Unit 2: TYPES OF INDIAN SOCIETY

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2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- identify urban society in India
- discuss the problems in Indian Urban Society
- discuss about the rural society in India
- define tribe
- discuss the constitutional provisions granted for the protection of tribal people

2,2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit (unit1) we have learnt that India is diverse in terms of language spoken in different parts of the country, religion practised

by the people, composition of population in terms race etc. Another diversity which is evident in this country is with regards to the type of society. In India three types of society exists namely, urban society, rural society and tribal society. In this unit we will learn in detail about these three types of society in India.

2.3 URBAN SOCIETY IN INDIA

Urban societies are an outcome of the process called urbanisation. According to Oxford dictionary of sociology urbanisation indicates the process of city and town formation. Urban societies are characterised by increasing population and engagement of the population in non-agricultural occupation.In other words towns and cities are understood as the urban area. At different times of the history, Indian civilisation has witnessed formation and prosperity of urban society. Some of those siginificant cities Harappa, Mohen-jo-Daro, Indraprastha, Pataliputa, Nalanda, Taxila, Agra etc. In the course of time with advancement of science and technology, emergence of new political and economic systems the old cities has attained new form and many new cities have been formed.

2.3.1 Classification of Cities

Cities in India can be classified on the basis of the size of its population for the functions which the cities play, so on and so forth.

- **Classification on the basis of population:** On the basis of population the census of India has categorised the cities in India into 6 types. Those cities which comprise of 100,000 and above population are considered as class I city. Those cities comprise of 50,000-99,999 population are considered as class II cities. The cities which comprise of 20,000-49,009 population are considered as class III cities. Those cities which comprise of 10,000-19,009 population are considered as class IV city. Cities having a population of 5000-9999 are considered as class V cities and the cities having a population which is less than 5,000 are considered as class VI cities. All the places having a minimum population of 5000, at least 75% of the adults engaged in non-agricultural activities and having

a density of population of 400 per square km is considered as a census town. Along with all these criteria if the places contain municipality, corporation, cantonment or notified town area committee then it is called a statutory town.

- **Function:** Cities in India can also be classified on the basis of their predominant function. Some of which are discussed below :
  - **Religious centres:** Certain cities are known for their religious centres which attract a large number of populations. These cities are also known as temple towns. In such cities the economy is shaped by the temples and the other associated activities like eateries, hotels, dharamshalas souvenir shops, guides etc. Two important example of temple town in India are Tirupati in South India and Nathdwara in North India.
  - **Commercial centres:** In India some cities have emerged and attracted huge population due to operation of extensive commercial activities and transaction carried out after industrialisation. For example Kolkata, Mumbai, Jamshedpur, Bangalore etc.
  - **Tourist spots:** Some cities have grown as tourist hubs due to its picturesque locations and other tourist attractions. In such cities the economy is shaped mainly through tourism. For example Shimla, Manali etc.
  - **Extended cities:** In order to offload the excessive population from the big metropolitan cities, new towns have been formed in the areas adjacent to the big cities. For example formation of New or *Navi* Mumbai and the coming of up of the National Capital Region (NCR) in the areas adjacent to Delhi. Gandhinagar was built as a twin city of Ahmedabad.

2.3.2 Problems of the urban society

In India the urban areas are expanding because more and more people are coming into the towns and cities in search of better opportunities. Migration to the urban areas are increasing due to the uneven development between rural and urban areas. However

the sudden increase in population has led to several problems in the cities. Some of which are discussed below.

