CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

THE VILLAGE DEFINITION

The village has been the nuclei in India's social and economical order and from times immemorial these are named fixed after the name of a local prominent person, mythical or historical hero, gods and goddesses, rivers or mountains having some sort of religious significance. The common term for village in India is grāma, derived from the root gras (to swallow or to eat). Sometimes it is derived from the root gam as well. Village or gaon has been defined in the Markandeya Purāṇa as the place surrounded by cultivable lands and where inhabited a number of people available to support the able cultivators in raising crops on those lands. Grāma means "aggregate". The "village or gaon in Marathi means an aggregate of family holdings." The English word "village" is derived from the Latin vicus and is defined by the Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary as "an assemblage of houses smaller than a town." The word grāma (village) was used in the Rig-vedas for the first time which also means a village. In the Indian context, however, the term "village" does not refer merely to group of buildings as in Germany. It includes both the cluster

1. V.S.Aggarwal, Patañjali-viśeṣa Bhart, P. 186.
2. Rig Vedas, 1.44. 10, 1.114.1, 2.12.7, 5.54.8, 10.146.1 and 10.149.4.
3. Abhidhāncintāmaṇi, 4, 384; History of Dharmasastra by P.V.Kane, III, P. 140, fn; Vide also Abhidhanarakṣaṇa, III, P. 865.
of houses and the surrounding lands cultivated. Although it has
come to simply generally a number of residential houses clustered
together at a place, yet it cannot be ignored that it means
something more. R.K. Patil writes, "A village is understood to mean
a group of families living in a rural area in adjoining houses on a
common village site, it is only in such an area that sense of
mutual obligation and concern for the rehabilitation of weaker
sections of the community can, if at all be felt. Such a group has
always had a local name and known limits, "grāma is a habitat in
the centre of land fit for cultivation" states the Mārkaṇḍeya
Purāṇa which shows that a village must have cultivable land all
round it. This fact is corroborated by the numerous land grants
also indicate that in addition to the habitat, the area of a
village comprised cultivable, uncultivable, high, low, watery, dry,
forest and grassy land.

According to Pran Nath the word grāma does not mean a village,
but "an estate or survey village which can pay 18 kinds of
government taxes", it does not appear correct to P.V. Kane.
According to him "grāma ordinarily meant a village in the modern
sense and included several hundred acres of land. While H.S. Maine
assumes that an Indian village was divided into three parts like
the district of the ancient Teutonic cultivating community in

1. grāmaḥ saṁvasatho jñeyo. Abhidhānaratnamāla, 2.1003;
Abhidhanacintamani, 4.27.
2. R.K. Patel: "Village Cooperatives and Development" in the
3. Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, 49.47.
and EI, V. No. 19.
5. A Study in the Economic Condition of Ancient India by Pran
6. Dharmasāstra by P.V. Kane. III, P. 140, fn. 182.
Germany - the village itself was the cluster of residential houses, the arable mark or the cultivated area, and the common mark or the village waste\textsuperscript{1}. Thus we can say that a village in India consisted of the inhabited part as well as all types of land attached to it.

The village boundary marks i.e. stones, ditches were also included in the boundary of a village. Anything related to a village i.e. boundary marks, cattle fields, wells, ponds were known to be unseparable parts of that village.

TYPES OF VILLAGE

Literary and epigraphic records show that the North India had various types of village settlements in early medieval period. The Mayamata\textsuperscript{2} and the Mānasāra\textsuperscript{3} classify the villages into many categories on the basis of their size varying from 500 to 20000 dāṇḍas; but usually the villages were small size as is evident from the description given in a verse of the Agni Purāṇa\textsuperscript{4} which suggests that even five families and the headman constituted a village. In Śukranitisāra which contains some traditions of the early medieval period, a grāma has been defined as 'that piece of land whose area is a krośa'\textsuperscript{5}. The text further states "The half of a grāma is called pali, the half of a pali is kumbha." In addition to the village we find another such Pāṭaka\textsuperscript{6} which also known as a small

\textsuperscript{1} Village - Communities in the East and West, 1571, PP.78 and 103-128.
\textsuperscript{2} Mayamata, Chapter IX.
\textsuperscript{3} P.K.Acharya, Architecture of Mānasāra, PP> 63ff.
\textsuperscript{4} Kuṭumbaiḥ pañcabhirgrāmaḥ śaṣṭhastra mahattaraḥ Agnipurāṇa, A.S.B., Edition, 165.11.
\textsuperscript{6} R.C.Majumdar, History of Bengal, Vol. I, P. 643, fn. I.
village or the subdivision of a village. In the Aparājita prcchā purā, grāma, khetaka, kuṭa and karvata are mentioned in the descending order, of which each succeeding unit has been regarded as measuring half of the preceding one.

A large number of villages of varied sizes (grāmas) have been mentioned in the contemporary inscriptions. In Bengal the inscriptions reveal that the villages had boundaries and consisted of well defined parts - the village settlement or habitat (vāstu) arable land ksetra), and natural meadow-land (gocara). The reference to grāma-danḍaka in the Candella inscriptions suggests that sometimes boundary -pillars were set up to mark off one village from the others but on the other hand the general boundary of the village appear to be quite open. This fact is attested by Bharata authentically states that a village is settlement of a large number of persons without a surrounding wall or moat. The Purāṇas, the smṛtis, and especially the land grants dealing with village of the period under review, too do not refer to village walls, moats or boundaries. It seems that the open village-sites in the midst of cultivated fields were perhaps more advantageous for keeping a close watch over the standing crops.

