

# MODULE 1

## PANORAMA OF INDIAN SOCIETY

# Diversity and Pluralism

- Indian is a vast country and has a long history. Its society has evolved through the ages and has also been affected by foreign influences giving it extreme diversity and made unity amidst diversity a characteristic of the Indian society
- In literary terms, diversity means differences. However in social context the meaning is more specific; **it means collective differences among people, that is, those differences which mark off one group of people from another.**
- These differences may be of any sort: biological, religious, linguistic etc. On the basis of biological differences, for example, we have racial diversity. On the basis of religious differences, similarly, we have religious diversity. The point to note is that diversity refers to collective differences.

# Uniformity

- Uniformity means similarity of some sort that characterizes a people. 'Uni' refers to one; 'form' refers to the common ways. So when there is something common to all the people, we say they show uniformity.
- When a group of people share a similar characteristic, be it language or religion or anything else, it shows uniformity in that respect.
- But when we have groups of people hailing from different races, religions and cultures, they represent diversity. Thus, diversity means variety.

- India is a large country with different geopolitical conditions in different parts of the country. This has brought differences in social evolution of the groups living in different parts of the country.
- Apart from the geo-political diversity, interactions with foreigners due to invasions, trade and missionary activities have also led to foreign influences and social groups coming to India.
- All these have impacted the Indian society in one way or the other.

A large number of foreign invader communities like the Greeks, Kushans, Sakas and Hunas settled in India and were in due course assimilated in Hinduism, while retained some of their characteristics and hence formed different social groups.

Muslims maintained their separate religious identity but adapted themselves to Indian conditions creating yet another category of social groups. Presently, Indian society is highly diverse.

Almost every major religion is represented in India. Institution of caste has added one more dimension to the diversity and every geographical region has developed its own language and culture.

# Pluralism

- In context of a society, pluralism can be seen in various aspects. It could be religious pluralism, cultural pluralism, linguistic pluralism or ethnic pluralism or could be a combination of more than one kind.
- Pluralism recognizes diverse groups and seeks to provide a mechanism in which no one group dominates the state and in which interests of all groups are reasonably taken care of.
- Thus pluralism can be said to be a diffusion of power among many special-interest groups, prevents any one group from gaining control of the government and using it to oppress the people.
- Our pluralist society has many groups such as women, men, racial, ethnic groups as well as broad categories as the rich, middle class and poor.
- In such a scenario domination of political power by one group could lead to neglect of the others resulting in social tensions which may be harmful to society as well as the state.

# Racial & Ethnic profile of India

- **A. Classification of Sir Herbert Hope Risley (1915):**
- Sir Herbert Hope Risley tried to classify the Indian population on the basis of anthropometric measurements.
- He had developed a clear-cut idea about the racial elements of India when he directed the operation of Census for India in 1901.
- Later, he took the help of anthropometry to affirm his assumptions and published the results in 1915 under the title '**The People of India**'. He identified three principal racial types in India viz.
- The Dravidian, the Indo-Aryan and the Mongoloid.
- These three types were again got mixed in varying degrees in different provinces (States).

# Risley distinguished seven different 'physical types'

- **1. The Dravidian type:**
- The stature of these people is short or below medium.
- The complexion is dark, approaching to black.
- The hair is similarly dark and plentiful with an occasional tendency to curl.
- The eye colour is also dark.
- The head is long and the nose is very broad, sometimes depressed at the root.



# Dravidian type

- The people of Dravidian type are distributed in the region from Ceylon to the valley of the Ganges covering the southern part of India, which especially includes the Western Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh (Hyderabad), Central India and Chotonagpur.
- The best example of this type is the Paniyans of Malabar (South India) and the Santals of the Chottanagpur.
- **Risley believed these people as original inhabitants of India** who are found to be modified at present by the infiltration of the Aryans, the Scythians and the Mongoloids.

