

CUET · GEOGRAPHY · CLASS XII · CODE 313

# Human Settlements

CUET unit: India — Human Settlements (Unit II: People — companion chapter on rural settlement types, evolution of towns and functional classification)

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## Snapshot

- A human settlement is a cluster of dwellings — from a hamlet to a metropolis; rural settlements are primary-activity based, urban ones secondary/tertiary.
- Indian rural settlements fall into four types — clustered, semi-clustered, hamleted, dispersed — each with regional examples.
- Indian towns evolved through ancient, medieval and modern (colonial + post-Independence) phases; the Census 1991 gives the statutory definition of an urban place.
- The urbanisation trend ran 1901–2011 (10.84% to 31.16%); towns are functionally classified as administrative, industrial, transport, commercial, mining, garrison, educational, religious, tourist.
- This topic is tested heavily for fact-recall on definitions, regional examples, the Census criteria, and the functional-type → city-name mapping.

## Detailed Notes

### 2.1 Core concepts

- **Human settlement** is the cluster of dwellings of any type or size where people live; the process inherently involves **grouping of people and apportioning of territory** as the resource base — people erect houses and other structures and command an area or territory as their economic support-base (NCERT §Intro, p. 15).
- Settlements range from a hamlet to a metropolitan city; **small, sparsely-spaced settlements specialising in agriculture/primary activities are called villages**, while **fewer, larger settlements specialising in secondary and tertiary activities are urban** (NCERT §Intro, p. 15). With size, the economic character, social structure, ecology and technology of a settlement all change.
- **Rural vs Urban — three differences** (NCERT §Intro, p. 15):
- **Economic base:** Rural settlements derive life-support from land-based primary economic activities; urban settlements depend on processing of raw materials, manufacturing of finished goods, and a variety of services.
- **Functional role:** Cities act as **nodes of economic growth**, supplying goods and services to their rural hinterlands in return for food and raw materials — the rural-urban functional link operates through transport and communication networks.

- **Social relations:** Rural people are less mobile so social relations are **intimate**; urban life is complex, fast, and social relations are **formal**.
- **Types of rural settlement** are determined by the extent of the **built-up area and inter-house distance**; in India, **compact/clustered villages of a few hundred houses are a rather universal feature of the northern plains**, but several areas have other forms (NCERT §Types of Rural Settlement, pp. 15–16).
- **Factors producing different rural-settlement types** (NCERT p. 16):
  - **(i) Physical features** — nature of terrain, altitude, climate and availability of water.
  - **(ii) Cultural and ethnic factors** — social structure, caste and religion.
  - **(iii) Security factors** — defence against thefts and robberies.
- **Four broad types of Indian rural settlements** (NCERT p. 16):
  - **Clustered / agglomerated / nucleated**
  - **Semi-clustered / fragmented**
  - **Hamleted**
  - **Dispersed / isolated**
- **Clustered Settlements (p. 16):** Compact or closely built-up area of houses; living area is distinct and separated from the surrounding farms, barns and pastures; intervening streets present recognisable patterns or geometric shapes — **rectangular, radial, linear**. Found in **fertile alluvial plains and north-eastern states**. People live in compact villages also for **security/defence reasons** — examples are the **Bundelkhand region of central India and Nagaland** — and for **water scarcity reasons** in **Rajasthan**, where compactness maximises utilisation of available water.
- **Semi-Clustered Settlements (p. 16):** Arise either from a tendency of clustering within a dispersed area or from segregation/fragmentation of a large compact village — one or more sections of village society choose or are forced to live a little away from the main cluster; the **land-owning and dominant community occupies the central part**, while **people of lower strata and menial workers settle on the outer flanks**; widespread in the **Gujarat plain and parts of Rajasthan**.
- **Hamleted Settlements (p. 16):** Fragmented into several physically separated units bearing a common name; the units are locally called **panna, para, palli, nagla, dhani** etc.; the segmentation is often motivated by **social and ethnic factors**; common in the **middle and lower Ganga plain, Chhattisgarh and the lower valleys of the Himalayas**.
- **Dispersed Settlements (pp. 16–17):** Appear as isolated huts or small hamlets in remote jungles, or on small hills with farms/pastures on slopes; extreme dispersion is caused by the **extremely fragmented nature of the terrain and the fragmented land-resource base of habitable areas**; many areas of **Meghalaya, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Kerala** have this type of settlement.

