

TRADITIONAL HOUSING FEATURES IN DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL BUILT FORM: A SPATIAL NARRATIVE ON TYPICAL KONKANI HOUSE: CASE OF MURUD, DAPOLI DISTRICT, MAHARASHTRA,INDIA

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Abstract

In all over the world, in any part of the globe, from prehistoric period till the date, complex layers of social stratification and their cultural diversity are reflected in the urban form of the settlement. The cause of this influence lies in the unique and diverse socio-cultural roots, which represent nothing but the 'Traditions' of that area. India is one of the parts of Asian continent where impact of these diverse socio-cultural patterns is reflected in housing texture. Through the case example of Murud in Konkani region of India, this paper highlights how the traditions and physiographic pattern of the area act as influence peddler in the spatial planning and form of the housing thereby impacting the urban form-grain and texture of the settlement. Today technological advancements dictate the magnitude and location of activities in space. The electronic revolution of today is just adding to the departure of local traditions which is strongly reflected in changing housing forms. The article also brings out importance of traditions as conservators in vernacular housing patterns and their typology and why they should be retained.

Keywords:Traditions, Konkani housing pattern.

Introduction

India! A subcontinent-country of culture and traditions! Tradition consistently adapts to the changing time and suitably transforms to the changed circumstances. Tradition therefore survives and remains timeless. People build their habitat responding to physiographic, regional, social-cultural context and above all because of their aspiration to construct their own house and live in their own house. The housing pattern, their needs vary from place to place depending on the differences in socio-economic, cultural and physical factors. Even the housing layout varies within the same place either with changing time and transformation of culture or with the prevailing of different cultures in the same zone. So when it comes to thehousing typology there are the three main aspects: spatial aspect, cultural aspects and political aspects that define the housing form in different places within the same zone or region.

The state of Maharashtra can be categorized into five basic geographical regions-Konkan, Desh, Khandesh, Marathwada and Vidarbha. With the variations in physical features as well as the culture, the housing pattern also is no exception to these differences. This article intends to highlight

housing typology and settlement pattern in the village of Murud in Dapoli District in Konkani region which here after will be presented as 'Typical Konkani House'. The study is confined to climatic and socio-cultural influences on spatial quality of Konkani house. The beliefs, myth, legends, rituals and daily life style comes under cultural influences which are shaped due to ones response to the forces of nature-climatic changes, geology etc- important physical element of the society. These aspects strongly define the housing component.

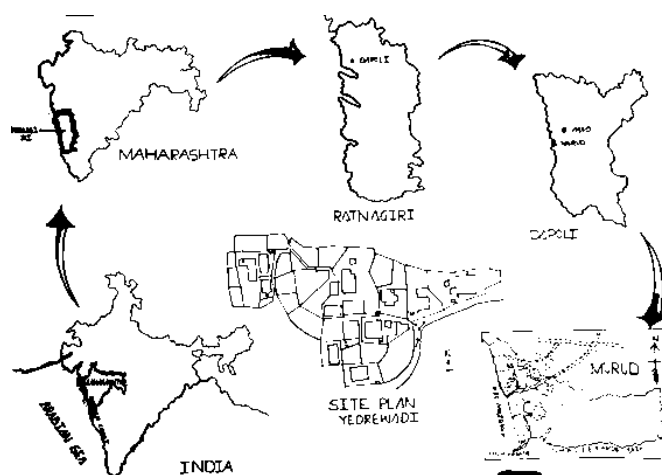


Figure 1: Location of Murud Village in District Dapoli of Konkani region of Maharashtra [3]



Figure 2: Landuse of Murud Village in District Dapoli of Konkanregion of Maharashtra [2]

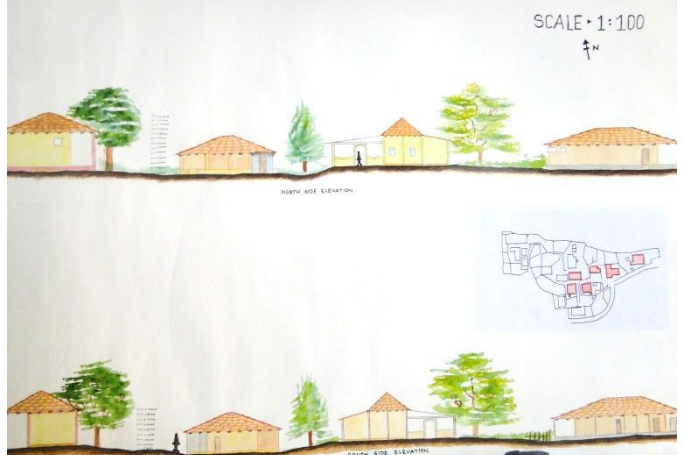


Figure 5: Existing plan, section and elevations of Murud settlement- highlighting different housing forms as per socio-economic pattern and evolved as response to existing physiography of Kokan region.



