

Course: MA (Geography)

Paper code: MGEO-208

Paper name: Geography of India

Semester: II

Topic: Cultural Regions of India

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Introduction

- The English word Culture is derived from the latin term '*Cult*' or '*Cultus*' meaning tilling of cultivation or refining.
- It means to refining or cultivating a thong to such an extent that its end product generates admiration towards it.
- In Sanskrit language it is termed as '*sanskriti*' derived from '*Kri*' which means '*to do*' and when the customs, languages, religion and beliefs are refined to an extent that it evokes our admiration, and becomes '*sanskriti*'.
- A cultural region is a portion of Earth's surface that has common cultural elements and has distinct cultural authority from other regions.

- The culture of Indian sub continent was called paddy culture by L.D. Stamp and sub-continent culture by J.N.L Baker.
- The cultural realm of India is characterized by joint family, village community, caste system, semi feudal land relations, subsistence agriculture, paddy farming, seasonal climate change and greatly influenced by Vedic values.

Cultural Regions of India

- Based on the cultural attributes (religion, language, racial characteristics, customs, etc) India may be divided into following 10 cultural regions (modified after J.E Schwartzberg, 1967).

**Dardic
Muslim
region**

**Indic Sikh
region**

**Indic
Buddhist
region**

**Pahari Indic
region**

**Main
Indic/Hindu
Hindi region**

**Eastern
Indic region**

**Eastern
Tribal region**

**Peninsular
Tribal region**

**Western
Indic region**

**Dravidian
region**

- **1. Dardic Muslim region-** it includes Kashmir valley, northern parts of Jammu (Doda district) and southern parts of Ladakh (Kargil) divisions where muslims are in majority and Kashmiri language and traditions are dominant. The region has Hindus and Sikhs in minority who are accustomed to Kashmiri cultural traditions. One of the significant cultural center is Srinagar.
- **2. Indic Sikh region (the Sikh Gurumukhi cultural region)-** it stretches over whole of Punjab including Chandigarh union territory, where Sikhs are in majority. Punjabi is the main language, written in Gurumukhi script, i.e why the region is also known as Sikh Gurumukhi region. The region comprises of Nordics and Oriental Mediterranean race. The significant cultural centers are Golden Temple of Amritsar, Anandpur sahib, Damdama Sahib and Sirhind.

- **3. Indic Buddhist region-** this covers parts of Ladakh (J & K), Dharamshala (HP) and Sikkim where Buddhism is a major religion and the landscape is dotted with Gompas and monasteries. Tibeto-Mongoloid race is found in this region. The people living here speak Tibeto-Himalayan language (a branch of Sino-Tibetan).
- **4. Pahari Indic region-** It comprises mountainous parts of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, which is called 'Dev Bhumi' because of numerous hindu holy places and shrines such as, Haridwar, Naina Devi, Chamunda devi, Pontasahab, Dev Prayag, Rudra Prayad, Yamunotri and Gangotri. Kinnauri and hindi are the main languages of this region and the major races being Tibeto-mongoloid and Oriental mediteranean.

- **5. Main Indic Region (Hindu Hindi Region)**- this region occupies a vast area in Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. It is a traditional heartland of Indian culture with dominance of Hinduism and hindi, while there is Muslim presence in some pockets of Uttar Pradesh. But these states are internally different in terms of casteism, conservatism, patriarchy and social taboos. Oriental Mediterraneans and Nordic races are found here.
- **6. Eastern Indic Region**- this incorporates parts of West Bengal, Odisha, Assam, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, where Bengali influence is dominant. Primarily Hinduism was practiced, but after Mughal period and colonial rule, Muslim and Christian population became an important part of it.

- **7. Eastern Tribal Region-** this is a heterogenous region consisting of different tribal groups of the north east. It is also called at times mixed cultural region, wherein depending on the domination of Hindu, Christian and Tribal population in a particular state, their cuisine family customs and dance varies. Meghalayas Garo and Khasi tribes follow matrilineal law, whereas Manipur's Meitei families follow patriarchal practices. In this cultural region, languages of Austric and Sino-Tibetan families are mainly spoken. Naga, Lushai, Meitei and Garo dialects are used in Nagaland, Mizo, Manipur and Garo hills .
- **8. Peninsular Tribal region-** this includes tribal dominated areas of Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Andaman and Nicobar. Munda and Mon Khmer, the two main branches of Austric linguistic family are spoken in these areas.

