

SETTLEMENT-LORE: SCRUTINY AS CULTURAL MEMORY, ALTERNATE HISTORY AND NEW FOLKLORE GENRE

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Abstract:

The idea and capability of construction of a shelter and beginning of settlement can be considered as the preliminary stride of human towards structured life, growth of tradition, culture, and civilization. The 'settlement-lore' can be defined as the 'folklore' associated with settlement. It is the cultural memory and materials of alternate history embedded and sustained in the tradition of a community. The term 'Settlement-lore' is not a prevailing accepted term in the discipline of Folklore. Due to absence of appropriate terminology or division that fits to current body of materials, the term is proposed. This is an attempt to survey, categorize, and explore that body of Settlement-lore came across in some ethnic communities of Assam, India. The traditional process of initiating settlement is a systematic process, dependent on different practical and supernatural consideration and endorsement. Settlement also often involves episodes of journey and migration. Such narratives of migration, place-lore, personal narrative etc. can be clubbed as constituent part of Settlement-lore. The paper, which is qualitative, is primarily based on field data, supplemented with related secondary sources. The paper attempts to record and classify collected settlement-lore with few examples from Assam qualify to consider as a new genre of folklore.

Keywords: Settlement-lore, cultural memory, belief, supernatural, oral narrative, society, culture

Introduction:

The journey of human from the nomadic stage to settled life and growth of civilization is mostly conjectured from imagination. This long journey from wandering stage to settled stage is though shrouded mostly in mystery and imaginary without proper coincidental evidence. But there is much possibility that the idea and capability of construction of a shelter or dwelling was the key impetus behind it beside the development of agriculture or agricultural revolution. The ability of construction of the shelter made human competent to stay together in a place for long time which developed and gave birth to settlement. The house or shelter is not just an enclosed space of comfort which protect human from adverse situation but also the prime media in the development of family, society, and shared life.

The shelter, dwelling, and growth of settlement were the key to development of human culture and civilization. Settlement is the human administered activity within a space or within a geographical area that triggers different physical modifications and transformations. This gradually develops the settlement landscape and built environment providing a new identity and cultural landscape to a place. Settlement enabled human with proper societal life, growth of empathy, tradition, and culture.

Shelter and settlement is also the media that connects human to a place and space. The role and function of shelter is multi-faceted and medium of connection as also evident in the following remark, "Philosophers such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard have considered that our relation to places consists in dwelling and that dwelling is the basic principle of existence" (Pearson and Richardsa 2005, 2). The topography, geography, and nature or ecology is closely connected with settlement and culture. The relation of physical world, settlement and culture is inseparable because, "The lifestyles which are actually present result from humankind appraising each environment, each landscape, through eyes affected by historical and cultural experiences and in the light of indigenous or acquired technologies" (Roberts 1996, 32).

Settlement acts as the veiled bonding thread of association and attachment between human and surrounding physical world or place. However, the growth of settlement or man-made transformation of topography into settlement landscape is subject to initial fulfillment of certain practical considerations like availability of water, fertile soil, and natural resources. However, besides the practical considerations, the tradition prescribed supernatural consideration and endorsement is vital criterion in the selection of settlement. Thus selection of settlement area, scheme of distribution of shelters, spatial consideration and site selection are important aspect of human settlement.

There is every possibility that the supernatural belief have played a conspicuous role in the development of dwelling, architecture, and subsequent settlement. The same might have started during the initial days of taking shelter inside the natural caves which subsequently resonated in the prehistoric paintings done on the walls of the caves (Janson 1982). The supernatural and cosmological belief might have played a prominent role in the growth and development of shelter and architecture, so also in the settlement.

Though the primary objective of shelter or architecture is to protect human from different adverse climatic situations and other threats, yet architecture can be or viewed as an enclosed space crafted for different human defined purposes. Architecture establishes and determines human relation to space. Thus, human relate or establish relation to a defined space in the form of a house, a home, a village or with the locality, the forest, or the surrounding. The following remarks in regard to space is interesting and relevant:

Space is perceived only as places. The environment is categorized and named. Through the cultural artefact of a name, undifferentiated *space* is transformed into marked and delimited place. Stories and tales may be attached to such places, making them resonate with history and experience. The culturally constructed elements of a landscape are thus transformed into material and permanent markers and authentications of history, experience and values. Although the stories change in the retelling, the place provides an anchor of stability and credibility (Pearson and Richardsa 2005, 3).

