

CHAPTER-9

Urban Livelihoods in India

Urban areas mean places where **modernisation** has occurred and where there's a huge population. Examples of urban areas are large mega cities like New Delhi and Mumbai, or smaller cities like Jaipur, Bhopal or Pune.

“Livelihoods” means what people do for a living and the lifestyles they have. Thus, in this article we shall learn about the different types of urban livelihoods in India, that is, the types of jobs in the city and the lifestyles people lead.

Types of Livelihoods

Urban Livelihood of Street Workers

In towns and cities, it is easy to spot many people working in the streets. Some examples are those of **vegetable vendors, ice-cream sellers, cobblers, rickshaw pullers**, etc. These workers are **self-employed** people. Another special feature is that there may be **no permanent shop** for them to carry out their occupation. Some live and sell their products in shacks, some move around in bicycles and millions are left to sleep beneath highway roads.



Most of these workers have migrated from rural areas (villages) in search of earning more money, but alas, the city life engulfs them. It is their basic right to earn a living and thus, the government has started with many schemes to ensure their protection.

Self Employed Businessmen

What do you think of shopkeepers of medicine shops, clothes shop or a cafe? These people are businessmen who have started their own enterprises. Some businessmen are worth billions- like the owners of multinational companies, or some are small enterprise owners, (like the owner of a sweet shop).

Some businessmen fall into the category of **organised sector**, where their accounts and businesses are recorded. However, small businessmen are self-employed in the **unorganised sector** too. They invest some money into starting on their own and slowly make profits. Business is a risky deal and it takes courage and creativity to run a successful one!



Factory Workers

Another one of the urban livelihoods in India is that of a factory worker. These people are not formally employed and thus, fall in the unorganised sector. Besides, they work as and when their employer wants them to and earns a very small income for their work. Some examples are sewers in clothes factories or labourers used for lifting heavy packages. These people are hired and paid on an hourly basis and it is not enough for them to subsist on generally.



Workers in Organised Sector

- A majority of urban livelihoods in India fall under this category of workers. Examples of this is a marketing manager of a company, a civil engineer working on bridges, or a doctor working in a hospital. They earn the highest 'salary' in the city per month, but they don't earn 'hourly wages' like labourers.
- These workers have several benefits, unlike street workers or factory labourers. These benefits are like having a company's retirement plan, a company's medical insurance, having paid leaves.

Thus, we see what type of jobs are there in cities, ranging from self-employing work on the streets, to working in big companies and corporates. Cities have the richest and the poorest people and the gap in urban livelihoods is shocking and unfortunate. As students of civics and responsible citizens, we must work towards providing the underprivileged with basic necessities and support.