

# AUTHORIAL HOMONYM AND SYNONYM

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[Analyses the causes for homonyms in the names of authors. Mentions the use of two or more words to form a name as the first resolvent to be devised. Pleads for title-page to be so designed as to eliminate some of the cataloguing difficulties arising out of it. Mentions the inadequacy of the first resolvent and the use of year of birth as a second resolvent. Pleads for this year to be mentioned in the preliminary pages of a book, as an agreed international standard. Pleads for the preliminary pages mentioning similarly all the alternative names under which an author has written books].

## 1 Etiology of Homonym 1

An ever-increasing cause for the formation of homonym among humanity is the ever-increasing excess of the number of humans over the number of words available to name them. This is often added to by the long-established folkway of naming a person after the grandparent or the great grandparent. In the Hindu community, the name of the immediate ancestor—the father—is mentioned in legal documents to avoid difficulties being caused by homonyms. On sacramental occasions like marriage, the names of three immediate ancestors and the name of the family (—gotra) are also mentioned. Perhaps similar resolvents of homonyms have been improvised in other cultural groups also to avert legal and sacramental difficulties.

## 11 RESOLVENT IN LONG USE

A more universally established permanent resolvent is the use of two or more words in the construction of name. In small intimate circles only one of these words is used. But in a wider public context all the words are brought into use. Thus assuming the number of words available to build names is  $n$ , the number of persons that can be named without homonym increases from  $n$  to  $n(n-1)$  with two worded names and to  $n(n-1)(n-2)$  with three-worded names. This device may be normally sufficient to give non-homonymous names, with a base of 1,000 words to about 1,000 million persons *i.e.* nearly to all the adults living in the world at one time. It will be so in spite of the habit of naming a person after grand-parent.

## 12 NOT IN FULL MEASURE

In practice, however, full use is not made of this theoretical possibility. In European cultural group, certain words can not occupy the last place in the name. Others can occupy only the last place. This latter are the surnames. Some other communities have now begun to imitate this. Again some words are used too often. Examples are John, Smith, Hoffmann in the West ; Muhammed in Muslims ; Rama, Krishna, Sita, Uma in Hindus ; Subramanian among Tamils. Thus homonyms occur even among contemporaries in spite of names being many-worded.

## 13 TROUBLE IN CATALOGUING

The use of many words in a name has created a problem in the rendering of a name in the heading of 'catalogue country.' Let us define "Potency" as the capacity of a word to individualise a person in wide public or author-context. The class of words from which the different words in a name are drawn do not have equal potency. The most potent word should be used as entry-word in heading. This is not, however, found in the same position of the name as found in usage or on title-page. In Chinese, it occupies the first place. In the West, it occupies the last place. In many South Indian names, it occupies the last but one place. Sometimes the prepotent word is a compound, the constituent words of the compound are sometimes hyphenated, sometimes connected by an auxiliary word, and sometimes written as separate words. To add to this, some puff-elements occur along with the substantial words and they have to be omitted from the heading. It is not possible for a cataloguer not born and bred in the cultural group of the author to determine the prepotent word in the name for use as entry-word. Now that Asia and Africa are entering the ascending phase of their cultural cycle, they are beginning to produce books in large numbers and are keen to collect European books too. Thus the burden of determining the entry-element in a name is going to involve much wastage of manpower. This is an inevitable result of the first stable resolvent of homonyms which has come to stay.

## 14 INTERNATIONAL STANDARD 1

This trouble in cataloguing can be nipped in the bud by adopting

an international standard to indicate by typographical deviation on the title page the entry-element, the secondary element and the puff element in the name(s) of author(s) and collaborator(s). The Documentation Committee of the Indian Standards Institution is promoting the establishment of such a standard.

## 2 Etiology of Homonym 2

In the world of authors, there is a second factor intensifying the incidence of homonyms. Author is immortal. Once a person writes a book, his name gets a permanent place in bibliography and in the catalogue of the National Central Library of his country and of some others. Perhaps it will stay permanently in some service libraries also. On the other hand his name is forgotten in his community in general and is removed from directories and who's whos soon after his death. Thus as names of authors cumulate through the ages, the chance for the incidence of homonyms goes on increasing in bibliographies and library catalogues. Even though many names will be removed from the catalogue of a service library, it may happen that homonyms denoting persons of different generations are left behind. Multi-worded names fail to be total resolvents in such cases.

