ANANTAM IAS · OPTIONAL NOTES

Anthropology Optional Ethnic, Linguistic and Demographic Structure of India

Paper 2 · Unit 2

The old racial schemes of Risley, Guha and Sarkar presented as history-of-the-discipline rather than fact, the four language families and where they are spoken, and the demographic profile anchored to Census 2011 as the last complete count.

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UPSC SYLLABUS

Ethnic and linguistic elements in the Indian population and their distribution. Indian population: factors influencing its structure and growth.

The Race Concept and Why the Racial Classification of India Is Discredited

This unit has a trap built into it. The syllabus phrase 'ethnic elements' invites the old racial classifications of the Indian population, and you must know them, but you must present them as historical schemes that modern biological anthropology has rejected, not as a live description of Indians. Lead with the framing, then give the schemes, then the critique. An answer that recites Guha's six 'races' as fact has failed before it starts.

- Race as a biological typology is rejected by contemporary anthropology and genetics. Human variation is clinal, continuous gradients of traits across geography, not a set of discrete bounded types; different traits (skin colour, head shape, nose form, blood groups) vary independently and do not bundle into 'races'; and there is more genetic variation within any so-called race than between them (the point associated with Richard Lewontin, 1972).
- The specific tools of the old classifications were unreliable. Anthropometric indices such as the cephalic index (head breadth to length) and Risley's nasal index (nasal breadth to height) are environmentally plastic and not fixed racial markers, and correlating them with caste rank imported social hierarchy into biology.
- The schemes confused categories that must be kept apart: race (biology), caste (a social institution), language (a learned system) and culture. Calling Dravidian-speakers a 'Dravidian race' is the textbook conflation, language is not ancestry.
- They were also ideologically loaded. The Aryan-versus-Dravidian racial framing served colonial and later political narratives, and Risley's inverse correlation of nasal width with social status gave caste a pseudo-biological sanction. Present this as a caution, not a finding.
- What replaces the race concept: population and ancestry analysed genetically. The influential reconstruction by Reich, Thangaraj, Patterson, Price and Singh (2009) modelled most mainland Indian groups as mixtures of two ancestral populations, Ancestral North Indian (ANI) and Ancestral South Indian (ASI), later refined by work adding a deep indigenous AASI component and Iranian-related and Steppe ancestries. Ancestry is gradient and admixed, which is the opposite of discrete races.
- The exam formula: 'The racial classifications of Risley, Guha and Sarkar are of historical and disciplinary importance, but the race concept itself is scientifically discredited; Indian population structure is better understood through clinal variation and genetic ancestry.' Say this, then present the schemes.

KEY TERMS

Clinal variation — The continuous, gradual change of a biological trait across geographic space, the pattern human variation actually takes, incompatible with discrete racial types.

Nasal index — The ratio of nasal breadth to nasal height; Risley made it central to his racial classification and correlated it, notoriously, with social status.

ANI and ASI — Ancestral North Indian and Ancestral South Indian, the two statistically inferred ancestry components (Reich et al., 2009) whose mixture describes most mainland Indian populations; a genetic, not racial, framework.

Ethnic Elements in the Indian Population: The Layered Picture

'Ethnic elements' in the older literature means the strata of physical types that anthropologists believed had entered and settled the subcontinent over time. The way to handle it is to describe the classical layered model as the classifiers saw it, name the populations they attached to each layer, and immediately note that the neat layering is a construct, since real populations are admixed and the 'elements' are not sealed groups.

