

CONTRIBUTION OF ETHNICITY IN PROMOTING DIVERSITY IN INDIA

Ethnic diversity is one of the social complexities found in most contemporary societies. Historically it is the legacy of conquests that brought diverse peoples under the rule of a dominant group. Ethnicity refers to the differentiation of groups of people who have shared cultural meanings, memories, and descent produced through social interaction. Ethnicity is considered to be shared characteristics such as culture, language, religion, and traditions, which contribute to a person or group's identity.

An ethnic group, or an ethnicity, is a category of people who identify with each other based on similarities such as common ancestry, language, society, culture or nation. Ethnicity is usually an inherited status based on the society in which one lives. Membership of an ethnic group tends to be defined by a shared cultural heritage, ancestry, origin myth, history, homeland, language or dialect, symbolic systems such as religion, mythology and ritual, cuisine, dressing style, art, and physical appearance. An 'ethnic group' has been defined as a group that regards itself or is regarded by others as a distinct community by virtue of certain characteristics that will help to distinguish the group from the surrounding community.

The term ethnic is derived from the Greek word ethnos which was loaned into Latin as ethnicus. The inherited English language term for this concept is folk, used alongside the Latinate people since the late Middle English period.

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 i.e. The Dravidian, the Indo-Aryan and the Mongoloid. On the whole, Risley distinguished seven different 'physical types' in the Indian population in the following way:

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. 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 eyes 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 Bengalian type 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. 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 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.

7. The Turko-Iranian type:

This type is characterized by broad heads and a 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 the face and body. The type includes the inhabitants of Afghanistan, Balochistan 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 Turkish and Persian elements in which the former's features predominate. Risley's classification faced considerable criticism from different authorities, especially in respect of the Dravidians, the Scytho-Dravidians and the Mongolo-Dravidians. Besides, the Indo-Aryans are distributed only in Punjab, Rajputana and the Kashmir Valley according to Risley. But the speakers of Aryan languages actually occupy a vast area in the Indian subcontinent, which has not been reflected in his classification. If he had measured the people of Kashmir alone, then he should have placed them in a separate group as they possessed absolutely different physical features. Further, Risley had given much importance to Scythian elements when he discussed broad-headed people as the ScythoDravidian type. In fact, the Scythian invaders stayed so short that they hardly got any opportunity to spread any remarkable influence among ethnic elements of the Bombay Presidency where Risley conducted his study. Risley also stated that the broad-headed elements in Bengal have been influenced by the Mongolian people. But it is difficult to confirm that the brachycephalic elements in Bengal and Gujrat have been derived from the Mongolian element. Although all Mongolian people are brachycephals, the epicanthic fold as a typical Mongolian feature is found only among some people living in Darjeeling and neighboring districts. This feature is totally absent among the people of other parts of Bengal.

Classification of Giufrida-Ruggeri (1921)

Giufrida- Ruggeri made the following six-fold ethnic classification for the people of India:

- 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 element:** Toda.
- 5. Dolichocephalic Aryan :** Indo-Afghans, Indo-Iranians, etc.
- 6. brachycephalic leucoderm** – Armenians, Georgianus, 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- Iranian, 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.

Classification of Dr. B.S. Guha (1937)

The racial classification of Dr. B. S. Guha's work is based on anthropometric measurements, which were collected during his investigations from 1930 to 1933. Guha traced six major racial strains and nine subtypes among the modern Indian population.

1. The Negrito:

These people are considered as the first comers and the true autochthones of India. They are characterized by dark skin colour, short stature, and frizzy hair with long or short spirals. The head is small, medium, long or broad with a bulbous forehead. The nose is flat and broad. The lips are everted and thick. 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 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 Yeruvakas 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 long-headed 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 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 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, these are:

a) Palaeo-Mediterranean: The people are characterized by long head with bulbous forehead, projected 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 Madurai, 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, which are:

a) *The Alpenoid:* This type shows broad head, medium stature, prominent nose and rounded face. The hair on the 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. The nose is very long and often convex. 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 the occiput is much more 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, 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 reddish. 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.