### 21 PROPOSED RESOLVENT

National Central Libraries have been for some decades using the year of birth of author as an efficient resolvent, in addition to the already existing resolvent of multi-worded names. In the case of dead authors, the year of birth also is added.

### 22 TROUBLE IN CATALOGUING

But the application of this time resolvent causes delay in cataloguing. The name of many an author is not included in who's who, as he has little political or equivalent importance. The only means of knowing his year of birth is to write to him. Most libraries cannot afford this. The authors too do not all reply. Ten years ago, I attempted to get the years of birth of Hindi authors by direct letters to authors and publishers and through insertions in important newspapers. In spite of reminders, not more than a few dozens replied.

### 23 RISK

There is also an element of risk. Sixteen years ago, a friend of

mine was Professor of Economics. He wrote a book. He sent a copy of it to the Library of Congress. He had a prompt request from that Library for his year of birth. Two years later, I found an astrological book entered against his name. This puzzled me. One day I asked him "when did you begin studying astrology"? "Me! Astrology!" he said with surprise. "Your book on astrology is found in a publishers' catalogue"! I said. He said that a name-sake of his had been writing books on astrology. But I pointed out that this year of birth given in the catalogue was 1894. He replied that it was his own year but that his name-sake was five years older. Even a vigilant organisation to ascertain year of birth may be misled, as in this case by homonym among close contemporaries.

#### 24 INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

This trouble in cataloguing can be nipped in the bud by the international standard for the preliminary pages of a book prescribing the insertion of the year of birth of the author. The ideal will be to give it at the end of his name on the title-page. If the newness of this idea is too jarring to the mind not accustomed to it, the year of birth may be given at least in the first line of the back of the title page. The author knows it. The publisher can get it from him. It may be difficult to get it before the source disappears, even as we do with the books of the past. The annual output of books in the world exceeds a hundred thousand. The printing of the dates on the back of the title page which can be done without any extra cost, will lead to considerable national and international economy.

#### 3 Duties of Catalogue

The catalogue should not give wrong or misleading informations to readers. If homonyms are not resolved books by different persons will be shown by the catalogue under one and the same name; and this will mislead readers. The Fifth Law of Library Science—A library is a growing organism—together with the advent of democracy, spread of learning and the cheap production of books, has begun to seek the aid of the second resolvent of homonyms, mentioned above. This resolvent seeks, in its turn, an improvement in the set-up of preliminary pages and an international standard to make the adoption

of the improvement universal. The Second Law of Library Science seeks the inclusion of another provision in the international standard. For that law is "Every reader his book". This implies that the catalogue should inform him exhaustively of all the books written by one and the same person, though he might have written them under different names. Different terms denoting the same idea are synonyms. Therefore we may say that these cond Law needs the equation of all the synonyms of an author's name.

### 31 ETIOLOGY OF SYNONYM

Several long established social practices lead to change of name of a person. In the West, marriage leads to change of name of a woman. In countries with court-life, peerage leads to change of name. This course is being slowly eliminated as republican form of Government is established. Ecclesiastical elevation also leads to change of name in the West. In Hindu and Buddhistic society, adoption of the status (=Asrama) of Sanyasi or Bhikshu leads to change of name. Quite often change of religion leads to change of name. In some countries ascent in official position leads to change of name. Apart from these social causes, fear, shyness or some other urge to hide one's real name leads to the writings of some of the books under a false name (=pseudonym). Mere freak too may make one change his name. This is legally permissible ; and the legal formality does not cost much money. Political causes may lead to a mass movement for change of name, at certain times. This has happened in several countries. Governmental action too may cause change of name on a large scale. This happened in Japan three generations ago and in Siam one generation ago when the adoption of surname was made compulsory.

### 32 CURRENT PRACTICE

The current practice of equating synonyms is either :

- 1 to enter all the books by one person under his earliest names ; or
- 2 to enter all the books by one person under his latest name ;
- 3 to enter each book under his name mentioned on its title page ; and

- 4 in the first two cases, to give a *see* reference to the chosen name from every other name ; and
- 5 in the third case, to give a *see also* reference from every synonym to every other.

