

**DIPLOMA COURSE IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT (DRD)**

**P A P E R - I**  
**FOUNDATIONS OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY**



**Odisha State Open University (OSOU), Sambalpur**

## **UNIT – I**

### **Rural Sociology:**

- . Emergence**
- . Importance**
- . Nature**
- . Scope**
- . Significance in the Indian context**

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**Objectives:**

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

*To define and explain rural sociology*

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

*To know the significance of the discipline to the Indian context*

**1.1 Rural Sociology: An Introduction**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Although, the cultural and religious realm of both the communities doesn't appear obvious, there are various differences in the basis style of living of the respective populations.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**1.4.5 Constitutional Obligations:** As observed earlier, the growth and progress of rural societies has always been a compulsion on the part of the governments (both state and central) which has to be implemented as prescribed in the Constitution. The Constitution of India Directive Principles of State Policy are "fundamental in governance of the country". And it is "the duty of the state to apply these principles in making laws". As per the constitutional mandate, the state is asked to build a social order in which justice-social, economic and political-prevails in all the institutions of the national life. "The state shall direct its policy in such a manner as to secure the right of all men and women to an adequate means of livelihood....

"Some of the other important directives relate to the prerequisite of opportunities for "the organization of village Panchayat" and enhancement in the standard of living. There are a variety of objectives of five year plans and the development policies but the fundamental spotlight is on the development of the standard of living of the vast rural population residing in the villages. In this context it is obligatory to foster development in the rural segment of society. Rural sociology can,

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

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

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

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

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

### **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.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **1.6.3 Rural Community:**

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

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

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

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

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

### **1.6.6 Rural Economy:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

It is obvious from the above analysis that the scope or subject matter 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.

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

Ans

2) What are the various scope of rural sociology?

Ans.

### 1.7. Lets Sum Up:

- Rural sociology is a field of sociology that is connected with the study of social life in rural areas.
  
- It is an active field in much of the world, and in the United States originated in the 1910s  
With close ties to the national Department of Agriculture and land-grant university colleges of agriculture
  
- Rural Sociology, as indicated by its name, studies rural society, rural social structures and institutions.

- ▯ The rural society is primarily dependent on agriculture and hence rural sociology also concerns itself on the peasant society. Rural sociology is centered on the rural community life.
  
- ▯ During the beginning of the 1950s, the sociologists and the social anthropologists began conducting extensive and innumerable studies in the field of rural sociology.

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

### 1.8. Keywords:

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

### 1.9. REFERENCES:

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### 1.10. CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – POSSIBLE ANSWERS.

#### Check Your Progress I

- 1) The basic significances of the discipline of rural sociology are Class Formation and Power Transformation, Panchayat 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

1) 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.

2) 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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