But the theoretical texts of the Mayamata and Mānasāra not only show surrounding walls or ramparts, but also moats all

3. Ibid, loc.cit.
6. Mayamata, 9.60;
arrived but this pattern, however, does not seem to have been followed in general, as no other record of our period agrees to it. Some small villages may have some handy loose earthwork of very normal height, or they may have been encircled with some sort of plant hedges, but a detailed study of the village pattern, specifically the one enumerated in the Mānasāra, indicates that walled villages were not suited to agriculturists or agricultural labourers. They were large and composite villages suitable for the residence of feudal chiefs or rich magnates, who might have preferred the houses of surrounding walls and moats for the protection of their own life and belongings. It is, however, clear from the Mayamata and the Mānasāra that the village pattern, which did not attain much attention in the earlier period was appreciably noticed by the writers in the early medieval period. The architectural works of Mayamata and Mānasāra presents eight types of village habitat. The Mayamata names them as daṇḍaka, svastika, prastara, prakîrnaka, nandyāvarta, paraga, padma and sripaṭisthita. The work does not describe them in detail but merely points out the nature and number of streets and roads running in the different habitats. But the remarkable feature of these sketches is the description of the village pattern. According to it small village should have four streets, a medium village eight, and a big village twelve or sixteen; the gates should be three, five or seven cubits (kara) wide; the number of

1. Mayamata, 9. 33-34.
2. Ibid, V. 56.
3. Ibid., V. 59.
drains (jālmārga) should be four; a village settlement should have four main parts - the brāhma, the daiva, mānuṣa and the Paisāca of which the first should be in the centre; the brāhmaṇas should reside in the daiva and the manusa parts, the artisans and labourers in the paisāca section, and the gods in the brāhma and the daiva divisions. The Mayamata stresses that the villages should have temples of Śiva, Viṣṇu, Kālikā, Kātyāyanī, Kārtikeya, Buddha, etc. with higher structures as against the remaining buildings to maintain the dignity of the sacred structures. The other main classification related to settlement pattern of villages is on the basis of the number of brāhmaṇas settled in a particular village. The main divisions are the uttama, madhyama and the adhama. The smallest unit comprises twelve or sixteen brāhmaṇas and the largest, twelve thousand brāhmaṇas.

The sketches of Mānsāra are almost similar to the Mayamata. The only main difference is that, it is more elaborate and systematic. The eight kinds of village according to this work are dañḍaka, sarvatabhadra nandyāvarta, padmaka, svastika, prastara, kārmuka, and caturmukha.

Dañḍaka

Shape of this type of village is rectangular. The village has three or five roads with breadth ranging from one to

1. Mayamata, V. 57.
2. Ibid, VV. 61-62.
4. Ibid, V. 81.
6. Mānasāra, Ch. 9, P. 102.
five dañdas. The buildings are to be three to five dañdas broad, and their length should be twice or thrice the breadth. The settlement should have a surrounding wall and a moat with four main gates on the four sides and perhaps the same number of subsidiary gates. It may consist of 12, 24, 50, 108 or 300 families of the brāhmaṇas, and may have temples of Viṣṇu and Śiva

Sarvatobhadra

This type of village is square in shape having one to five streets and a surrounding road with one way traffic system. The wall together with the moat all around the habitat should have four principal gates on the four sides. The quarters of the artisans and labourers are to be situated on the highway, and those of the vaśyas and the sudras towards the south. The cowherds should have their houses between the east and the south-east, and the cowsheds are to be made beyond them. The tanks for the use of bathing and drinking should be excavated towards the south, west, or south-west. The habitat should also have a brahmaṇḍapa or a temple of Viṣṇu or Śiva with some provision for the brahmacārins, saints and sages. Again, it should have a matha or manḍapa on the four corners besides alms house (satraśālā), drinking place (pānīyamaṇḍapa) and other charitable institutions.

Nandyāvarta

The shape of this type of village is oblonged or square and this may be modelled either on the caṇḍita or the sthanḍila or
the paramaśāyika pattern. Almost every of these patterns consist
of four parts - brāhma, daivaka, mānuṣa, and paisāca. The size or
extent of each differs. The candita has only sixty-four parts -
the brāhma four, the daivaka twelve, the mānuṣa twenty, and the
paisāca twenty-eight. The sthanḍila contains forty-nine parts -
the brāhma one, the daivaka eight, the mānuṣa sixteen and the
paisāca twenty four. While the paramaśāyika having only eighty -
one parts - the brāhma nine, the daivaka sixteen, the mānuṣa
twenty four and the paisāca thirty two. The whole habitat is to be
enclosed by a wall and a moat with four big gates in the four
corners with many smaller gates. Four main roads of three to five
daṇḍas wide should run in four sides. The number of brāhmans
should range from 52 to 4000. It should have temples of Viṣṇu,
Nrīṁha, Rāma, Gopāla, Lakṣmī, Gaṇeśa, Bhairava, Durgā, Sarasvatī and
others. The quarters of the despised castes (candālas) should lie
outside the village towards the east or north, and the cremation
ground should be situated in the north.1

Padmaka

This type of village settlement has equal length and
breadth, but the surrounding wall is either circular, quadrangular,
sexagonal or octagonal with four gates in the four directions.
Besides the main roads four to eight other streets are recommended.
For the rest it possesses the same features of the above
mentioned patterns.2

1. Manasāra, VV. 82-158.
2. Ibid, VV. 158-162.
Svastika

This type of village is to be built according to the paramaśāyika plan with equal length and equal breadth. It should have a surrounding wall and a moat with eight large gates in four directions and a number of small gates. Various classes of people may live in this village, but it is mainly designed for the kings. The king's palace is to be built in the centre, and the residential houses of the people should exist around the temples. The internal layout of streets should bear the form of a svastika. The temple of cāmunḍā is to be built outside the village towards the north and the candālas are to live to the east of this temple.

