

BA/BSc. 5th semester (Major Course)
Paper 502: Regional Geography of
India and SAAC nations
Unit 1: Regional Geography of India

Unity in Diversity

- Unity means integration and diversity means variety (differences).
- Unity is a social psychological condition. It connotes a sense of one-ness, a sense of we-ness. It stands for the bonds, which hold the members of a society together.
- Differences may be biological (racial diversity), religious (religious diversity), linguistic etc.
- When groups of people hailing from different races, religions, caste and cultures, they represent diversity.
- D.N. Majumdar wrote a book with the title, “Races and Cultures of India”. Mark the words in the plural: Races (not Race); Cultures (not Culture).
- State of togetherness
- Oneness in varieties
- Unity among diverse cultures and society
- A country providing the fact of unity and diversity



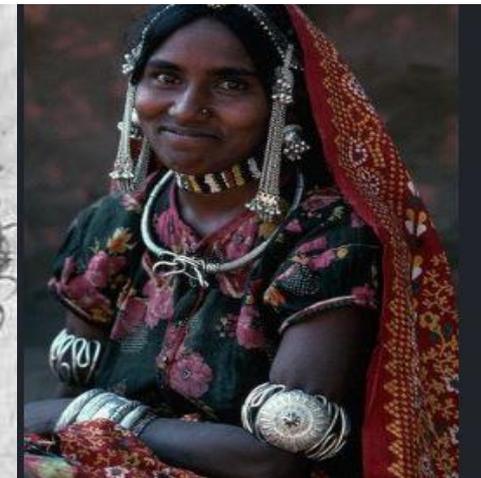
- Civilization of India is **5000** years old.
- Undivided to divided India
- Population- **1.21 billion** (2011 census)
- Area- **3, 287 million sq.km**
- **28 states and 8 union territories**
- Official languages-**18**
- Languages spoken- **325**
- Dialects- **1652**
- **Parliamentary form** of Govt.
- **Secular democratic** constitution
- World's **largest democracy**
- **Physical and cultural diversity**

Racial Diversity

A race is a group of people with a set of distinctive physical features such as skin colour, type of nose, form of hair, etc.

B.S. Guha (1952) has identified 6 racial types:

1. **The Negrito:** the black racial stock as found in Africa. They have black skin colour, frizzle hair, thick lips, etc. In India some of the tribes in South India, such as the Kadar, the Irula and the Paniyan have distinct Negrito strain.
2. **The Proto Australoid:** Australian aborigines and other peoples of southern Asia and Pacific Islands (the Ainu of Japan, the Vedda of Sri Lanka, and the Sakai of Malaysia). In India the tribes of Middle India belong to this strain. Some of these tribes are the Ho of Singhbhum, Bihar, and the Bhil of the Vindhya ranges.

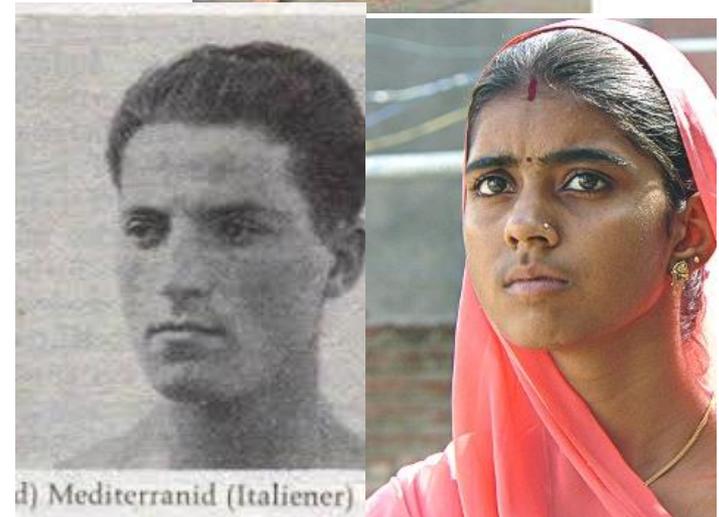


3. **Mongoloids:** racial stock native to Asia, including the peoples of northern and eastern Asia. For example, Chinese, Japanese, Burmese, Eskimos, and often American Indians also belong to this race. In India, the North Eastern regions have tribes of brachycephalic Mongoloid strain. A slightly different kind of Mongoloid racial stock is found in the Brahmputra Valley. The Mikir-Bodo group of tribes and the Angami Nagas represent the best examples of Mongoloid racial composition in India.

