
UNIT 9 OCCUPATION*

Structure

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9.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- Define the concept of occupation;
- Discuss the terms work, task and skills;
- Describe structures of occupation in India;
- Differentiate between organized and unorganized sectors of occupation; and
- Provide the classification of urban occupations.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit on “Migration” we discussed about the meaning, nature and types etc of migration process. Here, we will explain about Occupation which is one very important reason for which people migrate from rural to urban areas and even from rural to another rural area.

Occupation, or as it is also called work, entails the activities that people undertake in their lives. This work on one hand, offers a means of sustenance

and on the other hand, it organizes the overall life of a person in terms of giving a sense of identity, organizing a day, creation of a working network and at the end of the day getting paid which is a vital need for survival. There are other latent functions attached to the work such as a means to go out of the house, using skills and in return developing them, and so on. Occupation is considered as an essential part of our lives. We make ourselves capable to take up a job; we appear before the potential employers; we perform our duties once employed and at the end of the day we receive a payment against the work we do and this payment is based on our achievements.

This unit will offer an insight into contextualizing the terms occupation, task, work and other inter-related terms which have been used either interchangeably or in linkages with the broader term occupation. The unit also unfolds the structural patterns of occupation in India by highlighting three occupational structures such as primary, secondary and tertiary. The last section of the unit deals with the classification of urban occupations into four types and sheds light on the ways in which these categories of occupations exist and are carried out by people in urban areas.

9.2 THE CONCEPT OF OCCUPATION

The term occupation is understood as a vague term which indicates a model that guides the human performance. To overcome the vagueness in the term, we need to look into the multidimensional aspects of occupation such as the occupational form and occupational performance (Nelson, 1988). Occupational form involves objective aspects such as materials, human context, characteristics of physical settings and other socio-cultural dimensions that influence one's perception of the activities performed. Occupational performance, on the other hand, refers to the act of doing which involves the actions guided by the existing occupational forms. Nelson (1988) states that the act of doing by a person can be understood only in relation to the occupational forms.

Work, which is the other term often used interchangeably with occupation, is a social activity which involves human performance influenced by the performance of others at a workplace. The social interaction that happens at a workplace involves the inculcation of a large set of skills which influences the way workers carry out their activities. The way workers are organized at a workplace determines the nature of work being done, the workers who are involved in the work, the work process and finally what they get in return to their work.

Occupations can generally be considered as a method of allocating labour which involves three fundamental occupational elements such as 'a particular group of people, a particular type of work and an organised body or structure other than the workplace itself' (Abbott, 1995). The group of people differ in terms of their experience, skills and gender. The second element, that is, the type of work can also be divided in terms of the activities, products, tools being used and the customers. In terms of occupations, there exists the classification of occupations and the division of people on the basis of their

similarities and differences are accordingly given similar or different roles and responsibilities. For example a set of people having same skills, same education and same experiences can be given similar tasks and responsibilities which may be different from the tasks and responsibilities of another set of people. Two terms which are related to the term occupation are the concepts of task and skill. For clarifications, a task refers to an element or a component of work activity which yields an output. The output can be in the form of both goods and services. On the other hand, skills entail the workers' capabilities to carry out certain type of work. There exists an exchange system in which workers use their skills to produce goods in exchange for the wages.

9.3 OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURES IN INDIA

The occupational structure can be defined as the distribution or division of workers according to different occupations. There are at least ten occupational categories existent in India as per the Census of India report, 2011. These include cultivators, agricultural labourers, livestock, forestry, fishing and allied activities, mining and quarrying, manufacturing and processing in household industry, manufacturing and processing other than in household industry, construction, trade and commerce, transport, storage and communication; other services in both private or state owned formal and informal sectors.

Among these ten categories, the first three categories of cultivators, agricultural labourers, livestock, forestry, fishing and allied activities are considered as agriculture based occupations while as others are considered as non-agricultural occupations. All the ten categories of occupations can be divided into three broad structures such as primary, secondary and tertiary.

9.3.1 Primary Occupational Structures

Primary occupational structures involve the work of the labourers who directly use the natural resources extracted from earth to make a living. The examples of such natural resources extracted from earth include land, water, vegetation, building materials and minerals. These resources are used in various primary economic sectors such as agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, and so on. These kinds of jobs are carried out in the outside and for this reason they are also called as red collar jobs.

9.3.2 Secondary Occupational Structures

Secondary occupational structures include production activities such as manufacturing, construction and other small and large scale mining. There is the distribution of people into these various types of secondary occupations in the modern times. Manufacturing as a secondary occupation means production of goods by utilizing raw materials. These goods are produced at manufacturing units called as factories or industries. Considering the size of industrial units, there are two types of industries – small and large scale industries. The small scale industries include textile industries, shoe factories, printing press, furniture units, and so on. On the other hand, large scale

industrial units include steel factories, automobile industries, metallic units such as aluminium, copper, and so on. In these small and large scale industrial units, skilled people are involved in the process of production. The common activities that they engage in include construction of buildings, roads, bridges, dams, bus stops, parks, and so on. These kinds of works are a common activity in the urban spaces. In addition to the works mentioned, people in the secondary occupational structures also engage in gas factories, water and electricity departments, and so on.

