

26 URBAN LIVELIHOODS

CIVICS

In cities where life is a challenge that is accepted and faced every day, earning a livelihood is the priority of all people. India has about five thousand towns and twenty seven big cities called metropolis or simply as metros. They are million plus cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, etc. The factories manufacture 24 hours and it is said that people never sleep in these cities though people work in shifts.

There are numerous jobs in the cities from pulling rickshaws to working in factories and offices. The working conditions may vary. There are both casual workers as well as permanent workers and also selfemployed persons. Casual workers have no regular work or salary and their salaries are cut whenever they take leave. Permanent workers get a regular work and regular salary with other benefits such as house rent allowance, medical allowance, pension, etc.

Some parts of the city are different from others with respect to the kind of occupations. The localities of a city can roughly be divided into markets, factory-workshop area, office area and the streets and roads.



Vegetable vendor



Snacks vendor



Newspaper hawker



Flower seller



Milk vendor



Rickshaw puller

Some urban livelihoods—sale and service

Working on the Street



A rickshaw puller taking a nap in summer

There are almost one crore street vendors in the country working in urban areas. In a big city 10 to 20 per cent of all the workers in the city are people working on the street. They sometimes sell things or repair them or provide a service. A lot of rickshaw pullers carry people and goods from one part of the city to another. Auto-rickshaw drivers carry people and goods for a larger distance in the city.

The vendors work on their own. They are not employed by anyone, that is, they are self-employed. They organise their own by planning first, how much to purchase and where and how to set up their shops or move their cycletrolleys. Their shops are temporary structures – just some papers or plastic sheet spread over discarded box or on the pavement. Those who sell food or snacks on the street, prepare most of them at home.

Street vending was till recently looked upon only as an obstruction to traffic and to people walking. Therefore, the vendors or hawkers could be asked to dismantle their shops or move their cycle trolleys at any time by the police. There are certain parts of the city where these hawkers are not allowed to enter. However with the effort of some NGOs (Non Government Organisations), the government is thinking to give them some place on the pavement without obstructing the free flow of traffic and people. Hawking zones have been suggested for urban areas. It has also been suggested that mobile vendors should be allowed to move around freely.



A temporary home on the street

Often the street workers who come from distant places set up their homes on the streets as well. These are also temporary structures made of plastic, discarded boxes etc where several workers leave their belongings during the day and prepare their meals at night.

Working in the Market



A market

In city markets you can see rows of shops on either side of the market **street** selling toys, sweets, shoes, clothes, electrical goods, utensils and other things. Some markets have **lanes** and by-lanes where also, shops of all kinds are found. The shopkeepers earn their livelihoods by selling these things.

Some markets, however, have a **campus type** structure. Some markets are round in shape called **gole markets** or **circular markets**. The modern trend is taking a shop in a big **shopping mall**. These malls are usually multi-storeyed. There are many restaurants, ice-cream parlours, showrooms selling watches, jewellery, cottons, woollens etc.



A shopping mall

The markets also has small offices and shops that provide services such as banks, courier services and others. Often the doctors — physicians, surgeons, dentists have their clinics in the market shops. Chartered accountants, Income tax and Sales tax advocates, architects and others have their consultancy services in the market shops.

There are many people who own shops in various markets of the city. These business-persons are not employed by anyone. But, they do employ a number of other workers as helpers and supervisors. These are permanent shops and the shop owners get a licence to do business by the Municipal Corporation. These shops are closed on a certain day of the week to allow weekly holiday for the shop workers.

Working in the Factory-Workshop Area

The factory areas are generally full of small or big workshops manufacturing things. Stitching of clothes for children, women and men is such a big industry nowadays. After stitching, the clothes are embroidered to look more beautiful and attractive. Hundreds of male and female workers work for long hours often in shifts in these factories. Most workers in such factories are employed on casual basis, i.e. they are required to come during certain seasons when the employer gets large orders. The jobs are not permanent. If the workers complain about their pay or working conditions they are asked to leave.



A female worker stitching clothes

At the Labour Chowk

On some road crossings called **labour chowks** large number of people seek for job on daily basis. They are daily wage labourers. They work as helpers to masons or dig at construction sites. They load or unload trucks in the markets and factory areas. They also dig for laying pipelines and telephone cables and build roads. These daily wage labourers are also casual workers. They neither get regular work nor regular salary. They wait with their tools for people to come and take them for work. Sometimes they get none.



A scene at labour chowk

Working in the Office Area

In the cities there are many government and private company offices. People work there on permanent basis. They get regular work and regular salary with other benefits such as :

Holidays : They get off on Sundays and national holidays. They also get 14 leaves a year as casual leaves and some days as annual leave. Big companies also give yearly bonus. Medical facilities for the family : The company pays the medical expenses upto a certain amount for them and their family members. They get medical leave if they fall ill and their salary is not cut if they take this leave.

Savings for old age : A part of their salary is kept in a fund with the government. At retirement the money with interest is paid to the worker

Unlike casual workers, permanent workers will not be asked to leave if the government department or company does not have much work.

Working in call centres : It is a new form of work in the big cities. A call centre is a centralised office that deals with problems and enquiries that consumers and customers have regarding goods purchased and services like banking, ticket booking, etc. The call centres work for



Work at a call centre



Indian companies as well as foreign companies. They hire people who can speak English, use computers and can work mostly in night shifts. A call centre has one or more large rooms with working tables (called 'stations'). Each person has a computer and a telephone set.

Domestic Workers

In cities there is a large number of workers who work in houses as maids, cooks, babysitters, ayas. These are all casual workers. They are paid on a monthly basis. They can be asked to leave by the employers, any time they wish. They are paid meagre salaries and have no benefits for their future.