4. **The Mediterranean:** relate to the caucasian physical type, i.e., the white race.

5. **The Western Brachycephals:** 1) The Alpenoid are characterised by broad head, medium stature and light skin, found amongst Bania castes of Gujarat, the Kayasthas of Bengal, etc. (ii) The Dinaric- They are characterised by broad head, long nose, tall stature and dark skin colour, found amongst the Brahmin of Bengal, the non-Brahmin of Karnataka, (iii) The Armenoid- They are characterised by features similar to Dinaric. The Armenoid have a more marked shape of the back of head, a prominent and narrow nose. The Parsi of Bombay show the typical characteristics of the Armenoid race

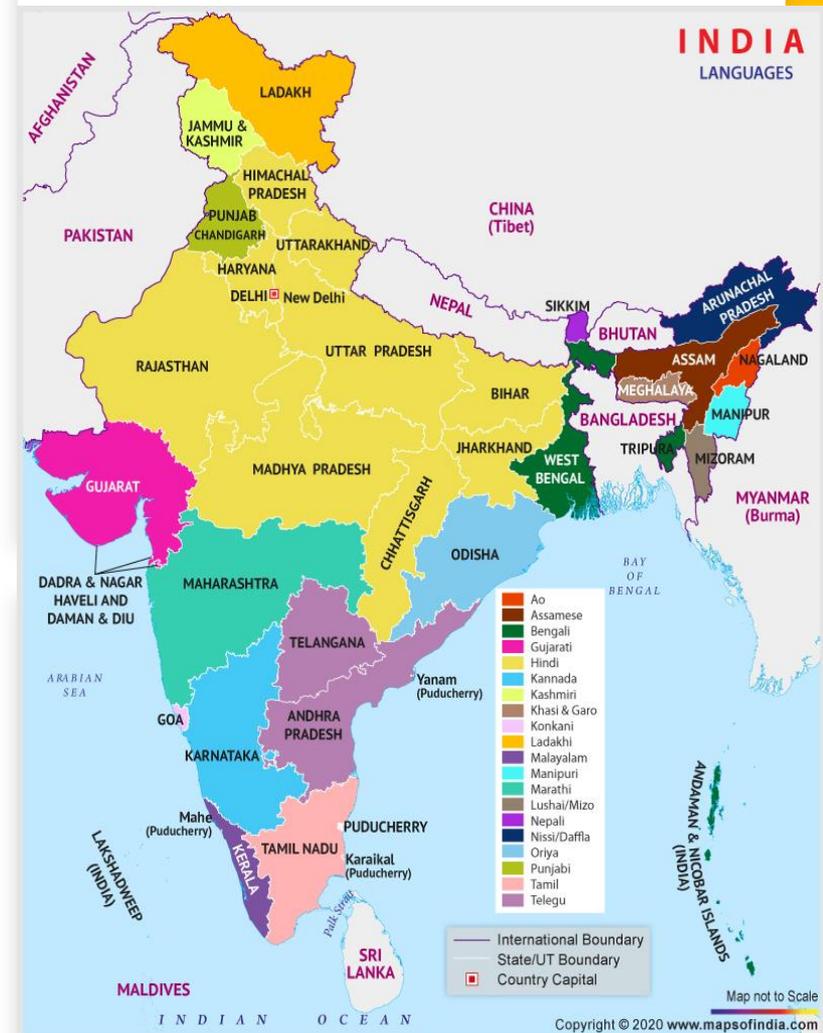
6. **The Nordic:** physical type characterised by tall stature, long head, light skin and hair, and blue eyes. They are found in Scandinavian countries, Europe. In India, they are found in different parts of north of the country, especially in Punjab and Rajputana. The Kho of Chitral, the Red Kaffirs, the Khatash are some of the representatives of this type.