We need not go, into the relative merits of the above three methods of effecting equation of synonyms in the name of an author.

### 33 TROUBLE IN CATALOGUING

But the application of any of the above three methods requires a knowledge of all the alternative names under which a person has written books. It is not easy to get this knowledge. To establish this knowledge is one of the functions of historical bibliography. Considerable man-power has been spent in the past to establish authorial synonyms. Vast dictionaries of pseudonyms have been built.

### 34 SOLUTION

It is not necessary to perpetuate the expenditure of man-power on this sort of pursuit. This difficulty can be nipped in the bud by stating in the preliminary pages of a book all the alternative names under which the author has written books. There can be ordinarily no reason for an author to refuse to give this information. It is time that occasionally there may be unavoidable reasons of secrecy. It may not be proper, for example, to disclose the true name of a pseudonymous author till the expiry of some years. Except in those few cases, it needs only a little thought to realise the saving of man-power by thus referring to create this problem in cataloguing without in any way taking away from each author the right to change his name as often as he desires. To perpetuate the problem and to refuse to adopt the preventive measure adopted above smells of the attitude of the proverbial mother-in-law mixing up grain with grain-like particles of pebble in order to find occupation for the leisure times of the daughter-in-law. The new social functions of libraries demand the use of all the existing library man-power and the addition of more, to fulfil all the social obligations thrown on library staff. In public libraries, the work of attracting one and all of the public and retaining their custom needs enormous man-power. In academic and business libraries, the library staff has a new vital part to play in the promotion

of "research-work-in-series" by vast teams, in order to meet the unbalancing being developed between population-pressure, and the available natural resources and the places of occurrence. No, it is improper to fail to record the equation of authorial synonyms as and when it gets generated without waiting for the sources to dry up and then turn some of the best brains of humanity in reconstructing them. Research of this kind would really amount to hiding deliberately in order to re-search.

### 35 INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

Here also, there is need for an agreed international standard. According to it, except for reasons of unavoidable secrecy, a book should mention at a specified place in the preliminary pages all the names, including pseudonyms, under which the author has written books.

### 4 Corporate Author

Alternative names are deliberately adopted by personal authors. But alternative names smuggle themselves unawares in the case of corporate authorship. This is at its worst in the case of governmental authorship. We have only to assemble together all the publications of any one department of a government to realise the extent of discrepancy in the name of the department. This happens because nobody in the department thinks about it.

### 41 ETIOLOGY

The first cause for inconsistency in the way in which the name of a department of government or a University or any other corporate body is mentioned in its publications is drifting without thought. Officers responsible for the publications change. But the corporate body goes on. This intensifies the drifting. A second cause is the unavoidable one of changes in the name itself. In this case, the same remedy may be applied as in the case of alternative names of personal authors. About fifteen years ago, I put up proposals to stop the wastage in library man-power by this unintended, and purposeless inconsistency in the name of governmental author. This proposal was contained in the *Memoires* of the Madras Library Association. Copies were sent to all the then governments in India for consideration

But there was absolutely no response. In those years, general governmental organisation was next only to military organisation in its total indifference to any economy measure. The world has now begun to realise the follow of such an attitude. At least in theory the government itself now professes to promote elimination of waste of all kinds, by standardisation and simplified practice.

#### 42 ADDITIONAL PROBLEM

In corporate authorship, standardisation will have to take possession of even a prior problem. There is at present no uniformity in the way in which corporate authorship is indicated or the place in the preliminary pages where it is indicated. No doubt the chaos that now prevails in this matter creates a good hunting ground for examiners. The most prolific among the corporate bodies causing this chaos has been the League of Nations in the past and its successor the United Nations Organisation and its specialised agencies at present.

#### 43 PRIOR STILL

Standardisation has to begin work even at a prior stage. This concerns, however, the library profession only. The *Prussian instructions* do not recognise corporate authorship at all. According to it, the dichotomy is that either a book has a personal author or it is anonymous. Evidently, it has been driven to avoid the recognition of corporate authorship, by the very chaos characterising the way in which corporate authors name themselves. But in its anxiety to avoid this Scylla, it has exposed itself even to graver risks from the Charybdis of the plethora of rules improvised by it to find the entry-word in the title of anonymous book. It has to devote 61 of its 241 rules to this tangled problem. The resulting chaos makes the remedy worse than the disease.

