

Chapter 8

Urban Livelihoods

2marks

1Q: Why did Bachchu Manjhi come to the city?

Answer: Bachchu Manjhi came to the city in search of better employment opportunities, as he faced irregular masonry work in his village, and the income was insufficient for his family.

2Q: Why can't Bachchu Manjhi live with his family?

Answer: Bachchu Manjhi cannot live with his family because he stays with his friends in a rented room in the city, where he works as a cycle-rickshaw puller. His family resides in the village, and he visits them a few times a year.

3Q: How do street vendors organize their work?

Answer: Street vendors organize their work independently. They plan how much to purchase, set up temporary structures for their shops, and decide on the location. They often sell items prepared at home by their families.

4Q: What is the significance of the term "labour chowk"?

Answer: Labour chowk is a place where daily wage laborers gather, waiting for potential employers to hire them for various tasks. It serves as a meeting point between employers and laborers seeking work.

5Q: Why is job security a challenge for casual workers?

Answer: Casual workers often work on a temporary basis, employed as per the immediate needs of the employer. They lack job security, and if they complain about pay or conditions, they may be asked to leave.

6Q: What are the benefits mentioned for permanent workers like Sudha?

Answer: Permanent workers like Sudha receive benefits such as savings for old age, holidays, and medical facilities for themselves and their family members, along with a regular salary.

7Q: What is the primary difference between permanent and casual jobs?

Answer: The primary difference between permanent and casual jobs lies in the nature of employment. Permanent jobs offer stability, regular salaries, and various benefits, while casual jobs are often temporary, lack security, and may not provide benefits.

4MARKS

1. You have probably noticed that people in Kalpattu are engaged in a variety of non-farm work.

The various farm activities are listed below.

1. Trading
2. Teaching
3. Blacksmith
4. Making baskets and utensils.

2. List the different types of people you read about in Kalpattu who depend on farming. Who is the poorest among them, and why?

Solution 2:

Different types of people who depend on farming are given below.

1. Landless farmers
2. Small landowners
3. Big landowners

Landless farmers are the poorest among them because their daily wage is very less, and they have to depend on landowners for their farming job. Moreover, farming is a seasonal job; hence, during the non-farming season, they have to go in search of other low-income jobs. Whenever someone in the family falls ill, all their savings and earnings are lost.

3. Imagine you are a member of a fishing family, and you are discussing whether to take a loan from the bank for an engine. What would you say?

Solution 3:

The bank is a reliable source for a loan when compared to moneylenders. Moneylenders often charge very high rates of interest, which could lead the family into a debt trap.

4. Poor rural labourers like Thulasi often do not have access to good medical facilities, good schools and other resources. You have read about inequality in the first unit of this text. The difference between her and Ramalingam is one

of inequality. Do you think this is a fair situation? What do you think can be done? Discuss in class.

Solution 4:

All are equal in the eyes of the Constitution. It is the duty of the government to provide basic facilities.

5. What do you think the government can do to help farmers like Sekar when they get into debt? Discuss.

Solution 5:

1. Provide subsidies for fertilisers and pesticides.
2. Provide low-interest loans.
3. Provide Minimum Support Price for crops.

6. Compare the situation of Sekar and Ramalingam by filling out the following table.

| | Sekar | Ramalingam |
|-----------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Land cultivated | | |
| Land required | | |
| Loans required | | |
| Shelling of harvest | | |
| Other work is done by them | | |

Solution 6:

| | Sekar | Ramalingam |
|------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Land cultivated | Around 2 acres | Around 20 acres |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Land required | Not required | Required in large numbers |
| Loans required | Yes, for seeds and fertilisers | Yes, for setting up rice mills |
| Shelling of harvest | Sell at low cost to lenders | Sell at a high cost to traders |
| Other work is done by them | Work as labourers in Ramalingam rice mills | Own rice mills and several shops |

7marks

1. Describe the various activities and occupations observed on the streets of the city in the provided illustration. How do these activities differ from the work in rural areas?

Answer: In the illustration, the city streets showcase a myriad of activities and occupations that collectively contribute to the urban hustle and bustle. Vegetable vendors, flower sellers, newspaper vendors, auto-rickshaw drivers, cobblers, barbers, and more are engaged in various services. The city environment portrays a dynamic mix of economic activities, each catering to different needs of the urban population. This starkly contrasts with rural areas, where occupations are often centered around traditional practices like agriculture and craftsmanship. In rural settings, the pace of life tends to be slower, with a focus on sustenance farming and community-oriented work. The diversity of services and the pace of life in cities highlight the urban-rural dichotomy.

