



# CONCEPT OF RACE

## and

# The UNESCO Statements on Race

### Introduction

The race is a term which has been used by a group of persons living in a territory for several generations. In many cases a culturally homogeneous people has been called a race but an anthropologist looks at it in a different way. They study human race in a purely biological sense and therefore the study of race may be regarded as a branch of science itself. It is a biological phenomenon, which is to be defined in biological terms.

Race is a concept; all men living today belong to a single species, Homo sapiens, which includes groups of populations, each differing from other populations in the relative commonness of certain hereditary traits. Each of this population constituting the species Homo Sapiens may be regarded as race.

Hooton has define race as a %great division of mankind, the member of which though individually varying are characterized as a group by certain combination of morphological, metrical features, principally non adaptive, which have been derived from their common descent.+He has differentiated into primary and secondary races according to their mode of formation. Primary races are differentiated by early geographical and genetic isolation, by loss of some genes and fixation of others by mutation, by breeding and by selection which secondary races are formed by the re-stabilization of blend of two or more primary races.



Ashley Montagu has given the genetical definition of a race as "a population which differs in the frequency of some gene or genes, which is actually exchanging or capable of exchanging genes across whatever boundaries separate it from other population of the species." In other words we can define race in an anthropological sense as "a population characterized by some concentrations, relative as to the frequency and distribution of genes or physical character, which appear, fluctuate and often disappear in the course of time by means of geographical and or cultural isolation." The concept of race may be regarded as classificatory devices to provide a frame within which the different population group may systematically be arranged. While dealing with the definition of race we should bear in minds a few related facts. For example, national religions cultural and geographical groups should not be confused with racial groups. The Indians do not form a race, nor do the Persians or the Germans. These are national group like the Buddhists or the Protestants. In the proper anthropological sense the Dravidian or the Aryans do not constitute race. They are linguistic groups. Therefore, a student of anthropology should be cautious group of people, as its use in referring to such groups may lead to a serious misconception.

The skeletal materials belonging to different period collected from various region of the world suggests that hybridization among different human population has been taking



place since long past. Even now race mixture is an ongoing process and as a result the races have got admixture. As a matter of fact hybridization is one of the factors for race formation and at the same time it plays role in extinction or absorption of racial groups. Therefore, we can say that there was never pure race of man and at present also there is no pure race. The concept of so called

pure race is based on wrong fact. Again we do not have evidence to say that race mixture produces undesirable results from the biological point of view.

In classifying human races most of the anthropologists do not consider the mental characters. The concept of racial ~~superiority~~ and ~~inferiority~~ has created many problems in human society. The concept is not based on any scientific fact. The scientist has not accepted the view that certain races are ~~superior~~ and others are ~~inferior~~.

In fact, the people under one race should possess a distinctive combination of physical traits and races are distinguished from each other by the relative differences of certain inherited characters, both phenotypically and genetically. Each racial group develops certain characteristics of physiological traits which differ from the others. The racial traits often change by mutation and it denotes dynamicity in race. Thus, race is dynamics, instead of a static group. Stability of a race depends on durability of various genes responsible for various inherited character. This stability may be achieved by the practice of marrying within the racial group. Any change in any one of the factors depicts a new change in the race as whole.

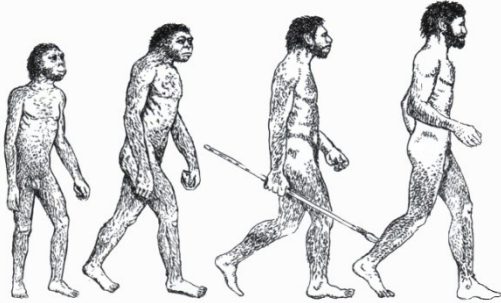
### **UNESCO Statement**

Two statements on Race were issued by UNESCO. The first was largely the work of a group of social scientists; the second was the product of a group of physical anthropologists and geneticists. The first statement was published on 18 July 1950 under the title ~~the~~ UNESCO Statement by Experts on Race Problems, and the second was published on 15 July 1952 under the title ~~the~~ Statement on the Nature of Race and Race Differences . by Physical Anthropologists and Geneticists, 1952+. In conversation one would refer to the first as ~~the~~ Statement on Race and to the second on ~~the~~ Statement on the Nature of Race. As the reader will perceive, there is marked agreement between the social and the natural scientists.



