

Understanding the Concept of a Village



Dr. Manas Upadhyay



What is a Village?

- **Definition:** A village is a small human settlement typically found in rural areas, larger than a hamlet but smaller than a town.
- **Small Rural Settlement**
 - Larger than a hamlet, smaller than a town
- **Population Range:** Geographers often define a village as having between 500 and 2,500 inhabitants.
- **Origin of the Word:**
 - Derived from Latin *villa* meaning “country house”
 - Passed through Old French *village* meaning a group of buildings
 - First recorded in English during the 14th century
- **Etymology**
 - From Latin *villa* (country house) → French *village*



Scholars' Views on Village

- **Sir Charles Metcalfe:**
 - “Village communities are little republics, nearly self-sufficient and independent.”
- **M.N. Srinivas:**
 - Villages are units where people share customs, caste, and occupations.
- **D.N. Majumdar:**
 - A village is a social organism, not just a physical space.
- **A.R. Desai:**
 - Villages form the base of India’s agrarian feudal structure.
- **Robert Redfield:**
 - Describes the village as homogeneous, self-contained, and tradition-bound.
- **Karl Marx (implied):**
 - Indian villages are historically stagnant and self-sufficient.
- **Louis Dumont:**
 - Highlights the caste hierarchy shaping rural life.
- **Yogendra Singh:**
 - Views villages as evolving systems influenced by modernization.



Key Features of Village Communities

1. Small Size & Population

- Limited geographical spread
- Residents often know one another personally

2. Agrarian Economy

- Agriculture is the main livelihood
- Depends on rain and traditional tools

3. Self-Sufficiency

- Local production of food and crafts
- Presence of artisans like potters, weavers, blacksmiths

4. Strong Social Ties

- Interconnectedness through kinship and caste
- Emphasis on community solidarity

5. Caste-Based Social Structure

- Occupations tied to caste hierarchy
- Interdependent social relations

6. Traditional Institutions

- Panchayat (village council) resolves disputes

- Community elders and informal justice mechanisms

7. Cultural Continuity

- Folk songs, festivals, and rituals
- Oral traditions and local dialects preserved

8. Collective Life

- Shared labor and cooperation in farming
- Festivals and decisions celebrated as a group

9. Limited Mobility

- Residents rarely migrate; strong land ties
- Changing in recent decades due to urbanization

10. Low Level of Modernization

- Limited infrastructure and access to education or healthcare
- Slowly changing with development programs



Classification by Structure

1. Nucleated Village

- ✓ Clustered houses with nearby community centers
- ✓ Common in fertile areas like paddy fields

2. Linear Village

- ✓ Homes built in straight lines along roads or rivers
- ✓ Balanced access to land and residential proximity

3. Dispersed Village

- ✓ Scattered dwellings, often in hilly or forested areas
- ✓ Residents live far from each other

4. Mixed Village

- ✓ Central nucleated zone with some scattered hamlets
- ✓ Found in both plains and hilly terrains



Classification Based on Residence

1. Migratory Villages

- Temporary, seasonal settlements
- Tribals practicing shifting cultivation

2. Semi-Permanent Agricultural Villages

- Residents stay for years, shift due to soil exhaustion
- Depend on rainfall and basic subsistence farming

3. Permanent Agricultural Villages

- Stable settlements with intergenerational continuity
- Strong community ties, long-standing institutions



Classification Based on Organisation

1. Co-operative Villages

- Individual land ownership, shared resources
- Farming and procurement done cooperatively

2. Semi-Collective Villages

- Community-owned resources
- Produce shared based on family size, not labor

3. Collective Villages

- Communal living and working
- All resources, food, and facilities shared equally



Classification Based on Land Ownership

1. Land-Lord Villages

- ✓ Dominated by powerful land-owning families
- ✓ Tenants pay rent, often exploitative relations

2. Ryotwari Villages

- ✓ Cultivators (Ryots) own land and pay revenue directly to the state
- ✓ Promoted autonomy and reduced intermediary exploitation



Thank You

