Concern For Community

The word community is a fluid one as it refers to human situations, the context of which changes with every progression of experience. With the rise of modern economic system and market economy, development of means of communication and transport, introduction of education and technology, interference of the state in the community life and with the emergence of secondary agencies the local communities faced a breakdown. This has created a concern for community which is expressed both by social scientists and laymen. Current social forces which are said to be hastening the decline of community are also said to be creating unhealthy social and psychological conditions in society. As years rolled on, intervention by the state in the community affairs is viewed as a trend not in keeping with past ideals, and centralization of power is interpreted by some as a "tendency towards death." Mills writes that much of "Public Malaise" to be observed in American Society results from the fact that "many decisions of enormous structural relevance never become public issues." It, therefore, is a common feeling that community is as essential to the development of human personality as necessary to "the full life processes." In a very real sense the "future of the small community is to a large extent future of the nation".

The desire to retain certain characteristics of the small community is seen in the efforts of many suburbanites to preserve the identity of their local political units and to have a voice in matters affecting their community. Other indications of interest in preserving community as a social unit are the emphases upon community development and other such programmes in the rural areas, improvement trust programmes and urban renewal projects in cities. The
The extent of this interest implies that community means something more than an aggregation of people in a geographically delineated area.

However, the concept of community is central to social scientists. If, "is not qualified by precise sub-clauses, it loses much if not all of its scientific usefulness". As such, it is deemed essential that the concept of, "Community should be used much more carefully and precisely lest it may produce erroneous or misleading conclusions".

**Concept Of Community**

The concept of community has been developed from Tonnies Concept of "Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft" and upon Durkheim's concept of "Mechanical and Organic Solidarity". Gemeinschaft refers to familiar community groups which are based upon friendship or neighbourhood and on blood relationships. Durkheim held the view that mechanical social organization was an appropriate title for those forms of social organizations which have been characterised by Consenience-Collective. This dual theory of societary explanation has roots far back in the history of western thought but it has been very commonly used by social scientists to differentiate social entities. Important among such conceptualizations may be mentioned Weber's "Traditional and Rational legal authority", Odum's "Folk-State Pair," Redfield's "Folk-Urban Continuum," Sorokin's "Familistic Versus Contractual relations" and Backer's "Sacred and Secular Societies".

Several attempts have been made to define community. "Among sociologists who focus their study on community, concepts have attained such a degree of heterogeneity that it is difficult to determine whether any one of the resulting definitions or even any one group of definitions afford an adequate description."

Several efforts have been made to provide a coherent order among these heterogeneous concepts. A systematic review of ninety-four definitions was made by "Hillery" in 1955. Since then a large number of studies on different aspects
of community have been published. This necessitates a reconsideration of the whole literature. Following him an attempt has been made to provide a broad based classification of different concepts in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics Mentioned</th>
<th>Authors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Generic Community</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A. Social Interaction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Geographic area</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Self-Sufficiency</td>
<td>Wilson; Hothouse; Wheeler and Ginsberg; Sanderson; Zimmerman; Fairchild; Davis; Landis; Haudry; Lloyd and Cook; Ware.</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. i) Common life</td>
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<td>ii) Kinship</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Consciousness of Kind</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Possession of Common ends, norms, means.</td>
<td>Ward; Hieronymus; North; Dunn; Fireman; Lundquist and Carver; Wood; Lundquist and Moore; Barr; Steiner; North; Osburn and Neumeyer; Getty; Ginsberg; Panninaggio; Hofsommer and Pryor; Romans; Hiller; Bennett and Tumin; Hillman, Firth; Thomas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Collection of Institutions</td>
<td>Park; Ogburn and Nimkoff; Sanders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Locality group</td>
<td>Galpin; Burgess; Rich; Sanders and Bramley; Womac; Alexander; Mighell; Hollenbeck; Nelson; Kenning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Individuality</td>
<td>Howe; McKenzie.</td>
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</table>
h. Effective relationship involving mutual and collective identification.

i. Interaction and Process.