- **Overcrowded areas:** Due to over concentration of people the towns and cities have become overcrowded. This has put an immense pressure on the existing resources of the town specially land. Since there is scarcity of land people start to settle even on the restricted lands causing disturbance to nature and also making themselves vulnerable to different problems. Again since most of the cities lack proper planning, construction and maintenance of the drainage and sewage system is also non-satisfactory. For example in the recent yeas Guwahati has become very populated. In order to cater to the housing of this huge population a number of residential buildings have come up by filling up of the wetlands in city and constructing big building over it and massive deforestation has also been evident to extend the periphery of the city. etc. All these have disturbed the ecological balance of the place. Accordingly the city has been facing the problem of artificial man made floods in the recent times.
- **Formation of Slums:** Inadequate housing facility in the urban areas has created a number of slum areas. These areas are formed without proper sanitation facility, lacks potable drinking water, the houses are ill ventilated and dingy making the inhabitants vulnerable to several diseases. The slums reside the low-paying workers. Very often the slums become the den of several vices. The essence of a slum is well expressed through the words of Dr.Radhakamal Mukherji, 'In the thousand slums of India's industrial centres manhood is unquestionably brutalised, women dishonoured and childhood is poisoned at its very source" .
- **Traffic congestion:** Urban areas are well connected by public means of transportation. Even though the public transportation system exists majority of the people in the urban areas prefer to own and travel in their own vehicles either to maintain the fast pace of life in the urban areas or as a status symbol. As a result traffic congestion has become common phenomena in the urban areas and has become another cause of woe for the people.

- **Power shortage:** Use of electricity is ever increasing with coming up of different electronic devices to make the lives of the people easier. Again with increasing population this demand and consumption of electricity has increased therefore certain pockets of the urban areas like the slums remain deprived of electricity for most of the time. On the other hand the affluent areas continue to get constant electricity. It is also seen that in order to meet the heavy requirement of electricity in shopping malls, industries, hotels, residential complexes, the nearby rural areas receive no or very fluctuating supply of electricity.
- **Environmental degradation:** Increasing population leads to haphazard construction, deforestation to create more space for human habitation. This creates an imbalance in the nature which in turn costs human beings heavily. For example due to rapid population growth, the area under Guwahati city has been expanding by destroying the nearby forest covers. Again, to cater increasing population a number of residential complexes have been erected by filing up of the wetlands. The direct consequence of this development has led increasing flash floods in the city which increasing turning out to be deadly. Again increasing vehicular and other pollution has increased with the growth of population in urban areas which has led degradation of the environment.

2.4 RURAL SOCIETY IN INDIA

According to A.W Green, 'A village community or a rural community is a cluster of people living within a narrow territorial radius who share a common way of life'.

Scholars like Bogardus have argued that, human civilisation have been nurtured in the rural society. Therefore it is believed that emergence of rural society or villages dates back to time immemorial. Even today though the number of cities or urban areas has been expanding but still a significant portion of the world population reside in the villages. In India too, the majority of the population resides in the rural areas. Till the 20th century only 11 % of

Indian population comprised of India's urban population. Therefore it was rightly pointed by Mahatma Gandhi that, 'Real India lives in its villages'. Even in the ancient times villages constituted important segment of settlements in India. In the ancient scriptures like Rig veda the mention of *gram* was found. According to Yogesh Atal the Ramayana has mentioned about two types of villages- the *ghosh* and the gram. A *ghosh* was much smaller than the gram. The *ghosh* was also known as *vraja* or *brij* which indicates a cattle farm. However both the different types of villages had their officials who were known as *mahattar.* A senior official was known as *gramani* or *gramik*. Again in the Mahabharata the mention of different types of village settlement is found. The villages formed around the forts or *durgs* were known as gram, the small hutments were known as *pallis, settlements* with large number of cattle farm was known as ghosh or brij. The villages were connected to one another culturally, socially and administratively. Ten villages were administered by one administrator known as *dashi.* The administrators who administered 20 villages were known as *vinshati,* those administrators who administered upto 100 villages were known as *shati*, and those administer over 1000 villages were known as *sahasra gramadhipati.* Kautilya's Arthasastra also mentions about various aspects of Indian rural life. He argued that villages should be one or two *krosha* (3.219 km) away from one another so that during difficult times one village could help the other. Arthasastra also mentions that 10 villages were known as *Samgrahana,* 200 villages were known as *Karvatika*, 400 villages were known as *Dronamukha* and 800 villages were known as *Mahagrama* or *Sthatnuja*. Before the advent of the Britishers though the princely states collected revenue was from the villages under their jurisdiction but to a large extent the villages were self-sufficient. The villages took various decisions regarding their social life by forming panchyats.