Ethnic Composition of India (General Classification):

India's present day population is a conglomeration of people belonging to different racial groups with different ethnic backgrounds. The people entered India from different parts of the world at different time periods adopting themselves. India has been a meeting point of different races and tribes from times immemorial. Almost all the major races of the world are visible in India. As a result, India has a varied population and diversified ethnic composition.

The population of the country mainly derived from the following racial groups:

(1) Negrito:

- The word Negrito is the Spanish diminutive of negro, used to mean "little black person".
- The Negritos from Africa were the earliest people to have come to India. This is the oldest tribe in India.
- They have survived in their original habitat in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- The Jarawas, Onges, Sentinelese and the Great Andamanese are some of the examples.
- Some hill tribes like Irulas, Kodars, Paniyans and Kurumbas are found in some patches in Southern part of mainland India.
- Badgi in Rajmahal (Bihar), Jaroya in Andaman, Kadar in Karnataka, Naga+khasi in North East etc.
- This has often been interpreted to the effect that they are remnants of the original expansion from Africa some 70,000 years ago.
- However, another study suggests that the Onge (indigenous to Little Andaman) are "more closely related to Southeast Asians than they are to present-day South Asians", and that the Great Andamanese "appear to have received a degree of relatively recent admixture from adjacent regional populations but also share a significant degree of genetic ancestry with Malaysian negrito groups.
- Significant geographical distribution (Globally): Andaman Nicobar island in India, peninsular region in Malaysia, Thailand's Southern part, Philippines's Luzon, negros, Palawan region etc.

❖ Racial features:

- ✓ Height : short stature
- ✓ Skin color : brown to black
- ✓ Hair: woolly or curly hair
- ✓ Nose: wide and fatty
- ✓ Lips: wide and reverse
- ✓ Head: wide
- ✓ Forehead: bulbous forehead

(2) Proto-Australoid or Australo-Melanesian:

The term "Australoid" was coined in ethnology in the mid 19th century, describing tribes or populations "of the type of native Australians". In physical anthropology, Australoid is used for morphological features characteristic of Aboriginal Australians by Daniel John Cunningham in his Text-book of Anatomy (1902). An Australoid racial group was first proposed by Thomas Huxley in an essay On the Geographical Distribution of the Chief Modifications of Mankind (1870), in which he divided humanity into four principal groups (Xanthochroic, Mongoloid, Negroid, and Australoid). The term "Proto-Australoid" was used by Roland Burrage Dixon in his Racial History of Man (1923). In a 1962 publication, Australoid was described as one of the five

major human races alongside Caucasoid, Mongoloid, Congoid and Capoid. South Indian tribes specifically described as having Australoid affinities include the Oraon, Munda, Santal, Bhil, Gondi, the Kadars of Kerala, the Kurumba and Irula of the Nilgiris, the Paniyans of Malabar, the Uralis, Kannikars, Mithuvan and Chenchus, Malpaharis of the highland of central India. This tribe is dominant in Middle and South India. Proto Australoids or Austrics were the next to come to India after the Negritos. They are people with wavy hair lavishly distributed all over their brown bodies. Long headed with low foreheads and prominent eye ridges, noses with low and broad roots, thick jaws, large palates and teeth and small chins.

