girl with this name being employed as a maid in the family of the Gardezis of that area.[55]

When a child is expected, lists of names are drawn up by the elders of both sides of the family. The parents too have a list and, increasingly in urban families at least, their choice is respected. Both fathers and mothers give names and, in some cases, a name could have several components though only a few are used. Ugly, disgusting, ridiculous and negative names are not allowed though in rural areas such names are still given to save the child from the evil eye. Such names are mentioned by Temple who points out that the name *khairati* meant that a child was given to a mendicant (f*aqir*) and then begged back in charity.[56] Such names are: *ghasita* (one who is dragged), *kala* (black), *khadera* (dragged) are still in evidence in rural society. Interestingly enough, Shamim Saifullah Khan, former principal of Aithchison College in Lahore and a scion of the famous Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's extended family of Charsadda, told the present author that he was given a female name (Shamim meaning fragrant wind) as he was the eldest boy and had to be saved from the evil eye.[57]

However, Islamic injunctions, in common with most other societies, prohibit names which would expose the child to ridicule or discrimination[58] and also 'offensive nicknames'.[59] It is well-known 'that the child who bears a generally unpopular or unattractive name may be handicapped in his social interactions with peers.[60] Social psychologists who have studied this phenomenon compared 88 white males with unique names out of 10,000 psychiatric cases and compared them to a

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[55] Amina Gardezi, Assistant Professor in a University in Lahore. Key informant on the naming practices of eminent land owning and Syed families of South Punjab, interview, 30 April 2012.

[56] Richard Temple, *op.cit.,* p.27.

[57] Shamim Saifullah Khan, interview, 8 December 2012.

[58] Sulayman Abu Dawud (circa. 9th Century) *Sunan Abu Dawud,* trans. From Arabic to English, Ahmad Hasan, *Compendium of Islamic Texts,* 1997, quoted from Book 41, No.4930. http://www.biharanjuman.org/hadith/sunan-abu-dawud-english.pdf.

[59] *Ibid.,* Book 41, No.4944.

[60] John W. McDavid and Herbert Harari, 'Stereotyping of Names and Popularity in Grade-School Children', *Child Development,* 37:2 (June1966), pp.453-59.

matched group with popular names and found 'a significantly higher frequency of psychosis in the peculiar name group'.[61] It is also suggested that 'the social desirability of the first name correlates significantly with individual popularity status'.[62] There are certain etiquettes connected with names. For instance, it is considered rude to call people, especially those who are older or occupy a higher social position, by their first names. These will be mentioned under the heading of no-naming below.

**Naming and power**

The power of giving a name or a nickname is an act of power. As Socrates points out in *Cratylus*, slaves cannot name themselves. And, for that matter, so cannot children though for social and emotional reasons they are generally given a name parents do not consider harmful or degrading. Barbara Bodenhorn and Gabriele Vom Bruck argue that naming is an act of power as it constructs an identity.[63] Alternative names-by-names, nicknames, sobriquets etc—whether chosen by the individuals or others are very common (45 out of 60 societies).[64] However, power plays a very important role in this kind of naming. Successful leaders, writers, cardinals and poets might be in a position to assume positive alternative names. Ordinary people, however, are named (and re-named) by others. That, after all, is the reason why in 50 per cent societies nick names are depreciatory[65] in 45 per cent they are based on physical abnormalities and in 48 per cent they are based on behavioral abnormalities.[66] Women are given names, even positive ones, by their husbands—as in the Tiv, Azando and Masai[67]—or, as in some families among the gentry (*ashraf*) Muslim in north India where the new bride was given a 'title' (*Khitab*) by her mother-in-law e.g. *Nēk Dulhan (*the gentle bride). Similarly, girls forced into prostitution were given new names by the powerful administrators (madams) of the house. Thus, in

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[61]   Arthur A. Hartman, Robert C. Nicolay and Jesse Hurley 'Unique Personal Names as a Social Adjustment Factor', *The Journal of Social Psychology,* 75:1 (June 1968), pp.107-110.

[62]   John W. McDavid and Herbert Harari, *op.cit.,* p.457.

[63]   G.V. Bruck and B. Bodenhorn, *op.cit.,* pp.1-30.

[64]   Richard D. Alford, *op.cit.,* p.70.