2.4.1 Types of Indian villages

On the basis physical shape of the settlements in the villages, Shantibhushan Nandi and D.S. Tyagi has classified the villages in India into four different types which is discussed below:

- **Shapeless cluster:** These villages which are highly populated but are dispersed. It is characterised by collection of small-sized clusters.
- **Linear cluster:** The villages where the settlements forms a parallel line separated by an open space or a linear street is known as a linear cluster.
- **Square or rectangular cluster:** The villages having straight streets running parallel to one another or at right angles to one another are known as square or rectangular cluster.
- **Isolated homesteads:** Some villages are formed by a conglomeration of several isolated homesteads. They are considered as a *mauza* for the purpose of revenue collection.

2.4.2 Local self-governance in the rural areas

The Government of India introduced local-self governance in the rural areas by establishing the Panchayati Raj system in the year 1992/3 with the enactment of the 73rd amendment act. This system was introduced with the conviction that democracy exists only when the power is decentralised and reaches even at the grass root level in the rural areas. This process decentralisation was initiated to grant more confidence to the rural people to shape their destiny by planning the development of the villages with the assistance of the government. In order to ensure that people irrespective of caste, class, gender and community can equality participate in the decision making process, the act (73rd amendment act) ensures reservation of seats in the panchayats. According to the act one-third of the seats are reserved for woman and another one-third is reserved for the scheduled castes/ scheduled tribes. Every panchayat follows an institutional framework which is described below:

- **Gram Sabha:** The gram sabha is also known as village assembly. It consists of the all the adult members of a village.
- **Panchayat:** It is the village council which is elected by the gram sabha.

- **Panchayat Samiti:** It is also known as Kshetra Samiti or Regional Council which is formed at the tahsil or the block level. Its members comprises of the elected members of the different panchayat which are under the jurisdiction of one block.
- **Zilla Parishad:** It is also known as the district council. The zilla parishad comprises of the representatives of pachayat samiti, the members of state legislature and the parliament representing a part or a whole district, all the district level officers belonging to different departments like agriculture, medicine, public health, Engineering, veterinary, education etc. The zilla parishad plays the role of supervising and coordinating the activities of all the panchayat samitis within its jurisdiction.

2.4.3 Criticism of local self-governance in India

The Panchayat system was formed to strengthen the rural areas and empower the marginalised section but the ground reality has reflected a different picture in the recent times. Some of criticisms against this system is described below:

- It is found that the acitivities of the panchayats are largely interfered with by the political parties. As a result many times the leadership position is not occupied by the most able individuals. This impacts the decision making process.
- Various schemes provided by the government to help the people are distributed through the panchayats. But very often the benefits and schemes are not well distributed and thereby it does not reach the poorest of the poor in the rural areas. The benefits are often cornered by some influential people in the village.
- Reservation of seats in the panchayats was meant to empower the marginalised section by providing a platform to their representatives to make their issues and concerns visible. For example one-third of the seats were reserved in the panchayats for the woman but very often it is found that the woman who are elected are only partial members of the panchayat and the actual decisions are taken by

their nearest male kin. This defies the very objective of this reservation process.



LET US KNOW

Population of India (in Crore)

	2001	2011	Difference
India	102.9	121.0	18.1
Rural areas of India	74.3	83.3	9.0
Urban areas of India	28.6	37.7	9.1

Table: 2.3a

Source: Census of India, 2011.

Thus, we can see that the increase in population in the urban areas is more than the increase in population in the rural areas. According to the Census of India the level of urbanisation has increased from 27.81% in 2001 to 31.16% in 2011 Census.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1a: In which year was the Panchayati Raj system established ?

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Q1b: Name two ancient Indian cities.

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2.5 TRIBAL SOCIETY IN INDIA

India posses a rich tribal heritage. Throughout the length and breadth of the country several tribal societies has embarked their history. However before understanding the tribal society in India, it is imperative to understand who are tribes?

G.S Ghurey has defined tribes, as the 'backward Hindus', thereby very problematically clubbing caste and tribes together and incorporating tribes under the rubric of the hindu caste system. Thus tribes were not treated by him as distinct either culturally or socially.

According to S.C Dubey, Tribe is, 'an ethnic category, defined by real or putative descent and characterised by a corporate identity and a wide range of commonly shared traits of culture'.

Andre Beteille has defined tribe as, 'a society with political, linguistic and a somewhat vaguely defined cultural boundary; further, as a society based upon kinship, where social stratification is absent'.

