CONCLUSION
Apart from summarizing the different perspectives attempted in this work the larger issues of Ancient Indian History that this thesis has contributed to will also be addressed here. It will also reflect on how this thesis could be developed further and what was attempted at but was not possible due to several limitations.

The Brahmaputra valley emerges as a unique zone with three micro regions, namely the Western, Central and Eastern zone. The Brahmaputra valley is an environmentally rich zone due to its location on the trijunction of three other regions such as the Himalayan ranges on the North; forest clad and highly dissected ranges of the Indo-Burmese border on the east and south, and vast plains of the Bengal delta to the west which lead to environmental abundance and diversity in these three micro-regions. This diversity is manifested in the variations in soil type, forest products, climate, etc. The three zones are not just diverse environmentally but it also results in diversity in these three zones such as diversity in the nature of settlements, agricultural pattern, craft activities, architectural patterns and administrative system.

The historiography of the Brahmaputra valley presents a lacuna in the study of ancient Indian History. It either considers it to be outside the folds of ‘Indian’ history or just brushes it aside as ‘mythological’ or ‘tribal’ history. This study based on the diverse dimensions of the region environmentally resulting in the emergence of complex settlement patterns and agricultural system is opposed to the study of one particular zone in a ‘diffusionist perspective’ from where settled cultivation dispersed to other parts of the
subcontinent. It reflects both continuity and diversity in patterns since prehistoric times.

The diverse nature of settlements can be seen as they were located in diverse environmental zones since prehistoric times and the kinds of resources that are utilised by the communities in the three zones also varied. The communities were influenced by the environment and also in turn influenced the environment as a symbiotic relationship emerged between the two as seen from the archaeological data since pre-historic times. The eastern zone inhibits the proliferation of settlements due to certain geographical reasons such as the constant recurrence of floods in the eastern tributaries and also the frequent change in the course of the settlements. The nature of settlements varied as there are references to pura (city) and grama (village settlements) in the epigraphs.

The number and nature of temples also vary in the three zones as the central zone temple remains reveal complex and elaborate temple structures. The temples emerge as dominant and empowering structures in the central zone as compared to the eastern and western zone.

The agricultural pattern that emerges in the three zones is an interesting one as it negates all existing theories of not only the expansion of agriculture (predominantly wet rice cultivation) eastwards but also the notion that giving away of land grants led to the emergence of surplus production and the transfer of revenue to the state. Shifting cultivation was practiced which also continued in the post 5th century period. The region also witnesses a range in the kinds of activities that were performed from boat building, exchange
activities, management of stables, etc. A survey of the terms referring to agricultural revenue are lesser in comparison to the officials who were engaged in revenue collection of boats, protected houses, stables and ports. There was shifting cultivation in the Neolithic period which continued in post 5th century AD period. Thus, it is obvious that the imposition of settled cultivation, which is generalized by historians, does not take place in the Brahmaputra valley.

The references to the abundance of water bodies in the region such as ponds, streams, lakes and rivers is significant as they are prominent in the region along with the presence of the mighty river Brahmaputra. There are instances where these ponds are being owned by individuals. Fishing appears to be profitable if the references to water bodies, boats and ships and also the references to the Kaivartas or fisher-men are examined.

Diverse crafts and occupations emerged in the three environmental zones based on the availability of a variety of forest and other plant resources such as bamboo, lac, honey, bombax etc. Textiles play a significant role in the region as there is literary data available that talks about the variety of textiles available in the region. There are certain references to groups of weavers as well who could have been powerful in society such as the term Caturvinsati-tantranam or twenty-four weavers who are also referred to as owners of land. There are terms that refer to weavers such as tantram and potters or the kumbhakara. Other professions such as lawyers, teachers or bhattaha, physicians or prayogvida etc., became prominent in society. These
sophisticated professions emerged in society due to the diverse range of occupations in society and also the increasing complexity in it.

On the issue of kingship, one can conclude that the kings were multi-facetted and played diverse roles in society. Apart from making grants to the Brahmins and to the temples they were also engaged in the construction of palaces and mansions, in the arts such as poetry and also learning. However, there is the reflection of fear when the king communicates with the inhabitants of the hills such as the tayikas and the vahikas as mentioned in the epigraphs.

The kings appointed several officials who were engaged in the performance of revenue collection in the three zones. These officials performed a number of tasks such as those taking care of the elephants and boats which are frequently referred to in the epigraphs. An interesting observation can be made on the kind of officials who were appointed by the king for instance, officials were appointed for taking care of property such as the chaurodharan was appointed for the recovery of stolen property and the authetikachhatravas was appointed for the collection of taxes from the protected houses. There are several categories of Brahmins that are referred to in the epigraphs for instance the Brahmanadhikar, was in charge of sacred functions in the region.

Language of the inscriptions is important in the region as we see the emergence of Sanskrit as a language as the epigraphs were written in Sanskrit. However, there was the existence of several dialects that were
spoken by the communities is also reflected in the epigraphs due to the presence of several non-sanskrit words.

This study has attempted to overcome two significant shortfalls that have been observed pertaining to the study of ancient Indian history and its bearings on the study of society and culture. Firstly, the over-emphasis on the study of the Ganga valley in Ancient Indian history has always been the focus area of historians. The boundaries of 'ancient Indian history' are restricted to the Ganga valley and all history that lies beyond it constitute 'regional history'. However, it is important that Indian history opens out to the study of broader regions and looks at history of regions in broader and global perspective and should look at history in a pan Asian perspective. Answers to several questions can be provided if we look at the history of larger areas. Smaller narratives enrich our view about the larger picture. Micro-history at times also contributes to the study of Meta-histories. Many questions on the pattern and emergence of settlements, the complexities in agriculture and other similar issues can be answered by juxtaposing the available. The kings made land-grants to Brahmins and also other items such as images of deities, bells, caves etc. to temples, asramas etc. The grants being eulogical in nature give divergent views on the qualities of the kings. The Kamauli grant (Sarma 1978:275) refers to a person named Manoratha who was a prasastim or composer of eulogical works similar to other regions the king promoted the writing of his own praises.

The study brings to light the significance of the Brahmaputra valley and highlights the environmental significance and its bearings on the culture of
this region through time. The region is addressed not as an extension of the Ganga valley, but is looked at by itself as standing on its own. It is significant geographically, environmentally and historically due to its location at the confluence of South and south East Asia.

This thesis could be developed further due to several limitations. The various parameters of diversity in the region such as plant species or settlement patterns could have been more enriching if there would have been archaeobotanical studies conducted in the region. Archaeological data is patchy and is inherent with gaps for long phases in this region. There is a need for more, excavations, surveys and also better documentation of the work carried out. There is some amount of work that is carried out but is difficult for researchers to access due to several problems. At some stage I would like to delve into these aspects and contribute through more field studies in the region.