

**BA Sociology (Hons)**

**Core- 8**

**Rural Sociology**

## **UNIT –I**

### **Rural Sociology: Its Emergence, Importance, Nature and Scope**

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### **Objectives:**

*To provide key insights into the emergence of rural sociology as a discipline*

*To define and explain rural sociology*

*To let the reader know about its nature, scope and significance*

*To provide the basic tools for data collection or fieldwork*

### **1.1 Rural Sociology: An Introduction**

Rural sociology is a field of sociology that is connected with the study of social life in rural areas. It is an active field in much of the world, and in the United States originated in the 1910s with close ties to the national Department of Agriculture and land-grant university colleges of agriculture. The sociology of food and agriculture is one focus of rural sociology and much of the

field is dedicated to the economics of farm production. Other areas of study include rural migration and other demographic patterns, environmental sociology, amenity-led development, public lands policies, so-called "boomtown" development, social disruption, the sociology of natural resources (including forests, mining, fishing and other areas), rural cultures and identities, rural healthcare and educational policies. Many rural sociologists work in the areas of development studies, community studies, community development and in environmental. Much of the research involves the Third World.

Rural Sociology, as indicated by its name, studies rural society, rural social structures and institutions. The rural society is primarily dependent on agriculture and hence rural sociology also concerns itself on the peasant society. Rural sociology is centered on the rural community life. There is a stark difference between the social structure, processes, social dynamics and social control in rural society. Hence, there is a difference between studying urban society and rural society, rural sociology studies the latter. Thus, rural sociology has been specially designed to study the rural phenomena and it is a systematic study of the varied aspects of the rural society. It is the study of the rural social networks and how they operate for the smooth functioning of the society. The rural society is generally rooted in the villages, and rural sociology studies the facets of the villages, the way it functions, the various problems it faces and the how it tackles to face the imminent challenges. Rural sociology offers viable solutions and ways of mitigating the problems that hound over the villages.

### **1.2 Definition of Rural Sociology:**

1. According to Sanderson, "Rural sociology is the sociology of rural life in the rural environment".
2. Bertand says, "Rural sociology is that study of human relationships in rural environment".
3. T.L. Smith, "Such sociological facts and principles as are derived from the study of rural social relationships may be referred to as rural sociology".

4. F.S Chapin, "The sociology of rural life is a study of rural population, rural social organization, and the rural social processes operative in rural society".
5. A.R Desai defines rural sociology as, "the science of rural society....It is the science of laws of the development of rural society".

The above definitions clearly justify that rural sociology studies the social interactions, institutions and activities and social changes that take place in the rural society. It studies the rural social organizations, structure and set up. In other words, it can be said that rural sociology acts as a reflection of the rural social life and provides the norms and values that govern the rural society. It provides a clear picture of the rural population and the difference they possess from the urban population.

### **1.3 Emergence of Rural Sociology:**

During the beginning of the 1950s, the sociologists and the social anthropologists began conducting extensive and innumerable studies in the field of rural sociology. The major concern of these studies was the scrutiny of the interrelationships between various dimensions of the rural organization. The field of rural sociology was enriched with the contributions by M.N.Srinivas (1960), McKim Marriott (1955), S.C.Dube (1955) and D.N.Majumdar (1955).

The birth of rural sociology was due to the requirement of the study of different conditions and aspects of rural life and the prevailing problems that plagues the rural society. Earlier, many social sciences have strived to provide viable solutions for the challenges found in the rural society but have not been able to provide viable solutions to them. In order to provide a discipline for serious and focused study of the rural society, rural sociology was born. According to Charles R.Hoffer, "Like all sciences, Rural Sociology developed in response to a need. It is an elementary fact in the realm of scientific thought that a new science comes into existence whenever phenomena confronting the human mind are not, or cannot be understood satisfactorily by the existing disciplines or sciences".

Though rural society exists since a long long time, but rural sociology had then not emerged due to the static and unchanged nature of the rural social life. In recent years, the components of dynamism and change have escalated the capability to comprehend the complex problems of life. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there was a major shift in the scientific inventions and discoveries that helped in transforming human thinking and life. The exponential growth of industrialization and urbanization caused issues such as slums and overcrowding in the cities. Such grave concerns diverted the attention towards the villages and the migrating population. Rural people faced a lot of challenges and difficulties. Eventually, the streams of thought by the thinkers focused on issues such as poverty, unemployment, health and hygiene, education and disorganization etc.

### **1.3.1 Rural Sociology as a Systematic Science:**

As a systematic science, rural sociology emerged in United States of America and the American society was facing severe disintegration from the period of 1890 to 1920. The problems included mass poverty, economic crises, no land rights with the cultivators etc. Such problems led to mass migration of the people from the rural hinterlands to the cities. As a result, there was severe shortage of food grains and also there was fear that the entire rural society was facing a threatening decay. The Country Life Commission (CLC) appointed in America to study the degrading situation of the rural society provided relevant data from the field and the findings were referred to the American Sociological Society in 1912. Reputed sociologists, such as James Michel Williams, Warren H. Wilson and Newell L. Sims contributed extensively to the study of American rural society. During those days, the rural sociologists used statistical and historical data along with field interview to find out empirical reality of the US country life. The works on rural sociology in America were discussed from humanist viewpoint and the solutions that it offered were highly revered in national level policy planning. The way general sociology emerged due to the problems in general life, similarly rural life problems necessitated the emergence of rural sociology.

In 1917, by the collaborative efforts of various sociologists, a new department named rural sociology was opened in American Sociological Institute for the survey, study and research in the rural areas. However, there were times when rural sociology faced paucity of research work due to inadequate skilled and trained personnel. But, gradually the research work on the rural problems was conducted by eminent research scholars that led to substantial and significant contributions, to rural sociology. A quarterly magazine name 'Rural Sociology' was published in the year 1936 and it fulfilled the requirement for a platform for publication of research papers in the area of rural life. Hence after, an organization named Rural Sociological Society was established in 1937. In 1930, a book written by Sorokin, Zimmerman and C.J Galpin named '*A Systematic Source Book in Rural Sociology*' was published which was known as a milestone in rural sociological literature.

Due to the pervasive turmoil during the war period, the need of rural sociologists was utterly felt. There were many departments established by the American government for the continuity of rural research work. While many scholars did research work on rural society, others were engaged as faculty members in various universities. However, the major prominence that rural sociology received was after the post war period. It was in this era that rural sociology was widely studied and researched upon. There was an expansion in the scope of the discipline of rural sociology which was earlier limited to rural problems only. The scope widened to study the rural social institutions like caste, marriage, family system; rural social change like migration and newer livelihood opportunities, rural community, rural education, rural urban contrast and rural health. This era witnessed various noteworthy publications like *Rural Sociology* (1948) by Nelson and *A Study of Rural Society* (1952) by Kolb and Bruner. Along with significant publications in the field of rural sociology, there were also newer subjects introduced in the American universities that created a mass applause for the discipline.

### **1.3.2 Emergence of Rural Sociology in India**

The commencement of rural sociology as a discipline in India dates back to Sir Henry S Maine who published two books i.e. *Ancient Law* (1861) and *Ancient Society* (1877). He wrote

extensively on the Indian villages but was later criticized by Dumont for his European biasness and centricism. According to Dumont, "Sir Henry Maine hardly ever looked at the Indian village in itself, but only as a counterpart to Tutonic, Slavonic or other institutions". India was to him little more than the historical repository of veritable phenomena of ancient usage and ancient juridical thought".

However, a systematic study of rural sociology in India commenced after the promulgation of the Constitution of India and the implementation of the Community Development Programmes. During the British era in India, sociologists tried to trace for the patterns of land tenure, customary laws and the functioning of the peasants and the artisans. There were also researches and enquiries made on the day to day affairs of the rural life. The recurrent famines in India provoked numerous studies. It was the effort of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)-an apex body of the social scientists who conducted research based surveys for nearly a decade. In its very first volume entitled *A Survey of Research in Sociology and Social Anthropology (Vol.I)*, the sub-discipline of rural sociology is discussed under the chapter 'Rural Studies'. A.R. Desai, a noted sociologist, has done a pioneering work in the field of Rural Sociology by editing *Rural Sociology in India*. He has raised few queries before defining rural sociology. Is rural sociology a distinct science or is it merely an application of the general principles of sociology? Should rural sociology restrict its scope merely to the life processes of rural society or should it also include as an integral part a study of rural and urban social life, comparative as well as in the mutual interconnection and interaction. He also interrogates: Should rural sociology only provide scientific knowledge about rural societies and laws governing its development or should it serve as a guide and suggest practical programmes of reform or reconstruction of that society in the socio-economic and cultural fields?

Post-independent India saw an upheaval in the community based life due to extensive participation of the rural masses in the freedom struggle. There have been many instances of deep divide on the basis of language, caste, regional biasness etc. Rural sociology eventually gained prominence and emerged in the India soil due to aforementioned reasons and also due



to its agrarian nature. India resides in villages and majority of its denizens are dependent on agriculture, these twin statements paved way for the origin and growth of rural sociology in India. It aimed at studying the grave issues, understanding the observable phenomena and proving viable and practicable solutions to mitigate the challenges.

#### **1.4 Significance of Rural Sociology**

Rural sociology holds immense significance in a country like India that is predominantly agrarian and majority of its population resides in villages. Dependence on agriculture forms the fundamental base of the Indian rural life and it also acts as a backbone for the rural population. It not only has an economic role to play but also helps in shaping the moral, psychological and ideological life of the rural people. But an urban bias has always been noticed among the scholars and researchers who have hitherto focused their attention on the study of phenomena and the challenges faced in the urban society. Although, three-fourths of the population resides in the villages under acute poverty and distress but they are hardly studied upon.

According to A.R Desai, “the study of the Indian rural society, which varies from state to state, district to district, due to their extreme geographical, historical and ethnic peculiarities, hitherto made has been spasmodic, insufficient and often superficial”. He further states that, “such a study cannot give an authentic, composite picture of the variegated landscape of the rural life, nor can it serve as a guide for evolving a scientific programme of reconstruction of the rural society, so essential for the renovation of the entire Indian society”.

However, there is an urgent need for the scientific and systematic study of the rural social life to understand its intricacies, complexities and the eventual transformations that it is going through.

As per general understandings the rural society in India is considered as immobile and stagnant, where people prefer to stay all their lives without even sparing a thought for migration. But with changing times, the unique agrarian socio-economic witnessed a major transformation due to the prolific impact of the British rule in India. In the post-independent era, the implementation

of the five-year plans and the permeation of the mass media facilitated in revolutionizing the rural society. Villages were earlier known to be atomistic, independent and self sufficient and also a closed group. But with the influx of modern technology and industries, rural people started migrating from the hinterlands causing slums and over populated cities. Villagers were exposed to political power through adult franchise, democracy and breezy transformation. It is in this context that the rural society and the living patterns of the rural folks needs to be evaluated by understanding the significance of rural sociology. It is argued by David Pocock and Louis Dumont that there is nothing special about Indian rural life. Both rural and urban communities are a part of the larger civilization of the subcontinent. They argue that the urban community is nothing but an expansion of rural community. Basically, rural and urban communities are the two sides of the same coin.

Whether it is Rampura or Kanpur, the Hindu marriage is basically a Hindu marriage. It does not change with the change of community. Correspondingly, there is nothing like rural family or urban family. Family is a basic Indian institution and in the paraphrase of I.P. Desai, family in India means joint family. The observations made by foreign anthropologists in the Contributions to Indian Sociology appear to be oversimplified. The facilities, comforts and the sources of income found obtainable in urban community are in a degree inadequate in rural community. It is this inequality which differentiates the rural communities from the urban communities. Although, the cultural and religious realm of both the communities doesn't appear obvious, there are various differences in the basis style of living of the respective populations.

The following may be noted as the factors that have led to transformations in the Indian rural society that has necessitated the significance of the discipline of rural sociology:

- 1.4.1 Class Formation and Power Transformation:** The significance of rural sociology in present-day India is principally due to political transformation and the ensuing class formation. The performance of the five-year plans and the surfacing of green revolution in 1960s and 1970s have propelled the creation of new classes. The

agricultural bourgeoisie which came into prominence during this time, eventually, claimed due allocation of political power. Agricultural development has been conveyed by the augmentation of a progressively more confident class of rich capitalist farmers, comprising newly rising rich kulak peasants and the middle class peasants who have articulated their interest through political power. However, the class formation and class differentiation in rural India has not been an even process. This potholed development of agriculture has caused conflict and contradiction at the village level. This has also given rise to communalism and brought in power the political parties that are non-secular.

**1.4.2** Panchayat Raj and Its Impact: The new power regime of the Panchayat Raj system has also asked for the significance of rural sociology. The distinction attributed through the policy of reservation to the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and women has reinforced the lately budding social formation in village life. The structure and functioning of Panchayat Rai and the in-built contradictions between the progressive castes and the dalits have also affected the rural structure. It calls for the use of scientific approach to the understanding of the village community.

**1.4.3** Poverty Removal Programmes: The catchphrase for the removal of poverty has taken a multiplicity of forms. The small and marginal farmers are in arms against the big or kulak farmers. The new peasant movements are a signal to this new struggle along with other immanent problems like over wage-land to the tillers, distribution of wasteland, agrarian relations in the context of commercial crops and above all class discrimination. The various poverty alleviation programmes, in order to be successful and reach out to the target population, need to understand the rural social structure and the factors pervasive in the social life.

**1.4.4** Changing Ecosystem and Environmental Dilemma: Numerous factors have resulted in rapid deforestation of the forest and subsequent degeneration of the forest land. Due to extensive unscientific and unsystematic mining, the forest land is on the verge of ruin. Both the urban and rural areas are facing devastation due to forest

land degradation. The debate on development and sustainable environment assumed new implication in India. It is argued that plans of development should not be made at the cost of environmental degradation and disequilibrium in eco-system. If big dams provide ample opportunities for irrigation, they also ruin the forest, mind wealth and turn thousands of farmers as oustees. The crisis of rehabilitation of these oustees becomes an agricultural disaster. On the other hand, the development specialists and, particularly the state and the central governments, put forward a counter-argument that these human resource 'losses' are at the cost of development. There is an accord in the country that development in all conditions should be eco-friendly. Thus the significance of rural sociology gains importance in the present context of massive developmental projects that lead to ravage of the environment. Rural sociology can offer solutions for creation of environment suitable and eco-friendly development projects.

- 1.4.5** Constitutional Obligations: As observed earlier, the growth and progress of rural societies has always been a compulsion on the part of the governments (both state and central) which has to be implemented as prescribed in the Constitution. The Constitution of India Directive Principles of State Policy are "fundamental in governance of the country". And it is "the duty of the state to apply these principles in making laws". As per the constitutional mandate, the state is asked to build a social order in which justice-social, economic and political-prevails in all the institutions of the national life. "The state shall direct its policy in such a manner as to secure the right of all men and women to an adequate means of livelihood...." "Some of the other important directives relate to the prerequisite of opportunities for "the organization of village Panchayat" and enhancement in the standard of living. There are a variety of objectives of five year plans and the development policies but the fundamental spotlight is on the development of the standard of living of the vast rural population residing in the villages. In this context it is obligatory to foster development in the rural segment of society. Rural sociology can,

hence, help in providing theoretical approaches as well as practical solutions for rural development.

**1.4.6** Despair of the small and marginal farmers: Due to excessive and continuous segmentation of the land holdings with every process of succession going through one generation to the other in a period of decades, land today has become an inadequate commodity. It has resulted into depeasantisation. The new and modern agricultural technology has become beneficial for big peasants and seldom is favorable to the small owners. This has forced the poor small and marginal farmers to leave their homestead land and migrate to other places. The marginal farmers are on the way of proletarianization as they don't possess adequate land that would help in higher productivity. As a result, lower production leads to lower returns which drag them into poverty and poor standard of living. Rural sociology can be utilized to study the condition of the poor farmers and the its perspectives can be used to formulate suitable policies that would target the small and marginal farmers. Such a farmer oriented policy would help in uplifting the standard of their living and provide them with viable opportunities in other livelihood realms.

**1.4.7** Diverse Ethnicities: India is an apt example of heterogeneity, diversities and multi-ethnicities which makes it mandatory to comprehend the village life methodically. There are many villages in our country that have their own language, dialect, customs, norms and values. It clearly brings out the fact that thorough knowledge of rural anthropology and rural sociology is essential to understand the diversities and yet the coexistence.

From the aforementioned points it is conclusive that rural sociology as a discipline holds immense significance as it touches varied facets of rural social life. In recent years, rural sociology is widening its horizons. Rural Sociology now studies agrarian relations, land reforms, agricultural labourers, wage reforms, stratification, rural leadership, environment

and above all peasant movements and struggles. There are troubles of rural people concerning exploitation and antagonism between lower peasantry and upper peasantry. Rural sociologists have recently shifted their emphasis from caste, ritual and village solidarity to agrarian relations and peasant movements. Such a widening zone of rural sociology provides attractive feedback to an appropriate rural development. It is a holistic study of rural social setting. It provides us valuable knowledge about the rural social phenomena and social problems which helps us in understanding rural society and making prescription for its all round progress and prosperity.

### **1.5 Nature of Rural Sociology:**

The nature of Rural Sociology generally implies whether it can be categorized under natural sciences or under arts. August Comte, the father of Sociology, called *Sociology* as the queen of sciences. Some sociologists have viewed sociology in terms of natural sciences. According to Pierre Bourdieu, "Sociology seems to me to have all the properties that define as science...All sociologists worthy of the name agree on a common heritage of concepts, methods and verification procedures". Most of the sociologists opine that Sociology has all the characteristics of science and it is, no doubt, a science. Since rural sociology is a specialized branch of Sociology, therefore it is also a science.

