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# Community Response to Local Environment: Reflections in Certain Micro-Landscapes of the Brahmaputra River Valley in Assam, India

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## I. Abstract

With an area of 56,194 sq. km., the Brahmaputra river valley in Assam, India is an environmentally unique area characterized by the presence of a variety of micro-landscapes within its broad geographical framework. Endowed with various natural resources such as habitable lands, fertile soils, water bodies, fauna and flora, these micro-landscapes have attracted people of different ethnic backgrounds from around for settlement since time immemorial. These people have responded to their local micro-landscapes sustainably, and in course of time set good examples of harmonious living with nature. However, due to the rapid growth of population and growing external influences during the recent period, these landscapes have experienced remarkable change in their ecological and cultural characteristics.

The present study is an attempt to investigate the process and pattern of response of the communities to their local environment and how the micro-landscapes shared by them are getting modified in course of time. It has been observed that certain unconformities have already emerged in the process of nature-culture interaction leading to a number of environmental and socio-cultural problems in the concerned landscapes. The study is mainly based on field survey carried out in selected landscapes within the valley and systematic interaction with the targeted communities sharing the landscapes through generations. The landscapes are mapped using conventional and modern techniques in order to understand their environmental characteristics and modifications made by the associated communities.

Key words: Micro-landscape, ethnic communities, nature-culture interaction, Brahmaputra valley.

## II. Introduction

The nature-culture model is the representation of nature as the ecosystem physically integrated with human society (Bocking, 1994; Ignatow, 2006). Nature has always been effective in all aspects of human life and livelihoods and thus it plays a dominant role in shaping the associated culture (Salman and Munir, 2016; Thakur, 2018). The unique drama of existence is going on with changing socio-economic experiences over time. For man, no matter how he becomes aware of himself or exalts himself above, the world always draws the means of his existence from one and the same source-nature (Laptav, 1979). It is precisely labour, raising man above nature, that again unites him with it, realizing itself as "a process in which both man and nature participates, and in