



## TOPIC

### Race and Religion – Part One (Race)

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## 1.1 Introduction

❖ This world is full of diversities. Living and non-living beings are one of the most glaring diversity and even within living beings we often make differences among plant, animals, humans, etc.

❖ Further, we make differences between man and man, based on many perceptions like race, religion, culture, linguistic, political affiliation, nationality, wealth, etc.

❖ Many social scientists agree that among these criterions cultural differences are probably most profound but it is race and religion which has known to create most controversies and conflicts around the world.

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## 2.1 Objectives

- ❖ The present presentation will deal an important aspects of human society- the race.
- ❖ In the first we will come to know about concepts of race, how this notions have originated, its so called types and associated features, its social implications, etc.

## 3.1 Understanding the Concept Race

- ❖ The term race is full of controversies. This conception has varying meaning from time to time, culture to culture and place to place due to controversies associated with its scientific, political or social explanations.

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❖ First of all, the present confusion is also due to different usage the word 'race', for example this word is used to describe individual human beings like French, German, Chinese, white, black, etc. in USA; used for some domestic animal species in Italy and not for human and wild animals; in English language has a separate equivalent word 'breed' for domestic animals; in Nordic languages it is applied to both human as well as animals, etc.

❖ Further, humans in all society have most probably always observed and speculated about the physical differences among individuals and groups and also they have attributed markedly different meanings to these distinctions based on their own social-political relations/understandings.

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❖ The father of ethnography and a famous Greek thinker Herodotus had view that *Agythrsi* were the most refined people who wore gold ornaments; *Neuris* had peculiar capacity to transform themselves into wolf; *Androphagis* were the most rude and savage; *Budinis* were blue eyed, red haired and well built; *Geloni* were settled farmers (Husain, 1995).

❖ Similarly, why it is that the Celts and the Germans are fierce; Hellenes and Romans are inclined to political life and humane; Egyptians are more intelligent and more given to crafts; Syrians were unwarlike and effeminate, but at the same time intelligent, hot-tempered, vain and quick to learn (Julian, 1923).

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❖ All these show that concept of race in whatever form was there from very early time. Thus in order to understand the origin of the concept race, we also need to have an insight into evolution and distribution of man on the earth.

❖ Scientific explorations have proved that origin of any kind of living being in this world is possible only at certain geo-environmentally favourable areas.

❖ Two possibilities are there, either the evolution of human take place at one favourable geo-environmental area and latter they spread to other areas and survived or they evolved at more than one distant favourable geo-environmental area and survived thereafter.

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❖ In the case of first, it is very much clear that scientifically/genetically all human beings have no glaring differences to classify them into different races. However in the case of second possibility the concept of race seems valid.

❖ Further, careful scientific investigations have already made it clear that the present species of man has evolved from common ancestor called *Homo sapiens* at one favourable area and later they spread to other parts of the world.

❖ There is no direct evidence to establish when the first man appeared on the earth surface and at which place he was born (Husain, 2002).

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❖ By comparing the degree of biological similarity of man and other animals and also by studying and analysing fossils of man and other animals found at different places we learn about the evolution of early man.

❖ Further, origin, survival and growth of a species depend not only on geo-environment of an area but also on technological attainment, large adaptability of brain and body, their competition with other species, etc.

❖ The long gestation period of human embryo and dependency of female to male during this time suggests man is a social animal since very early time.

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- ❖ The only possibility of man's out migration in very early time was push factor either in the form of adverse geo-environment or competition from other humans.
- ❖ Climatic studies have shown that by 3 to 2.4 million years ago the temperature of Africa decreased and it become progressively colder and drier.
- ❖ This has reduced the dense rainforest area of North Africa and by this time the *genus* Homo started becoming holy terrestrial and turning towards more carnivorous nature.
- ❖ In this time other herbivores and carnivores also multiplied in grassland and steppe areas.

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❖ Probably, due to increased stature and large brain, *genus* Homo was quick in adapting themselves to new difficulties than other animals.

❖ This has given them an opportunity to multiply their population and now they also started following herds and other resources.

❖ The long geographical segregation leads to development of different *species* of *genus* homo.

❖ By 1.8 million years ago Homo erectus was evolved from Homo *habilis* and spread out in Asia and Europe by 1.5 million years ago.

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❖ However, the glacial and interglacial periods of Pleistocene Period plays very important role in deciding the present distribution of Homo sapiens around the world.

❖ Though there is no unanimity but based on fossil evidences it is generally agreed that between 500,000 to 300,000 years ago Homo sapiens staged properly on this earth as a separate *species*.