## 2. The Indo-Aryan type:

- This type is the most close to the traditional Aryans who colonized India.
- The people are tall statured with fair complexion, dark eyes, and plentiful hair on face and body.
- They also possess predominant longhead (dolichocephalic), narrow and long (leptorrhine) nose.
- The type is confined to Punjab, Rajasthan and Kashmir where the members are known as the Kashmiri Brahmins, Rajputs, Jats and the Khattris.

### 3. The Mongoloid type:

- The most important characteristic features of this type are broad-head, dark complexion with yellowish tinge and scanty hair on face and body.
- The stature is usually short or below medium. The nose shows a wide range of variation, from fine to broad.
- The face is typically flat where the eyes are oblique with epicanthic fold.
- The people of this type are found along the Himalayan region, especially in the regions namely North East Frontier, Nepal and Burma.
- The best examples are the Kanets of Lahul and Kulu Valleys, Lepchas of Darjeeling and Sikkim, the Limbus, the Murmis and the Gurungs of Nepal and the Bodo of Assam.

## 4. The Aryo-Dravidian type

- This type is known as the Hindustani type.
- Generally the heads of the people are long with a tendency towards medium. The complexion varies from light brown to black.
- The nose is usually medium, although the broad nose is not uncommon. But in this case, the broad nose is always broader than the nose of Indo-Aryans.
- In stature, the people are shorter than the Indo-Aryans who usually show a below average height; i.e. the height ranges from 159cm to 166cm.
- Thus, the Aryo- Dravidians is differentiated from the Indo-Aryans. The type is considered as an intermixture of the Aryans and the Dravidians in varying proportions.
- The people of this type are found in Uttar Pradesh, in some parts of Rajasthan and in Bihar.

# 5. The Mongolo-Dravidian type:

- This type is known as the Bengali type.
- The members of this type are characterized by broad and round heads with a tendency towards medium dark complexion and plentiful hair on face. The nose is usually medium with a tendency towards flatness.
- The stature is also medium but sometimes short. Such people are found in Bengal and Orissa. T
- The notable representatives of this type are the Bengali Brahmins and Bengali Kayasthas.
- According to Risley this type is not only an admixture of the Mongolians and the Dravidians, some blood strains of Indo-Aryan type are also mixed with it.

## 6. The Scytho-Dravidian type:

- The people of this type possess medium to broad head, low to medium stature, fair complexion, and a moderately fine nose, which is not conspicuously long.
- The hair is scanty on face and body. It is held that the type has been evolved by the intermixture of two distinct racial strains—the Scythians and the Dravidians.
- Typical example of this type is found in Western India comprising the Maratha Brahmins, the Kunbis and the Coorgs, who are distributed in the tracts of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra-Gujrat border region upto the Coorg.

# The Scytho-Dravidian type:

- The Scythian element is more prominent in higher social groups of these regions while the Dravidian features predominate among the lower social groups in the region.
- However, this Scytho-Dravidian type is markedly different from the Turko- Iranians in the traits like larger head, flatter face, and higher profile of nose and shorter stature.

## 7. The Turko-Iranian type:

- This type is characterized by broad heads and fine to medium nose, which is long and prominent.
- The stature is fairly tall and the average height of the males varies from 162cm to 172cm. Although the eyes are dark in colour, grey eyes are not uncommon.
- Complexion of the people is generally fair; plentiful hair is found on face and body.



# The Turko-Iranian type:

- The type includes the inhabitants of Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Northwest Frontier Provinces (now in Pakistan) who are represented by the Balochis, Brahai, Afghans and some other people of NWFP.
- In the view of Risley, this type has been formed probably by the fusion of Turki and Persian elements in which the former's features predominate.

## B. Classification of Giufrida-Ruggeri (1921):

- 1. Negrito: Veddas and some South Indian jungle tribes.
- 2. Pre-Dravidian or Australoid Veddic: Santals, Oraons, Mundas, etc.
- 3. Dravidian: Tamil and Telugu speaking people.
- 4. Tall dolichocephalic(long head) element: Toda.
- 5. Dolichocephalic Aryan : (Homo dolichomorphus): Indo-Afghans, Indo-Iranians, etc.
- 6. brachycephalic(broad head) leucoderm – (Homo Indo-European brachymorphus) – Armenians, Georgians, etc.