Our relation to space is charged with emotion, admiration, fear, affection, abhorrence, or sacredness, surprise, or magnificence. However, such a space is actually an area with a certain boundary which may be physical or imaginary, or a delimited space where we are connected with emotion. Thus, for instance a place human live, may it be the village, locality, or the home with which we feel certain bonding, which is actually a specific and unambiguous 'defined' place or space. Such a 'defined' place or space usually provides us with the feeling of happiness, comfort, and protection. However, the general expanse of space is infinite that normally generates the feeling of astonishment and insecurity. And the human in a way or other have seen trying to delimit or enclose the limitlessness expanse of space. Thus, it may be a tree, a passage, a hill, a river or so on, or the demarcating boundary of a habitation that defines and limits the expanse of space. Similarly, the house, structure, or architecture are the enclosed space or enclosed area by or for someone for certain purpose.

The demarcation of space is not solely an act of delimitation but simultaneously, it can be said to be a mode of drawing that space or demarcated area into emotional bond. However, the process of possessing and owning an area is a systematic process in the traditional societies, especially in gone days. Being the social animal, people in the traditional societies primarily thought and acted as community. And the selection and demarcation of a suitable area for settlement of the community was the first concern followed by individual areas, accomplished through traditional and ritualistic procedures.

The wisdom and procedures to endorse the suitability of a space for habitation and settlement as well as different narratives associated with a certain settlement are an important chunk of folklore. Such traditions and wisdom, traditions as well as narratives related with settlement, which can be termed as 'Settlement-lore', which are current and continuing in the oral tradition of traditional societies. This is an effort to peep into slice of the subject of settlement, operational wisdom, and traditions associated with settlement, as well as related narratives from some selected areas of Assam, India.

Objective and Limitations of the Study:

The settlement locations and patterns, irrespective of tribal and other non-tribal ethnic communities of Assam, nevertheless display certain basic features. The practical considerations were not the sole considerations to finalize a settlement, rather, there might have had certain other considerations concerning the establishment of a habitat. Such considerations, methods, traditions, beliefs, and narratives associated with settlement are categorized and christened as settlement-lore. And this study is an effort to look into the aspects, traditions, beliefs, narratives and similar items of traditional societies related with settlement landscape.

This is an endeavor to peep into cultural memory associated with settlement and highlight the operational wisdom, traditions, and other folklore items associated with it. The other focuses of the paper are the survey, collection and categorization of narratives and other traditional materials associated with settlement.

The present study is limited in many ways. As the study was undertaken in few selected areas, so the discussion is based on the study and materials collected through field studies in those selected area. More such studies in different areas will be helpful for proper and inclusive study on the topic. So, the discussion and analysis of this paper is limited to the collected materials in the selected areas.

Methodology:

As settlement-lore is components of culture and folklore, so the methodologies applicable in the discipline of Folklore or allied social science subjects are equally applicable in the study of settlement-lore. For the study of settlement-lore, empirical study is obligatory and the primary field technique applicable for the collection of such data is observation method that follows interaction and interviews. Observation is very crucial in comprehending settlement-lore, because one needs to look critically the topography, built environment, settlement layout, special features of settlement, spatial significance, and so on. Such observed points or special features may be the initial points of opening up a discussion with the local folk that gradually opens up new vistas of enquiry through unstructured interview and 'life-history approaches' (Bronner 2017). Present study is based on data collected through observation and personal interviews, collected during the field studies. The study thus turns to be exploratory in nature.

Review of Literature:

The settlement-lore draws its connection with vernacular architecture, folklore, culture, and heritage study. So, the secondary sources and studies pertaining to folklore, culture, or different ethnographic studies often contain materials relating to settlement-lore. However, many data are current only in oral tradition. Notwithstanding, the books like *House Form and Culture* (1969) by Amos Rapoport, *Landscape of Settlement: Prehistory to the present* (1996) by Brian K. Roberts, *Architecture and Order: Approaches to Social Space* (2005) edited by Michael Parker Pearson and Colin Richards considered space as an important aspect relating to human. The books in the vernacular Assamese language like *Karbi Sanskritir Etihash* (2010) by Basanta Das, *Asamar Lokasanskriti* (2013) by Birinchikumar Barua also contains valuable information relating to settlement-lore. However, all such sources have not documented or categorized these unique materials relating to settlement. Therefore, this study was undertaken. The celebrated books on folklore like *The Study of Folklore* (1965) by Alan Dundes, *Folklore: The Basics* (2017) by S. J. Bronner were the source to frame theoretical discussion on folklore.