Prastara

This type of village settlement is meant for the ruling class (the kṣatriyas) or the vaiśyas. The surrounding wall together with the moat should have a number of gates including the four main gates. The temple and the royal residence should be built as stated earlier. The vaiśyas quarters are to exist in the interior, and the artisan class or working class people should live in the paisāca block. The main roads are wide enough for two-way traffic and should have shops on its sides.

Kārmuka

The shape of this type of habitat is semi-circular with its breadth equal to, or less than, the length. The pattana, the

1. Mānasāra, VV. 163-207.
2. Ibid, VV. 208-226.
khetaka and the kharvata are its three varieties. The vaiśyas should reside in pattana, the ṣūdras in khetaka, and the lower orders should reside in kharvata. This type of habitat should be erected on the river-bank or the sea-coast. The internal streets should run in such a way that the outside part of the meeting place of the two streets may bear the look of a bow. Such a village may or may not have a surrounding wall with the required number of gates, but should have the temples of Viṣṇu and Śiva. The other features are the same as stated earlier.

Caturmkha

This village is square or oblong with a surrounding wall of a similar shape. A high road with provision for two-way traffic should run all round. The whole site is divided into four square blocks by means of two streets intersecting at the centre, and four main gates are to be built at the four ends of these two streets. The surrounding highway may have houses of all castes. Temples of Viṣṇu, Rudra and other gods should be built according to the plan already noticed.

Thus the villages of the Mayamata and the Mānasāra contain in general a good number of temples, roads and streets, and houses of various castes and classes of people. Certain types of villages, according to the Mānasāra, are especially meant for the kings or are more suitable for the residence of the Kṣatriyas. But we cannot say precisely about the number of villages settled.

according to the plan mentioned in these theoretical sketches. We may, however, infer that some old villages in the area under-review, particularly those having brāhmaṇa villages, still confirm to numerous rules laid down in Vāstuśāstras. For example, the caṇḍalas or the persons of the so called despised caste still live either outside the main village habitat or on the outskirts of the habitat. The location of cremation grounds, temples, of gods and goddesses, streets, lanes and separate sections of the village for the persons of the same caste or profession can still be seen in some large villages and the suggestion of the Mānsāra that the villages not settled according to the principles of the Vāstuśāstras should be extended towards the east and north¹ is still practised by the brāhmaṇa householders.

The village settlements varied in size. We have also seen that some village settlements contained only five or six families, and sometimes even one family only². The kṣudragrāma of the Mayamata³ and the kṣullakagrāma of the Mānasāra⁴ mean small villages. The word grāmaka as used in the Harśacarita⁵, and the Nalanda copper-plate of Dharampala⁶ also means a small village settlement. The letter ka at the end of the word grāmaka suggests its small size. Similarly the word kutumbi⁷ associated with kugrāma in the Harśacarita and the Āryāsaptasati states that the

¹ Manasāra, V. 263.
² Mayamata, 9, P.31
³ Ibid, 9,43.
⁴ Mānasāra, 10,40.
⁵ H.C. PP.57 and 230.
⁷ H.C., P.211.
pamaras lived in the kugrāma, suggests that this type of village settlement was simply a small settlement inhabited by poor farmers or agricultural laborers.

Several other types of village settlements of the period under review were known by the following names - agrahāra, khetā, khetaka, kharvata ghoṣa, ghoṣaka, pallī, pallikā, pakkana, pātaka, kaṅci, kaṅcikā, mayūtā, paḍā or paḍā, kuṭika or ekabhoga, etc.

Agrahāra, generally, was an abode of the brāhmaṇas. The kathāsaritsāgara and the vimānārcanākalpa of the Marīci Samhitā refers to several agrahara villages which appear to be settlements of the brāhmaṇas. They are Bahusuvarṇaka situated on the bank of the Ganges, Mahānvrksaghata lying in the Anga country, Brahmatsthalo on the Kālindē, and another Brahmathala in Kusumapura. The Nidhanpur copper-plates of Bhāskaravarman indicate that the village of Mayūrasālmala granted to 205 brāhmaṇas of various gotras was an agrahara. The Madhuban plate of Harṣa speaks of the grant of the village of Samakūndakā in the bhukti of Śrāvastī (Sanet-Mahet in the Gonda district of U.P.) as an agrahara to two brāhmaṇa scholars. The two donees in each case may or may not have lived in the village granted. Even if they lived there,

1. Ṛṣy., V. 262.
3. K.S.S., 7.41.
4. Ibid, 82.3
5. Ibid, 76.5.
6. Ibid, 96.4.
the village could not be called a settlement of the brāhmaṇas as other castes also may have lived there. Hence an agrāhara was not necessarily inhabited exclusively by the brāhmaṇa families. It was simply a grant made to the learned brāhmaṇas for their subsistence. If, however, the Gunaighar grant of the 6th century A.D.¹ be taken into account, it would appear that sometimes land was donated as an agrāhara to Buddhist viharas as well. This shows that agrāhara also stood for any kind of religious gift².

Thus the agrāhara villages, although mainly related to the brāhmaṇas, were occasionally associated with the non-brāhmaṇas as well.

Kheta was a village habitat³ of the tillers and farmers⁴, and Khetaka a small village⁵ inhabited by husbandmen⁶. The letter "ka" suffixed to kheta suggests that kheṭka was a smaller community.