[65]   J. Morgan, C. O'Neill and R. Harre, *Nicknames: Their Origins and Social Consequences* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p.5.

[66]   Richard D. Alford, *op.cit.,* p.84; for early Chinese names see Paul Goldin Rakita 'Personal Names in Early China' *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 129:1 (Jan.-Mar. 2000), p.78.

[67]   *Ibid.*, p.88.

Mirza Ruswa's Urdu novel *Umrao Jan Ada* the abducted girl-child Ameeran is given the name Umrao by Khanum Sahib.[68]

Powerless groups, named by others, have to settle down for labels—often short ones—for whatever names are conferred upon them. Susan Benson, for instance, mentions the 'injurious' naming practices of masters towards slaves.[69] In Jamaica indigenous people were given 'day names' (e.g. Quashie born on a Sunday) which were considered pejorative.[70] Even when they were given European names 'they were usually in the diminutive form'.[71] Burnard, quoting Croton, says that 'some names were obviously intended to demean. Croton discovered slaves on Worthy park Estate called Monkey, Villain, and Strumpet'.[72] Indians settled in South Africa, responding to their lack of power as individuals, themselves adopt Anglicized first names 'in work places to pre-empt the often humiliating nicknaming by white superiors of staff'.[73] In South Asia too names based on days such as Jumrati (Thursday), Mangal (Tuesday) Juma (Friday), Itwari (Sunday) were common among the working classes. In some cases, despite Islamic belief in egalitarianism, working-class people were forbidden to take the names of prominent local dignitaries.[74] Even the name Ali Mohammad (Ali= A: exalted), when that of a servant, was shortened to Mammad. Such shortening also took place in Hindu names.[75] Indeed, simple names were

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[68] Mirza Hadi Ruswa, 1899, *Umrao Jan Ada* [Urdu] (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 2005), p.38.

[69] Susan Benson, 'Injurious Naming: Naming, Disavowal, and Recuperation in Contexts of Slavery and Emancipation, in G.V. Bruck and B. Bodenhorn, *op.cit.,* pp.178-99.

[70] David DeCamp, 'African Day-Names in Jamaica', *Language,* 43:1 (Mar. 1967), pp.139-49.

[71] Trevor Burnard, 'Slave Naming Patterns: Onomastics and the Taxonomy of Race in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History,* XXXI:3 (Winter 2001), pp.334-35; Newbell N. Puckett, 'American Negro Names', *The Journal of Negro History,* 23:1 (1938), pp.36 & 38.

[72] *Ibid.,* p.336.

[73] Thomas Blom Hansen, 'Where Names Fall Short: Names as Performances in Contemporary Urban South Africa', in G. V. Bruck and B. Bodenhorn, *op.cit.,* p.216.

[74] Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi, n.d., *Jab Iman ki Bahar Ayi* [Urdu:When the Spring of Belief Arrived] (Karachi: Majlis-e-Nashariat-e-Islam, n.d.),  p.45.

[75] For Marhatta names see W.F. Sinclair *op.cit.*, p.161; for Punjabis see Richard Temple, *op.cit.*, p.32.

the norm in the Indo-European languages too although, for upper-class names, 'dithematic compounds' were the common form.[76]

In this context folklore and literature provide examples. Temple quotes the story of a poor boy called Parsu who grew up to be called Parsa and finally, when he got some money, Paras Ram in the following couplet:

> *Is daulat men tin nam*
> Parsu, Parsa, Paras Ram[77]

(With respect to wealth you have three names/ Parsu, Parsa, Paras Ram)

So common was the use of abbreviated names that some British officers did not believe that the real names of people in inferior social positions could be longer. For instance Richard Temple says: Prisoner Ali Nawaz Khan of the police report is the 'Alia of the evidence, and that the witnesses Govardhan Das and Durga Parkash are known as Gobra and Durga to their friends, and I would remark that 'Alia, Gobra and Durga are the real names of these worthies, the grander ones being used merely for the occasion….[78]

In fact, the longer names were authentic but are too prestigious to be used for common people but were used for respectable people. 'The Dou Mbojo of Indonesia also abbreviate their full Arabic names, which are used in official documents, to short form' (Halimah becomes Lima and Abdur becomes Dura).[79]

In Urdu fiction low-status people are never called by full names. For instance in Asmat Chughtai's story *'Kafir'* [infidel] when the Nawab calls her son by his full name as the boy's father did in formal writing, the mother is touched.