- In contrast to H.H. Risley, Giufrida-Ruggeri had mentioned the Veddas and some South Indian forest dwelling tribes as possessing the Negrito element.
- He categorized the Indo-Afghans, Indo- Iranians, etc. under dolichocephalic Aryans.
- In his consideration, the brachycephalic leucoderms was a type, which included the Armenians and the peoples of Pamir and Georgia.
- He was inspired by the language based racial classification of his predecessor Sir H. H. Risley.
- But Giufrida-Ruggeri's classification was too short to denote the enormous variation of physical types that exist among the peoples of India.

## C. Classification of A.C. Haddon (1924):

- He divided India into three main geographical regions—(a) Himalayas, (b) the Northern plains or Hindustan and (c) the Southern plateau or the Deccan which is mostly covered by the jungles. He had dealt with each of these three regions, separately, for the reconstruction of racial elements in them.
- **The Himalayan region:**
- **Two principal types are found in this region:**
- **(i) Indo-Aryan:**
- **(ii) Mongoloid:**

## (i) Indo-Aryan:

- People of this type show tall stature, brown skin colour with varying shades, dolichocephalic(LONG) head with straight fine leptorrhine(long narrow) nose, well-developed forehead and a long narrow face.
- This type is represented by the Kanets(Thakur,Rajputs) of Kulu Valley. In Eastern Punjab the Indo-Aryan Kanets exhibit a trace of Tibetan blood.

- **(ii) Mongoloid:**

- According to Haddon, this type dominates in North Eastern India.
- In fact, the main racial element of North East Frontier Agency of India is the Mongoloid and the representatives are the Lepcha, Garo, Naga, Khasi, Dafla, etc. who show the Mongoloid features.

# The Northern plains or Hindustan region:

- The Indo-Afghan is the predominating type of this region.
- The people are characterized by dolichocephalic head with straight fine leptorrhine nose, well-developed forehead and a long narrow face.
- Stature ranges from medium to tall, eyes are dark on light brown complexion.
- The hair is black and wavy. The representative populations are the Jats and the Rajputs and others.
- But the places where the members of this type have mixed with the aboriginal people, the admixture peoples are assumed as the lower caste people. The Deccan region or Southern plateau

# The different racial elements of this region as found by Haddon are as follows:

- **1. Negrito:**
- Some people of this area show Negrito racial strain. Their physical characteristics include medium head, flat nose, flattened occiput(back of the head), protruding forehead and very dark skin colour.
- The hair is black and the eyes are brown. The lips are somewhat fleshy and everted(turned inside out).
- The best representatives are the Kadars of Cochin, the Urallis of Nilgiri Hills and the Pullayans of Palni Hills. On the other hand, Andamanese represent a true Negrito racial element.



## 2. Pre-Dravidian

- This is the oldest existing stratum of Indian population.
- The people are characterized by dolichocephalic heads, short stature, and very dark skin with black hair.
- The hair form varies from wavy to very curly. The representative populations are Bhils, Gonds, Santals, Oraons, Hos, Mundas, etc.

### 3. Dravidian:

- The Dravidians are characterized by the dolichocephalic heads, medium stature, brownish black skin colour and the mesorrhine nose.
- They possess plentiful hair, which are wavy with an occasional tendency to curl.
- The people of South India speaking Tamil, Malayalam, Telegu, Canarese, etc. belong to this type.









## .4 Southern brachycephals:

- This type is characterized by Mesocephalic (medium head) to brachycephalic head and mesorrhine nose.
- The complexion is brownish black.
- However, the features are represented by the Paniyans of the Tamil district and the Pavara fishermen of the Tirunnevalley coast.