Different opinions are expressed related to kharvata. According to Monier-Williams it is a mountain village⁷. Visvarupa takes it to be a combination of village and town both.⁸ Wilson takes it a small market town⁹. Aparaka makes it larger than a

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¹ S.I.Vol.I. by D.C.Sircar, P.331ff.
² Ibid, pp.226, fn.9.
³ Khetah...grāmabhede ca.....Nanarthasamgraha of Ajayapala, P.30, V.3.
⁴ Khetah karsalsagrāmāh. Śrīdharasvāmī quoted in Śabdakalpadruma, Pt. II, 283.
⁵ grāmaḥ samvasatho jñeyo grāmādhānamca Khetakaṁ Abhidhānaratnāmāla, 2.103.
⁷ Ibid, P.338.
⁸ Ibid, P.635.
⁹ K.K., XII, P.461, fn.9.
village and smaller than a town\textsuperscript{1}. Vijanesvara states that it is a village habitated by a large number of troublesome persons\textsuperscript{2}. According to the Danasagra of Vallalasena Kharvata is a village having prominence among two hundred villages, and khet\textsuperscript{a} extends up to a krosa\textsuperscript{3}. The Edilpur plate of kesavasena states that several prominent kharvatas having high buildings and paddy fields were donated to the br\textsuperscript{a}hma\textsuperscript{a}nas\textsuperscript{4}. All these statements lead us to believe that kharvata was something like an extraordinary or a large village situated at a central place having a fine bazar. This may be compared to the modern bazar type of big villages located on both sides of a main road\textsuperscript{5}.

Both ghosa\textsuperscript{6} and ghosaka were settlements of herdsmen\textsuperscript{7}, but ghosaka seems to be smaller than ghosa. The Gangetic valley was so much popular for its ghosa\textsuperscript{s} that Indian books on rhetoric (alakh\textsuperscript{a}ra) are full of the expression "gangayam ghosah", which means "gangatate ghosah" (herdsmen's residence on the bank of the Ganges).

Pall\textsuperscript{i} was a hamlet where hunters and forest dwellers lived in their huts made of leaves, branches, grass or stone pieces, and a small pall\textsuperscript{i} was called pallika\textsuperscript{8}. Reference to pall\textsuperscript{i}

\textsuperscript{1}K.K., XII, P.461, fn.9.
\textsuperscript{2}Mit. on Yaj., 2.167.
\textsuperscript{3}Dharmaka\textsuperscript{s}a, P.145.
\textsuperscript{4}I.B., III, No.13, 11.36-38.
\textsuperscript{5}ghosa \textit{abhi}rapali \textit{syat}.Abhidh\textit{anaratn\textsuperscript{m}\textsuperscript{a}la}, 2.106.
\textsuperscript{6}Hindi Sahitiya Sammelana, Prayag, 2nd edition, 2000, P.I.
\textsuperscript{7}K.V.Soundara Rajan, \textit{Mechanics of city and village in Ancient India}, Ch.5, P.78.
\textsuperscript{8}Vidh\textit{aya kutika yatra prat\textsuperscript{a}s\textsuperscript{a}kh\textit{at\textsuperscript{r}anopalai\textsuperscript{h} pulind\textsuperscript{a}h kurvat\textsuperscript{e} v\textit{asa\textsuperscript{m}} pall\textsuperscript{i} sval\textsuperscript{p\textsuperscript{a}} tu pallika\textsuperscript{a}. \textit{Samar\textsuperscript{a}nga\textsuperscript{a}nas\textsuperscript{u}tradh\textsuperscript{a}ra}, 18.6.
is also found in the Dudhpani Rock inscription of Udayamana (about 8th century A.D.)\textsuperscript{1}. Reference to Pallikā is seen in the Bangarh plate of Mahipala, which mentions the villages kuraṭapallikā and Chūtapallikā\textsuperscript{2}. The Harṣacarita states to a small forest village situated on the outskirts of the vindhyān forest in southern Uttar Pradesh\textsuperscript{3}, and to Yastighraka, another small village lying close to the Ganges in the modern district of Bihar\textsuperscript{4}. The Gauḍavaho also speaks of forest villages\textsuperscript{5} having the characteristics of Pallī or Pallikā. Although, Halāyudha pakkaṇa was also a dwelling place of the śāvaras\textsuperscript{6}, but we do not get any specific instance of this particular type of forest habitat existing in our area.

Pāṭaka is defined differently by several writers of early medieval period. According to Hemacandra it is half of a grāma\textsuperscript{7} (village) and sometimes it is interpreted as a part of a village (grāmaikadeśa)\textsuperscript{8}. But F.Kielhorn rightly observes that the use of the word in some inscriptions indicates to be "the outlying portion of a village or a type of hamlet which had a name of its own, but really belonged to a larger village"\textsuperscript{9}. The earliest reference to pataka is found in the Damodarpur plate (No.5) of A.D. 543\textsuperscript{10}. In course of time its importance increased, and it became a

\begin{itemize}
  \item 1.E.I., II, No. 27, 11.7-8.
  \item 2.Ibid, XIV, No.23, 11. 31-32.
  \item 3.H.C., PP.227-230.
  \item 4.Ibid, P.57.
  \item 5.Gauḍavaho, V. 607.
  \item 6.Pakkaṇaḥ śavarālayah. Abhidhānaratnamāla, 2.106.
  \item 7.Pāṭakastu tadardhe syat. Abhidānacintāmaṇi, 4.384.
  \item 8.I.A., XVIII, P.135.
  \item 9.Ibid, XVIII, P.135.
  \item 10.S.I., Vol.I by D.C.Sircar, PP.337ff, 1.15.
\end{itemize}
prominent type of village settlement in the early medieval period.