#### 44 INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

The task of establishing a standard for corporate authorship has first to be turned on reconciling the German practice and the Anglo-Saxon practice. The *Vatican code* has upheld the latter. The second task has to be to establish a standard for naming government departments. Perhaps there may be need to have a short name of corporate bodies for citation if the legal name is elaborate. The



short citation name is the one to be gone into for standardisation, to satisfy the needs of cataloguing. The third task has to be to arrive at a standard for indicating the name of the corporate author on the title-page. Here we meet with some difficulties. The indication of the name of a personal author has been evolving ever since printing was invented i.e. for about five centuries. It has now reached a stage when standardisation is an easy step. But the indication of the name of corporate author on title-page is perhaps less than two centuries old. It is still far too nebulous to be crystalised into a standard. Experiment will be necessary about the place on the title-page and the manner in which the name should be mentioned. If the hurdle of the third stage is crossed, the fourth stage will give no difficulty. It will be merely the mode of denoting alternative names. For this reason, the Documentation Committee of the Indian standards Institution has not included this in the draft standard it has set up. But it will have to be taken up as early as possible.

### **5 Appeal to Library Profession**

The first appeal is to the library profession. It should recognise that a stitch in time saves nine. One class of the present difficulties in cataloguing turn on the existence of homonyms and synonyms among the names of authors, personal and corporate. We should not develop the mentality of the slave who clings to his chains. The mental fibrosis likely to develop in old guards should be got over. It is the duty particularly of the younger members of the profession to break the shackles of the unnecessary encrustations caused by blind tradition. The Ifla and the corresponding bodies in the various nations should mobilise public opinion within the profession. They should formulate a definite proposal and make bold to solicit the co-operation of the publishing trade to lighten the load on cataloguer by giving the reasonable help set forth in this paper.

### **6 Appeal to Publishing Trade**

The second appeal is to the publishing trade. The publisher occupies a position of vantage in the physical embodiment of a book. He has opportunities to be in constant and intimate contact with the author through the period the book goes through the press. He should

be willing to elicit from the author: 1 the sorting out of the entry element, the secondary element in his name; 2 his year of birth; and 3 the various alternate names used by him in writing books. The publisher should interpret the international standard to the author, explain the economy resulting from the adoption of the standard and help him to furnish the necessary information correctly. The artist employed by the publisher to design the title-page and the other preliminary pages should be able to incorporate all this new information in his design without prejudice to the total aesthetic effect. This appeal goes equally to the governments, who form the most prolific publishers to day. The International Association of Publishers should co-operate with the Ifla in arriving at a workable standard. It should also enthuse the corresponding bodies in the various nations to persuade each publisher to conform to the proposed standard.

### **7 Appeal to Authors**

The third appeal is to the world of authors. They should not fight shy of giving the information needed for embodiment in the preliminary pages. They should find the mood to understand the significance of the terms entry element, secondary element and puff element and indicate them in their names. After all, name is something intimate to the author. He is the most competent to mention the relative potency of the several words in his name. He is again the right person to give the right year of his birth and a reliable list of his alternative names used by him in writing books. The various departments of governments, the Universities and the research and business organisations are now becoming prolific corporate authors. Therefore this appeal is to them also.

### **8 Appeal to Standard Organisations**

The fourth appeal is to the International Standard Organisation, through its TC/46 and to the corresponding bodies in the several countries. Their main objective is to eliminate waste of all kinds in the production and service of all commodities material as well as nonmaterial. This they seek to do by the establishment of international and national standards and the reduction of their number,

in each case, to the smallest possible. This, in its turn, they seek to do by doing liaison work between the producers, the servers and the consumers of the commodities and services. In the case, of books, the producers are the authors for the thought-content and the publishing and the printing trades for its embodiment in the subtle and the physical bodies; the servers are the librarians including the cataloguers who make the preparation for service. The consumers interest has to be represented by the standards organisations themselves. These should persuade the producers and the servers to agree about the usefulness of having an over-all international standard and national standards to furnish the greater details specific to the cultural practices of the respective nations. The spade work being done in the matter by the Documentation Committee of the Indian Standards Organisation and the provisional standard drafted by it are commended for consideration, finalisation and adoption at an early date.