Communities – Rural and Urban

INTRODUCTION:

Man has lived in communities since the dawn of human histories. In fact, grouping very similar to human communities exist among animals and even among plants. The term “community” has been used very loosely but anthropologist/sociologists have sought to give it a more exact connotation. They agree concerning some of its basic things which the term should denote.

The word ‘community’ has been derived from two Latin words; namely, ‘com’ and ‘munis’. In English, ‘com’ means together and ‘munis’ means to serve. Thus, community means to serve together. It means, the ‘community’ is an organization of human beings which has been framed for the purposes of serving together. A community is a collection of inter-dependent people with residential ties to a particular locality. The territorial boundaries differentiate it from other groups, because most of other groups are not tied to specific localities.

Communities are spatially specific but, otherwise, are unrestricted. They are unlike groups and organizations that have special interests and touch only a narrow part of their participants’ levels. Communities encompass major portions of the lives and roles of their members. The term ‘community’ denotes almost uniformly and permanently local aggregation of people having diversified as well as common interests and served by a constellation of institutions.

RURAL AND URBAN COMMUNITIES:

For many centuries, village and city have been the two most recognizable general types of human civilization. But between the two, there is no sharp demarcation to tell where the city ends and the country begins. Rural and urban depict modes of community life, not simply geographical location. Rural and urban distinction has nothing to do with primitive communities because rural community, no matter how small it is, is still subjected to countless urban influences.
Sometimes, urban area is defined in terms of high density of population, but it is not true. Some of the agricultural villages are densely populated yet cannot be called urban.

Socially speaking, the city is a way of life. The adjective “urban” suggests this way of life very nearly; it indicates a wide acquaintance with things and people, a somewhat Sauvé and polished manner, superficial politeness. But the question which arises is how far the urban way of life is limited to the urban population and how far the physical and the social definitions of urban correspondence. The answer is that there is a causal connection between the two but not a one to one correspondence. The city as a place where population is concentrated inevitably gives rise to and depends upon certain features of social organization that we regard as urban. We should speak not only of cities but of urbanized societies and regions.

**GROWTH OF VILLAGE COMMUNITY:**

In the primitive societies, people were nomadic and moved from place to place. Next step came when people began to lead a settled family life. It was here that the habitation in the villages started. Each community invariably started its settlement from the village itself. Character of village started changing when people started considering village land as the property of the village as a whole but it belonged to only one lord who exploited all those who tilled the land.

The things have much more changed in modern village which is now under impact of urbanization.

**FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GROWTH OF VILLAGE COMMUNITY:**

(i) **Topographical Factors** – It includes land, water and climate. Villages with fertile land, good climate and water in abundance attracted more people.

(ii) **Economic Factors** – Favourable agricultural conditions led to advance stage of living.

(iii) **Social Factors** – In villages where there is not internal and external peace, village community become more prosperous.

(iv) **Ecological Factors** – It includes factors such as population, occupation, distance from the town, and social as well as geographical organization.
GROWTH OF URBAN COMMUNITY:

In reality the transition from a purely rural community to an urban one is not abrupt but gradual. There is no absolute boundary line which would show a clear-cut cleavage between the rural and the urban community. Many differential characteristics of the rural and urban community would consist not so much in the presence of certain trails in rural, and their absence in urban communities, as much as in a quantitative increase of these characteristics.

The above conception has been given the name of “rural-urban continuum” by recent writers suggesting that the differences between the two types of community are gradual and continuous, and not qualitative differences per se, resulting in a simple dichotomy. Thus, Stuart A. Queen and B. Carpenter claim that “there is a continuous gradation from rural to urban rather than a simple rural–urban dichotomy”. According to Gist and Halbert, the familiar dichotomy between ‘rural’ and ‘urban’ is more of a theoretical concept than division based upon the facts of community life. “Every village possesses some elements of the city while every city carries some features of the village”, as remarked by Maclver, “but between the two there is no sharp demarcation to tell where the city ends and the country begins”.

Generally speaking, the urban communities are identified as large, dense and heterogeneous, and the rural communities as small, less dense and homogeneous, yet no hard and fast line can be drawn.

The characteristics of size, density, heterogeneity and occupation exhibit differences in degree from place to place and time to time. Sharp and absolute divisions between rural and urban communities do not exist and therefore we must recognize the fact that rural and urban communities are polar types and that they may be found at many points on the so-called “continuum” that extends from one extreme pole to the other.

RURAL – URBAN CONTRAST:

As pointed out, the difference between village and city life is very difficult but neither on the basis of culture nor that of population it is possible to define either a village or city. Difference between city and village is more that of degree than of a kind. But inspite of these difficulties, major discerning differences are as follows:
(i) The Most Obvious Difference is the Relative Isolation of the Country Life:

The family circle must supply the greater part of economic and social needs of its members. Family customs undisturbed by the constant succession of new contacts and new stimuli characteristics of urban life, grow more deeply rooted. Whereas city family is typically less engrossing, Urbanization denudes the household of economic functions and throws the individual into association relationship. Social control in the city reflects the multiplicity of social contacts, the diversity of social codes and pre-dominance of secondary relationships.

(ii) Difference in the mode of occupation:

The principal occupation of a countryman is farming, involving the raising of crops and of stocks. It lacks specialization. Further, there is very little scope for occupational mobility, because one condition of specialization is the size of the economic market, a condition guaranteed in the urban society. The economic differentiation of the urban community is the source of social groupings, both vertical, involving occupational divisions on the same levels, and horizontal or in terms of social status.

(iii) Simplicity Versus Complexity:

The rewards of the farmer's toil are rarely bountiful. If the rewards are somewhat speculative it is usually between the limits of penury and a modest livelihood. He is less subject to the stimulations that comes from social proximity, sharp social contrasts and social mobility. In cities, due to specialization and competitiveness, the speculative element enters strongly into city life.

(iv) Associative Individualism versus Persistent Traditionalism:

The combined influences of the urban scene stimulate what may be called as associative individualism. The city dweller selectively organizes his social relationship. He is accepted more in terms of his specific qualities. The pre-dominance of secondary over primary relationship distinguishes wide range of social attitudes as characteristics of a city, whereas the countryman relies more on primary relationship.

(v) The Intensity of Community Sentiment in City and Country:
The ‘we–feeling’ of the city dweller is weakened by the complexity of urban life. His role-feeling is similarly affected because he has little awareness of the role of other fellows and his role is apt to become less meaningful in his eyes. In village community, ‘we–feeling’ and dependency feeling is prevalent.

(vi) The Cultural Contrasts and Relationship between City and Country:

A purely urban culture, divorced from the types of stimulation found in rural community would be fundamentally unbalanced and handicapped. Whereas the country provides the raw material of the cultural as well as the economic life of man, it tends to retain a relatively simple form of cultural expression which is taken up into the arts of city and reshapes to its specialized and “Variant demands”. The social structure of the city is necessarily as complex as its culture presenting a variety of extremes and modulations. It stands in contrast to the country-side with its forms of accentuation, intensification or sophistication.

CONCLUSION:

The mark of a community is that one’s life may be lived wholly within it. One cannot live wholly within a business organization or a church, one can live wholly within a tribe or a city. The basic criterion of community, then, is that all of one’s social relationships may be found within it. In the past communities used to be self–sufficient because the people lived in a very simple life and not many complications had till then arisen. But today character of the community is very complex and politically, socially or economically, no community can be self-sufficient these days.