A plate of Govindacandra of V.S. 1200 (A.D. 1143) records the grant of village kāila together with its ten pātakas lying in the Temiṣapacottara pattalā. A plate of Govindacandra and Mahārajaputra Rājyapāla of V.S. 1203 (A.D. 1146) mentions the grant of village Camaravāmi with Haricandapālī and two or three other pātakas. The Bengal Asiatic society's copper-plate grant of Jayaccandra of the vikrama year 1233 (A.D. 1177) refers to the grant of village Godanti with its two pātakas, namely, Ghaṃṭīmauyī and Nītāmayī, situated in the Antarvēdi, i.e. the Doab lying between the rivers Ganges and Yamuna. The grant of village Pambāi along with its pātakas is mentioned in the Machlishahr copper-plate of Hariścandradeva of Kanauj (V.S. 1253- A.D. 1196).

The Howraghat plates of Balavarman III in Assam refer to Bappadevapāṭaka situated in the vārasepattana viṣaya. The Bargaon grant of Ratnapāla mentions Vāmādeva - pāṭaka lying in the Trayodāsagrāma visaya on the northern bank (perhaps of the Brahmaputra). The Gauhati grant of Indrapala speaks of kāśīpāṭaka within the Hapyoma viṣaya on the northern bank. Thus it appears that hamlets called pāṭakas existed all over northern India from Uttar Pradesh to Assam in the early medieval days. The formation

2. Ibid, VIII, No. 14D.
4. E.I., X., No. 21, 1.20.
5. Ibid, XXXII, No. 33, 11, 36-37.
of several hamlets (pātakas) within the same village boundary points to extension of agriculture. Residence of cultivators quite close to the fields meant easy supply of labour and manure, and careful supervision of the standing crops. This must have led to a great improvement in farming.

Koṇcī or koṇcikā also appears to be a small village settlement. It may have been single caste based\(^1\), but such types of villages existed in Assam only. The Assam plate of Vallābhadeva refer to the villages of Devūnīkoṇcī and Saṃśrahīkoṇcikā\(^2\). As the latter is mentioned to be linked to the village Doṣrīpāṭaka, it may have been a small settlement.

The word paḍā indicates a small village inhabited by a particular caste or class. The Bhatera plate of Govindaśavadeva refers to village Bhatapada, which seems to be a habitat of the brāhmanas\(^3\). But the Bhattapataka which appears in the Bhatera plate\(^4\) makes it clear that pada is a corruption of pāṭaka. Although we do not know which particular caste or class of people resided in pada. The terms pada and paḍā, however, seems to be similar in meaning.

The single family unit was known by the name of kuṭīka or ekabhoga\(^5\). It had a very limited arable land area and that was to be managed by the labour of that particular family itself.

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1. The History of civilisation of the people of Assam by P.C. Choudhary, P.325.
2. E.I., V. No. 19, 11.43, 44.
3. Ibid, XIX, No. 49, 1.29.
5. I.B., III, NO. 14, 1.42.
VILLAGE SETTLEMENT

As we have already discussed different types of village patterns of our period of study. The villages of north India were agriculture oriented during the early medieval period and they are still the same till date. It is often said that culture begins with agriculture. When man gave up the nomadic stage of life and settled down with his fellow-nomads at a fixed place. Thus started the phase of agricultural economy (was started). Agriculture assured him food and shelter. Now, he could live together with his fellowmen and plough the field, and produce enough to maintain himself and his family throughout the year without much wondering as he was doing before. Kosambi, therefore, correctly, describes that "the advance of plough-using agrarian village economy over tribal India is a great historical achievement 1. Favourable climatic conditions congenial to necessary rainfall are the main factors for the agriculturists to maintain the stability of their life. The natural calamities i.e. famine, draught, floods led the farmers to shift their settlements or even to give up agriculture and go back to the initial stage of human civilization, if the climate did not favour such a long-term settlement at a particular place.

Cultivation being the pivot of rural or agrarian economy, almost all types of people had to move around it. This was the main incentive for co-operation and good-will among the villagers.

Again, apprehension of common danger to life and property from fire theft, attack of wild animals, flood, draught, pestilence and royal atrocities to which the villagers were occasionally subjected, led to the feeling of unity and harmony among them. Village festivities also help them to come closer. The mutual dependence of all castes and classes as a result of the general principle of one work for one class was the main factor in making people co-operative.

The archaeologists and historians have some contradictions about dates of three main phases of urbanization in India namely Indus civilization, Ganges valley and lastely, early medieval period of North India. In between these three phases of urbanization there were two phases of urban decay, the first being the decay of Harappan centres and the second, from the 4th C.A.D. to 9th C.A.D. R.S.Sharma in his recent work Urban Decay in India (300-1000 A.D.) has examined 40 excavated sites throughout India and has concluded that the urban contraction was the important cause of agrarian expansion in early medieval period. Land grants to temples particularly to brāhmaṇs, made on a large scale in forest area or backward and less developed areas, opened fresh lands to cultivation, and numerous settlements or villages came into being. The introduction of calendar on agriculture, the acquaintance of the brāhmaṇs with the material, dealing with

2. R.S.Sharma, Urban decay in India (300-1000C), Delhi, 1987, P.172.
agriculture in the Arthashastra of Kautilya, and the Brihat samhita of Varahmihira, the migration of the jobless artisans of the decayed urban areas, the growth of technology relating to agricultural operations, etc. are the main factors, according to R.S. Sharma which contributed to the agricultural expansion during the early medieval age. The brāhmaṇas, it seems, had taken lead in uplifting agrarian production by using their superior position in the varna system. As the parasara smṛti (7th C. text) did not prohibit them from undertaking cultivation, they must have taken lead in agricultural operations and settlement of villages in the initial stages of agrarian expansion. Kosambi considers brāhmaṇas, the main instrument of change to plough -village culture.

