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WINGS TO YOUR THOUGHTS.....

LANGUAGE PRACTICE AND STYLE OF HILL AREA MIGRATION

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Abstract: *The Numerous language practices and styles have been developed for planning of settlements and construction of buildings in the Himalayan region of north India during past centuries to meet the requirements of local people. These language practices are developed by the people, for the people, without any technical/professional training; with the help of locally available, natural and environmentally friendly construction materials and indigenous construction techniques which people have learned, developed, and refined over centuries. The main focus of the paper to show the balance factor of the language practices and styles are developed with the objective to have sufficient protection against harsh climatic conditions and natural calamities.*

Keywords: *Language, Hill development, Hill Nature, Hill construction.*

1. Introduction

These traditional practices offers best suitable solutions for functional utility and livability. Ritual beliefs, customs, social structure, profession, economic status and culture are often reflected in language buildings through their form, scale, size, colour, materials and facades. Language practices have minimal impact on environment in and around hill settlements and different salient features of language practices evolved in hilly areas like the use of local materials, thermal comfort, environmentally friendly design, smaller foot print, contextual appropriate development are also considered as the essential requisites of sustainable development [1]. Along with various benefits of language practices and styles, language buildings have some crucial issues and concerns like, need for regular maintenance, low strength of materials and/or building components, unavailability of skilled craftsmen who can work with traditional materials, shortage of traditional materials and reluctance of residents to develop their buildings with language practices lead to reduced use of these sustainable language practices for construction of new buildings in hilly areas. Moreover, increased urbanization, need and construction of multi-storeyed buildings; improved transportation to promote the use of contemporary materials in hill settlements. Improvement in living and economic conditions, improvement and increase in building services; better, fast and easily understandable and workable construction techniques and equipments further affects the use of language practices for planning and design of new buildings in hill settlements. Massive development with contemporary materials results in pollution, loss of

vegetation, increase in soil erosion, increase in surface run off, lowering of water table, flooding, change in micro climate and increase in occurrences of instability, which cause severe damage to sensitive and fragile environment in and around hill settlements. To minimize different ill impacts of new and massive development on natural environment in and around hill settlements and to maintain environmental quality, various building regulations are enforced, but problems related to environmental deterioration persist and further intensifies in hill settlements. The need to draw lessons from sustainable language practices for formulating building regulations and design of new buildings in hill settlements of North India. In light of the above, to draw important lessons from traditional practices for new development in hill settlements, various salient characteristics of traditional settlements which are sustainable are discussed in the section below.

2. Development in Indian hill towns

As per National Building Code 2005, any area having altitude more than 600 m from mean sea level or any area with average slope of 30° is classified as hilly [2]. Depending upon the altitude and prevailing climatic conditions hill regions are classified into Foot Hills (below 1200 m), Mid Hills (1200–3500 m) and High hills (above 3500), with varied geo-environmental conditions and resources available for development [3]. Most of the hill towns (such as Shimla, Nainital, Dalhousie, Mussoorie, Manali and Kasauli) are the most preferred tourist destinations situated in the mid hill regions.

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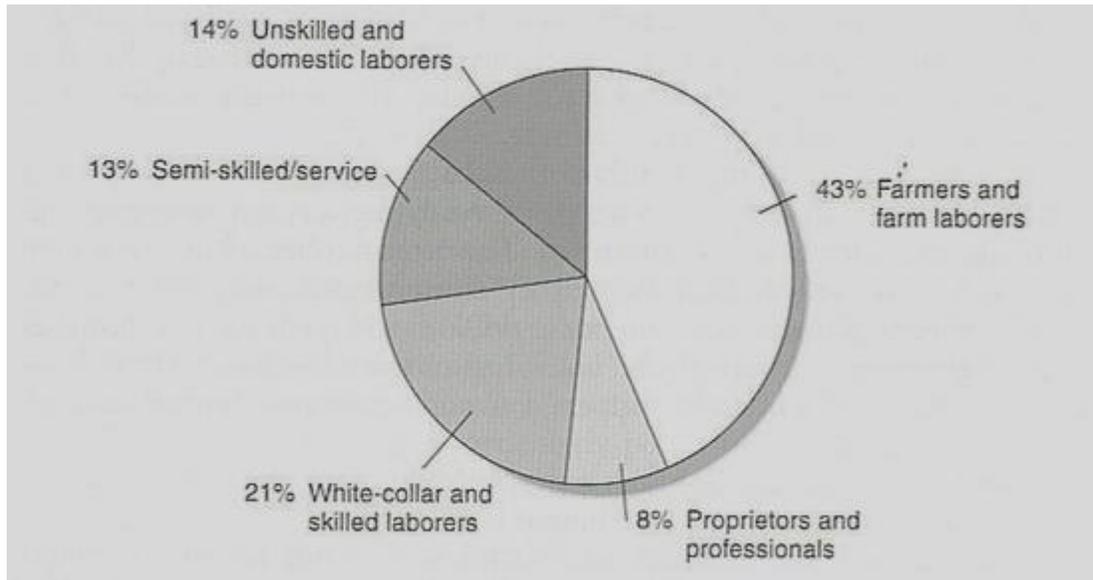


Figure 1: Diversion of population effected with language

These hill towns were developed by British during the pre-independent era and presently are main activity centres and employment generators, which are experiencing huge pressure for urbanization due to high population growth and large migration from surrounding villages for employment and better living conditions. The development in these important hill stations/towns of India according to [4], can be grouped into four main stages- first stage of colonial dominance; second is after independence in 1947 when power had been exercised by local elite; third stage when these hill stations became a centre of socio-economic development; and fourth stage comprising of present scenario of development (especially in the context of Shimla), when hill stations are under tremendous pressure of new development.