Conceptualizing 'Settlement-lore' in the backdrop of Folklore

The 'settlement-lore' can be defined as the folklore associated with settlement. It is the cultural memory embedded in the tradition and embodied by the folk people of a community. They are the traditional body of wisdom, tradition, or belief, connected which effect, defines, or shapes a traditional settlement. Settlement induced changes as evident in the settlement landscape bears many levels of meanings and clues to study about the people and their culture. Hence, the settlement is an important aspect of human existence and as, "settlement landscapes are signs and symbols of centuries of human endeavour ... In the ordering of settlement and economic life, above all in the concept of sharing resources, however

unevenly, imagination and ingenuity can be seen to be at work, coupled with a deep understanding of the physical environment" (Roberts 1996, ix).

The term 'Settlement-lore' is not a conventional or established term in the discipline of Folklore or Folkloristics. However, in the categories or genre-based classification of folklore proposed by renowned folklorist like Alan Dundes and others, there is the absence of appropriate terminology or category that fits for the current body of materials (Dundes 1965; Padun 1991; Oring 1987). As no conventional term or grouping encompasses this body of folklore, the term is coined to represent and discuss these materials collectively.

The space, topography, geography, and nature or ecology is closely connected with settlement and culture and therefore, we encounter folklore materials associated with them. The relation of physical world, settlement and culture is inseparable because, "The lifestyles which are actually present result from humankind appraising each environment, each landscape, through eyes affected by historical and cultural experiences and in the light of indigenous or acquired technologies" (Roberts 1996, 32). Therefore, folklore associated with space continues both as active and passive cultural memory and new memories and narratives associated with space generates with time.

The material related with the traditional settlement inevitably draws its connection with the folklore. The settlement-lore is prevalent current in a group of people or 'folk' as per definition of Alan Dundes (Dundes 1965), while the materials are the part of traditional wisdom or 'lore'. On the other hand, the materials associated with the settlement can be term as folklore as folklore is "the material that is handed on by tradition, either by words of mouth or by custom and practice. It may be folksongs, folktales, riddles, proverbs, or other materials preserved in words" (Taylor 1965, 34).

R. M. Dorson has divided folklore materials into four primary broad divisions, viz. Oral Literature or Verbal Art or Expressive Literature, Physical Folklife or Material Culture, Social Folk Custom, and Performing Folk Arts. However, the materials relating to settlement-lore, so far came across and collected, do not strictly fall only into one of the above divisions of folklore. Rather, the materials are of diverse kind and diverse in nature, drawing link to more than one division of folklore. The current diverse body of materials is related to different aspects associated with settlement- from habitat selection to selection of individual homestead and house site. The traditional settlements in Assam are encountered as hamlet or village which display certain characteristic features in respect of locations, distribution, and patterns. The consideration and phenomenon of establishing a settlement near the natural sources of water like river or streams, availability of natural resources, and arable land might be the general and primitive tendency across the societies, which are often noticed in the old settlements. However, it seems that the above considerations were not the sole considerations or criterion to finalize a settlement, rather, along with those practical considerations, there might have had certain other considerations concerning the establishment of a habitat. Thus, such considerations or effort of complying with such considerations, may ultimately lead to final selection of a location for settlement. Perhaps, because of such conditions, we sometimes encounter settlements away from such resources. Such considerations, methods, traditions, beliefs, and narratives associated with settlement or the Settlement-lore is very important part of culture and folklore. Thus, systems or traditions governing settlement, other types of folklore materials connected with settlement e.g. legends and narratives, supernatural beliefs and consideration, and so on are constituents of settlement-lore. And this study is an effort to look into the aspects, traditions, beliefs, narratives and similar items of folklore materials related with establishment and continuing a settlement.