Generally, different parts of the village were given to the first families of settlers. The Muslims, also known as navayats, had settled on the West Coast in the early medieval period and it was obvious that they got mixed with the other castes which included Sonar (Goldsmith), Gavada (fisherman), Kumbhar (Potter), Nhavi (Barber) Parit (Washerman), Sali, etc. They have to perform the duties assigned to them throughout the year.

Every village had its own name, arable land, pastures, boundary marks, cremation ground, markets, roads, streets and tracks, etc.

Villages were named after all sorts of things - gods,

men, bird, beasts, castes or classes of people, nature of the site, markets, hills, fruits, field products, rivers, tanks, temples, bathing ghats, trees, flowers, grass, etc. All village names ending pura, nagara, grāma and agrahāra and those having sanskrit names are obviously of Aryan origin and the rest appears to be of non-Aryan origin.

The villages having names with pura were not always large and compact settlements. Cācāpura in the Temiṣapacottara pattalā\(^1\) and Vijahārapura in the kaṅkagrāma bhukti\(^2\), although called pura, were simply pāṭakas and hence small village settlements. Sometimes the names of two or more neighbouring villages were combined into one probably for proper location and designation. Thus long names, such as Bhādapanāṃdapa of the Amavālī pattalā\(^3\), Ghasasambhogabhāttavāḍāgrāma of the Pundravardhana bhukti\(^4\) should not be taken as single names.

Every village of North India had arable land for cultivation. Early medieval literature and land grants are full of references to arable lands and cultivation. The cultivable land was spread over all around the village habitat. Some parts of the arable land had names of their own. This is suggested by the fact that certain names used in the land grants are not specifically mentioned as names of villages, nor do they definitely appear to be

1. E.I., IV, No. 11 M.
2. Ibid XXI, No.37.
3. Ibid, XXVI, NO. 36.
so from the text. Hence they are not villages, they may be taken as names of the particular parts of the cultivable land. For example, Tivāyī kṣetra\(^1\), kavillī, Gāṇḍolī and Dehipā khaṇḍakṣetra\(^2\), Hākkevaṭṭī bhū, khāgāli bhūmi and puraputta bhūmi\(^3\), Bhaviṣabhū\(^4\) are such names.

We do not come across to any reference related to enclosures or fences all round the cultivated land, which may have been as open as it is today. The Manusmṛti refers to the fencing only of those fields which lay by the side of the paths, rather cattle-paths or very close to the village habitat\(^5\). The fallow part of the arable land left untilled for a year or more was termed as khila. According to Halāyudha and Yādavaprakāśa khila was untilled land\(^6\) and Nārada states that a piece of land, if untilled, became half-khila in a year and full khila in three years and very near to a forest in five years.\(^7\) The Edilpur copper-plate of Keśavasena\(^8\), the Calcutta sahitya parisat copper plate of Viṣvarūpasena\(^9\), the copper plate grant of Vallālsena\(^10\) specifically refer to khila as a part of village land.

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1. E.I., VIII, No. 14E, I.II.
2. Ibid, XXVI, No. 1, 1.36.
5. Manu, 8.240.
6. A.R.M., 2.3; Vaijayanti of Yadavaprakasa, P.124, 1.36.
8. I.B., NO. 13, 1.51.
9. Ibid, No. 15, 1.60.
10. Ibid, III, NO. 7, 1.45.
Along with arable land, pasture (vraja, gocara or gopracāra) was another important constituent of the village area. It appears from most of the land grants of the early medieval period that it lay just outside but in touch with the arable land extending upto the village boundary and was full of grass, shrubs, bushes, hollowed lands, barren tracts, forests and hills. Like the cultivable area, this uncultivable land lay quite open. Sometimes the term goṣṭha is taken to signify pasture land. According to Samarāṅgaṇasūtra-dhāra gaṅḍha means a residence of cows and a small goṣṭha is goṣṭhaka. Hemcandra defines goṣṭha as goṣṭhāna or goṣṭhānaka meaning a place for the cows. But according to Halāyudha the terms vraja, gokula and goṣṭha are the same. Medhātithi explains govrāja as a place where cows go to graze, but then he states that it may as well mean goṣṭha, which he takes as the place where cows stay. In our opinion goṣṭha was different from gocara or vraja, goṣṭha was really a cow-pen or a cow-station where cows or cattle in general, belonging to the whole village, took rest or collected together before their start for the grazing pastures ground.

Village cremation ground was another important constituent of the village area. It generally lay outside the habitat towards the north. The Dharmaśāstra rules prescribe ablution of the dead

1. gokulāvāsamicchanti goṣṭhamalpaṁ tu goṣṭhakam. Samarāṅgaṇa-sūtra-dhāra, 1,18.4.
2. goṣṭhānaṁ goṣṭham. A.C.M., 4.30.
4. govrāje gāvo yatra caraṇām vrajanti goṣṭho vā govrājah Medhātithi on Manu, 4.116.
body before it is placed on the pyre\textsuperscript{1}, that is why availability of
water was an important consideration for the selection of a
cremation site. The persons carrying the dead to the cremation
ground and taking part in the rites connected with it are required
to take bath outside the village, just after the rites are over.
Hence cremation grounds were generally selected near rivers,
streams, big tanks and reservoirs, etc. The Khalimpur plate of
Dharmapāla states that the funeral rites (parakarmma) of the
village Palitaka were performed on an island\textsuperscript{2}. Places of cremation
in the present day village indicate little change in the nature of
cremation sites in north India.

Some villages, perhaps the larger ones and those
centrally located, had market places generally called haṭṭa or
haṭṭikā. Hatta perhaps stood for bigger markets and haṭṭikā for
smaller ones\textsuperscript{3}. The Khalimpur plate of Dharmapāla refers to the
hattika of the four villages granted to the temple of Nunna
Nārāyaṇa\textsuperscript{4}. Each of them appears to have its own market, as
separate boundary is shown for each.

