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Q6(a)

Examine the contribution of village studies towards the understanding of Indian social system

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · Anthropology GS 2 · 20 marks · Indian Village

5.1 Indian Village-Significance of village study in India; Indian village as a social system; Traditional and changing patterns of settlement and inter-caste relations; Agrarian relations in Indian villages; Impact of globalization on Indian villages.

Core demand of the question

- Examine the contribution of village studies towards the understanding of Indian social system
- Keep the answer to a 20-mark length of about 250 words

Revision summary

Village monographs replaced varna texts with jati, land, and faction.

Srinivas, Dube, and Marriott set the classic Indian village model.

The village is open to market, shrine, and state.

Karve's kinship zones explain regional marriage difference.

Panchayati raj and development still use this grammar.

Introduction

Village studies turned Indian society from a textual varna map into a field of jati, land, and faction. They are the empirical backbone of how anthropology understands the Indian social system.

Body

From text to field

- **M. N. Srinivas** at **Rampura** showed **dominant caste**, Sanskritisation, and the vote bank in one village.
- **S. C. Dube** at **Shamirpet** joined caste, faction, and planned change.
- **McKim Marriott** at **Kishan Garhi** tested little and great tradition as actual ritual traffic, not a book.

What the system looks like

- The village is not a republic isolate. **M. N. Srinivas** and others showed ties to market, shrine, and state.
- **Irawati Karve** supplied regional kinship that village studies then saw as north-south difference in marriage.
- **Oscar Lewis** and **F. G. Bailey** added faction and caste politics as the local state.

Limits and later use

- **One village is not India. Yet compared monographs built a system:** hierarchy, reciprocity, and mobility.
- **L. P. Vidyarthi** linked village clients to the sacred complex at Gaya, so the system includes the tirtha.
- Development, **panchayati raj**, and media studies still start from this village grammar.

Flow diagram

Village studies -> Srinivas Dube Marriott
Village studies -> Jati faction land
Village studies -> Shrine market state

Conclusion

- **Village studies contributed the working model of Indian society:** jati, dominant caste, faction, and extra-village ties. Without them, the social system would remain a shastric cartoon.

Facts & figures

Rampura

Srinivas's Mysore village that defined dominant caste and Sanskritisation in the field.

Shamirpet

Dube's Telangana study of caste, faction, and planned change.

Kishan Garhi

Marriott's Uttar Pradesh village for little and great tradition.

Dominant caste

Srinivas's term for the locally powerful cultivating jati that runs the village.