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Rural Settlement in India

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Abstract: It is widely accepted that settlements can be differentiated in terms of rural and urban, but there is no consensus on what exactly defines a village or a town. Although population size is an important criterion, it is not a universal criterion since many villages in densely populated countries of India and China have population exceeding that of some towns of Western Europe and United States. At one time, people living in villages pursued agriculture or other primary activities, but presently in developed countries, large sections of urban populations prefer to live in villages even though they work in the city. The basic difference between towns and villages is that in towns the main occupation of the people is related to secondary and tertiary sectors, while in the villages most of the people are engaged in primary occupations such as agriculture, fishing, lumbering ,mining, animal husbandry, etc.

Index Terms - Rural , settlement , compact and helmeted.

I. INTRODUCTION

Depending on the size, the rural settlements are classified as Hamlets is rural settlement comprising of few houses only), true village communities, villages and large villages. True village community are just ancient and long settled villages where in extreme cases, no personal property exists and everything belongs to community of peasants. Such village communities are seen in India, Malaya and France.

II. MEANING AND DEFINITIONS OF SETTLEMENTS

Generally the human settlements are considered as points of population concentration. Entomologically the word fiends its roots in the old English "Self" (Seat) or "Sedan" (to place) and is not a specialized scientific term. It has as many as eleven meanings (Chamvers's -1961) of which two important from geographer's point of view, "a settled colony" (Group of houses where people dwell) and " the act of setting" (forming a permanent residence). But as is evident from Stone's review, the term has been employed to mean several things in geographical literatures.

According to Brunches (1952) "Settlement is the topographic expression of the grouping and arrangement of two fundamental elements, houses, and highways."

Dicken and Pitts said, "Settlement refers to the grouping of people and houses into hamlets, village's towns, and cities."

According to Rubenstein, J.M. (1990) "Settlement refers to a permanent occupation of a site by group of individuals."

III. RURAL SETTLEMENT

The definition of a rural settlement depends on the country. In some countries, a rural settlement is any settlement in the areas defined as rural by a governmental office, e.g., by the national census bureau. This may include even rural towns. In some others, rural settlements traditionally do not include towns. Common types of rural settlements are villages, hamlets and farms.

Traditionally, rural settlements were associated with agriculture. In modern times other types of rural communities have been developed .The settlement where the occupation of majority of people relate to the local natural resources are called rural settlement for example , (1) settlement of fisheries along a sea coast , (2) settlement of tribal people in the forest area and (3) settlement of farmers along the banks of rivers.

IV. Rural settlements may be classified on the basis of a number of criteria:

- (i) ON THE BASIS OF SETTING: The main types are plain villages, plateau villages, coastal villages, forest villages and desert villages.
- (ii) ON THE BASIS OF FUNCTIONS: There may be farming villages, fishermen's villages, lumberjack villages, pastoral villages etc.
- (iii) ON THE BASIS OF FORMS OR SHAPES OF THE SETTLEMENTS: These may be a number of geometrical forms and shapes such as Linear, rectangular, circular star like, T-shaped village, double village, cross-shaped village etc.
 - (a) Linear pattern: In such settlements houses are located along a road, railway line, river, canal edge of a valley or along a levee.
 - (b) Rectangular pattern: Such patterns of rural settlements are found in plain areas or wide inter mountain valleys. The roads are rectangular and cut each other at right angles.
 - (c) Circular pattern: Circular villages develop around lakes, tanks and sometimes the village is planned in such a way that the central part remains open and is used for keeping the animals to protect them from wild animals.
 - (d) Star like pattern: Where several roads converge, star shaped settlements develop by the houses built along the roads.
 - (e) T-shaped, Y-shaped, Cross-shaped or cruciform settlements: T-shaped settlements develop at tri-junctions of the roads () while -shaped settlements emerge as the places where two roads converge on the third one and houses are built along these roads. Cruciform settlements develop on the cross-roads and houses extend in all the four direction.
 - (f) Double village: These settlements extend on both sides of a river where there is a bridge or a ferry.