## UNESCO STATEMENT ON RACE BY SOCIAL SCIENTISTS, JULY 1950

1. Scientists have reached general agreement in recognizing that mankind is one: that all



men belong to the same species, Homo sapiens. It is further generally agreed among scientists that all men are probably derived from the same common stock, and that such differences as exist between different groups of mankind are due to the operation of evolutionary factors of differentiation such as isolation, genetic drift,

random fixation, changes in the structure of the genes hybridization and natural selection. In these ways groups have arisen out of varying stability and degree and differentiation which have been classified in different ways for different purposes.

2. From the biological standpoint, the species Homo sapiens is made up of a number of

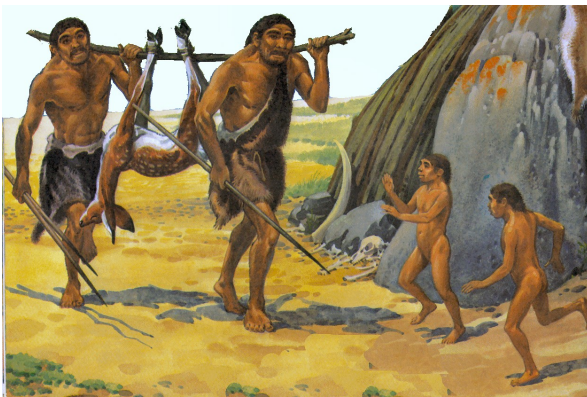
population each one of which differs from the others in the frequency of one or more genes. Such genes responsible for the hereditary differences between men, are always few when compared to the whole genetic constitution of man and to the vast number of genes common to all human beings regardless of the population to which they belong. This means that the likenesses among men are far greater than their differences.



3. A race, from the biological standpoint, may therefore be defined as one of the group of populations constituting the species Homo sapiens. These populations are capable of inter breeding with one another but by virtue of the isolating barriers which in the past had kept them more or less separated and exhibit certain physical differences as a result of their somewhat different biological histories.

4. In short, the term *race* designates a group or population characterized by some concentrations. Relative as to frequency and distribution, of hereditary particles (genes) or physical characters, which appear fluctuate, and often disappear in the course of time by reason of geographic and or cultural isolation. The varying manifestations of these traits in different populations are perceived in different ways by each group. What is perceived is largely preconceived, so that each group arbitrarily tends to misinterpret the variability which occurs as a fundamental difference which separates that group from all others.

5. These are the scientific facts. Unfortunately, however, when most people use the term *race* they do not do so in the sense above defined. To most people, a race is any



group of people whom they choose to describe as a race. Thus, many national, religious, geographic, linguistic or cultural groups have, in such loose usage been called a *race*, when obviously Americans are not a race, nor are Englishmen, nor Frenchmen nor any other national group. Catholics, Protestants, Moslems, and Jews

are not races, nor are groups who speak English or any other language thereby definable as a race, people who have in Iceland or England or India are not races, nor are people who are culturally Turkish or Chinese, or the like thereby describable as races.

6. National, religious geographic, linguistic and cultural groups do not necessarily coincide with racial groups, and the cultural traits of such groups have not demonstrated genetic connection with racial traits. Because serious errors of this kind are habitually committed when the term *race* is used in popular parlance, it would be better when speaking of human races to drop the term *race* altogether and instead speak of ethnic groups.

7. Now what has the scientist to say about the groups of mankind which may be recognized at the present time? Human races can be and have been differently classified by different anthropologists. At the present time most anthropologists agree in classifying the greater part of present day mankind into three major divisions. They are as follows :

The Mongoloid Division

The Negroid Division

The Caucasoid Division

The biological processes which the classifier has here embalmed as it were, are dynamic, not static. These divisions were not the same in the past as they are at present, and there is every reason to believe that they will change in the future.

8. Many subgroups or ethnic groups within these divisions have been described. There is no general agreement upon their number, and in any event most ethnic groups have not yet been either studied or described by the physical anthropologists.

9. Whatever classification the anthropologist makes of man, he never includes mental characteristics as part of those classifications. It is now generally recognized that intelligence tests do not in themselves enable us to differentiate safely between what is due to innate capacity and what is the result of environmental influences, training and education. Wherever it has been possible to make allowances for differences in environmental opportunities, the tests have shown essential similarity in mental characters among all human groups. In short, given similar degrees of cultural opportunity to realize their potentialities, the average achievement of the members of each ethnic group is about the same. The scientific investigations of recent years fully support the dictum of Confucius (551-478 B.C.) ~~Menc~~ <sup>Men</sup> natures are alike, it is their habits that carry them far apart.+



10. The scientific natural trait available to us at present does not justify the conclusion that inherited genetic differences are a major factor in producing the differences between the cultures and cultural achievements of different peoples or groups. It does indicate, however that the history of the cultural experience which each group has undergone is the major factor in explaining such differences. The one trait which above all others has been at a premium in the evolution of men's mental characters has been educability plasticity. This is a trait which all human beings possess. It is indeed, a species character of Homo sapiens.