- **Urban Settlements (p. 17):** Generally compact and larger; engaged in a variety of non-agricultural, economic and administrative functions; functionally linked to rural areas around them via market towns and cities — directly and indirectly with villages and with each other.
- **Census of India, 1991 definition of an urban place (Box, p. 17):** A place is urban if it has **(i)** a municipality, corporation, cantonment board or notified town area committee, **AND (ii)** a minimum population of **5,000 persons**, **AND (iii)** at least **75 per cent of male workers engaged in non-agriculture pursuits**, **AND (iv)** a density of population of at least **400 persons per sq km** — all four conditions are cumulative.
- **Evolution of Towns in India (p. 17):** Towns flourished in India since prehistoric times — **Harappa and Mohenjodaro** existed in the Indus Valley civilisation; town evolution continued until the arrival of Europeans in the 18th century; on the basis of their evolution Indian towns are **Ancient, Medieval and Modern**.
- **Ancient Towns (>2000 years old, p. 17):** Developed mostly as **religious and cultural centres** — **Varanasi, Prayag (Prayagraj), Pataliputra (Patna), Madurai**.
- **Medieval Towns (~100 in number, p. 17):** Developed as headquarters of principalities/kingdoms; fort towns built on the ruins of ancient towns — **Delhi, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, Agra, Nagpur**.
- **Modern Towns (pp. 17–18):** The British and other Europeans first developed coastal **trading ports** — **Surat, Daman, Goa, Pondicherry** — and then **consolidated their hold around three principal nodes** — **Mumbai (Bombay), Chennai (Madras), Kolkata (Calcutta)** — built in British style. By extending control directly or through princely states they established administrative centres, **hill-towns as summer resorts** and added new civil, administrative and military areas. **Towns based on modern industries also evolved after 1850** — **Jamshedpur** is the standard example. After independence, planned administrative capitals (**Chandigarh, Bhubaneswar, Gandhinagar, Dispur**) and industrial centres (**Durgapur, Bhilai, Sindri, Barauni**) emerged; old towns developed into **satellite towns around metropolitan cities (Ghaziabad, Rohtak, Gurugram** around Delhi); with rural investment, a large number of medium and small towns developed across the country.
- **Urbanisation in India (p. 18):** The level of urbanisation in India (2011) was **31.16%**, quite low compared to developed countries; total urban population has increased **eleven-fold during the 20th century**; enlargement of urban centres and emergence of new towns drove this growth; the growth rate of urbanisation has **slowed down during the last two decades**.
- **Table 2.1 — India: Trends of Urbanisation 1901–2011 (p. 18):** Year-wise number of towns/UAs, urban population (thousands), % of total population, decennial growth %. Key data points: **1901 — 1,827 towns / 25,851.9 thousand / 10.84%**; 1951 — 2,843 / 62,443.7 / 17.29% / 41.42% growth; 1971 — 2,590 / 1,09,114 / 19.91% / 38.23%; **1981 — 3,378 / 1,59,463 / 23.34%** /

**46.14% (highest decennial growth);** 1991 — 4,689 / 2,17,611 / 25.71% / 36.47%; 2001 — 5,161 / 2,85,355 / 27.78% / 31.13%; **2011 — 6,171 / 3,77,000 / 31.16% / 31.08%.**

- **Functional Classification of Towns** (NCERT pp. 18–19): Each town performs many functions but is classed by its dominant/specialised one:
- **Administrative** — Chandigarh, New Delhi, Bhopal, Shillong, Guwahati, Imphal, Srinagar, Gandhinagar, Jaipur, Chennai.
- **Industrial** — Mumbai, Salem, Coimbatore, Modinagar, Jamshedpur, Hugli, Bhilai.
- **Transport** — ports (Kandla, Cochin, Kozhikode, Vishakhapatnam) or inland hubs (Agra, Dhulia, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Nagar, Itarsi, Katni).
- **Commercial** — Kolkata, Saharanpur, Satna.
- **Mining** — Raniganj, Jharia, Digboi, Ankaleshwar, Singrauli.
- **Garrison / Cantonment** — Ambala, Jalandhar, Mhow, Babina, Udhampur.
- **Educational** — Roorkee, Varanasi, Aligarh, Pilani, Prayagraj.
- **Religious and cultural** — Varanasi, Mathura, Amritsar, Madurai, Puri, Ajmer, Pushkar, Tirupati, Kurukshetra, Haridwar, Ujjain.
- **Tourist** — Nainital, Mussoorie, Shimla, Pachmarhi, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Udagamandalam (Ooty), Mount Abu.
- **Cities are not static in function** (p. 19): Functions change with growth; even specialised cities, as they grow into metropolises, become multifunctional (industry, business, administration, transport) and cannot be placed in a single functional class.
- **Smart Cities Mission (Box, p. 19):** Promotes cities with **core infrastructure**, a **clean and sustainable environment** and a **decent quality of life**; applies smart solutions to make areas less vulnerable to disasters, use fewer resources and provide cheaper services; the focus is on **compact areas, creating a replicable "lighthouse" model** for other aspiring cities.