2. Presence of some Common Characteristics other than area.

a. Self sufficiency
b. Common life
c. Consciousness of Kind
d. Possession of Common ends, norms, means

3. Social System

4. Individuality

5. Totality of Attitudes

6. Process

7. Ecological Relationship

Rural Sociology

A. Social Interaction.

1. Geographic area

a. Self sufficiency
b. Common life
c. Consciousness of Kind
d. Possession of Common end norms, means
Anthropologists unlike sociologists did not give much thought to a precise definition of Community. The focus of their study has been tribal or other cultural groups. They also have undertaken studies of small communities as representative of the larger units. Murdock and Firth have given a review of the conception of the community as viewed by anthropologists. Generally, the tribal name or tribal and territorial name has been given by the authors to their studies. Their content is given below. It appears that the concept of Community has been viewed differently by sociologists and anthropologists. Consequently, studies related to community fail to elicit a well defined concept of community which could be utilized by all the social scientists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic Mentioned</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Little Community</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>or</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A. Geographic area</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Distinctiveness</td>
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<td>Smallness</td>
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<td>homogeneity all providing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-sufficiency Locality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Homogeneity in character, Social Solidarity, Close integration of social, economic and other activities, undifferentiated values, Plurality of relations between persons kinship units.</td>
<td>Goldenweiser; Redfield; Arensberg; Leach; Fried Meier; Oberg; Golon; Gluckman; Gillin; Foster; Sjoberg; Bourne; Dunzel; Redin; Tax.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Grouping, territorial propinquity, Common aims, beliefs and procedures, Close face to face relationship, resulting in group.

Steward; Linton; Murdock; Ford, Hudson; Keredy Simmons and Whiting; Weyer; Speck; Summer, Dollard, Doob, Miller, Power & Sears.

B. Ecological relationships

Approaches To The Study Of Community

In spite of lack of consensus upon the definition of the concept of community there has been a great stress upon empirical research in sociology. All of the different perspectives or approaches from which empirical researches in community have been undertaken have made some contribution to community theory. Different studies undertaken in the field can be summarized under four different approaches.

The ecological approach: This approach to the study of community focuses on four aspects of community organization. One of these is the spatial patterning of socio-cultural phenomena in a given area in which economic life of the community provides the basic structure, and competition is viewed as the basic process. Another focus is on those physical structures in society which are related to sustenance and residence. The influence of the natural and man-made environments on social living is a third focus. A fourth focus is on indices of physical change and processes emphasizing technology and economy.

Although ecological studies provide a framework for the spatial setting of community, yet most of these have been static picture of communities. Being symbiotic and commensalistic, it ignores other kinds of community phenomena, viz. role relationship and institutional forms of action which arise from the fact that individuals are motivated toward particular ends in sharing a territory for residence and sustenance relationships. It provides no way to delineate useful model for the study of ecological relationships for community analysis and variables for inter-community relationships which are part of the system.
of communities. Moreover, ecologists have ignored the consumption units and have laid emphasis only on production units.

The Institutional Approach: The primary focus in this approach is on repeated and accepted forms of behaviour in a given locality which are said to form the community structure. Value-orientations, ethnographic studies, and social relations studies are important elements of the institutional approach. Both social anthropologists and sociologists have made use of this approach for the study of pre-industrial and modern communities.

In institutional approach, it is assumed that values provide the group life without any reference to the emergence of the values itself. Further no spatial limits have been specified for community consideration in this approach. For want of these essential specifications, the concept loses its scientific objectivity, as depending upon the values or norms the community, a social group may start from two individuals and no end may be feasible. Moreover, depending upon value-orientations, even non-members may become the members of the community without being a part of the community. Another problem with this approach is that it tends to be non-accumulative. Little attempts have been made in these studies to build explicit theory, though one investigator may use concepts and insights developed by his predecessors.

The Social System Approach: defines community as "the local society with several institutions apparently neatly inter-related and forming the whole." Within this approach, such concepts as "processes and operations of the system," "communications," "decision making," and "boundary maintenance" point to the fact of social change. Inspite of these references to change and process, however, there is a significant lack of direct observations of these processes and changes in structures. As in the ecological approach, one finds in social
System analysis little more than a series of still pictures. Like institutional approach, social system approach lacks objectivity and is based on certain assumptions. Despite its shortcomings, this approach has been widely used in the fields of "social problems," "industrial relations," "hospital studies," "national character in person, microcosm of culture or society," "community power structure," and studies of "cultural and economic change and development." It offers a better insight of social change and processes if the study is undertaken over a period of time.