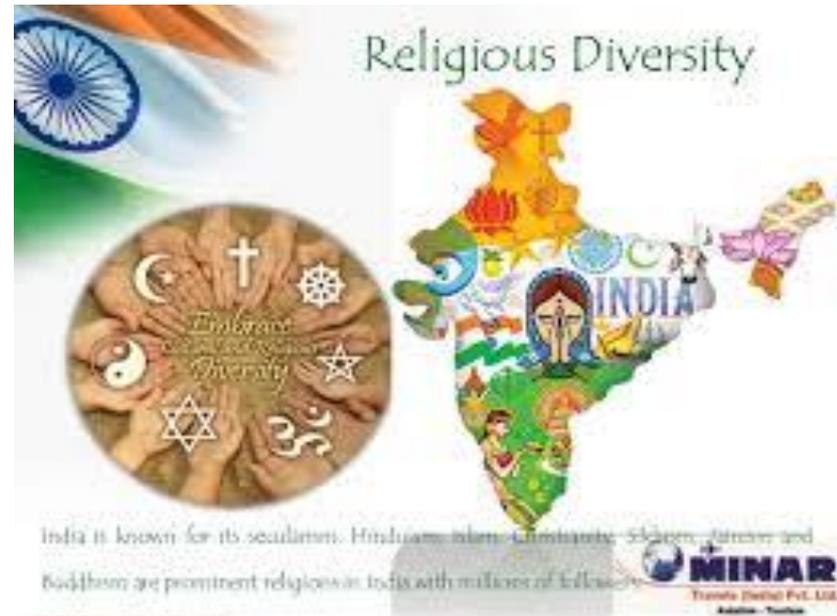
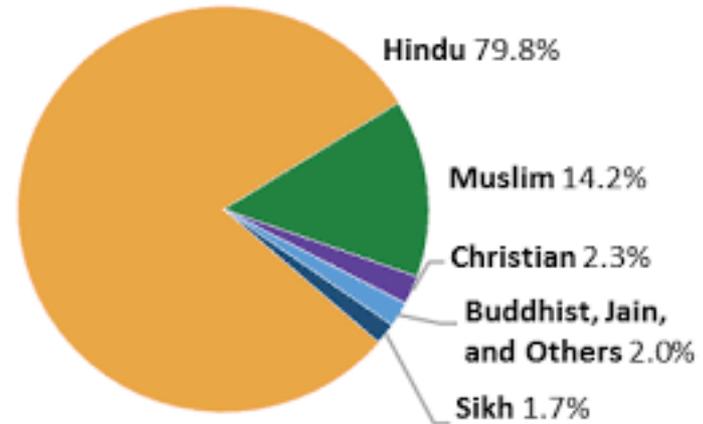
Linguistic Diversity:

- Grierson noted 179 languages and 544 dialects, the 1971 census on the other hand, reported 1652 languages in India which are spoken as mother tongue.
- Only 18 languages are listed in Schedule VIII of the Indian Constitution. These are Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu.
- The above constitutionally recognised languages belong to two linguistic families: Indo-Aryan and Dravidian. Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil and Telugu are the four major Dravidian languages. The languages of Indo-Aryan family are spoken by 75 percent of India's total population while the languages of Dravidian family are spoken by 20 percent.
- In ancient times it was Sanskrit, in medieval age it was Arabic or Persian and in modern times we have Hindi and English as official languages.



