



**PGDRM**

**MADHYA PRADESH BHOJ (OPEN) UNIVERSITY**  
**Raja Bhoj Marg Kolar Road, BHOPAL (M.P.)**

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**Post Graduate Diploma in Rural Management (PGDRM)**

**MRD-102**

**Rural Development Programmes**

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## Unit – 1

### Rural Sociology

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#### Learning Objectives:

After completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- *provide key insights into the emergence of rural sociology as a discipline*
- *define and explain rural sociology*
- *understand about its nature, scope and significance*
- *evaluate significance of the discipline to the Indian context*

#### Structure:

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Definition of Rural Sociology
- 1.3 Emergence of Rural Sociology
  - 1.3.1 Rural Sociology as a Systematic Science
  - 1.3.2 Emergence of Rural Sociology in India
- 1.4 Importance and Significance of Rural Sociology
- 1.5 Nature of Rural Sociology
- 1.6 Scope of Rural Sociology
- 1.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.8 Keywords
- 1.9 References
- 1.10 Check Your Progress – Possible Answers

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#### 1.1. Introduction:

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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.

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

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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 the laws governing the specific Indian rural and social organisation has still to be created. Such a science is, however, the basic premise for the renovation of the Indian rural society, as indispensable for the renovation of the Indian society as a whole”.

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.

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

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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 time, but rural sociology had then not emerged due 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.

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

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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.

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

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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 citizens 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.

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#### **1.4. Importance and Significance of Rural Sociology:**

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Rural sociology holds immense significance in a county 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 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, there-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 the process of development.

As per general understanding, 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 importance and significance of the discipline of rural sociology:

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### **1.4.1. Class Formation and Power Transformation:**

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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.

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### **1.4.2 Panchayati Raj and its impact:**

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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.

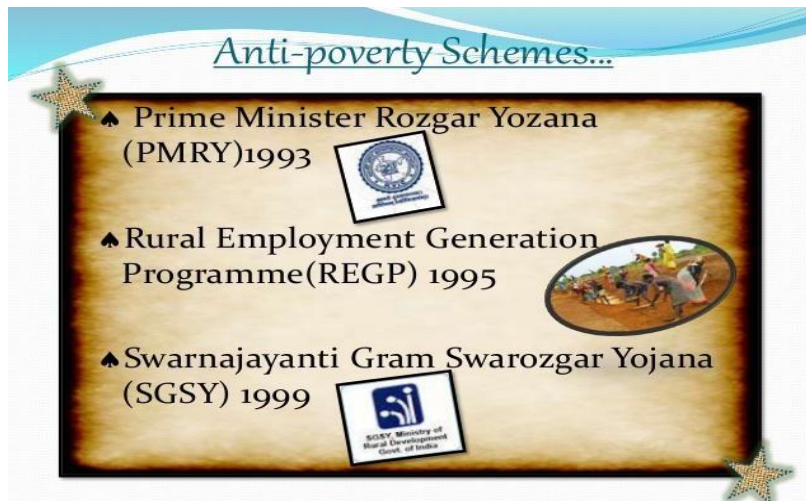


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### **1.4.3 Poverty Removal Programmes:**

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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.




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#### **1.4.4 Changing Ecosystem and Environmental Dilemma:**

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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 ecosystem. 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.

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#### **1.4.5 Constitutional Obligations:**

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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.

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#### **1.4.6 Despair of the small and marginal farmers:**

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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 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 living and provide them with viable opportunities in other livelihood realms.

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#### **1.4.7 Diverse Ethnicities:**

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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 above mentioned 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.

### **Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with the possible answers provided at the end of this unit.

1) What are the basic significances of the discipline of rural sociology?

Ans.

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

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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:

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### **1.5.1 Scientific Methodology:**

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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.

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### **1.5.2 Facts Accumulation:**

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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.

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### **1.5.3 Empiricism:**

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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.

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### **1.5.4 Precision and Accuracy:**

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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.

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### **1.5.5 Discovery of cause-effect relationship:**

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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.

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**1.5.6 Predictions:**

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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:

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**1.5.7 Lack of Objectivity:**

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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.