Nevertheless, before furthering to elaborate rural sociology as a science, it is essential to know what science is. Science is a method and way of looking at things consisting of systematic steps like observation, collection and classification of data, hypothesis, testing, theory and conclusion. Science possesses six basic ingredients.

Firstly, science employs the scientific method. Secondly; it is a study of facts. Thirdly scientific principles are universal. Fourthly, scientific laws are vertical. Its validity can be examined at any time and it proves true in every place. Fifthly, science discovers the cause-effect relationship in its subject-matter and in this connection provides universal and valid laws. Finally, science can

make predictions on the basis of universal and valid laws relating to the cause-effect relationship in any subject. The function of science is based upon a faith in causality.

The nature of Rural Sociology as a science can be examined on the following grounds.

- 1.5.1 Scientific Methodology:** Rural Sociology utilizes scientific methodology and hence, all the methods used in rural sociology are scientific in nature. These methods are observation, interview, case study, schedule, and questionnaire etc. In these methods, the first step is collection of data through observation. On a stipulated date the results are brought out on the basis of accepted data. The validity of these results is verified and theories are formulated. Such rigorous methodology is assumed to produce dependable theoretical constructs.
- 1.5.2 Facts Accumulation:** Rural Sociology is always founded on factual study. It studies rural social relationship and activities in a factual manner. It makes a scientific study of facts, general principles and theories involved in them. It is also a known principle that science grows on the data collected from the field and that a sociologist stands on the shoulders of other sociologists as said by Robert Merton.
- 1.5.3 Empiricism:** Unlike natural sciences that carry out experiments in the closed laboratory for measurement and verification, rural sociology uses the empirical method in the form of fieldwork. For a rural sociologist going to the field carries immense significance as it helps him/her to gather relevant data on the basis of which he will formulate theories and also it provides an occasion for experimentation, observation and verification.
- 1.5.4 Precision and Accuracy:** Two of the important features of scientific investigation are precision and accuracy. The data that is collected should reflect the exact existing

situation at the time of observation. The principles of rural sociology need to be proved true when verified. Their validity can be examined by any one.

**1.5.5** Discovery of cause-effect relationship: Like Sociology, Rural Sociology also discovers a cause effect relationship between the phenomena. For example, in the modern society, the rate of divorce increases rapidly due to the family disorganization. Similarly, due to the swift growth of population the rate of poverty and unemployment increases in the rural society. In these examples, family disorganization and population growth are two causes and divorce as well as poverty and unemployment are their effects. Rural Sociology has discovered a cause effect relation between the phenomena and population growth and divorce. Thus Rural Sociology finds the causal relationship in social disorganization and other incidents, activities and relationship in rural society and then forms laws concerning them.

**1.5.6** Predictions: Eventually, on the basis of cause-effect relationship rural sociology becomes capable of anticipating the future and make predictions concerning social relationship, activities, incidents etc. For example, if disorganization in the families becomes pronounced, it can make predictions concerning the number of divorces and many other things. Knowing the cause-effect relationship, rural sociology can conclude 'what will be' on the basis of 'what is'.

Thus, it is evident from the above analysis that Rural Sociology, by nature, is a science. It possesses all the essential characteristics of science. However, there are plenty of objections against the scientific nature of rural sociology. Some sociologists have raised their views against the nature of Rural Sociology as a science. They have vehemently objected to the scientific nature of rural sociology on the basis of the following grounds:

**1.5.7** Lack of Objectivity: The first objection rose against the nature of rural sociology being called a science is that, an unbiased and objective study cannot be made in it. The



chief reason of this is that the sociologists have to play dual role of both the doctor and the patient in society. They are the members of that very society which they studies. From this point of view, they have established a very secure relation with the contents, very commencement of society. The sociologists study religion, family, marriage, economic system etc. But hold their observation lacks the ingredient of objectivity, which is so much indispensable to science.

**1.5.8 Lack of experiment:** There was also an objection that rural sociology doesn't use Rural Sociology is not a science just because of the term, science used in it. If science is used for physical sciences, then rural sociology cannot assert to be a science. The term science is used for physical sciences includes the dual process of experimentation and prediction. Rural Sociology, in this context, is not a science because its subject matter, the human relationship and behavior and they are abstract in nature. One can neither see nor touch, neither weigh nor analyze in the laboratory. It does not possess the instruments like the microscope and the thermometer to measure the human behavior as science does. It is not probable to validate and test the theory and the principles of rural Sociology like science.

**1.5.9 Lack of measurement:** The third argument against the nature of Rural Sociology as a science is that it is deficient in measurement. In natural sciences, definite and standard measurement is used to measure and weigh. The different measurements like units, grams, meters, centimeters etc, by which the subject matter of natural sciences can be measured the units or Rural Sociology. Due to the lack of measurement, the results of rural sociology differ from time to time which is not in the case of natural sciences.

**1.5.10 Lack of Exactness:** The fourth objection is that the discipline doesn't provide exactness. It is not possible to follow the laws and principles of rural sociology universally as the principles of natural science can be followed. Its law and principles

vary on the basis of time and place concerned. For example, the rural social problems of one country may be different from the other country. In India untouchability is a serious rural problem but in America it is not so.

**1.5.11 Lack of Prediction:** The fifth and final objection against the nature of Rural Sociology being called a science is that it is deficient in accurate prediction. Observation and hypothesis are the two basic ingredients of science. On the basis of observation and hypothesis, science has formulated many laws and through which any sort of prediction can be achievable about any experiment. But due to the lack of objectivity and electivity, the principles that are invented by rural sociology are not always acceptable. Consequently, it becomes to predict any occurrence or phenomena or forecast cannot be possible about the laws and principles of Rural Sociology. For instance according to the standing principles of natural science we can predict that the combination of two hydrogen molecules and one oxygen molecule produces water. But such type of prediction is almost impossible in the field of Rural Sociology.

It is evident from the above analysis regarding the nature of Rural Sociology, that it is very difficult to conclude whether, by nature it is science or not as there are dual and contrasting opinions both in favor and against the scientific nature of rural sociology. There can be no doubt over the question that rural sociology uses scientific techniques like observation, experimentation, classification and tabulation in the collection and interpolation of data systematically. The conclusion derived by the rural sociology is based upon empirical realities. Therefore, rural sociology, no doubt can definitely be a novel branch of science having the subject-matter and methodology of its own.

### **1.6 Scope of Rural Sociology:**

In comparison to other social sciences, Rural Sociology is a novel branch of Sociology and is a separate science that possesses its own subject matter and method of study. By scope of the

discipline, it is meant that what Rural Sociology refers to what it studies. To draw attention on the scope, N.L. Sims says, "The field of Rural Sociology is the study of association among people living by or immediately dependent upon agriculture. Open country and village groupings and groups behavior are its concern."

According to Lowry Nelson, "The scope of Rural Sociology is the description and analysis of progress of various groups as they exist in the rural environment. In the words of Bertrand and his associates: "In its broadest definition Rural Sociology is the study of human relationship in rural environment." On account of the opinions given by Sims, Nelson and Bertrand, it is observed that the scope of Rural Sociology revolves around rural people, their livelihood and social relationship in rural environment.

Though it studies society from the rural perspective, its main aim is concentrated on rural lives. The subjects that are included within the scope are very comprehensive in nature and we can blindly say that its boundary is varying large. The scope of Rural Sociology may be clear from the analysis of the following subjects.

#### **1.6.1 Rural Society:**

Rural Sociology is widely understood as the sociology of Rural Society. Apart from studying the rural society, Rural Sociology also studies its nature and primary components from the structural and functional stances. The most crucial objective of rural sociology is to study rural social life. Rural social life encompasses the behavior patterns, web of relationship, social interactions, standard of living and socio-economic conditions of the rural people. Therefore, the scope of Rural Sociology expands where the boundary of Rural Society is expanded.

#### **1.6.2 Rural Population:**

The population residing in the geographical rural area is the basic essence of Rural Sociology. The discipline studies the nature, characteristics, size, density and distribution of rural population from various angles. Rural Sociology aims at the study of the factors of growth of population, its evil effects of Rural Society, rural –urban migration for the greater interest of the

country at large. It also tries to understand the behavioral patterns, prevailing customs and folklores that dominate the day to day lives of the rural population.

#### **1.6.3 Rural Community:**

Rural community is considered as one of the primordial organizations of mankind. Hence, Rural Sociology is chiefly concerned with the origin, nature, characteristics, social attributes and human ecology of rural community. It also studies the homogenous trajectory of the rigid and conservative nature of hither to existing customs, traditions, folkways, mores, norms, values and so on in rural community.

#### **1.6.4 Rural Social Organization:**

Social organization plays the backbone of every society as well as social life. The most imperative function of Rural Sociology, therefore, is to offer fundamental knowledge about rural social organization. Rural Social organization envelops the spiritual lives, religious activities, sacred relationship and divine notion of rebirth, *Karmaphala* etc. of the rural folk which intensely affects the entire rural social life. Rural sociology, thus, for the betterment of rural life, studies the future prospectus of rural social organization and governing laws for its development.

#### **1.6.5 Rural Social Institution:**

Rural social institutions imply the known figures of processes that prevail among the relations between the rural people. Rural sociology, thus, studies the structure, characteristics and functions of rural social institutions. Rural social institutions comprise family, marriage, kinship, religion, caste. Rural Sociology studies the sociological significance of these institutions in the rural context.

#### **1.6.6 Rural Economy:**

Agriculture is the backbone of rural economy and majority of the rural population are absorbed in it. They directly depend on agriculture for their livelihood and sustenance. Rural Sociology, therefore, studies the causes liable for the failure of agriculture and suggests various measures for the development of agriculture in villages. Besides, the acceptance of new agricultural

technology among the farming centers, upgrading of old farming methods, formation of open markets and providing agricultural training to the farmers are the vital areas of the study of rural society.

#### **1.6.7 Rural social Process:**

Rural Sociology also studies the two process of rural social interaction, namely, conjunctive and disjunctive. Rural conjunctive process includes co-operation, accommodation and assimilation. Rural disjunctive process, on the other hand, comprises competition and conflict. Thus, the nature, characteristics and social importance of these processes are to be appropriately considered by the scope of Rural Sociology.

#### **1.6.8 Rural Religion:**

Religion plays a predominant role in the rural society, considered as the soul of rural people and it is regarded as the chief quintessence of rural life. The rural people blindly follow the religious ideas and values; consider worshipping as a prime duty. Rural Sociology, in this context, and studies the concept and social importance of rural religion and its impact on rural society.

#### **1.6.9 Rural Culture:**

Culture refers to that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, moral law, art, custom and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society. Rural culture is firmly rooted in rigid and conservative dogmas and it is generally very stagnant in nature. It includes old customs, tradition, folkways, mores, norms, values and so on. Rural Sociology studies the complexities of rural culture, its different structural organizations, cultural patterns, cultural traits and cultural lag in the rural contexts.

#### **1.6.10 Rural Social Problems:**

One of the important contents of rural sociology includes the study of problem engulfed in the rural life. These problems are centered on socio-economic conditions, political, cultural ethos and value based. The problems generally are poverty, unemployment, population growth,

illiteracy, casteism, untouchability etc. Rural Sociology, therefore, studies the causes and evil effects of these problems and also suggests measures for their eradication for the greater interests of the country at large. As these problems are rooted in the rural societies that are also diverse from place to place, their causes, nature and remedies vary from one another. Rural sociology tries draw in the similarities as well as the differences between the problems that stem from various existing issues and also the discipline tries to provide viable remedies to it.

#### **1.6.11 Rural Social Control:**

Social control is the control of society over an individual. In Rural Society, social control is in formal and rigid in nature. Rural Sociology considerably studies the informal means and agencies such as religions, customs, folkways, mores, norms etc, of social control. In rural society, the imperative primary groups like family and neighborhood play a vital role in social control.

#### **1.6.12 Rural Social Change:**

Social change is meant only such alterations as occur in social organization, that is, structure and functions of society. Of late, the rural society is on the path of social change. Due to the impact of money modernizing forces, Rural Society is undergoing incredible transformations in the twentieth century. In order to pace up social change in the rural areas and also keep the momentum going, Rural Sociology undertakes necessary steps. Rural Sociology also studies the diverse factors responsible for social changes in a systematic way. It also tries to provide possible solutions for any change ignited derailment in rural social life.

#### **1.6.13 Rural Urban Contrast:**

The study of rural society remains incomplete unless the study of rural urban contrast is done in a proper and scientific manner. Both the village and city, hypothetically, are the two contrasting modes of community life. Rural Sociology studies the rural-urban contrast on the basis of social, economic, religious and cultural point of view. Besides, rural sociology also draws attention on the comparative study of these two societies. As a result, the concept of rural society and social institutions can be clear by this contrasting analysis.

#### **1.6.14 Rural Planning and Reconstruction:**

Rural planning and reconstruction are very much necessary for under developed societies. In this context, the poor and backward condition of Indian rural society requires planning and reconstruction in a systematic and planned manner. Rural Society is engulfed in plenty of issues and social problems. Therefore, for the eradication of these problems and for the betterment of rural life, proper planning and reconstruction should be made by the state as well the central government. A.R. Desai says, Rural Sociology studies all these subjects and provides proper guidelines in this direction.

It is obvious from the above analysis that the scope or subject matter or Rural Sociology, no doubt is very immense. Though, it is the youngest and progressive science, yet it studies the various aspects of rural society as well as rural life to a great extent.

#### **1.7 Tools of Data Collection in Rural Sociology:**

**1.7.1 Rural Survey:** A survey is always known as holistic in nature and it studies the village in its totality. The surveys generally aim at studying all the existing and already existent facets of the village. They study the socio-economic changes that the villages have undergone due to internal or external factors.

**1.7.2 Village Monographs:** The Census of India has habitually published village monographs every decade. The monographs basically portray the overall scenario in the villages and are non-intensive in nature. The researchers conduct a casual study of the village life and write up narratives on the villages as they exist and operate.

**1.7.3 Observation:** One of the most basic and essential methods to collect data from the village is observation. This method helps in making the researcher understand the occurring phenomena all by himself (i.e.in his presence). There are two types of observations: Participant and non-participant, while in the former the researcher identifies himself with the village, in the latter he doesn't participate in any of the activities and behaves like an outsider.

**1.7.4** Interview: the technique of interview is essential because often it is not possible to understand the phenomenon just by observing it. Many a times, it becomes difficult for a non-villager researcher to simply reach to a conclusion just by observation. He needs to sit and ask questions to the villagers to comprehend the intricacies of a village social life and the underlying norms that govern the behavioral patterns of the rural people.

**1.7.5** Case Studies: A deeper and intensive study of a village is done through case studies. By conducting case studies, the researchers try to find out any unique occurrence in the village that's stands out from the rest of the findings. The case studies also help in throwing insights into the main study or body of work .

### **1.8.Lets Sum Up:**

- Rural sociology is a field of sociology that is connected with the study of social life in rural areas.
- It is an active field in much of the world, and in the United States originated in the 1910s with close ties to the national Department of Agriculture and land-grant university colleges of agriculture
- Rural Sociology, as indicated by its name, studies rural society, rural social structures and institutions.
- The rural society is primarily dependent on agriculture and hence rural sociology also concerns itself on the peasant society. Rural sociology is centered on the rural community life.
- During the beginning of the 1950s, the sociologists and the social anthropologists began conducting extensive and innumerable studies in the field of rural sociology.



- The major concern of these studies was the scrutiny of the interrelationships between various dimensions of the rural organization. The field of rural sociology was enriched with the contributions by M.N.Srinivas (1960), McKim Marriott (1955), S.C.Dube (1955) and D.N.Majumdar (1955).
- The commencement of rural sociology as a discipline in India dates back to Sir Henry S Maine who published two books i.e. *Ancient Law* (1861) and *Ancient Society* (1877). He wrote extensively on the Indian villages but was later criticized by Dumont for his European biasness and centricism.

#### **1.9.Keywords:**

Rural, village, scientific, research, community, population, rural problems, planning

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## UNIT-II

### Village Community: Characteristics, Types and Rural-Urban Contrast and Continuum

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**Objectives:**

*To provide key insights into the evolution and growth of village community*

*To provide the characteristics and types of village community*

*To discuss rural-urban contrast and continuum*

**2.1 Evolution and Growth of Village Community**

The man was nomadic in nature and was completely ignorant about farming and cultivation. He used to wander for food everywhere until he learnt the skills of agriculture and settled down. By acquiring the knowledge of agriculture, he settled in a particular geographical area and was not required to keep wandering. As they found fertile land for farming many individuals came together, formed families and created an eventual neighborhood. By staying close vicinity, they became closed acquaintances and shared joys and sorrows. They also had their community based rituals, traditions and festivals. Thus, the village community gradually took shape and its basis was the 'we-feeling' among the members who shared the same geographical area. There was the formulation of governing laws and principles that prevailed in the society. A village community could be, hence, defined as a group of persons permanently residing in a definite geographical area and whose members have developed community consciousness and cultural, social and economic relations which distinguish them from other communities.

