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Q4(a)

**Who is said to be the pioneer of village studies in India?
Illustratively describe contributions of some Indian sociologists
on village studies. How their approaches are distinct from each
other?**

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · Sociology GS 2 · 20 marks · Rural and Agrarian Social Structure

Rural and Agrarian Social Structure: The idea of Indian village and village studies; Agrarian social structure - evolution of land tenure system, land reforms.

Core demand of the question

- Identify pioneers of Indian village studies (Srinivas as field pioneer; others)
- **Describe distinct approaches:** structural-functional field, Indological village, Marxist, comparative civilisation, caste-class-power
- Name **Rampura**, Shamirpet, **Sripuram**, Dumont-Pocock, Marriott, Dube, Majumdar, Bêteille
- Do not collapse everyone into one method

Revision summary

Srinivas is the pioneer of intensive village fieldwork in Indian sociology, with **Rampura** and the dominant caste.

Dube's Shamirpet offered a holistic community study; Majumdar mixed survey and anthropology.

Marriott and Dumont-Pocock insisted the village be read through civilisational and ideological categories.

Bêteille separated caste, class and power as no longer symmetrical.

Marxist and political-anthropological village studies further shifted the master variable to surplus and faction.

Introduction

If one name is asked for the **pioneer of intensive village field studies** in professional Indian sociology, it is **M. N. Srinivas-Rampura**, the dominant caste, sanskritization, and the book view versus field view. He was not alone. **S. C. Dube, D. N. Majumdar, McKim Marriott, Louis Dumont and David Pocock**, and **André Bêteille** built a library of villages with **distinct theoretical knives**.

Body**Srinivas and the field village**

- **Srinivas made the village a total social fact observed over time:** caste ranking, factions, harvest, and the dominant caste as a local power fact. The method is **structural-functional ethnography** with a historical eye. It dethroned purely textual Indology without ignoring ritual.

Other approaches

S. C. Dube (Indian Village, Shamirpet) wrote a more holistic community study, accessible and administrative in tone, mapping groups, economy and changing leadership. **D. N. Majumdar** combined anthropology and village survey, including Himalayan and north Indian sites, with a stronger physical-anthropology inheritance. **Marriott's** Kishan Garhi work and the little/great tradition dialogue treated the village as a **civilisational node**, not an isolate. **Dumont and Pocock's** "For a Sociology of India" scolded empiricism that ignored indigenous ideology; the village must be thought with hierarchy, not only with British community-study templates. **Béteille's** **Sripuram** (Caste, Class and Power) broke the functionalist calm: land, education and panchayat created **asymmetry**-caste, class and power no longer sat in one pyramid.

Marxist village work (**A. R. Desai**, later agrarian studies) asked who took the surplus, not how the ritual rank held. **F. G. Bailey** (Bisipara) brought political anthropology and factions. **Kathleen Gough** brought class and Kerala's radical countryside. Earlier, **W. H. Wiser's** jajmani study and the Wisconsin / Cornell projects treated the village as a service economy. **Oscar Lewis** in Rampur used a comparative peasant lens. These are not footnotes; they show that "village studies" was always a **plural craft**.

Dumont also doubted the village as a sociological isolate: caste and civilisation overflow the revenue boundary. That critique is a distinct approach, not a denial of Srinivas's ethnography. After the 1970s, feminists and Dalit scholars asked whose village the monograph had been-rarely the landless woman's.

Approaches differ on the **unit** (village as isolate vs as node), the **master variable** (ritual rank, land, state, civilisation), and the **politics** (harmony, conflict, colonial construction). **M. N. Srinivas** remains the pioneer of the Indian field village; distinctiveness is the point of the rest of the syllabus.

Flow diagram

Srinivas Rampura -> Field / dominant caste
 Dube Shamirpet -> Holistic community
 Marriott / Dumont-Pocock -> Civilisation and ideology
 Beteille Sripuram -> Caste class power

Conclusion

Srinivas pioneered the intensive Indian village monograph as sociology. Dube and Majumdar widened survey and community description. Marriott and Dumont-Pocock civilisationalised the village. Béteille politicised it as caste-class-power. One village, several sciences.

Facts & figures

Rampura

Mysore village of Srinivas's ethnography; source of dominant caste and much of his empirical vocabulary.

Sripuram

Tanjore village of Béteille's Caste, Class and Power, showing diverging axes of stratification.

For a Sociology of India

Dumont and Pocock's 1957 programme: Indian sociology must use Indian ideological categories, not only imported community study.

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