RURAL SOCIETY
MEANING AND CHARACTERISTICS
The term ‘rural society’ is used almost interchangeable with terms like ‘villages’, ‘countryside’, or ‘folk society’.

In sociological literature most commonly used term is the village.

In India, a community having a population of less than 500 persons per square kilometer, 3/4th population is engaged in primary occupation, namely agriculture, has a village panchayat, is classified as village for administrative purposes.
For sociologists, the term ‘rural society’ implies the following:

- It is a small society, meaning thereby that it has a small population and extends over a shorter physical area.
- Density of rural population is very low and it may be clustered according to the criteria of social status.
- It is an agrarian society.
- It is marked by traditional moral customs (mores) and folkways. It preserves the traditional culture.
DUBE, LEWIS, SRINIVAS, MARROIT, BAILEY, GOUGH, BERREMAN, EPSTEIN, ANDRE BETEILLE, T.K. OOMEN, K.L. SHARMA etc are some sociologists and anthropologists who have studied Indian villages.
Closely associated with nature
Agriculture dominated economy
Small size of community
Greater homogeneity of population
Social differentiation / social stratification
Social mobility
Social control
Leadership pattern
Social solidarity
INSTITUTIONAL FEATURES

FAMILY
Family is the oldest, most prevalent and enduring social institution everywhere in the world.

It plays a decisive role in the material and cultural life of the rural aggregate.

Rural society is marked by patriarchal joint family where the grandfather is the patriarch. The grandmother is his deputy.
• It is the old and universal institution of India.
• According to Mandelbaum “it consists typically of a set of men, related as fathers and sons or brothers, together with their wives and children. It is generally a unit of consumption and a unit of production. The property is held in common under the trusteeship of the eldest male member. All the members of the joint family are fed from the common kitchen and have a single purse.”
• It include four or more generations
CHARACTERISTICS

- Greater homogeneity
- Based on peasant household
- Greater discipline
- Greater interdependence
- Dominance of family ego
- Authority of father
- Filial and fraternal solidarity
- Hierarchy in family roles
- Close participation in various activities.
According to Burgess and Locke, "by familism is meant, in general, acceptance of welfare of the family group as the central value to which the interests of the individual members are subordinated."
• Marriage at earlier age and its higher rate.
• Family as a unit of social responsibility
• Family as a basis of norms of societies
• Family, its impress in political form
• Co-operative rather than contractual relations
• Family as a unit of production, consumption and exchange.
• Dominance of family cult and ancestor worship
• Less mobility
FUNCTIONS OF RURAL FAMILY

- SOCIAL
- POLITICAL
- ECONOMIC
- RELIGIOUS
- CULTURAL
- EDUCATIONAL
There is a change in both structure and functions of the rural family.

Traditional joint families are giving way to nuclear households.

Position of women in rural family has improved.

The cementing bond of family is being changed from consanguinity to conjugality.

The basis of rural family relationship is shifting from status to contract.
• The family is being transformed from a unit of production into a unit of consumption
• Familism, too, is gradually dropping off.
Marriage is a socially recognised assumption by man and woman of the kinship status of husband and wife.

The marriage has never been individual affair.

It is a family affair and brings two families together.

In rural India, because of village exogamy, marriage has been viewed as a village affair where two villages are involved.
• A marriage is inevitable in a rural society.
• Unmarried daughters are disgrace to the family and it shows the neglect of duty on the part of the parents.
• A marriage mobilizes family resources.
• Marriage is absolutely essential
• Marriage at an early age.
• Forms of marriage (monogamy, polygyny)
• Marriage with relatives prohibited
• Arranged marriages
• Matching of horoscope
• Mate selection mean the process of the selection of marriage partners by the prospective mates themselves or by their kinsmen.

• K.M.Kapadia discuss it under the following three sub-heads:
  1. The parties to selection
  2. The field of selection
  3. The criteria of selection
Marriage partners themselves select their life partners based on mutual volition.

Marriage partners are selected by the kinsmen.

Marriage partners are selected by the partners and the kinsmen in mutual consultation.

THE PARTIES TO SELECTION
In rural areas, elders, kinsmen and sometimes professional intermediaries (nai) play an important role in initiating the marriage proposals.