## 5. Western Brachycephals:

- Haddon had traced a zone of broad-headed people extending from Gujarat to Coorg, along the Western coastal area of India.
- The people are characterized by brachycephalic heads, almost leptorrhine nose, light brown skin colour and tall stature.
- Riskey had mentioned these people as the Scytho(sakans)-Dravidians. The best examples are the Nagar Brahmins of Gujarat, the Prabhu, the Maratha of Maharashtra, etc.
- Haddon's classification was based mainly on physical characters, artifacts, customs, languages and folk-tales. He justified his own analysis by the help of the evidences.
- According to his analysis, the oldest people of India must have been the Pre-Dravidians.



# E. Classification of B.S. Guha (1937):

- Dr. B. S. Guha's racial classification is based on anthropometric measurements, which were collected during his investigations from 1930 to 1933. Guha traced six major racial strains and nine sub-types among the modern Indian population.
- **1. The Negrito**
- **2. The Proto-Australoid**
- **3. The Mongoloid**
  - a) Palaeo-Mongoloid
    - i) Long-headed
    - ii) Broad-headed
  - b) Tibeto-Mongoloid

- **4. The Mediterranean**

- a) Palae-Mediterranean
- b) Mediterranean
- c) Oriental

- **5. The Western Brachycephals**

- a) Alpinoid
- b) Armenoid
- c) Dinaric

- **6. The Nordics**

# . The Negrito:

These people are considered as the first comers and **the true autochthones(original inhabitants) of India.**

They are characterized by dark skin colour, short stature, and frizzly hair with long or short spirals.

The head is either small, medium, long or broad with bulbous forehead. The nose is flat and broad. The lips are everted and thick.

# The Negrito:

- The best representatives of this type are the **Kadars, the Irulas, the Puniyans, etc. of South India.**
- Such type of characters is also visible among the tribes living in the Rajmahal Hills.
- In respect of the head form and hair form, the Indian Negrito strain resembles more to the Melanesian Pygmies than to the Andamanese or African Pygmies.

## 2. The Proto-Australoid:

- This group is considered as the **second oldest racial group in India**.
- The people are characterized by dolichocephalic head, broad and flat nose (platyrrhine nose) which is depressed at the root.
- They are further short in height, dark brown to nearly black in skin colour.
- The hair is wavy or curly. Supraorbital ridges are prominent. These features are found among almost all the tribes of the Central and Southern India.
- The best examples are the Oraons, the Santals, and the Mundas of Chottanagpur region; the Chenchus, the Kurumbas, the Yeruvas and the Badagas of Southern India; and the Bhils, Kols of Central and Western India.

### 3. The Mongoloid:

- This type of people is distinguished by scanty growth of hair on face and body. The eyes are obliquely set and show the presence of epicanthic fold. The face is flat with prominent cheekbones and hair is straight.
- This group can be divided into two sub-groups, such as Palaeo-Mongoloid and the Tibeto-Mongoloid. The former one is further sub-divided as long headed and broad-headed.
- In Palaeo-Mongoloid group, especially the longheaded type possesses long head, medium stature, and medium nose. Their cheekbones are prominent and skin colour varies from dark to light brown. The face is short and flat.
- They are the inhabitants of the sub-Himalayan region; the concentration is most remarkable in Assam and Burma Frontier.

# The Mongoloid:

- The Sema Nagas of Assam and the Limbus of Nepal are the best examples. The other sub-division of palaeo-Mongoloid is the broad-headed type who possesses broad head with round face, dark skin colour and medium nose.
- The eyes are obliquely set and epicanthic fold (skin **fold** of the upper eyelid covering the inner corner of the eye) is more prominent than that of the long-headed type. This type has been identified among the hill tribes of Chittagung, e.g. the chakmas, the Maghs, etc.

- Second sub-division of Mongoloid is the Tibeto-Mongoloids who shows no further divisions. Their physical features are characterized by broad and massive head, tall stature, long and flat face, and medium to long nose.
- The eyes are oblique with marked epicanthic fold. Hair on body and face is almost absent. The skin colour is light brown. The best examples are the Tibetans of Bhutan and Sikkim.



