INTRODUCTION

The theme of discussion of the present thesis entitled “Patterns of Rural Settlement in Manipur: A Morphological Study” is a sub-field of settlement geography. Really speaking, the geographical study of rural settlements in modern context began with Ritter’s 1 work in the early nineteenth century. It is only since the turn of the last century that settlement geographers have been preoccupied with the study of rural settlements. Although the study of settlements has immense significance for a country like India, the branch of geography has received only limited academic attention. Geddes 2 was the first writer who wrote on “A Human Geography of Bengal” in four volumes in 1935.

Likewise, Pithawala 3 and Ali 4 contributed much to the studies of settlement Geography in India. A fundamental work was produced by Mukherjee 5 in 1940. Ahmad 6 through his study on the rural settlement types in U.P., paved the way for further studies on rural settlement of India. In fact, the growth of the research work in this field is only a post independence phenomenon when the Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi took active initiative in various research works on settlement Geography. Since then settlement geography has become more popular with the Indian Geographers and accordingly, in the recent years, a considerable growth of

published work in this field had appeared in India and several geographers have turned their personal attention towards the study of certain specific areas or regions of the country.

The utterly lacking systematic studies of settlement of India were filled in to some extent by some important works of Singh. There are some other important works by Ahmad, Bhalla, Despande Bhattacharya and others on the settlement aspects of different parts of India.

In this connection it will not be out of place to mention that during the last three decades M.S. Vishwanath studied settlements in Thanavur (Tamilnadu) in 1956 while A.B. Mukherjee (1956-57) worked on Maradabad and Bjuor Districts. S.D. Kaushik (1959) worked on Dheradun District and S.D. Mishra (1962) worked on Mathura District. B. Mukherjee worked on settlements in the Hooghly region while A.B. Bose on Chirai (Rajasthan). Besides these pioneer works, during the sixties and seventies, there were some more contributions published in the National Geographical journal of India, B.H.U., Varanasi. Recently, some more doctoral thesis were presented for award of degrees in various Universities of the country. Thus different parts or region of India were taken for detailed study of several geographers. Thus, it is a welcome sign that studies in rural settlement are catching the increasing attention of geographers in a country that is traditionally regarded as "the land of villages".

Taking these broad facts into consideration, it may be remarked here that the study of human settlements have now been a favourite subject of investigation of the settlement geographers. But, it is regretted to note that such a study as a systematic discipline on the above line is young in North-East India. In Manipur, it is still the youngest because no such other analytical study has been done on the problem of this border state. It is felt that there is need to orient geographical

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researches to the planning and developmental aspects of rural settlements, as they form an important link in the settlement systems of India.

Keeping in view of this academic gap regarding the study of settlement system of the State, the present work has been taken for a detailed study, so that the planners as well as those who are interested in this line of study may stimulate further research works which will be of both academic and practical value.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Nature gives a limited landscape while there is unlimited expansion of population growth. In such position, if there is ultimately growing of population upto the over capacity of its land, the earth will become a landless planet for settlement. In the mean time, environmental phenomena have a cumulative effect on the origin, evolution, growth distribution, structure and patterns of settlement. Such impact of environment on settlement morphology is our common problem. It is therefore to investigate such relations of environment and its corresponding settlement morphology for rural settlement in the state is the problem of the present research work.

Manipur “The Land of Jewels” in the extreme north east border of the country has an early settlement since the time immemorial of Paleolithic age (10,000 to 27,000 years ago). From the archeological and anthropological findings of stone tools from ancient archeological sites- Songbu, Napachik, Tharon, Khangkhui Machi and Nongpok Keithelmanbi, it has been shown that the first man of Manipur is the Songbu Cave Man. Those people are believed to be descendents of Tibeto Burman Group.

In the beginning of the last century (1991), the state had a population of 2,84,465 only but by 2001, the State comprised 23,88,634 of population. It shows that within a century the state earns more than 10 times of its population. About 72 percent of the state population live
in rural areas finding shelter in 2182 inhabited villages. These inhabited villages are distributed unevenly through its geographical phenomena. About four-fifths of villages in the hill areas are too small with population below 500. Such villages form about one-fifth of the rural settlements in the central valley and two-fifths in the Barak Basin. Medium-sized villages, in the population of 500 to 2000 constitutes one-sixth of the hill villages, about half of the valley villages and two-fifths of villages in Barak Basin. Large villages over 2000 of population form less than 2 percent of the hill villages while it is 30 percent and 2 percent respectively of the valley villages and villages of Jiribam Sub Division.

Under different factors the state holds different rural settlement patterns. Linear, rectangular and square patterns along the river banks, roadsides, margins of marshy lakes, cultivated paddy fields and surrounding of tanks are the most common feature in the valley while dotted with numerous hamlets, all being very small rectangles linked with the headman’s house and church by village Kutchu Paths. No definite pattern can be recognised in such hill areas therefore they are noted as amorphous pattern of settlement.

