

Social Morphology & Rural House types in India

Settlement morphology is primarily concerned with the lay-out, plan and internal structure of the settlements. It not only views settled area in terms of physical space but identifies its various components in respect of socio-economic space which has its direct bearing in controlling the arrangement of buildings, patterns of streets and fields and functional characteristics of settlements in general.

In an old settled country like India it assumes considerable importance, for it helps in understanding the socio-cultural structure of the villages, their economic and sanitary conditions as well as their response to new innovations (Tiwari, R.C. 1984, p. 90).

The morphology of settlement has two main components-(a) ground plan, and (b) built-up area. The ground plan mainly includes street patterns, arrangement of buildings and cultural artifacts like temple, fort, residence of village head-man and market place etc. Here the process of change is comparatively slow. On the contrary, built-up area undergoes frequent changes. Doxiadis has identified four main parts within the morphological structure of a settlement. These include: (a) homogeneous part consisting of fields, grazing land etc., (b) circulatory part consisting of village roads, streets and lanes etc., (c) central part provided by the built-up area of the village, and (d) special part marked with temple, school, Panchayat *ghar*, *Morung*, etc.

Indian village, though defined as the smallest revenue-cum-administrative unit, generally consists of aggregates of residences, the inhabitants of which have certain relations, and some kind of union or bond of common government (Baden Powell, 1892, p. 97). The built-up area consisting of clusters of houses is surrounded by cultivated fields and linked with *kachcha* and *pukka* roads or village footpaths.

Salient Features of Indian Rural Social Structure

Rural Social Structure: every society has certain units. It is these units that form the social set up or social structure. These units are inter-related and through their study, it is possible to study the behavior patterns of the society. This is true of the Indian society, particularly the Indian Rural Society.

In Indian Rural Society, different villages are the units and they have geographical, moral and other types of structures. Their behavior pattern, their beliefs, ideas, faiths etc. are also different from one another. For the proper study of the Indian Rural Society, the units that form the social structure have to be studied.

Units of Rural Social Structure: we have just now seen that the villages form the units of the Rural Society. These villages have their own structure. The structure formed out of the following units: -

1) Family, 2) Caste System, 3) Internal Organization, 4) Religion; and 5) Economic System.

If scientific and proper study of the Indian social structure is to be made, these units have to be studied in detail. Let us take them up one by one.

1) The family:

Family is the basic unit of Indian social structure. It occupied an important place in the Rural Society. Apart from performing various basic and important tasks, the family also brings about socialization, social control and also performs various economic activities. It is the agency that controls the religious activities particularly in the Rural Society. It has the following characteristics:

a) Patriarchal family structure, b) joint family system, c) extended family structure.

2) Caste-System:

The second unit of the social organization of social structure of the Rural Society in the Caste System. Through the institution, the functions status, occupation role and social position are determined. In fact, it is an inverse system or reverse system or traditions. The caste system is based on endogamy and sometimes has common economic position or linkage.

It is a pervert from of old economic classification. The following extract throws light on the origin of the Indian Caste System. The origin of Indian caste sometimes is traced from the penetration of the Aryans, who devised the system for the division of labor in their society. The traditional divisions have long since been complicated over laid by innumerable sub-division into multitude of several thousand different caste which marred the social structure of India.

It clearly shown that Indian caste system is the result of different caste units. There is social stratification on the Rural Society which gives birth the caste-system. The caste system is based on certain customs and traditions. As a result of those customs and tradition various factors are determined, which in their form determine the Caste System as such is an endogamous group. Normally it has the following characteristics: -

1) Limited to the persons born within that caste. 2) Endogamous group, 3) Determined occupation.

3) The internal organization:

This internal organization governs and determines the social and individual life of the people living in a particular village. Normally every village has a Panchayat and its head; it is elected with the consent of almost all the adult members of the village. Such as revenue, law and order etc., generally there is a village Panchayat, a village Nyay Panchayat, Panchayat of different castes and certain other social, religious and political group's voluntary groups.

That are indented at helping the villagers are maintaining the religious customs and traditions play a vital role in determining the internal organization and working of the villagers and village life.

