

Module-18

RURAL SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA



Developed by:

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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.

Definition of Rural Sociology:

1. According to Sanderson, "Rural sociology is the sociology of rural life in the rural environment".
2. Bertand says, "Rural sociology is that study of human relationships in rural environment".

3. T.L. Smith, "Such sociological facts and principles as are derived from the study of rural social relationships may be referred to as rural sociology".
4. F.S Chapin, "The sociology of rural life is a study of rural population, rural social organization, and the rural social processes operative in rural society".
5. A.R Desai defines rural sociology as, "the science of rural society....It is the science of laws of the development of rural society".

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

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.

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, 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.

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