The interactional approach, still another prospective from which community may be viewed is the interactional prospective. This approach focuses on dynamics of social interaction and process within the ecologically described setting and institutional framework of the local society. Here, the community is taken as an organization. It emphasizes upon the fact that community coherence depends not only upon the collective aspects of community but also upon motivational gratification through different media.

Four important foci which may be noted in this approach are the treatment of community as a social group; emphasis on community action; leadership and power structure in the community; and on the notion of community field, arena, or situation. It has been used, though not intensively, in the study of "Community as a social realm," "Community power structure and decision-making." In this type of approach community is conceived more in terms of need-gratification rather than community loyalty. Depending upon interest without definite loyalty, a group may become social and with interest satisfaction, it may lose the connotation of community. It thus leads to multiple community systems, e.g., community of home, community of interests etc., without other necessary gradients. This dilemma thus results in subjectivity in the concept.
Methodological Considerations

All these approaches have contributed to the study of both urban and rural communities. Rural and Urban are counterparts and complimentary areas which complete the universe taken together. Rural Sociology has encompassed subject matter which entails the use of rural-urban relationship.

A logical fallacy in community researches is a lack of co-ordination between empirical research and theoretical analysis. Both the sociologists and the anthropologists have been concentrating on evolving continuum and polar types to differentiate social phenomena. The trend had been to differentiate the primitive communities from modern communities in terms of their interpersonal relations, degrees of interaction, involvement in group activities, mutual aid and mutual support, internalization and acceptance of values and norms. In the primitive communities their role was dominant whereas in modern communities they are subordinated to special interests.

Redfield's concept of folk-urban continuum needs a special mention. He presented the problem of community analysis and distinguished between "scientific analysis" and "holistic synthesis". He surveyed the possibility of studying communities as they advance from their folk level to urban level. Minar has criticized this approach because of lack of fit between the empirical data on specific societies in an ideal type construct, a problem of defining the traits and characteristic of ideal types, and the limitation of folk urban continuum.

Oscar Lewis, also, attempted to test validity of Redfield's concept and rejected it on the ground that there is no explicit delineation of urban from folk type. Lewis suggests that "instead of types under which many variables are subsumed, the separate variables ought to be the focus of study. This approach helps us to separate variables and to examine their interrelationships through research, and then in so far as possible put them back together into theoretically coherent
basic variables and perhaps (if the research findings warrant it) into new typologies has been successfully demonstrated in Weber's and Sorokin's differentiation in terms of system of relationships, social action and variability of action orientation. Parsons' pattern variables which express the ways in which to relate each other in interaction is a refinement of typological approach. Another trend in community studies is to interpret community in terms of its leadership pattern. The social scientists concentrate upon sociometric scales and designs which have not been sufficiently developed. Studies of communities in terms of values, the personal identification of local residents with their communities. The community organisation for common goal achievement; and internalization and institutionalization of behaviour and social relationships and what happened to these relationships and these groups themselves under the impact of forces from outside the community has been another focus of research. The basic assumption was that structure and functioning of communities can be understood in terms of values people hold and preserve and practise. It was further assumed that values give the communities "cohesion or solidarity" institutional pattern, social differentiation and social startification. Locality identification approach as a community study method has been widely criticized. It is established that community identification is independent of "activeness" in terms of organized interaction, and observation of established functional relations, (patterns of interaction) is not a reliable criterion of community identification.

Whatever have been the foci of research the basic question what the communities are, how they work and how to use them as a setting for "exploration, discovery or verification of interconnections among social and psychological facts still persist and processes. Community is multidimensional and its study involves multifactorial approach. It calls for concurrent analysis and attack upon all the relevant
factors, which can be better understood through "Community-study method. It lays emphasis upon observational approach rather than upon the statistical or experimental. Through it we can better explore compare and verify community phenomena as an investigator is in a position to observe human beings acting and feeling in free situations outside the laboratory.