❖ **Racial features:**

- ✓ Height : short to medium stature
- ✓ Skin color : brown to black
- ✓ Hair: clean hair
- ✓ Nose: broad flat
- ✓ Lips: wide and reverse
- ✓ Head: wide
- ✓ Forehead: bulbous forehead

(3) Mongoloid:

❖ **Mongols:** The Mongols are an East-Central Asian ethnic group native to Mongolia and to China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. They also live as minorities in other regions of China, as well as in Russia. Mongoloid is a grouping of various peoples indigenous to Asia, North America, South America, and the Pacific Islands (with some exceptions). In 2019 Mongoloid comprised 29%, Negroid 27% and Caucasian 20% of earth population. The first use of the term Mongolian race was by Christoph Meiners in 1785, who divided humanity into two races he labeled "Tartar-Caucasians" and "Mongolians". • The word "mong" derives from the word "mongol" and "mongoloid". Dr. John Langdon Down, who discovered Down's syndrome in the 1860s, used "mongolism" and "mongoloid" to describe the people from Mongolia and Mongoloid race (those of Asian ethnicity). Mongoloids found in the North-Eastern part of India in the States of Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, and Tripura and in Northern parts of West Bengal, Sikkim, and Ladakh are people with yellow complexion, oblique eyes, high cheekbones, sparse hair and medium height. Indian tribes belonging to the Mongoloid race: Lepcha, Toda, Rava, Khasi, Limbu, Garo, Naga, Chakma etc.

❖ **Mongolian community in India:** Onward migration from Tibet: Mongolians who were originally studying in Tibet in the 1950s followed the Tibetans and fled to India after the 1950 invasion of Tibet and the 1959 Tibetan uprising. Many of them settled in Kalimpong, West Bengal. Direct migration from Mongolia: They entered India through northern or eastern mountain. Presently they occupy large areas of Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and other part of north east India.

The Mongoloid race of India can be divided into two sub groups:

(i) Palaeo- Mongoloids: Assam and Myanmar border.

(ii) Tibeto-Mongoloids: Bhutan border, Sikkim and Trans Himalayas.

❖ **Racial features:**

- ✓ Height : medium to tall
- ✓ Skin color : Yellowish to fair
- ✓ Hair: straight and dark hair.
- ✓ Nose: flat to steep
- ✓ Lips: simple
- ✓ Head: wide and round
- ✓ Forehead: high
- ✓ Check bones: high

(4) Dravidians:

The origin of the Sanskrit word dravida is the word tamiz (Tamil). The Sanskrit word dravida is used to denote the geographical region of South India. In Prakrit, words such as "Damela", "Dameda", "Dhamila" and "Damila", which later evolved from "Tamila", could have been used to denote an ethnic identity. While the English word Dravidian was first employed by Robert Caldwell in his book of comparative Dravidian grammar based on the usage of the Sanskrit word dravida in the work Tantravartika by Kumarila Bhatta, the word dravida in Sanskrit has been historically used to denote geographical regions of Southern India as whole. Dravidian people or Dravidians are speakers of any of the Dravidian languages. There are around 245 million native speakers of Dravidian languages. Dravidian speakers form the majority of the population of south India and are natively found in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Maldives and Sri Lanka.

❖ **Origin of the Dravidians:**

- ❖ The origins of the Dravidians are a "very complex subject of research and debate."
- ❖ They may have been indigenous to the Indian subcontinent, but origins in, or influence from, West-Asia has also been proposed.
- ❖ According to Narasimhan et al. (2018), Dravidians formed as a mixture of Archaic Ancestral South Asians, and neolithic farmers from Iran.
- ❖ Although in modern times speakers of various Dravidian languages have mainly occupied the southern portion of India, Dravidian speakers must have been widespread throughout the Indian subcontinent before the Indo-Aryan migration into the subcontinent.
- ❖ According to Carole Davies, "many academic researchers have attempted to connect the Dravidians with the remnants of the great Indus Valley Civilisation, located in Northwestern India," most noteworthy Asko Parpola, who did extensive research on the

IVC-scripts. The Brahui population of Balochistan in Pakistan has been taken by some as the linguistic equivalent of a relict population, perhaps indicating that Dravidian languages were formerly much more widespread and were supplanted by the incoming Indo-Aryan languages.

- ❖ Nowadays Tamils, Malayalis, Telugus, Kannadigas that make up around 20% of India's population.