Categorization of Settlement-lore:

To restate, there is every possibility that the settlement sites were selected following certain traditional procedures. The site bearing favourable, positive, and good sign were perhaps selected for the purpose of settlement. In this matter, the systems, considerations, and associated traditional wisdom become operational and these are important facet and paradigm of the human culture, folklore, and existence. Such traditions and wisdom as well as narratives related with settlement are current and continuing in the oral tradition of traditional societies. Similarly, the narratives relating to migration and starting of a specific settlement, the stories and personal narratives about the past and subsequent changes in a place, the supernatural stories in relation to specific area in a settlement, etc. are the materials that can be dubbed and considered as 'Settlement-lore'.

The scrutiny of Settlement-lore materials displays diversity. As said above, some Settlement-lore materials are continuing as cultural memory that remains in passive memory while some of the materials are current in present time and active in nature that disseminates in oral tradition. Therefore, Settlement-lore can be roughly grouped into the following basic and primary divisions based on their existence in the society:

- 1) Passive Settlement-lore, and
- 2) Active Settlement-lore.

In the first genre, i.e. Passive Settlement-lore, the following materials can be included:

- i) Settlement-lore associated with Selection of Settlement Sites,
- ii) Settlement-lore connected with Selection of building site,
- iii) Settlement-lore associated with consecration and commencement,

On the other hand, in the category of Active Settlement-lore, we can include the following items:

- i) Narrative about migration & establishment of settlement/ connected with History,
- ii) Narrative about a place, drawn/ connected with popular folk narratives,
- iii) Etymological Narratives of place name (place lore/ etonyms),
- iv) Supernatural beliefs & accounts on specific place/ architecture or habitat,
- v) Personal narrative about land, place, or associated environment,
- vi) Nostalgic story, gossip and hearsays relating to settlement/ land

Selective Illustrative examples of Settlement-lore:**1. Specimen of Passive Settlement-lore:****i) Settlement-lore associated with Selection of Settlement Sites:**

As listed above, the genres of Settlement-lore is diverse and so the items. A few items pertaining to selective genres will elucidate the topic and nature of materials. Here to start with examples of 'Passive Settlement-lore' associated with selection of suitable sites for settlement which is basic for starting settlement. The auspiciousness of site as examined in case of Hindu temple construction (Kramrisch 1986) was comparably followed on folk level probably because the shelter was perhaps held as sacred as the temples. This is evident in some of the remarks of scholar like Raglan who said 'the houses were originally neither shelter nor dwelling but temples' (Pearson and Ricardsb 2005, 49). Similarly, Rapoport also held that house "It is one thing to say that the dwelling has symbolic and cosmological aspects...and another to say that it has been erected for ritual purposes and is neither shelter nor dwelling but a temple" (Rapoport 1969, 40).

Here below some of such two examples prevalent and collected from two tribal communities inhabiting in Assam:

o Procedure prevalent among Tai-Aiton tribe:

This particular procedure was said to be followed by the Aiton tribe for the selection of a settlement. Thus, in order to select a new habitat, some people go to forest with the intention and a site is chosen pro tempore for the purpose. Then some area of the intended site is cleared and cleaned and the group stay there for the night. During the night, the peoples remain alert to hear the crying sound of a special bird known among them as *Nuk-kat-kang*. They believe that when pair of this variety of bird together produces the sound of '*kat-kang*' at around 12 of midnight, then the area is regarded as fit for establishing a new settlement. They believe that this special species of birds resides in the *ashram* (hermitage) of *Muni* (Sage), so their presence in an area recons suitability of the place for settlement. However, successively they carry out certain other tests primarily to see availability of water as well as detect the wind direction or check required dampness of the land. They carry out the test of availability of water using an earthen lamp (*saki*), which they keep on ground. If the burning wick of the lamp makes the sound of catching water vapour that signals about the availability of ground water, then the land finally selected for settlementⁱ.

o Procedure Prevalent among the Dimasas tribe:

When the Dimasas intend to establish a new settlement, they also carry out similar kind of procedure. Thus, for the purpose, three members of the community come to the place and spend the night there. During their stay at night if the owl hoots or deer or other animals fight in that area then the area is regarded as portent and not favourable for setting up new settlement. However, if the red jungle-fowls crows at the break of dawn in the area, then the area is regarded as favourable for the purpose. In that condition of finding the area favourable for establishing new settlement, they carry out further test of favourability. Thus, then they will make a fire in that area and if the smoke of the fire moves vertically upward or moves to the east direction, then the area is regarded as favourable. On the other hand, if the smoke flies to the western direction, then it is regarded as ominous. If everything is found favourable, then the community people will conduct certain rituals on following day, before setting up the villageⁱⁱ.

ii) Settlement-lore connected with Selection of homestead/ building site:

On the other hand, further selection of individual site for construction of homestead or house is equally important and indispensible affair. Generally, certain areas of a settlement like area adjacent to cremation ground, or areas believed to having presence of malevolent force like ghosts are forbidden for the purpose. On the other hand, individual settlement sites are selected through different beliefs based traditional system. These are continuing as the cultural memory within the community.