This method entails certain difficulties which may be mentioned as those of:

a) **Representativeness.** The first step in research is to obtain a representative community so that the research findings may be generalized. The problem is especially dominant in countries with strong regional differentiation and variation, stratified and segregated classes, ethnically mixed, religiously composite and plural societies. With little variation it may be less serious in countries with uniform peasant communities.

b) **Completeness.** Another problem is how the community is to be bounded and demarcated. It has special significance in those cases in which one settlement or human interests and contacts grade off into another settlement and thus articulate with the neighbouring community or overlaps the neighbouring one.

c) **Diffusiveness.** Representativeness and completeness shade off into the question as to how far the community chosen contains in it the institutions, cultural elements and the forces of the whole society or civilization for which it is to serve as a sample or mirror. It should, therefore, be internally consistent enough to tell us what a community is? And it must tell us how to mirror its culture so that we may read back from sample to universe.
d) Integration. Above difficulties lead us further to enquire the cohesive aspects of community life. Is the community "integrative enough, common-minded enough, cooperative or sharing enough" to be designated as a community. It should also mirror the non-integrative elements which may be normal to its society. We must, therefore, not ignore the factional and sectarian traits of the community as they refer to the extent of unity and equilibrium within the community and extent of its reciprocity.

e) Identification. Collective identification/provides effective and functional relationship between individuals and individuals and groups is another problem. "Feeling of Unity", creates manifest co-operation and other established forms of interaction. Interactional process in this regard should be both cognitive as well as behavioural. Community is a basic unit of organization and transmission within a society and its culture. As a representative it may be understood in its organizational, sociological, political, constitutional, ecological, economic and human-geographic aspects. All these considerations imply that utmost care may be taken to use community study method.

Data Collection And Presentation:

Implicitly community-study method is comparative in nature since one such "a whole", of social and cultural experience of human objects must be alike or different from others. Following points in the collection of data may be kept in view:

1. Techniques of data collection should not be delimited to one particular method. Manifold and, at the same time, varied techniques may be used. Sociologists and Social Scientists have resorted to observation, participant observation, schedules, questionnaire (Mailed), depth
interviewing, life history and case study method, house-to-house canvasses content analysis, documents, sociometrics, sociograms, and survey methods. Help also has been sought of secondary data. This shows that for fruitful community study method and techniques must be looser rather than water-tight.

2. Interfunctioning of local institutions must be understood and weighed properly. Certain institutions are primarily distinguished by their properties. These includes: a) Institutions which drive from the residence context; b) Institutions which drive primarily from the consensus process in the community, and c) extra-local institutions which utilize local action to implement both local and extra-local goals.

3. Data collected should be reworked to reject the extent and to find a first hand model of the inter-connections of social, cultural and psychological facts present in the whole round of life. "The empirical fit between an attitude and behaviour, a belief and a cultural pattern, an institutional norm and a custom or section is of more interest than the number of persons who express the attitude or practise the behaviour on the average"

Development of a Working Model:

Community study method necessitates the development of a working models which help us to understand the related and unrelated patterns in the community. They raise the socio-psychological problem of the "arrangement of basic solidarities and basic demographical and ecological controls". The working model must define the community properly. In the development of working models the territorial or geographic character of the community, its demography, social structure, and cultural and institutional aspects of behaviour which provide organization and
way of living to the people, must be kept in view.

Nature of Community,

Territory, a group of people, their common culture and communityness as community characteristics has been emphasized by majority of research studies. Stressing the importance of these relationship Goldwater suggested, It is scarcely necessary to add that the basic character of locality as a social classifier has never been transcended. Even wandering bands and tribes had a specific geographic area recognised as home. Their forays for food often took them long distances from their home base but the home base was not abandoned, or if it was, a new base was established in another location. Communityness develops from socio-cultural system and collective identification which provides a frame of reference for community interaction involving a number of people from number of families living together. Studies further indicate that community is a basic unit of organization and transmission within a society and socio-cultural activities which cater the basic minimum personal needs and basic minimum social relations and needs through which societal survival is assured. From conceptual discussions and methodological considerations emerge twelve characteristics of the community.

Characteristics of The Community. These characteristics may be specified as: i) locality as the basis of commonality of life; ii) institutional framework and formalized structural system which provides a frame of reference for behavioural orientation; iii) institutional but readily recognized voluntary groups; iv) a shared system of belief and perception; v) reciprocity of relationship with different objects and elements which facilitate organic functioning of the community; vi) identification and participation which influences an individual's action and decisions; vii) frequent intimate face to face contacts; viii) recognition of interaction of community as a social system; ix) a timeless unity;
x) cooperation as the ethical basis of social life; xi) division of labour regulated through the culture and traditions of the community; and xii) a system of social stratification which creates community cohesion and community sentiments.