- The classical model imagines successive strata: an oldest 'Negrito' element, a 'Proto-Australoid' or Pre-Dravidian substratum said to underlie much of the tribal and lower-caste population, a 'Mediterranean' element linked to the coming of agriculture and to Dravidian-speakers and the Harappans, Mongoloid elements in the Himalayan and northeastern fringe, and later 'brachycephalic' (broad-headed) Alpo-Dinaric and Armenoid elements in the west, with a 'Nordic' element associated with Indo-Aryan speech.
- Each 'element' was tied to particular populations: Negrito to certain Andaman Islanders and, controversially, some south Indian hill tribes; Proto-Australoid to tribes such as the Santal, Munda, Bhil and to Australian-Aboriginal resemblances; Mongoloid to the Himalayan and northeastern tribes; Mediterranean to the peninsular and Dravidian-speaking populations; and the western brachycephals to Gujarat, Maharashtra and the Bania and Parsi communities.
- This layering is genuinely part of the discipline's history and you should be able to reproduce it, but flag its status: it rests on anthropometry and on inferring migrations from head and nose shape, and modern genetics does not recover these as discrete founding populations. The 'elements' are heuristic labels, not biological ancestors.
- The one 'element' that has been most doubted even within the older literature is the Negrito. Guha claimed a Negrito substratum; S.S. Sarkar (1954) strongly questioned whether any true Negrito element survives on the Indian mainland, restricting it at most to the Andamans. Carry this internal disagreement, it shows you know the debate rather than the list.
- The honest synthesis: India's population is deeply admixed from several ancestral sources over a very long period, and the 'ethnic elements' scheme is the pre-genetic attempt to describe that depth. Use it to show the history of the question, and let genetics (ANI-ASI, plus AASI, Iranian and Steppe ancestries) carry the actual account of peopling.
- Distribution logic worth stating: the older classifications did capture a real geographical patterning, Mongoloid features concentrated in the north and east, 'Mediterranean' affinities in the peninsula, brachycephaly in the west, but this patterning is clinal and admixed, not a map of separate races.

KEY TERMS

Proto-Australoid — A term in the older classifications for a supposed early substratum resembling Australian Aboriginals, attached to many central Indian tribes; a typological label, not a validated ancestral population.

Brachycephal — A broad-headed physical type (high cephalic index); the western Indian 'Alpo-Dinaric' and Armenoid elements were classed as brachycephalic in the older schemes.

Risley's Classification: Anthropometry, the Nasal Index and Seven Types

Herbert Hope Risley is where the racial classification of India starts as an official project, and he is examinable both as a scheme and as a warning. As Census Commissioner he turned anthropometry into administration, and his correlation of the nose with caste rank is the single most cited example of race science serving social hierarchy in India.

- Risley, Census Commissioner for the 1901 Census, set out his views in 'The People of India' (1908). He used large-scale anthropometry, above all the nasal index, and argued that the population resolved into physical types corresponding broadly to two main races, Aryan and Dravidian, with a Mongoloid presence.
- His seven types are the list to know: Turko-Iranian, Indo-Aryan, Scytho-Dravidian, Aryo-Dravidian (also called Hindustani), Mongolo-Dravidian (the Bengali type), Mongoloid, and Dravidian. They were meant to be geographic-cum-racial groupings of the whole population.
- The notorious claim: Risley held that social precedence tracks the nose, asserting in effect that the social status of a group varies inversely with the average relative breadth of its nose, the higher the caste, the narrower and finer the nose. This fused racial anthropometry with the caste order and gave the 'Aryan conquest' story a bodily proof.
- Why it fails, beyond the general critique of race: the nasal index is affected by climate and is not a stable ancestry marker; caste is a social institution, not a breeding population, so correlating it with a physical index is a category error; and the whole scheme reads colonial and Brahmanical assumptions back into 'science'.
- Its importance is historical and administrative: Risley embedded racial thinking in the census and in the way caste was officially understood, and the reaction against him, including the move toward Guha's more systematic survey, is part of how Indian physical anthropology developed.
- Exam handling: reproduce the seven types and the nasal-index claim, then reject the claim explicitly. Do not present Risley's Aryan-Dravidian racial division as a real account of Indian ancestry.