**2.1.1 Factors for the Growth of Village Community:**

There has been an interplay of several factors that has led to the steady growth of the village community. They are as follows:

1) **Physical Factors:** The physical or the topographical factors are those which have forced the individuals/communities to migrate and settle in one particular geographical area. These factors are significant as individuals always want to reside in a place that is suitable and comfortable for survival and provides a cocoon against the harsh natural calamities.

a) **Land:** One of the most vital factors is land that is required for building residential houses and also for cultivation. Fertility of land is highly essential for higher yield rates of food grains and other crops. Those villages that have settled in highly productive land are prosperous than the villages settled in mountainous regions of barren lands. It becomes difficult to stay in deserts that are highly prone to sand storms and don't have fertile soil for crop production. Building permanent and strong houses is also easier in the plains than the hilly areas.

b) **Water:** Another significant factor that led to the growth of village community is water. It is almost inconceivable that any village or any settlement is found where there is no sign of water. Human beings need water to survive and for which it is quite inevitable for them to reside near any water source that is drinkable and usable for daily chores. As the rivers are recurrent sources of water, hence, any village that is settled near the rivers is prosperous and highly developed. Without adequate availability of water there is hardly any use of fertile land. In India the villages along the river banks are in a better condition than those which are seeking out miserable existence in the deserts and the hills. In the desert, where water quantity is scarce, the villages are scattered far and wide. It is fact that the greatest cultures of the world have evolved and grown on the banks of the rivers. Water is also required for vegetation and animal husbandry; hence, it plays a highly crucial role in the growth of the any village community. However, rivers which are frequently hit by the floods are also not apt for a civilization to flourish.

c) **Climate:** The climatic condition of an area is also critical in the growth of the village communities. A moderate climate is the most favorable to the health of human beings and also conducive for better agricultural output. Thus, the villages with better climatic conditions are well developed and prosperous. It gets difficult for human beings and animals to reside in an extreme climate and it also becomes problematic to lead a proper life. The village communities near the equator and the poles have to struggle a lot for development under such barbaric conditions.

## 2) **Economic Factors:**

a) **Agriculture scenario:** Agriculture is considered as the spine of rural livelihood and is even today maintained as the mainstay of the village communities. The standard and condition of living of the rural masses is highly dependant in the state of agriculture in that particular village community. If there is an increase in the productivity in the village, then the village runs on the path of growth and prosperity. If the yield rate gains significantly then the village people have ample time for recreational activities and engage in cordial relationship. But if the condition of agriculture faces threat due to any factor then the village community faces a lot of loss and socio-economic decay. The developed countries have invented scientifically advanced techniques and equipments that have resulted in higher productivity that has impacted positively on the economic standard of living of the people. On the other hand, countries like India where agriculture plays a prominent role still lag behind which leads to farmer frustration and apparent suicides. The farmers face a lot of debt crisis and economic degeneration. Also, the soil loses its fertility value by repeated production and absence of soil testing and soil cure.

b) **Cottage Industries:** Apart from agriculture, the cottage industries have played a crucial role in the growth and richness of the village community. In the village, the cottage industries are linked with the manufacture of hand spun cloth, ropes, baskets, toys, *gur*, *agarbatti* etc. While on the one hand, these cottage industries provide a means of livelihood to landless people, they also engage the seasonal

farmers and the female folk of the village. By engaging such people into work, the cottage industries facilitate in upgrading the financial condition of the poor and marginalized sections of the society.

### 3) Social factors:

- a) **Peace:** For an enduring and healthy development of the village community it is required that there should be the presence of external and internal peace. In countries, where there is always the threat of war and unrest, the village communities find it difficult to tackle and hence, their growth is hampered.
- b) **Security:** Peace is based on security, the permanent growth of village communities being impossible in the absence of the latter. Security comprises of several kinds of security from diseases, security of livelihood, security of finance, security from various other activities of life. For a community to thrive it is essential to insulate it from insecurities and troubles that lead to its destruction. Be it man-made or natural calamities, every village community needs proper security to grow and develop.
- c) **Cooperation:** Community development becomes difficult to attain in a non-cooperative environment. There are various activities in a village which rely on the collective cooperation of the entire community and cannot be delegated to the responsibility of just one individual. The village people work out a common goal for the holistic development of the village and work together for the prosperity of the village.
- d) **Intelligence and labour:** For accelerated growth in the villages, it is highly necessary that its denizens work hard for a better standard of living. By hard labour, they would be able to achieve greater productivity in agriculture and other activities which would help in bettering their lives. They also need to use their intelligence, both traditional and acquired through governmental schemes, to steer their efforts into fruitful businesses. These two factors have helped the villages in the western countries to achieve greater success rates and all around prosperity.

#### 4) Ecological factors:

- a) **Population:** Population plays a major role in denoting a particular geographical area as a village, town or a city. When the population augments, then the definition of the area automatically changes. The increase in infrastructure puts an impact on the living styles of the rural people. Culture also plays an important role in shaping the mindset of the population. The socio-cultural life of the people in a village from diverse communities differs from the village that is inhabited by a population of the same community. The villages are also operational on the basis of the social networks and the mutual relationships that the people share with one another.
- b) **Livelihood:** The village life is also affected by the occupation or the livelihood opportunities that the people carry out. A village full of farmers will be different from a village that is inhabited by forest produce gatherers. There is a stark difference between the socio-economic conditions and standard of living.
- c) **Social organization:** One of the important components that have an influence on the village life is the social organization. In India, caste system plays a pivotal role in stratifying the society, basically the rural society, and a village based on the caste system is different from a tribal village. A village governed by the joint family system becomes distinguishable from village where nuclear families prevail. There are debates that due to caste system, there is an allocation of jobs to various stratum of the society, while on the other hand, the caste system is ruled by stringent dogmas that prove to be hell for the people belonging to the lowest rung of the system.
- d) **Location:** The geographical location of the villages even puts an impact on the growth and prosperity of a village. Those villages which are situated in difficult terrains and in the hilly areas or deserts are hardly progressive. On the other hand, the villages which are situated in the plains are closer to the cities/towns are more prosperous and grow well. There is also a contrast in the cloths, food, culture, language, occupation etc. between the villagers hailing from different geographical locales. Those villages which



are closer to the city, are also on a progress path as the people easily access jobs and hence, better their standard of living. The remote villages are left out from the mainstream, are governed by strict religious dogmas and fail to prosper.

## **2.2 Characteristics of a village community:**

A village community is basically characterized as a particular area inhabited by small number of people sharing intimate and informal relationships with one another. The primary source of livelihood of the rural people is agriculture, though they also get engaged in forest produce collection, weaving, dairy etc. In the words of T.L Smith, "Agriculture and the collecting enterprises are the bases of the rural economy, farmer and countryman are almost similar terms". Apart from these features, the people of the village also exhibit homogeneity of population due to which they do not frequently come into conflict with each other and maintain mutual intimacy and harmony. The following are features that characterize rural community:

- 2.2.1 **Bases of social organization:** In India there are more than half a million villages. Eighty per cent of the Indian population lives in these villages. Hence, in every respect the future of India is very much linked with the development of villages.
- 2.2.2 **Group of people:** Village community signifies a group of people in which the people do not take part in a particular interest. On the other hand, they share the basic conditions of a common life.
- 2.2.3 **Specific locality:** Locality is the physical basis of village community. A group of people forms village community only when it begins to inhabit in a definite locality.
- 2.2.4 **Smaller size:** Village communities are generally smaller in size. The Census of India assigns a place with 5000 inhabitants as a village community. 80% of the Indian villages have less than 1000 population each.

- 2.2.5 **Significance of neighborhood:** Neighbourhood relationship is another significant characteristic of village life. Two factors namely living in immediacy on the part of the rural people and an atmosphere of fellow-feeling, friendship, sympathy, affection and love available in the rural setting, encourage neighbourhood relationship in the village. So far as the village community is concerned, each one loves his neighbour as he loves himself. He, in fact, considers his neighbour more central than the relatives living far away from him. He always defends his neighbor during any crisis and is also supported similarly by his neighbours.
- 2.2.6 **Community sentiment:** Community sentiment is the primary very core of village community. The villagers display a strong sense of belongingness and we-feeling. Often “my own village” is the normal expression of such community sentiment. Furthermore, the members have a sense of reliance on the community for both physical and psychological satisfaction.
- 2.2.7 **Prevalence of primary relations:** A village community is often observed as a primary group. It is characterized by the preponderance of personal and as such comparatively long-lasting relations. There is relative unfussiness and genuineness in human relationships. Kinship groups play critical roles in the context of the village community.
- 2.2.8 **Marriage:** Generally in the villages, endogamy is practiced. The traditional system of marriage is predominantly arranged marriage based on choice of parents selecting the spouse for their children. There is either no or very little freedom on the part of both boys and girls in matters of mate selection.
- 2.2.9 **Joint family system:** The joint family system still shapes the basic structural unit in the rural community. All the members of a family stay together under the same roof, take food cooked in the common hearth, hold property together, participate in common worship and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred. It is established that the amount of joint families in villages is much more than that in towns and cities.
- 2.2.10 **Agricultural economy:** Agriculture is considered as one of the most profound occupations in rural India. It is fundamentally a way of life for the villagers as their entire

mode of social life, day by day schedule, habits, customs and attitudes spin round agriculture. A very minute segment of the rural population relies upon non-agricultural occupations such as carpentry, pottery, basket making etc for their livelihood but these occupations are also indirectly linked to the major occupation that is agriculture.

2.2.11 **Caste System:** Caste system is an exceptional feature of the Indian village community. It prescribes the role, status, occupation and marital relationships of the village people. The caste system exercises such a decisive authority on the villagers that it has rightly been portrayed as the “alpha and omega” of village life.

2.2.12 **Jajmani system:** Jajmani system is one more practice of village life in India. Under this system, members of a caste or many castes tender their services to the members of other castes. People to whom such services are offered are called, ‘Jajmans’ and those who offer their services are known as “Parjans” or “Kamins”. The Kamins are remunerated in terms of crops or grains either annually or half-yearly. On ritual occasions such as marriage, birth and death, the Kamins are paid additional wages. The Jajmani relations unite the families of various castes into a hereditary, permanent and multiple relationships. Of late, the system has been significantly destabilized by socio-economic and political modifications in India.

2.2.13 **Uncomplicated lifestyle:** It is appealing to watch that even in the money-oriented era of today, the usually established ideal in the village is one of simple living and high thinking. The villagers are a simple and genuine people with a tranquil and peaceful life.

2.2.14 **Faith in religion:** Religion plays a supreme role in the life of the village. Religious influence is visible in every significant action of village life like sowing, harvesting of crops, birth, marriage, illness, death etc. On all such occasions, the villagers observe religious ceremonies in the form of ‘Puja’, ‘Mela’ or ‘kirtan’. In this way, faith in religion is very robust in rural area.

2.2.15 **Homogeneity:** Homogeneity of population is one more vital attribute of village communities. The members of a village display resemblance in their dress, speech, beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviour. There is hardly any apparent distinguishing character among the rural people and they genuinely celebrate their similarities.

- 2.2.16 **Panchayat system:** The operation of the village as a political and social body assembled together the members from diverse castes. The traditional village Panchayat in the shape of village council performs a multiplicity of tasks, comprising the maintenance of law and order, settling of disputes, celebration of festivals and construction of roads, bridges and tanks. On the other hand, significant matters relating to the caste rules, property and family disputes and other activities of serious nature were dealt with by the caste Panchayat.
- 2.2.17 **Informal social control:** In the rural areas, there is a prevalence of social control which is informal and direct. The primary groups like the family, neighbourhood act as influential and commanding agencies of social control in villages. The traditional village Panchayat and the caste Panchayat also exercise stringent control on the deviant members of the community. No deviance is tolerated and the criminals are severely punished.
- 2.2.18 **Mobility:** One of the characteristics of the village population is that their territorial, occupational and social mobility is limited and scarce. The reason is attributed to the lack of satisfactory spread of education in the rural areas. However, in recent times, there have been rampant cases of rural exodus owing to the declining agricultural productivity. Rural people are leaving their hinterlands in search of better livelihood opportunities (that cities provide) and to uplift their standard of living. Migration and mobility have, hence, become quite frequent.
- 2.2.19 **Status of women:** In general terms, the women in villages are illiterate or less educated and their social status is lower than that of their counterparts in the towns. Factors like prevalence of child marriage, joint family system, traditional ideals, old values and lack of education among females are liable for the low status of women.
- 2.2.20 **Standard of living:** On account of gross poverty and lack of adequate employment opportunities, the standard of living of the villagers is quite low. Hence most of them do not have home conveniences and recreational facilities. Many of them suffer from acute poverty and food insecurity. They don't have sufficient surplus income or savings.

**2.2.21 Culture:** In the villages, culture is more static than in the bigger cities or towns as greater significance is attached to religion and rituals in the former. The rural population is found to be more philosophical than the materialistic urbanites. From the sociological point of view, the villages are important because they safeguard the antique culture of the Indian society. The villagers in India still have faith in the lofty ideals of the theory of Purushartha and the doctrine of Karma and lead a simple and natural life marked by sacrifice, theistic tendency etc. They worship many gods and have each and every festival to celebrate.

The above characteristics convey that the villages in India are comparatively steadier and strong. The rationale is perhaps attributed to the relative static character of ruralism as a way of life – the norms of behaviour, customs of family relations, traditions of community life etc. The aforementioned are some of the most important characteristics of a village community where life is more natural and an orderly arrangement.

In spite of the fact that villagers are not economically sound, their life continues in a vein of satisfaction because of its very simplicity. However, the aforesaid characteristics have gradually disappeared and taken over by newer terms. Over the years, these characteristics have vanished, partly or wholly, some of their purity because of the impact of processes of social change like industrialization, urbanization etc. However, these characteristics hold good by and large, if not in their entirety.

### **2.3 Types of Villages:**

The study of the classification of village community assumes implication on numerous grounds. Its study allows understanding varied social institutions and cultural patterns operating in the rural context. In addition, such a categorization is helpful in analyzing the growth of a specific village community. Rural sociologists are not undisputed on any generally agreed-upon classification of rural community. However, there have been some of the significant criteria have been put forth to classify village communities.

According to some criterion, villages have been divided into three categories.

1. Migratory agricultural villages: These villages refer to the villages where the people live in fixed abodes only for few months.
2. Semi permanent agricultural villages: These villages are characterized by the people living in a village only for few months.
3. Permanent agricultural villages. So far as permanent agricultural villages are concerned, the population resides for many generations.

According to another criterion, villages have been classified into six groups. They are isolated farmstead, villages, line villages, circular pattern, market centre settlements and hamlets. In isolated farmstead is concerned, the individual lives on his farm with his farmland surrounding him. Village as a pattern of settlement signifies concentration of the rural people together with their farmland. In case of line villages residences are nearby and effortlessly reachable to one another and at the same time are located on their respective farms. Coming to circular pattern, village houses are found to be arranged in a circle enclosing a central area with the houses and yard at the apex of triangular plot. Market centre settlements are predominantly dwelled by merchants who handle agricultural products, bankers, shopkeepers and others. Hamlets refer to small villages. Ordinarily they do not provide the facilities and services which are readily available in the larger village.

The following types are other criteria for categorization of the village communities:

- a) The nucleated village: It is otherwise known as grouped village where homes of farmers and artisans are bunched jointly whereas the land cultivated by them is located outside the village at varying distances. Their livestock are often accommodated with them or nearby. Irrespective of the variety of shapes, such villages are typified by a close-knit social organization promoted by residential closeness, contact, community sentiments and ideas. In the Indian context, nucleated village is the most common pattern of settlement frequently visible in paddy growing areas.

- b) The linear village: In linear type of settlement the houses are built on parallel rows and there is hardly any physical demarcation to illustrate where one village ends and where another begins. Small streams or mountains divide one village from the other and dole out as natural boundaries. Every house is bounded by a small garden of coconuts, plantains, and cashew nuts and the rice fields are bit away from the houses. This model unites the social advantages of residential closeness and economic advantages of living on one's land. Such villages are found in Kerala and in the delta land of Bengal.
- c) Dispersed village: The village in which the dwelling places of the village lay speckled or diffused is called a dispersed village. Such kinds of villages are found in hilly areas, as in the Himalayan foothills, in the highlands of Gujarat etc. These villages have no definite shape or structure and no village streets. There are only footpaths connecting one cluster with another. Families living on their farms retain all the livestock and other possessions in the farm.
- d) The mixed village: Mixed village is the combination of nucleated and dispersed pattern of settlements. In this type of village settlement there is a bigger compact settlement of houses which is surrounded by a few small hamlets at a distance. Such villages can be seen both in plain as well as mountainous regions.

There is substantial disparity in the lay out, distribution and internal structure of rural communities. Four criteria have been adopted in categorizing them into major sub-groups. They are permanency, settlement, social stratification and social organization. Permanency refers to the process of transition from man's nomadic life to settled village life. Settlement signifies pattern of ecological distribution of residences of social groups. Social stratification refers to forms and extent of social differentiation, ranking in a stratification system, degree of mobility admitted by the system as well as patterns of ownership of land. Last but not least, organization reflects the way village communities organize their life in common. Typically co-operative, semi-collective and collective villages have been delineated in rural sociology.

## **2.4 Rural-Urban Continuum**

Rural-urban continuum is a course of socio-economic interface between the villages and the towns or cities. Numerous cultural traits are diffused from cities to the rural areas. For example, dress patterns like pants, shirts, ties, skirts, jeans, etc. diffuse from cities to the rural areas. In addition, modern thoughts, ideologies are also transmitted from the cities to the rural areas due to widespread communication via radio, television, newspaper, etc. The urbanism, which is urban way of life, emerges in the cities and gradually reaches to the rural areas, depending on their immediacy to cities. The process of urbanization has not been a remote occurrence. Currently, together with the entire range of occupational diversification, spread of literacy, education, mass communication, etc, continuity between rural and urban areas has amplified. Urban jobs and other facilities of living have become status symbols in the rural areas. Several up to date techniques of agricultural development and many of the institutional frameworks for rural development are also produced from the urban centres.