Kaleem Uddin—big tears came in eyes of Kullu's mother… only his father would write Kaleem Uddin like this (Author's translation from Urdu).[80]

Sometimes poor people are addressed with reference to other people and their real names are virtually lost. Thus in Asmat Chughtai's story *'Nanhi ki nani'* the Nani (=maternal grandmother) was never

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[76]   Ernst Pulgram, 'Indo-European Personal Names', *Language*, 23:3 (Jul-Sep. 1947), pp.189-206.

[77]   Richard Temple, *op.cit.*, p.32.

[78]   *Ibid.*, p.15.

[79]   Peter Just, 'Bimanese Personal Names: The View of Bina Town and Donggo', *Ethnology,* 26:4 (Oct. 1987), pp.313-28.

[80]   Asmat Chughtai, *Kulliyat-e-Asmat Chughtai,* (ed. & comp.) Tariq Mahmood (Lahore: Book Talk, 2008), p.584.

known by her own name but as the daughter-in-law, mother or grandmother of other people.[81] Names from the Punjab in 1947 follow the same pattern. Ordinary people go by one name or nickname—Dullah (from Abdullah), Bhala (Mehraj Din), Kaada (Mian Nuruddin) and so on[82] while respectable people have longer names like Mujahid al-Hussaini whose said his surname was 'based on my devotion to the ideas of Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani'.[83]

## Islamization of names

While the actual frequency of occurrence of Islamic components in names–such as the ninety-nine names of God etc.—in the names of the early years of Pakistan and the post-Zia-ul-Haq period (d. 1988) (the period in which Pakistani society was Islamized) will be the subject of another article, the people interviewed for this study did feel that names in the middle-classes had become more Islamic than before. They also said that there was a movement to reform Pakistani Muslim names in the tradition of high scripturalist Wahabi-oriented Islam. Thus names implying that the prophet or saints bestow a child (Rasool Baksh, Ghaus Baksh etc) are being declared as un-Islamic. Also, Pakistanis omit the *abd* (worshipper of) when using the name of God with their names. A number of interviewees told the present author that they had changed such names under the instructions of their strictly religious *madrassa* teachers. For instance, Abdul Akbar, an electrician working in Rawalpindi, had the name Mohammad Akbar. He changed it when studying in a Deobandi *madrassa* because he became aware that it meant 'Mohammad is Great' whereas only God could be great.[84] This purist attitude towards Islamic naming may be affecting self-consciously strict Muslims in Pakistan but rural areas and the westernized elite still has many of such names.

In short, whatever local customs and lack of knowledge of Arabic might bring about, there is a general desire to give Islamic names to children in Pakistan. And, since Arabic names are considered synonymous with Islamic ones, books on children's names overwhelmingly comprise such names even if they are not actually used in society. The following data indicates this trend. The category of 'unknown' are names which, in the opinion of the author, are not actually used in Pakistan.

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[81]    *Ibid.,* p.715.
[82]    Ishtiaq Ahmed, *op.cit.,* pp.241, 142 and 32.
[83]    *Ibid.,* p.512.
[84]    Abdul Akbar, Electrician in Rawalpindi, interview, 26 March 2012.

| Total | Arabic | Persian | Turkish | Urdu-Hindi | Other | Unknown | Source |
|-------|--------|---------|---------|------------|-------|---------|--------|
| 3784 | 77.62 | 16.81 | 0.48 | 4.89 | 2.48 | 42.09 | Ahmad & Ahmad 2008 |
| 4592 | 68 | 20 | 3 | 7.0 | 2.7 | 16.5 | Mohsin 2010 |
| 3968 | 72 | 25 | 2 | 0.6 | 2.4 | 37.0 | Sheikh n.d. |
| 2848 | 71.32 | 23.28 | 1.33 | 1.83 | 1.93 | 27.88 | Baloch n.d |
| 6481 | 71 | 20 | 2.60 | 1.32 | 3.70 | 31.80 | Raza 2003 |
| 21673 | 72 | 21 | 1.88 | 3.1 | 2.64 | 31 | Total of names and mean of percentages of occurrence. |

The writers of these books suggesting children's names feel that names from Arabic are valorized and preferred to those of other languages. Most of them begin with Islamic injunctions on naming and some also give the names of God and the Prophet of Islam (Peace be Upon Him).