KEY TERMS

Anthropometry — The systematic measurement of the human body (head, nose, stature); the method on which the racial classifications of Risley and Guha were built and which proved unreliable as a racial tool.

Risley's nasal-index claim — His assertion that social status varies inversely with the relative breadth of the nose, the clearest instance of race science being used to naturalize the caste hierarchy.

B.S. Guha's Sixfold Classification (1935): The Canonical Scheme

Biraja Sankar Guha's classification is the one the paper most often wants, because it is the most systematic Indian anthropometric scheme and became the standard reference. Learn the six main elements with their subtypes and one or two associated populations each, and then, as always, mark it as a historical typology now discredited in principle.

- Origin and status: Guha carried out an anthropometric survey in connection with the Census of India 1931 and published his classification of the racial affinities of the peoples of India in 1935. It is the fullest and most-cited of the Indian racial schemes.
- Element 1, the Negrito: a supposed oldest substratum with dark skin, woolly hair and short stature, which Guha associated with some Andaman Islanders and certain south Indian and northeastern groups. This is the most contested element (see Sarkar below).
- Element 2, the Proto-Australoid (Pre-Dravidian): dark-skinned, wavy-haired, broad-nosed, associated with many central and southern Indian tribes such as the Santal, Munda, Bhil and the tribes of the peninsula, and held to be the basic element of the tribal population.
- Element 3, the Mongoloid, in two branches: Palaeo-Mongoloid (further split into long-headed and broad-headed forms), associated with the tribes of the sub-Himalaya, Assam and Myanmar border; and Tibeto-Mongoloid, associated with Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim and the higher Himalaya.

- Element 4, the Mediterranean, in three forms: Palaeo-Mediterranean, Mediterranean proper, and the Oriental type, associated with the Dravidian-speaking populations of the south and with the bearers of Indus/agricultural culture, long-headed with medium stature.
- Element 5, the Western Brachycephals (broad-headed), comprising Alpinoid, Dinaric and Armenoid subtypes, associated with western India, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bengal and communities such as the Bania and Parsi. Element 6, the Nordic: tall, long-headed, fair, associated with the Indo-Aryan speakers of the north-west, held to be a later arrival.
- The critique attaches at once: the six elements rest on anthropometry, conflate language and culture with biology (Dravidian speech read as a 'Mediterranean' race, Indo-Aryan speech as 'Nordic'), and describe as separate types what genetics shows to be an admixed continuum. Guha's scheme is a landmark of Indian physical anthropology and a discredited account of Indian ancestry at the same time, and the mark is in holding both.

B.S. Guha's six racial elements (1935)

Element	Subtypes	Associated populations (as classified)
Negrito	-	Some Andaman Islanders; certain south Indian and NE groups (existence contested)
Proto-Australoid (Pre-Dravidian)	-	Santal, Munda, Bhil and many peninsular tribes; the 'basic' tribal element
Mongoloid	Palaeo-Mongoloid (long- and broad-headed); Tibeto-Mongoloid	Sub-Himalayan, Assam and NE tribes; Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim
Mediterranean	Palaeo-Mediterranean; Mediterranean; Oriental	Dravidian-speaking south; bearers of Indus/agricultural culture
Western Brachycephals	Alpinoid; Dinaric; Armenoid	Western India, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bengal; Bania, Parsi
Nordic	-	Indo-Aryan speakers of the north-west; classed as a later arrival

KEY TERMS

Guha's sixfold classification — The 1935 anthropometric scheme dividing the Indian population into Negrito, Proto-Australoid, Mongoloid, Mediterranean, Western Brachycephals and Nordic elements; the standard Indian racial scheme, now a historical typology.

Palaeo-Mongoloid / Tibeto-Mongoloid — Guha's two branches of the Mongoloid element, the first for sub-Himalayan and northeastern tribes, the second for the high-Himalayan Tibetan-affiliated populations.