Figure 3: Existing Built form of rural settlement of Murud Village in District Dapoli of Konkan region.

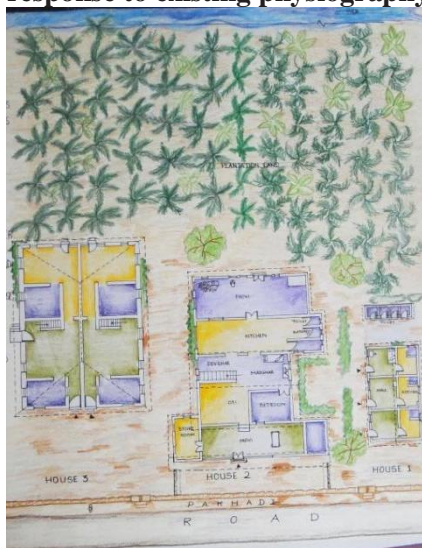


Figure 6: Linear Pattern of each plot in the settlement layout having farm land on the rear side.

Socio-Cultural Pattern

In Murud social stratification is dominant which is reflected in various settlement groupings. There are various societies depending upon the caste as well as the religion. One will find different communities ranging from kunbis, brahmins, sonar, bhandari, nhavis and Muslims. Initially Murud was densely populated by Kunbi settlements which were considered to be high class people and were well known for their cleanliness, hygiene and neatness in household activities. Simultaneously Muslims and other communities settled over here which got engaged in agriculture and oil marketing. They were pioneers in establishing the oil mills in Murud. Later on Brahmin communities settled over here which considered Kunbis and Muslims as low profile communities depending upon the economy and activity pattern and gave importance to education apart from agriculture and fishing. Eventually grouping of these settlements took place within the undulating fabric of Konkan region. Later on Brahmins owned large parcels of land where intense agriculture activities and dense plantation of coconut trees, supari and bananas were carried out. Even today fifty percent population is of Muslim community. It's main occupation is fishing activity since Murud abuts the coast line of Arabian Sea. Very thin line difference is observed in housing typology of these various communities since the housing form has responded to the physiographic and occupation pattern of the different community groups.

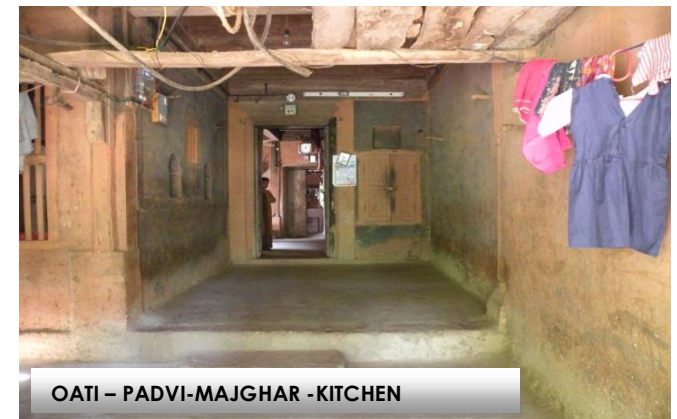
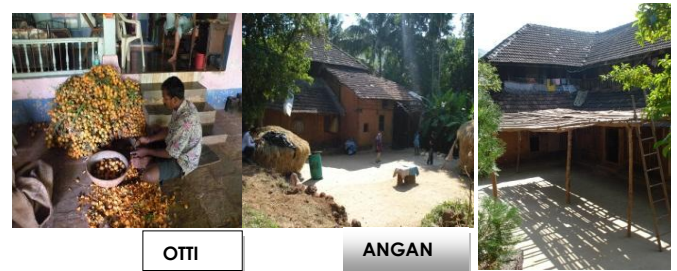