Thus, the Garo people traditionally select individual settlement sites for house through the traditional process called '*Jumang-niya*'. Thus, after opening and cleaning an area to settle, they plant a piece of bamboo around one meter length on the intended land. Then they come back home, take bath, and then sleep to see dream. Subsequently dreams are analyzed and if fowls are seen in the dream, then it is regarded as ominousⁱⁱⁱ.

Another example may be added here prevalent among the Deori tribe of Assam. Deoris used to consult the traditional diviner (*Dandai / Deo-utha*), who goes into trance and attains the power when the traditional supreme god of Kundimama enters his body, to select a site for settlement. He is simultaneously consulted for the selection of site for homestead, to check about presence of any (malevolent) supernatural spirit, and orientation of house^{iv}.

iii) Settlement-lore associated with consecration and commencement:

Supernatural beliefs led traditions in the selection, layout and starting of homestead/ house is indispensible part of vernacular architecture tradition in Assam. Thus, the selection of the site for the homestead is done through certain belief led traditional processes. After the selection of the site for the homestead, a suitable place for the construction of the house is selected. Then, the site is prepared according to the traditional prescription. Thus, in the vernacular architecture tradition of the state, apart from consulting astrologer, diviner or traditional priests, the suitability and geomancy of a place is finalized through traditional systems like burying of rice, hurling of egg, through cowry shells, through dream, through plantain leaf and so on. A favoured place is then purified and purged through different traditional customs. Moreover, the layout, orientation of houses, and elements of a homesteads are dependent on traditional religious and supernatural beliefs. Such practice is more or less prevalent among every community.

An example may be cited here which is current among the Misings people of Assam (Deka 2018). They first select a suitable place for the construction of house through ritual called '*Panam*' (Sarma 2000) or '*tagir-kanam*'. The traditional priest *Mibo*, who examines the supernatural favourability of the place through two traditional methods, conducts the ritual. In first method, *Mibo* carries out the process through *yakchaa* (a sword) and *dognou* (a precious gem) (Medak 2015). In the second method, the suitability is tested through burying of rice. Thus, in the evening hours of an auspicious day, there

pack a certain number of rice (usually five/ five pairs/ or equal of family members) in a *tarapat* and bury them in the four corners of the proposed plot by the Mibo or some elderly person. During the moment of burying the bundles, the clan God, Doyi-Polo, Sedi Mel are recalled and chanting the name of the forefathers, utters '*Tat mai nalo, gumin chaying auppinge, chide akum kumdasem kateika*' meaning 'Oh ancestors and forefathers and God of house, please check the suitability of the place of this house' (Pegu 1970, 250).

Next day, the bundles are inspected and if the things are found in situ, then the plot is recommended for the construction while any disturbance in the material is regarded as an ill omen. Thus, if any insect is detected inside the bundle then the site is not recommended for construction. It is believed that if a house is constructed even after such a signal, then the family members will suffer from (skin) diseases or may encounter attack of ghosts. Moreover, if the grains are found scattered or separated from each other, then there is the probability of quarrels among the family members. On the other hand, missing of any rice from the bundle is believed as a signal of death of family member and hence such plot is abandoned (Dole 2008). On the occasion, the owner chants the following mantra: '*Tala-taya nulu. Tat-long-ka oag-akum bertee, dekpe omna medang oyadek praman chil, lengkan-hangks omrna petam peki dung*', which means 'oh ancestors! I intend to build a house on this land. Show me the signs of your approval. Swearing in the name of ancestors, I declare that I expect the sign of your approval.' (Sarma 2000, 176).

