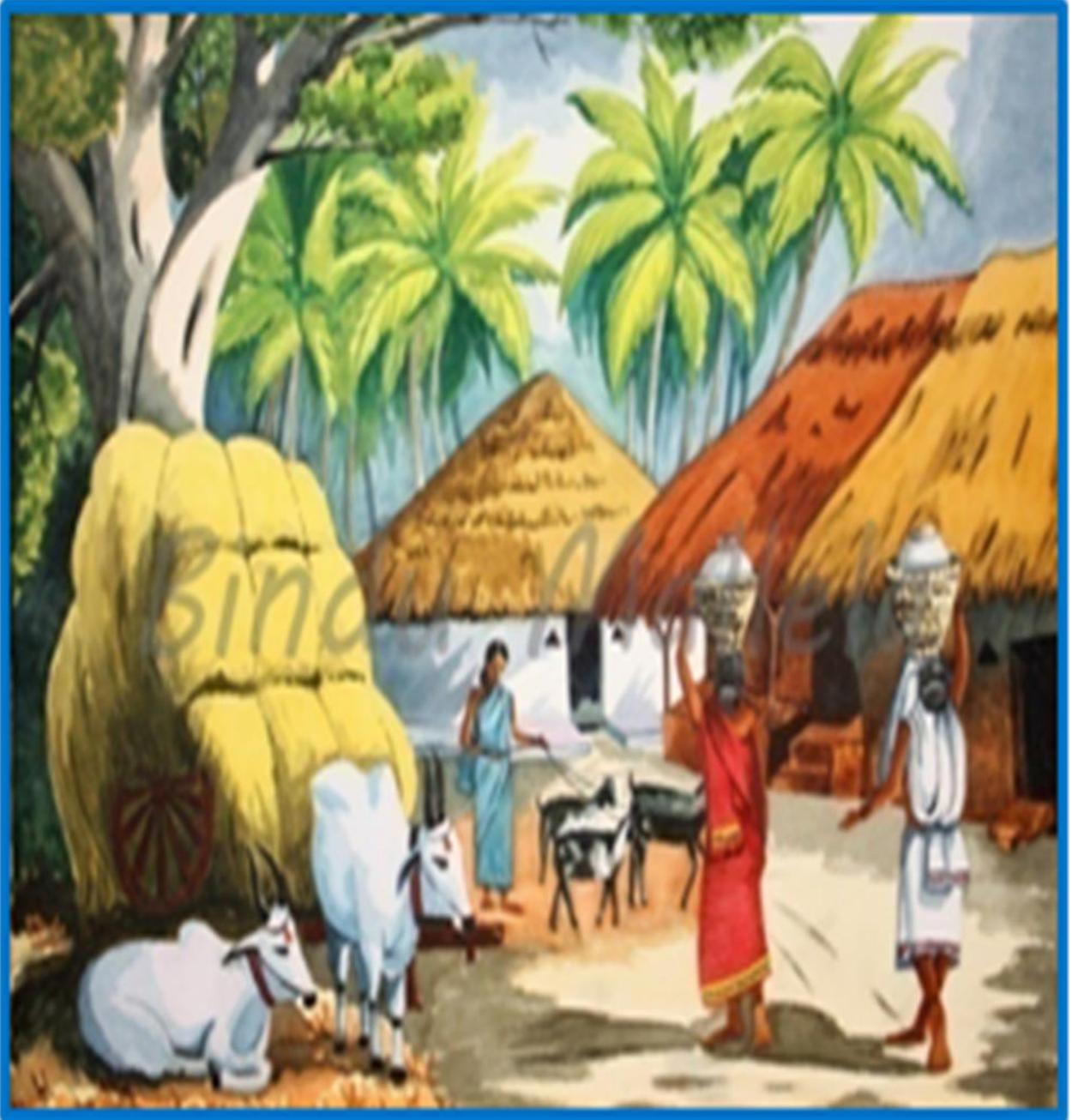




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Odisha State Open University, Sambalpur, Odisha

## DIPLOMA COURSE IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT (DRD)



**Compiled by:**

**S T Rehman**

Email: [st.rehman@osou.ac.in](mailto:st.rehman@osou.ac.in)

Website: [www.osou.ac.in](http://www.osou.ac.in)