❖ During the Pleistocene glaciations area under permanent ice cover increased, sea level fall and land suitable normally to species of tropical and subtropical areas shrank while interglacial period provided them suitable geo-environment in larger areas.

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❖ Thus each time glacial period bring a crisis not only to then surviving human species but also to many other species.

❖ In Pleistocene glacial periods of Gunz, Mindel and Riss human species residing in frontier areas tried to recede back in their earlier warmer areas. However, those resided within tropics in Africa were least affected by it. This gave them an opportunity to equip themselves somewhat in better way.

❖ In fact by 150,000 years ago Homo sapiens firmly spread out in nearly whole Africa. By the end of glacial period of Riss Homo neanderthalensis originated as a separate species physically better adapted to colder climate.

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❖ The interglacial period between Riss and Wurn was very important in deciding modern species distribution of human. By this time Homo sapiens were definitely better equipped than other Homo species of the world.

❖ This interglacial period become as a crisis period for Homo neanderthalensis as this has reduced glacial areas, increased temperature and gave little time to settle them.

❖ On the other hand Homo sapiens have multiplied and by 70,000 years ago spread out from Africa to Asia and Europe. This time Homo sapiens were not receded in last Pleistocene glaciations Wurn but stayed there in colder areas using better technology like cave dwelling, etc.

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❖ These Homo sapiens has played a decisive role in wiping out Homo neanderthalensis and Homo erectus either through direct competition for territory, technological superiority to better adapt adverse geo-environmental conditions or through gene-mixing and dominance of genes of Homo sapiens.

❖ Now it is evident that the modern man along with chimpanzees, gorillas, bonobos, orangutans, all primate species, belongs to *superfamily* of Hominoidae in anthropological evolution.

❖ Hominoidae is divided into two *family* Hominidae and Hylobatidae.

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❖ Hominidae is further evolved into two *subfamily* Homininae and Ponginae; Homininae further leads to evolution of two *tribes* Hominini and Gorillini and finally Hominini evolved into two *genus*- Homo and Pan.

❖ The *genus* Homo had several *species*-Homo habilis, Homo erectus, Homo neanderthalensis and Homo sapiens.

❖ Homo habili was the first species in this *genus* which evolved about two million years ago in Eastern Africa and spread quickly in different parts of Africa.

❖ Homo erectus evolved by 1.8 million years ago and by 1.5 million years ago spread over Europe and Asia.

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❖ Homo neanderthalensis was evolved as a species better suited to colder climate by 1.3 lakh years ago and disappeared from Asia and Europe by 50,000 and 30,000 years ago respectively due to adverse climate and competition with/comparative advantage of Homo sapiens.

❖ The lone survivor of *genus* Homo, the Homo sapiens, believed to have evolved from Homo erectus.

❖ Two theories have been postulated to explain present distribution of Homo sapiens around the world.

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❖ Milford H. Wolpoff in early 1980s postulated 'Multiregional Hypothesis' or 'Regional Continuity Hypothesis' to explain this phenomenon (Wolpoff et al., 1988).

❖ Based on fossils data he argued that all *genus* of Homo like Homo erectus, Neanderthals, Homo sapiens, etc. were a one species evolved around 2 million years ago as Homo erectus in Africa and then spread throughout the world.

❖ The isolation from each other imparted them a regional character and side by side their interbreeding, gene flow, natural selection of genes, etc. has promoted somewhat similar evolution all around the world to give present stock of human species the modern Homo sapiens.

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- ❖ Thus human evolution not only maintained regional character but also maintained their commonness.
- ❖ The critics of this hypothesis say fossils evidences are not adequate.
- ❖ Further mitochondrial DNA sequencing using fossils of Neanderthals has suggested that they are separate species and they have not contributed mitochondrial DNA to modern species of man.
- ❖ Another hypothesis called '*Out of Africa*' or '*Complete Replacement*' was postulated by Chris Stringer and Peter Andrews.

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❖ They believed that Homo sapiens evolved in Africa some 200,000 years ago and spread out around the world between 70,000 – 50,000 years ago.

❖ Finally due to their better environmental adaptability using superior technology they eventually replaced existing hominid species like Homo erectus and Homo neanderthalensis in Europe and Asia.

❖ Researches on haplogroups in Y-chromosomal DNA and mitochondrial DNA; autosomal DNA; highest mitochondrial genetic diversity among African populations, etc. supports 'Out of Africa Hypothesis' and now it is more recognised by anthropologists with some exceptions.

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❖ Thus in the long history of human evolution Africans, Asians and Europeans ethnic groups and sub-groups were differentiated very recently and only slightly in their adaptation to regional geo-environment.

