
ARCHITECTURE AND CULTURE: THE DYNAMICS OF THE CHANGING HOUSE-FORM IN RURAL SETTLEMENTS OF ANDHRA PRADESH

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Abstract: Rural settlements are indigenous settlements evolved based on various parameters like socio-cultural, occupational, economical, geographical, climatic aspects etc. They evolve or develop based on availability of local materials and various other aspects. Majority of rural areas of Andhra Pradesh depend on agriculture and there are other settlements which depend on specialized occupations like fishing, weaving, pottery etc. Most of the families at the initial stages are joint families. So the houses are large enough to accommodate complete family. The activity or job in which the complete family is involved is same and it becomes a family business. The rural or the village life is always taken as an example of societies with great socio-cultural aspects. The house forms, people, society, festivals, beliefs, celebrations etc are all part of rural character.

This paper aims at taking few examples of house forms in a rural settlement and the changes which has taken place during a period of time and various influences or reasons which led to these changes.

Key Words: Rural Settlements, Culture, Transformation, Built form/fabric, urbanistaion

Abstract : Rural settlements are indigenous settlements evolved based on various parameters like socio-cultural, occupational, economical, geographical, climatic aspects etc. They evolve or develop based on availability of local materials and various other aspects. Majority of rural areas of Andhra Pradesh depend on agriculture and there are other settlements which depend on specialized occupations like fishing, weaving, pottery etc. The house forms are derivative of the spaces required based on the occupational background. Another important feature in India and which is a common observation in most parts of the country is the caste and religion. Both of them have connection with occupation and vice versa. There are some caste groups which are pertaining to a particular occupation. A particular caste group involves only in gold making, another group involves only in weaving, whereas another group which involve in only business. This was seen from the past and hierarchy of housing in a rural settlement in

India also follows the same system. A group of households with a particular caste are grouped together in these settlements. R.Y.Singh (1994) in his book Geography of settlements describes about village versus rural settlements as the term “village” attracts simultaneously denounces any legal definition. It discards to be delimited by either size or population criteria. In India, officially village stands for the area demarcated as a mauza meaning “parcel of ground with definite boundaries, for revenue purposes without clear and consistent regard for its population.” Obviously, village, gram and gaun are synonymous terms which denote a cluster of houses including the surrounding land almost self sufficient and usually grouped at a convenient site. The houses along with the street pattern are visible elements of the rural landscape which humans have superimposed on the natural landscape of a region. Thus, the village of the present day or village community, so popularly used term of the past, is a comparatively small and simple agglomeration

of the houses at a favourable and convenient site.

Most of the families at the initial stages are joint families. So the houses are large enough to accommodate complete family. The activity or job in which the complete family is involved is same and it becomes a family business. The rural or the village life is always taken as an example of societies with great socio-cultural aspects. The house forms, people, society, festivals, beliefs, celebrations etc are all part of rural character. Various definitions of culture reflect differing theories for understanding, or criteria for evaluating, human activity. Edward Burnett Tylor writing from the perspective of social anthropology in the UK in 1871 described culture in the following way: "Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2002) described culture as follows: "... culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs".

The character of a rural settlement is changing and the settlements in the present stage might be a derivative of various changes taken place in last few decades. The transformation is less in few settlements and more in few settlements, which might be resultant of various factors. The factors may be political, social, cultural, geographical etc. Urbanisation, industrialisation and modernisation are some of key factors which played a major role in transformation process. The process is slow or fast, but it's happening. The impact might be more in few locations and

less in few locations. Urbanisation played a key role in this process. The Industrial Revolution, which began in England about 1760, led to radical changes at every level of civilization throughout the world. The growth of heavy industry brought a flood of new building materials, such as cast iron, steel, and glass, with which architects and engineers devised structures hitherto undreamed of in function, size, and form. Change is inevitable; people migrate from rural to urban due to various reasons. It might be for better job or employment opportunities, better quality of life, better educational opportunities, better health facilities, better entertainment and the list goes on and on. Urbanization occurs naturally from individual and corporate efforts to reduce time and expense in commuting and transportation while improving opportunities for jobs, education, housing, and transportation. Living in cities permits individuals and families to take advantage of the opportunities of proximity, diversity, and marketplace competition. People move into cities to seek economic opportunities. In rural areas, often on small family farms, it is difficult to improve one's standard of living beyond basic sustenance. There are both negative and positive impacts of urbanisation. Farm living is dependent on unpredictable environmental conditions, and in times of drought, flood Cities, in contrast, are known to be places where money, services and wealth are centralized. There is a notion that, Cities are where fortunes are made and where social mobility is possible.