In fact, secondary occupational structures attach value to the natural resources through converting raw materials into valuable products and this kind of occupational structure is often termed as blue colour job.

Activity 1

Talk to at least 10 people in your neighbourhood about their occupation. Ask them about its nature and how much value do they attach to it i.e. their work?

Write a short report on the basis of the information given by these people to you and share it with other learners at your Study Centre.

9.3.3 Tertiary Occupational Structures

Other than the two structures discussed already, there is yet another occupational structure existent within the economic system and this third occupational structure is called as tertiary occupational structure. This type of occupational structure has the potential of generating high employment opportunities. People engage in works at the tertiary level and the jobs at this level are different in nature than other two structures. This occupational structure is also called as service sector in which a number of services are provided by the workers involved in it. These services include services in hotels and restaurants; transport and communication services; banking and insurance services; business services as well as real estate services; services in public administration; and so on. In most of the developed countries, people engage in tertiary occupations at a very high rate than in developing countries. According to the World Development Report of 1983, around 45 to 50 percent of working people from developed countries were working in tertiary sectors. In India, only around 20 percent of the total working people were involved in tertiary occupations.

It is assumed that there will be an increase in the rate of economic development if people swing from primary occupational structures to secondary and tertiary occupational structures.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What do you understand by the term occupation?

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2) Mention some of the objective aspects of occupations?

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3) What is occupational performance?

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4) What is an occupational structure?

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5) There are three occupational structures in economic system. Name them.

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9.4 CLASSIFICATION OF URBAN OCCUPATIONS

The Census of India-1991 has defined occupation as “participation in any economically productive activity”. This sort of participation in an economic activity can be physical activity such as the actual work requiring physical strength or it can also involve mental activity such as effective supervision and direction of work. Occupation can also involve both paid and unpaid work. Unpaid work corresponds to the work done on a farm or in any family activity.

As we know, that India is an agricultural country. However the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of India comes from the urban areas because urban areas have more concentration of capital. For this reason also, urban spaces are called as the heart of employment opportunities available for every

individual. Occupations in urban spaces are available in abundance and there is undoubtedly no surprise to acknowledge the fact that most of the GDP is generated from urban areas. The sources of GDP in urban spaces are the various occupations that people undertake in order to make a living.

Now before we go into discussing various urban occupations, let us understand what living in urban spaces means? Urban spaces, precisely, refer to those areas in which there is a high density of population. These people have different means of income. So they undertake different occupations in urban spaces. Generally, the occupations in urban spaces are divided into four types, that is, street workers, self-employed businessmen, factory workers and those who work in organized sectors.

Activity 2

Visit the local market and speak to a shopkeeper about his business. Similarly approach a motor mechanic in the market and a street vendor about his work.

Compare the nature and work specification of each and write a note on “what is work”. Discuss it with others at your Study Centre.

9.4.1 Street Workers

Street workers or what is also called as street vendors are a vital organ of the economy of any country around the world. Street workers sell goods and offer their services at public places such as streets or other market places. They play an important role in shaping the informal economy of any country. In almost all the towns and cities across the countries, street workers can be seen working day and night on the streets. They are self-employed, for example, rickshaw pullers, vegetable vendors, cobblers, snack-sellers, tea-sellers, ice-cream sellers, etc. These street workers do not have or have limited access to formal markets. They are not entitled to any kind of support from the government for training or from banks for credit loans. So they are forced to work outside of the labour laws and other legal structures. Consequently, they often suffer poor working conditions.

Another significant issue concerning street workers is that they do not have a permanent location in terms of a shop or any other structure to sell their goods. Some of them live and sell their products in sheds, others keep moving from one location to another on bicycles. These street workers are mostly the migrants who have migrated from rural areas to earn an income.

Street working is an occupation existent in almost all the countries and India is no exception to it. In India, the proportion of street workers is around 2% of the entire population of a city (Bhowmik, 2005). Due to the increase in the migration of low-skilled people from rural to urban areas, there has been a decrease in the availability of employment opportunities within the formal economic sectors. This has tremendously contributed to the increased proportion of street vendors in many Asian countries including India. The declining of employment opportunities in private sectors coupled with underpayment and in pursuit of self-employment, those who were earlier employed

quit their private jobs so as to start working in cities as street vendors (Joseph, 2011).