4) Religion and religious organization:

Like caste, family internal organization etc., religion is an important unit of the village social structure of organization. In fact, religion means worship of the super natural power. This super natural power means god and other gods and deities, worship of supernatural power and the ditties form an important part of village life. Villages have their own gods and deities.

5) Economic system:

Economic system has now come to occupy an important place in every social structure. In fact, economic system determines not only the social structure but various other things. It includes the means and the system of production system of distribution, sharing of profit etc., according to Raymond forth; social and economic activities are inter-related have a mutual relationship.

They are interring dependent and literally, the economic system determines the social structure very much. According to economic conditions the activities of a man are determined. This is true of the village society as well. The economic system of the villages is based on the following two factors: -

A) Functional specialization and b) Inter-dependence.

In village society as we have seen earlier different castes have different occupations and functions. In other words, their economic activities are determined by their social conditions. A particular social group has

performed particular type of economic activities. For example, the social group or the caste that is known as washer man is responsible for washing the clothes; no one can be to that profession.

They have monopoly over the washing of clothes and they are prohibited taking to any other thing. In this manner they have a functional specialization.

But in villages functional specialization is not free from interdependence of people of a particular caste do a particular thing, members of other castes or social groups have to depend on them for fulfillment of their economic needs of earning their livelihood but also help the member of other social group to do their livelihood but also help members of other social group to do their job. Because of the backwardness of the economic position the social structure of the villages is also backward. It has to be studied in proper prospective so that real progress can be made.

Models of Social Morphology in Indian Villages

At times there are more than one inhabited site within the territorial limits of one revenue village interspersed with cultivated fields, pastures and village groves, etc. The main site, generally occupying the central location and inhabited by early village settlers (mostly belonging to the upper castes and zamindars), forms the nucleus of the village and is known as 'Khas Gaon'. Others around it is small hamlets named after the dominant castes residing therein (mostly low castes, land-less labourers, village artisans or emigrants from the main village) and are called (*'purwa', 'pura', 'tola', 'toli', nagala', 'patti'*, etc. The main village and its outlying hamlets, though physically detached from each other, function as an integrated unit under the old *jajmani* system.

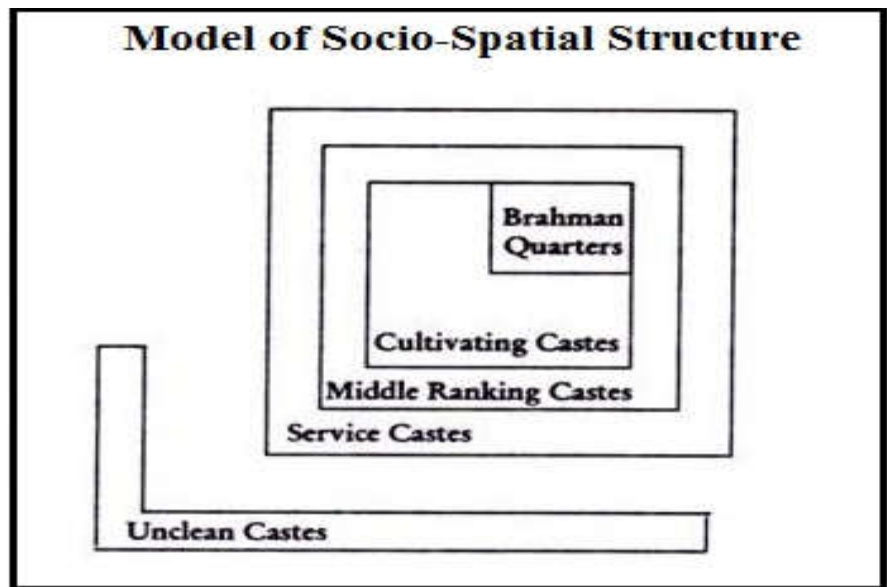
The general pattern of land use includes multi- cropped best soil zone (*Gauhan or Goind*) around the inhabited site followed by less fertile and low irrigated single cropped zone (*Manjha* or Har) in the periphery. In ancient days the inter-village transition area was occupied by the forests, pasture lands and barren areas but owing to the growth of population it has now been largely brought under cultivation. Similarly, early inhabited sites consisted of compact houses with less development of lanes and streets, etc, but some are now being replaced by open residential sites with lanes and narrow winding streets.

