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Discourse on Rural Settlement of Sikkim with special reference to Hee-Gyathang, North Sikkim

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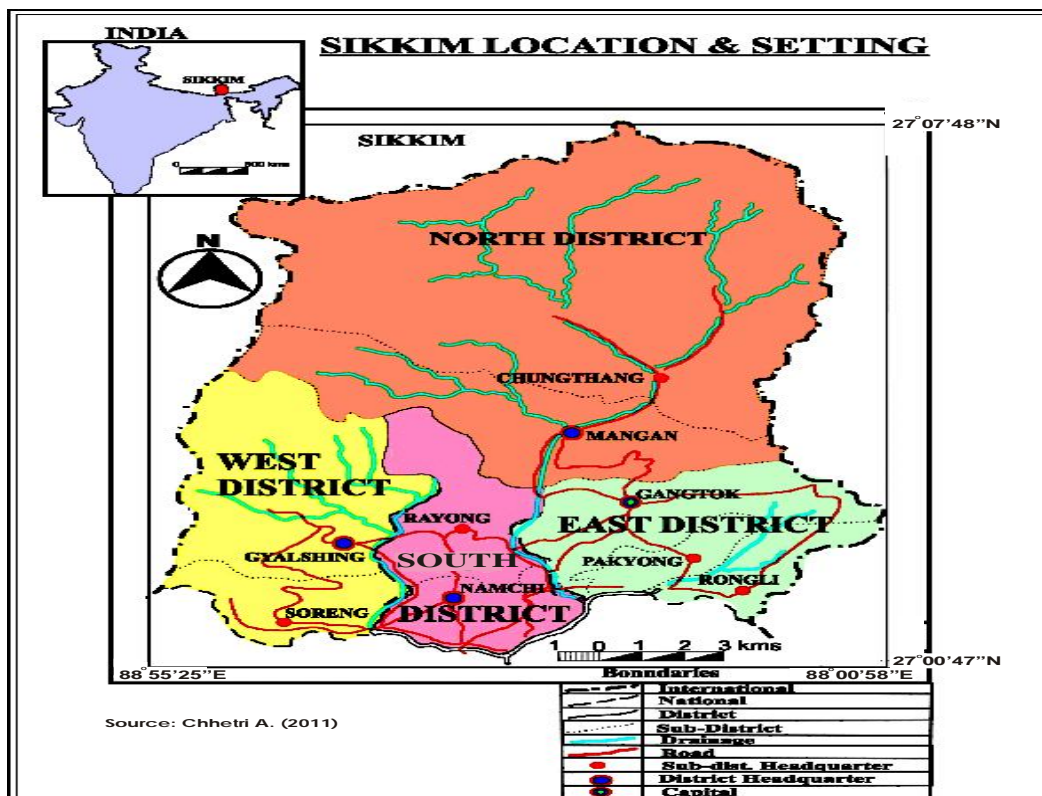
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Abstract: The paper is totally based on field investigation which was carried out in different blocks of North districts of Sikkim. As settlement not only shows the multi-relational dimension but it also exhibits the variation, boundaries as a whole, it also generates a typical landscape. The main focus of this paper is on Rural Settlement where the detail study of rational house type of different ethnic groups like Bhutia Lepcha and Nepalese are studied. The recorded history witnesses that the different ethnic groups came with different idea of constructing houses which are of typical type, the Lepcha who are consider to be original habitat of Sikkim had the similar way of constructing houses that of Bhutia. This different ethnic groups brought their own culture and own way of living. This includes house type or style, food habits, dressing, belief etc, the lepcha and bhutia have some kind of similarities in the construction of houses unlike Nepalese who developed a different style of constructing houses all together. With an objective of Identification of different settlement pattern/ form and their classification on the basis of ecological and non-ecological factor, Collection, Analysis, Interpretation of process of settlement data as these data which will not only important for town planner and other government agencies but can be studied for the improvement of settlement in Sikkim.