Yet another indicator of the popularity of the names connected with Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his family (the *Ahl-i-Bayt*) is that they are found on vehicles, roadside cafes, religious buildings (*madrassas*, shrines etc). They are also found on trucks as Jamal Elias, who has written a book on trucks in Pakistan, has noted.[85] The exhortation to Ali for help '*ya Ali madad*' is found on the lips of the people and on vehicles as well as other places.

Giving a name to the child also had religious significance. Whether done by the family or someone with a reputation for piety, the meaning of the name is considered. It is supposed to be auspicious and preferably at least one component of the name is to be from Arabic, Persian and, to a lesser extent, Turkish. These languages are considered Islamic by the common people. In some cases more elaborate procedures are followed. For instance, letters were taken out of the Qu'ran by opening the book and taking the first letter of the seventh line. To this the numerological value of the date of birth was sometimes added and a name was chosen. However, a recent book on Islamic names for the Muslim diaspora in the West condemns these practices as un-Islamic.[86] Moreover it prohibits all nicknames and names like Qamar (moon),

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[85]   Jamal J. Elias, *On Wings of Diesel: Trucks, Identity and Culture in Pakistan* (Oxford: Oxford Publication, 2011), p.133.

[86]   Abdul Shukoor Qasmi, *Rahnuma-e-Islami Nam* [Urdu: Guide to Islamic Names], additions by Abdul Shukoor Alawi (Karachi: Nadwa tul Qalam, 2007), p.12.

Badar (moon) and Gulab (rose) unless they have an Islamic component.[87] It especially goes out to outlaw Parvez because the Iranian monarch of that name tore up the Prophet of Islam's letter when it was presented to him.[88] It also emphasizes the use of *abd* – names saying that they must not be left out when using a name of God but are not permitted for any other name.

According to Annemarie Schimmel, this kind of abbreviation corresponds to the tendency to leave out the '*abd* completely and to invent forms like *Haqqi* from 'Abdul Haqq, 'Abdi from 'Abdullah, or Hamid from 'Abdul Hamid… it is nevertheless somewhat weird, and would shock every pious Muslim, to see in modern telephone directories so many divine names appearing as family names, like Haq (Haque, Huq etc), Wahid, Ghaffar, etc., or to listen to a telephone conversation between Qudrat-i-Khuda (God's might) and Ghulam Nabi (Servant of the Prophet) which begins with 'Khuda (God) speaking' and then 'here is Nabi (the Prophet) speaking…'.[89]

While in India, 'a strong tendency in favour of secular names' has supplemented religious naming,[90] in Pakistan the modern identity is proclaimed through short, sometimes western but mostly Arabic and Persian names not used in the previous generations. Such names are modern-sounding like Mahak (good smell), Sadaf (pearl), Mona, Romona, Hira, etc. for girls and Kashif, Shaheer, Jawad for boys. Muslim names—names with Muhammad, Ahmed, Hussain, Omar, Usman, Hassan and *abd*-names—are found both in the rural and urban areas. However, old-fashioned names ending on Din (faith)—Taj Din, Jamal Din, Badar Din etc—are more of a rural preserve than urban trend. Yet another old fashion is using Ditta (Punjabi for 'given') with names e.g. Allah Ditta, Nabi Ditta, Maula Ditta etc. This combination, along with its female equivalent 'Ditti', is out of fashion in the cities. The Persian form of 'given' (*baksh*) is also out of favour. As mentioned earlier, names invoking anyone but God—such as Rasool Baksh, Khuda Baksh, Peer Baksh are frowned upon as the strict interpretation of Islam is that only God can give children. As urbanization increases in Pakistan (from 17.8 in 1951 to 32.5 per cent in 1998), rural components of names are stigmatized more and more and immigrants to the cities change them because of culture shame.

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[87]   *Ibid.,* p.13.
[88]   *Ibid.,* p.14.
[89]   Annie Marie Schimmel, *op.cit.,* p.28.
[90]   R. R. Mehrotra, 'Name Change in Hindi: Some Sociocultural Dimensions', *Anthropological Linguistics,* 21:4, (April 1979), p.207.