A typical residence with an agricultural background is selected for the study. The Village- Velnuthala is situated in Krishna district in Andhra Pradesh. Studies and discussions were made to identify the built fabric from 1940. The land belongs to a family with two sons and two daughters who migrated from Vizianagaram district in Andhra Pradesh, which is around 450 km from Velnuthala. The house was built with

mud walls, mud flooring and thatched roofing. The house consists of four large utility rooms with verandah in the front and rear, a kitchen which is separate from the main living area, and also outdoor kitchen space. The plot also has a granary storage space, cattle shed, pooja space, semi open areas (like verandahs to sit and spend time outside). There is no electricity, drinking water and toilet facilities. They purely depend on kerosene lanterns and most of the activities are carried during the day time. Drinking water is collected from an existing drinking water pond

by the inhabitants. There is another pond which is exclusively used only for washing clothes and cattle. The inhabitants move to the fields for toilet related services. The schedule starts at 4.30 am and ends at 6.30 pm. The family depends on agriculture and the fields are adjacent to the village. Figure 1 shows the village layout which has two ponds divided for drinking and washing. The houses are radially developed around the pond and the houses are surrounded by the fields, which becomes the major occupation pattern of the villagers



Fig. 1 Rural settlement (Velnuthala village) in Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh, India
Source: author

Figure 2 shows the house fabric or form in 1940. The house belongs to a family with two sons and two daughters. The joint family existed for few decades. The change has occurred when marriages took place in the family. The daughters have moved to different villages. The sons had their own families which were combined for few years but separated with agricultural lands divided. Figure 3 shows an interesting phenomenon, where the house was comfortably divided with addition of a kitchen, cattle shed and granary storage. There was no

physical barrier made on the site. The internal four rooms were divided within the two brothers. The house when seen from outside is like a joint family, as they share the same open spaces, the open, semi open spaces, informal meeting, discussions happens within the same compound. The central orange line in figure 3 shows an imaginary division of space for two families. The site has entry from east and west pathways or kucha roads, which helped them for easy division of spaces.

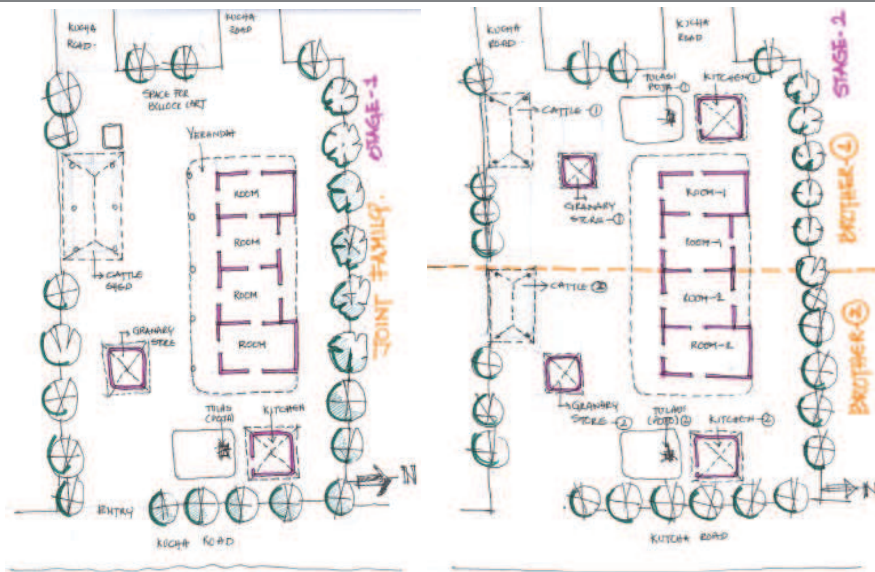


Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig.2, 3 House form or fabric in 1940 and 1970

Source: author

The first brother has one son and two daughters; the second brother has four sisters and three brothers. But the influence of urbanisation, finding jobs from urban centres have started during this period. The next generation started settling in the urban areas and one or two members of the family who could not get through formal education or who is interested in

farming or the elder son who inherited the fathers occupation was left in the village. The properties got subdivided again with less acres of land in the hands of the individuals. The government interventions in building pucca houses like Indira Awaas yojana, raajiv Awaas Yojana etc attracted the villagers to take advantage and built pucca houses.