The large scale commercialization of agriculture has also been facilitated by the process of urbanization. Correspondingly, agricultural requirements for machinery have generated the growth of manufacturing units in urban areas. Earlier, numerous scholars had supposed that there is a perceptible disparity between the urban and the rural community. Nevertheless, this concept of rural-urban dichotomy underwent a revolution. The scholars noticed that there was much individualism, lack of understanding, fear and suspicion even among the villagers, the peaceful village image of rural life took a severe blow. These studies pointed out that the peaceful community type of existence in villages was not a fact. Remarkably the concept of the urban community also underwent change in the 1950's. It was found that family made life close, informal and secure. That is to say there do exist 'Urban villages.' This aspect of complex societies is very mystifying. Moreover there exist people who live in villages and work in towns. Neither the village nor the town can thus be thought of as a stereotype.



What is clear from above discussion is that the rural and urban life in complex society is not the opposite of one another. In fact it could no longer be assumed that the environment determined any one type of association. However this is not to say that rural and urban populations do not have any differences. Usually, rural-urban continuum proposes a linear portrayal of the contrasting natures of social relationships characteristic of rural and urban settlements. This was an accepted theoretical tool to categorize diverse types of community and the changeover between them. It began from the early 20th century Sociology's endeavor to understand the social changes resulting upon rapid urbanization. Life in the countryside occurred in small, geographically isolated settlements which were socially homogeneous, with high levels of mutual communication and social solidarity, and which changed very slowly.

Urban communities were attributed the opposite characteristics: L. Louis Wirth of the Chicago School, in his highly influential essay 'Urbanism as a Way of Life' (American Journal of Sociology, 1938), thought cities distinctive because they were large, dense and heterogeneous and that this produced the transient, disorderly, anonymous and formal associational relationships of urban living. Such understandings had affinities with Ferdinand Tonnies' a-spatial distinction between *gemeinschaft* (community) and *gesellschaft* (association). In principle, if all settlements could be placed on such a continuum we would have a strong account of spatial arrangement influenced social life.

There are varied opinions from various sociologists; while some have used the concept of rural-urban continuum to stress the idea that there are no sharp breaking points to be found in the degree or quantity of rural-urban differences.

1. Robert Redfield has given the concept of rural -urban continuum on the basis of his study of Mexican peasants of Tepoztlain. The rapid process of urbanization through the establishment of industries, urban traits and facilities has decreased the differences between villages and cities.
2. M. S. A. Rao points out in the Indian context that although both village and town formed part of the same civilization characterized by institution of kinship and caste system in

pre-British India, there were certain specific institutional forms and organizational ways distinguishing social and cultural life in towns from that in village.

3. G. S. Ghurye believes that urbanization is migration of people from village to city and the impact it has on the migrants and their families.
4. MacIver remarks that though the communities are normally divided into rural and urban the line of demarcation is not always clear between these two types of communities. There is no sharp demarcation to tell where the city ends and country begins. Every village possesses some elements of the city and every city carries some features of the village.
5. Ramkrishna Mukherjee prefers the continuum model by talking of the degree of urbanization as a useful conceptual tool for understanding rural-urban relations.
6. P. A. Sorokin and Zimmerman, in 'Principles of Rural-Urban Sociology', have stated that the factors distinguishing rural from urban communities include occupation, size and density of population as well as mobility, differentiation and stratification.

However, ensuing research mainly undermined that idea. Spatial arrangements themselves are not determinant of social relations; even if some parts of cities are rather anarchic, more, for instance the suburbs do not conform to the model. One can also find traditional and interpersonally intimate relationships in cities, as demonstrated by the working class community of Bethnal Green by Michael Young, and conflicts and isolation in the countryside. Moreover, both city and village enclose culturally distinct groups, suggesting that there are no dominant cultural forms typical of settlement type and that settlement type does not determine the character of interpersonal social ties.

While discussing rural-urban contrast it was debated that in terms of ethos of life, cultural groupings and modes of living, village and city are distinct from each other. They appear as dichotomous entities. But structural similarities still subsist between the two in regard to patterns of caste, rules of marriage and observance of religious practices. Villages and cities are not absolute units. Administration, education, employment and migration are institutional

sources of linkage between the village and the city. In regard to rural-urban continuum social thinkers have differing views.

A number of sociologists believe that it is complicated to differentiate between rural and urban areas predominantly in countries where education is universal and people follow heterogeneous occupations, have membership in large organizations and therefore have secondary relations. On the other hand, a lot of sociologists have highlighted on heterogeneity, impersonal relations, anonymity, division of labour, mobility, class difference, employment patterns, secularism etc. as the items to be the basis for distinguishing ruralism from urbanism. They maintain that rural and urban are two dichotomous terms which are differentiated on the basis of above criteria.

However, there are some sociologists who still believe that this dichotomy is not possible. There is no absolute boundary line which would show a clear cut cleavage between the rural and the urban community. Secondly many a time most of these items are regular both to rural as well as urban areas with the consequence that it is complex to distinguish the two. For example, 'empirically, at least, urban can be independent of size and density.' If this is true, then large size and high density of settlement are not always conditions for an urban way of life in any given community. Similarly, O.D. Duncan has revealed by an analysis of quantitative data that such characteristics as relative size of income and age group, mobility of population, extent of formal schooling, size of family and proportion of women workers do not even correlate closely with via reactions in the size of population. Oscar Lewis, an anthropologist, worries about the reality of any widespread criteria to distinguish the rural environment from the urban. In this regard what one needs to know is what kind of an urban society, under what conditions of contact, and a host of other specific historical data to understand rural-urban dichotomy.

However, there are sociologists who consider that rural- urban differences are real and to use these concepts on dichotomic basis is necessary for analytical purpose. Dewey observes, "Evidence abounds to show that many of the things which are uncritically taken as part and parcel of urbanism do not depend upon cities for their existence. History reveals that creativity

in the form of invention and discovery is not limited to cities, that literacy is not tied to urbanization and sacred ties are stronger in some cities than in many small towns and farming areas.”

The addition of both population and cultural bases in the term ‘Urbanism’ confuses the whole issue. People and culture, in fact, are inseparable. But the influences upon human attitudes and actions of the two logically must be distinguished. Man appears to be no exception to the general rule that important variation in numbers and density of objects brings about uniformly significant changes in the nature of the objects, relationships. Variation in size and density of population at least have certain effects in respect of (i) anonymity, (ii) division of labour, (iii) heterogeneity, induced and maintained by anonymity and division of labour, (iv) impersonal and formally prescribed relationships, and (v) symbols of status which are independent of personal acquaintance.

Culture can increase or decrease the impact of these items but it cannot eradicate them from the city. Richard Dewey thus correctly pointed out that these five elements are unavoidable accessories of urbanization and must be taken into deliberation in understanding it.

But there are some sociologists who still believe that urban ways of life are piercing into the rural areas and it might be hard to sketch a line between the two. In a village where the inhabitants walk, talk, dress and otherwise deport themselves like urbanites, it is difficult to say whether it is a rural or urban community.

In ancient times when cities lived within walls and the gates were closed at night it was the walls that divided rural from urban. Such an ancient city was like a house for its inhabitants, or a self-isolated island. With the coming of industrialism, cities could no longer be preserved within walls. As such the walls were a hassle, access being more important. Cities turned from building walls to roads. In recent times it is not basically practicable to draw a line between city and country because of their mutual interdependence. Scholars, both of urban and rural sociology, are largely in agreement that rural community that is not under urban influence would be

difficult to locate. On the other hand, there is no urban community without a substantial share of people of rural origin not yet fully urbanized.

Ruralites who migrate to cities continue to maintain links with their kin in villages. Social change may have weakened family bonds but primary relations have not vanished. The prototype of migration is often step by step from village to small town, to big city and to metropolitan city. It is worth mentioning in this context that our metropolitan cities have 'rural pockets'. In other words, the rural penetrates into the city as the urban penetrates into the country and the city and the villages are not dichotomous entities but co-terminus units.

The rural-urban continuum can be represented in a diagram as follows:



The two extremes of the line represent two forms of life on one remote village and on the other metropolitan life. In this way we can visualize communities as ranging from the most urban to the least urban. The purely urban and the purely rural would be abstractions at the opposite poles of the 'rural-urban dichotomy'. This range between the extremes is termed by some sociologists as the 'rural-urban continuum, generally the villages having most contacts with the city tend to be more urbanized than those with the least contacts. It would differ with the urbanity of the city and the rurality of the country.

This wide fluctuation in definitions has three important implications:

- i. Official classifications should be treated with caution—for example, a large proportion of settlements classed as 'rural' in China and India would fall within the 'urban' category, if they used the criteria and population thresholds adopted by many other countries. Given the size of the population of these two countries, this would significantly increase the overall proportion of urban residents in Asia and in the world.

ii. International comparisons are difficult, as they may look at settlements which, despite being classed in the same category, may be very different in both population size and infrastructure. Further, the reliability of data on urbanization trends within one nation can be compromised by changes in the definition of urban centres over time.

iii. Public investment in services and infrastructure tends to concentrate on the centres that are defined as urban. As a consequence, investment can bypass settlements not defined as urban even if these can, and often do, have an important 'urban role in the development of the surrounding rural areas. Within national and regional urban systems, larger cities also tend to be favoured with public investment over small- and intermediate-sized urban centres, including those with important roles in supporting agricultural production, processing and marketing.

## **2.5 Rural-Urban Contrast**

Many families and individuals find themselves, at least at some point, questioning the advantages of rural versus urban life. Quality of life is one of the central issues to consider in any comparison between rural versus urban living. While a case can be made for either location as being the best place to live, it is worthwhile to consider how these two options, rural versus urban, are similar and different. Important factors such as the capacity to make general choices, diversity, health, and employment concerns all influence both sides of the comparison and although each both rural and urban living offer great benefits, they both have a seemingly equal number of drawbacks. Rural and urban areas are generally similar in terms of terms of human interaction but differ most widely when diversity and choice are issues.

There are a number of positive as well as negative factors that contribute the overall quality of life in urban centers and if there is any general statement to be made about urban living, it is that there is a great deal of diversity and choice. In urban areas, there are many more choices people can make about a number of aspects of their daily lives. For instance, in urban areas, one is more likely to be able to find many different types of food and this could lead to overall greater health since there could be a greater diversity in diet. In addition, those in urban areas

enjoy the opportunity to take in any number of cultural or social events as they have a large list to choose from. As a result they have the opportunity to be more cultured and are more likely to encounter those from other class, cultural, and ethnic groups.

Pollution (noise and atmospheric) is an issue that could impact the overall quality of life. In addition to this, overpopulation concerns can also contribute to a decrease in the standard of living. Parents have a number of choices available for the education of their children and can often select from a long list of both public and private school districts, which leads to the potential for better education. It is also worth noting that urban areas offer residents the possibility to choose from a range of employment options at any number of companies or organizations. Aside from this, urbanites have better access to choices in healthcare as well and if they suffer from diseases they have a number of specialists to choose from in their area. According to one study conducted in Canada, rural populations show poorer health than their urban counterparts, both in terms of general health indicators (i.e. standardized mortality, life expectancy at birth, infant mortality) and in terms of factors such as motor vehicle accidents and being overweight. This could be the result of less reliance on vehicles in urban areas as well as greater emphasis on walking. Despite the conclusions from this study, however, there are a number of drawbacks to urban living as well, although, the life expectancy in cities may be higher.

Rural places do not offer the same level of choice and in very isolated areas and one might be forced to commute long distances to find even a remote selection of the diversity found in urban centers. Still, despite this lack of choice, there are a number of positive sides to rural living in terms of quality of life. For instance, living in a rural area allows residents to enjoy the natural world more easily instead of having to go to parks. In addition, people do not have to fight with the daily stresses of urban life such as being stuck in traffic, dealing with higher rates of crime, and in many cases, paying higher taxes. These absences of stressors can have a great effect on the overall quality of life and as one researcher notes, "People living in rural and sparsely populated areas are less likely to have mental health problems than those living in

urban areas and may also be less likely to relapse into depression or mental illness once they have recovered from these in more densely populated areas”.

The lack of daily stress found in cities from external factors (traffic, long lines, feeling caged, etc) has much to do with this. While there may not be a large number of stores and restaurants to choose from, those in rural areas have the benefit of land upon which to grow their own food, which is much healthier. Although urban populations have large numbers of social networks and networking opportunities, rural communities offer residents the ability to have long-lasting and more personal relationships since they encounter the same people more frequently. While there are not as many schools to choose from and sometimes rural schools are not funded as well as some others, children can grow up knowing their classmates and experience the benefits of smaller classrooms

One of the drawbacks to living in a rural area, however, is that unlike urban areas, residents do not have the best opportunity to choose from a range of employment options. While they can commute to larger towns, this gets expensive and is not as convenient as working close to their residence. In general, if there is any statement to be made about the quality of life of rural living, it is that there is a greater ability to connect with people and the landscape. The quality of life in urban areas is similar to that in rural areas in that both involve a high degree of socialization, even if on a cursory level. Where they differ most noticeably is in the availability of choices and diversity, especially when vital factors (healthcare, education, and employment options) are concerned

## **2.6.To Sum Up:**

- By acquiring the knowledge of agriculture, he settled in a particular geographical area and was not required to keep wandering. As they found fertile land for farming many individuals came together, formed families and created an eventual neighborhood.
- By staying close vicinity, they became closed acquaintances and shared joys and sorrows. They also had their community based rituals, traditions and festivals. Thus, the village



community gradually took shape and its basis was the 'we-feeling' among the members who shared the same geographical area.

- Physical, economic, social and ecological factors led to the establishment of village community.
- A village community is basically characterized as a particular area inhabited by small number of people sharing intimate and informal relationships with one another. The primary source of livelihood of the rural people is agriculture, though they also get engaged in forest produce collection, weaving, dairy etc.
- Rural-urban continuum is a course of socio-economic interface between the villages and the towns or cities. Numerous cultural traits are diffused from cities to the rural areas.
- Quality of life is one of the central issues to consider in any comparison between rural versus urban living. While a case can be made for either location as being the best place to live, it is worthwhile to consider how these two options, rural versus urban, are similar and different.
- Important factors such as the capacity to make general choices, diversity, health, and employment concerns all influence both sides of the comparison and although each both rural and urban living offer great benefits, they both have a seemingly equal number of drawbacks.
- Rural and urban areas are generally similar in terms of terms of human interaction but differ most widely when diversity and choice are issues.

## **2.7.Keywords:**

Rural, urban, continuum, contrast, village, culture, community

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## **UNIT III**

**Rural Social Structure, Agrarian and  
Peasant Social Structure, Caste &  
Politics, Major  
Peasant Movements in India**

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**Objectives:**

- *To find out the meaning of a social structure, rural and agrarian structure*
- *To understand the crucial components of the agrarian social structure*
- *To trace the various peasant movements and their significance in the history of India*
- *To understand the dynamics between caste and politics in India*

**3.1 What is Social Structure?**

As per study the Sociologists use the word 'social structure' to imply the inter-relationship, inter-connectedness, and inter-dependence of the diverse parts of society. In terms of their form, all societies have the similar parts. Thus, there are groups and communities in all societies, but the nature and substance of these groups and communities vary from one society

to another. For example, an Indian village is unimaginable without the caste system, while a Chinese village does not have castes. Its units are the people of different families and occupational groups. The logic of distinctiveness that the people of dissimilar groups have is also seen at the level of the people of different families and occupational groups in Chinese villages. The inter-relationship of the different units makes up the structure of the society. Every unit of a society is supposed to be important, for each one of them is involved in the functioning of society. In other words, none of them can be doled out with. But, in each society, some of its elements are regarded as central, because the society is structured around them. Many scholars mention that for defining an Indian village, its population, physical structure, and modes of production are absolutely significant. Typically, a village has less than five thousand individuals. As a physical entity, it is an aggregation of houses of mixed architecture (some of mud and thatch and some of cement) in the midst of surrounding agricultural fields—the mainstay of village life is agriculture. Of course, there may be some exceptions to the image of village that is presented here: for instance, a village may have more than ten thousand people, as is the case in Kerala. Or, the village may be an assortment of cement houses inhabited by people who may chiefly be in service or may be self-employed non-agriculturalists. Additionally to these indicators, sociologists believe that the social structure of an Indian village is implicit best in terms of the interrelationship of different castes, as a frequent suggestion is that the caste system has been destabilized in urban areas, but not in the rural areas, where even the members of non-Hindu communities, which have opposed the caste system, have continued to be treated as 'castes'. Of late, the Indian rural society substantially transformed, particularly since the Independence as a result of a series of the land reform legislations that have sped up the rapidity of this change. This explains why the altering agrarian relations comprise one of the essential scholarly concerns of social scientists, including sociologists in India. A society is a collection of people who are adequately organized to generate conditions essential to live together with a universal recognition. It is an organized system of social interactions and patterned behaviour. Every society has its own identity based on the nature of its social institutions. India has a rich cultural heritage and is a land of diversities. The diversity in social life is reflected in multi-social, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-caste nature of

the society. The main features of the Indian social structure are: major rural habitation in small villages; multi-religious and multi-caste social identities and significant role of family in the social life.

### **3.2 Rural Social Structure:**

Village community, family and caste are the fundamental machinery of the rural social structure and they connect the economic and social life of people in rural areas. In order to comprehend this social structure, it is essential to understand the nature of society. Each society consists of different parts, such as individuals, groups, institutions, associations, and communities. The most common analogy one can think of at this point is that of an organism that has diverse components working mutually as a whole. Society is a system like any other system, such as the solar system, the chemical system, a mechanical system or an organic system. Of these the most appropriate parallel for detailing the concept of society is that of an organism. This is typically identified as the 'organic analogy'. The collectivity of the groups is known as the community. In an organism, the organs unite to shape the organism, which is the whole. In a similar manner, the aggregation of numerous communities makes the whole called society.

