

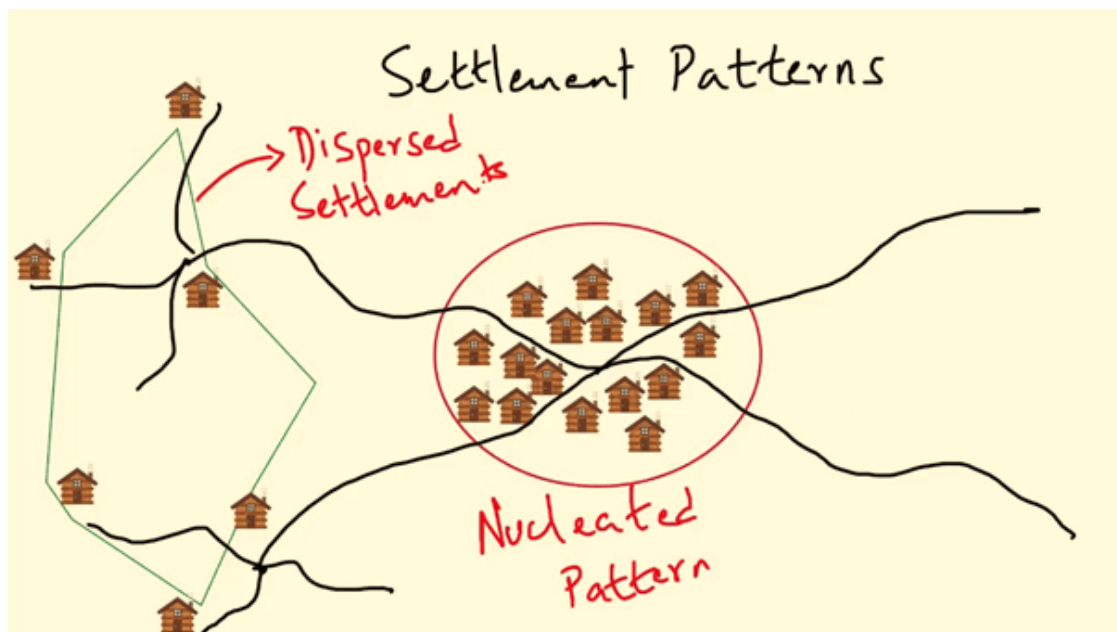
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Human Settlement: Objectives, What is a Settlement? Types and Patterns of Rural Settlements

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In the previous chapter, we have discussed about population composition, total population, rural-urban population, population growth, etc. In this lesson, our focus will be on human settlements, the concept of settlements meaning and nature, evolution and classification of rural and urban settlements in India.



Objectives

The major objectives of this chapter are:

- To describe the meaning of settlement
- To identify various types of rural settlements
- To describe various house types in India
- To establish the relationship between house types with relief, climate, and building materials
- To define an urban area as given by the Census of India
- To explain the functional classification of urban settlements as given by Census of India

What is a Settlement?

A settlement can be defined as any form of human habitation which ranges from a single dwelling to a large city. The word settlement is described as a process of opening up and settling of a previously uninhabited area by the people. In geography this process is also known as occupancy. Hence, settlement is a process of grouping of people and acquiring of some territory to build houses as well as for their economic support.

Settlements can broadly be divided into two types – rural and urban. Some basic differences between rural and urban areas are:

- Rural areas have predominantly primary activities, whereas urban areas have the domination of secondary and tertiary activities.
- Generally, the rural areas have low density of population than their urban counterparts.

Types and Patterns of Rural Settlements

Type refers to a category of things having some common features whereas pattern refers to a regular form or order in which a series of things occur. The term settlement pattern is strictly applied to the spatial arrangement or distribution of settlements within a given area. It differs from the settlement form. Settlement form relates more to the spatial characteristics of individual settlement. However, sometimes forms and patterns are used interchangeably. As far as type of rural settlements is concerned, it implies the degree of dispersion of the dwellings.

Types of Rural Settlements

If we group settlements found all over the country, these can broadly be grouped under four categories. Let us discuss these types along with some of the major patterns associated with each type.

- **Compact Settlements:** These settlements have closely built up area. In such settlements all the dwellings are concentrated in one central site and this inhabited area is distinct and separated from the farms and pastures. Maximum settlements of our country come under this category. They are spread over almost every part of the country. These settlements are distributed over the entire northern Indo-Ganga plain from Punjab in the north-west to West Bengal in the east, Orissa coast, and basins of Mahanadi in Chhattisgarh, coastal areas of Andhra Pradesh, Cauvery delta of Tamil Nadu, Maidaus of Karnataka, lower Assam and Tripura, in the valleys of Siwaliks etc.