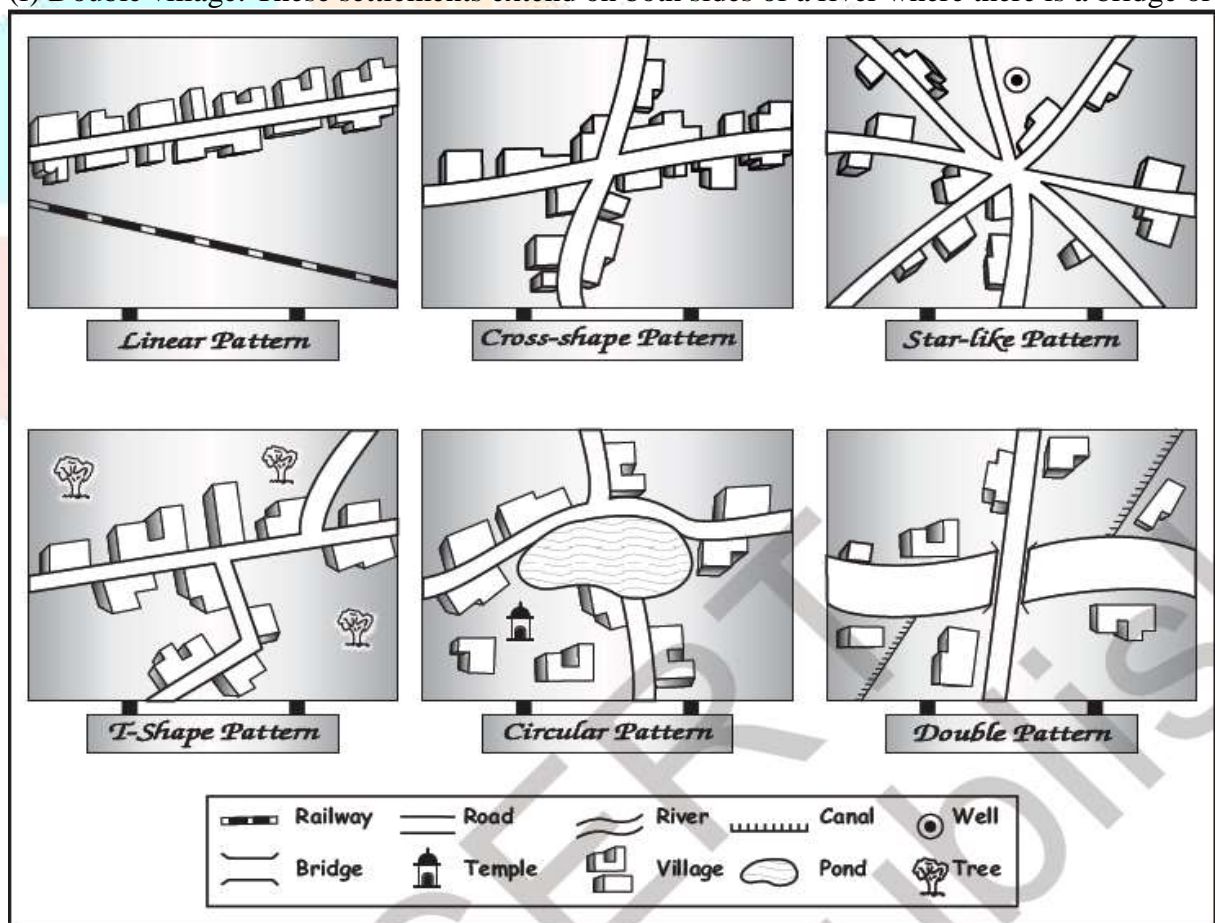


Fig. 10.5: Rural Settlement Patterns

V. RURAL SETTLEMENT SYSTEM IN INDIA

Rural Settlements in Northeast India are arranged in a remarkable variety of forms and patterns. These are related to marked changes in physical geography within relatively short distances and to successive movements of people from different parts of India and adjoining countries since time immemorial.

The physical factors are not alone sufficient to explain the patterns of rural settlements. Economic factors like markets, village cart-tracts, footpaths, roads and railways have also mattered to self-sufficient village communities.

VI. PATTERN OF RURAL SETTLEMENT IN INDIA

On the basis of number of villages, hamlets and number of occupation units, R.B. Singh identified four settlements. They are (i) compact, (ii) semi-compact, (iii) hamleted (iv) dispersed or scattered type.

(i) Compact settlements:

If the number of villages equals the number of hamlets in an area unit, the settlement is designated as compact. Such settlements are found throughout the plateau region of Malwa, in the Narmada Valley, Nimar upland, large parts of Rajasthan, paddy lands in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Vindhyan Plateau and several other cultivated parts of India.

In such villages all the dwellings are concentrated in one central site. The inhabitants of the village live together and enjoy the benefits of community life. Such settlements range from a cluster of about thirty to hundreds of dwellings of different forms, sizes and functions. Their size varies from 500 to 2,500 persons in sparsely populated parts like Rajasthan to more than 10,000 in the Ganga plain.

(ii) Semi-compact settlements:

If the number of villages equals more than half of the hamlets, it is semi-compact settlement. These are found both in plains and plateaus depending upon the environmental conditions prevailing there. The dwellings in such settlements are not very closely knitted and are huddled together at one common site. It covers more area than the compact settlements; the hamlets occupy new sites near the periphery of the village boundary.

(iii) Hamleted settlements:

If the number of villages is equal to half of hamlet number, it is a hamlet settlement. The hamlets are spread over the area with intervening fields and the main or central settlement is either absent or has feeble influence upon others. Often the original site is not easily distinguishable and the morphological diversity is rarely noticed. Such settlements are found in West Bengal, eastern Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and coastal plains.

(iv) Dispersed settlements:

If the number of villages is less than half the number of hamlets, the settlement is regarded as dispersed. The inhabitants of dispersed settlements live in isolated dwellings scattered in the cultivated fields. Individualism, sentiments of living freely, custom of marriage relations are conducive to such settlements.

CONCLUSION

Rural settlements in the developing countries are large in number and poorly equipped with infrastructure. They represent a great challenge and opportunity for planners. Supply of water to rural settlements in developing countries is not adequate. People in villages, particularly in mountainous and arid areas have to walk long distances to fetch drinking water. Water borne diseases such as cholera and jaundice tend to be a common problem. The countries of South Asia face conditions of drought and flood very often. Crop cultivation sequences, in the absence of irrigation, also suffer. The general absence of toilet and garbage disposal facilities cause health related problems. The design and use of building materials of houses vary from one ecological region to another. The houses made up of mud, wood and thatch, remain susceptible to damage during heavy rains and floods, and require proper maintenance every year. Most house designs are typically deficient in proper ventilation. Besides, the design of a house includes the animal shed along with its fodder store within it. This is purposely done to keep the domestic animals and their food properly protected from wild animals.

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