# 4. The Mediterranean

- **This group is divided into three distinct racial types, which are as follows:**
- **a) Palaeo-Mediterranean:**
- **b) The Mediterranean:**
- **c) The Oriental:**

## a) Palaeo-Mediterranean

- The people are characterized by long head with bulbous forehead, projected occiput with high vault.
- They also show medium stature, small and broad nose, narrow face and pointed chin. The hair on face and body is scanty. The skin colour is dark.
- These people probably introduced megalithic culture to India. The Dravidian speaking people of South India exhibit the main concentration of this type.
- The Tamil Brahmins of Madura, Nairs of Cochin, and Telugu Brahmins are the examples

## b) The Mediterranean:

- The features include long head with arched forehead, narrow nose, medium to tall stature and light skin colour.
- Their chin is well developed, hair colour is dark, eye colour is brownish to dark and the hair on face and body is plentiful.
- These people live in the regions like Uttar Pradesh, Bombay, Bengal, Malabar, etc.
- The true types are the Numbudiri Brahmins of Cochin, Brahmins of Allahabad and Bengali Brahmins. It may be assumed that probably this type was responsible for the building up of Indus Valley civilization.

- **c) The Oriental:**
- These people resemble the Mediterranean in almost all physical features except the nose, which is long and convex in this case.
- The best examples are the Punjabi Chattris, the Benia of Rajputana, and the Pathans.

## 5. The Western Brachycephals

- **This racial group is divided into three types as given below:**
- **a) The Alpenoid:**
- **b) The dinaric:**
- **c) The Armenoid:**

- **a) The Alpenoid:**

- This type shows broad head with rounded occiput, medium stature, prominent nose and rounded face.
- The hair on face and body is abundant and the skin colour is light.
- This type is found among the Bania of Gujarat, the Kathi of Kathiawar and the Kayasthas of Bengal,

## b) The dinaric:

- This type is characterized by broad head, rounded occiput and high vault. The nose is very long and often convex.(downward)
- The face is long and stature in general is very tall. The skin colour is dark; eye and hair colours are also dark.
- The representative populations are found in Bengal, Orissa and Coorg. The Brahmins of Bengal and Mysore are the best examples.
- Both the Alpino and the dinaric people entered into India through Baluchistan, Sind, Gujarat, and Maharashtra.
- They penetrated Ceylon from Kannada. The presence of this type has been noted in the Indus Valley site, Tinnevalley and Hyderabad.

- **c) The Armenoid:**

- This type shows a resemblance with the Dinarics in physical characters.
- Only difference is that, among the Dinarics the shape of occiput is much developed and the nose is very prominent.
- The Parsis of Bombay exhibit typical Armenoid characteristics. The Bengali Vaidyas and Kayasthas sometimes show the features of this type.



## 6. The Nordics:

- The people are characterized by long head, protruding occiput and arched forehead. The nose is straight and high bridged. All are tall statured with strong jaw and robust body built. The eye colour is blue or grey. The body colour is fair which is reddish white.
- This element is scattered in different parts of Northern India, especially in the Punjab and Rajputana.
- The Kho of chitral, the Red Kaffirs, and the Khatash are some other representatives of this type.
- The Nordics came from the north, probably from Southeast Russia and Southwest Siberia, thereafter penetrated into India through Central Asia.

# Criticism of Guha's Classification:

- Firstly, Guha's findings regarding the Negrito element have been opposed by almost all-leading anthropologists.
- Secondly, Guha tried to prove that all racial elements in India are of foreign origin. Keith strongly opposed this view. Because, Keith believed in a racial evolution that has taken place in India and so he took India an evolutionary field of different races.
- Further, Guha had shown the people of India as Mongoloid and Brachycephalic.
- He proposed a sweeping distribution of Brachycephals, southwards, round the both ends of the Himalayas, which ultimately extends to the West to spread over the whole of the Deccan.

- In the northeast and the east, this brachycephalic area is supposed to have spreaded from the Nepal and Bhutan, upto Bengal and Orissa.
- Dr. Sarkar has strongly opposed the proposition of Guha.
- In his opinion the brachycephalic population of India does not show a sweeping distribution as has been described by Guha.