11. So far as temperament is concerned, there is no definite evidence that there exist inborn differences between human groups. There is evidence that whatever group differences of the kind there might be are greatly over-ridden by the individual differences, and by the differences springing from environmental factors.

12. As for personality and character, these may be considered race less. In every human group a rich variety of personality and character types will be found and there is no reason for believing that any human group is richer than any other in these respects.

13. With respect to race-mixture the evidence points unequivocally to the fact that this has been going on from the earliest times. Indeed, one of the chief processes of race-formation and race-extinction or absorption is by means of hybridisation between races or ethnic groups. Furthermore, no convincing evidence has been adduced that race-mixture of itself produces biologically undesired effects. Statements that human hybrids frequently show undesirable traits, both physically and mentally, physical disharmonies and mental degeneracies, are not supported by the facts. There is therefore, no biological justification for prohibiting intermarriage between persons of different ethnic groups.

14. The biological fact of race and the myth of race should be distinguished for all practical social purposes. Race is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth. The

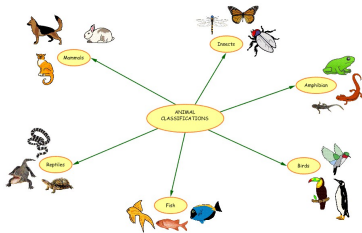
myth of race has created an enormous amount of human and social damage. In recent years it has taken a heavy toll in human lives and caused untold suffering. It still prevents the normal development of millions of human beings and deprives civilization of the effective co-operation of productive minds. The biological differences between ethnic groups should be disregarded from the standpoint of social acceptance and social action. The unity of mankind from both the biological and social viewpoints is the main thing. To recognize this and to act accordingly is the first requirement of modern man. It is but to recognize what a great biologist wrote in 1875. As man advances in civilization and small tribes are united into larger communities, the simplest reason would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts and sympathies to all the members of the same nation, though personally unknown to him. This point being once reached, there is only an artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies extending to the men of all nations and races. These are the words of Charles Darwin in the *Descent of Man* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1875, pp. 187-188). And, indeed, the whole of human history shows that a co-operative spirit is not only natural to men but more deeply rooted than any self-seeking tendencies. If this were not so we should not see the growth of integration and organization of his communities which the centuries and the millennia plainly exhibit.

15. We now have to consider the bearing of these statements on the problem of human equality. It must be asserted with the utmost emphasis that equality as an ethical principle in no way depends upon the assertion that human beings are in fact equal in endowment. Obviously individuals in all ethnic groups vary greatly among themselves in endowment. Nevertheless, the characteristics in which human groups differ from one another are often exaggerated and used as a basis for questioning the validity of equality in ethical sense. For this purpose we have thought it worth while to set out in a formal manner what is at present scientifically established concerning individual and group differences.



## UNESCO STATEMENT ON THE NATURE ON RACE IN RACE DIFFERENCES BY PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGIST IN GENETICISTS, JULY 1952

1. Scientists generally agreed that all man living today belong to single species



Homo Sapiens, and are derived from a common stock, even though there is some dispute as to when and how different human groups diverged from the common stock.

The concept race is unanimously regarded by anthropologist as classificatory device providing a zoological frame within which the various group of mankind may be arranged and by means of which studies of evolutionary process can be facilitated. In its anthropological sense, the word race should be reserved for groups of mankind processing well develop and a primarily heritable physical differences from other groups.

2. Some of the physical differences between human groups are due to differences in hereditary constitution and some to differences in the environments in which they have been brought up. In most cases both influences have been at work. The science of genetics suggests that the hereditary differences among populations of a single species are the results of the action of two sets of processes. On the one hand, the genetic composition of isolated populations is constantly but gradually being altered by natural selection and by occasional changes (mutations) in the material particles (genes) which control heredity. Populations are also affected by fortuitous changes in gene frequency and by marriage customs. On the other hand, crossing constantly breaks down the differentiation set up. The new mixed populations, in so far as they, in turn, become isolated are subject to the same processes, and these may lead to further changes. Existing races are merely the result, considered at a particular moment in time, of the total defect of such processes on the human species. The hereditary characters to be used in the classification of human groups, the limits of

their variation within these groups, may legitimately differ according to the scientific purpose in view.