Hill towns, such as Shimla, Nainital, Dalhousie and Mussoorie, developed by Britishers had low density and low rise pattern of development and consisted of low rise cottages for European and the Indian elite and shop cum residential buildings for the local native population. These hill towns/stations were designed to cater to the needs of a specific population size, for example, Shimla town was planned and designed to cater the maximum population of 25,000 people [5]. After independence, various hill towns became main centre of administration, tourism, commerce, healthcare and education, and attracted large populations from surrounding regions due to economic activity and employment opportunities. As a result of which, low rise low density pattern of development is presented in place of sparse development in majority of hill towns of North India.

The unique urban cape present in hill towns is a result of the weaving together of topography, architecture, the arrangement of streets, urban spaces and vistas [6].

3. Tourism and Out Sourcing

Tourism is major source of economy in hill towns, which has increased manifold in last few decades due to higher paying capacity of people, change in life style and improved accessibility of hill towns to people living in major/large cities. To cater the need of tourist, a large number of commercial establishments in the form of hotels, guest houses, shops, restaurants are required along with recreational and transportation facilities, which can be facilitated by change/modification in existing land use and building regulations related to Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R), road widths, parking.

4. Scarcity of land

There is a scarcity of suitable buildable land in hill towns due to steep topography, undesirable slope direction, different geo-environmental constraints and proneness to natural hazards. Therefore, there is a need to formulate building regulations so as to optimize the use of limited suitable space for development. This scarcity of suitable buildable land leads to increase in land prices in hill towns.

5. Increasing awareness toward Hill Area

With increase in global concerns and awareness related to sustainability, energy efficiency and

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climate change, the awareness of society related to desired responses from built environment have changed significantly. There are concerns related to environmental protection, cutting of trees, disturbance of natural drainage pattern, pollution of air land and water, depleting forest cover, lowering ground water table and drying of surface water sources. There are concerns and awareness in society related to energy conservation and management, water conservation and management, efficient treatment of sewage and waste water and its reuse and proper disposal and garbage treatment and disposal. Moreover, awareness related to different social issues such as universal and disable friendly designs, safety and security against crimes in public places, provisions for elderly and children, accesses for emergency response and safety and stability against natural hazards and fire has increased in society and building regulations need to be formulated or modified to address issues of built environment related to these crucial social and environmental issues.

6. Impact on natural environment

Existing development pattern which is outcome of building regulation amendments has enormous impacts on natural environment of Shimla. Cutting of slopes for development work is a common phenomenon in hill towns which affects the ecology and environment of the region. The extent of cutting/quantity of excavated earth is dependent upon building footprint and slope angle. Existing regulations permit buildings with larger footprints, which require large cutting of sloping grounds (even more than permissible limits), which cause disturbance to natural drainage pattern, and lead to loss of vegetation, affect ecology of area and may trigger natural hazards (such as landslides). Existing vegetation cover available on-site is removed for construction purposes, results in barren slopes covered with buildings without any vegetation, which become more prone to slope failure and further extent of soil erosion increases during rain. Moreover, flattening of sloping terrain results in loss of valuable and fertile top soil and debris produced after cutting of slope is generally dumped in valleys or near water channels, disturbing or blocking natural flow of water and increase siltation in downstream areas. Though regulations related to maximum permissible cutting of slopes are present, but slopes in Shimla are cut much more than the permissible limits. Due to intensive development consequent upon inappropriate building regulations and their noncompliance, natural features like springs are adversely affected as many of them either are dried up or are become polluted.

7. Conclusion

Various geo-environmental and developmental factors such as Topography, stability, slope direction, existing vegetation, access and visual significance should formulate the basic premise to formulate building regulations for a specific hill town. New building regulations should be formulated at local level depending upon the intrinsic characteristics of area/zones of a town and their impacts on urban environment in and around hill towns need to be monitored. To formulate new building regulations in a hill town different area/zone characteristic maps such as, topography and slope aspect map, hazards potential map, existing vegetation map, access and aesthetic significance map are need to be prepared for Shimla town. Since, land use map indicating different use specified to different zones/localities is not sufficient enough to specify the feasibility of particular use and/or extent of desirable development under particular use in an area/zone of hill town. These different area/zone characteristic maps should be made available to public along with land use map and proposed building regulations.

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