Regarding roads and paths lying outside the habitat but
within the village boundary cattle paths appear to be very common
in villages. They are known as gopatha\textsuperscript{5}, gomārga\textsuperscript{6}, gosantīra\textsuperscript{7} and
govāṭa\textsuperscript{8} in the land grants of our period. They were not

\textsuperscript{1}Mit. on yaj., 3.1 and 2 (Setlur's ed. P.1139).
\textsuperscript{2}E.I., IV, No. 34.1.41.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid, IV, P. 254, fn.5.
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid, IV, No.34,11.51 and 52.
\textsuperscript{5}I.B. No.7, 11. 41-42, 43, 44, E.I., XXI, No.37, 11.29, 33, 35.
\textsuperscript{6}Ibid, IV, No. 34, 1.43.
\textsuperscript{7}J.A.S.B., LXVI, Pt.I, pp.285ff, pl.3, obverse, 1.11.
\textsuperscript{8}E.I., II, No.28, 1, 63.
well-constructed metalled or even kaccā roads; they were simply tracks made on the level ground through constant movement of the cattle in the morning and evening. These tracks or trodden paths connected the village habitat with its pasture, and they were such a prominent feature of the village expanse that they were used as boundary marks of a village or a piece of land. The Chittagong copper-plate of Dāmodara, although later than our period (A.D. 1243) refers to a public road (raja-patha) as a boundary mark of a piece of land in the village called kamanāpIndiyāka. Moreover, there may have been roads and paths connecting the villages of a particular area with their centrally located mart called hatta or hattika. The land grants of early medieval period state that a village or a piece of land was granted with its water and land. Water (jala) appears to include all the rivers, streams tanks, reservoirs, springs, etc. lying within the donated area. Water is highly essential for agriculture. This is why villages were generally settled on the banks of a river or near a pond, reservoir or spring.

Coming to the size of the village settlements, we find that they were not of one standard size. Some were small and others large. According to Kautilya a village should extend up to a krośa or two, and a krośa according to Nitinirniti commentary of Yogghama (C.A.D. 12th century) means either 2000 dhanus, one dhanu

1.Ibid, XXI, No. 37, 11.29, 33; I.B., III, No. 7, 11.41-42, 43, 44.
2.I.B., III, No. 9, 1, 34; E.I., XIV, No. 15, pl. of 1150, 1.24.
3.gramaṁ krośadvikrośasImanaṁ. Artha.,2.1.3.
being equal to four hastas\(^1\), or that space up to which the lowing
of a cow at the end of the night can be heard\(^2\). The latter meaning
of kroṣa is supported by old glosses in Muni Jina Vijaya's edition
of a fragment of the Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra\(^3\). Some sort of
contradiction in opinion is there, when Pran Nath observes that "the
cropped area in an average grāma in ancient India comprised between
15 and 25 acres\(^4\), but P.V.Kane has different views, who rightly
holds that a village contained several hundred acres of land\(^5\).

Architectural texts lay down the size of various kinds of
villages. According to Mayamata the size of a village should range
from 20000 to 100000 daṇḍas circumferentially and from 500 to 20000
daṇḍas\(^6\) lengthwise. But the Mānasāra fixes 2001 daṇḍas\(^7\) as the
maximum limit and 25 daṇḍas\(^8\) as the minimum for the extent of a
village. Population wise its size could vary from one family to
12000 persons\(^9\). But villages having a population of 12,000 or
little less than that, must have been very few; for, even at
present the number of villages with a population over 10,000 is
only 92\(^10\), in north India. Though, the Bengal Asiatic Society's

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1. Chaturhastadhanuh Sahasradvayaṁ kroṣaḥ. Artha., 1.2.3.
2. Savasane yānattāṁ pradeśaṁ gavāṁ rutaiṁ kruṣṭaiṁ
   vyāpnotitadgoruṁ kroṣa iti ca. Ibid, Comm.
3. Artha., P.56, gloss no. 8.
4. S.E.A.I., p.41.
5. History of Dharmaśastra by P.V.Kane, H1.P.140, fn. 182.
8. Ibid, V. 5.
10. India 1964 Publications Division, Ministry of Information and
    Broadcasting, Govt. of India, pp.22-23, (Table 18).
copper-plate grant of Trilocanapāla of the pratīhāra dynast discovered at Jhusi on the left bank of Ganges, opposite Allahabad, states that the village of Lebhundāka in the Asurābhaka viṣaya was donated to six thousand brāhmaṇas attached to Pratiṣṭhāna¹ (modern Jhusi which still known as Pratisthapur²). This indicates that it was a large village.

The village boundary was coined by the terms āghāṭa, sīnā or maryādā³. The boundary marks, natural or artificial, generally existed at the extreme end of the uncultivated land or the pasture surrounding a village. Kautilya⁴ refers that rivers, mountains, forests, caves and trees should indicate village boundary. Almost all the chief law givers discuss this problem in detail and recommend various natural and artificial signs for the demarcation of boundary.

Some land grants refer specifically to village boundary marks. The Khalimpur plate of Dharmāla mentions the boundaries of four villages namely, Krauncasvabhra, Mādhāsāmmalī, Pālitaka and Goppepali, all situated in the Pundravardhana bhukti⁵. The Govindpur copper plate of Laksmanasena indicates that the village of Viddarassana, situated in the Vardhamana bhukti, was bounded by the ganges⁶.