❖ Only a very small part of modern human genome which decides minor features like skin, hair and eye colour; nose, lip and eye lid etc. vary in different geo-environment.

❖ These minor variations show only better adaptability to locale geo-environment and thus a black skin of negro definitely make him better adapted to tropical areas than a white skinned person. Similarly a person born and grown in high altitude areas are better adapted to low oxygen there than his counterpart born and grown in plain areas.

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❖ These minor features may of some significance in early time when environmental determinism was dominant but with rapid technological attainments there importance has further diluted.

❖ Thus all persons are nearly equal in terms of intellect, physical capability, cognition, communication, interbreeding, etc. around this world.

❖ This also explains why among different surviving primate species man has a close resemblance with its immediate cousin chimpanzees in coordination of different organs, gestation periods and in biochemistry of their blood.

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❖ This evolutionary process as backed by different scientific evidences suggests that there is no sufficient genomic diversity to suggest or group different human being into various races with altogether different capabilities or there is no natural subdivision in human population.

❖ Thus the modern racial classification has socio-economic explanation.

❖ The opportunity and obstacles which geo-environment pose before a society are not similar everywhere. Technological consideration of a society is also important nevertheless in some geo-environment most of socio-economic activities are simpler and easier than in others.

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❖ Those societies which flourished in geo-environmentally better area, where resources are ample and easier to exploit, have multiplied their development with occasional technological gain. This has developed a superiority complex in them and on occasional clashes with other society they have tried to justify it.

❖ With the advent of modern society and industrial revolution in Europe great struggle was started to control as much resources around the world as possible. Wherever they gone around the world they established their supremacy over local population using technological gains and tried to justify as well as perpetuate it through racial explanations.

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❖ The slave trade of Africa, apartheid policy of South Africa, Nazi explanation of pure German blood, etc. all in one way or other basically devised to perpetuate own selfish interests.

❖ The supporter of superior and inferior race often advocate that superior race has better intellect but scientifically all human in general have similar brain, also there is no universally accepted way to objectively access intellect of human brain without any demerits. The twins reared in contrastingly different geo-environment show some adaptability to the locale after a very long period.

❖ But this does not mean that every human being is similar in all respect.

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❖ We have genetic diversities, but large number of our genes deciding almost all major features of all human are same and only a very small part of our gene pool deciding mainly our minor features vary person to person. This is why twins are also not exactly same or they are not clone.

❖ Better if these minor differences in gene will remain a matter of our scientific research only and they should not be misused to differentiate between person to person.

❖ Thus the racial classification of human beings has socio-economic and political explanations and have no scientific basis.

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❖ But just as all men have sufficient general resemblances to be classed as human, so, to a lesser degree, certain groups of men have enough characteristics in common to be classed, somewhat arbitrarily, as races (Husain, 2002).

❖ Thus a race or racial group usually refers to the categorisation of human beings into different population groups on the basis of commonly noticeable inheritable physical features.

## 4.1 Classification of Race

❖ Origin and defining of the concept race is full of complexities and so the classification of race be. Many suggested a broad phenotype and genotype criterion.

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❖ Phenotypes consider physical features whereas genotypes consider genetic sources behind difference in physical features. Both have serious problems.

❖ First of all, a unique physical feature, say colour of skin, per race is difficult to identify and secondly the degree of any physical feature, skin colour here, varies even within a so called racial group.

❖ Further the problem of genetic origin of difference in different physical has still not solved properly.

❖ So, instead of going into phenotype and genotype debate it is generally inheritable different physical features, either singly or on in combination, are used.

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❖ Mostly skin colour, hair colour and type, eye colour, fold of eye-lid skin, shape of nose and head, thickness of lip and even blood groups are often used as a determinant of race.

❖ It is not necessary that all races must have a unique combination of all these features. Instead different combinations are used to distinguish one race from other.

❖ Therefore, two races may be alike in hair colour, in form, and in eye colour, but differ in stature, head form and in other traits, two others may be similar in head form, but diverse in eye colour and hair colour (Husain, 2002).

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❖ Thus subjective element become a significant factor and as the number of indicators increases more and more combinations may be derived to identify race.

❖ This is the reason as why it is always difficult to draw a hard and fast line between the races.

❖ Taking into account of above facts the human population have been divided into three major races - the Caucasoid, the Negroid and the Mongoloid. There is one minor group, the Australoid, whose members combine the facial characteristics of the Negroid group with wavy hair (Leong and Morgan, 1982).

❖ Next, some characteristic features of major races have been documented.

