



## Significance of Name in Literature

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**ABSTRACT** This research article attempts to find out the significance of name in literature. Careful planning comes before actual construction. Many times, we must have heard this line. In Robert Browning's *A Grammarian's Funeral*, the speaker states "he lived nameless" in pursuit of mastering his studies. (Line 25) If literature is a project or building, the writer has to imagine and draft a plan for that building, visualize its shape and style as a whole, before beginning to construct its characters and their signifying role-based personality. The research article in order to examine the importance of name in literature takes a series of literary works as the field of study. Sometimes deductive and some other times inductive method and approach have been applied. The article shows various different significance of name in different contexts. Through showing various significance of name, the paper also presents the other functions of name besides identification. In order to make the study more relevant and to avoid biasness in judgmental statements, evidence has been taken from several great works. The article uses the source taken from literature to literary theory.

**KEYWORDS** Name, Identification, Ambiguity, Evocative names, Significance

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### Background information on the significance of name

In *Romeo and Juliet*, it has been said that what is in name; if you call a rose by any name it will smell as same. How many of you agree with the statement? Can the statement be applied to the general drama of life? Can we move forward in practical life by any name? Will not the addition of new names create repulsion in our mind? Are we emotionally connected to a particular name? James Joyce in *Ulysses* alluding Shakespeare writes "What is in a name? That is what we ask ourselves, in childhood when we write the name that we are told is ours." In the "Sign" theory, 'Signifier' and 'Signified' are also related to name. A signifier is the material form the sign takes and signified is the

abstract concept to which signifier points. Signs are the most important units carrying and producing meaning in any act of communication. It is anything that represents something through names. It is the name which distinguishes one from another. In post-structuralism the theorists especially Derrida discussed the arbitrariness of naming an object. His view resembles with Shakespeare's about name. In Media theory, Roland Barthes in his *Image Music Text* introduced the term 'anchorage' which is indirectly related to the importance of name. It is defined as the captions (name) which fix the meaning of visual images. Name occupies very prominent role and position; whether be it of place, person, object, formula, conventions, protocols, initiatives, or theory. It is the name which helps to remember some arduous ideas and things very easily. It is the identity in the materialistic world. Although sometimes the addition of fame to it creates inequality. The addition of fame to name is artificial, while name is like something artificially natural as it is tagged since the origin of that person or object. The concept of 'name' cannot be erased from the canon of literature. One can imagine avoiding the name might bring chaos and mess to which level along with creating ambiguity. Character implies the person having the quality of goodness, appropriateness, heroism and consistency. Aristotle has also considered character as the second element in *Poetics*.

### II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several researches have been done on importance of names in literature. Other researchers show the power of names in literature and legal writing. Name is the constituent part. Researchers have done in-depth study of names and its division through different literary texts. Several other texts have been used as references to put forward the study without creating ambiguity. The research paper will be helpful for the students and scholars to have depth knowledge about the designation of the character's names. Generally, the people belonging to non-literature background are aware about protagonist, antagonist as the name of character.



This research has been done with a comprehensive survey and critical analysis of Amy Bitternan's "What is in a Name: The Power of Names in Literature and Legal Writing" and Alastair Fowler's "Literary Names: Personal Names in English Literature". The aforesaid scholars with their inquisitiveness conducted the research focusing more on the history of names, the types of several names and less on with the examples. Whereas, this paper focuses less on types of names and more on several function and importance of names. The focus is on the link between names and identity can provide new insights into the development of the personality.

### III. METHODOLOGY

An analytical method of study based on a thorough textual reading, analysis and interpretation of primary text would be adopted while undertaking this research project. Additionally, secondary sources like reference books, articles from journals and useful resources available in the internet would be consulted alongside the primary sources.

### IV. THESIS STATEMENT

Through an analysis of several literary texts, this paper argues that there are various significant roles of name and name is not just arbitrary. Definitely, choosing or possessing a name defines the duty, responsibility and identity. It also analyses how people deliberately choose the names.

#### Multifaceted forms of name

There are many characters and they are named as flat or round; major or minor; protagonist or antagonist as per their characteristics, personality and role in that particular literary text. In real life, everyone bears some name and it matters in their lives. Likewise in literature 'name' also matters. There are some eponymous literary works like *Anna Karenina*, *Tom Jones*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Joseph Andrews*, *Pamela*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *Tristram Shandy*, *Mrs Dalloway*, *Orlando*, *Clarissa*, *Amelia*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Jane Eyre*, *Candida*, *Saint Joan*, *Doctor Faustus*, *Little Dorrit*, *Lolita*, *Lord Jim*, *Lucky Jim*, etc. These ground breaking works are much familiar and popular for the name of their characters. This can well justify the importance of name.

Evocative names in literature is found in the *Sound and Fury* and the *Color Purple*. In *Sound and Fury*, thirty three years old disabled Benjy is

referred as the fury. Celie addresses her husband as mister in *Color Purple*.