1. I.A., XVIII, pp.33ff. 11.3 and 10-11.  
2. G.D., P.159.  
4. Artha., 2.1.4.  
5. E.I., IV, No. 34, 11.31-43.  
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The body of persons residing on, owning or cultivating the land, separately circumscribed, must necessarily tend to form, in some sense, a "community" more or less self-contained. The inhabitants reside together, very often in one central group of houses or cottages, built on an elevation at some convenient point within the village area. In such a village dwelling-site often surrounded by mud walls, having gateways which led into narrow and tortuous lanes outside there used to be an open space on which all the village cattle assembled in the afternoon, and where the village weavers stretched the webs for the cloth they weaved for local use, and where the village washermen would spread the washed linen for drying up. There was a common "tank" or a pond or a public well for the general use, and there was the village temple, shrine or mosque as the case may be. Usually, there was a small groove or at least a spreading tree (banyan, peepal or neem) with a raised platform round it, which formed the common meeting place. Beside the dwellings of the principal landholders, there were the cottages of dependents and subordinate tenants, as well as those of the farm labourers, village servants and artisans. The village menials of low caste lived together, outside the villaers'...

1. E.I., XXI, No. 37, 1.35.
3. J.A.S.B., Calcutta-IX, Pt.-II (1940), PP.766ff., 1.23 (Tezpur grant).
dwellings. The village community consisted of the colonists and invaders - the landowners of the village.

DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES

What was the sort of population inhabiting the villages in India in 650-1206? They were cultivators, artisans, non-skilled labourers and ordinary folk. Castewise, they represented all the four varnas - the Brāhmīns, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, and the Sudras. Religionwise, they were Hindus, Muslims, and Jains. Different tribes and clans were also represented. The early Aryans and other races invading India had formed "tribes" with a certain organization. The existing forms of villages, land customs, the names used and traditions preserved - all these demonstrate beyond doubt that such races as the Jats, Rajputs and Gujjars who played such a prominent role in Indian history in 650-1206 were settled under the rules of tribal life some of which they always continued to observe. We meet in the history of early medieval India a single group, possessing lands in one place or in more than one, but not known to be a sub-division of any larger body. Secondly, we also find a whole tribe, with its major and minor subdivisions. In the first case, the existing group remembers only its descent from some one ancestor and is not numerous enough to be called a tribe. Perhaps, one man or two or

2. E.I., XXII, No. 25, 1.22; Yaj; 2.150.
4. H.C., P.84. saṃbhṛāntaparījanopanitān cūsanaṁ....bheje.
three brothers, obtained a settlement in some region that was vacant, and the families multiplied into a "clan" keeping alive the memory of their common descent and maintaining a certain solidarity. Among the Rajputs, the ancestor became the Raja and the heads of branch families held subordinate status - Ramal, thākur and so on - and the jurisdictions of the Raja's central dominion and those of the other chiefs were well-defined. The subjects of each were bound in allegiance to the chief, and the chiefs owed allegiance to the Raja. This became a form of Indian feudalism to which we will revert in the following chapters. On getting the alarm signal, every member of the clan able to bear arms would rush to the chief's help. In the villages of the Punjab and its north-west frontier, there were not only clans like those of the Rajputs or Jats, but there existed a wider organisation which included the tribe, the clans and the smaller sections. The Raja not only protected his own tribe and its clans but also accorded protection to the neighbouring tribes (hamsaya)!

The personal relationship of the people in the villages was governed by rules of marriages, customs, religious norms all of which determined every matter including the non-alienation of land. The village organization in the north was patriarchal so that descent, chiefship and inheritance all went with the patria familias. Some tribes developed the feudal system referred to earlier, but there were others like the Bisen clan of Rajputs of Avadh who did not.

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Finally every village was obliged to provide for itself the means of supplying the simple wants of life. The people could not go to a distant town or another village to find a pair of shoes and have a carpenter. And so each village had potters, blacksmiths, cobblers, carpenters, washermen, sweepers, cattle-keepers, watchmen, barbers and grave diggers or priests for funerals, marriages and festivals. They lived permanently in the village and became hereditary. They were not paid by the job but worked for a fixed annual (or harvest) allowance of grain, cash and parquisites. Sir Henry Maine noted that in some villages of north India, these artisans had small holdings of rent free land which like the duty itself became hereditary. It is in this background that we can evaluate the social rural life of India in 650-1206 A.D.

In short, the bulk of the total Indian population of about 100 to 140 millions in the medieval period was rural. The average man in ancient and medieval India, as today, was a countryman. The medieval Indian village differed very little from that of the present day, but while most villages in the North are now open and undefined, in the ancient and medieval times, they were usually walled or stockaded, as they are still in many parts of the Deccan. In 650-1206 A.D., the village was a cluster of huts, small and large, often grouped round a well or pond, near which was

a small open space with a few trees. The villages often had club rooms, which served as rest-houses for travellers and as centres of social life. Gradually, by the tenth century A.D., the place of these halls was taken by the village temples. The villages formed a self-conscious community, and often had a energetic communal life. A Jataka story has it:

One day they stood in the middle of the village to transact village business, and they (decided to) do good works; so they would get up be times and go out with knives, axes and crowbars. With their crowbars, they rolled away the stones on the four highways; they cut down the trees which caught the axles of their carts; they levelled the irregularities (of the roads); they built an embankment and dug tanks; they made a village hall; they showed charity and kept the (Buddhist) commendments.¹

This vigorous corporate life continued into the Middle Ages. The village councils took an active interest in the communal welfare, dug and renewed reservoirs, made canals, improved the roads, and cared for the village shrines. This strong sense of the continuity was one of the chief factors in the survival of the Hindu culture.² In India the village became the social, political, economic and religious laboratory. It has been the chief instrument for preservation of group values. Kings came and went, but the village remained. It was, in the words of Elphinstone, "the indestructible atom" of the Indian civilization.³

¹ Jataka, no.31, p. 190.