❖ **Racial features:**

- ✓ Height : medium to tall
- ✓ Skin color : black, brown, fair
- ✓ Hair: plentiful hair with slight curls
- ✓ Nose: steep
- ✓ Lips: simple
- ✓ Head: wide and round
- ✓ Forehead: high

(5) Mediterranean:

The Mediterranean race (Mediterranean race) is one of the sub-races into which the Caucasian race was categorized by most anthropologists in the late 19th to mid-20th centuries. This racial stock may be related to the Caucasian physical type i.e. the white race. It is one of the dominant races in India. The Mediterranean is characterized by medium or short stature, slender build, long head and dark complexion. The Mediterranean race is divided into three types such as:

- (i) Palaeo-Mediterranean
- (ii) Mediterranean and
- (iii) Oriental.

The Paleo-Mediterranean racial type is found in Tamil-Nadu and Andhra Pradesh and is represented by the Tamil and Telegu Brahmins in South India. The Mediterranean is considered one among the most dominant racial strains in India who are believed to have been the builders of the Indus Valley Civilization. The oriental Mediterranean is almost similar to the Mediterranean type. Even though the Mediterranean race was once pre-dominant throughout India, but now it is confined to the South, among the Dravidians.

❖ **Racial features:**

- ✓ Height: shorter or medium (not tall) stature,
- ✓ Skull: long or moderate skull,
- ✓ Nose: a narrow and often slightly aquiline nose,
- ✓ Hair and Eyes: prevalence of dark hair and eyes,
- ✓ Skin Colour: cream to tan or dark brown skin tone,

(6) Brachycephals:

Western Brachycephalics include the broad headed people living mainly on the Western side of the country such as the Ganga valley and the delta, parts of Kashmir, Kathiawar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The Parsis and Kodavas also fall under this category. It is believed that the western Brachycephals have entered India from the west.

This race is divided into three sub-groups:

- (i) The Alpinoid
- (ii) The Dinaric and
- (iii) The Armenoid.

The Alpinoid is characterized by broad head, medium stature, light skin and are found amongst the Bonias of Gujarat, the Kayastha caste of Bengal etc. The Dinaric is found among the Brahmin of Bengal, non-Brahmin of Karnataka. This strain is also claimed to be found among the Orissans. People belonging to this strain are characterized by broad-head, long nose, tall stature, dark skin colour. The Armenoid is characterized by more marked shape of the back of head, a prominent and narrow nose. The Parsees of Bombay possess these characteristics and therefore they are believed to be the true representatives of this racial type.

(6) Nordic or Indo-Aryan: Russian-born French anthropologist Joseph Deniker that initially proposed "nordique" (meaning simply "northern") as an "ethnic group" (a term that he coined). He defined nordique by a set of physical characteristics such as the concurrence of somewhat wavy hair, light eyes, reddish skin, tall stature and a dolichocephalic skull. Of six 'Caucasian' groups Deniker accommodated four into secondary ethnic groups, all of which he considered intermediate to the Nordic: Northwestern, Sub-Nordic, Vistula and Sub-Adriatic, respectively. Nordics points were the last one to immigrate to India. They came to India somewhere between 2000 and 1500 BC. They are now mainly found in the Northern and Central part of India. People belonging to this racial stock are characterized by tall stature, long head, light skin and hair and blue eyes. This physical stock has come to India from the North South East Asia, South West Siberia through Central Asia and spread all over the Northern part of our country during the second millennium B.C. At present, this strain is found amongst the Bania castes of Gujarat, the Kayasthas of Bengal etc., in North India, not in a pure form, but in a mixed form with the Mediterranean race. They are, in particular, found in Punjab and Rajputana. This racial type is represented by the Kho of Chitral, the Red Kaffirs, and the Khatash. It is believed that they have influenced Indian culture through their contribution of new ideas to philosophy and literature.