- **9. Western Indic Region-** this includes the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa where Marathi and Konkani influence is prominent. Significant cultural destinations are Surat, Panchmahal, Dwarka, Bhavnagar, Ahmedabad, Nagpur, Amravati, Nashik, Triambakeshwar, Aurangabad and Mumbai. Hinduism is the main religion, while Buddhist and Muslim pockets are also prominent at places. Alpinoids, Dinarics and Oriental Mediterraneans are the dominant races in Gujarat and some parts of Maharashtra. In addition to these races, Proto Australoids and Palaeo Mediterraneans are also found in Maharashtra.
- **10. Dravidian Region-** It stretches over five southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala with dominance of Paleo Mediterranean traits and Dravidian language. Significant cultural destinations are, Rameshwaram, Madurai, Kanyakumari, Tanjavur, Tirupati, Bijapur, Bangalore and Mysore.

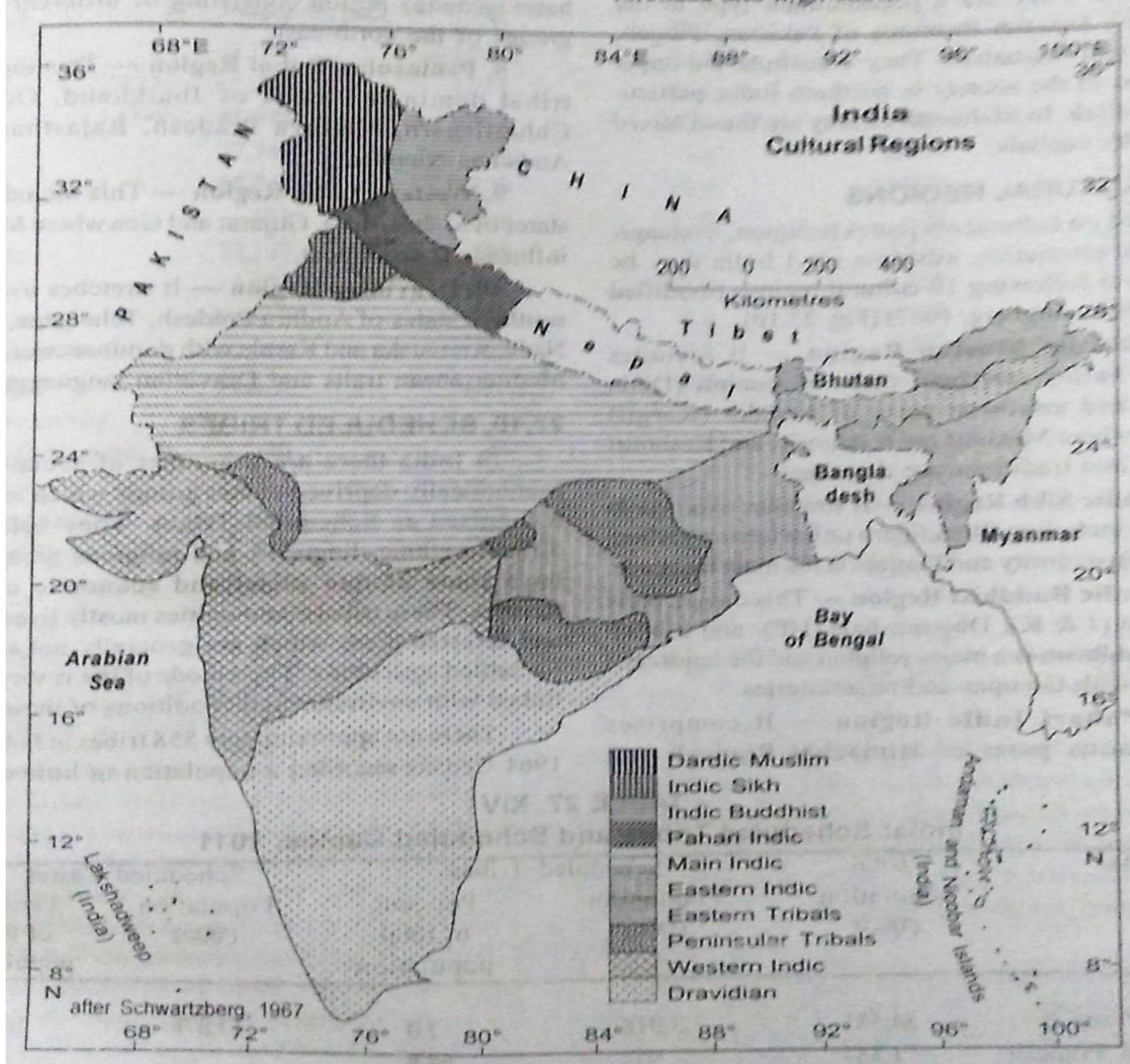


Figure:1 showing Cultural Regions of India

Source: R.C Tiwari, Geography of India