## 2.2 Definitions to memorise

Term	Definition	Page
Human settlement	Cluster of dwellings of any type or size where humans live, involving grouping of people and apportioning of territory as resource base	15
Rural settlement	Sparsely located small settlements specialising in agriculture and other primary activities	15
Urban settlement	Fewer but larger settlements specialising in secondary and tertiary activities	15
Hinterland	The area served by a town/city through transport and communication networks	15

Term	Definition	Page
Clustered settlement	Compact, closely built-up village area separated from farms/pastures, often rectangular/radial/linear in pattern	16
Semi-clustered settlement	Fragmented settlement from segregation within a large compact village; dominant community at centre, lower strata on flanks	16
Hamleted settlement	A large village fragmented into several physically separated units bearing a common name (panna, para, palli, nagla, dhani)	16
Dispersed settlement	Isolated huts or hamlets of few huts in remote jungles or on small hills with farms/pastures on slopes	16–17
Urban place (Census 1991)	Place with municipality/corporation/cantonment/notified town area committee AND population $\geq 5,000$ AND $\geq 75\%$ male workers in non-agriculture AND density $\geq 400$ persons/sq km	17
Ancient towns	Towns with $>2,000$ years of history, mostly religious/cultural centres (Varanasi, Prayagraj, Patna, Madurai)	17
Medieval towns	$\sim 100$ towns of medieval origin, headquarters of principalities — fort towns (Delhi, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, Agra, Nagpur)	17
Modern towns	Colonial-era + post-Independence towns — trading ports, three British nodes, planned capitals, industrial and satellite towns	17–18
Level of urbanisation	% of urban population to total population — 31.16% in India (2011)	18
Administrative town	Town hosting higher-order administrative HQ (e.g., Chandigarh, New Delhi)	18
Transport (port) town	Town engaged primarily in export/import via a seaport (e.g., Kandla, Cochin)	18
Mining town	Town developed in mineral-rich area (e.g., Raniganj, Jharia, Digboi)	19
Garrison/Cantonment town	Town emerging around a military establishment (e.g., Ambala, Jalandhar, Mhow)	19
Educational town	Town that grew around an institution into a campus town (e.g., Roorkee, Pilani)	19
Religious/cultural town	Town that gained prominence from religious or cultural significance (e.g., Varanasi, Madurai, Ajmer)	19
Tourist town	Town developed primarily for tourism (e.g., Nainital, Mussoorie, Shimla, Ooty)	19
Smart Cities Mission	Mission promoting cities with core infrastructure, sustainable environment and replicable lighthouse model	19
Satellite town	Town developed around a metropolitan city (e.g., Ghaziabad, Rohtak, Gurugram around Delhi)	18

## 2.3 Diagrams / processes to remember

- **Fig. 2.1 — Clustered Settlements in the North-eastern states (p. 16):** photograph showing a compact built-up area in a hill setting.
- **Fig. 2.2 — Semi-clustered settlements (p. 16):** photograph of a main cluster with a smaller fragmented cluster on the periphery.
- **Fig. 2.3 — Dispersed settlements in Nagaland (p. 17):** isolated dwellings on a hillside with intervening farms/pastures.
- **Fig. 2.4 — A view of the modern city (p. 17):** wide road and modern urban infrastructure typical of a British-built node.
- **Table 2.1 — India: Trends of Urbanisation 1901–2011 (p. 18):** as detailed in §2.5 below.
- **Conceptual map of functional types (pp. 18–19):** Administrative / Industrial / Transport (port + inland) / Commercial / Mining / Garrison / Educational / Religious / Tourist — nine functional classes; each town listed multiple times if multi-functional.