### **3.3 Caste System:**

A village is conceptualized as a conglomeration of castes, each conventionally connected with an occupation. Members of a caste are generally bunched together, occupying a particular physical space in the village, which may come to be known after the name of the caste like *dhobîbârâ* (i.e. the settlement of the laundrymen), *jâton ka gudâ* (i.e. the habitation of the Jats) or *raikon rî dhânî* (i.e. the hamlet of the Raikas). Every caste possesses its own style of living, its own types of clothes, its own distinct pattern of houses, and mutually acceptable common grounds for existence. It also has its distinct dialect, folk deities, lore, and ceremonies. The members of a caste are spread over a region in more than one village. The members of a caste living in nearby villages have matrimonial relations among them. Each caste has its own council (*panchayat*), which is a collective body of the members of that caste living in different villages, but situated close to each other. This body takes up all disputes between the members of the

caste and discusses all instances where the identity of the caste is abrogated and is in danger. Thus, for political purposes, social control and matrimony, the members of a caste in a village are dependent upon their co-caste fellows in other villages. These relations result in the unity of the members of a caste spread in different villages. M.N. Srinivas has called this type of unity 'horizontal solidarity'. The Hindu society is recognized for its varna and caste system. The society is widely divided into four orders or varnas on 'functional' basis, namely, Brahmana (traditional priest and scholar), Kshatriya (ruler and soldier), Vaisya (merchant) and Shudra (peasant, labourer and servant). The scheduled castes are outside the varna scheme. Each varna may be divided into different horizontal strata, and each strata is known as caste. The caste system leads to

- (a) segmental division of society
- (b) hierarchy
- (c) restrictions on social interactions,
- (d) civic and religious disparities and privileges of different sections
- (e) restriction on choice of occupation, and
- (f) restriction on marriage.

Though caste is primarily a Hindu institution, few components of caste are found in every religious group in India. The caste system based on birth created divisions in the society and contributed to the social and economic inequalities. A section of people were treated as untouchables and they were exploited by upper castes in the society and administration. However, in the recent years, we find some change in the nature and the role of the caste system. The role of the caste is changing. However, one can find that the impact of caste in interpersonal and social relationships is decreasing but paradoxically it is playing an important role in political process. The caste is being increasingly used for political mobilisation. This has a negative effect on the working of political and administrative institutions.

Formation of informal groups on caste lines among the public services is another developing phenomena. This affects the homogeneity of the public services. Realising the



existence of inequalitarian social system, the Constitution has provided for preferential treatment to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes in public services. In recent years, we find many agitations for and against the reservations in public services.

Paradoxically, it is found that the preferential treatment system designed to bring equality is a cause of the internal tensions in the public organisations. In a social situation of primordial loyalties, the administrative institutions based on universalistic principles are subjected to a lot of stress and strain.

**3.3.1 Sub- Caste:** A sub-caste is considered a smaller unit within a caste. In the village setting usually we find that there is only one sub-caste living there. A larger number of sub-castes indicate the late arrivals to a village. Thus for all practical purposes a sub-caste represents the caste in the village. In the wider setting of a region, however, we find many sub-castes. One example from Maharashtra is of kumbhar (potters). There are several groups among them; those who tap the clay, those who use the large wheel, those who use the small wheel. All the three are endogamous groups.

**3.3.2 Changes in the Caste System:** The major traditional avenues of social mobility were Sanskritisation, migration and religious conversion. Lower castes or tribes were able to move upward in the caste hierarchy through acquisition of wealth and political power. They could accordingly claim higher caste status along with sanskritising their way of life, i.e., emulating the life-style and customs of higher castes. Some significant transformations have taken place in the caste system in rural areas in the current era due to the novel forces of industrialization, urbanization, politicization, modern education and legal system, land reforms, development programmes and government policy of positive discrimination in favour of the lower castes.

Occupational association of caste has slightly altered in the villages. Brahmins may still work as priests, but in addition, some have also taken up agriculture. Landowning dominant castes belonging to both upper and middle rung of caste hierarchy generally work as supervisory

farmers. Other non-landowning lower castes, including small and marginal peasants, work as wage labourers in agriculture. Artisan castes, namely, carpenters and iron-smith continue with their traditional occupations. However, migration to urban areas has allowed individuals from all castes including untouchables to enter into non-traditional occupations in industry, trade and commerce, and services. Additionally, inter-caste marriage is almost non-existent in rural areas. Inter-caste restrictions on food, drink and smoking persist but to a smaller extent because of the existence of tea stalls in villages which are patronized by nearly all castes. The hold of untouchability has narrowed. Dissimilarity in dress has become more a matter of income than caste affiliation. In conventional times, the upper castes were also upper classes but it is not entirely factual today because now new job-related opportunities to increase income have developed in villages. People migrate to cities and bring money back to their villages. This has changed the traditional social structure.

**3.4 Family:** The joint family is considered to be one of the three pillars of Indian social structure, the other two being the caste and the village community. Family is an essential social unit and in country like India, the family ties and bonds are immensely strong. In ancient times, the joint family system essayed a crucial role as a socio - economic institution. The social norms prescribe the subordination of personal interests to that of family. However, in contemporary times, the joint family system is paving way for the nuclear family system, but still the emotional ties of extended family keep playing an important role in the social life. Patriarchy dominates the family life. The head of the family is usually the father or the eldest male member. Women generally occupy a secondary position. The structure and operation of family has many implications on administrative system. The paternalistic and authoritarian structure of the family life is partly responsible for the paternalistic and authoritarian behavioural orientations of the administrators. The socialization process in the family influences the attitude formation of the administrators. The family loyalties may also result in sacrifice of values like impartiality, integrity and universality.

**3.4.1 Change in Family:** Traditional joint family occupied a prominent place in villages in India. It was largely established among the landed gentry and priestly caste. But nuclear family also

existed in India. Lower caste families whose primary source of livelihood was agricultural labour were mostly nuclear. However, they valued the ideal of joint family. Diverse studies have been conducted to analyze the change taking place in family in India with increasing industrialization and urbanisation, changes in economy, technology, politics, education and law in modern times. There are two approaches. The first assumes that the family structure in India has undergone the process of unilinear change from the joint to nuclear form as in the West. Secondly, I.P.Desai (1964), S.C. Dube (1955), T.N.Madan (1965), and others argue that it is necessary to observe family as a process. They adopt developmental cycle approach to understand changes in the family structure in India. They advocate that the presence of nuclear family households should be viewed as units, which will be growing into joint families when the sons grow up and marry. The 'developmental cycle' approach implies that a family structure keeps expanding, with birth and marriage, and depleting with death and partition in a cyclical order during a period of time.

**3.5 Lineage and Kinship:** Within the village, a group of families tracing descent from a common ancestor with knowledge of all the links constitute a lineage; and the children of the same generation behave as brothers and sisters. They form a unit for celebrating major ritual events. Sometimes the word Kul is used to describe these units. Usually these families live in closeness and a guest of one (e.g. a son-in-law) could be treated as such in all these families. These bonds of families may go back to 3 to 7 generations. People do not marry within this group. Beyond the known links, there are further connections but people know the common ancestor but are incapable to map out each connection. Such families use a more general phrase like being "bhai-bandh" of one another. They are also exogamous. The word Gotra or clan may be used for them.

### **3.6 Agrarian Class Structure**

In the modern period, the British land revenue system propelled a more or less comparable agrarian class structure in villages in India. They were the three classes of the landowners (zamindars), the tenants and the agricultural labourers. The landowners (zamindars) were tax

gatherers and non-cultivating owners of land. They belonged to the upper caste groups. The agricultural labourers were placed in a position of bondsmen and hereditarily attached labourers. They belonged to the lower caste groups. There has been a noteworthy impact of land reforms and rural development programmes introduced after independence. Land reforms led to the expulsion of small and marginal tenants on a large scale. But the intermediate castes of peasants, e.g., the Ahir, Kurmi etc. in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh benefited. Power of the feudal landed families started declining all over the country. The commencement of the Green Revolution in the 1960s led to the emergence of commercially oriented landlords. Rich farmers belonging normally to upper and intermediate castes prospered. But the fortune of the poor peasantry and the agricultural labourers did not improve. This has led to inflection of class conflicts and tensions. Agrarian unrest in India became a common feature in various parts of the country. P.C. Joshi (1971) has summarized in the following manner the trends in the agrarian class structure and relationships:

- (i) It led to the decline of feudal and customary types of tenancies. It was replaced by a more exploitative and insecure lease arrangement.
- (ii) It gave rise to a new commercial based rich peasant class who were part owners and part tenants. They had resource and enterprise to carry out commercial agriculture.
- (iii) It led to the decline of feudal landlord class and another class of commercial farmers emerged for whom agriculture was a business. They used the non-customary type of tenancy.

**3.6.1 The Issue of Village Autonomy:** The Indian village was depicted as a 'closed' and 'isolated' system. In a report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons, Charles Metcalfe (1833), a British administrator in India, depicted the Indian village as a monolithic, atomistic and unchanging entity. He observed, "The village communities are little republics, having nearly everything that they want within themselves and almost independent of any foreign relations". Current historical, anthropological and sociological studies have however revealed that Indian village was hardly ever a republic. It was never self-reliant. It has links with the wider society. Migration, village exogamy, movement for work and trade, administrative connection, interregional market, inter-village economic and caste links and religious pilgrimage were

prevalent in the past, connecting the village with the neighbouring villages and the wider society.

**3.6.2 The Jajmani System:** A very significant characteristic of conventional village life in India is the 'Jajmani' system. It has been studied by various sociologists, viz., Willian Wiser (1936), S.C. Dube (1955), Opler and Singh (1986), K. Ishwaran (1967), Lewis and Barnouw (1956). The term 'jajman' refers to the patron or recipient of specialized services and the term 'jajmani' refers to the whole relationship. In fact, the jajmani system is a system of economic, social and ritual ties among different caste groups in a village. Under this system some castes are patrons and others are serving castes. The serving castes tender their services to the landowning upper and intermediate caste and in turn are paid both in cash and kind. The patron castes are the landowning dominant castes, e.g., Rajput, Bhumihaar, Jat in the North, and Kamma, Lingayat and Reddi in Andhra Pradesh and Patel in Gujarat. The service castes comprise Brahmin (priest), barber, carpenter, blacksmith, water-carrier, leatherworker etc. The jajmani relations essentially operate at family level. A Rajput land-owning family has its jajmani ties with one family each from Brahmin, barber, carpenter etc., and a family of service caste offers its services to specific families of jajmans. However, jajmani rules are enforced by caste panchayats. But the jajmani system also possesses the elements of dominance, exploitation and conflict. There is a vast difference in exercise of power between landowning dominant patrons and poor artisans and landless labourers who serve them. The rich and powerful jajmans exploit and coerce the poor 'kamins' (client) to uphold their supremacy. In fact, there is reciprocity as well as dominance in the jajmani system.

**3.6.3 Changes in Village Power Structure and Leadership:** Marginal changes of adaptive nature have occurred in power structure and leadership in villages after gaining independence due to various factors e.g. land reforms, panchayati raj, parliamentary politics, development programmes and agrarian movements. According to Singh (1986), upper castes now exercise power not by traditional legitimisation of their authority but through manipulation and cooption of lower caste people. The traditional power structure itself has not changed. New opportunities motivate the less powerful class to aspire for power. But their economic

backwardness thwarts their desires. B.S. Cohn (1962), in his comparative study of twelve villages of India, found a close fit between land-ownership and degree of domination of groups. Now younger and literate people are found increasingly acquiring leadership role. Moreover, some regional variations also have been observed in the pattern of change in power structure in rural areas.

### **3.7 Major Peasant Movements in India**

Peasant Movement in India is precipitous in history and is weighty with a number of rebellions that have occurred in several regions within the country. Peasant movement and uprisings in India took place mostly during the British rule, as the economic policies confounded traditional ways of livelihood, and resulted in seizure of land and increase in debt of the peasants and farmers. The exploitations of British colonialism were borne by the Indian peasants unfavorably. However the peasants stood their ground and wrestled against the British at every single step. There was an alteration in the confrontation actions of the peasants, because they started fighting for their demands and the injustice done to them. This behavior became visibly important and in action after 1858. The colonial economic policies, the new land revenue system, the colonial administrative and judicial systems and the damage of the handicrafts leading to the congestion of land, transformed the agrarian structure and impoverished the peasantry.

In the vast zamindari areas, the peasants were left to the tender mercies of the zamindars that rack-rented them and bound them to pay the illegal dues and perform beggar. In Ryotwari areas, the government itself levied heavy land revenue. This forced the peasants to borrow money from moneylenders. Increasingly, over large areas, the actual cultivators were reduced to the status of tenants-at-will, share-croppers and landless laborers, while their lands, crops and cattle passed into the hands of landlords, trader-moneylenders and rich peasants. When the peasants were unable to suffer further, they opposed the coercion and exploitation; and, they found whether their target was the native exploiter or the colonial administration, that their real enemy, after the barriers were down, was the colonial state. One form of elemental

protest, especially when individuals and small groups found that collective action was not possible though their social condition was becoming unbearable, was to take to crime. Many expelled peasants took to robbery, decoity and what has been called social banditry, preferring these to malnourishment and social deprivation.

### **3.7.1 Movement for Indigo Cultivation:**

The most militant and widespread of the peasant movements was the Indigo revolt of 1859-60. The indigo planters, nearly all Europeans, forced the tenants to grow indigo which they processed in factories set up in rural (mofussil) areas. From the beginning, the indigo was grown under an awfully tyrannical system which involved huge loss to cultivators. The planters forced to peasants to take a scanty sum as advance and below market price. The comment of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, J.B. Grant was that: the root of the whole question is the struggle to make the raiyats grow indigo plant, without paying them the price of it." The peasant was forced to grow indigo on the finest land he had whether or not he sought to assign his land and labour to more paying crops like rice. At the time of release, he was cheated even of the due low price. He also had to pay regular bribes to the planter's officials. He was forced to accept an advance. Often he was not in a position to repay it, but even if he could he was not allowed to do so. The advance was used by the planters to force him to go on cultivating indigo. Since the enforcement of forced and fraudulent contracts through the courts was a difficult and prolonged process, the planters restored to a reign of terror to coerce the peasants. Kidnapping, illegal confinement in factory godowns, flogging attacks on women and children, carrying off cattle, looting, burning and demolition of houses and destruction of crops and fruit trees, were some of the methods used by the planters. They hired or maintained bands of lathiyals (armed retainers) for the purpose. In practice, the planters were above the law, with a few exceptions the magistrates; mostly the European favored the planters. However, the government was bound to employ a commission for investigation and alleviation of the system. But still, the clash could not be mitigated and the domination of British and confrontation of peasants continued.

### **3.7.2 Movements in Bihar and Bengal:**

The indigo peasants of Bihar revolted in greater scale in Darbhanga and Champaran in 1866-68. Again turbulence broke out amidst peasants in 1870's in East Bengal. The influential and cunning Zamindars liberally took way out to expulsion, harassment, unlawful capture of property, including crops and chattels and extortions, and large-scale use of force to increase rents and to prevent the peasants from acquiring occupancy rights. The Bengal peasants also had a long tradition of resistance stretching back to 1782, when the peasants of North Bengal had rebelled against the East India Company. From 1872 to 1876, the peasants united and formed a union to impose a No Rent policy and fought against the Zamindars and their agents. It was stopped only when the government suppressed the peasants' acts of violence. This created a state of agitation and unrest amongst the peasants and it ended when the government promised to take some action on the Zamindari oppression.

### **3.7.3 Movements in Maharashtra, Kerala and Assam:**

A foremost agrarian conflict took place in Pune and Ahmednagar -districts of Maharashtra in 1875. In Maharashtra, the British government had directly settled the revenue with the peasants. At the same time, it augmented the rates of revenue so high that it was unfeasible to pay the revenue and they had no option left other than borrowing the money from the moneylenders who charged high interest rates. More and more land got mortgaged and sold out to the moneylenders, who gave highest efforts to attain the land at legal and illegal terms. Peasant endurance got exhausted by the end of the year 1875 and enormous agrarian riots took place. Police was unsuccessful in meeting the anger of peasants' struggle which was suppressed only when the whole military force at Pune took the field against them. Once again the modern intelligentsia of Maharashtra supported the peasants' demands. But it pointed out that the source of misery of peasants was high revenue rates and government's incapability to provide loan at cheaper rates. Peasant unrest also broke out in several other parts of country such as North Kerala and Assam. The situation aggravated in Assam because of high land revenue assessment. The peasants declined to pay enhanced revenue demands to the landlords and brawled against the land revenue collectors to seize their lands. The situation worsened and Police had to mobilize their network to suppress the peasants. Many peasants were killed ruthlessly and viciously in the riots.



### **3.7.4 Anti –Moneylender Uprising:**

The period from 1915 to 1947 witnessed a number of agrarian uprisings beginning with the Anti-moneylender Agitation in West Punjab, the Kirti Party, the various Kissan Morchas, the Communist and Socialist struggles. All these formations centered around the issues of the agrarian classes including both of the farmers and the workers. To begin with, in the year 1915 an anti-moneylender uprising of peasants emerged in the districts of Multan, Muzaffargarh and Jhang.