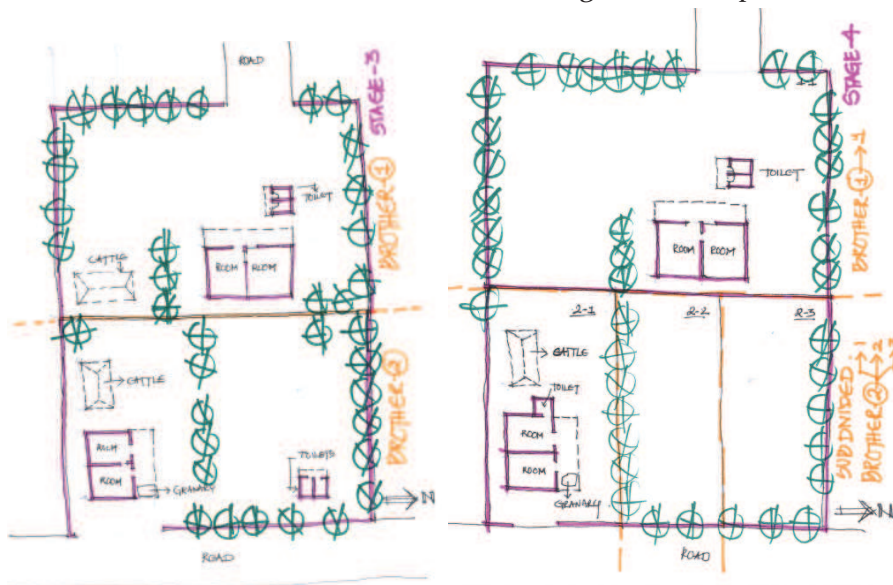


Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 4,5 House form or fabric in 1990 and 2014

Source: author

Figure 4 shows the division of the plot within the two families. They are left with only two families who take care of the farming. The remaining is settled in different rural and urban areas. But the land ownership remains the same for the whole family. A typical RCC house and an extension verandah for semi open space and for granary storage becomes an additional feature to the concrete house. The toilet is placed at

another end of the plot. Cattle shed become a necessity for any household. Figure 5 shows the further subdivision of the second part of the plot with three sons dividing the property and yet only one family residing in the house. The toilet has become attached and in one of the plot the cattle shed is removed. This is the present stage of the plot in 2014.



Fig. 5,6 House form or fabric in 2014 showing house built under government scheme and also a cattle shed

Source: author



Fig. 7,8 House form or fabric in 2014 showing toilet and outside cooking space

Source: author

This is the transformation process of the built fabric and also the division of the plot since 1940. The plot was purchased and house was built in 1940. The changes which have taken place is resultant of various parameters, like change in the family structure, growth of the family, subdivision of the agricultural lands and residential plot, socio-economic aspects, urbanisation etc. The main question which

arises here is, why people should migrate from rural to urban? Why should we think only about smart cities and not smart villages? Can we develop policies, where rural population will have better facilities and they need not think of moving to urban areas? There are lot of questions which arise. Of course, if we think of answering these questions and formulates a better vision for the growth of these rural

settlements, which are simultaneously losing its character, which has great history. These indigenous settlements are resultant of various parameters of socio-cultural-economic-climatic-geographic aspects. They have their own identity, let's preserve and move ahead with a vision of creating better life and sustainable rural settlements.

This also reminds me of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for boosting infrastructure in rural India centres round creating at least 2,500 model villages in the next five years through the "Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana". The "MP Model Village Scheme" was announced by Modi in his Independence Day address. Noting that the aspirations of people living in villages now match those of the urban population, the Prime Minister said it is important to make this project people-driven. Modi asked each MP to develop at least three villages by 2019 under ambitious schemes that aim to transform rural India.

"We are nearly 800 MPs. If before 2019, we develop three villages each, we will reach nearly

2,500 villages. If in the light of this scheme, the states also create a similar scheme for MLAs, then 6,000-7,000 more villages can be added," Modi said at the launch of the scheme. The Prime Minister said if one village in each block is developed, it will have a positive effect on surrounding villages and development would reach there too.

"Ever since the country got independence, all governments worked for rural development in their own way, but this effort has to continue and changes need to be incorporated at the right times," he said. Modi wanted every villager to have a sense of pride for his village and said the scheme will enable one to do that by meeting high standards of infrastructure and development.

Referring repeatedly to Mahatma Gandhi and Jayaprakash Narayan, the Modi said the scheme under which each MP will take responsibility of developing physical and institutional infrastructure in one village by 2016 and three villages by 2019 is not only about money.

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