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**1.5.8 Lack of experiment:**

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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.

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**1.5.9 Lack of measurement:**

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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.

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#### **1.5.10 Lack of Exactness:**

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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.

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#### **1.5.11 Lack of Prediction:**

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The fifth and final objection against the nature or 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.



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

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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.

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### **1.6.1 Rural Society:**

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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.

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### **1.6.2 Rural Population:**

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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.

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### **1.6.3 Rural Community:**

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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.

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

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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.

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

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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.



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

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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.



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

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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.

- **ASSIMILATION:** It means one culture merge itself with the dominant culture. Eg: Jainism in India merging with Hindu Culture.
- **ENCULTURATION:** It indicates learning one's own culture. Eg: Tamilian learning Tamil Culture
- **CORE CULTURE:** It indicates any culture which used by most of the members in the society. Eg: Caste system found in all over India.

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### **1.6.8 Rural Religion:**

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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.

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### **1.6.9 Rural Culture:**

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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.

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

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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.



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

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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.

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

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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.

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

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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.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Social Studies Worksheet


### 3 Types of Communities I

Using the words below, write the community type in the box next to the picture.


Urban	Rural	Suburban
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1.

2.

3.

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

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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 of 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.

### **Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with the possible answers provided at the end of this unit.

2) What are the various methods to examine the nature of the discipline of rural sociology?

Ans.

3) What are the various scopes of rural sociology?

Ans.

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## 1.7. Let Us Sum Up:

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- 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.

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## 1.8. Keywords:

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- **Empiricism:** Empiricism in the philosophy of science emphasizes evidence, especially as discovered in experiments. It is a fundamental part of the scientific method that all hypotheses and theories must be tested against observations of the natural world rather than resting solely on *a priori* reasoning, intuition, or revelation.
- **Community:** A community is commonly considered a social unit (a group of three or more people) who share something in common, such as norms, values, identity, and often a sense of place that is situated in a given geographical area(e.g. a village, town, or neighborhood).
- **Population:** A population is a summation of all the organisms of the same group or species, which live in a particular geographical area, and have the capability of interbreeding. In sociology, population refers to a collection of humans. Demography is a social science which entails the statistical study of human populations.

- **Planning:** Planning is the process of thinking about and organizing the activities required to achieve a desired goal. It involves the creation and maintenance of a plan, such as developmental aspects that require conceptual skills.

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### **1.9. References:**

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1. Desai. A.R., Rural Sociology in India
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3. Bertrand. A.L., Rural Sociology
4. Shah. G., Gandhian Approach to Rural Development
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### **1.10. CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – POSSIBLE ANSWERS:**

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#### **Check Your Progress I**

- 1) The basic significances of the discipline of rural sociology are Class Formation and Power Transformation, Panchayati Raj and its impact, Poverty Removal Programmes, Changing Ecosystem and Environmental Dilemma, Constitutional Obligations, Despair of the small and marginal farmers, Diverse Ethnicities.

#### **Check Your Progress II**

- 2) The various methods to examine the nature of the discipline of rural sociology are Scientific Methodology, Facts Accumulation, Empiricism, Precision and Accuracy, Discovery of cause-effect relationship, Predictions, Lack of Objectivity, Lack of experiment, Lack of measurement, Lack of Exactness, Lack of Prediction.
- 3) The various scope of rural sociology are Rural Society, Rural Population, Rural Community, Rural Social Organization, Rural Economy, Rural Social Institution, Rural social Process, Rural Religion, Rural Culture, Rural Social Problems, Rural Social Control, Rural Social Change, Rural Urban Contrast, Rural Planning and Reconstruction.



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## Unit – 2

### Village Community

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#### Learning Objectives:

After completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- *provide key insights into the evolution and growth of village community*
- *provide the characteristics and types of village community*
- *distinguish rural-urban contrast and continuum*

#### Structure:

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Characteristics of a Village Community
- 2.3 Factors for the Growth of Village Community
- 2.4 Types of Villages
- 2.5 Rural-Urban Continuum
- 2.6 Rural-Urban Contrast
- 2.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.8 Key Words
- 2.9 References
  
- 2.10 Check Your Progress – Possible Answers

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#### 2.1 Introduction:

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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 neighbourhood. 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.**

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## **2.2 Characteristics of a Village Community:**

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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:

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### **2.2.1 Bases of social organization:**

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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.