2. Explain the challenges faced by street vendors in the city. How do they organize their work, and what is the nature of their work environment? =

Answer: Street vendors in the city encounter numerous challenges that stem from the informal nature of their work. One major challenge is the lack of job security – they are not employed by anyone and are vulnerable to police actions that might force them to dismantle their temporary shops. Organizing their work becomes a crucial aspect, and street vendors have to plan purchases, set up their shops, and decide on strategic locations independently. The nature of their work environment is characterized by temporary structures, often mere boards or papers spread over discarded boxes or plastic sheets on pavements. The work environment lacks permanence, making it susceptible to abrupt changes and challenges, such as unfavorable weather conditions or municipal regulations.

3. Compare the experiences of Bachchu Manjhi, a cycle-rickshaw puller, and Nirmala, a tailor in a garment factory. How do their working conditions, earnings, and job security differ?

*Answer: Bachchu Manjhi, a cycle-rickshaw puller, and Nirmala, a tailor in a garment factory, have distinct experiences in the city workforce. Bachchu faces challenges related to the nature of his work – he purchased a cycle rickshaw to become self-employed, ferrying passengers for income. His earnings fluctuate based on the number of trips, and he faces challenges when he falls ill, resulting in days without income. His job lacks security, and he stays in a rented room with friends.

In contrast, Nirmala works in a garment factory as a tailor, primarily during the season when the factory receives orders for export. She faces long working hours, sometimes extending late into the night, and is paid on a daily basis. However, her employment is temporary, with the factory reducing staff after the season ends. During the off-season, she experiences unemployment, highlighting the precarious nature of casual employment. The key difference lies in the nature of their work – Bachchu as a self-employed individual with uncertainties, and Nirmala as a casual worker in a seasonal garment factory.*

4. Explain the concept of "labour chowk" and its significance in the city. How do daily wage laborers operate in this space, and what challenges do they face in finding work?

*Answer: "Labour chowk" is a significant concept in the city, serving as a central gathering place for daily wage laborers seeking employment. Daily wage laborers, often working as helpers to masons or in construction-related tasks, gather at this location to wait for potential employers. The concept is significant as it facilitates a connection between laborers and employers in need of temporary workers.

Operating in "labour chowk" involves laborers waiting, often with their tools, for someone to hire them for a day's work. The process is informal, relying on verbal agreements between the laborers and employers. The challenges faced by daily wage laborers include the lack of permanent accommodation, leading them to sleep

on pavements or seek shelter in night shelters provided by the Municipal Corporation for a nominal fee. The local tea and cigarette shops around "labour chowk" play a multifaceted role, acting as banks, moneylenders, and safety lockers for the laborers. Challenges include the uncertainty of finding work each day, reliance on informal arrangements, and vulnerability to exploitation.*

5. Discuss the working conditions of Nirmala in the garment factory. What challenges do casual workers like Nirmala face, and how do they cope with periods of unemployment?

*Answer: Nirmala, a casual worker in a garment factory, faces demanding working conditions, especially during the peak season when orders for export are high. She works long hours, often extending beyond the standard eight-hour workday. The nature of her employment is casual, meaning that she is hired on a need basis, primarily during the busy season. During this time, she may work six days a week, and at times, even on Sundays when urgency demands. The peak period lasts from December to April, and by June, the work is over, leading to a reduction in staff.

Challenges faced by casual workers like Nirmala include job insecurity – her employment is not permanent, and she anticipates being asked to leave when the factory reduces its staff. Additionally, during the off-season, she faces unemployment, and finding other work becomes a necessity. Coping with periods of unemployment often involves seeking alternative employment opportunities, contributing to the informal and uncertain nature of casual labor.*

Choose the correct answers

1. Describe the various activities and occupations observed on the streets of the city in the provided illustration. How do these activities differ from the work in rural areas?

- a. Only vegetable vendors are present in the city.
- b. The city streets are devoid of any economic activities.
- c. The city streets showcase a diverse range of activities like vegetable vendors, flower sellers, and more.
- d. None of the above.

Answer: c. The city streets showcase a diverse range of activities like vegetable vendors, flower sellers, and more.

2. Explain the challenges faced by street vendors in the city. How do they organize their work, and what is the nature of their work environment?