Figure 8: Activity pattern in typical Kokani house in Murud Village

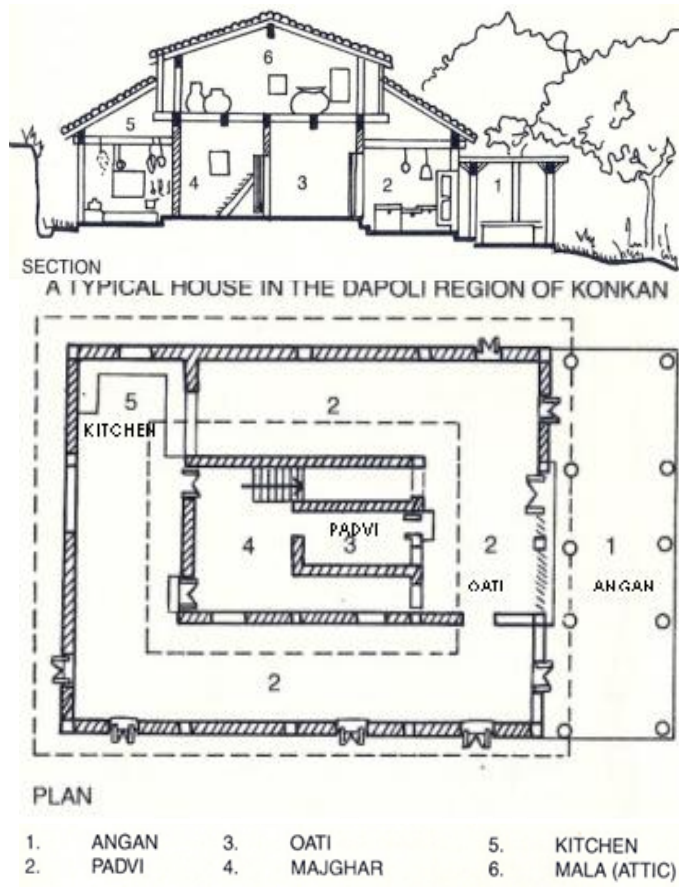


Figure 7: Plan and Section of typical Kokani house in Murud Village [1]



Figure 9: Different activity areas of typical Kokani house
 Photographs by Author

Discussion

Physiography- The Konkan region is on the west coast of India, south of Mumbai in western Maharashtra. The climate is hot & humid & monsoon is heavy. This region has rustic green, strongly undulating landscape, rich in horticulture & fishing being located around the coastal area of Arabian sea. Rice, fish and fruit are the staple diet of the Konkani people. The terrain is hilly interpenetrated with sweet and salt water

rivulets running into the saddles and valleys to meet Arabian Sea. Small groups of settlements commonly known as 'Wadis' are spread out in undulating pockets of hilly terrain. Most families have a defined patch of land extending on rear side of house where these fruit trees are grown.

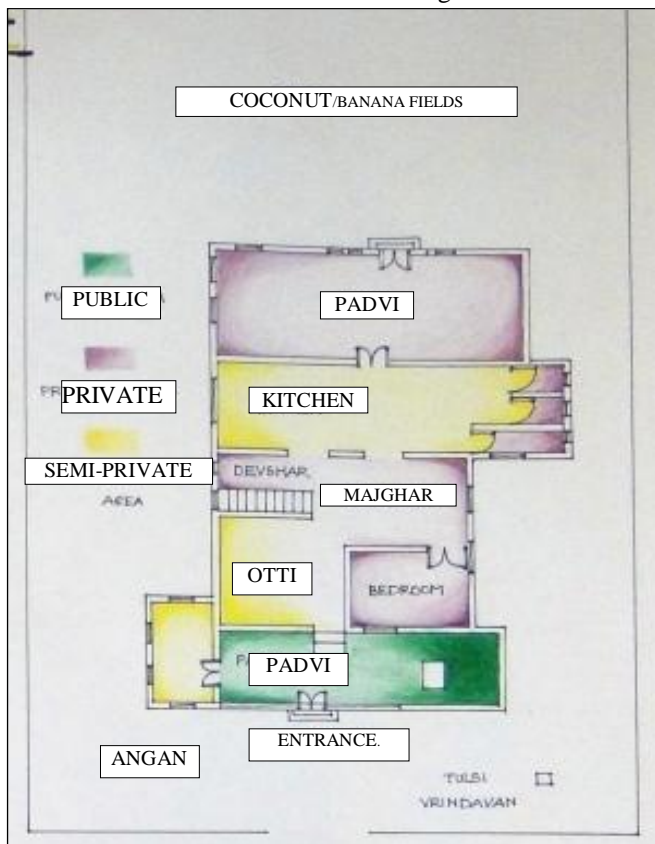


Figure 10: Plan of Housing Typology of Kokani House[2]

Activity pattern-Their daily activity is nurturing these trees and harvesting their yield, which requires lot of space, skilled people and plenty of storage. This activity pattern has been reflected in the built form of house in formal manner. The entire household including servants are involved in these farm related chores. Naturally this space surrounding the house is utilized for this purpose. Being located on undulating terrain, terraces and pits (khalas) are created which have helped in allocating different activities and distinguishing the areas from one another. The house occupies the peak of terrain with ancillary activities on lower levels. From the house one has overview of all the terraces. Figure 8 and 11 presents different activities in Kokan housing form.