According to D.N Majumdar, A tribe is, 'a collection of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well assessed system of reciprocity and mutulatity of obligation'.

2.5.1 Characteristics of tribes

- Every tribe identifies themselves with a particular geographical territory.
- A particular tribe claims to have descended from one common ancestor.
- Every tribe follows certain distinctive religious practices which designs their lifestyle and beliefs.
- Every tribe possess a particular language which generates 'we-feeling'.
- Tribes prefer to live in relative isolation from others but in close proximity to nature.

But most of tribes in India today cannot be understood in this sense as they do not live a life of seclusion. However the constitution of India has provided many erstwhile tribal communities the status of Scheduled Tribe in order to protect their interests. Today scheduled tribe population can be found in both the rural and urban areas. For the preservation of tribal culture the Constitution of India has granted different provisions which are discussed in the next section.

2.5.2 Approaches towards tribal society

Before the advent of the colonial rule the tribal people in India were leading an autonomous life. However after the annexation of India by the Britishers the whole Indian society had undergone a lot of change. Tribal societies were experiencing a state of crisis in their social and cultural life. After independence though tribal territories were incorporated within the Indian state but careful deliberations were carried out to protect, uplift and resolve the problems the tribal societies were experiencing. In the process three significant approaches came forward to resolve the problems of the tribal people. The following approaches are discussed below:

- **Policy of Isolation:** This approach was advocated by Verrier Elwin. According to this approach the best way to resolve the problems faced by tribal society was to let them live away from the rest of society. In this direction he proposed for creating National Parks and reserved areas where tribal people would live with complete non-interference from the outsiders.
- **Policy of Assimilation:** This approach was advocated by G.S Ghurey. According to the advocates of this approach, since the tribal people are 'backward Hindu' their problems would resolve once they are assimilated into the mainstream Hindu lifestyle.
- **Policy of Integration:** One of the advocates of this policy towards the tribal people is Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. According to this view rather than assimilating or isolating the tribal people, they must be integrated with the rest of India. It implies that they must be provided

the access to modern facilities but yet allowed to retain their distinctiveness and determine their own course of social development.

2.5.3 Significance of 5th and the 6th schedule of Indian constitution

As discussed in the previous section, before the arrival of the Britishers, the tribal settlements had independent administration looked after by the chieftains. However later with the coming of Brishers, the money economy and the non-tribal population entered the tribal areas. This had profound impact on the social and cultural aspects. Most importantly the tribal people were exploited by the non-tribal people. Since they were not used to the transaction system through the exchange of money and because they did not receive formal modern education, the moneylenders could easily deceive them. Consequently the tribal people loosed huge tracts of land at the hands of non-tribal people. This gave rise to several revolts like the revolt spearheaded by Birsa Munda in Jharkhand against the *dikus* (non-tribal).

The constitution of India makes a commitment to protect the tribal people through various provisions. One of such constitutional provision is facilitated through the 5th schedule of the Indian constitution. The 5th schedule covers the tribal areas of 9 states in India namely, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan. This schedule grants autonomy and rights to tribal people in the tribal areas over land. The governor of these states is provided with special responsibilities to administer the areas identified as Scheduled areas.

In the context of North-eastern states, during the annexation of the kingdoms of the hill tribes by the Britishers for various political and administrative purposes the British government kept the hill tribal areas excluded from the rest of India. Therefore these tribes

to a great extent preserved certain aspects of their social, cultural and political life. After independence the 6th schedule of the Indian constitutions granted the tribal people of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram the power to exercise legislative and executive power through the creation of autonomous regional council and Autonomous District councils.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q2a: Name an advocate of the policy of isolation towards the tribal people.

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Q2b: Name two states where 5th schedule is implemented.

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2.6 LET US SUM UP

- Urban societies are characterised by increasing population and engagement of the population in non-agricultural occupation.
- Towns and cities are understood as the urban area.
- Cities in India can be classified on the basis of the size of its population and for the functions which the cities play.
- Human civilisation has been nurtured in the rural society.
- Even today though the number of cities or urban areas has been expanding but still a significant portion of the world population reside in the villages.
- In India too, the majority of the population resides in the rural areas. Till the 20th century only 11 % of Indian population comprised of India's urban population.