2. Selective Specimen of Passive Settlement-lore:

i) Narrative about migration & establishment of settlement/ connected with History:

o Narrative about Migration: Prevalent among the Tai-Khamtis of Barkhamti village:

This narrative piece which a specimen of alternate history is prevalent among Tai-Khamti tribe people of the Barkhamti village, situated near Narayanpur of Lakimpur district, Assam. According to the current narrative among the local Khamti people, the village was said to be established in 1843 AD. According to them, their ancestral place was Sadiya where they had their principality. And during the colonial rule, the Khamti people killed 20 British officials in Sadiya. After the incident, the British army captured the Khamti people, and ordered their exile to Kaliapani. The captive Khamtis were shipped through Brahmaputra and when the ship reached Kalabari, which is around 15 km away from Barkhamti village, the Britishers mistaken Kalabari for Kaliapani. So, the Khamti captives were dropped down there, who subsequently settled in the present village.

This piece of folk narrative has certain tint of historic validity, as the Khamtis historically had their own territory at Sadiya on the bank of river Tengapani since 1794 (Gait 1906) or from 1797 (Gohain 2015). After certain political upheaval and during British rule, the Khamtis attacked the Sadiya garrison of the British in January 1939 and killed Col. White, the Political Agent, and many others. Subsequently, their chief Chaopha Plang-Lu alias Chao Kon-Mung alias Ranua Gohain alias Chao-Mo-Ngun (Sadiya Khoa Gohain in Assamese) was killed. And British re-settled the Khamtis in different parts and Chao-La alias Bhodia, the son of late Khamti chief with his follower was settled at Narayanpur (Gohain 2015).

ii) Narrative about a place, drawn/ connected with popular folk narratives:

o Narrative of Migration: Prevalent among the Noctes of Dihingkinal Nocte village:

The Dihingkinal Nocte village, inhabited by around 40 Nocte (a Naga sub-tribe) households, is situated near Joypur in Dibrugarh district. The Noctes of the village are follower of Neo-vaishnavism and follower of Bareghar *sattr* of Chachani (Merbeel). According to their oral history, they migrated to Joypur area from Tirap district of erstwhile NEFA (now called Arunachal Pradesh) at around 1700 AD. Thus, their king ('*Narapati*') namely Lotha Khoonbou was a pious person and follower of their traditional region. One day, an *Atoi* (Vaishanava monk?) appeared in his dream and divulged about his *Guru* (Spiritual Preacher) of previous life. Then he decided to find out the *Guru*, and subsequently filled two bamboo pipes with gold and silver respectively and left them on a stream. As the pipes started flowing away with water, the king along with his subject started following and proceed with the pipes. Subsequently, the pipes reached the Merbeel, near Burhidihing, where it kept on moving in circular way in a whirlpool. Witnessing the incident, a *Bhakat* (Vaishnava disciple) went to catch the pipes but the pipes moved away, who subsequently informed Sriram ata, the *Sattradhikara* of Bareghar *sattr*, about the miraculous incident. The *Sattradhikara* then prayed before the pipes offering betel nut and betel leaves and ultimately reached the pipes. After reaching near the pipes, he also saw Lotha and his subject on the bank of the **beel** (a **lake-like wetland**). Lotha also came to know that he found the *Guru* he came in search and told the *Guru* about his purpose. Subsequently, the *Guru* took some tests to check the devoutness of Lotha, where he succeeded and ultimately he was given the *sharan* (initiation). And thus, the Nocte people migrated to their present area and became follower of Neo-vaishnavism.

iv) Supernatural beliefs & accounts on specific place/ architecture or habitat

Establishment or distribution of homesteads, allocation of other community spaces, or in defining spatial code in a villages or settlement outlines the settlement landscape. In this matter, the socio-religious beliefs as well as supernatural beliefs play very important and decisive role. The supernatural beliefs, especially the belief about malevolent spirit like ghosts defines, dictates, or plays significant role in the settlement of a village. Thus, the areas adjacent to the cremation ground, if there any or certain specific location of a settlement are avoided for establishment of homestead out of belief of ghosts and other supernatural spirits. One such case is cited herein as an example of the working of supernatural belief in the settlement.

