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Q3(c)

Describe the traditional patterns of settlement of Indian villages

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · Anthropology GS 2 · 15 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

- Describe the traditional patterns of settlement of Indian villages
- Keep the answer to a 15-mark length of about 200 words

Revision summary

Indian villages are often nucleated around tank and temple, with fields outside.

Linear and dispersed patterns appear by region and ecology.

Caste quarters mark the nucleated core, as Srinivas and Dube showed.

Tribal hamlets follow clan and forest more than a single street.

Karve's kinship zones track north-south difference in the plan.

Introduction

Traditional Indian village settlement is a map of houses, lanes, and fields that follows caste, water, and defence. It is a social pattern, not a random scatter.

Body**Common patterns**

- Nucleated villages of the north and Deccan pack houses around a tank, temple, or fort, with fields outside.
- Linear and street villages follow a road or river. Dispersed homesteads appear in parts of the east, Kerala, and some tribal hills.
- **Srinivas** and **Dube** showed the nucleated core as a **caste geography**: high jatis near the temple, service groups and Dalit quarters at the edge.

Tribal and regional variants

- Gond and other Central Indian settlements may be hamlet clusters near jhum or forest, not a single street.
- **Sixth Schedule** hill villages can be ridge-top and clan-based.
- **Irawati Karve's** zones help: southern villages often encode different kin and street rules than the north Indian khap village.

What the pattern does

- Settlement encodes purity, drainage, and watch. **Panchayati raj** offices later sit on the same square.

- Change comes as pucca colonies, highways, and mines, but the old map still explains who lives where.

Flow diagram

Nucleated core -> Caste quarters
Linear river road -> Regional type
Tribal hamlets -> Forest jhum

Conclusion

Traditional settlement patterns are nucleated, linear, or dispersed according to region, with caste and clan written into space. The village plan is a social document.

Facts & figures

Nucleated village

Packed homestead core with outfields, common in much of the north and Deccan.

Caste geography

Temple-centre and edge quarters that map rank onto lanes.

S. C. Dube

Shamirpet showed how settlement, caste, and administration sit together.

Hamlet cluster

Tribal pattern of small settlements rather than one tight street village.