(1) Socio-Spatial Structure

Besides physical characteristics social conditions specially the caste system play dominant role in affecting the internal morphological structure of the Indian villages. Generally, the economic prosperity, social status and functional attributes are very much linked with the centuries old caste hierarchy which gives a distinct size, shape and layout to the rural dwellings. High ranking castes like Brahmans, *Rajputs, Kayasths*, etc, possess pretentious houses with large courtyard and separate apartment for each young female, while low ranking castes specially untouchables have single room hut/house shared by all members of the family and at times by cattle as well without much open space, courtyard and lanes, etc. *Ahir, Lodh, Kachhi, Kurmi*, etc., together with many service castes like *Lohar, Kahar, Kohar, Barhai*, etc., occupy median position between two extremes and are gaining gradually in their economic prospects during recent years due to their hard work, reservation policy of the government and extravagant habits of higher castes, especially erstwhile zamindars and landlords who still depend upon labourers to get their farm-work done.

The nucleus of the village is usually occupied by high castes, while subordinate castes have peripheral locations. Untouchables like *Chamar, Pasi, Jatav, Musahars, Mehtars, Dhanuk*, etc., build their houses far away from the high castes on the periphery interspersed by village-grove, cultivated fields, water bodies, *usar* lands etc. At times caste-based hamlets emerge within the village territory using various epithets like *Chamarauti, Chamartola, Lodhian, Ahiran, Kurmiyan, Thakuran, Babhanauti, Babhantola, Kaithan*, etc.

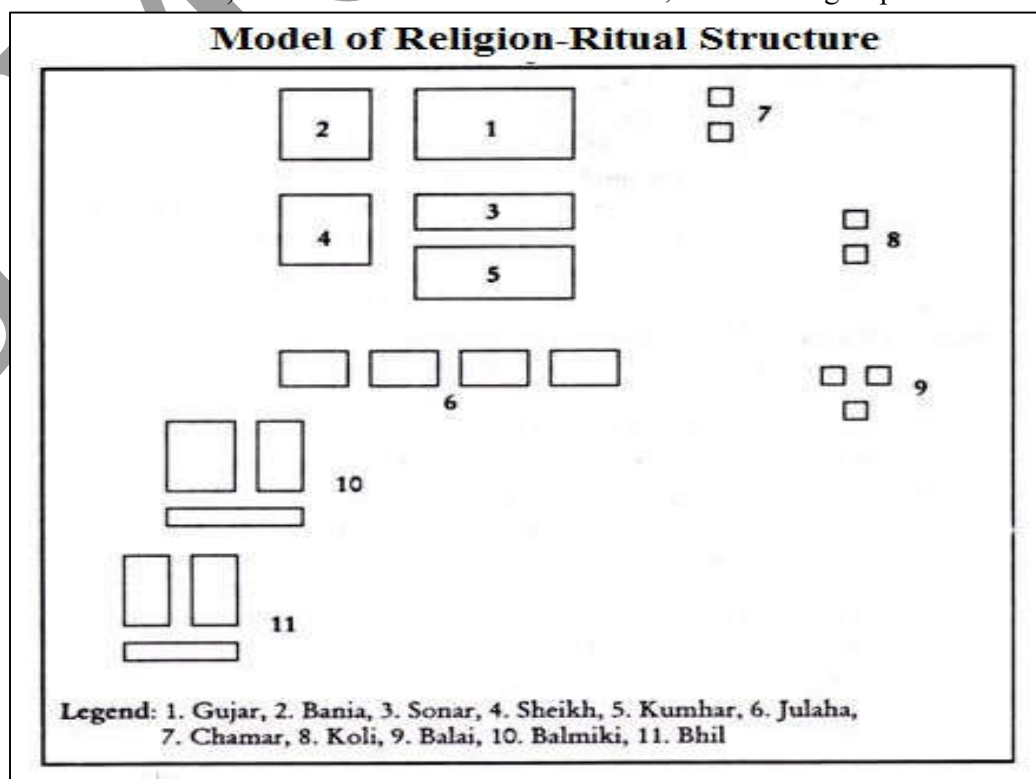
These hamlets together with their inhabitants are closely linked with the main site under the *jajmani* system and act like a single functional unit. These two concepts of social space and functional integration have much relevance in understanding the socio-spatial structure of the Indian villages and have been neatly displayed by K.N. Singh (1972) through his religion-ritual and secular dominance models.