Sarkar and Other Revisions, and the Verdict on Racial Classification

Guha did not have the last word, and the paper rewards knowing that the schemes were argued over from within. S.S. Sarkar's revision, and the broader mid-century critique, is the bridge from the racial classifications to their scientific abandonment. This section is where you convert the schemes into a critical position.

- S.S. Sarkar, in 'The Aboriginal Races of India' (1954), reworked and reduced the racial picture and, most sharply, questioned Guha's Negrito element, doubting that a true Negrito race survives on the Indian

mainland outside the Andamans. His revision shows the classifications were unstable even on their own anthropometric terms.

- Other Indian anthropologists refined the enterprise: D.N. Majumdar and C.R. Rao brought statistical and, increasingly, serological (blood-group) data to bear, which pointed away from tidy racial types toward continuous variation, an internal move from anthropometry toward population biology.
- J.H. Hutton and others in the census tradition also engaged the racial map, but the trend of twentieth-century evidence, blood groups first, then molecular genetics, was to dissolve the types rather than confirm them.
- The decisive critiques to carry: traits vary independently and clinally, so no bounded races exist; anthropometric indices are environmentally plastic; the schemes conflated race, language, caste and culture; and modern genetics (ANI-ASI and the later AASI, Iranian and Steppe components) describes Indians as admixed populations on gradients, not as members of discrete races.
- The correct exam verdict: 'Risley (1901/1908), Guha (1935) and Sarkar (1954) are the major racial classifications of the Indian population and are essential to the history of Indian anthropology, but the race concept underlying them is scientifically discredited; population structure is now analysed through genetic ancestry and clinal variation.' This single sentence protects you on every question in this unit.
- One nuance that impresses: the classifications did register real geographic patterning (Mongoloid affinities in the north-east, and so on), which is why they were persuasive; the error was to read gradient, admixed variation as fixed racial types. Crediting what they got right while rejecting the framework is the sophisticated answer.

KEY TERMS

Sarkar's revision — S.S. Sarkar's (1954) reworking of the racial classification of India, notable for doubting the reality of a mainland Negrito element claimed by Guha.

Serology in racial study — The use of blood-group frequencies (rather than body measurements) to study population affinities; its continuous, overlapping distributions helped undermine discrete racial typology.

Linguistic Elements I: Indo-European (Indo-Aryan) and Dravidian

Language is the safer half of this unit because linguistic families are real and well-mapped, provided you never treat them as races. India's languages fall into four families, and the two largest by far are Indo-Aryan and Dravidian. Grierson's Linguistic Survey is the foundation; the distributions and the caution that speech is not ancestry are the marks.

- The foundational reference is George Abraham Grierson's 'Linguistic Survey of India' (published 1903 to 1928), which mapped India's languages into families and remains the classificatory starting point: Indo-European (with the Indo-Aryan and Iranian branches), Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic (Austric) and Tibeto-Burman (part of Sino-Tibetan).
- The Indo-European family, through its Indo-Aryan branch, accounts for roughly three-quarters of the Indian population, the single largest bloc. Its major languages, Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Odia, Assamese, Kashmiri, Urdu, Nepali and others, plus classical Sanskrit, dominate the north, west, east and central plains. (Iranian, the family's other Indian branch, is minor.)
- The Dravidian family is the second largest and is concentrated in the south, with four major literary languages, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam, and many smaller ones, Tulu, Kodava and the tribal Dravidian languages Gondi, Kui, Kurukh (Oraon) and Malto of central India. Brahui, spoken in Balochistan

(Pakistan), is a geographically detached Dravidian outlier often cited as evidence of a formerly wider Dravidian spread.