Migration

There is not enough employment in the rural areas. Therefore, people in large numbers move from rural to urban areas every day in search of a job. The movement of a large number of people from one place to another in search of job is called **migration**. Forced by crop failure, floods etc. people from villages migrate to cities in search of work. Big metros such as Delhi and Mumbai have a huge influx of people everyday. All type of people, educated and illiterate, rich and poor, from villages and towns of all states migrate to big cities to get benefit of the varied employment opportunities there.

The migrants from rural areas are too poor to rent permanent houses. They set up shanty hamlets called slums. These slums are a major burden on city resources. Many of them use electricity and drinking water almost free. Living conditions are very unhygienic and prone to spread epidemics. The lot of migrants support the economic activities in the cities by their labour but they also put heavy pressure on the resources and public facilities of the cities. Some criminals have easy access to the slums, they live there and turn them into centres of crime.

Some NGOs (Non Government Organisations) have come forward to provide slum-dwellers almost free health and education facilities. The political parties use them as their vote banks. They arrange some facilities for the slum-dwellers such as ration cards, drinking water and electricity supply but they could not provide them permanent houses. At times the central government set up some residential colonies for the slum-dwellers in Delhi. But the inflow of the rural people is too much. So these measures are insufficient.

Key Words

- » Vendors : people usually selling small items on cycle-trolleys, bicycles or on foot.
- » Rickshaw : a bicycle made into a two-seater and driven by a man.
- » Casual labourers : temporary labourers not employed on regular basis.
- » Self-employed : people engaged in own business and not employed by others.
- » Labour chowk : a place where labourers wait for being hired by people.
- » Hawking Zones : zones reserved for persons selling goods on streets.
- » Migration : movement of a large group of people from one place to another in search of job.

SUMMARY

- ▶ In urban areas earning a livelihood is the priority of all people.
- ▶ There are numerous jobs in the cities from pulling rickshaws to working in factories and offices.
- ▶ The localities of a city can roughly be divided into markets, factory-workshop areas, office areas and the streets and roads with respect to kind of occupations.
- ▶ There are almost one crore street vendors in India working in urban areas. They sometimes sell things or repair them or provide a service.
- ▶ The vendors work on their own. They organise their own by planning first, how much to purchase and where and how to set up their shops or move their cycle-trolleys.
- ▶ Often the street workers who come from distant places set up temporary structures on the street serving as their homes.
- ▶ There are many people who own shops in various markets of the city. They do employ a number of other workers as helpers.
- ▶ Hundreds of male and female workers work for long hours often in shifts in factories.
- ▶ On some road crossings large number of people seek for job on daily basis. They are daily wage labourers.
- ▶ In the cities there are many government and private company offices. People work there on permanent basis.
- ▶ People who can speak English and use computers work at call centres mostly in night shifts.
- ▶ There is not enough employment in the rural areas. Therefore, people in large numbers move from rural to urban areas everyday in search of work.

Exercise Time

A. Tick (✓) the only correct choice amongst the following :

1. India has about _____ thousand towns and twenty seven big cities called metropolis.
a. five b. six c. seven d. eight
2. The modern trend is taking a shop in a big _____.
a. garden b. society c. shopping mall d. towns
3. There are almost _____ crore street vendors in the country working in urban areas.
a. one b. two c. three d. four
4. In urban areas _____ a livelihood is the priority of all the people.
a. earning b. enjoying c. spending d. giving
5. _____ is a new form of work in the big cities.
a. Shopping mall b. Call centres c. Migration d. Calling point

B. Fill in the blanks :

1. _____ are not employed on a regular basis.
2. On some road crossings large number of people seek for job _____ on basis.
3. In urban areas earning a livelihood is the _____ of all people.
4. There are almost _____ street vendors in India working in urban areas.
5. Hundreds of workers work for _____ hours often in shifts in factories.



C. Match the following :

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. A worker having job on regular basis | a. Casual worker |
| 2. A worker not having job on regular basis | b. Vendor |
| 3. A person selling small items | c. Self-employed |
| 4. A person engaged in own business | d. Permanent worker. |

D. Write true (T) or False (F) against the following statements in given brackets :

1. There is enough employment in the rural areas.
2. Street vendors sell things or repair them or provide a service.
3. Casual workers have regular work and regular salary.
4. Domestic-maids are permanent workers.
5. People who can speak English and use computers work at call centres.

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E. Define the terms :

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 1. Vendors | 2. Casual Labourers | 3. Hawking Zones |
| 4. Labour-chowk | 5. Self-employed | 6. Migration |

F. Answer these questions briefly :

1. Distinguish between the street vendor and a shopkeeper.
2. Can we grade domestic maids under the category of casual labour ? In each case give reasons.
3. What are metropolis cities ? Name five metropolis cities.
4. What are labour-chowks ? What is their use ?
5. What benefits a permanent worker get along with the salary ?
6. In what ways is a permanent and regular job different from a casual job ?
7. What is migration ? Why do people migrate ?
8. What are the effects of rural to urban migration on urban areas ?

G. Answer these questions in detail :

1. Compare the jobs of a casual worker and a permanent worker.
2. How do the street vendors manage their work ? What are their problems ? Has someone come forward to help them ?
3. List the types of markets ? What type of things are sold there ? What type of self-employed people sit there to do business or give services ?

PROJECT WORK

1. Compare the jobs of a casual worker and a permanent worker.
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3. List the types of markets ? What type of things are sold there ? What type of self-employed people sit there to do business or give services ?