

Adapting like a water

Pinky Pame was born between the confluence of Subansiri river and River Brahmaputra. She migrated from her village to further her college but married young. As a new daughter in law of the house, she sits by the hearth to prepare pork meat for guests which is offered with rice and Apong (rice beer). Rice is the staple food of the Mishings. Apong is a special drink served and offered in various ceremonial functions and in worshipping of spirits.

The flood is a norm for riverine people community like Mishings, especially during rainy season. She lives in a typical Mishing house called 'Changhar' – a thatched house, raised about 4 -5 feet from the ground with a bamboo and wooden stilts. She lives with her husband and his family. Sometimes, while she is cooking, pigs run below the house as her new family breeds pigs. During the night, 'fireflies' called 'Junaki' is seen flying through the crevices of the floor. It is a platform house which is traditionally known as Taleng Okum. They serve the dual purpose of keeping floodwaters and wild animals at bay.

These kind of houses are easy to construct and elevation levels of the houses can be changed depending upon the floods of the previous year. Higher the water level than the previous year, more elevated are subsequent houses built. During the time of flood, as a child Pinky remembers her maternal house to have a boat to move about for their daily chores. But, with forest cover reducing, logging banned and wood becoming scarce, cheaper replacements like bamboo rafts, wood or banana stems are being used to navigate through floodwaters.

Now, she is a proud mother of a boy.