- The critical point that examiners test: the Indo-Aryan / Dravidian divide is linguistic, not racial. There is no 'Aryan race' and no 'Dravidian race'; speakers of both families share deep admixed ancestry, and language spread by contact and shift, not only by migration. Repeating Risley's Aryan-versus-Dravidian racial reading here is the error to avoid.
- Distribution logic to state: Indo-Aryan covers the Gangetic and western plains and the north generally; Dravidian covers peninsular south India, with a scatter of tribal Dravidian in the central Indian forest belt; and the two meet and interpenetrate across the Deccan, with heavy mutual borrowing (India is a classic linguistic 'convergence area' or Sprachbund).
- The Sprachbund point is worth a line: despite belonging to different families, Indian languages have converged on shared features (retroflex consonants, certain grammatical patterns) through long contact, which again shows that the families are about descent of speech, not about separate peoples.

India's two largest language families

Family / branch	Major languages	Distribution
Indo-European (Indo-Aryan)	Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Odia, Assamese, Kashmiri, Urdu; Sanskrit	North, west, east and central India; ~three-quarters of the population
Dravidian	Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam; Tulu; tribal Gondi, Kui, Kurukh; Brahui (Pakistan)	Peninsular south; tribal pockets in central India; Brahui as a detached outlier

KEY TERMS

Linguistic Survey of India — Grierson's monumental survey (1903-1928) that classified India's languages into families and remains the foundation of Indian linguistic classification.

Sprachbund — A convergence area where languages of different families come to share features through long contact; the Indian subcontinent is a classic case, showing family is descent of speech, not of people.

Linguistic Elements II: Austro-Asiatic (Austric) and Tibeto-Burman (Sino-Tibetan)

The two smaller families carry most of India's tribal languages and much of the northeast, so they matter out of proportion to their speaker numbers. Know the internal branches, the flagship languages and the distributions, and note the Andamanese languages as a separate case that does not fit the four-family scheme.

- The Austro-Asiatic family (older term Austric) has two Indian branches. The Munda branch, spoken across the central-eastern tribal belt, includes Santali (the largest, with its own Ol Chiki script and Eighth Schedule status), Mundari, Ho, Korku and Sora. The Mon-Khmer branch in India includes Khasi and its relatives in Meghalaya, and Nicobarese and Shompen in the Nicobar Islands.
- Austro-Asiatic distribution: the Munda languages sit in Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, the heart of tribal central India; Khasi in the Meghalaya hills; and the Nicobarese far to the south-east in the islands. It is the family most strongly identified with the older tribal populations.
- The Tibeto-Burman family, a branch of Sino-Tibetan, occupies the Himalayan arc and the north-east. Its many languages include Meitei (Manipuri, an Eighth Schedule language), the Naga languages, Bodo, Garo,

Mizo (Lushai), Tripuri (Kokborok), Lepcha, Ladakhi and the Himalayan languages of Sikkim, Arunachal and the sub-Himalaya.

- Tibeto-Burman distribution: the whole Himalayan belt from Ladakh through Sikkim and Bhutan's borderlands to Arunachal, and the hills of Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya (Garo). It maps closely onto the 'Mongoloid' geographic patterning of the older racial schemes, without that patterning implying a race.
- The Andamanese exception, worth a sentence for completeness: the languages of the Andaman Islands (Great Andamanese, and the Ongan languages Onge and Jarawa) do not belong to the four mainland families and are usually treated as a separate family or as isolates, a reminder that the four-family scheme covers the mainland, not literally every Indian language.
- The synthesis to write: India's linguistic map has an Indo-Aryan north, a Dravidian south, an Austro-Asiatic (Munda) central-eastern tribal belt with Khasi and Nicobarese outliers, and a Tibeto-Burman Himalayan-and-northeastern arc, with the Andamanese languages standing apart. This is a map of speech communities, shaped by settlement, contact and shift, and it must not be read as a map of races.