3. National, religious, geographical, linguistic and cultural groups do not necessarily coincide with racial groups, and the cultural traits of such groups have no demonstrated connection with racial traits. Americans are not a race, nor are Frenchmen, nor Germans, nor ipso facto is any other national group. Moslems and Jews are no more races than are Roman Catholics and Protestants, nor are people who live in Iceland or Britain or India, or who speak English or any other language or who are culturally Turkish or Chinese and the like, thereby describable as races. The use of the term "race" in speaking of such groups may be a serious error, but as one which is habitually committed.



4. Human races can be, and have been classified in different ways by different anthropologists. Most of them agree in classifying the greater part of existing mankind into at least three large units, which may be called major groups (in French grand races, in German Hauptrasen) Such a classification does not depend on any single physical character. Furthermore, so far as it has been possible to analyse them, the differences in physical structure which distinguish one major group from another give no support to popular notions of any general "superiority" or "inferiority" which are sometimes implied in referring to these groups.

Broadly speaking individuals belonging to different major groups of mankind are distinguishable by virtue of their physical characters, but individual members, or small groups, belonging to different races within the same major group are usually not so distinguishable. Even the major groups grade into each other, and the physical traits by which they and the races within them are characterised overlap considerably. With respect to most, if not all measurable characters, the differences among individuals

belonging to the same race are greater than the differences that occur between the observed averages for two or more races within the same major group.

5. Most anthropologists do not include mental characteristics in their classification of human races. Studies within a single race have shown that both innate capacity and environmental opportunity determine the results of tests of intelligence and temperament, though their relative importance is disputed.



When intelligence tests even non-verbal are made on a group of non-literate people, their scores are usually lower than those of more civilized people. It has been recorded that different groups of the same race occupying similarly high levels of civilization may yield considerable differences in intelligence tests. When, however, the two groups have been brought up from childhood in similar environments the differences are usually very slight. Moreover, there is good evidence that given similar opportunities the average performance do not differ appreciably from one race to another.

Even those psychologists, who claim to have found the greatest differences in intelligence between groups of different racial origin, and have contended that they are hereditary, and report that the performance of some members of the group surpass not merely the lowest ranking member of the superior group, but also the average members of the group. In any case, it has never been possible to separate members of two groups on the basis of mental capacity, as they can often be separated on a basis of religion, skin colour, hair form or language. It is possible, though not proved, that some types of innate capacity for intellectual and emotional responses are common in one human group than in another, but it is certain that within a single group, innate, capacities vary as much as if not more than, they do between different groups.

The study of the heredity of psychological characteristics is beset with difficulties. We know that certain mental diseases and defects are transmitted from one generation

to the next, but we are less familiar with the part played by heredity in the mental life of normal individuals. The normal individual, irrespective of race, is essentially educable. It follows that his intellectual and moral life is largely conditioned by his training and by his physical and social environment.

If often happens that a national group may appear to be characterized by particular psychological attributes. The superficial view would be that this is due to race. Scientifically, however, we realize that any common psychological attribute is more likely to be due to a common historical and social background, and that such attributes may obscure the fact that, within different populations consisting of many human types, one will find approximately the same range of temperament and intelligence.

6. The scientific material available to us at present does not justify the conclusion that inherited genetic differences are a major factor in producing the differences between the cultures and cultural achievements of different peoples or groups. It does indicate, on the contrary, that a major factor in explaining such differences is the cultural experience which each group has undergone.



7. There is no evidence for the existence of so-called pure races. Skeletal remains provide the basis of our limited knowledge about earlier races. In regard to race mixture, the evidence points to the fact that human hybridisation has been going on for an indefinite but considerable time. Indeed, one of the processes of race formation and race extinction or absorption is by means of hybridisation between races. As there is no reliable evidence that disadvantageous effects are produced thereby, no biological justification exist for prohibiting intermarriage between persons of different races.

8. We now have to consider the bearing of these statements on the problem of human equality. We wish to emphasize that equality of opportunity and equality in law in no way depend, as ethical principles, upon the assertion that human beings are in fact equal in endowment.



9. We have thought it worth while to set out in a formal manner what is at present scientifically established concerning individual and group differences.

## CONCLUSION

A race, from the biological standpoint, may be defined as one of the groups of population constituting the species *Homo sapiens*. In short, the term *race* designates a group or population characterized by some concentrations. Scientist generally agreed that all man living today belong to single species *Homo Sapiens*, and are derived from a common stock, even though there as some dispute as to when and how different human groups diverged from the common stock.