The causes of this upsurge were the increased poverty conditions due to the prevalence of famine conditions that led to a very high rise in food prices and it led to the great suffering of the lower classes of people including poor peasants. Further to complicate the situation the moneylenders stopped giving loans to the peasants and it led to the peasants revolt against moneylenders who looted wheat stocks of moneylenders and burnt the debt bonds. In Ahmadpur Sial in Jhang district the first outbreak occurred. In Jhang district alone the peasants formed bands of 200-600 and committed about 70 dacoits. Soon the movement spread to Multan district where in Kabirwala tehsil 34 dacoits took place. The most important of these was the Basti Sikander riot. In Multan district there were 6 dacoity cases. The riots reached Rangpur, north of Muzaffargarh district. The influence spread and it reached to the Leiah tehsil and to Alipur tehsil in Muzaffargarh district. About 32 riots occurred in Alipur tehsil only. The total number of dacoities in Muzaffargarh district was 60 and the rising lasted for three weeks in Muzaffargarh district.

The peasants also looted shops, burnt account books which recorded their debts and destroyed the property of moneylenders. It was reported that 4 or 5 persons died of injuries. The uprising was suppressed but nothing was done to relieve distress of indebted peasantry. These movements or riots of peasants did not generate any menace to the British rule, but proved that the Indian peasants' reactions were immediate and spontaneous to every condition. The peasants always resisted the efforts of the British to get control and power in the name of maintaining law and order. Thus, in practicality, the illiterate and ignorant people performed

acts of appreciation against the menace of the increasing British colonialism. Their faith, their courage and heroism, their willingness to make immense sacrifices were no match against the imperialist power armed with the latest weapons and the resources of a worldwide empire. The popular movements and rebellions of the 19th century did, however, reveal the immense sources of resistance to imperialism that lay dormant among the Indian people. Later by the 1930s, the condition of the peasants started to improve all over the nation due to gradual political and economic developments. This became possible due to the various efforts undertaken by the Indian National Congress during that period.

### **3.8 Caste and Politics**

Caste has always been vital to modern Indian politics. Even the power structure of mediaeval India was based on caste. Caste also functioned as the key standard in the distribution of power and material resources in the colonial period. Colonialism in India created a democratic and modernist space; nevertheless this space was also predominantly captured by upper-caste groups. The nationalist struggle against the imperial power was targeted at establishing the caste-class hegemony. Non-Brahmin and low-caste movements were active during the colonial era, broadly pursuing two aims: achieving upward caste-class mobility and annihilation of caste. The caste system played a noteworthy role in determining the content and direction of the processes of political socialization, political mobilization and institutionalization within the framework of modern democracy. The dynamics of caste and class were at the root of the intricacy of Indian politics in its functioning. Behind the apparently religious and communal movements in post-independent India, it was the dynamics of caste-class supremacy that was the real operational factor. Both the anti-caste and the upwardly mobile caste movements are directing the pro-reservation movement, which aspired at upward class mobility of the hitherto excluded castes. The pro-imperialist bourgeois policies of the ruling class and the struggles against these policies are also influenced and shaped by the tensions and contradictions in caste-class dynamics. In the subsequent year's independence, the traditional upper castes continued to rule in most parts of India. For example, until 1977, upper castes continued to hold important elected positions in Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state in the Indian union.

Until 1962, as many as 63% of ruling Congress members of the Legislative Assembly came from elite castes. Soon, however, long-established peasant castes such as Ahirs, Kurmis, Koeri, Lodh Rajputs, and Jats began to rule the political space of northern India. In the southern state of Tamilnadu, the Vanniyars and Thevars became confident, and in Karnataka, control was wrested in the mid-1950s from the traditional rural elite within the Congress party by the Vokkaligas and Linagayats. In the North Indian Hindi speaking belt, upper caste members of parliament fell below 50% for the first time in 1977. The challenge to the established Congress was mounted in Uttar Pradesh rather effectively in the late 1960s by a coalition of peasant castes led by Charan Singh. In Bihar, also, there was a considerable fall of upper caste members of the legislative assembly after 1977.

### **3.8.1 Dalit in Politics**

The dual relationship between caste and politics is set for re-examination whenever there's a major election. That caste association is a basic determinant of political calculation and voting patterns is an ordinary aspect of academic and street discourse. Even when the relationship is complex, and not easily reducible to a limited set of factors, it acts as a matrix which encloses the electoral field. This is usually denied or condemned by the urban upper class which occupies the apex of the social structure and whose concerns and ideology are reflected in the mainstream media. But for the overwhelming majority of the Indian bourgeoisie, attached in some way or the other to the countryside, caste considerations usually govern political affiliation either directly or indirectly. The Republican Party was founded by the legendary Babasaheb Ambedkar in 1957.

He later led his people to renounce Hinduism and embrace Buddhism instead. It is correct that most of the votaries of the Republican party of India (RPI) belong to the Mahar caste because other previously untouchable castes of the region, such as the Mangs, Matangs, and Chambaras, have stayed away from it. In fact, they often veer toward supporting the Bharaiya Janata party, which is, paradoxically, a right-wing Hindu organization. This is because many members of these other castes believe that the RPI is a vehicle of upward mobility for the Mahars alone. They have

also ceased from becoming Buddhists. Nevertheless, Babasaheb Ambedkar's shadow looms large even today in the politics of the previously known untouchables. They resent the term "*Harijan*" (children of God) that Gandhi used for them as they consider it too patronizing. They would rather be known as "Dalits," or the oppressed. Ambedkar was the first to use this term to designate the Scheduled Castes for its apparent combative edge.

Ambedkar, today, has been deified among the Buddhist Mahars of Maharashtra and has a similar iconic status to Buddha in many Mahar families. Ambedkar's death anniversary in 1981 provided the occasion for Kanshi Ram to launch the Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samit (or DS-4). According to Vora, no Dalit leader after Ambedkar paid any steady attention to economic issues. Dalits are, however, very dynamic when it comes to voting in elections. For example, the turnout of Scheduled Caste (or Dalit) voters was as high as 62.2% in the 1998 elections. In all, caste has become an important determinant in Indian society and politics, the new lesson of organized politics and consciousness of caste affiliations learnt by the hitherto despised caste groups have transformed the contours of Indian politics where shifting caste-class alliances are being encountered. The impact of these mobilizations along caste-identities has resulted not only in the empowerment of newly rising groups but has amplified the power of stimulating politics and possibly leading to a growing crisis of governability.

### **3.8.2 Modern India**

At the commencement of the twentieth century, caste rank was not a good indicator of material deprivation. It is highly unlikely that the heterogeneity within a caste and between castes sharing the same administrative rank would have diminished over time, while observed economic inequalities have been very high. Clearly, the caste-based public policy is deficient in empirical foundation. However, the Indian state is essentially conveying the benefits to the advantaged by treating the rich and the poor belonging to the caste categories as equals. Thus the ruling coalition co-opts the elite of the lower castes, strengthens itself and weakens the depressed groups.

At the same time the policy and its regular extensions, by determinedly focusing on caste, keep the poor divided along caste lines. Thus caste quotas are extremely useful as a tool of governance. It is hypocritical to argue that this policy does anything to get rid of severe, long standing deprivation. Relationships between castes have become more relaxed today. There is more food sharing between castes and a lot more eating done at local restaurants where caste distinctions are less likely to be made. One of the major changes that took place in India was occupational pursuits among men (and women later on). Earlier, most men did not bend away from their caste-linked occupations, such as blacksmithing and pottery making. Many have now taken up novel occupations that are not associated with their caste, such as government jobs, teaching, retail and services, and machine repair. Wealth and power in the village is now less associated with caste than before, and landownership has become more diversified. Also, the idea that purity and pollution is caused by the lower castes has reduced fairly. It has, however, only somewhat diminished in the public, whereas behind closed doors and on ceremonial occasions, purification rituals related to caste status are still observed. Although discrimination on the basis of caste has been outlawed in India, caste has become a means for contending for access to resources and power in modern India, such as educational opportunities, new occupations, and improvement in life chances. This drift is associated to India's favored policies and the execution.

Politics in India highly depended on patron-client ties along the caste lines during the Congress-dominating period. The caste that one belongs to serves as a strong determinant of his or her voting pattern. In India, different political parties represent the interests of different caste groups. The upper and merchant castes such as Brahmin, Rajput and Kayasth tend to express their interests through the Congress Party. The agrarian middle class such as the Jats tend to vote for the competing parties. Numerically minor parties, represented by the Jan Shangh, receive votes almost exclusively from the upper and trading castes. However, caste does not solely determine voting behaviors. Discrepancies occur especially for the upper caste groups. (ibid) This means that not everyone from the same caste would vote for only one particular party. The upper caste people have more freedom to vote by political beliefs. The Mandal

Commission covered more than 3000 Other Backward Castes. It is thus not clear which parties are associated with each castes. Loyal groups of voters usually back a certain candidate or party during elections with the expectation of receiving benefits once their candidate is in office. This practice, called "vote bank", is prolific throughout most regions of the country. Many political parties in India have openly indulged in caste-based votebank politics. The Congress party used votebank to maintain power; the competing parties constructed vote banks to challenge the Congress dominance of politics.

### **3.9 Politically Important Castes**

Bihar

- Yadav,
- Bhumihar Brahmins
- Rajputs

Uttar Pradesh

- Dalits, led by Mayawati
- Yadavs

West Bengal

- Supporters of Mamta Banerjee

Karnataka

- Lingayat

Punjab

- Dalits (especially Ad-Dharmis and Mazhabis), who tend to support Bahujan Samaj Party
- Jat Sikhs, who tend to support Akali Dal(Badal)

Rajasthan

- Jat/Bishnoi, Rajput,Gurjar/Gujjars

Maharashtra

- Marathas (26%)
- Kunbi (OBC)(8%)
- Dhangars (NT in State, OBC in Center) (12%)

- SC 15%
- ST 9%
- NT (Other than Dhangars) 10%
- Mali (OBC)(8%)
- Bramhans 6%

### 3.19 Conclusion

We have to come to certain conclusions and offer viable solutions to the problems created by a wrong understanding and application of the standard of Caste in India. What has been there for centuries cannot be undone in a day or two. Therefore there is change all over the place – in the thinking of people about caste, community, religious and philosophical values. Nothing is objectionable so long as there is no compulsion, hatred, animosity. The world is created by God in a wonderful and mysterious way. Diversity is the Art of Nature; but Unity is the Heart of God. This is what the Rgveda (I.164.46) declared ages ago: *‘eka^ sad viprābahudhāvadanti’* (What exists is One but wise men call it by different names). Let people do what they think is right and good for them; but let them not battle in the name of religion, philosophy, race, caste, class, community or political affiliations.

### 3.20.To Sum Up:

- As per study the Sociologists use the word ‘social structure’ to imply the inter-relationship, inter-connectedness, and inter-dependence of the diverse parts of society. In terms of their form, all societies have the similar parts. Thus, there are groups and communities in all societies, but the nature and substance of these groups and communities vary from one society to another.
- Village community, family and caste are the fundamental machinery of the rural social structure and they connect the economic and social life of people in rural areas.
- In the modern period, the British land revenue system propelled a more or less comparable agrarian class structure in villages in India. They were the three classes of the landowners (zamindars), the tenants and the agricultural labourers. The landowners (zamindars) were tax gatherers and non-cultivating owners of land

- Marginal changes of adaptive nature have occurred in power structure and leadership in villages after gaining independence due to various factors e.g. land reforms, panchayati raj, parliamentary politics, development programmes and agrarian movements.
- These movements or riots of peasants did not generate any menace to the British rule, but proved that the Indian peasants' reactions were immediate and spontaneous to every condition. The peasants always resisted the efforts of the British to get control and power in the name of maintaining law and order. Thus, in practicality, the illiterate and ignorant people performed acts of appreciation against the menace of the increasing British colonialism.

**3.21.Keywords:** Agrarian, Rural Structure, Peasant, Caste, Politics, Movement

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## Unit-IV

Rural Development Programmes:

IAY, SGSY, SHGs, Panchayati Raj

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**Objectives:**

*To outline the background of Rural Development in India*

*To provide the chronology of the rural development programmes in India*

*To provide the significant role played by the programmes*

*To discuss the issues and challenges that the rural development faced*

**4.1. Introduction**

As India has the highest population of poor people, community development has assumed towering precedence. The early development programmes focused at upliftment of the rural poor, covered agriculture, animal husbandry, roads, health, education, housing, employment, social and cultural activities. However, food security being the major reason of concern, agriculture received noteworthy concentration.

In 1957, a three-tier-system of rural local Government, called 'Panchayati Raj' (Rule by Local Councils) was established. These were Gram Panchayat (Village level), Panchayat Samiti (Block level) and Zilla Parishad (District level). The endeavor was to decentralize the process of decision making and promote people's participation. As the programme could not fulfill the expectations of the rural poor, the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was introduced in 1979, with specific focus on the weaker sections of the society. By mid eighties, the Government was able to meet the minimum needs of the poor, which included elementary education, health, water supply, roads, electrification, housing and nutrition. In 1987, the Planning Commission decided to deem the blocks as the fundamental units for development planning. The task of planning at the district level was entrusted to the District Planning and Development Council which had wider representation of the society. Panchayati Raj reforms were introduced

through the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment to facilitate planning at the micro-level and to strengthen the Gram Sabha (village assembly). The Government of India has also been encouraging voluntary action to mobilize the rural people.

Numerous initiatives of the non-government organisations in the last decades have had significant impact on the development. NGOs are promoting sustainable livelihood through dairy husbandry, water resource management, wastelands development and various income generation activities in several states. Farmers and cultivators in various several states have established cooperatives for processing sugarcane, oil-seeds, milk, fruits and vegetables. With professional management and application of modern technologies, these organisations have brought economic stability and eliminated exploitation by intermediary traders. For strengthening people's organizations, Self Help Groups (SHGs), comprising of poor families has been promoted under the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002). It is the people's initiatives and involvement which can sustain the development. The government and political power have the will to support people's movement and this should promote sustainable rural development in India.

## **4.2 Background**

After 67 years of independence and an ever escalating population, India is the largest democracy in the world. To uphold this democracy and freedom, it is essential to guarantee economic empowerment and better quality of life for all the citizens. In spite of momentous industrial development, Indian economy is majorly dependent on agriculture which is also known as the backbone of Indian economy. Over 65% of the population living in rural areas is principally dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. A majority of these families spend over 90% of their earnings on basic needs such as food, fuel and health care. Over 35% of the rural families being poor, tackling their problems is the national priority to ensure social justice and better quality of life.

India reels under poverty, hunger, malnutrition and urban-rural imbalanced growth. The population that is incapable and unable to earn their own income and do not have any

source of livelihood are classified as poor. Unemployment, seasonal employment, underemployment are the major causes of rural poverty. The other factors are small land holdings, harsh agro-climatic conditions, poor infrastructure and limited opportunities for rural industrial development, poor health care, illiteracy, social suppression, addiction to alcohol and exploitation by vested interests. Land is the major resource in India, which provides livelihood to the rural population. However, majority of the farmers in India are small and marginal farmers who have inadequate land for increasing productivity. Water is another critical resource required to enhance the agricultural production. Out of the total arable area of 169 million ha, only 28% area is under irrigation and the rest is dependent on rains, where hardly one crop can be grown in a year. About 40% of the cropping area is located in low rainfall regions where the employment opportunity is hardly for 40 to 50 days in a year and crops generally fail twice in five years. Decline in many traditional occupations and poor institutional infrastructures have further reduced job opportunities. Thus about 90% of the rural population, who are deprived of adequate land holding, have to look for other means of livelihood for their survival. This leads to rampant rural exodus and most of the rural population forced to migrate to the cities in search of a livelihood. However, increased migration overpopulates the cities leading to formation of innumerable slums, unhygienic living conditions and increased pressure on land.

In India, out of the total population, over 65% people are presently living in villages and about 35-40% families, who earn less than US\$ 275 per annum, are classified as poor. About 25% of the villages do not have assured source of drinking water for about 4-5 months during the year and about 70-75% of the water does not meet the standard prescribed by the World Health Organization (WHO). Poor quality drinking water is adversely affecting the health and diarrhea is an important cause of infant mortality. Traditional Indian communities being male dominated, women have been suppressed till recently. While the average literacy rate in rural areas is around 50-65%, it is as low as 20-25% among women in backward areas. Earlier, education of girls was felt to be redundant which gravely affected their quality of life. Illiteracy has also concealed their growth due to deficient communication with the outside

world. They are sluggish in accepting new practices, which are indispensable with the changing times. Apart from lack of communication, social norms have also stalled their progress. Numerous vested interests, both local and outsiders have exploited this situation. The rich landlords did not want any infrastructure development, which would benefit the poor, because of the fear that they would not get cheap labour to work on their farms. The local moneylenders did not want alternate financial institutions to provide cheaper credit needed by the poor. The traditional healers campaigned against modern medicine under the array of religion and divine power. Thus, the poor continued to live in the clutches of the powerful, accepting it as their destiny. They shunned altercation and preferred to live a voiceless and suppressed life tolerating the worst.

It is a well known fact that agriculture is the primary source of livelihood but most of the illiterate farmers have not been flourishing in cultivating their land economically. Most of them treated agriculture as a family tradition following age old practices and they adopted new changes only after observing the success of their neighbors. As the chances of crop failure on arid lands is very high, the farmers usually do not invest in external inputs like improved seeds, fertilizers and plant protection measures and suffer from poor crop yields, even during normal years. Apart from private holdings, pastures and common lands owned by the government and community are also being used in many ways, particularly for fuel and fodder collection. The Government has reserved about 10% of the total land in each village for livestock grazing. The ownership of this land is with the Village Panchayat (Local Government) and all the members of the community have free admittance.

The Panchayat has no power over the use while the community does not consider it to be their responsibility to manage the pasture. This has resulted in over-exploitation and denudation of the pastures. The same situation prevailed on village woodlots and community forests. Thus, in spite of land scarcity, over 50% of the total land is either unused or under-utilised. Such wastelands, unable to retain the rainwater are promoting soil erosion, flooding of rivers and silting of tank beds. They are also hosting a wide range of pests and diseases.