India's two smaller language families and the Andamanese case

Family / branch	Representative languages	Distribution
Austro-Asiatic (Munda)	Santali, Mundari, Ho, Korku, Sora	Central-eastern tribal belt: Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh
Austro-Asiatic (Mon-Khmer)	Khasi; Nicobarese, Shompen	Meghalaya hills; Nicobar Islands
Tibeto-Burman (Sino-Tibetan)	Meitei/Manipuri, Naga languages, Bodo, Garo, Mizo, Lepcha, Ladakhi	Himalayan arc and the north-east hills
Andamanese (separate)	Great Andamanese, Onge, Jarawa	Andaman Islands; not part of the four mainland families

KEY TERMS

Munda — The Indian branch of Austro-Asiatic spoken across the central-eastern tribal belt, its largest language Santali; strongly identified with older tribal populations.

Tibeto-Burman — The Indian branch of Sino-Tibetan spoken along the Himalayan arc and in the north-eastern hills, including Meitei, the Naga languages, Bodo and Mizo.

Demographic Profile of India: Census 2011 and the Factors of Structure and Growth

The last part of the syllabus asks for the Indian population's structure and the factors driving its growth. The single most important exam discipline here is dating your figures: tag them to Census 2011 as the last complete enumeration, and flag that the Census due in 2021 was postponed and had not been conducted as of these notes, so all decadal figures still rest on 2011.

- The dating rule, stated up front: the Census of India 2011 is the last completed decennial census. The 2021 Census was postponed (initially owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently for administrative reasons) and remains not yet conducted, so there is no more recent full count; cite Census 2011 figures as such and note the gap.

- Core Census 2011 figures to know: total population about 1.21 billion (1,210.9 million); decadal growth 2001 to 2011 of 17.7 percent, a slowing from earlier decades; population density about 382 persons per square kilometre; and an urban share of roughly 31 percent, meaning India was still predominantly rural in 2011.
- Composition and sex ratio: the overall sex ratio was 943 females per 1000 males, an improvement, but the child sex ratio (0 to 6 years) fell to 919, a serious signal of sex-selective practices and son preference. Scheduled Castes were about 16.6 percent and Scheduled Tribes about 8.6 percent of the population.
- Literacy from Census 2011: overall 74.04 percent, with a persistent gender gap (male about 82 percent, female about 65 percent) and wide interstate variation, Kerala at the top and several northern states well below the mean.
- Factors influencing growth, framed by the demographic transition: India is in the later stages of transition, mortality fell earlier and faster (declining infant mortality, rising life expectancy) while fertility fell later, producing the high growth of the twentieth century that is now decelerating. Fertility has fallen close to and, by more recent survey estimates such as NFHS-5 (2019 to 2021), to about the replacement level nationally, though the census cannot confirm the latest total.
- Factors influencing structure: the age structure is young but ageing, giving India a 'demographic dividend', a large working-age share, that is a window rather than a permanent condition; strong regional divergence, with much of the south and west at or below replacement fertility while parts of the north (Bihar, Uttar Pradesh) remain higher; internal migration reshaping urban and rural populations; and the sex-ratio problem noted above. Determinants of fertility include female education and age at marriage, contraceptive use, infant mortality, urbanization and economic development.
- The mandated coverage not to drop: 'structure' means composition (age, sex, rural-urban, social groups, literacy), and 'growth' means the transition and its drivers. Answer both, and keep every hard number tagged to Census 2011 or to a named survey, never floating free.
- A closing analytic line worth writing: India's demography has moved from a high-growth to a stabilizing regime, but the aggregate hides sharp regional and gender contrasts, a near-replacement, ageing, urbanizing south and west against a younger, higher-fertility north, which is why national averages must always be disaggregated.

India's demographic profile (Census 2011, the last complete count)

Indicator	Census 2011 value	Note
Total population	~1.21 billion (1,210.9 million)	2021 Census postponed; no later full count
Decadal growth (2001-2011)	17.7%	Decelerating from earlier decades
Sex ratio	943 females / 1000 males	Child sex ratio (0-6) fell to 919
Population density	~382 per sq km	Wide interstate variation
Literacy rate	74.04% (male ~82%, female ~65%)	Persistent gender and regional gaps
SC / ST share	SC ~16.6%, ST ~8.6%	Urban share ~31%

KEY TERMS

Demographic transition — The shift from high to low birth and death rates through intermediate high-growth stages; India is in its later stages, with mortality having fallen before fertility.