## 2.5 Key data table (chapter facts at a glance)

#	Fact / figure	NCERT source
1	Number of rural settlement types (India)	4 (Clustered, Semi-clustered, Hamleted, Dispersed), p. 16
2	Local names for hamlet units	panna, para, palli, nagla, dhani, p. 16
3	Clustering driver — Bundelkhand & Nagaland	Security/defence, p. 16
4	Clustering driver — Rajasthan	Water scarcity, p. 16
5	Semi-clustered region	Gujarat plain & parts of Rajasthan, p. 16
6	Hamleted region	Middle/lower Ganga plain, Chhattisgarh, lower Himalayan valleys, p. 16
7	Dispersed region	Meghalaya, Uttarakhand, HP, Kerala, p. 16-17
8	Census 1991 minimum urban population	5,000 persons, p. 17
9	Census 1991 minimum density	400 persons/sq km, p. 17
10	Census 1991 male-worker non-agri share	≥75%, p. 17
11	Ancient towns — examples	Varanasi, Prayagraj, Pataliputra (Patna), Madurai, p. 17
12	Medieval towns — count and examples	~100 towns; Delhi, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, Agra, Nagpur, p. 17
13		Surat, Daman, Goa, Pondicherry, p. 17

#	Fact / figure	NCERT source
	Earliest European trading ports	
14	Three principal British nodes	Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, p. 17
15	First modern industrial town (after 1850)	Jamshedpur, p. 18
16	Planned post-Independence capitals	Chandigarh, Bhubaneswar, Gandhinagar, Dispur, p. 18
17	Planned post-Independence industrial towns	Durgapur, Bhilai, Sindri, Barauni, p. 18
18	Delhi satellite towns	Ghaziabad, Rohtak, Gurugram, p. 18
19	Urbanisation 1901 → 2011	10.84% → 31.16%, Table 2.1 p. 18
20	Number of towns/UAs in 1901 → 2011	1,827 → 6,171, Table 2.1 p. 18
21	Highest decennial growth in urbanisation	46.14% in 1971-81, Table 2.1 p. 18
22	Urban population 2011	3,77,000 thousand (≈377 million), Table 2.1 p. 18
23	Growth in urban population during 20th century	Eleven-fold, p. 18
24	Number of functional classes	9 (Administrative, Industrial, Transport, Commercial, Mining, Garrison, Educational, Religious, Tourist), pp. 18-19

## 2.4 Common confusions / NTA trap points

- **Census urban definition** — all four conditions are cumulative:  $\geq 5,000$  population AND  $\geq 75\%$  male workers in **non-agriculture** AND density  $\geq 400/\text{sq km}$  AND a statutory civic body. NTA often replaces "non-agricultural" with "primary sector" (Exercise 1 (ii) trap) or swaps the density figure.
- **Rural-settlement types vs region:** Gujarat plain = semi-clustered; middle/lower Ganga plain & Chhattisgarh = hamleted; Meghalaya, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala = dispersed; northern plains & NE states = clustered. Easy to swap.
- **Reasons for clustering** are situational — Bundelkhand and Nagaland (security/defence) vs Rajasthan (water scarcity). Distractors flip the reason.
- **Ancient vs Medieval vs Modern towns:** Varanasi, Prayagraj, Patna, Madurai are ancient (religious/cultural). Delhi, Agra, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, Nagpur are medieval. Jamshedpur, Chandigarh, Bhubaneswar are modern. Varanasi appears under both ancient and religious/cultural classifications — note context.

- **Three British nodes = Mumbai (Bombay), Chennai (Madras), Kolkata (Calcutta)** — Surat, Daman, Goa, Pondicherry were earlier trading ports, not the three principal British nodes.
- **2011 urbanisation = 31.16%**, not "about one-third" rounded loosely; also note the trend has slowed in the last two decades despite absolute numbers rising.
- **Local terms for hamlets** (panna, para, palli, nagla, dhani) belong to **hamleted** settlements, not dispersed.
- **Bhopal is NOT on a river bank** (Exercise 1 (i)) — it sits on the Upper and Lower Lakes; Agra (Yamuna), Patna (Ganga), Kolkata (Hooghly) are on rivers.
- **Multifunctional tendency** — as cities grow they shed single-function labels; do not insist on classifying a metropolis under one heading.
- **Smart Cities Mission** focuses on **compact areas with a replicable lighthouse model**, not on entire mega-city footprints.

## Practice MCQs

## PYQ Alignment

This chapter is a high-yield CUET source — Census-of-India's urban definition, the four rural settlement types with their regional examples, the ancient/medieval/modern town classification, and the functional classification (type → city) are repeatedly tested in CUET 2023–25. Expect direct fact-recall, matching-type and statement-based questions in this set of roughly 8 questions per paper. For year-wise CUET stems see [/pyq/geography](#).