These concepts suggest that precise definition of community necessitates the differentiation of localities to their size and complexity. But within a given territory there is also a problem to demarcate and delineate community phenomena. This overlapping of phenomena within the community show that it is not possible to define community adequately. Communities have complex pattern which may be both related and unrelated to socio-psychological problems of the arrangement of basic solidarities and basic demographical and ecological controls. For all these reasons it is advisable to define community operationally.

Community Defined,

Operational definition recognises the fact that communities differ from each other in nature and they range from relative homogeneity to heterogeneity. Community may, therefore, be defined as a social group characterized by:

1) A stable economy whether dependent upon its own resources or upon external trade relations,

2) A sense of community loyalty as compared with members of other communities,

3) An institutional frame work which may be similar to other communities yet the members in their interaction with members of outer communities recognise it their own,

4) Both formal and informal social organization of actions which motivate the members to participate in various local formal and informal associations, sharing locally oriented goals and ideologies. It thus implies the "Collective way of solving problems."
5) Own leadership and power structure within the community.

6) Collective aspect which does not derive from people doing the same thing, but also from their doing different things which provide them multiphased need-gratification.

7) A geographic area with spatial boundaries which offers social and political safe-guard to its inhabitants.

This definition meets the basic requirement of the community model method approach which may be developed with following ingredients: a) Individuals (persons, population, community membership etc.) b) Space (territory, position, movement); c) Time (Schedule, clanders Time service); d) Functions (for individuals and group life); e) Structure and Processes which lay the basis for functions and organizations.

With operational definition the present study aims at apprehending community as a social system. Loomis defines social system as "orderly and systematic uniformities of social behaviour developed through interaction. He differentiates social system as, "Concrete interactive structure" and as an "Abstract Unit". The first refers to the pattern of interaction of the actors of the system among themselves within a set frame of reference. To keep the system as an on-going concern the member interest more among themselves than with non-members. In the second case the emphasis is upon persistent patterns of interaction which do not require specific persons to be considered as part of the system. The pattern of relationship prevail from generation to generation and from region to region. Social systems are composed of social interactions and cultural factors which structure these interactions. As significant unit of social system we accept Sorokin's "meaningful interaction of two or more human individuals" and his requirement that interaction be an event "by which one party tangibly influences the overt action or state of mind of the other." We also
accept Parson's observation that "Participation of an actor in patterned interactive relationship is for many purposes the most significant unit of social system."

Social system approach is adopted in preference to others as:

1) Operational definition and community method make the adoption of this approach as compared to others much easier; ii) it helps us to study change not only in the community as a whole but also in its parts and their reciprocal impact upon each other, and iii) it is more suitable to study the interaction of the system or sub-systems with the external system and influence of this interaction or interaction patterns inside the system.

Is Indian Village A Community?

Some social scientists have cast doubts upon the community character of the village. It has been argued that village is a "secondary community," which is a composition of primary communities represented in castes. The writers have attributed the failure of community development to non-recognition of the primary communities. A sociological appraisal of these writings indicates a segmental approach to the interpretation of community. They fail to recognize that in India within the framework of community it is group which is a unit both of action and of value-orientation. Secondly they do not differentiate between a "social group" and "community." Nath's "primary community" is basically an informal organization of social groups which do not have a stable economy which merge with the community as the members of these groups interact with outer community, whose spatial and temporal limits are subject to the limits of the community. Community provides for their multiphased needs-gratification and the group norms work within the institutional framework of the community.
An individual's position as he interacts within the community system and without the community system is given in two diagrams.

Diagrams show that as an individual operates without the community, his action is primarily determined in terms of his being a member of a particular community and other considerations are secondary. The village communities in India, no doubt, have undergone a change as compared to traditional communities, but they still possess the characteristic of the community as defined operationally in earlier part of this section. The criticism of Nath and Desai is with reference to static aspect of the community rather than the dynamic one. The latest study of village "Jitpur" by Nath is based on the assumption that the Indian Village is a community.

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