- a. Street vendors enjoy job security.
- b. Street vendors don't face any challenges in organizing their work.
- c. Lack of job security and the need to plan purchases and set up temporary shops are challenges faced by street vendors.
- d. Street vendors have permanent structures for their shops.

Answer: c. Lack of job security and the need to plan purchases and set up temporary shops are challenges faced by street vendors.

3. Compare the experiences of Bachchu Manjhi, a cycle-rickshaw puller, and Nirmala, a tailor in a garment factory. How do their working conditions, earnings, and job security differ?

- a. Both Bachchu and Nirmala have permanent jobs with high salaries.
- b. Bachchu faces challenges related to seasonal work, while Nirmala enjoys job security.
- c. Nirmala's job lacks security, and Bachchu has a stable income.
- d. Bachchu and Nirmala share similar working conditions and earnings.

Answer: c. Nirmala's job lacks security, and Bachchu has a stable income.

4. Explain the concept of "labour chowk" and its significance in the city. How do daily wage laborers operate in this space, and what challenges do they face in finding work?

- a. "Labour chowk" is an entertainment hub in the city.
- b. Daily wage laborers don't face challenges in finding work.
- c. "Labour chowk" serves as a central place for daily wage laborers to seek employment, facing challenges like uncertainty and reliance on informal arrangements.
- d. Daily wage laborers operate in formal settings with fixed contracts.

Answer: c. "Labour chowk" serves as a central place for daily wage laborers to seek employment, facing challenges like uncertainty and reliance on informal arrangements.

5. Discuss the working conditions of Nirmala in the garment factory. What challenges do casual workers like Nirmala face, and how do they cope with periods of unemployment?

- a. Nirmala enjoys permanent employment in the garment factory.
- b. Casual workers face no challenges in periods of unemployment.\
- c. Challenges faced by casual workers like Nirmala include job insecurity, long working hours, and coping with periods of unemployment by seeking alternative employment.
- d. Casual workers have guaranteed employment during the entire year.

Answer: c. Challenges faced by casual workers like Nirmala include job insecurity, long working hours, and coping with periods of unemployment by seeking alternative employment.

Fill in the blanks

1. Landless farmers are the poorest among them because their daily wage is very less, and they have to depend on landowners for their farming job.
2. Street vendors in the city encounter numerous challenges that stem from the informal nature of their work.
3. Bachchu Manjhi, a cycle-rickshaw puller, and Nirmala, a tailor in a garment factory, have distinct experiences in the city workforce.
4. The primary difference between permanent and casual jobs lies in the nature of employment.
5. "Labour chowk" serves as a central place for daily wage laborers to seek employment, facing challenges like uncertainty and reliance on informal arrangements.

Summary

The chapter "Urban Livelihoods" provides insights into various occupations in the city, illustrating the diverse ways people earn a living. The narrative follows a visit to the city, exploring street vendors, small businesses, factory workers, and office professionals.

The chapter begins with a vivid depiction of street life in the city, showcasing the activities of vegetable vendors, flower sellers, newspaper vendors, cobblers, and rickshaw pullers. It introduces Bachchu Manjhi, a cycle-rickshaw puller who migrated from a village, highlighting the challenges and uncertainties of his livelihood.

The focus then shifts to street vendors, emphasizing their self-employment and the challenges they face, such as temporary structures, lack of security, and restrictions on where they can operate. The narrative presents the case of street vending as a means of livelihood, recognizing the significant number of street vendors in urban areas.

The chapter proceeds to explore different urban areas, including markets and factory-workshop zones. It introduces Harpreet and Vandana, owners of a garment showroom, highlighting the changes in the business environment and the need for adaptability. The text also delves into the conditions of casual workers like Nirmala in garment factories, emphasizing the lack of job security, long working hours, and seasonal employment.

Additionally, the chapter touches upon the lives of call center employees, providing a glimpse into the evolving nature of employment in the city. It contrasts casual workers with permanent workers, illustrating the differences in job security, benefits, and working conditions.

The chapter concludes with a visit to the office area, introducing Sudha, a marketing manager with a regular job. It contrasts her stable employment with the uncertainties faced by casual workers, highlighting the benefits of a permanent position, such as savings, holidays, and medical facilities.

The questions at the end of the chapter encourage readers to reflect on the living conditions of casual workers, compare permanent and casual jobs, and consider the services provided by individuals in markets they visit.

In summary, "Urban Livelihoods" offers a comprehensive exploration of the diverse ways people in the city earn a living, shedding light on the challenges, variations, and contrasts in urban occupations.