

## **Quadrant II – Transcript and Related Materials**

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**Unit:** 1- Urban Society in India

**Module Name:** Nature, Scope and Significance of Urban Sociology

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### **Notes:**

#### **1.1 Nature, scope and significance of Urban Sociology**

Urban Sociology is that branch of Sociology which deals with the description and analysis of urban life. Indeed, today the majority of the world's population dwells in urban places, and there is every indication that rapid urbanization will continue for the foreseeable future. Increasingly, then, the study of society is the study of urban society, and therein lies the relevance of urban sociology.

Urban sociology is the study of the special form of community organization called cities. The principal questions of urban sociology are how and why cities came into being, why they take on certain forms of social organisation, how they are spatially structured, how people living in cities interact with one another, how cities affect their host regions and nations, and how problems arise from urbanism/urbanization.

The term 'urban' is understood as follows:

- Any place where there is agglomerate population i.e., communities of 20,000 or more.
- A 'way of life' that is distinct from rural or small town lifestyles.
- A centre known for its political, economic or cultural power, i.e., government centre.
- A hub of change where innovation and creativity abound, i.e., employment.
- A population centre that spawns and fosters alternate value systems, i.e., diversity over uniformity; freedom over security and anonymity over familiarity.

#### **Meaning and definition of Urban Sociology**

According to Ergon Ernest Bergel Mearning, 'urban sociology deals with the impact of the city life on social action, social relationships, social institutions and the types of

civilizations derived from and based on urban modes of living and so on. This impact is considerable without cities, mankind would have remained on a much more primitive level. Thus, urban sociology is a special study of the influence of environment on man.'

Professor House has defined urban sociology as 'the specialized study of city life and problems.'

According to Kent P. Schwirian, 'urban sociology is the sociology of urban life and activities.'

According to James A. Quinn, 'urban sociology is that branch of sociology, which deals with the city of urban community, with urbanization and urbanism as its main components.'

Urban sociology is the study of the social organization and interaction of population groups within the built environment. - the physical superstructure of highways, abandoned factories, suburban housing developments, shopping malls, gated communities, public housing, manufacturing areas and the like created by modern capitalism. It also deals with the historic forces, which have produced the industrial and corporate cities of the present era; the location of industrial and commercial areas within the contemporary city; the lifestyles of racial and ethnic groups within urban neighbourhoods; and of the effect of social, economic, and political forces on patterns of everyday life in cities and suburbs. Urban sociology examines social structures and processes of modern urban ways of life and its implications for city dwellers with the socio-cultural milieu.

### **Nature of Urban Sociology**

Two major currents came to characterize urban sociology in the early period.

1. The first came from the sociologists at the University of Chicago, emphasizing the demographic and ecological structure of the city, the social disorganization and pathology of the urban normative order and social psychology of urban existence.
2. The second current has come to be called 'community studies.' It consists of ethnographic studies of the social structure of individual communities and the ways of life of the inhabitants.

These two orientations are divided into the culturalists' approach and the structuralists' approach in urban sociology.

1. The culturalists emphasize on how urban life feels, how people react to living in urban areas; and how the city life is organized. This approach tries to study and explore the culture, organizational and social psychological consequences of urban life. Louis Wirth's works belong to this approach.
2. The structuralists' approach investigates the interplay between the political and the economic forces, the growth, decline and changing spatial organization of urban space. They consider city as the physical embodiment of political and economic relationship. They argue that the city itself is an effect of more fundamental forces and cities are shaped by social powers that affect all aspects of human existence.

Urban sociology is the combination of both the above approaches.

### **Scope of Urban Sociology**

The scope of urban sociology is very vast and multidimensional. Urban sociology relies on the related sciences and borrows from history, economics, social psychology, public administration and social work. The subject matter of sociology is cities and their growth, and it deals with such problems like planning and development of cities, traffic regulations, public waterworks, social hygiene, sewerage works, housing, beggary, juvenile delinquency, crime and so on. Thus as urbanism is many-sided so is urban sociology.

Urban sociology studies the urban setup and facts and also tries to give suggestions to solve problems arising out of dynamic nature of the society.

The scope of the urban sociology can be studied under the following heads:

1. **Introductory scope of urban sociology:** the main aim of urban sociology is to study the basic principles of the city life. Under introductory scope, the study covers the following areas:
  - **Urban ecology:** Urban ecology studies the facts of the urban environment. It also emphasizes on the study of population in the cities.
  - **Urban morphology:** under urban morphology, the study of social life of urban areas and that of urban organisation is taken up
  - **Urban psychology:** the area of study under this covers the behaviour and the mode of living of the people in urban areas.
  - **Analytical scope:** under the analytical scope, various concepts and important phases of urban life are developed and studied.
2. **Reformative Scope:** under reformatory scope of urban sociology, the problems of urbanism are studied. This includes some of the important issues such as the impact of urbanisation on urban society leading to urban disorganization, urban planning and development.

Thus, the scope of urban sociology is much wider as it covers the whole spectrum of urban life and its changing environments.

### **Significance of urban sociology:**

Urban sociology occupies an important place as it tries to study the urban life of both developed and developing countries. The urban life of an advanced country is taken as an example to be followed by the less developed and developing nations. With the advancement of industrialization and technological developments, the people of villages are attracted towards cities and towns and this has hastened their urbanization to a great extent. Due to this the personal tendencies and trends and norms and standards of all social institutions have also undergone a tremendous change. The urban society is also witnessing an increase in crimes and corruption leading to social disorganization. Many grave economic and political problems have also cropped up forcing governmental organizations to pay attention in finding solutions.

to these problems. The service of the urban sociologist is equally important as those of the doctor, engineer or any other professional. Without the help of urban sociologist, urban social problem cannot be effectively solved. The importance of urban sociology can be realized from the following reasons cited below:

- Reconstruction of urban society
  - Study of urbanization
  - To solve the problem that crop up due to the extension of urbanization
  - Urban planning
  - Proper implementation of community projects
  - Study of the ever-changing urban social structure
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### **Urban Sociology in India**

While urban sociology developed in America in the 1900s at the University of Chicago with the works of Park, Burgess and McKenzie in India very few studies of towns and cities on the aspects of urban social life were initiated during that time. In the 1920s, the Patrick Geddes, a notable town planner, started a few urban studies in India. Urban sociologist S. Ghurye followed this with his work on '*Cities and Civilization*' (1962) at the University of Bombay in the early 1960s. He worked on the comparative and historical aspects of urbanization and urban-rural dichotomy. Most of the studies are on the culturalist's approach on the experience of urban life and adjustment problems. Radhakamal Mukerjee of Luckow University took up a few ecological studies of 'Morphology of Indian Cities' by John E. Brusii (1962), 'Little Madras in Bombay City' by K. L. Mythili (1959), University of Bombay, Meera Kosambi (1965) and Mehta (1966). Although ecological studies have a limited value for sociologists, they are nonetheless a valuable source material to follow up both the social processes and the implications of ecological phenomenon.

Various Research Committees of the Planning Commission of India initiated a number of socioeconomic surveys of cities during the First Five-Year Plan period, and by the end of the Eighth Five-Year Plan, there were many studies on individual, mega, medium and small cities on the various aspects of urbanization, urbanism, social problems, caste and class, ecology, pollution and so on.

Demographic studies of towns and cities are mainly based on the Census and National Sample Survey Data. Kinsley Davis, Asish Bose, M. K. Premi, Raj Bala and many others have made significant contributions to urban democratic analysis. In fact, much of the work has been done in this section in the Indian context too as town planners on housing, community development, urban renewal, urban development and so on have recently initiated many studies.