Keywords: Rural Settlements, Morphology, House Type, Nepali, Bhutia, Lepcha

I. INTRODUCTION

Sikkim is a very small state in eastern Himalayas, extending 114 km from north to south & 6 kms from east to west having total area 7096 sqkm. The state falls under 88° 00' 58" and 88° 55' 25" East longitudes and 27° 00' 46" and 28° 07' 48" North latitudes. The state being a part of inner range of Himalayas has no open valley & no plains, which is one of the vital reason which hinder the settlement in the state.



When we have talk about the settlement of the state, we need to go little back to search some facts findings, as history of Sikkim witnesses the settlement pattern has gone through many drastic changes over the years. Though these changes are seen over the years have no such recorded account on the pattern, form, morphology, of settlement in Sikkim. Major part of the state is covered by rugged mountain terrain also by snow cap mountain which restrict the growth of settlement in Sikkim. The people of Sikkim generally lived in disperse hamlets which were seen all over the slope of the mountains, as well as very few available flat land. As Sikkim is having one major river named Teesta people here are settled along by side of this river & its tributaries like Rageet & took the agriculture activities alongside of this river valley. Generally, the Nepali community are the one who introduced & started agrarian activity & domesticating animals. Whereas the tribal community comprising of Lepcha & Bhutia preferred to settle along the periphery of monastery which are situated on Hill top. State having four districts namely North, East, West & South. Gangtok city is the capital of state as well as it's also the district headquarter of East district whereas Gyalzing is HQ of west, Namchi is for South & Mangan is for North district. Except some part in south & east district most part of the state is sparsely populated & settled, more than 60 % of total area of state is uninhabited due to difficult terrain & harsh climatic conditions, but east district being the capital of state & HQ is overcrowded & settlement pattern is haphazard & grossly mismanaged which is already creating lots of Urban problem & in coming days its going to increase in more rapid manner rather than decreasing. This will lead to problems while managing disaster in the state. The settlement in Sikkim is mostly confined within the counter line of 3000 mts.

II. PROBLEMS & DISCUSSION

Sikkim having no flat piece of good sized land anywhere, where settlement can flourish. Measure portion is covered by the pre-cambrian rock and is much younger in age consisting of phylites and schist as the major rock type here the slopes are highly vulnerable to weathering and prone erosion to land slide. Like the other states of India Sikkim has number problem related to settlement and its future probability some of these are;

- A. The pressure of settlement along the slope of hilly areas is comparatively high and risky as compare to flat piece of land.
- B. Due to nature of Himalayan area, the impact of weathering and mass wasting is a common phenomenon which result in massive landslides, rock fall, flash flood etc.,.
- C. Due to the pressure of increasing population and of concept of nucleated family the marginal land or the area, which is not suitable for settlement, is also being utilized.
- D. The in migrating population from the surrounding areas especially as constructional workers laid to grow unplanned, unmanaged, slum type of settlement.
- E. No comprehensive account on evolution of settlement has been documented so far incase of Sikkim Himalayas, therefore there is an urgency and need of settlement study for the state.
- F. The difficult terrain and inaccessibility are some of the major causes which have led to develop individual house rather than the collective housing or settlement

The cultivation of cardamom has changed the economy of the people as this agricultural product is sold in a handsome price other than this, the unauthorized tenants on an "Adhia- which means share cropper" are also found. The Hee Gyathang block is the biggest in the whole reserve with 277 houses out of which 138 are laborers (other than lepcha). There was only 60 houses during 1938 (Gorer 1938 page no 54) this block is composed of many small busties out of which only 16 inhabitat

III. GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDIES

- A. Identification of different settlement pattern/ form and their classification on the basis of ecological and non ecological factor
- B. Collection, Analysis, Interpretation of process of settlement data as these data are not only important for town planner and other government agencies but can be studied for the improvement of settlement in Sikkim.
- C. Morphology and Settlement form must be geared up to mitigate the increasing population need in terms of settlement.
- D. The Settlement study has assumed a place of pride in the field of applied geography for the assessment of various types of Settlement and their future probability.
- E. Settlement in Sikkim has evolved based on different community's participations hence the study and understanding of such ethno base settlement is keen to scholar.