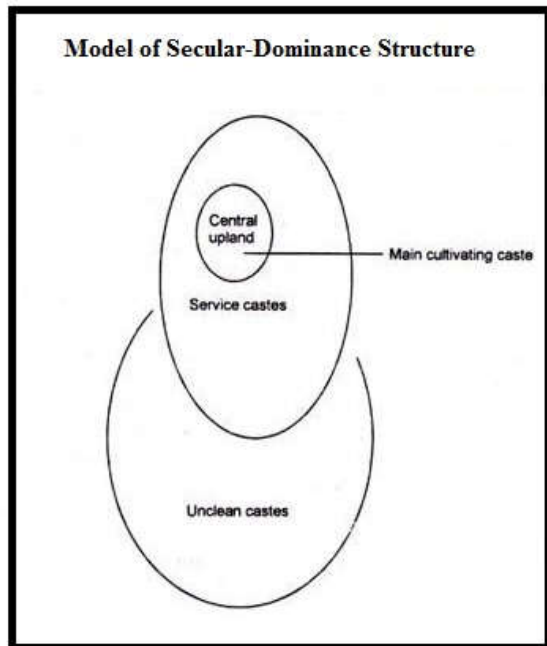
(2) Religion-Ritual Model

Hindu social organization based on caste system leads to the maximization of social distance due to socio-ritual notions like purity-pollution, untouchability, etc. It envisages a Brahman-untouchable ritual continuum in which all other caste groups occupy different niches according to their social status. The practice leads to the development of twin settlements of caste Hindus and out-castes which are separated from each other more by social space than by any appreciable barriers. Brahmans, being the priestly castes and performers of rituals and ceremonies, find place in almost all villages and so is the case with untouchables whose labour and services make the foundation of village economy.

The segregation was much pronounced during the past favouring the outgrowth of helmeted structure of villages, In case of compact settlements out-castes generally lived on the outer parts of the built-up area in a direction (south, south-east and north etc.) less conducive for wind movement, for even air gets polluted after coming in contact with a Shudra's body. How and why these traditions came into being is a matter of debate amongst scholars, but the author believes these untouchables to be the remnant of the pre-Aryan tribes who were always despised by the Aryans and later Rajput settlers.



(3) Secular-Dominance Model



Contrary to the religion-ritual model of distance maximization secular dominance model brings different caste-groups closer to each other, so as to function as complementary unit under old *jajmani* system. Land holders (mostly higher castes) for their agricultural work and services while landless low castes for earning their livelihood have to depend upon each other for their survival.

This reduces the distance between these two social groups making the settlement compact and unified. There are instances when land-owning dominant castes invited various service castes to settle within the village territory for carrying out the functions of *jajmani* system. *Rajputs*, being the principal land holders in the Ganga Plain, have exercised this secular power in the colonization of many villages while in some other cases castes like Brahmins, *Kayasths*, *Banias*, etc., also held this privileged position. This functional interdependence is seen even in case of certain Muslim villages as remnants of old decayed tradition prevailing amongst the converts.

Either of the two models is not capable of explaining the present socio-spatial structure of the villages independently. It is their joint pull which gives distinct pattern to the village morphology and under the stresses of new socio-economic orders the old system is gradually losing its importance. *Jajmani* system is now a decayed institution and the rigidity of the caste system is fading out. The rise in the socio-economic conditions of the Dalits due to improvement in their education level has made them conscious about their rights as a result of which the traditional barrier is breaking down.