Management of these wastelands to perk up the productivity can revitalize the supply of fodder and fuel, aid the percolation of rainwater and improve the agricultural production. Water is a critical input for crop production but abhorrently mistreated by the community. Major sources of water supply are rainfall, lakes, rivers, snowy mountains and underground storage. Except wells and small tanks, the other sources of water are collectively owned by the community. However, the powerful lobbies and vested interests have been taking benefit of these water resources for their own benefits, while the poor have no means of using their share. This has been hastening the economic imbalance between the small and large landholders. In India, Rainfall is the major source of water for agricultural production, however, in the absence of adequate soil and water conservation practices, it is estimated that over 65% rainwater runs off, flooding the rivers. About 28% of the total cropping area in the country is under irrigation, where farmers have a tendency to use unwarranted water. In the absence of adequate training and demonstration, they believe that excess water can enhance their crop yields. Moreover, as the water charges are fixed on the basis of the area covered under irrigation instead of on the quantity of water supplied, farmers do not want to limit the use of water. Due to excessive use of water for irrigation, fertile lands have turned into sodic and saline wastelands, thereby posing a grave threat not only to food security and employment generation but also to community health, biodiversity and the environment.

Apart from cultivation, livestock is another vital natural resource owned by the poor. Normally the rural families keep 1-2 cows or buffaloes for milk, a pair of bullocks for farming and a few sheep, goats and poultry for supplementary income. Although fodder is in dearth, most of the poor families maintain large herds and let them graze on common lands. Dairy husbandry has good scope, as there is good demand for milk.

However, most of the important breeds of cattle and buffaloes are genetically eroded and about 80-85% of the livestock are infertile and cause undue pressure on forest resources while the rural poor are not capable to take use these animals properly. Thus most of our natural resources like land, water, forests and livestock are discarded and underutilized. It is possible to make sustainable use of these natural resources through application of fitting

technologies and use of idle labour. Apart from insufficient earning for livelihood, the rural people also suffer from poor health arising from starvation, lack of immunisation, hygiene and sanitation. Over 25% villages do not have year-round supply of drinking water and many of the drinkable water sources are polluted. Consumption of polluted water is the main source of illness particularly during the rainy season. Most of the villages have no drainage and sanitation and quite a less rural population use latrines. Medical and immunisation services do not reach isolated villages. Illiteracy in rural areas is high particularly among women, varying from 55% to 75%. With growing family size and incapable to satiate the mounting needs, the rural poor have to depend on money lenders, to meet their emergencies and fall into the debt trap. While some migrate to cities, others live in chronic poverty. Most of the poor have confidence in others as well in their ability to live a decent life. They are neither convinced about the appropriateness of the technologies, nor certain about the capabilities of the development agencies involved in launching these projects. Poor farmers who have been getting monetary aid in the past from the government and other donor agencies, lack adequate motivation and training. In the nonexistence of their felt needs, they have been misusing these inputs for unproductive purposes or for mere survival without fulfilling the project goals. In this process, many poor farmers have developed a 'dependency syndrome' and expect outsiders to provide the means for their livelihood.

Rural development projects are often implemented without ample planning. In the absence of an integrated approach to embark upon multidimensional interrelated problems, sectorial development activities may not convey expected results. Apart from incorporation of various sectors, many of these projects also lack proper planning and resource mobilisation. Unlike industries, rural development projects are not implemented on sound management principles taking into deliberation the required inputs, technologies, human skills and opportunities for marketing the produce.

#### **4.3 Rural Development Programmes**



The United Nations defines “Rural Development is a process of change, by which the efforts of people themselves are united, those of Government authorities to improve their economic, social and cultural conditions of communities into the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national programme. Rural Development is a process of bringing change among rural community from the traditional way of living to progressive way of living. It is also expressed as a movement for progress”.

The famous sociologist, James H. Crops has defined rural development as a process through collective efforts, aimed at improving the well being and self-realisation of people living outside the urbanised area. He further contends that the ultimate target of Rural Development is people and not infrastructure and according to him one of the objectives of rural development should be to widen people’s range of choice.

Mishra and Sunderam defined rural development as not merely development of rural areas but also the development of quality of life of the rural masses into self-reliant and self-sustaining modern little communities. Rural development is therefore development of rural areas in such a way that each component of rural life changes in a desired direction”. The basic objectives of rural development are to organize, develop and utilize the available resources of land, water and manpower in such a manner that the entire population depended on these resources has an equitable opportunity to meet, as a minimum in its basic needs”.

Rural development is a multi-dimensional process which includes the development of socio-economic circumstances of the people living in the rural areas. According to the 2011 census, India has 1.21 billion populations. Out of that 833 million, 68.84% population lives in India’s 6, 40,867 villages. Majority of these people are farmers or rely on agriculture for their livelihood. Since independence many rural development programmes have been undertaken by the Government of India and various state governments which are implemented through Five Year Plans. Some of these programmes are:

- Intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP- Package Programme)

- Intensive Agricultural Area Programme (IAAP)
- High Yielding Varieties Programme (HYVP- Green Revolution)
- Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP)
- Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA)
- Hill Area Development Programme
- Operation Flood I, II and III (White Revolution)
- Fisheries Development (Blue Revolution)
- Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)
- Jawahar Rojgar Yojna (JRY).

#### **4.3.1 Rural Development during pre-independence period**

In the pre-independence period, numbers of rural development programmes were started by the Social Reformers. Some of these programmes were gradually disappeared and some merged with Government sponsored schemes later. Here we are mentioning only two popular rural development programmes :

##### **1) Sriniketan:**

The initial attempts at rural development were initiated by Shri. Rabandranath Tagore in 1908 by establishing youth organization in the Kaligram Progana of his Zamindari, He tried to generate a class of functionary workers who could be trained to identify themselves with the people. In 1921 he established a Rural Reconstruction Institute at Shantiniketan in West Bengal. A group of eight villages was the centre of the programme. This project, inadvertently, had many elements of extension education in both spirit and action. Activities like demonstration on scientific methods of agriculture, training of youths, adult education and health co-operatives were significant aspects of the work aimed to make a group of villages self-reliant. This was a very all-inclusive programme uniting culture, health, education and economic aspects of village life together. Concept of village level workers and regeneration of village organization were put to work. This project was closely guided by Mr. Leonard Elmhirst, an Englishman trained in economics from USA.

The programme aimed at:

- To create a real interest in people for rural welfare work.
- To study rural problems and to translate conclusions into action.
- To help villagers develop their resources and to improve village sanitation.

These objectives were preferred to be achieved by generating a spirit of self-help, developing village leadership, organizing village scouts called Brati Balika, establishing training centers for handicrafts and establishing a demonstration centre at Shantiniketan. These demonstration centers organized demonstration or farmer's holding for improved practices. The programme established dairy to supply pure milk and better animals to the farmer's poultry farm for development of farmers. The students and worker of the institute were provided facilities for training in tanning, pottery, embroidery tailoring etc. This institute also had a mobile library and ran night schools film shows in the rural areas. As the institute was debarred from adequate governmental assistance it could not conduct research work on the lines initially planned by Tagore and hence, its work remained limited to the eight villages only. But in due course, the central government recognized it as an important pioneering centre of extension research in India.

## **2) Marthandam:**

The work was started by Dr. Spencer Hatch an American Agricultural expert in Travancore under the auspicious of young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in 1921. The primary objective of the project was to fetch copious life for rural people. It was aimed to represent the three-fold development, not only spiritual, mental and physical but also economic and social. The vital technique of the centre was 'Self-help with intimate expert counsel'. From the demonstration centre at Marthandam, about hundred villages were enclosed through Y.M.C.A. centers in villages. The extension secretary was appointed to monitor the activities of the group. Marthandam was in a tactical position to serve the villages. It kept prize bulls and goats, model bee-lives, demonstration plots for improving grain and vegetable seeds, poultry runs with prize laying-hens, a weaving shed, etc. Inside the centre, there was equipment like honey extractors, health charts and the items needed for other cottage vocations. At the centre, cottage

vocations were taught and agricultural implements tested. The emphasis throughout was on self-help and co-operation. The triumphant yield of this project was the Egg-selling Club, which eventually became a self governing body. Another co-operative society was honey club, where the villagers were trained the utility of modern bee-hives and extracted honey scientifically. The honey was cured and marketed co-operatively. There were Bull clubs, weaver's club also. The activities conducted at centre could meet the mental, physical and spiritual needs of the villagers. The major deficiencies of the project were insufficient funds and governmental help. The activities were mainly organized the Marthandam and the village workers did not stay in villages. The religious bias of the institution was also a chief obstruction in its activities.

### **3) Gurgaon Experiment:**

Rural upliftment movement on a huge scale was first commenced by Mr. F. L. Brayne, Deputy Commissioner in the Gurgaon district of Punjab state. He was quite moved by the backwardness, poverty and desolation of the people. A village guide was posted to serve as a mediating link for flowing any information and advice of the experts in various departments on to the villagers. The programme of introducing improved seeds, implements, the methods of cultivation etc. was started all through the district. As the village guides were not technical men, very modest everlasting value was achieved in fact. The project was unable to develop leadership in the villages that would carry on the work after the departure of the village guides from the villages. The work again got an impetus, after 1933, where Mr. Brayne was appointed as the Commission of Rural Reconstruction in the Punjab. 1935-36. Government of India granted Rs.1 crore for various rural works which acted as a stimulus. However, the project could not make much headway as the local talent was not utilized for development process. Most of the work was done by exercising power over the people rather than by voluntary involvement of local people.

### **4) Gandhian Constructive Programme / Sewagram:**

Mahatma Gandhi always dreamt of self contained and self sufficient village life in India. He was conscious about the grassroots' problems of India, rural set up and he sought to resolve these

tribulations without interference of any exterior group. He wanted to solve these problems by local people and through local resources. People know Gandhiji not only as a Mahatma or political agitator, but also as a social and economic reformer. He made people to comprehend that India lives in villages and that the common man's upliftment is the upliftment of the country. Concerning development work in the country, he emphasized that the "salvation of India lies in cottage industries." The key-words of his economy are:

- Decentralized production
- Equal distribution of wealth
- Self-sufficiency of Indian villages.

For equal distribution of wealth, cruel process of extermination was not followed but throughout the heart of the owners by persuasion and appeal to the better sense of man. According to him self-sufficiency of Indian villages can be achieved by eliminating middlemen, so that the farmer could get the full price for his produce. He wanted that the tiller should be able to consume his own products like fruits, milk, vegetables etc.

For the betterment of people he formulated many programmes like the promotion of village industries, basic and adult education rural sanitation, uplift of backward tribes, uplift of women, education in public health and hygiene, propagation of natural language, love for the mother tongue, economic equality, organization of kisans, labour and students and so on. He wants to make villagers self-sufficient and also want to develop endurance which is helpful against coercion and prejudice. The important institutions, which were organized to foster his ideas were; All India Spinner Association, All India Village Industries Association, Gandhi Ashram at Tiruchengudi, Gandhi Niketan at Kallupatti, Gandhi Gram at Dindigal, Gandhi Sewa Sadan at Porur (Malabar), Kasturba Ashram in Trichur, Kerala. Truly speaking, the Gandhian constructive Programme was became big institutions and simple ideas became philosophies. His emphasis on Khadi became the Charkha movement and then, the All India Khadi and Village Industries Board. His thought, against untouchability and caste system, resulted in the organization of Harijan Sewak Sangh and many like this. He created leaders like Vinoba Bhave, Nehru,

Jayaprakash Narayan, Mira Ben etc. who came from common stock, but got inspiration from Gandhi. All the people engaged in reconstructive programme felt that their work was needed in a great programme for their country reconstruction.

#### **4.3.2 Rural Development since Independence**

Without much delay after attainment of independence, the central government had undertaken some important programmes of rural reconstruction. These are: Community Development Programme (1952), National Extension Services (1953) and Panchayati Raj (1959) on the recommendation of Hon'ble Balwant Rai Mehta Committee's report. The objectives of Panchayat Raj are intensely occupied in tradition and culture of rural India and are by no means a new concept. Panchayat Raj offered a system of self-governance at the village level. The objective also aimed mostly alteration of the traditional rural India with self local governance. The Community Development Programme (CDP) was launched as an educational and organisational programme to reach rural people. It aimed to inspire self-help and public cooperation. But due to several implementation-level problems and lack of local organization effectiveness, CDP could not make much away.

Besides these, some social reformers had also launched rural development programmes. These are the (a) The Etawah Pilot Project (b) The Nilokheri Experiment and (C) The Bhoodan Movement. Above these the Bhoodan Movement became popular.

Acharya Vinoba Bhave, one of the profound social reformers in India was the founder of the Bhoodan Movement. The motivation for Bhoodan came to Vinobaji in 1951 when he was touring the Telengana District of Hyderabad. "The basic objective of Bhoodan Campaign was to avoid the surfacing of bloody revolution by solving the land problem in a peaceful way. The real purpose was to generate the right atmosphere so that progressive land reform could follow".

The various five-year plans have witnessed more investments in rural areas in terms of number of development programmes implemented by the central and state Government. These

programmes have assisted rural people to alter their life-styles somehow. These programmes are related with agriculture and allied activities but there are certain other policies which are specially intended to lift the standard of the rural people in the field of health, education, sanitation etc. After the commencement of economic reforms in 1991, the Government has been given exceptional consideration to the rural India by providing certain developmental schemes to augment the existing programmes and to initiate some new schemes for the rural areas. The following are some of the schemes:

### ***1) THE INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (IRDP)***

The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) is an organised effort to develop the likelihood of developing infrastructural facilities along with emphasized upon growing the earnings of the under-privileged strata of rural India. The commitment of the Government under this programme was to attain the objectives of bringing down the percentage of population below the poverty line to less than 10 percent by 1995. In spite of the achievements made during the Sixth Plan, there continued to exist certain serious lacunae in the implementation of these programmes identified by the various researchers, educationist, government and non-government organizations.

### ***2) SWARNJAYANTI GRAM SWAROZGAR YOJANA (SGSY) :***

This programme was started with effect from 01.04.1999 after review and restructuring of the erstwhile IRDP and its allied programmes namely TRYSEM (Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment) DWCRA (Development of Women & Children in rural areas) and GSY (Gramin Samridhhi Yojana). The earlier programmes are no longer in operation with the launching of the SGSY. The SGSY was somewhat intended to provide self-employment to millions of villagers. Poor families living below the poverty line were organised into Self-help groups (SHG)s established with a mixture of government subsidy and credit from investment banks. The main aim of these SHGs was to bring these poor families above the poverty line and concentrate on income generation through combined effort. The scheme recommended the establishment of activity clusters or clusters of villagers grouped together based on their skills and abilities.

Each of these activity clusters worked on a specific activity chosen based on the aptitude and skill of the people, availability of resources and market potentiality. The SHGs are aided, supported and trained by NGOs, CBOs, individuals, banks and self-help promoting institutions. Government-run District Level Development Agencies (DRDA) and the respective State governments also provided training and financial aid. The programme focusses on establishing microenterprises in rural areas. The SHGs created may have a varying number of members based on the terrain and physical abilities of the members. It goes through three stages of creation:

- Group formation
- Capital formation through the revolving fund and skill development and
- Taking up of economic activity for skill generation.

The SHGs are usually created by selecting individuals from the Below poverty-line (BPL) list provided by the Gram sabha. The SHGs are divided into various blocks and each of these blocks concentrated on 4-5 key activities. The SGSY is mainly run through government-run DRDAs with support from local private institutions, banks and Panchayati raj institutions. The Government also assists villagers in marketing their products by organizing melas or fairs, exhibitions, etc. The Swarna Jayanti Swarozgar Yojna (SGSY) has been renamed as National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM). With this the scheme will be made universal, more focused and time bound for poverty alleviation by 2014. Government subsidy allocated for SGSY per individual is 30% of the total capital investment if the total investment is less than Rs. 7,500 and 50% of the investment for SC/STs if the investment is less than Rs.10,000. For self-help groups, the government offers a subsidy of 50% if the total investment is less than Rs. 1.25 lakhs. There are no monetary ceilings on subsidy in the case of irrigation projects. The SGSY concentrates on the marginalized sections of society. Accordingly, SC/STs comprise 50 percent, women 40% and the physically challenged make up 3% of the total beneficiaries from the scheme. Government funding for the scheme is divided between the Center and State on a 75-25 basis.

### **3) NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEES ACT-2005 (NREGA) :**



The National Rural Employment Guarantees Act.-2005 was launched by the Govt. of India on 2nd Feb. 2006. This Act guarantees 100 days of employment in a financial year to any rural household whose adult members are wishing to do unskilled manual work. But now a day, reports available from various states, the scheme is not functioning in proper way. The programme was renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

#### Objective:

The objective of the Act is to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Strong social safety net for the vulnerable groups by providing a fall-back employment source (when other employment alternatives are scarce or inadequate growth engine for sustainable development of an agricultural economy). Through the process of providing employment on works that address causes of chronic poverty such as drought, deforestation and soil erosion, the Act seeks to strengthen the natural resource base of rural livelihood and create durable assets in rural areas. Effectively implemented, NREGA has the potential to transform the geography of poverty. Empowerment of rural poor through the processes of a rights-based Law. New ways of doing business, as a model of governance reform anchored on the principles of transparency and grass root democracy. Thus, NREGA fosters conditions for inclusive growth ranging from basic wage security and recharging rural economy to a transformative empowerment process of democracy. The Act was notified in 200 districts in the first phase with effect from February 2nd 2006 and then extended to additional 130 districts in the financial year 2007-2008 (113 districts were notified with effect from April 1st 2007, and 17 districts in UP were notified with effect from May 15<sup>th</sup> 2007). The remaining districts have been notified under the NREGA with effect from April 1, 2008. Thus NREGA covers the entire country with the exception of districts that have a hundred percent urban population.

