

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q3(c)

Describe the methods adopted by Sir Herbert Hope Risley in classifying Indian populations. What are the criticisms against Risley's classification?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · Anthropology GS 2 · 15 marks · Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization

1.1 Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization-Prehistoric (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Neolithic-Chalcolithic), Protohistoric (Indus Civilization). Pre-Harappan, Harappan and post-Harappan cultures. Contributions of the tribal cultures to Indian civilization.

Core demand of the question

- Describe the methods adopted by Sir Herbert Hope Risley in classifying Indian populations. What are the criticisms against Risley's classification?
- Keep the answer to a 15-mark length of about 200 words

Revision summary

Risley used census anthropometry, especially the **nasal index**.

He named seven racial types and linked them to caste rank.

Boas showed bodily traits are plastic.

Guha and later data show huge overlap among the types.

Caste is a marriage-and-rank order, not a race, as **Ambedkar** also argued.

Introduction

H. H. Risley classified Indians as races by anthropometry, above all the **nasal index**, and tied those races to caste. The method was census science in the service of a stable racial map.

Body

Methods

- **As Census Commissioner he used** anthropometry: stature, head length and breadth, and especially the **nasal index** (breadth/height of nose).
- He ranked groups from leptorrhine (narrow nose) to platyrrhine (broad nose) and wrote **seven types**, including Turko-Iranian, Indo-Aryan, Scytho-Dravidian, Aryo-Dravidian, Mongolo-Dravidian, Mongoloid, and Dravidian.
- Caste and tribe lists were treated as breeding populations. A high caste with a narrow nose was read as more Aryan.

Criticisms

- **Franz Boas** had already shown that head form shifts with environment. A nose is not a frozen race ticket.

- **B. S. Guha** and later biologists found overlap so large that **seven types** do not cut nature at the joints.
- Caste is endogamous in rule, not a sealed race. **Ambedkar** rejected racial origin of caste on political and empirical grounds.
- **Irawati Karve** used measurement without Risley's caste-equals-race leap.
- The scheme served colonial ranking and recruitment. It is history of science, not a living taxonomy.

Remainder

- Some regional clines in stature or face exist. They do not rescue Risley's seven named races or his caste ladder.

Flow diagram

Nasal index -> Seven race types

Seven race types -> Caste as race

Caste as race -> Boas Guha Ambedkar critique

Conclusion

Risley measured noses and wrote seven Indian races tied to caste. Overlap, plasticity, and the non-racial nature of caste collapse that classification.

Facts & figures

Nasal index

Breadth of nose divided by height; Risley's favourite race marker.

Census of India 1901

Administrative platform for Risley's racial ranking of castes and tribes.

Seven types

Risley's named Indian races, from Turko-Iranian to Dravidian.

B. S. Guha

Later census anthropologist whose own types still could not save Risley's caste-race equation.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/anthropology-gs-2/2022/describe-the-methods-adopted-by-sir-herbert-hope-risley-in-classifying-indian-populations-what-are-the-criticisms-against-risleys-classification/> · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com