Significance of rural sociology in India

In the Indian context, especially, rural sociology is of greater significance because of the following reasons-

- (a) Village is the life and blood of Indian social life; according to S.C. Dubey "from time immemorial village has been a basic and important unit in the organization of Indian social life."
- (b) Unique nature of transformation of Indian society where elements of traditional and modern cultures have been juxtaposed;
- (c) Agricultural base of the country is of unique variety and also the most predominant mode of occupation is agriculture;
- (d) For rural development and solution of rural problems; according to A.R. Desai, "this systematic study of rural social organization; of its structure; function and evolution has not only become necessary but also urgent after advent of independence..."
- (e) Growing influence of industrialization and urbanization;
- (f) Villages as the basic unit of study;
- (g) Scientific study of village community is a prerequisite for democratic decentralization.

Rural House types in India

The village lay out is often irregular, although there is central street in each of the villages and with many rough and narrow lanes. Mostly the arrangement of the houses inside a village is very often confusing as they have resulted from a process of accretion in which the ideas of individuals and the availability of the land were the main factors taken into consideration.

Main occupations of the villagers are agriculture and related activities. The people practicing different occupations conform to respective castes i.e. distinct groups according to professions. Social and religious segregation is the dominant feature of the Indian village and such segregation is observed with local traits in the study region. The villages generally have open drains along the roads. Insanitation, caused due to drainage facility and filth is usual feature of every village.

House Types According to Building Materials:

The availability of local building material is of great importance in the construction of houses. The use of clay, sand, bamboo, grass, reeds, timber, and stone are usually made for the construction of wall and roof of the houses. In respect of building material there is little variation in the area, since the type of building material available in the area is common.

This study is based on census of India, housing report and field visit. There are certain materials which are in universal use but some regional differences can still be noticed. On the basis of building materials, houses can be classified as follows.

- a) House built in grasses, leaves, reeds, wood and bamboos:** These types of houses are predominant in the forested areas. Grasses, leaves, reeds, bamboo, and timber are available in plenty in this area and therefore, these materials are used as building material of wall and roof. These types of houses are required to be rebuilt before every monsoon. The entire repairing / construction work is accomplished within a period of two or three days.
- b) Mud wall and flat mud roof:** Such types of houses are found generally found in all over India. The chief characteristics of such dwelling are cheapness of material and suitability for regional climatic conditions.
- c) Stone – in – mud walls and tiles, slates, shingle roof:** This house types are built out of these locally available building materials. Such houses have walls built of bricks in mud or lime and roofs of tiles or C.I. sheets.
- d) Brick Houses:** Only in large villages rich people are able to build such houses as they are expensive. Therefore, the percentage of such houses in rural areas is very less.
- e) Stone houses:** The walls of the houses are built in dressed stone blocks and mud masonry. The roofs of these houses are made up of C.I. sheets, tiles or mud. Stone is cheap and available everywhere, therefore, many houses are built in stone.

House Plans

- a) Rectangular House:** The rectangular shape of the houses is the most common house structure in India. The houses are mainly used for residential purposes. Schools, hostels, and public buildings are of this shape. A rectangular house plan consists usually 3 to 4 rooms with an open courtyard in front of the building and a little shed at the rear. In some plans such houses have attached *varandhas* which serve the purpose of a cowshed, kitchen, or guest room. They are provided with a few small windows.

b) Square houses: This type is generally preferred by rich people who build their houses in brick and cement. They have a courtyard in the middle and are surrounded by rooms on all sides. The doors of each room open in the courtyard.

c) Circular houses: This type of house is predominant in the forested areas. They are generally made of grasses, leaves, reeds and bamboos. This is a very simple and least expensive type of houses.

Types of Rural Houses in India

1. Huts: These are small crude shelters. It is mostly made of natural plus locally obtainable materials. It's swift plus cheap in the building. Nowadays we can see such huts on isolated tribal areas only. India is renowned for the adornment of the front wall, plus the extremely small entry. The Toda people are a little pastoral community who live on the isolated Nilgiri highland of Southern India. Before the late eighteenth century, the Toda coexisted nearby by other communities, counting the Badaga, Kurumba and Kota, in a movable caste-like society organization in which the Toda was the top ranking. It probably is the best house in summer.