Though, the state is very small in area, it has two geographical features - hills and plains. Therefore, types of settlements are also different in hills and plains. On the basis of the compactness of dwellings the settlements in the state are grouped into three types- compact, semi-compact and dispersed. Except some the villages in the valley are of compact type having more than 200 dwellings the semi-compact types which represent an intermediate stage between the compact and dispersed settlements comprise an average population of 100 to 150 persons in a nucleated site with 2 to 5 and more subordinate hamlets. Such types are mostly concentrated in the Jiribam Sub-Division. Dispersed habitations are the characteristics of the Manipur hills, where villages are situated on the hill tops or the spurs.
Rural dwellings in the state bear an indelible stamp of the environment and its locally available materials. The economy of the dwellers is also one of the most important factor to draw the types of houses. With the advancement of modern technology and availability of readymade building materials in the nearby markets, people are to build houses of such materials under corresponding grades of economic status. Consequently, in the rural areas of the state about 75 percent of the total dwellings are C.I sheeted. In the remote areas of Manipur, where such facilities are not available, locally available materials like wood, mud, thatches and bamboos are the purely primary materials. The ground plan of the dwellings is of rectangular shape which gives help for allocation of rooms. Court yard is one of the most common feature of rural houses in the valley districts. Court-yard is the most important space to dry out the harvested crops.

With the increasing of population, expansion of settlement also is increasing day by day in our limited landscape. It is therefore a well planned settlement having future prospect is keenly needed. Giving emphasis on the development of infrastructure, we need to have such plans - improvement of rural health and sanitation services, planning for new settlement areas, planning for better housing design, establishment of new service centres etc. on the front.

1.2 Selection of the Study Area

The inspiration for the present research work came slowly but steadily. The curiosity arose in the mind of researcher when he was a postgraduate student at Agra University (Now Dr. Ambedkar University) in 1987. There he had the advantage of seeing some of the most relevant works of authors like Sharma 12, Bhattacharya 13, Mishra 14, and others on the settlement Geography of India. On his return to Manipur after completing his Master Degree in Geography, his primary concern was selection of a topic with a view to analysing in the above line of

research work. The choice falls ultimately in Manipur which is more intimately known to him. For all that the very title of thesis is given as “Patterns of Rural Settlement in Manipur: A Morphological Study”.

1.3 Study Area

The region under consideration is Manipur State, which is situated in the eastern part of India extending between the latitude 23°50' and 25°41'N and the longitude 93°2'E and 94°47'E. It has an area of 22,327 sq. km. which constitutes 0.68 percent of the total land surface of the country. By physical features, the state may broadly be divided into two parts viz., the hills and the valley. These two regions differ sharply in certain respects. The valley is small in area (1843 sq. km.) being only about 8.3 percent of the total area of the state but this area is one of the most thickly populated regions of India, while hills constituting 91.7 percent of the total area of the state (20,484 sq. km.) is recorded to be one of the thinly inhabited parts of the country. According to 1991 census of India, an overwhelming majority of population representing 72.48 percent of the total population of the state are scattered over 2,182 villages, and the remaining 27.52 percent being concentrated in 30 urban centres.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

As mentioned earlier, the study of rural settlement is an important aspect of settlement geography. In the present research work an attempt has been made to describe and interpret the pattern of rural settlements occurring in the state. In this context it will not be out of place to mention that various physical, cultural and social factors have influenced the patterns of rural settlement in different parts of the state.
The main objectives of the present research work are:

(i) To assess the environmental setting which influences the type, pattern, distribution and morphology of settlements of the study area.

(ii) To identify the influence of both physical and cultural environment on the spatial distribution of population and settlements.

(iii) To find out the histogenesis of settlements of the study area in relation to anthropological and archeological findings.

(iv) To examine the site and morphology of rural settlement in the state.

(v) To visualise the future plans and reorganisation of the state.

(vi) To expose manifold problems after investigation of settlement systems in the Geographical phenomena.

(vii) To propose constructive suggestions for the improvement of the State planning and social well being in the state.

1.5 Methodology and Technique

The work is done by empirical method which is based on observation and experience. The methodology and techniques to determine the pattern of rural settlements in the study area is very simple. The major areas of attention in this methodology are as under.

1.5.1 Steps taken in

In order to have a clear picture of rural settlement patterns in morphological form of the study area and completion of this work the author adopted the following steps.

(i) Pre-Field: Collection of available secondary data from various Government departments, libraries, literatures, maps and preparation of questionnaire etc.
(8)

(ii) Field: Collection of prima facie informations and the relevant facts and data from various sources—census and census reports, district census handbooks, district gazetteers, administrative and settlement report through personal interviews and questionnaires.

