

26.2 RURAL SOCIETY

Rural society means society that lives in village, and is dependent on natural environment. Rural economy rests predominantly on agriculture and allied activities. These societies have a low density of population, intimate group relationships and have oral traditions. Rural societies are rich in culture and tradition. However, from the contemporary point of view, they are considered to be socio-economically less developed. Therefore, several development activities have been undertaken in our country to improve their socio-economic conditions.

26.2.1 Characteristics of Rural Societies

The village community has the following characteristics.

- (i) Agriculture is the predominant occupation among them. It is not the only source of income but also the way of life for the villagers.
- (ii) The village community is small in size. It means they live in small geographical areas with lower density of population as compared to the towns.
- (iii) They have primary group behaviour, i.e. face-to-face relationship is found among the members of the village.
- (iv) Their social structure is based on kinship and family relationships. Here the role of lineage (*Vansh*) is very important.
- (v) Mostly they live in joint family. A joint family is a group of people who live under one roof, eat food cooked at one hearth, have joint property, participate in common worship and are linked to each other through kinship ties. The joint family has a greater generation bondage than the nuclear family.

- (vi) They are more conservative and tradition oriented towards the performance of rituals as well as belief in deities.
- (vii) Group feeling and mutual cooperation is more evident among them. They have a brotherhood feeling. They co-operate with each other in times of exigencies.
- (viii) Their culture is also known as folk culture, i.e. consisting of customs, rituals and norms, etc. which are unwritten, but orally transmitted and learned. Since they have a common socio-economic background, they do not have differences in ideology towards life. Hence they are homogenous in nature.
- (ix) Traditionally, their economy is based on agriculture having primitive technology and mono-cropping pattern. It was less productive. Lack of proper marketing facilities and introduction of monetary economy has resulted in poverty. Further, decline in cottage industries has pushed them to migrate to neighbouring towns.
- (x) Village India is largely based on caste system, which has a hierarchical (castes are ranked according to their purity and pollution, their religious customs and practices and the nature of their occupation) base. For example, Brahmins are ranked as highest one because they do the purest occupation of performing rituals and teaching, whereas, shudras is ranked lowest because of his impure occupation of working as scavengers. They follow the above hierarchical system intensely.
- (xi) Modern way of living and thinking (based on achievement of the individual and their rational thinking) is lacking in rural society. They still follow the ascriptive model of life, hence their mobility is restricted.
- (xii) Any deviant behaviour is dealt with strictness in the rural areas.
- (xiii) Since modern technology has not gained firm ground in rural areas, people are still following the age-old methods of cultivation as well as solving the related day-to-day problems. It involves hard work throughout the day as it is a labour intensive occupation.
- (xiv) They have a relatively self-sufficient economy particularly in terms of production and consumption.
- (xv) They have a static economy, since they lack modern technology, modes of investment and a market economy.
- (xvi) They cling to conservative and traditional style of living: They have a strong tradition and is known as the little tradition. Their attachment to the past is strong.



Notes

INTEXT QUESTIONS 26.4

Fill in the blanks with appropriate words from the brackets:

- (i) Rural areas are dominated by _____ occupation (agricultural, industrial, professional).
- (ii) Villages have _____ density of population (higher, lower, moderate).
- (iii) Village economy is _____ (developed, less developed, primitive).
- (iv) Indian villages have _____ system (caste, class, estate).

26.2.2 The Indian Village Community: As a Social Unit

British administrators held that village communities in India are like little republics. It means they have every thing they want within themselves, and they are not dependent on outsiders for their existence. But this has been proved to be a myth by Indian sociologists after the scientific study of Indian villages. Village in India is an integrated unit. There have been inter-connections and inter-dependence between villages on socio-economic and religious terms since ages. A study of Haryana village indicated that at least 300 villages are linked through marriage ties. Several consumption items like salt, edible oil, various tools cloth and jewellery were not produced in every village. All types of services were not available in every village.

Besides, for political purposes villages were always a part of some kingdom, feudal lords and used to pay revenue to the king. Further, various cultural and the pilgrim centres have attracted people to travel throughout the country. For example, the Char Dham concept of Hindus for attainment of *Moksha* by people has been popular. Besides, trade practices have linked the villages with world. Therefore, we cannot say that villages are in isolation, but they were always a part of the larger society.

26.2.3 Changes in Rural Society

After independence, the community development programme was started in 1952. It meant an all round development of village communities. The involvement and participation of community was the main aim. Later on in 1959 Panchayati Raj (Local Self Govt.) was started. Both the programmes are running successfully even today. However, Integrated Rural Development Programme has replaced the Community Development Programme in 1979.

The rural and urban societies have a continuous interaction among them. The