This example is from the Barbang village of Barpeta district, more specifically connected with two adjacent hamlets of the village namely Machkhowapara and Khandopara. A stretch of about 400 meters of the connecting road was desolate and held haunted, which was covered by thick bamboo and trees from both sides that turned the road dusky even during the daytime. Almost at the middle of this part of the road, there are two almost right angle turns, falling to east and west. This part of the road is believed as most haunted where 3 apparitions (*buna jinish*) exist, meander, and appear. In the

eastern turn of the road, one person called Beme burha of Khandopara established a *than* (shrine) and planted one *bel* (wood apple) and one mango tree. Beme, a quite strange looking person whose face and hands resembled to primates, used to practice magic and he had seven ghosts in his possession. Before his death, Beme incidentally chosen one Sambhu Kalita of Machkhowapara to whom he handed over the secret knowledge about ghosts 'taming' and 'rearing'. Beme subsequently sheltered his 7 spirits in the mango tree of the *than* and advised Sambhu to offer regular worship there. Subsequently, around 35 years back, Sambhu established himself near the *than* and started living in that haunted area. Simultaneously, he started offering regular worship in the *than*. After the establishment of the *than* and regular worship, the 3 ghosts of the area became gradually neutral. However, after Sambhu's settlement, nobody settled in that stretch of road for years. However, of late (about 5/6 years back), gradually new settlements are coming up from both ends and the area is fast transforming^v. And within a few coming years, the whole of this stretch of road is expected to develop new settlements and will have a different settlement landscape, which was quite different few years back.

v) Personal narrative about land, place, or associated environment:

vi) Nostalgic story, gossip and hearsays relating to settlement/ land:

Besides those, certain episodes or phenomenon recent past that impacts different aspects of a settlement that consequently generates new Settlement-lore materials which may be **Personal narrative about land, place, or associated environment or Nostalgic story, gossip and hearsays relating to settlement/ land**. Here can cite the example of the Pathsala area of Bajali district of Assam. This small town and nearby areas suddenly witnessed the rapid escalation in migration and settlement of a sizeable population, especially from the nearby areas. The unrest during the Bodo movement and growing reputation of the town as an education hub intensified the process. As a result, the town has undergone rapid extension and commercialization that changed the settlement landscape and generated new aftereffects. All these happening has not only changed settlement landscape but also generated various items of Settlement-lore like nostalgic story, gossip and hearsays, etc.

Especially, the development has severely affected the life, culture, and eco system of surrounding localities, especially to a nearby water body namely Sikhrotiya beel. The haphazard settlement and recently reconstructed NH-31 has blocked the normal outflow of water from the beel (**a lake-like wetland**). This consequently affected an area of around 10 square kilometer of cultivable land surrounding the beel. This has not only almost ceased the agricultural and fishing activity in the area in reference, but also affected numerous associated culture and tradition. As a result, varied nostalgic recollections are often turned the recurrent topic among the local population. But most importantly, the termination of cultivation activity has resulted in rapid growth and covering of the entire area by the water hyacinth (*meteka*) and other aquatic grass and weed. As a result, the entire areas of paddy fields are gradually turning into a swamp land. This is gradually changing the general topography and new items of Settlement-lore will gradually generate.

Conclusion:

The settlement, being a prime activity of human, is integral and closely associated with the life and culture of people. The settlement not only changes the topography and surrounding of a place but creates and nurtures varied folklore items. The settlement is an important part of human existence and settlement is determined and dependent on different beliefs and knowledge of the people. This body of the knowledge, the associated considerations, narratives, as well as beliefs and customs associated with settlement are interesting items of folklore, which necessitates to be segregated as 'settlement-lore'. The study of settlement-lore can provide us various clues and bring before us an alluring world of information. Further comprehensive studies on settlement-lore can lead to unearthing of a host of folklore materials. It will simultaneously provide scope of understanding diverse aspects related with traditional settlements such as schemes of settlement as well as comprehend the nature, symbolism, and meaning of settlement landscape and hidden spatial codes. Simultaneously, the settlement-lore leaves the possibility of uncovering and reconstructing the social, religious, geographic, and belief of the past. The close and further study and analysis of the Settlement-lore, especially the wisdom and folklore associated with settlement keeps the potential of revealing the scheme and nature of settlement of a place. Moreover, the topographical studies and data may be useful input for cross disciplinary study, analysis and planning. Notwithstanding, the body of the material associated with settlement can be segregated and labeled as 'settlement-lore', which will unleash a diverse field of knowledge and enquiry.

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