In short, a name indicate the socio-economic class and, more accurately, the origins of a person. It is this function of class betrayal which account for parents living in urban areas bestowing urban-sounding, modern names on their children. Indeed, there is so much culture shame for these quintessentially rural Punjabi names that a woman working as a maid servant who had once told her employer that her name in the village was Allah Ditti refused to acknowledge that as her name insisting again and again that her name was Saima. When confronted by her employer in private she said that name was not to be told to an outsider. Such name-changing out of embarrassment about old-fashioned or rural names has also been reported for India.[91]

**Name-changing to create a desiderated identity**
Changing one's name is a much commoner phenomenon than most people imagine. Not only do Pakistani urban women change their name on marriage but people of all sexes change name either partially or wholly for many other reasons. The most common one is the indexation of the name with a certain desiderated identity or the concealment of another identity. The most extreme case of this was the taking of male names among the ruling family of Yemen before it became a republic. In the perception of their society, the feminine name 'is a medium enabling contact with her through establishing a bodily image' so the male names 'are defensive devices' from the male libidinous imagination.[92] This does not happen in Pakistan but women are not called by their names among the conservative parts of the country.

People who have the power to name themselves construct a desirable identity through this privilege. Such people have traditionally been kings, princes, great lords and poets. Mughal emperors, for instance, adopted a title like Prince Khurram became Shahjahan (king of the world). And the taking up of poetic names (*takhallus*) is an established tradition in Urdu poetry. Sometimes the *takhallus* becomes so well-known, as in the case of the Urdu poet Ghalib (1797-1869), that the real name Mirza Asadullah Khan is not used. The *takhallus* too can be changed. For instance, Ghalib's first *takhallus* was 'Asad' (lion) but he changed it to Ghalib. Khwaja Meer Dard (1721-1785), another classical master of the *Ghazal,* had the *takhallus* 'Meer' but changed it to Dard (pain) when another famous master of the *Ghazal*, Meer Taqi adopted it. Sometimes one's name could function as a *takhallus*, for

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[91]    *Ibid.*, p.207.
[92]    Gabriele Vom Bruck, 'Names as Bodily Signs', In G.V Bruck and B. Bodenhorn, *op.cit.,* pp.226-50.

instance in the cases of Iqbal (1723-1810) and Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911-1984) whose names were Mohammad Iqbal and Faiz Ahmed Khan.

In some cases, especially in the film industry, names were changed in order to fit in better with a certain role. For instance when a Muslim youth Ali Meer had to play a Hindu mythical hero called Puran Bhagat, he was given the name of Kumar.[93] In any case, during the 1930s-40s Muslim actors were given Hindu names because Bollywood was predominantly Hindu. Thus the filmstar Yousuf Khan became Daleep Kumar, Mumtaz Jahan Begum changed her name to Madhubala, Mehjabeen Ara Kamal became Meena Kumari[94] while the actress Shahida got fame as Naina.[95] However, this trend has been reversed now with Shahrukh Khan, Salman Khan, Amir Khan, Saif Ali Khan making the name Khan iconic in Bollywood.

But, while the *takhallus* is always in addition to the given name and that too in the case of poets, a full name-change occurs for other reasons among ordinary people. One reason is that there is a belief that certain names are 'heavy' (*bhari*), inauspicious or ominous for the bearer.[96] In the case of Mohammad Waseem, a well-known Pakistani academic, his first given name was *Parvez*. However, as he was a sickly child and an elder brother had died earlier, his mother changed it to Waseem.[97] Nawaz Attari, a peon in an office in Lahore, said that names are changed if husband and wife do not live in peace. Then it is assumed that the names do not match with each other and are changed.[98] He also said that certain names, such as Bilal, are considered 'heavy'.[99] Such superstitions are often criticized by religious reformers. For instance, Syed Ahmed Barelvi when preaching in Saharanpur in the early part of the nineteenth century said if a child dies parents do not give its name to their second child so that it does not die too. This, he preached, should be given up.[100] In some parts of Pakistan unusual name changing fashions persist. For instance in a prominent Gardezi Syed family of Multan, a

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[93]  Sa'adat Ali Manto, *Manto Nama* [Urdu: The Writings of Manto] (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1991), p.415.

[94]  Theodore Wright, *op.cit.,* p.6.

[95]  Saadat Ali Manto, *op.cit.,* p.415.

[96]  For a similar belief in another pre-modern society see R. H. Barnes, *op.cit.*, p.314.