Generally, people live in compact settlement for security or defence purpose. The greatest example of this type is in Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. In Rajasthan people live in compact settlement because of the scarce availability of cultivable land and water body. Such

settlements generally range from a cluster of about thirty to hundreds of dwelling of different forms, size, and functions. On an average their size varies from 500 to 2,500 persons in sparsely populated parts of Rajasthan to more than 10,000 persons in the Ganga plain. Very often these settlements have a definite pattern due to closely built area and intervening street patterns. As many as 11 patterns are identified. We will discuss only five major patterns. These patterns are:

- **Linear Pattern:** It is commonly found along main roads, railways, streams, etc. It may have a single row of houses arranged along the main artery. For example, rural settlements found along the seacoast, river valley, mountain ranges etc.
- **Rectangular Pattern:** This settlement type develops around the rectangular shape of the agricultural fields as it is common to find a system of land measurement based on square units. Village paths and cart tracks also confirm to the rectangular field patterns and run through the village in north-south and east-west directions. Accessibility to farms and fields, and connectivity to other settlements lead to rectangular shape of settlements. The settlements of coastal Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh and either side of Aravalli hills may be cited for examples.
- **Square Pattern:** This is basically a variant of rectangular type. This pattern is associated with villages lying at the crossing of cart tracks or roads and also related to features restricting the extension of the village outside a square space. These features may include an old boundary wall, thick orchards, a road, or a pond.
- **Circular Pattern:** In the upper Doab and Trans-Yamuna districts, Malwa region, Punjab and Gujarat, large villages are characterized by a very high degree of compactness. The outer walls of the dwellings adjoin each other and present a continuous front so that when viewed from outside, the villages look like a walled and fortified enclosure pierced by a few openings. The round form was a natural outcome of maximum aggregation for the purpose of defence during the past.
- **Radial Pattern:** In this type, a number of streets converge on one centre which may be a source of water like pond or well, a temple or mosque, a centre of commercial activity or simply an open space. Thus, the streets seem to be radiating from a common centre. Examples are settlements near Gurushikar, Mount Abu in Rajasthan, and Vindhyachal in Uttar Pradesh.
- **Semi- Compact Settlement:** In these settlements the dwellings or houses are not well-knitted. They are characterized by a small but compact nucleus around which hamlets are dispersed. It covers more area than the compact settlements. These settlements are found both in plains and plateaus depending upon the environmental conditions prevailing in that area.

Such settlements are situated along streams in Manipur, Mandla and Balaghat districts of Madhya Pradesh, and Rajgarh district of Chhattisgarh. Different tribal groups inhabit such settlements in the Chhota Nagpur region. In Nagaland, such settlements may be in the form of blushing villages. Like, compact settlements, semi-compact settlements may also have different patterns. Some of the patterns are:

- **Checkerboard Pattern:** This is a type of settlement found generally at the junction of two roads. The village streets meet each other at an angle or are parallel to each other. This is because of the tendency to align the dwellings along cardinal axes. This pattern is common in the northern plains.
- **Elongated Pattern:** Such settlement occurs as a result of elongation of the rectangular pattern due to influence of site features. For example, in the Ganga plains, in areas liable to inundation,

the rectangular pattern becomes unusually elongated along the high ground. Even otherwise the advantage offered by riverside location forces such a pattern.

- **Fan Shaped Pattern:** This pattern can be seen where some focal points or line is situated at one end of the village. A focal object may be a tank a riverside, a road, an orchard, a well, or even a place of worship. Such patterns are common in the delta region where the dwellings simply follow the fan shaped profile of the delta as in the case of Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna, Cauvery, etc. Such patterns are also common in the Himalayan foothills.
- **Hamlet Settlements:** This type of settlements, are fragmented into several small units. The main settlement does not have much influence on the other units. Very often the original site is not easily distinguishable, and these hamlets are often spread over the area with intervening fields. This segregation is often influenced by social and ethnic factors. The hamlets are locally named as faliya, para, dhana, dhani, and nanglay. These settlements are generally found in West Bengal, eastern Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and coastal plains. Geographically it covers lower Ganga plain, lower valleys of the Himalayas and central plateau, or upland region of the country.
- **Dispersed Settlements:** This is also known as isolated settlements. Here the settlement is characterized by units of small size which may consist of a single house to a small group of houses. It varies from two to seven huts. In this type, hamlets are scattered over a vast area and does not have any specific pattern. Such type of settlements is found in the tribal areas of central part of India covering Chhota Nagpur plateau, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan. Such patterns are also common in the hills of north West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.