(iii) Post Field: Processing of data, cartographic presentation, and report writing.

1.5.2 Source of Data and Criteria Employed

The subject is a complex one; source materials were scattered and available in various interdisciplinary forms.

(i) Data Sources:

(a) Primary or raw data: Primary data are collected from the field through survey, personal observation and questionnaires.

(b) Secondary data: Census and census reports, district census handbooks, district gazetteers, administrative and settlement reports, available research papers, maps and toposheets are the main sources of secondary data.

(ii) Criteria Employed:

(a) The histogenesis of settlement of the state is evaluated in different historical periods through anthropological and archeological findings.

(b) Shape, size, site and morphological patterns of rural settlement are resolved by personal investigation in the field but in case of remote areas it is ascertained through latest toposheets and satellite imageries.

(c) The spacing of rural settlement is calculated in the block level by adopting Mather's Method.

(d) Morphology of selected villages is established through the interpretation of collected morphological maps from the department of settlements and personal spot survey.

(e) Many cartographic techniques are applied depending on the agreeable findings.
1.6 The Need

In the process of development of a region, state or country, the study of settlements plays a very substantial role as it has become an important element in achieving the socio-cultural systems. This study has its own important place in the field of geographical study. The need of this study in the country particularly in the state of Manipur is felt from many point of views that planners, politicians and social reformers need to know about size, shape, pattern, types as well as multi distributional aspects of settlements in order to execute their specific action of work. Moreover, shelter is one of the most important basic necessities of human beings. On the other hand the study of settlements is the study of shelters. Logically, it is therefore essential to study the present research work.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Primarily the study will enable to bring out a brief physical and cultural settings which exert their influence on the patterns of settlements; a detailed account on the histogenesis of settlements from the prehistoric times to the present; spatial organisation as basic to the present; spatial organisation as basic tool for planning in respect of the rural habitations; morphological study of selected villages. Moreover the study will help in determining the suggested strategies for the improvement of planning of the region.

1.8 Review of Relevant Works

Through the study of Rural Settlement begins with the work of Ritter's work in the early 19th Century, the amount of literature on settlement geography particularly on this morphological study and implication of development of rural settlements in the developing countries is still very limited. However, a brief review of the studies, relevant to this present work is presented herewith.
The work of Prof. Ahmad in this particular branch of human geography is quite remarkable. His Ph.D. Thesis London (1948) entitled “Settlement in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh” is a detailed study of settlements both rural and urban in the long settled fertile country of Uttar Pradesh. The rural settlement types in U.P., are analysed in an important paper\(^5\) He describes the Indian village pattern\(^6\) based largely on the study of 1 inch topographical sheets. The rural and urban settlement of Bihar have been studied by him in his book on Bihar\(^7\) R.L. Singh on settlement geography have provided guide lines to investigators in this field. One of his papers (1961) gives clear idea of meaning, objectives and scope of settlement geography\(^8\). His paper on “Evolution of Settlements in the Middle Ganga Valley” is a significant study of rural settlements\(^9\). He has also recorded the several advances in the field especially in the study of rural houses, urban centres and their origin, growth and morphology.


A.B. Mukherjee (1956-57) worked on Moradabad and Bijnor Districts while M.S. Vishwanath studied settlements in the Thanjavur (Tamil Nadu) in 1956. Such prominent works enlighten the study of settlement in a bright way.

Besides, the above pioneer works, a few more doctoral theses were presented for award of degree in various Universities as follows :- “Rural Settlement Patterns and House Types of the Deccan Trap Region of Vidarbha” (1965) by S.S. Padhye from Nagpur; “Settlement Pattern in Kumaon” (1968) by S.C. Joshi (Agra); “Rural Settlements of Chottanagpur” (1969)

\(^7\) Ahmad, E., “Bihar: A Physical, Economic and Regional Geography”, Ranchi, 1965.

Such above studies are from the different parts of the country but not from North East India. It shows that the systematic study of settlements in North East India is quite negligible in number. In Manipur, the present work will represent the initial effort for the study of rural settlement.

1.9 Structural Organisation of the Study

Keeping in view of the above objectives of the study, the present research work is organised into the following eight chapters.

Chapter - 1 : Introduction.
Chapter - 2 : Geographical setting.
Chapter - 3 : Histogenesis of settlements.
Chapter - 4 : Distributional pattern and Types of Rural Settlements.
Chapter - 5 : Morphology of Rural Settlements.
Chapter - 6 : Morphology of Rural Dwellings.
Chapter - 7 : Planning for Rural Development.
Chapter - 8 : Summary, Findings and conclusion.