[97]  Mohammad Waseem, open-ended interview, 23 April 2012.

[98]  Nawaz Attari, interview, 8 March 2012.

[99]  *Ibid.*

[100]  Abul Hassan Nadvi, *op.cit.*, p.45.

child's name is changed to someone who dies in the family.[101] This, however, is not the norm in other parts of Pakistan.

Yet another name-changing practice is that of adopting neutral sounding names among Pakistani settled in western countries. For instance, a friend of the author, Tariq Ahsan, settled in Canada had a daughter and the parents wanted to name her Qurratul 'Ain (Arabic: Light of the eye). However, when he consulted English-speaking Canadians he found that they could hardly pronounce the name and found it too unwieldy. It would also be difficult to write and mark the child out as an outsider. So they chose the name Shehrezad—of the Arabian Nights fame—and use its abbreviation (Sherry) in everyday life.[102] Other names chosen by the Pakistani community are Maria, Laila, Marina for girls and Haris (pronounced /Haeris/) and Samir for boys.

In addition to that they also choose western-sounding nicknames to facilitate merging in with the mainstream community. These may be John, Nick, Mary or Jill or wsternized abbreviations of their own names: Kamal (Kaemel), Shahzad (Shez), Qurrat ul Ain (Annie) etc. Such abbreviated names were also used in South Asia among the wsternized community. Indeed, most Annies were Arabic *'ains* (eyes); Sherrys were Shahr Banos on Shehrezad or Shahwar etc. This westernized elite is described in the novels of the British period and the early years of Pakistan.[103] The same trend can be observed among the workers of the call centres of Pakistan, as mentioned earlier, who take up westernized nicknames to sound American or British.[104]

Sometimes, however, Muslims take up neutral or ethnic names in order to mask their identity in order to escape physical danger. During the days of the partition of India—the late 1940s—the well-known novelist of Pakistani origin, Zulfikar Ghose (b. 1935), changed his family name of Ghaus which immediately identified him as a Muslim This is how Ghose explains his change of name.

Ghose is a common Hindu name familiar to anyone who has been to Calcutta, while we are Muslims. But the Indian before independence was a time of communal hatred; we found it convenient to be known as *Ghause* among Hindu communities and *Khawaja* among

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[101]    Amina Gardezi, interview, 30 Apr. 2012.
[102]    Tariq Ahsan, interview, 20 May 2012.
[103]    Nasir Ahmad Farooqi, *Snakes and Ladders* (Lahore: Watan Publication, 1968), p.9.
[104]    Tariq Rahman, 'Commodification of Language in the Call Centres of Pakistan', *Language in Society,* 38:2 (2009), pp.233-58.

Muslims… And I prefer it. It is half Muslim, half Hindu, half Pakistani, half Indian.[105]

In the coastal south and west of India, old Hindu surnames survived. According to Theodore Wright these—Saradgi (Karnataka), Antulay (Maharashtra), Kutty (Kerala) and Pookunhikoya (Lakshwadeep)—remain because 'Islam arrived peacefully through Arab merchants even before the Turko Afghan invasions of the North'.[106] This adoption of names for business purposes or to fit in better with the majority community parallels the similar trend of adopting Hindu names in Bollywood which has been mentioned earlier.

Such behaviour has been shown by other minority communities also. For instance, during the 1940s and 50s, 'some 50,000 Americans filed petitions with state courts each year seeking permission to change their family names; 80 per cent of them were Jews.[107] But other communities, such as the Poles, also changed or simplified their names when they immigrated to North America.[108] And, of course, immigrants of nearly all communities use Western-sounding nicknames to adjust better in western societies.

The *Hijras* of South Asia-–including eunuchs, hermaphrodites, transvestites and homosexuals—who wear women's clothing, also change their names 'on being initiated unto the community'.[109] Unfortunately, despite detailed descriptions of the *Hijra* way of life in Muslim societies such as Bangladesh[110] and Pakistan[111] none of these authors has mentioned anything specific about the naming practices of *Hijras*. However, field research by the present author suggests, that they do not reveal their earlier name, a male name, to strangers. Three *Hijras* whom the author interviewed in Rawalpindi gave their present names— Reema, Saima, Meera—which were all modern, urban female names but not their original ones. They said that their new names were given to

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[105]   Zulfikar Ghose, *Confessions of Native-Alien* (London: Routledge, 1965), p.139.