**Department of Rural Development**

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

**P A P E R - I**

**FOUNDATIONS OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY**

**Compiled by:  
S T Rehman  
Department of Rural Development**

## **UNIT – II**

### **Rural Social Structure:**

- . Village Community**
- . Characteristics**
- . Factors affecting village community**
- . Types of Villages**
- . Rural – Urban Contrast**
- . Rural – Urban Continuum**

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## **Objectives:**

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

*provide the characteristics and types of village community*

*To discuss rural-urban contrast and continuum*

### **2.1 Evolution and Growth of Village Community:**

The man was nomadic in nature and was completely ignorant about farming and cultivation. He used to wander for food everywhere until he learnt the skills of agriculture and settled down. By acquiring the knowledge of agriculture, he settled in a particular geographical area and was not required to keep wandering. As they found fertile land for farming many individuals came together, formed families and created an eventual 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.**

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

A village community is basically characterized as a particular area inhabited by small number of people sharing intimate and informal relationships with one another. The primary source of livelihood of the rural

people is agriculture, though they also get engaged in forest produce collection, weaving, dairy etc. In the words of T.L Smith, "Agriculture and the collecting enterprises are the bases of the rural economy, farmer and countryman are almost similar terms". Apart from these features, the people of the village also exhibit homogeneity of population due to which they do not frequently come into conflict with each other and maintain mutual intimacy and harmony. The following are features that characterize rural community:

2.2.1 **Bases of social organization:** In India there are more than half a million villages. Eighty per cent of the Indian population lives in these villages. Hence, in every respect the future of India is very much linked with the development of villages.

2.2.2 **Group of people:** Village community signifies a group of people in which the people do not take part in a particular interest. On the other hand, they share the basic conditions of a common life.

2.2.3 **Specific locality:** Locality is the physical basis of village community. A group of people forms village community only when it begins to inhabit in a definite locality.

2.2.4 **Smaller size:** Village communities are generally smaller in size. The Census of India assigns a place with 5000 inhabitants as a village community. 80% of the Indian villages have less than 1000 population each.

2.2.5 **Significance of neighbourhood:** Neighbourhood relationship is another significant characteristic of village life. Two factors namely living in immediacy on the part of the rural people and an atmosphere of fellow-feeling, friendship, sympathy, affection and love available in the rural setting, encourage neighbourhood relationship in the village. So far as the village community is concerned, each one loves his neighbour as he loves himself. He, in fact, considers his neighbour more central than the relatives living far away from him. He always defends his neighbour during any crisis and is also supported similarly by his neighbours.

2.2.6 **Community sentiment:** Community sentiment is the primary very core of village community. The villagers display a strong sense of belongingness and we-feeling. Often

"my own village" is the normal expression of such community sentiment. Furthermore, the members have a sense of reliance on the community for both physical and psychological satisfaction.

2.2.7 **Prevalence of primary relations:** A village community is often observed as a primary group. It is characterized by the preponderance of personal and as such comparatively long-lasting relations. There is relative unfussiness and genuineness in human relationships. Kinship groups play critical roles in the context of the village community.

2.2.8 **Marriage:** Generally in the villages, endogamy is practiced. The traditional system of marriage is predominantly arranged marriage based on choice of parents selecting the spouse for their children. There is either no or very little freedom on the part of both boys and girls in matters of mate selection.

2.2.9 **Joint family system:** The joint family system still shapes the basic structural unit in the rural community. All the members of a family stay together under the same roof, take food cooked in the common hearth, hold property together, participate in common worship and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred. It is established that the amount of joint families in villages is much more than that in towns and cities.

2.2.10 **Agricultural economy:** Agriculture is considered as one of the most profound occupations in rural India. It is fundamentally a way of life for the villagers as their entire mode of social life, day by day schedule, habits, customs and attitudes spin round agriculture. A very minute segment of the rural population relies upon non-agricultural occupations such as carpentry, pottery, basket making etc for their livelihood but these occupations are also indirectly linked to the major occupation that is agriculture.

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

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

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

2.2.14 **Faith in religion:** Religion plays a supreme role in the life of the village. Religious influence is visible in every significant action of village life like sowing, harvesting of crops, birth, marriage,

illness, death etc. On all such occasions, the villagers observe religious ceremonies in the form of 'Puja', 'Mela' or 'kirtan'. In this way, faith in religion is very robust in rural area.