#### **4) THE DISTRICT RURAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (DRDA)**

The District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) has traditionally been the main organ at the District Level to supervise the implementation of different anti-poverty programmes. But due to infrastructural lacunae of local administration the available report is not satisfactory.

#### **5) *NATIONAL BANK FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (NABARD)***

NABARD is set up as an apex Development Bank with an aim for facilitating credit flow to poor peasants and development of agriculture, small scale industries, cottage and village industries, handicrafts and other rural crafts. It also has the mandate to support all other allied economic activities in rural areas, promote integrated and sustainable rural development & secure prosperity of rural areas.

#### **6) *GREEN REVOLUTION PROGRAMME***

The much published Green Revolution Programme of the late-60's had a very holistic design of bringing prosperity to the masses of the rural India but it could not reach up to the mark. No, doubt, it provided some self-reliance in food, yet it was not able to change the overall socio-economic conditions of the Indian mass peasantry.

#### **7) *INDIRA AWAAS YOJANA***

Housing is one of the basis requirements for human survival. For a shelter-less person, possession of a house brings about a profound change in his existence, endowing him with an identity, thus integrating him with his immediate social milieu. With a view to meeting the housing needs of the rural poor, Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) was launched in May, 1985 as a sub-scheme of Jawahar Rozgar Yojana. It is being implemented as an independent scheme since 1 January 1996. The IAY aims at helping rural people below the poverty line belonging to SC/ST, freed bonded labourers in construction of dwelling units and upgradation of existing unserviceable kutcha houses by providing assistance in the form of full grant.

#### **4.4 Community Development Programme**

The concept of community development in India was set off well before independence. Even throughout the freedom struggle, under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, substantial thought was given to rural upliftment and reconstruction. He emphasized on a nineteen point constructive programme for complete independence by truthful and non-violent means. He often counseled the leaders that real independence could be enjoyed only when the rural economy was reinforced and poverty eradicated. He promoted communal harmony, economic equity, social equality, de-addiction from alcohol and narcotics, promotion of '*khadi*' (hand spun and hand woven cloth) and village industries, sanitation, health care, education and empowerment of women. The aim was to generate lucrative employment in rural areas and to perk up the quality of life. The Government of India Act, 1935 under the British Rule, while confirming sovereignty on the provinces, incorporated rural development as an imperative programme for the welfare of the people. With the outburst of World War II and Bengal Famine of 1943, food supply was a critical problem in the majority parts of the country. Stress on food production was provided through 'Grow More Food Campaign' which incorporated the supply of free seeds, subsidies for construction of wells and embankments, supply of manure, fixing a minimum price for grain, etc. However, there was limited scope under the 'Zamindari' system where a small number of rich farmers owned the agriculture lands and the rest of the villagers worked as labourers.

Post-independence of India in 1947, community development assumed elevated priority. In 1948, a pilot community development project was launched through the Etawah Project. Soon in 1952, the Government of India launched 55 Community Development Projects, each covering about 300 villages or a population of 30,000. Though the programme was multi-dimensional, the chief weight was placed on agricultural production, as the areas selected for launching the project were located in irrigated areas or where rainfall wasn't a deterrent. In 1953, the National Extension Service Project was launched with similar aims to envelop bigger areas, including the rain fed regions. This project of three-year duration, distinguished the blocks of 150-300 villages as convenient units for starting community development programmes. The objectives and activities of the Project were modified from time to time

and continued as an enduring multi-function extension agency in each block. These community development blocks were taken care of as usual administrative units for planning and development with standard budgetary allocations.

By the end of the First Five Year Plan (1952-57), 1114 blocks covering 163,000 villages were in function and by the 60s, the CDP covered the entire country. The programme was characterized by the following features:

- Comprehensive in content;
- Economic progress as the core objective;
- Flexible programmes and
- Posting of a multipurpose worker at the village level.

The plan defined the vital objective of planning as creation of conditions in which living standards are rationally high and the citizens have full and equal opportunity for growth and justice. The programme aimed at upliftment of the rural poor, covered agriculture, animal husbandry, roads, health, education, housing, employment, social and cultural activities. While aiming at economic development through agriculture and cottage industries, efforts were made to improve literacy, health, sanitation, housing, transport and communication. To execute the multi-facet programme, an extension organization, headed by a Block Development Officer (BDO) was established at each block or the revenue tehsil, with a team of subject specialists and village level workers (VLW). Each VLW covered a population of 5000-6000, spread over 5-10 villages to implement various development programmes launched by different departments. The VLWs were expected to meet the farmers and persuade them to take part in various development schemes. The BDO was assisted by eight Extension Officers, one each for agriculture, animal husbandry, Panchayat, cooperation rural industries, rural engineering, social education and women and child welfare. Additionally, a medical officer with support staff was posted in every block to offer medical assistance. The extension officers reported primarily to the BDO and to their senior as well, in the respective department, based at the district headquarters. The BDOs reported to the District Collector,

who is the administrator of the district. The Development Commissioner, at the state level was responsible for coordinating community development through the District Collectors. At the National level, the administration of the community development programme was handed over to the Planning Commission. 1950s till mid 1970s, there was no important attainment and poverty was at the threshold of escalating. The Indian economy had developed into slower compared to those in the East and South East Asia over the post independence period. The levels of living were incongruously low for a vast majority of the population. The Land Reforms Act of 1956 did eliminate remnants of the feudal-colonial rule from the scene, but the enactment of the laws did not aid the poor and landless to get power over the land, particularly in North India. There were fluctuations in the poverty status but the major increase in poverty was observed in the late sixties and early seventies (55% - 69%), when rainfall levels were less than normal and monsoon failures lingering beyond a year. Even the central programme of agricultural development was futile to augment food production. In early seventies, India was bound to import food grains. Seeping benefits of development were mopped out by the increasing population. Improvement in agricultural productivity, improvement in the absence of education and infrastructural development was not sustainable. The resources allotted for community development during 1952-67 were also so low that it worked out to barely Rs.10 per head over this period.

#### **4.5 Panchayat Raj Institutions**

In 1957, five years after launching the community development programme, the Government appointed the Balvantrai Mehta Committee to propose measures to eliminate obstructions in implementing the programme. The Committee recommended the configuration of a three-tier-system of rural local Government, to be called 'Panchayati Raj' (Rule by Local Councils). These were Gram Panchayat (Village level), Panchayat Samiti (Block level) and Zilla Parishad (District level). The plan was to decentralize the process of decision making and to shift the decision making centre nearer to the people, support their participation and situate the bureaucracy under the local people's control. However, the Panchayati Raj was not able to fulfill all the expectations of the people and planners. A major

rationale was the domination of socially and economically advantaged sections of the local community, who ignored the welfare of the weaker sections. The other reasons were lack of accord among the elected members due to political fractions and pervasiveness of corruption and incompetence. In mid sixties, the national priority was shifted to agricultural production and a distinct technological orientation was given to agriculture. Under the Fourth and Fifth Five Year Plans (1969-74 and 1974-79), the central government introduced independent administrative hierarchies to carry out special programmes, bypassing the Panchayati Raj institutions. Special programmes like Small Farmers' Development Agency (SFDA), Intensive Agricultural Areas Programme (IAAP), Intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP), Tribal Development Agency (TDA), Marginal, Small Farmers and Agricultural Labourers Development Agency (MFAL) and area development agencies such as Command Area Development, Drought Prone Area and Hill area Development Programmes were financed and operated directly by the Central Government.

#### **4.6 Present Rural Development Paradigm**

India implemented the New Economic Policy in 1991 which was closely associated with Globalization. At this stage, the paradigm of rural development was meant to speed up country's economic growth, but in doing so it was found that the system widened greater socio-economic inequality amongst the people of rural India. The government has incurred a huge expenditure on the long term policies for other including urban development but has inadequately spent on health, education, food, environment which is the fundamental need of the common people, especially for the rural people in India.

The Global Hunger Index, India ranks 66th amongst 88 countries. As per UNDP, Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI), 65 cores of Indian people are Poor. They are mostly rural folk. The report of National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector mentions that 77 percent of Indian population live on rupees 20/- or less per day. The poverty ratio in rural areas as found by the Prof. Tendulkar Committee set up by the Planning Commission and the Prof. N.C. Saxena Committee set up by the Ministry of Rural Development was to 41.8 percent and 50

percent respectively. The Right to Food Campaign registered more than 5000 starvation deaths in different parts of the countryside between 2001 and 2005. In current times, India has adopted the policy of promoting the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for faster Industrial development. Similarly, mining rights are being granted to the corporations mostly over the densely populated tribal pockets. As a result, a immense land acquisition by the large corporations in various guises, have displaced, deprived and destroyed the livelihoods of these poor tribal and peasants. In India there is a specific law for forest dwellers namely, PESA (Panchyats Extension to Scheduled Act) to protect their lands and livelihoods where it is clearly mentioned that non tribal or outsiders cannot purchase their lands. However, the government is ignoring the law consciously to help the multinationals. At present, in India conflicts between peasant sections and the State have become frequent. The government is grabbing their lands, forests, water forcibly and curbing their basic rights. Many a times, these conflicts results in a bloody war as seen in Singur, Nandigram in West Bengal, Kashipur in Orissa and Dantewara in Chhattisgarh etc.

#### **4.6.1 Impact of globalization on farmers**

In India, approximately 80 percent of the rural population is engaged in agriculture. As a result, the cost of agricultural production has amplified because cost of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation etc. has increased substantially. The capital intensive and import based agricultural activity have eventually started displacing mostly poor, small and marginal peasants from land. Now, the estimated annual business from rural market of agri-inputs including tractors is worth Rs.45,000 crore. Multinational agri-business companies like Cargill, Pepsico, Monsanto, ITC etc. are already in the field to dominate this profitable market. A novel class has appeared in rural India during the period of globalization that has been benefited by this globalization process. These are mainly the rich and high middle class farmers. Majority of the owners themselves do not cultivate the land, they oversee the agricultural activities and such supervising families are basically engaged in services in the government or private sector or business especially related to agribusiness. In some places they also act as moneylenders and lend money to poor peasants at a high interest and control the local political power. Basically, these classes have more

purchasing power and are the main customers for durable and other luxurious goods in rural India. Ironically, the residual poor and marginal peasants comprise the large segment in rural areas and have been subjected to unfathomable dilemma in the era of globalization. Small farmers, in particular, are hardly benefited by this globalization epoch while big farmers with their economic and political pressure, are able to harvest the benefits of globalization as they can get best technologies, grow cash crops, negotiate agreements, and market their products.

On the other hand distressed peasants who are feeding the nation are mostly indebted. According to the National Crime Bureau record, in the ten years period between 1998 and 2008 as many as 2 lakh farmers have committed suicide in India. According to Report of the Comptroller and auditor General of India "Out of 89.35 million farmer households, 43.42 million (48.6%) were reported to be indebted. The incidence of indebtedness was highest in Andhra Pradesh (82.0%), to be followed by Tamil Nadu (74.5%), Punjab (65.4%), Kerala (64.4%), Karnataka (61.6%) and Maharashtra (54.8%). On an average, the amount of debt per farmer household was Rs.12,585/-". Estimated number of indebted farmer households was highest in Uttar Pradesh (6.9 million), to be followed by Andhra Pradesh (4.9 million) and Maharashtra (3.6 million)".



#### **4.6.2 Emphasis on People's Participation**

In spite of different programmes initiated for rural development, there is yet to be any major advantage to the poor to sustain their livelihood. The two major concerns have been centralization of power and non-involvement of people in the process of development since the introduction of Panchayati Raj. Although, it was widely acknowledged as the only optimism for activating people's participation which is the spirit of a democratic system, the system had generated strain and division. This demanded Panchayat Raj reforms through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in 1992, which empowered the PR institutions to bear the accountability of development and decentralized planning. Till then, all the functions were carried out by the government machinery and there was no chance for participation by the villagers. This had created a reliance pattern and enabled the government officials to order terms to the people.

Under this constitutional amendment, 29 items of development were transferred to PRIs. These can be grouped under the following sectors: Agriculture; Forestry and Environment; Industries; Infrastructure, minimum needs; Social welfare; Poverty Alleviation and Maintenance of community assets. Considering the weak status of the Gram Panchayats to facilitate village level micro-planning for development, the District Planning Committee has been strengthened with members representing various government and non-government organisations. To assist the planning at micro-level, it was planned to reinforce the Gram Sabha (village assembly). The Gram Panchayat can use the Gram Sabha as a forum for discussion and finalisation of annual plans. Such a round-table can also set the precedence for implementing various development programmes. Simultaneously, a suitable mechanism should be developed to continue the interest of the villagers in Gram Sabha activities. In the absence of ample contribution, vested interests may influence the proceedings for their own benefits. Initiatives from farmers' organisations, self help groups, educational institutions and other voluntary organizations to nominate their representatives on the Gram Sabha can guarantee their participation in the proceedings and uphold the interest of the common people.

#### 4.6.3 Role of Non-Government Organisations

The major reason influencing the thriving implementation of rural development in India is motivation of the poor families to ensure their active participation. Development of appropriate people's organisations is also essential to access the benefits of various schemes, particularly by the illiterate poor. To ensure people's involvement in the development process and to take them into confidence, they should be involved in the programme, right from the stage of planning. Numerous innovative programmes implemented on a pilot scale have revealed that many rational suggestions made by even the poor people can be effortlessly implemented to produce good results. Such an approach asks for elasticity in the programme. The target families should be motivated to assume the responsibility of implementing the programme, while the implementing agencies should play the role of a catalyst. In this chore of integrated rural development, voluntary agencies can play a significant role.

The voluntary organizations or non-government organisations (NGOs) in general center their voluntary action and service to embark upon the troubles of the common people or to assist them face their challenges. The main characteristic of voluntary agencies is human-touch. Organisations with profound voluntarism and professionalism can execute the programme efficiently. Commitment of the volunteers and staff, their relationship with the community, flexibility in the programme, innovative approaches to solve the problems can result in greater success. Local organizations who have been working in rural areas can serve the community more efficiently. During the 1970s the government recognized the crucial role of voluntary agencies in complementing government's effort in rural development. Earlier, the NGOs formed by religious institutions and liberal public were involved in operating hospitals and educational institutions. With assistance from international donor agencies, the Ministry of Agriculture formed an independent organization called 'Freedom from Hunger Campaign' to sustain the voluntary organizations involved in rural development. This organization was re-organized and renamed as 'People's Action for Development-India (PAD-I)'. PAD-I was merged with Council for Advancement of Rural Technology in 1986 and renamed as Council

for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART). Since then, CAPART has been financially assisting the voluntary agencies involved in rural development. In the last two decades, several initiatives of the NGOs have had important impact on the development. Pervasive success of these initiatives have now encouraged many state governments to initiate schemes to encourage people's participation and numerous centrally sponsored schemes have predetermined the development of community based organisations to plan and implement the programme.

With better opportunities for promoting self-employment through investment in agriculture and micro-enterprise, services were formed for availing soft loans from banks and other financial institutions. The Reserve Bank of India issued guidelines to all the bankers not to be adamant on collateral security up to Rs.25, 000 drawn by the poor for investment in development activities. As a result, over Rs.250 billion was distributed as rural credit in 1995-96, of which 50% amount was from the cooperatives and the rest from other banking institutions. Nevertheless, as the formal banking operations were not expedient for many villagers because of their inflexibility, distance and high cost of operation, quite a lot of pioneering banking institutions have been established by the NGOs.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

The observations of Prof. M.S. Swaminathan in his Report of National Commission on Farmers-2006-“Economic growth which bypasses a huge population is joyless growth and not sustainable in the long run” brings out the factual image of development. What then is the future of India's rural population numbering over 700 million? “We cannot be silent onlookers to a situation where 30% of India is shining and 70% is weeping”. Equity considerations cannot be ignored for too long. Faster growth in agriculture with improvement in welfare of the rural population is important. The need is not only to register increase in agriculture (rural) production in million tons but actual improvement in rural incomes, which will benefit millions of poor people.

In the present-day circumstance, it can be obviously seen that the rural poor people is still intrinsic to Indian Society and it actually is the building block of the development of the Society. If India actually wants rural development in right sense it needs to urgent fortify the economic conditions and status of the poor sections in rural areas and also take necessary prolific rural developmental programmes.

#### **4.8. Lets Sum Up:**

- After 67 years of independence and an ever escalating population, India reels under poverty, hunger, malnutrition and urban-rural imbalanced growth.
- The population that is incapable and unable to earn their own income and do not have any source of livelihood are classified as poor. Unemployment, seasonal employment, underemployment are the major causes of rural poverty.
- Rural development projects are often implemented without ample planning. In the absence of an integrated approach to embark upon multidimensional interrelated problems, sectorial development activities may not convey expected results.
- Rural development is a multi-dimensional process which includes the development of socio-economic circumstances of the people living in the rural areas.
- In the pre-independence period, numbers of rural development programmes were started by the Social Reformers. Some of these programmes were gradually disappeared and some merged with Government sponsored schemes later.
- Without much delay after attainment of independence, the central government had undertaken some important programmes of rural reconstruction. These are: Community Development Programme (1952), National Extension Services (1953) and Panchayati Raj (1959) on the recommendation of Hon'ble Balwant Rai Mehta Committee's report.
- However, If India really wants rural development in true sense it needs to urgent uplift the economic conditions and status of the poor sections in rural areas and also take necessary fruitful rural developmental programmes.

**4.9. Keywords:** Rural Development Programmes, Villages, Farmers, Community Development,

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