[106]   Theodore Wright, *op.cit.*, p.6.

[107]   Charles Silberman, *A Certain People: American Jems and their Lives Today* (New York: Summit Books, 1985), p.59.

[108]   Robert Klymasz, 'The Canadianization of Slavic Surnames', *Names,* June-December 1963, pp.81-253.

[109]   Vinay Lal, 'Not this, Not that: the Hijras of India and the Cultural Politics of Sexuality', *Social Text,* 61 (Winter 1999), pp.119-40.

[110]   Adnan Hossain, 'Beyond Emasculation: Being Muslim and Becoming Hijra in South Asia', *Asian Studies Review*, 36:4 (2012), pp.495-513.

[111]   Claire Pamment, 'Hijraism: Jostling for the Third Space in Pakistani Politics', *The Drama Review,* 54:2 (Summer 2010), pp.29-50.

them by their spiritual leader, the Guru, and that they did not remember their earlier names.[112] Claire Pamment names many prominent *Hijras* of Pakistan and, apart from a few like Mohammad Aslam, others are known as Bobby, Moti (pearl), Sanam (idol) which are feminine names.

### No-naming

In many pre-industrial societies personal name is not used by younger people for their seniors. Instead kinship and even fictive terms are preferred. According to Alford's comparative survey of 60 societies the following facts emerge.

| Taboo on the use of | No of societies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Parents' name | 18 | 30 |
| Spouse names | 16 | 26 |
| Parents-in-law's names | 17 | 28 |
| (Source: Adapted from Alford, 1988, p.106). | | |

Indeed, 'addressing someone by name indicates equality with or superiority over that person',[113] in Pakistani society also. The prerogative to address someone by the first name while receiving name with honorific (e.g Sardar Sahib, Nawab Sahib, Syed Salman Shah Sahib, Shah Ji) is an indicator of power in Pakistan's inequal society. The person with greater power, whether because of age or wealth or societal status, can use the first name while the subordinate will always reciprocate with name plus honorifics or fictive kinship terms. As Lyon observes, 'assymetrical relationships, and the culture of intervention, have become the *modus operandi* of the society'.[114] Thus naming conventions are also indicators of the hierarchy among donors (patrons) and recipients (clients) in Pakistan's patronage-oriented network. Among north Indian *ashraf* Muslims too, elders are never called by their names by younger people but kinship terms are used. This pattern of behaviour is also shared by the Hindus of north India among whom, besides the usual terms of kinship, 'the English terms "auntie" and "uncle" for related friends or neighbours of the parental generation'.[115] This is also true for urban Pakistanis.

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[112]   *Hijras,* interview, 5 May 2013.

[113]   Richard Alford, *op.cit.,* pp.102-3.

[114]   Stephen M. Lyon, 'Power and Patronage in Pakistan', Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK, 2002, p.3.

[115]   Sylvia Vatuk, *op.cit.*, p.269.

Husbands and wives, in common with other pre-modern societies as indicated in the table above (e.g. the Hidatsa,[116] use either tekonyms (*Munne ki Amma/Abba* = the Mother/father of the Baby Boy/Girl or simply a vocative (*sunti hain* = do you hear) by a wife or *bhalilok* (good people) by a husband.[117] Both spouses may also use the pronoun 'un' (she or he) when referring to each other. This avoidance of names does not extend to in-laws nor is it as acute as reported for the Ethiopian Kambasta-speaking people.[118] However, elder in-laws names are not taken in Pakistan by younger in-laws. Moreover, as in classical Greece,[119] women are not named in the rural areas or among conservative people. They may be referred to as *androon-e-khana*, *ghar wale* (both Urdu terms for 'the people of the house'), *kor walan* (Pashto for the same) or bachhe (children) by polite male friends. Among urban but traditional men the formal term Begum Sahiba may be used but the name of the wife is neither used by the husband in front of his men friends nor indeed by the friends.