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **2.3.1. Physical Factors:**

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

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

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

### 2.3.2. Economic Factors:

- a) **Agriculture scenario:** Agriculture is considered as the spine of rural livelihood and is even today maintained as the mainstay of the village communities. The standard and condition of living of the rural masses is highly dependant in the state of agriculture in that particular village community. If there is an increase in the productivity in the village, then the village runs on the path of growth and prosperity. If the yield rate gains significantly then the village people have ample time for recreational activities and engage in cordial relationship. But if the condition of agriculture faces threat due to any factor then the village community faces a lot of loss and socio-economic decay. The developed countries have invented scientifically advanced techniques and equipments that have resulted in higher productivity that has impacted positively on the economic standard of living of the people. On the other hand, countries like India where agriculture plays a prominent role still

lag behind which leads to farmer frustration and apparent suicides. The farmers face a lot of debt crisis and economic degeneration. Also, the soil loses its fertility value by repeated production and absence of soil testing and soil cure.

b) **Cottage Industries:** Apart from agriculture, the cottage industries have played a crucial role in the growth and richness of the village community. In the village, the cottage industries are linked with the manufacture of hand spun cloth, ropes, baskets, toys, *gur*, *agarbatti* etc. While on the one hand, these cottage industries provide a means of livelihood to landless people, they also engage the seasonal farmers and the female folk of the village. By engaging such people into work, the cottage industries facilitate in upgrading the financial condition of the poor and marginalized sections of the society.

### 2.3.3. Social factors:

a) **Peace:** For an enduring and healthy development of the village community it is required that there should be the presence of external and internal peace. In countries, where there is always the threat of war and unrest, the village communities find it difficult to tackle and hence, their growth is hampered.

b) **Security:** Peace is based on security, the permanent growth of village communities being impossible in the absence of the latter. Security comprises of several kinds of security from diseases, security of livelihood, security of finance, security from various other activities of life. For a community to thrive it is essential to insulate it from insecurities and troubles that lead to its destruction. Be it man-made or natural calamities, every village community needs proper security to grow and develop.

c) **Cooperation:** Community development becomes difficult to attain in a non-cooperative environment. There are various activities in a village which rely on the collective cooperation of the entire community and cannot be delegated to the responsibility of just one individual. The village people work out a common goal for the holistic development of the village and work together for the prosperity of the village.

d) **Intelligence and labour:** For accelerated growth in the villages, it is highly necessary that its denizens work hard for a better standard of living. By hard labour, they would be able to achieve greater productivity in agriculture and other activities which would help in bettering their lives. They also need to use their intelligence, both traditional and acquired through governmental schemes, to steer their efforts into fruitful businesses. These two factors have helped the villages in the western countries to achieve greater success rates and all around prosperity.

#### 2.3.4. Ecological factors:

a) **Population:** Population plays a major role in denoting a particular geographical area as a village, town or a city. When the population augments, then the definition of the area automatically changes. The increase in infrastructure puts an impact on the living styles of the rural people. Culture also plays an important role in shaping the mindset of the population. The socio-cultural life of the people in a village from diverse communities differs from the village that is inhabited by a population of the same community. The villages are also operational on the basis of the social networks and the mutual relationships that the people share with one another.

b) **Livelihood:** The village life is also affected by the occupation or the livelihood opportunities that the people carry out. A village full of farmers will be different from a village that is inhabited by forest produce gatherers. There is a stark difference between the socio-economic conditions and standard of living.

c) **Social organization:** One of the important components that have an influence on the village life is the social organization. In India, caste system plays a pivotal role in stratifying the society, basically the rural society, and a village based on the caste system is different from a tribal village. A village governed by the joint family system becomes distinguishable from village where nuclear families prevail. There are debates that due to caste system, there is an allocation of jobs to various stratum of the society, while on the other hand, the caste system is ruled by stringent dogmas that prove to be hell for the people belonging to the lowest rung of the system.

d) **Location:** The geographical location of the villages even puts an impact on the growth and prosperity of a village. Those villages which are situated in difficult terrains and in the hilly areas or deserts are hardly progressive. On the other hand, the villages which are situated in the plains are closer to the cities/towns are more prosperous and grow well. There is also a contrast in the cloths, food, culture, language, occupation etc. between the villagers hailing from different geographical locales. Those villages which are closer to the city, are also on a progress path as the people easily access jobs and hence, better their standard of living. The remote villages are left out from the mainstream, are governed by strict religious dogmas and fail to prosper.