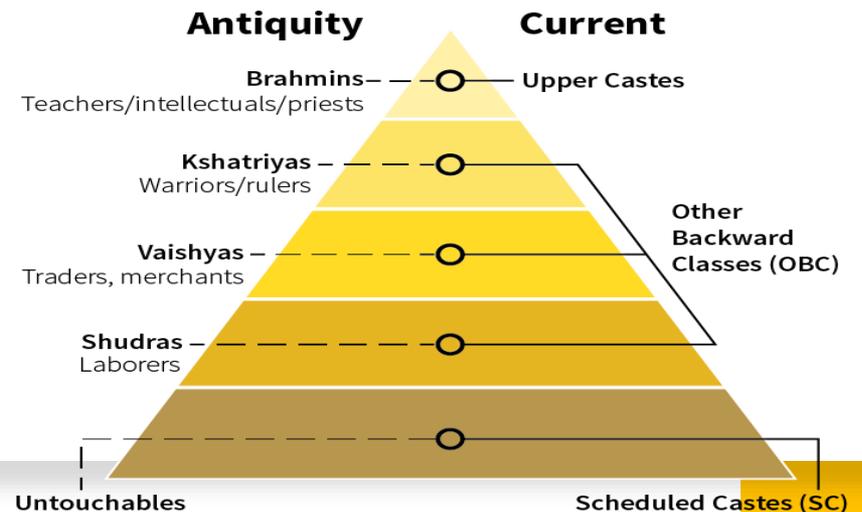
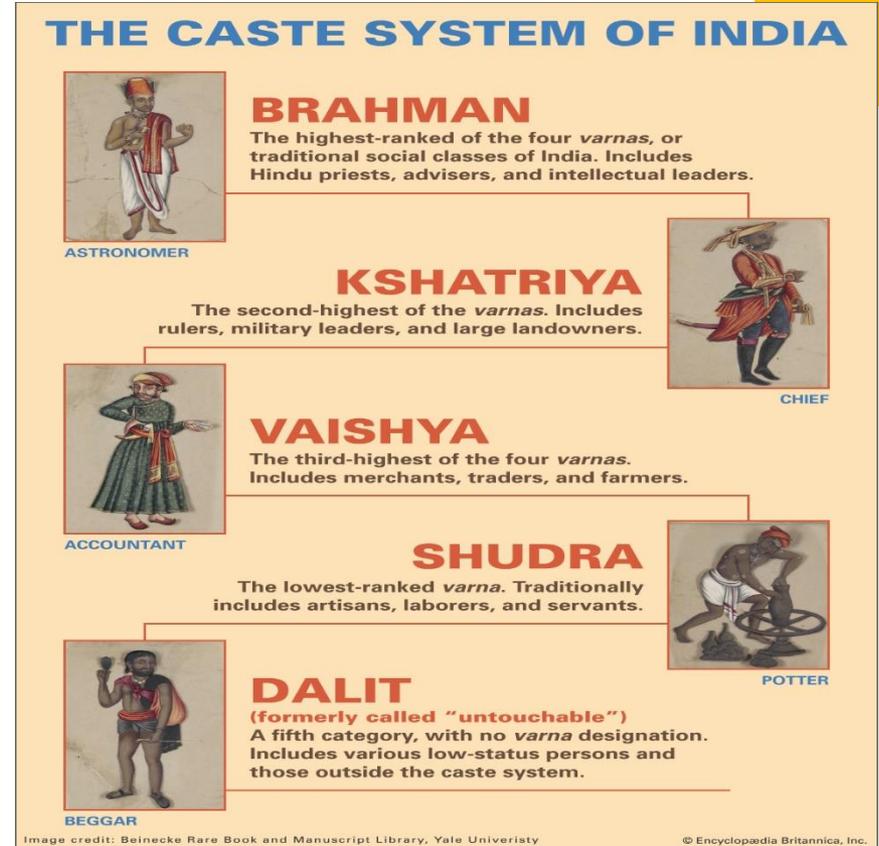
Religious Diversity

- India is a land of multiple religions. We find here followers of various faiths, particularly of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, among others.
- Hinduism is the dominant religion of India
- Then there are sects within each religion. Hinduism, for example, has many sects including Shaiva, Shakta and Vaishnava. Add to them the sects born or religious reform movements such as Arya Samaj, Brahma Samaj, Ram Krishna Mission. More recently, some new cults have come up such as Radhaswami, Saibaba, etc. Similarly, Islam is divided into Shiya and Sunni; Sikhism into Namdhari and Nirankari; Jainism into Digambar and Shvetambar; and Buddhism into Hinayan and Mahayan.
- Hindu and Muslim are found in almost all parts of India, the remaining minority religions have their pockets of concentration. Christians have their strongholds in the three southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh and in the north-eastern states like Nagaland and Meghalaya. Sikhs are concentrated largely in Punjab, Buddhists in Maharashtra, and Jains are mainly spread over Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat, but also found in most urban centres throughout the country



