

**Changes in House Types of Rural Meitei Villages in two valley districts of Manipur Valley in the Context of Sustainable well-being**

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**Abstract:**

Meitei's Villages in Manipur Valley in India mostly use locally available building materials to construct their houses. The house represents the cultural heritage of the past and the survival of tradition. Imprints of houses are reflected through shape, size, roof and wall types, doorways and other architectural style of house. However, in the last few years people began to stop building traditional Meitei house slowly giving way to modern concrete house and a new lifestyle so as to adjust to the changing progress, scientific, technological and socio-economic development. But certain characteristic structures of traditional Meitei houses remain unchanged. To investigate this trend of change to modern house type in rural Meitei settlements, some Meitei villages in the two valley districts of Manipur were selected in order to conduct a case study. The present article focuses these changes in the context of sustainable well-being of rural Meitei's settlements.

**Keyword:** House types, traditional Meitei house, modern house, sustainable well-being.

**Introduction:**

Manipur is located between 23°51'N latitude to 25°41'N latitude and 93°2'E longitude to 94°47'E longitude in the extreme eastern parts of the country. The total length of its border is about 854km including 352km long international border with Myanmar and the remaining 502km long border separates Manipur from the states of Assam, Mizoram, and Nagaland. The shape of Manipur is rectangular cup or a threshing mat with the oval shaped Manipur plain or Manipur valley in the center.

Manipur is one of the smallest states of India with an area of 22,327 km. The central plain covers only a small area of the state i.e. 1843 km or 8.25 percent of the total land surface of Manipur and the remaining hilly part covers an area of 20,484 km or 91.75 percent of the area of the whole state. The most striking topographic features in the mountainous state of Manipur valley or central plain or Imphal plain, which occupies 2,238 km<sup>2</sup> (excluding Khoupum valley) i.e. about 10 percent of the total area of the state. The Manipur valley consists of two major parts i.e. 1) the central plain or Imphal valley and 2) the Barak valley or Jiribam plain. The two valley districts under study are Imphal East and Imphal West. There

are 103 Meitei Villages in Imphal East and 69 Meitei villages in Imphal West as per 2011 census. The rural population of the Imphal East in 2001 is 2, 86,566(12.5%) which decline to 2, 72,906(9.56%) in 2011. The Imphal West district accounts for 197691(8.6%) rural population in 2001 while it reduce to 195113(6.3%) in 2011. This changing figure clearly hints that as the change in lifestyle of the modernizing rural population, and the dwindling rural populace will echo in the structure and use of the built environment of these areas. Out of the 172 total Meitei villages in the two valley districts of Manipur 41 were selected on the basis of its location such as villages at foothills, villages at lake shore, villages along the river banks and villages in the plain in order to conduct a case study (Table.1).

Table.1 Showing number of selected villages:

District	Foot hills Village	Lake shore village	River banks village	Plain village	Total
Imphal East	5	3	5	9	22
Imphal West	5	2	5	7	19

The present study emphasizes on the observed changes in architecture, house types and lifestyle in rural Meitei's Villages. It highlights the necessity of designing the rural settlement for sustainable well-being. The villagers were interviewed to recognize why people accepted these changes and how these relate with their well-being.

### **Transition of House Types:**

The types of traditional Meitei house according to the numbers of rooms are broadly classified into four types. They are Yumjaokamapal( 9 big room house); YumjaoKaTaret( 7 big rooms house); YumjaoKa Manga( 5 big room house); YumjaoKa Mari( 4 big room house). Among these four types the Meiteis commonly construct the ‘YumjaoKa Mari’ type. It consists of various part serving different functions, Mangol( front verandah) consists of Phamen; Ningolka( unmarried daughter's room); PhamenKa (oldest members room); ChakhumKa( kitchen); SanamahiKa( God's room). Locally available resources like bamboos, woods, reeds, thatches, mud, and clay were the main materials used to build traditional Meitei's houses. A rectangular shaped foundation of mud is made on which the house is built with the bamboos pillar. The house is roofed by the dried thatch or straw fix on the

framework of split bamboos. The walls are constructed with a mixture of mud and pieces of straw applying on the framework of split bamboos and plastering of cow dung mix mud to smoothen it. The conventional rural Meitei's house is with no vertical expansion. The traditional rural Meitei's houses represent a great architecture features consisting of rich cultural heritage of the past and present Meitei societies. In last 30-40 years back, the majority of houses in Meitei's Villages are of typical traditional Meitei house of Mud wall-thatch roof. Developments of nonagricultural activities have influenced the structural features of rural dwelling. Mobility of people and exposure to urban living style has motivated rural people to get their houses modified in structure and design. However, we witnessed an increase in the use of brick, cement, galvanized iron (G.I) sheet, Asbestos(Rhino) sheet, iron etc. as building materials. In order to validate this change, in depth Field survey was conducted to collect characteristics of these selected settlements. Google Earth version 9.2.56.4, Coordinates-GPS Formatter Version 6.3.3 have been used to study the characteristics of the settlement pattern and exact location of the selected villages. In depth field survey of the study area conducted in the year 2016 revealed that -R.C.C building (flat brick roof and brick wall) occupies about 10% of the rural dwellings, Half brick wall-G.I sheet slanting roof shares about 40%, Mud Wall- G.I sheet roof occupies about 30%, G.I sheet wall-G.I sheet roof account about 5%, Asbestos sheet wall- G.I sheet roof is about 10% and the traditional thatched roof-mud wall is only 5% of the houses. The increasing percentage of new roof and wall types in 2017 study, which was absent in last 30-40 years back, shows incremental promotion and alteration of roofs and wall by the residents.

This specifies that among the prevailing population, there is demand for renovation and inclination for new building materials over the locally available traditional materials.