IV. FINDINGS

- A. Due to the old laws of Sikkim the holding of land among schedule tribe community is stagnant since ST land cannot be purchased by non tribal community on top of that people from other states of India are not allowed to purchase land in Sikkim, this factor has a notice able impact on the community wise evolution and development of settlement. Since no tribal area are flourishing in terms of settlement due to natural as well as migratory factor of population growth and vice versa
- B. Due to development in the tourism sector the area specially in north shows tremendous growth and development of settlement and change in use of residential houses to a commercial houses such as Hotels, Home Stays, Offices, Travel agencies etc.
- C. Initially animal raring and herb collection from the forest was primary occupation but now days due to strict forest department rules, development of infrastructure and communication and due to famous tourist destination people in the north have shifted their profession from trans human settlement to a permanent tourism and its allied activities
- D. The agriculture area in and around Transportation Line mainly along National Highways, State Highways, District Road and PMGSY, have converted into Settlement area, fallow area for future use and other commercials use viz shops, warehouse etc
- E. New generations are more inclined towards Tourism related professions, as a result people participation in agriculture and related activities are low, resulting into high cost of labour, due to which land are kept fallow.
- F. Government declares this belt as the Industrial Belt of Sikkim. Few other urban centers were The holding size has significantly changed from Semi-medium, Medium and Large holdings to Marginal and small holdings (1976-77 to 1990-91). This is mainly due to fragmentation of land among next generation and sold and purchase of house building plots only.

V. CONCLUSION

Due to its geographical location Sikkim has a scarcity of flat land which hinder the proper growth, development and extension of settlement. Majority of settlement has developed along the hill slope specially along the connectivity lines such as NH31A district highway, sub district roads etc.

The house type in the state has been modified as per the availability of construction material. Previously connectivity of Sikkim with other surrounding region was considerably poor and ill maintained which resulted into the high cost of construction, hence the most of the houses were constructed with cheap and locally available material, after the merge with Indian Union the connectivity, infrastructural and technology developed in the state which resulted in development of the construction methods and advancement of the technology which chages the shape, size and the style of the houses. Majority of urban hub in sikkim started developing as an transportation line settlement viz, singtam, rangpo, nayabazar, jorethang etc., along the National Highway NH31A from Singtam to Rangpo number of industries came up that the also developed for administrative purpose which were developed as district and subdistrict head quarters, for example Namchi, Mangan, Geylzing, Gnagtok, Pakyong, Ravang, Chungthang etc.,

The state government has launched many programs under RMDD and UD & HD departments to make state free from poverty one major step in this context was taken by building of new pucca houses called as model houses in the rural area during the survey it was found that more than 6000 houses were kutcha, the condition of this houses were so bad and were not in condition to upgrade. To solve the problem new scheme known as “Chief Minister Rural Housing Mission” to achieve Katcha house free state by 2013. Under this scheme the model house of 2 bedrooms, Kitchen attached with dinnig one toilet one small varanda was constructed which costed as Rs 3.50 lakh per house.

The beneficiaries of this scheme were of local group and already residing in katcha house the selection of this beneficiaries are done through ward sabha and gram sabha which is finally approved by block Rural house construction committee (BRHCC) after a year it was felt that this model houses having tin roof had no chance to upgrade or to add further slabs, so now instead of this model house RCC building of one slab are been constructed for the beneficiaries, all they needed was that, they should have the plot (piece of land) where Government can cinstuct a building now the beneficiaries with RCC buildings has started using the ground and first floor for shops and tanents respectively because of this the economy of the house hold also improving. In the urban area the Urban Development and Housing Department is the nodal agency for providing individual urban housing in the state, the department also provides the social housing to the urban poor.

In the urban area the demand of the house is more from the middle and the lower income group as there is less number of Government land, the pressure on the Government to provide suitable sites and houses to the people.

In the Urban area there is a high demand of rented house, there are many Urban problems faced by almost all the urban centers in the state the more is in the capital. The government as well as the NGO's like Sikkim Development Foundation, VHAS and ECOSS are doing the need full.

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