### CUET 2025 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

**Q.22 (CUET 2025)** Arrange the following Indian towns from ancient to modern period:

(A) Chandigarh (B) Nagpur (C) Madurai (D) Surat

- A) (A), (B), (C), (D) B) (C), (D), (B), (A) C) (B), (C), (D), (A) D) (C), (B), (A), (D) Tests: Ancient / medieval / modern town classification Answer: Not in extracted key

**Q.24 (CUET 2025)** Which of these criteria is NOT correct for defining an urban settlement (Census of India 1991)?

- A) Population more than 5000 B) Density at least 400 persons per sq km C) 75% male workers engaged in agriculture D) Municipality or notified town area Tests: Census of India urban-settlement definition Answer: Not in extracted key

**Q.25 (CUET 2025)** Match the towns with their types: Chandigarh — Administrative town; Kandla — Transport town; Jharia — Mining town; Jalandhar — Garrison town.

- A) B) C) D) (options blank in source) Tests: Functional classification of Indian towns  
Answer: Not in extracted key

### CUET 2024 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

**Q.8 (CUET 2024)** Canberra was planned by \_\_\_\_\_.

- A) Patrick Geddes B) Walter Burley Griffin C) Jean Gottmann D) George Zipf Tests: Planned cities and their designers  
Answer: Not in extracted key

**Q.20 (CUET 2024)** Match town types with examples. Type — Example: (A) Industrial — (I) Mhow; (B) Commercial — (II) Katni; (C) Transport — (III) Satna; (D) Garrison — (IV) Modinagar.

- A) A-IV, B-III, C-II, D-I B) A-I, B-III, C-II, D-IV C) A-I, B-II, C-IV, D-III D) A-III, B-IV, C-I, D-II  
Tests: Functional classification of Indian towns  
Answer: Not in extracted key

**Q.21 (CUET 2024)** Identify correct statements about metropolis. (A) Chief centre of activity (B) Administrative/commercial/industrial centre (C) Serves small hinterland (D) Very large city

- A) A, B, D only B) A, C, D only C) A, B, C only D) B, C, D only Tests: Metropolis — features  
Answer: Not in extracted key

**Q.42 (CUET 2024)** What is the pattern of settlement that develops around a lake?

- A) Rectangular pattern B) Linear pattern C) T-shaped pattern D) Circular pattern  
Tests: Rural-settlement patterns (circular around lakes)  
Answer: Not in extracted key

**Q.47 (CUET 2024)** Dharni is an example of \_\_\_\_\_.

- A) Hamlet B) Dispersed C) Semi-clustered D) Clustered Tests: Rural settlement types — Dharni as a hamleted/semi-clustered example  
Answer: Not in extracted key

**Q.48 (CUET 2024)** Which of the following towns represents a satellite town?

- A) Rohtak B) Sindri C) Dispur D) Mhow Tests: Satellite town examples (Rohtak near Delhi)  
Answer: Not in extracted key

**Q.49 (CUET 2024)** The city of \_\_\_\_\_ is located on the river Hooghly.

- A) Madurai B) Hyderabad C) Kolkata D) Delhi Tests: Riverside locations of Indian cities  
Answer: Not in extracted key

### CUET 2023 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

**Q.12 (CUET 2023)** Which city was the first urban settlement to reach a population of one million?

- A) Paris B) New York C) Tokyo D) London Tests: History of urbanisation — first million-city  
Answer: Not in extracted key

**Q.14 (CUET 2023)** Which of the following statements about the definition of urban settlements by Census of India are correct? A. Places with municipality, corporation,

cantonment board or notified town area committee; B. Minimum population of 5000 persons; C. At least 50% male workers engaged in non-agricultural pursuits; D. Population density of at least 400 persons per sq km.

- A) (A), (B), (C) only B) (A), (B), (D) only C) (B), (C), (D) only D) (A), (C), (D) only Tests: Census of India urban definition (the three thresholds and statutory criterion) Answer: Not in extracted key

**Q.21 (CUET 2023)** In which environment can we expect clustered rural settlements?

- A) Alluvial plains of Ganga river B) Small hills with farms on slopes C) Himalayan ridges D) Thick forest and hills of North-East Tests: Conditions favouring clustered rural settlements Answer: Not in extracted key

**Q.22 (CUET 2023)** Which one of the following is a cantonment town?

- A) Ambala B) Raniganj C) Bhilai D) Jharia Tests: Garrison/cantonment town examples Answer: Not in extracted key