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### **2.2.2 Group of people:**

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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.

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### **2.2.3 Specific locality:**

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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.

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### **2.2.4 Smaller size:**

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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.

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### **2.2.5 Significance of neighbourhood:**

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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, love and affection 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 neighbour during any crisis and is also supported similarly by his neighbours.

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### **2.2.6 Community sentiment:**

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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.

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### **2.2.7 Prevalence of primary relations:**

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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.

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### **2.2.8 Marriage:**

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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.

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### **2.2.9 Joint family system:**

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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.

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### **2.2.10 Agricultural economy:**

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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.

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### **2.2.11 Caste System:**

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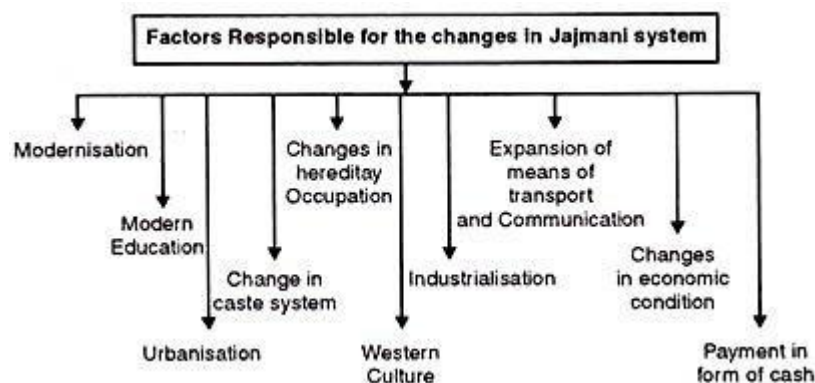
Caste system is an exceptional feature of the Indian village community. It prescribes the role, status, occupation and marital relationships of the village people. The caste system plays a decisive role on the villagers.

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### 2.2.12 Jajmani system:

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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.



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### 2.2.13 Uncomplicated lifestyle:

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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.

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### 2.2.14 Faith in religion:

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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.

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### 2.2.15 Homogeneity:

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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.

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**2.2.16 Panchayat system:**

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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.

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**2.2.17 Informal social control:**

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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.

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**2.2.18 Mobility:**

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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.

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**2.2.19 Status of women:**

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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.



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**2.2.20 Standard of living:**

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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.

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**2.2.21 Culture:**

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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.

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**2.3. Factors for the Growth of Village Community:**

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

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**2.3.1. Physical Factors:**

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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 favourable 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.

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### **2.3.2. Economic Factors:**

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**a) Agriculture:**

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 dependent 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.



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**2.3.3. Social factors:**

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**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.

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**2.3.4. Ecological factors:**

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**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.

**Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with the possible answers provided at the end of this unit.

1) What are the characteristics of a village community?

Ans.

2) What are the factors responsible for the growth of village community?

Ans.

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## 2.4. Types of Villages:

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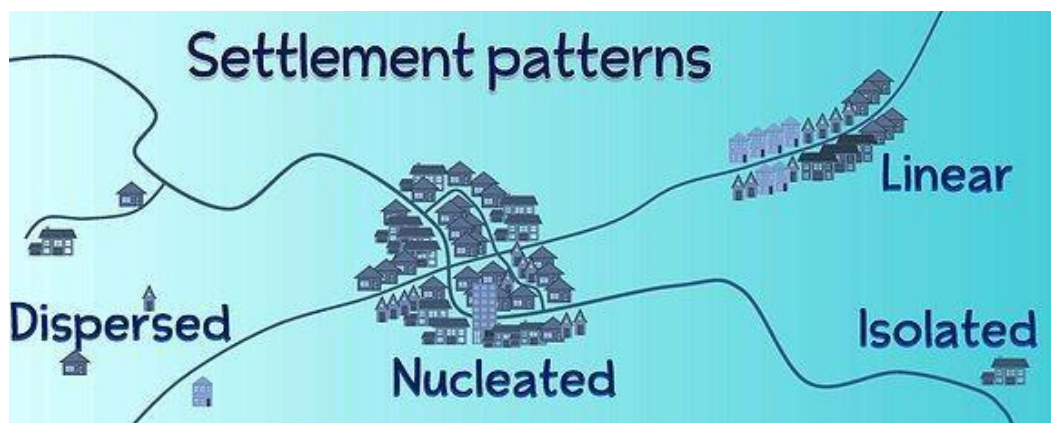
The study of the classification of village community assumes implication on numerous grounds. Its study allows understanding varied social institutions and cultural patterns operating in the rural context. In addition, such a categorization is helpful in analyzing the growth of a specific village community. 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 of the village communities categorized as:



**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 refer 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.

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## **2.5. Rural-Urban Contrast:**

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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 centres 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 it. 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.

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. Besides 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 centres. 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.

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## **2.6. Rural-Urban Continuum:**

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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 endeavour 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 Tönnies' 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 Tepoztlan. 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. Maclver 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

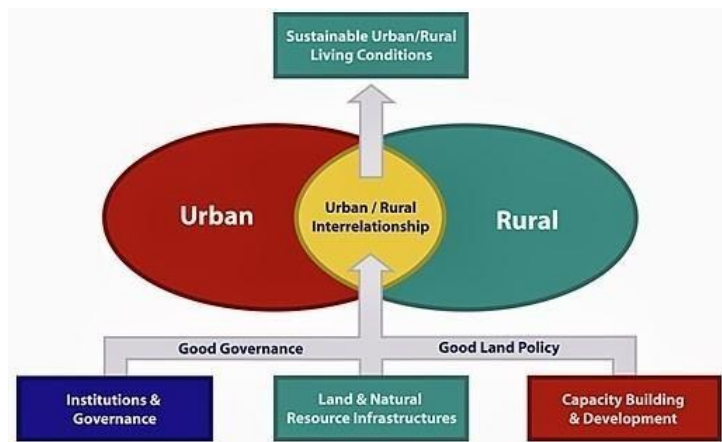


anarchic, more, for instance the suburbs do not conform to the model. One can also find traditional and interpersonally intimated relationships in cities, as demonstrated by the working class community of Bethnal Green by Michael Young, and conflicts and isolation in the countryside. Moreover, both city 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.

### **Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with the possible answers provided at the end of this unit.

3) How many types of villages have been categorized?

Ans.

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### **2.7. Let Us 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 neighbourhood.
- 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 human interaction but differ most widely when diversity and choice are issues.

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## **2.8. Keywords:**

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- **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.
- **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.
- **Rural – Urban Continuum:** Continuum means continuity. By rural-urban continuum is meant “continuity from the village to the city.
- **Livelihood:** A livelihood is a means of making a living. It encompasses people’s capabilities, assets, income and activities required to secure the necessities of life. A livelihood is sustainable when it enables people to cope with and recover from shocks and stresses (such as natural disasters and economic or social upheavals) and enhance their well-being and that of future generations without undermining the natural environment or resource base.

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**2.10. CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – POSSIBLE ANSWERS:**

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**Check Your Progress I**

- 1) Bases of social organization  
Group of people  
Specific locality  
Smaller size  
Significance of neighbourhood  
Community sentiment  
Prevalence of primary relations  
Marriage  
Joint family system  
Agricultural economy  
Caste System  
Jajmani system  
Uncomplicated lifestyle  
Faith in religion  
Homogeneity  
Panchayat system  
Informal social control  
Mobility  
Status of women  
Standard of living  
Culture
- 2) Physical factors –Land, Water, and Climate.  
Economic factors – Agriculture, Cottage Industries.  
Social factors – Peace, Security, Cooperation, Intelligence and Labour  
Ecological factors – Population, Livelihood, Social Organization, and Location.

**Check Your Progress II**

- 3) The nucleated village  
Dispersed village  
The linear village  
The mixed village.

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