Spatial planning features

The climate, physiography and the daily chores in household divide Konkani house into five parts: *Angan- Padvi- Otti- Majghar- Kitchen- Mala*. The sloping terrain provides the facility of creating different terraces which can be earmarked for different outdoor activities which vary from harvesting the fruits, drying, cutting, peeling, making by products or utilizing various parts of trees such as wood, leaves, branches etc. These activities are manually carried out and take place in Angan or Padvi during summer season only. During summer Angan is covered with temporary roofing in the form of interwoven coconut leaves supported on bamboo posts which

can be dismantled as per climatic needs.

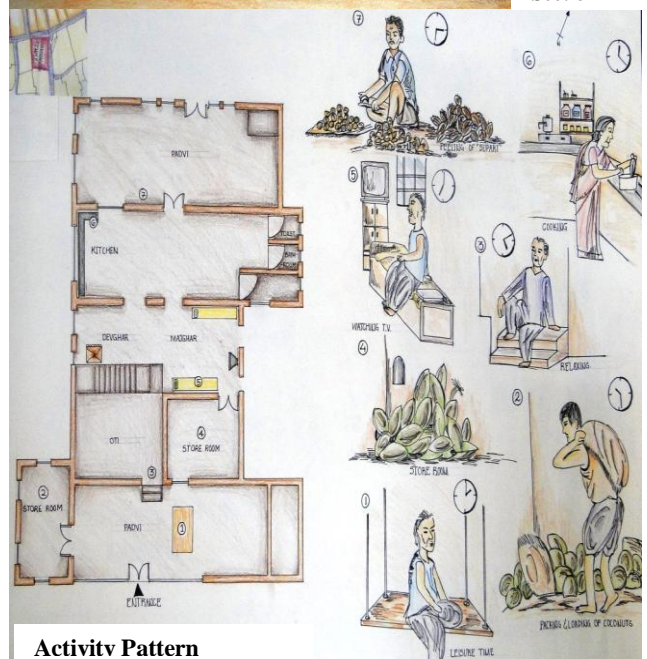


Ground Floor Plan

First Floor Plan



Section



Activity Pattern

Figure 11: Case Example of Konkani House Of Brahmin community in Murud village [2]

This protects the Padvi from direct heat penetration and acts as buffer or screen from sun radiations and allows the filtered cool air to pass through. During monsoon due to heavy rains their entire routine changes, since they have to fold up and closedown outdoor activities and stay at home. With monsoon over, house is the only place to be visited for meals since all other activities including sleeping is performed in Padvi. Thus

a particular season demands the activities that need to be accommodated in housing layout. These all influence the house design which needs to care for outdoor as well as indoor spaces. This principle applies to even group housing where houses are arranged between, behind or around open spaces or angans in informal manner. Majghar is an inner core area of the house, usually dark and cool, surrounded by other rooms and treated as multipurpose area meant for private family activities. The small and steep timber staircase in Majghar leads to Mala (Attic) where food grains are stored. The roof space above Padvi is also treated as extended space of Majghar for drying of fruits. In case of larger houses, the attic is extended to form a bedroom with projecting bracketed balconies. The Konkani lifestyle is exceptionally extrovert and doesn't need a open to sky courtyard but rather well protected, dry, cool room. This gives comfort and feeling of being well protected. The geometry of house plan is based on square modules, measuring from (9*13, 11*15, 13*17) arm length. Taking advantage of steep contour houses are raised from road level. Also pedestrian areas are raised from the road level. The concept was that only people from Brahmin Community were permitted to access the walkway while lower caste community people were restricted to road level. Figure 7 ,9, 10 and 11 presents housing pattern as per daily activities of Kokanis.

Conclusion

Today in the era of globalization-privatization, the advancements in field of science and technology have boosted the trend of modernization in architecture as well as planning, there by totally changing the housing typology, pattern and construction techniques to be used. As a result vernacular built forms and traditional construction techniques using local materials are disappearing. Rural housing also has not been exempted from impact of privatization and developments in construction techniques. The planning principles adopted in rural areas taking into account local context in terms of climate, environment, and vernacular construction technique and lastly the culture and tradition of the region are losing its importance in society and are being forgotten for the time being. However observing the production of monotonous concrete jungle without considering the context in cities due to impact of inflation in land values, it is necessary to revert back to architecture and planning principles adopted in rural housing where thought to social cultural, physical and last but not the least economic factors in design of housing pattern is given thereby enhancing the spatial quality. The future architects and planners should study and take into consideration the relationship of Indian traditions in various context, their respective settlement patterns and housing layouts and try to bring the same in developing urban and semi-urban zones, or conserve the built areas subjected to real estate pressure, so that it is suited to Indian psychology and environment. This will not only revive the local tradition-culture in respective zones but also save the traditional or vernacular built fabric from effects of Globalization!

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