Eldest male have the final authority in such decisions.
THE FIELD OF SELECTION

- It is governed, controlled and regulated by three procedures i.e.
- Proscription (restrictions by society)
- Prescription (possible field within which one has to choose)
- Preferences (importance to certain kinmen for being selected)
The field of selection is determined by the interplay of the rules of exogamy and endogamy.

The rules of exogamy determine the inner field within which one cannot marry.

The rules of endogamy determine the outer boundaries beyond which one cannot marry.
The field of selection (cont...)
• In southern India, cross-cousin marriages are preferred.
• Among Muslims, marriage with father’s brother’s daughter is obligatory. She is treated as bint-aam (chief wife)
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<th>The Criteria of Selection</th>
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<td>1. Familial attributes</td>
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<td>2. Family background</td>
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<td>3. Family reputation</td>
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<td>4. Size of family</td>
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<td>5. Educational level of family</td>
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<td>7. Kinship alliance</td>
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<td>1. Individual attributes</td>
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<td>10. Income</td>
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<td>11. Knowledge of household work</td>
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In some castes in south india, the family of the groom pays bride-wealth at marriage to the family of the bride.

In most of north india, it is the family of the bride that gives dowry to the groom and his family.
• Dowries are usually given when the status of the bridegroom’s family is superior to the bride’s family.
• Bride-wealth is given where women are strong economic assets to a family.
Late marriages are becoming common
Arranged marriages are not generally looked upon with favour
Non kindered marriages for the girls has become preferential
Changes in marriage ceremonies also noticed
RURAL ECONOMY
• In the Indian rural economy, land occupies the key position.
• Social life (power and prestige) in a village is based on the economy of land and grain.
The Indian rural economy is at different stages of development with regard to the techniques of production.

- Hoe level
- Plough level
- Tractors and fertilizers level
JAJMANI SYSTEM

- It is an important institution of rural economy.
- The term 'jajman' is in practice, used for any person standing in the relationship of the employer.
- Kamin is one who performs service.
- The term jajman refers to the whole relationship.
- These relations are durable and they continue over generations.
• The jajmani system assures a stable labour supply to the dominant castes.
• The kamins are paid in terms of cash, kind and prerequisites on daily, monthly or yearly basis.
• Acc to wiser jajmani links are between families rather than between castes.
• A jajmani patron cannot abruptly discharge av superflous or nefficient worker or quickly hires a new.
• Kamin runs into indebtedness of the jajmans.
• This system further gave rise to bonded labour.
LAND TENURE SYSTEM IN INDIA

1. Zamindari system
2. Mahalwari system
3. Ryotwari system
4. Various land reforms after independence.
New class structures are emerging in the agrarian scene where economic and political power overpower the ritual base i.e. Caste basis of stratification.
RURAL POLITY

VILLAGE PANCHAYAT
It is a system of local government at the village level. The panchayati raj system normally envisages a three-tier arrangement:
• First at the village level
• Second at the block level
• Third at the district level
The first comprehensive village panchayat act was passed in 1947.

Rajasthan was the first state to implement the panchayati raj.
FUNCTIONS OF VILLAGE PANCHAYAT

- Development functions
- Civil functions
- Law and order functions
- Welfare functions
- Administrative functions
A step to revive the old institutions with a presumption that power to the people can
Lead to the third stratum of government
Help panchayat retain the image of institution
Translate the dream of grassroot democracy into reality
• It is obligatory for all the states to establish a three-tier system of panchayat at the village, intermediate and district levels.
• All seats in all the three-tiers will be filled in by direct elections on the basis of adult franchise.
• Reservation of seats for the sc’s, st’s, s and women in the panchyats at all levels.
• Tenure of panchayats at all levels shall be five years
• Conduct of the elections to the panchayats shall be the duty of state election commission.
Panchayati raj is becoming a political institution and not merely a development institution.

It opens tremendous possibilities for rapid social change in India’s villages.

It helped in improving the status of SC’s and ST’s in highly stratified rural society.

Decentralization of powers,
GROUND REALITIES

• The reluctance of state level politicians to recognize the importance of the lower levels of governance---their autonomy, their powers and their area of functioning
• Low level of political consciousness.
• Low level of literacy especially of women.
• Patriarchal system.
• Non co-operative attitude of government officials.