

Significance and Applicability of Central Place Theory of Christaller

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The central-place system of Christaller is applicable partially even to this day in countries of the developing world including India, China and areas where primary occupations predominate. The theory, it is again emphasized, is normative in character.

The theory as propounded by Christaller, no doubt, is being criticized. But it is also true that almost all theories have both their attackers as well as defenders. It is true that industrial and technical changes have brought changes in world trade pattern, and the relationships between town and country have become obscured. But, it is also equally true that the changed large cities have not lost their role as service centres for their extensive tributary areas, thus reflecting to some measure a central-place pattern.

Therefore, it will be of no use to seek approximation in the real world. But, the impact of the theory is not absent. Let us examine the case of our country India, where administrative hierarchy of settlements exists. Its practical relevance and impact on daily life is obvious.

Gram Panchayats which are rural in character provide legal, economic, administrative, and educational and health services to the adjoining hamlets and smaller villages are central places of the lowest order. The administrative hierarchical system of India may differ but the spacing of tehsil and district level centres conforms to the theory. The overall difference may be due to wide gaps between the real and ideal world.

Table 11.2
Administrative Hierarchy of Settlements in India

<i>Hierarchical Level</i>	<i>Number of Settlements</i>	<i>Spacing (km)</i>	<i>Population Served (in lakhs)</i>	<i>Area Served (sq km)</i>
National Capital	1	—	6,840	32,80,543
State Capitals	25	428	311	1,49,116
District HQs.	412	100	17	7,962
Tehsil HQs.	2,500	40	2.8	1,250
Block HQs.	502	30	1.4	652
Gram Panchayats	2,00,000	5	0.04	20

Table 11.2 show that Chrisstaller's concept differs from the system in India.

Theoretically, the ratio between the higher and lower order settlements is expected to be 1:7. But in India it is 1:19 of districts to states. Moreover, the number and spacing between different hierarchical levels is far from the ideal. But as stated below demographic hierarchy in India reveals a different picture.