### 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.

### 2.4. Types of Villages:

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

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

1. Migratory agricultural villages: These villages refer to the villages where the people live in fixed abodes only for few months.
2. Semi permanent agricultural villages: These villages are characterized by the people living in a village only for few months.

3. Permanent agricultural villages. So far as permanent agricultural villages are concerned, the population resides for many generations.

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

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

- a) **The nucleated village:** It is otherwise known as grouped village where homes of farmers and artisans are bunched jointly whereas the land cultivated by them is located outside the village at varying distances. Their livestock are often accommodated with them or nearby. Irrespective of the variety of shapes, such villages are typified by a close-knit social organization promoted by residential closeness, contact, community sentiments and ideas. In the Indian context, nucleated village is the most common pattern of settlement frequently visible in paddy growing areas.
- b) **The linear village:** In linear type of settlement the houses are built on parallel rows and there is hardly any physical demarcation to illustrate where one village ends and where another begins. Small streams or mountains divide one village from the other and dole out as natural boundaries. Every house is bounded by a small garden of coconuts, plantains, and cashew nuts and the rice fields are bit away from the houses. This model unites the social advantages of residential closeness and economic advantages of living on one's land. Such villages are found in Kerala and in the delta land of Bengal.
- c) **Dispersed village:** The village in which the dwelling places of the village lay speckled or diffused is called a dispersed village. Such kinds of villages are found in hilly areas, as in the Himalayan foothills, in the highlands of Gujarat etc. These villages have no definite shape or structure and no village streets. There are only footpaths connecting one cluster with another. Families living on their farms retain all the livestock and other possessions in the farm.

- d) **The mixed village:** Mixed village is the combination of nucleated and dispersed pattern of settlements. In this type of village settlement there is a bigger compact settlement of houses which is surrounded by a few small hamlets at a distance. Such villages can be seen both in plain as well as mountainous regions.

There is substantial disparity in the lay out, distribution and internal structure of rural communities. Four criteria have been adopted in categorizing them into major sub-groups. They are permanency, settlement, social stratification and social organization. Permanency refers to the process of transition from man's nomadic life to settled village life. Settlement signifies pattern of ecological distribution of residences of social groups. Social stratification 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.

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

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

There are a number of positive as well as negative factors that contribute the overall quality of life in urban 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.

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

Rural places do not offer the same level of choice and in very isolated areas and one might be forced to commute long distances to find even a remote selection of the diversity found in urban 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

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

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

The large scale commercialization of agriculture has also been facilitated by the process of urbanization. Correspondingly, agricultural requirements for machinery have generated the growth of manufacturing units in urban areas. Earlier, numerous scholars had supposed that there is a perceptible disparity between the urban and the rural community. Nevertheless, this concept of rural-urban dichotomy underwent a revolution. The scholars noticed that there was much individualism, lack of understanding, fear and suspicion even

among the villagers, the peaceful village image of rural life took a severe blow. These studies pointed out that the peaceful community type of existence in villages was not a fact. Remarkably the concept of the urban community also underwent change in the 1950's. It was found that family made life close, informal and secure. That is to say there do exist 'Urban villages.' This aspect of complex societies is very mystifying. Moreover there exist people who live in villages and work in towns. Neither the village nor the town can thus be thought of as a stereotype.

What is clear from above discussion is that the rural and urban life in complex society is not the opposite of one another. In fact it could no longer be assumed that the environment determined any one type of association. However this is not to say that rural and urban populations do not have any differences. Usually, rural-urban continuum proposes a linear portrayal of the contrasting natures of social relationships characteristic of rural and urban settlements. This was an accepted theoretical tool to categorize diverse types of community and the changeover between them. It began from the early 20th century Sociology's 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 Tonnies' a-spatial distinction between *gemeinschaft* (community) and *gesellschaft* (association). In principle, if all settlements could be placed on such a continuum we would have a strong account of spatial arrangement influenced social life.

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

1. Robert Redfield has given the concept of rural -urban continuum on the basis of his study of Mexican peasants of Tepoztlain. The rapid process of urbanization through the establishment of industries, urban traits and facilities has decreased the differences between villages and cities.