2. Habitat Houses:



Baker model houses are lucrative, sustainable, organic architecture initiative. Idea visualized by British Indian Architect, Laurence Wilfred Baker, this has been popularized in Kerala as the low-cost ecological houses. Every building is unique plus good-looking with space consideration which blends by nature of that plot. This beautiful home is a way out for people looking for low-cost construction.

3. Kuchcha House: They are prepared of wood, straw, mud and dried out leaves. A hut is a kuchcha house. Mainly the tribal people build those houses which are beautifully designed on their mud walls from the exterior giving it a beautiful look. They are defined as the typical rural houses in India.

4. Tepees: A tepee is ready of a cone-shaped wooden casing by a covering of buffalo hide. Similar to modern tents, tepees are cautiously designed to group and break down speedily. When a tribe roams from place to place, every family would bring their tipi poles plus hide tent together with them. Initially, tepees were concerning 12 feet high; however, once the Plains Indian tribes get horses, they start building them double as high. Tepees are first-class houses for people who are forever on the move. Plains Indians often migrated to

chase the actions of the buffalo herds. These types of houses are very common for the Transhuman groups of people, e.g., the Banjaras.

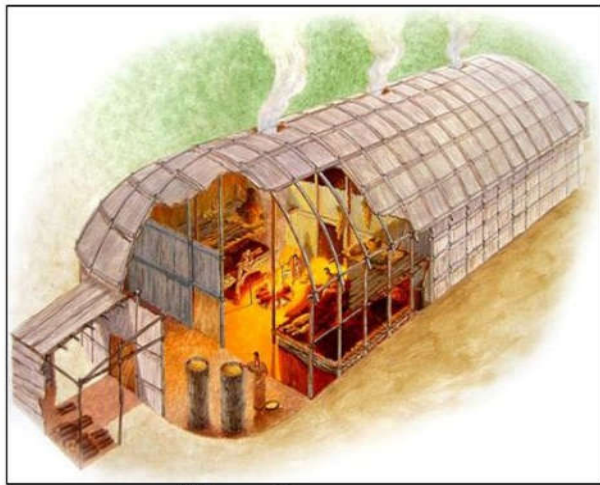
5. Long Houses: They are built by pole frames plus elm bark covering. The major difference is that longhouses are a lot, much larger than wigwams. Longhouses can be 200 feet long, 20 feet high and 20 feet wide. Inside the longhouse, raised platforms formed a second story that was utilized for sleeping space. Mats plus wood screens separated the longhouse into split rooms. These types of houses are found in the villages of Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh etc. with large family size.



3. Traditional Kuchcha Houses



4. Tepees



5. Long Houses



6. Small Indian Houses

6. Small Indian House: The typical nuclear Indian family consists of 4 members, and this kind of house is the most common one for them. The house is complete with a small open area in the front and a big gate protecting it. It is a modern type of house found in the urban attached villages where the people are economically sound enough.

7. Bamboo House: Bamboo House India is a beautiful one to stay in. They come in various sizes and shapes. They are designed by the rural communities in India, and this acts as a sustainable livelihood opportunity for them. We can also find them at the tourist places as home-stay. It is familiar in the forested and highland villages.



7. Bamboo Houses



8. Stilt Houses



9. Wooden Houses



10. Tree Houses

8. Stilt House: Stilt houses are fancy and are built from a raise from the ground of water or soil. One of the main reasons for such a type of construction is for protection against flooding. They are yet another Indian house models. These types of houses are found in the villages attached to the sea coasts or lowlands prone to regular flooding.

9. Wooden House: Wooden house in India is fairly common and are objects of elegance. They are much like the other houses, except that everything is built on strong wood. They are familiar in the villages of high mountainous regions.

10. Tree House: They are very common in the forest areas and are major attraction and fascination for many people. It sits high like the branch and is a stay worth taking up.