9.4.2 Self-Employed Businessmen

Self-employment means doing something on our own to earn a livelihood. Street working is also a self-employed occupation. But in terms of business, self-employed businessmen include those people who have started their own business or enterprise and are the owners of their business, for example, the owner of a provisional store. Businessmen fall in both the organized and unorganized categories. In organized business, the accounts of the businessmen and also their economic affairs are recorded. In contrast to this, there are other businessmen who run a small enterprise, they are self-employed and therefore fall in the category of unorganized sector. Those in the latter category start their own business by making small investments and so they make low profits as compared to the businessmen who are in organized sector.

Business is considered as a challenging task because of the risk involved in it. One needs to have an excellent business mind which plays a vital role in its success. The application of the mind in the business enterprise is a key to deciding the fate of businessmen. People who wish to build their own career do so by opting self-employment. There are various other professions other than business that people undertake in urban spaces such as freelance work, performing arts, writing and so on. These are all typically the modes of self-employment.

9.4.3 Factory Workers

Another aspect of urban occupation is that of working in factories which is a major occupation of migrants in cities and towns of India. People who work in factories or any other manufacturing units constitute an unorganized sector of employment because these people are informally employed by the factory owners. Factory production in India has a long history and dates back to 1850s. During this time, goods were manufactured for export to the British. In colonial India, factories were established in Calcutta and Bombay (now being called as Kolkatta and Mumbai respectively). The reason to establish industries in India was because of the fact that production cost was low due to the availability of cheap labour. There were two reasons for the availability of cheap labour: one, because the country's economy was destroyed by the colonial rulers; and two because there was no regulatory mechanism for wages or work.

However after India attained independence in 1947, the regulation of industries started however the major changes took place in 1985 such as the reduction in the control of private sectors. Restrictions on foreign trade were also lifted. However in the informal sectors, workers did their jobs at the commands of their employers and they make a small income out of the work they do. Some of the common examples of this sort include sewers in cloth factories or labourers working as coolies. These sections of workers were hired by the employers and they were paid on the basis of their hourly works.

However the earning that they make out of it was insufficient for them to sustain.

9.4.4 Organised Sector Workers

Organized sector workers include those workers who work in sectors which are registered with the government. In organized sectors, employees' terms of employment are rigid and permanent or regular. There are various terms and conditions which make an employment sector an organized one. In fact, being considered as an organized sector is a difficult process as it requires proper registration with the government. Organized sectors are regulated by the government and they are liable to pay taxes also.

In India, a majority of urban occupations fall under the organized sectors in which workers perform according to the rules of the company. Common examples of employees working in organized sectors include marketing managers, civil engineers, doctors, and so on. These employees make high income on a monthly basis unlike the hourly work of wage based labourers. These workers enjoy multiple benefits given to them by the sectors they work in and these provisions are provided to them by the government through legal documents. Common examples of the benefits enjoyed by them include retirement plan, medical services and medical insurance, paid leaves, as well as other benefits.

Thus, as we have discussed, there are different types of jobs available in urban areas in India ranging from the street workers to employees in huge companies and corporations.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Define urban spaces?

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2) Occupations are classified into four types. Name them.

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3) Urban spaces are also called as

4) Who are street workers? Give examples.

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- 5) Point out a difference between an organized sector and an unorganized sector.

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9.5 LET US SUM UP

Economy in India is undergoing a major transformation in terms of people shifting from rural areas to urban areas in search for livelihood. Occupation or search for employment is the main reason for the migration of people from rural to urban areas. It plays a vital role in securing the economy of any developing country. In addition to this, employment is the main source of income for most of the urban population. In this unit, we discussed the general concept of occupation as well as what constitutes urban occupation. We also discussed the terms associated with or used interchangeably with the concept of occupation such as work, task, skills, job, and so on. The unit further offers an insight into what constitutes occupational structures and discussed the status of occupational structures in India by identifying three occupational structures such as primary, secondary and tertiary structures of occupation. The later part of the unit offers classification of occupation in urban spaces by categorising various occupations into four categories. These four categories include the street workers, business enterprise, factory workers and organized sector workers.

9.6 REFERENCES

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9.7 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Occupation refers to the activities that people undertake for livelihood.
- 2) Some of the objective aspects of occupations include materials, human context, and characteristics of physical settings.
- 3) Occupational performance refers to the act of doing which involves the actions guided by the existing occupational forms.
- 4) Occupational structure can be defined as the distribution or division of workers according to different occupations.
- 5) The three occupational structures in economic system are primary, secondary and tertiary occupational structures

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Urban spaces are those areas in which there is a high density of population such as a town or city.
- 2) Street workers; Self-employed businessmen; Factory workers; and Organized sector workers.
- 3) The heart of employment opportunities.
- 4) Street workers are those workers who sell goods and offer their services at public places. Examples of street workers include rickshaw pullers, vegetable vendors, cobblers, tea-sellers, etc.
- 5) Organized sectors include those sectors which are registered with government and in which the accounts of the businessmen and their economic affairs are recorded. On the other hand, unorganized sectors include businessmen who run a small enterprise. These businessmen start their own business through making small investments. Thus they make low profits as compared to the businessmen in organized sector.