2. M. S. A. Rao points out in the Indian context that although both village and town formed part of the same civilization characterized by institution of kinship and caste system in pre-British India, there were certain specific institutional forms and organizational ways distinguishing social and cultural life in towns from that in village.
3. G. S. Ghurye believes that urbanization is migration of people from village to city and the impact it has on the migrants and their families.
4. 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 intimate relationships in cities, as demonstrated by the working class community of Bethnal Green by Michael Young, and conflicts and isolation in the countryside. Moreover, both city and village enclose culturally distinct groups, suggesting that there are no dominant cultural forms typical of settlement type and that settlement type does not determine the character of interpersonal social ties.

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

A number of sociologists believe that it is complicated to differentiate between rural and urban areas predominantly in countries where education is universal and people follow heterogeneous occupations, have membership in large organizations and therefore have secondary relations. On the other hand, a lot of

sociologists have highlighted on heterogeneity, impersonal relations, anonymity, division of labour, mobility, class difference, employment patterns, secularism etc. as the items to be the basis for distinguishing ruralism from urbanism. They maintain that rural and urban are two dichotomous terms which are differentiated on the basis of above criteria.

However, there are some sociologists who still believe that this dichotomy is not possible. There is no absolute boundary line which would show a clear cut cleavage between the rural and the urban community. Secondly many a time most of these items are regular both to rural as well as urban areas with the consequence that it is complex to distinguish the two. For example,

‘empirically, at least, urban can be independent of size and density.’ If this is true, then large size and high density of settlement are not always conditions for an urban way of life in any given community. Similarly, O.D. Duncan has revealed by an analysis of quantitative data that such characteristics as relative size of income and age group, mobility of population, extent of formal schooling, size of family and proportion of women workers do not even correlate closely with via reactions in the size of population. Oscar Lewis, an anthropologist, worries about the reality of any widespread criteria to distinguish the rural environment from the urban. In this regard what one needs to know is what kind of an urban society, under what conditions of contact, and a host of other specific historical data to understand rural-urban dichotomy.

However, there are sociologists who consider that rural- urban differences are real and to use these concepts on dichotomic basis is necessary for analytical purpose. Dewey observes,

“Evidence abounds to show that many of the things which are uncritically taken as part and parcel of urbanism do not depend upon cities for their existence. History reveals that creativity in the form of invention and discovery is not limited to cities, that literacy is not tied to urbanization and sacred ties are stronger in some cities than in many small towns and farming areas.”

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

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

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

In ancient times when cities lived within walls and the gates were closed at night it was the walls that divided rural from urban. Such an ancient city was like a house for its inhabitants, or a self-isolated island. With the coming of industrialism, cities could no longer be preserved within walls. As such the walls were a hassle, access being more important. Cities turned from building walls to roads. In recent times it is not basically practicable to draw a line between city and country because of their mutual interdependence. Scholars, both of urban and rural sociology, are largely in agreement that rural community that is not under urban influence would be difficult to locate. On the other hand, there is no urban community without a substantial share of people of rural origin not yet fully urbanized.

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

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



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

This wide fluctuation in definitions has three important implications:

- i. Official classifications should be treated with caution—for example, a large proportion of settlements classed as ‘rural’ in China and India would fall within the ‘urban’ category, if they used the criteria and population thresholds adopted by many other countries. Given the size of the population of these two countries, this would significantly increase the overall proportion of urban residents in Asia and in the world.
- ii. International comparisons are difficult, as they may look at settlements which, despite being classed in the same category, may be very different in both population size and infrastructure. Further, the reliability of data on urbanization trends within one nation can be compromised by changes in the definition of urban centres over time.
- iii. Public investment in services and infrastructure tends to concentrate on the centres that are defined as urban. As a consequence, investment can bypass settlements not defined as urban even if these can, and often do, have an important ‘urban role in the development of the surrounding rural areas. Within national and regional urban systems, larger cities also tend to be favoured with public investment over small- and intermediate-sized urban centres, including those with important roles in supporting agricultural production, processing and marketing.

### **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.

### **2.7. Lets 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 terms of human interaction but differ most widely when diversity and choice are issues.

## **2.8. Keywords:**

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

## **2.9. REFERENCES:**

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## 2.10. CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – POSSIBLE ANSWERS

### 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, Climate.  
Economic factors – Agriculture, Cottage Industries.  
Social factors – Peace, Security, Cooperation, Intelligence and Labour  
Ecological factors – Population, Livelihood, Social Organization, Location.

## Check Your Progress II

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

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