Demographic dividend — The temporary economic advantage of a large working-age population relative to dependents, a window opened by India's young age structure rather than a permanent condition.

Child sex ratio — Females per 1000 males aged 0 to 6; its fall to 919 in Census 2011 is read as evidence of sex selection and son preference.

Last-mile revision

- Frame first: race as a biological typology is discredited (clinal variation; more variation within than between groups; Lewontin). Risley, Guha and Sarkar are history-of-the-discipline, not fact. Ancestry is analysed genetically (ANI-ASI; later AASI, Iranian, Steppe).
- Risley (Census 1901; 'The People of India' 1908): anthropometry and the nasal index; seven types (Turko-Iranian, Indo-Aryan, Scytho-Dravidian, Aryo-Dravidian, Mongolo-Dravidian, Mongoloid, Dravidian); the notorious claim that status varies inversely with nasal breadth.
- Guha (1935, from the 1931 Census survey): six elements, Negrito, Proto-Australoid, Mongoloid (Palaeo- and Tibeto-), Mediterranean (three forms), Western Brachycephals (Alpinoid, Dinaric, Armenoid) and Nordic. The canonical Indian scheme.
- Sarkar (1954, 'The Aboriginal Races of India'): revised Guha and doubted the mainland Negrito element. Majumdar, Rao and serology moved the field from anthropometry toward population biology.
- Four language families: Indo-European/Indo-Aryan (~three-quarters, north/west/east/central), Dravidian (south + tribal central + Brahui outlier), Austro-Asiatic/Austric (Munda central-east; Khasi, Nicobarese), Tibeto-Burman/Sino-Tibetan (Himalaya and NE). Grierson's Linguistic Survey is the base; Andamanese stands apart.
- Language is speech, not race: no Aryan or Dravidian 'race'; India is a Sprachbund with cross-family convergence (retroflexion).
- Demography: tag everything to Census 2011 (last complete count); 2021 Census postponed. Population ~1.21 billion, growth 17.7%, sex ratio 943 (child 919), density ~382/km2, literacy 74.04%, SC ~16.6%, ST ~8.6%, urban ~31%.
- Growth and structure: demographic transition (mortality fell before fertility); fertility now near replacement (NFHS-5 ~2.0, survey not census); demographic dividend; sharp regional divergence (south/west at/below replacement, north higher); son preference in the child sex ratio.

Common errors to avoid

- Reciting Guha's six 'races' or Risley's seven types as a live description of Indians. They are historical typologies; the race concept is discredited. Frame before you list.
- Repeating Risley's nasal-index-equals-status claim without rejecting it. It is the classic case of race science naturalizing caste, and it must be marked as false.
- Confusing language family with race, writing about an 'Aryan race' or 'Dravidian race'. The families are linguistic; their speakers share admixed ancestry.
- Forgetting the internal disagreements, especially Sarkar's doubt about Guha's Negrito element. Carrying the debate shows command; reciting one list does not.
- Leaving Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman vague. Name Munda (Santali, Mundari, Ho) versus Mon-Khmer (Khasi, Nicobarese), and locate Tibeto-Burman in the Himalaya and north-east.
- Quoting demographic figures with no date. Every number must be tagged to Census 2011 (or a named survey like NFHS-5), and the postponement of the 2021 Census must be flagged.
- Treating fertility decline as uniform. The south and west are at or below replacement while parts of the north remain higher; national averages hide the divergence.
- Presenting the demographic dividend as a guaranteed benefit. It is a time-limited window that depends on employment and human capital, not an automatic dividend.