## Nicknames

The role of nicknames in the social structure of other societies have been mentioned above, in Pakistan they seem to perform qualitatively different functions related to who invents them and for whom. If invented by the person himself they are meant to protect the self or maximize gratification. If invented by others the same objectives may be served if the inventors and users look up to the person. If, however, the former are hostile or contemptuous of the person, the nick names they use may assault the self and reduce gratification. Nicknames, then, indicate the power of naming and even the 'tyranny' of it.[120]

The names invented by a person, such as the pen name (*takhallus*), have been mentioned earlier, other fictive names, called aliases, are used by criminals such as 'commando', 'captain' and 'general' in Pakistan. These are leaders of criminals or militant members of political parties and pressure groups who take up these aliases to proclaim their courage, militant credentials and leadership qualities. In some cases these aliases are used by the followers or those who look up

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[116]   R.H Barnes, *op.cit.*, p.322.
[117]   Tariq Rahman, *Language, Education and Culture* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[118]   Yvonne Treis, *op.cit.*
[119]   David Schaps, 'The Woman Least Mentioned: Etiquette and Women's Names', *The Classical Quarterly,* 27:2 (1977), pp.323-30.
[120]   J. Morgan, *et. al. op.cit.*

to such characters. Not all such aliases apply only to desperadoes. Sometimes, a nickname like Pari (fairy), Guriya (doll) may be used for a pretty little girl by her doting family or admiring friends.

In the Punjab some nicknames are reserved for certain physical qualities. For instance, a boy with light eyes will invariably be nicknamed '*billa*' (tomcat). The corresponding female nickname '*billi*' (female cat) is usually changed to '*billo*'. However, it is a common nickname and is not reserved only for girls with light eyes. That is why the following popular song:

> *Asan te jana billo de kar*
> *Kinne kinne jana Billo de kar*

(I have to go to Billo's house who all have to go to Billo's house)

Nicknames—always conform with the phonological rules of the local language. Thus the guttural sounds of Arabic or Persian (the ovular stops and fricatives) and Persian from Arabic are not used. They are substituted by sounds from the indigenous languages such as Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto and Urdu. They are also shorter than the names from the Islamic heritage languages. Thus Fazal become 'Phajja', Abdullah becomes 'Dulla', Ghulam Rasul, 'Soola', Rafeeq, 'Pheeka' and so on. In KP the vocative forms of names as well as nicknames take the vowel /a/ i.e. Sahib becomes Sahiba, Gul becomes Gulla, etc.

Among the westernized elite, as already mentioned, nicknames are westernized. Here too, as in other groups of people, they express solidarity and affection if given by people who like and care for the person. If meant to signal defects and shortcomings, especially physical ones, they are a cause of distress but retain their group identity-marking function nevertheless. In this sense nicknames are part of 'onomastic politics' at the level of one's social circle. The power of those who are socially more powerful, even if it is an ephemeral power, can give names which can control, marginalize, insult or honour and praise an individual. So insulting are some of such nicknames that an informant from South Punjab (Muzaffargarh) refused to divulge the nicknames of the children of his village on the ground that these were not fit for the author's ears.[121]

**Conclusion**

This ethnographic description of Pakistani naming practices, beliefs about names and their relationship with power and identity has brought out that names are not unproblematic labels. Pakistani society is in

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[121] Hussain Abid, open-ended interview with a cook from south Punjab serving in Lahore, 16 November 2012.

transition between the traditional and the modern. Moreover, it has also been subjected to increasing Islamization and even radicalization since the last twenty-five years or so. Names too reflect these divergent and conflicting worldviews. Thus, while there is a tendency to give more Islamic names, there is also the tendency to adopt certain western features of naming such as the taking of men's names among urban women and the abandonment of rural names. Names are also changed because of traditional beliefs that they may be inauspicious but also to sound modern, to fit in better with a dominant community or for some pragmatic reason. Names are, in the final analysis, indexed to identities in Pakistan. Indeed, as soon as we hear a name we immediately index it to an identity be it religious, ethnic, caste or class. That is why names can be changed by people who feel their identities carry social costs more than they can afford. In short, naming ideologies are in a process of flux in Pakistan as the ideological forces of Islamization, modernization and pragmatism affect the choice of personal names.

**Notes:**
1. *Abjad* is mnemonic device to commit the numerical values of Arabic letters of the alphabet to memory.
2. Also found in the following variant. In ordinary Hindi-Urdu the word for hole (*ched*) becomes the Persian *soorakh* when a person gains social prominence and khan in added to the name.
   *Daulat tere teen nam*
   *Chiddva, ched, soorakh khan*