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Features	Caucasoid	Negroid	Mongoloid
<i>Colour of Skin</i>	Very fair to brown	Black to brown or yellowish	reddish-yellow brown
<i>Stature</i>	Tall to medium	Tall to short	Medium tall to medium short
<i>Form of Head</i>	Long to broad and short, medium high to very high	Long	Predominantly broad, height medium
<i>Face Type</i>	Narrow to medium broad, tends to high, no prognathism	Medium broad to narrow, tends to medium high, strong prognathism	Medium broad to very broad, malars high and flat, tends to medium high
<i>Hair Type</i>	Strait or wavy and blonde, brown or black	Crinkly or frizzy	Lank and straight
<i>Eye Type</i>	Blue to dark brown; Lateral eye-fold occasional	Brown to brown black, vertical eye-fold common	Characteristic fold on upper lid
<i>Nose Type</i>	Bridge: usually high; form: narrow to medium broad	Bridge: usually low; form: medium broad to very broad	Bridge: usually low to medium; form: medium broad
<i>Body Build</i>	Linear to lateral; slender to rugged	Tends to be lateral and muscular	Tends to be lateral; some linearity evident
<i>Blood Group</i>	More A than B	High in Rhe(cDe)	High in B
<i>Distribution</i>	Europeans, Semitics (Arabs and Jews) and Indo-Aryans	Africa south of Sahara, Also in some pockets of India, South-East Asia and South-West Pacific	Northern, eastern and south-eastern Asia, America

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## 5.1 World Distribution of Races

❖ It is generally believed that *homo habilis*, originated around 2 million years ago in east African rift valley area, were the ancestor of *homo sapiens*. *Homo sapiens* were originated around 2 lakh years ago and later from them the modern humans have evolved.

❖ From its place of origin of genus *homo* they spread out to Eurasia following two routes, one being along Egyptian Sinai peninsula to areas of present Israel, Syria, Lebanon (the Levant area) and then to other parts and the other possible route of crossing the strait of Bab-al-Manded to Yemen and then to other parts.

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❖ According to many experts three successive waves of major outmigration of genus *homo* took place along these two routes to Eurasia. First wave was dated as early as 1.8 million years ago, while other two waves originated around 6 lakh years before and 1 lakh year before. Thus first two waves of migration took place before the evolution of *homo sapiens*.

❖ Soon after evolution a section of *Homo sapiens* migrated outward (1.95 lakh years ago). Those migrated westward in the Congo basin lead to the evolution of Congoid subspecies, those remained in eastern Africa evolved into Capoid/Khoisanid (San-Bushmen) subspecies and those migrated northward in Africa prepared the stage for latest migration of genus *homo* to Eurasia about 1 lakh years ago.

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❖ This northward faction, later on migration, evolved into the Australoid, the Mongoloid and the Caucasoid subspecies under the influence of different local environment.

❖ Many researchers believed that the last migrants (about 1 lakh years ago) of genus homo completely wiped out genetic frequencies of earlier waves (1.8 million years ago and 6 lakh years ago) (Out of Africa theory) while some believe that though the genetic frequencies of each successive migrants dominated the earlier waves but the remnants of genetic frequencies of earlier waves also found associated with dominant frequencies (Out-of-Africa-Again-and-Again theory).

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❖ Those moved to Asian region first branched in two sections along Iran border, one section moved towards east and north-east direction while other section moved along the Arabian Sea coast to the Indian subcontinent.

❖ The second main branching took place in the south-east Asia when one section moved southward into Myanmar, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Australia, etc. while other section moved to China and Far East. The southward section evolved into proto-Australoid while China faction developed into proto-Mangoloid.

❖ After the great destruction to human civilization by the Toba volcanic eruption, some 74,000 years ago, many proto-Australoid also moved into Indian sub-continent.

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❖ A section from China further moved into the Siberian region and then eastward to North America and further southward to South America.

❖ Population which remained in the West Asian region slowly developed into proto-Caucasoid. They moved eastward to form major population of Indian sub-continent. They also moved to west and northwest direction to Anatolian plateau and then after crossing the strait of Gibraltar they branched to move into eastern and western Europe to make major chunk of population there.

❖ Those remained in central, eastern and southern Africa evolved into proto-Negroid.

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❖ Here it must be noted that this is a general picture of race distribution and at many places aberration to it may be found.

## 6.1 Summary

❖ Racial discrimination is present in society, in various forms, since very old time.

❖ It is found that the so called racial discrimination has no scientific basis but it is purely a socio-politico-cultural phenomena.

❖ In terms of abilities all normal human beings are nearly equal in all respects.

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