Sometimes writers choose appropriate names for the characters to create an immediate impression on the reader. David Lodge in the *Art of Fiction* points out names in literature are never neutral. In *Vanity Fair*, the name Becky Sharp suggests that 'Becky' is both clever and dangerous. 'Sharp' Signifies danger and needs carefulness. Those who were not careful about Becky Sharp get wounded.

#### Name as an agent of life saving and identity formation

In the diasporic novel *Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri name is a dominant theme. Here name signifies identity, love, care, emotion, and savior. In the beginning, the son hates his name given by his father. But in the end, it is the significance of the name 'Gogol', the son of Ashok realizes and strengthens their bond. It is the name which brought epiphany within the son of Ashok. Ashok is saved in the train accident for the name of the author of the book he had in his hand. The fusion of fame with the name of this author grabs the attention of people to save that person who was handling the book.

#### Repetition of names

In some literary texts, it is seen that the personality, quality, and disease are inherited from the previous generation. Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, characters' names are repeated in the next generations. José Arcadio Buendía is repeated as the name of his son without a surname 'Buendia' instead referred as José Arcadio II. The men of the Buendia line are named either José Arcadio or Aureliano and the women are named Úrsula, Amaranta or Remedios. It is a very difficult task to locate the difference between people who have the same name. In D.H. Lawrence's novel the *Rainbow* Ursula Brangwen is the daughter of Willam and Anna. Although *Women in Love* is a sequel to *Rainbow* not many characters' names are repeated. The name of Ursula is repeated.

Charles Dickens has used grotesque names such as Quilp or uncle Pumblechook. In *David Copperfield*, the name of David's late father is David sir. Clara Copperfield is the mother of David Copperfield. She dies on his ninth birthday while he was at boarding school. Clara Peggotty is the nurse of David Copperfield who plays an important role in his life. Can it be the intention of the novelist that the nurse or the caretaker is the second mother? Is it the reason to name the mother and caretaker with



the same name to signify the similarity between mother and caretaker? Can it be the reason the novelist gave different surname to show the difference between the mother and the caretaker? In *Great Expectations*, Herbert's wife name is Clara Pockett. Agnes Fleming is the mother of Oliver in *Oliver Twist*. Agnes Wickfield is the second wife and close friend of David in *David Copperfield*. It seems the novelist had a special connection with the name Clara.

### The yearning for connection and acceptance

In Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, the narrator who is addressed as 'I' announces "call me Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or by any other name you please – it is not a matter of any importance." In the opinion of the narrator, all these names define women in general. This is clearly visible that the less importance of name whenever, the narrator announces any random name to be called. Her attitude towards the name to identify a woman is clearly apparent. In her view the name is not of great significance. Addition of any specific name neither change the hasty generalization about women nor the prejudices against them.

### Name as an intricate and compelling thing

In the play *Evam* Indrajit, the protagonist who is a writer himself struggles of not getting content to write his story. With the persuasion of his friend Manasi, he picked four characters among the audience. Names them as Amal, Vimal, Kamal, and Nirmal. The name of the fourth person is not accepted by the writer hence, asks him to reveal his real name. Getting persuaded he reveals his name as Indrajit. From the inquiry it is learnt that he is hiding his real identity. He stated he is afraid of revealing his identity. Finally, he names himself Nirmal Kumar Roy. It can be observed that 'Nirmal' is that exact name the writer did not accept. But for the writer this is true that in concept of life has taught him there is not one Manasi but many. The attributes of one Manasi stands for all Manasi. The

hero himself is anonymously addressed as the rotagonist whereas the name of the four characters is in rhythm. The protagonist who is a writer does not concern about the name of the first three characters but hesitates with the name of the fourth character. The less significance of the name is proved when Indrajit reveals his real name to be Nirmal and he is an ordinary man, in ordinary life having ordinary ambition. For the protagonist the absurdity of life is same for all human beings but with the possession of different names in different form. The name only creates difference in identification or recognition whereas, the absurdity of live is common.

### V. CONCLUSION

The findings of this paper clarify that everything has a specific name and name matters although the importance varies. In order to figure out and differentiate one from another, there is definitely need of name. From the above mentioned texts derived the conclusion that there are some spheres where the name is of great significance and some of less. A name has an emotional connection which is most clearly illustrated in *The Namesake*. Inferring name has an emotional connection might be an inductive approach. When talking about some universal sphere and about the meaning of existence, attributes of human suffering in general or about the lesser important and subjugated section of the society name is less important and sometimes of no importance. There are very less literary works where the protagonist or some other characters do not possess any name. 'The protagonist' in *Evam* Indrajit; 'the son', 'the girl', 'the father', 'the mother', etc. In *Six Characters in Search of an Author*; 'the man', 'the teacher' in the *Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* are some examples of this category. These literary pieces are not complete without unnamed characters. Hence, this is concluded that the novel and play are not possible without the name of the characters and name is of greater significance in these two specific genres of literature.

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