### **Sustainable well-being and Sustainable development:**

How changes in house types reflect in the well-being of the villagers? To answer this question it is necessary to understand what well-being defines and what is sustainable well-being.

While there is no consistent meaning of human well-being, well-being can be viewed as a binding together idea and a trait of both the goal and abstract components which comprise wellbeing and personal satisfaction, Sarvimaki (2006). The fluctuation in the definition is regularly because of the order and weighing of the various variables which are thought to gauge well-being. Subjective social indicators depend on studies gathering individuals' own

assessment of momentary well-being or general life fulfillment while objective social indicators depend on a presumption about fundamental human needs and rights. When all is said in done, well-being is comprehended as a condition of prosperity, joy or flourishing. In more extensive understanding well-being is carrying on with a decent existence with which one is fulfilled.

The progress from conventional to present day is frequently termed as 'development' and is related with the development and well-being of society. The term 'sustainable development' is defined as a 'development that meets the present needs without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' United Nations, WCED (1987). There are three core areas of sustainability, they are environmental, economic and social domains. These domains of sustainability are needed to be incorporated to the rapidly changing rural environment of a developing country like India.

Sustainable well-being is the assimilation of individual well-being and dimensions of sustainable development. It is an interrelated grid of individual aspects and shared aspects of a community. Then, sustainable well-being will be the quality of life which can remain to survive and persist in the long term for the future generations by the resources available in our environment.

#### **Cause and effect of changes:**

In the above intercourse of the article we come to know the inclination of people to change from traditional to modern house types. In order to recognize the cause of such changes, it is inevitable to know whether these changes will be environmentally sustainable or will it improves social well-being or are these changes a preferred or induced one.

#### **Cause of changes:**

##### **Preference of modern building materials over traditional one and desires of the villagers:**

It is essential to recognize whether the preference of newer building material for house provides contentment and well-being and whether this changes a preferred or induced one. After field survey, it come to realize that the preference of newer building materials were due to the easily availability of modern material like G.I sheet, asbestos sheet, iron bar, cement, brick etc., easy to build with readymade materials. Nowadays to construct a traditional house finds difficult as the skilled builder for such house are hard to find, at the same time raw

materials for such house type like different types of bamboos, good quality thatch, wood, cane are also not easily available and expensive.

Mobility of people and exposure to urban living style has motivated rural people to get their houses modified in structure and design. Those who could not afford a new modern house chosen for partial renovation of their prevailing houses. When mud walls weaken, they try to replace them with concrete walls, even old mud walls are coated with sand-cement mixture to avoid destruction. The aspiration of some wealth off villagers induced to build modern houses with architectural design to gain social recognition and to show-off their wealth. The choices of the people lead to fulfill only some aspects of individual well-being but not the well-being of the community.

It tends to be contended that inadequacy in accomplishing generally prosperity viewpoints is because of the unidentified needs of individuals that ought to be fulfilled, and which must be reflected in their decisions, and subsequently in design intercessions. Here, individuals are not totally mindful of their needs, and don't distinguish those necessities which can fulfill them, which when met by design intercessions, can fulfill them and keep on fulfilling them; those requirements, however the various needs which lead to well-being. Henceforth, a design should mull over the prompt prerequisite for fulfillment, yet a comprehensive comprehension of what an individual's needs are and his different needs too, so there is no contention with one another. Consequently, designers have a significant task to carry out in the society, as they have a comprehension of the all-encompassing needs of both the individual and the community.

### **Effects of change:**

The Change from traditional to modern house type leads to change in the life style of the rural people. The testimony of the changing rural life style are the attach bathroom, toilet which are absent in the traditional house, using various electronic items like fan, refrigerators, T.V., rice cooker etc., R.C.C or G.I. sheet boundary of the homestead which were earlier fenced by bamboos or by planting some shrubs. Not exclusively is that thoughtfulness regarding building plan significant, in any case, we additionally need to think about structure at road and village levels. A plan arrangement which can work at both people and village scales is required. Designing of rural settlement would subsequently be planning of rural configuration such as streetscapes, community land, Community pond, playground and their spatial arrangement with the settlement in all.

### **Suggestions for bringing sustainable well-being:**

Unplanned community land, playground, pond should be properly developed. The community land and playground is the only source of recreation for children and the place of sporting activity for youths in rural areas. It is more important in rural areas of Manipur which is considered as the powerhouse of sport in India, where bulk of players are come from countryside. Community pond should be well maintained as it is prime source of water preserve in the region. In order to improve economic conditions of the villagers, it is essential to design various small market to sell the local products .

Maintaining all weather roads to increase the accessibility and interconnection with nearby areas and make public transport system more reliable in order to reduce the necessity of personal vehicles.

The rural waste ranging from biodegradable kitchen waste to environmentally harmful plastic waste are thrown in a pit, streets or drain when ultimately burnt in the open create pollution. Discharging of waste from cattle and poultry farm in open swampy areas and drain led to breeding ground of various contagious diseases. So, the village as well as household level proper waste management practices should be encouraged with the support of local self-government and state government.

The preference of building modern house over traditional one indicates over dependency on imported raw materials , which prices are rapidly increasing, will create hindrances to the villagers to build such houses in near future. So, builders are needed to be trained to use locally available materials in a scientific way.

Awareness at the community level should be created about the environmental influence of using modern building materials to the people, in order to create sustainable living.

### **Conclusions:**

To Structure rural settlement for the prosperity of the community while not settling on prosperity of individual is significant for the sustainable well-being of rural areas. Government need to educate the villagers about the merits and demerits of choosing modern building materials over traditional one and their impact on the environments. So, the designers should amalgamate both traditional and modern style house construction to bring sustainable well-being of rural areas.

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