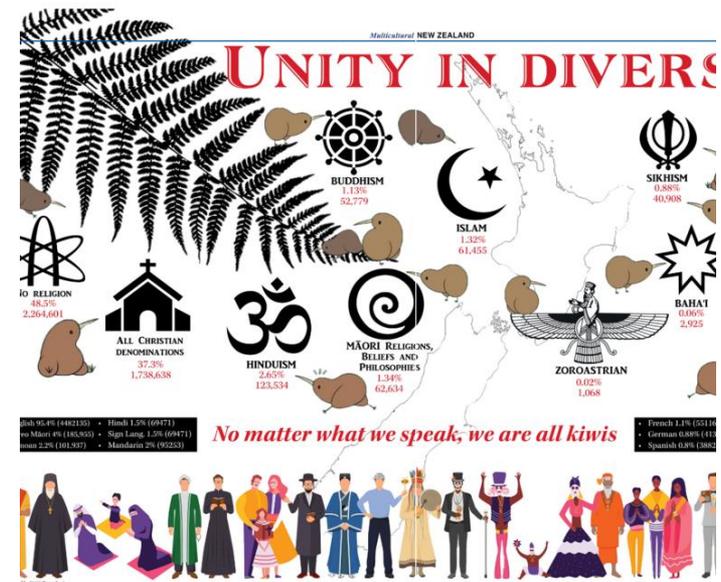
Caste diversity

- India, as you know, is a country of castes.
- The term caste is generally used in two senses: sometimes in the sense of Varna and sometimes in the sense of Jati.
 - Varna refers to a segment of the four-fold division of Hindu society based on functional criterion. The four Varna are Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra with their specialised functions as learning, defence, trade and manual service. The Varna hierarchy is accepted all over India.
 - Jati refers to a hereditary endogamous status group practising a specific traditional occupation. You may be surprised to know that there are more than 3,000 jati in India. These are hierarchically graded in different ways in different regions.
- The practice of caste system is not confined to Hindus alone. We find castes among the Muslim, Christian, Sikh as well as other communities. You may have heard of the hierarchy of Shaikh, Saiyed, Mughal, Pathan among the Muslim. Furthermore, there are castes like teli (oil pressure), dhobi (washerman), darjee (tailor), etc. among the Muslim. In view of this you can well imagine the extent of caste diversity in India.
- The diversity of many other sorts like settlement patterns - tribal, rural, urban; marriage and kinship patterns along religious and regional lines; cultural patterns reflecting regional variations, and so on.



Unity amidst diversity

- There are bonds of unity underlying all this diversity. These bonds of unity may be located in a certain underlying uniformity of life as well as in certain mechanisms of integration.
- Census Commissioner in 1911, Herbert Risley (1969), was right when he observed: “Beneath the manifold diversity of physical and social type, language, custom and religion which strikes the observer in India there can still be discerned a certain underlying uniformity of life from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin”.
- These are geo-political unity, the institution of pilgrimage, tradition of accommodation, and tradition of interdependence.



Geo-political:

- The first bond of unity of India is found in its geo-political integration.
- India is known for its geographical unity marked by the Himalayas in the north end and the oceans on the other sides.
- Politically India is now a sovereign state.
- The same constitution and same parliament govern every part of it.
- We share the same political culture marked by the norms of democracy, secularism and socialism.
- Although it has not been recognised till recently, the geo-political unity of India was always visualized by our seers and rulers.
- The expressions of this consciousness of the geo-political unity of India are found in Rig-Veda, in Sanskrit literature, in the edicts of Asoka, in Buddhist monuments and in various other sources.
- The ideal of geo-political unity of India is also reflected in the concepts of Bharatvarsha (the old indigenous classic name for India), Chakravarti (emperor), and Ekchhatradhipatya (under one rule).



The Institution of Pilgrimage:

- Another source of unity of India lies in what is known as **temple culture**, which is reflected in the **network of shrines and sacred places**.
- From Badrinath and Kedarnath in the north to Rameshwaram in the south, Jagannath Puri in the east to Dwaraka in the west the religious shrines and holy rivers are spread throughout the length and breadth of the country.
- Closely related to them is the age-old culture of pilgrimage, which has always moved people to various parts of the country and fostered in them a sense of geo-cultural unity.
- It has played a significant part in promoting interaction and cultural affinity among the people living in different parts of India. Pilgrimage can, therefore, rightly be viewed as a mechanism of geo-cultural unity.

Tradition of Accommodation: Have you heard of the syncretic quality of Indian culture, its remarkable quality of accommodation and tolerance?

- The first evidence of it lies in the elastic character of Hinduism, the majority religion of India.
- It is common knowledge that Hinduism is not a homogeneous religion, a religion having one God, one Book and one Temple. Indeed, it can be best described as a federation of faiths.
- Polytheistic (having multiple deities) in character, it goes to the extent of accommodating village level deities and tribal faiths.

