Chapter 7

ROLE OF STATE &
NON-STATE ORGANISATIONS
For Rousseau, the state of nature was associated with man in a pre-social, pre-linguistic world.

The collective effort of Man had started long back and probability it began with his effort to safeguard himself against the fury of nature. The natural calamity and the collective behaviour of humanity as response have closely been related since the dawn of human civilisation. The colossal of misery that a single natural calamity can bring to humanity is known now. As mentioned above, in one earthquake in China in 1556, the total no. of people killed was 8,30,000. Obviously, the state, social, religious and other organisations would come forward to provide the possible support to the affected lot during and after any calamity.

Since, the region was prone to frequent earthquakes due to its being in seismic volatile zone, the state, socio-religious and all the organisations had played an important role in the calamity mitigation. The extant records inform us about the contributions of such organisations.

Since, the study period commences as back as in the early phase of the 13th century and goes little over half way through 20th century covering almost eight hundred years and that too in a region where tribal state formation is still prevalent, a brief description regarding the region’s nature and development of state seem essential to assess their role during the calamities in the region. Leaving apart the smaller states, the period under consideration primarily spreads over three types of state formations, 1228-1826 AD – Ahom period; 1826 Yeandabu treaty to 1947 – Colonial state and the 3rd phase 1947 to 1960 Post Colonial Independent democratic welfare state of India.

THE AHOM STATE

During initial four hundred years after the arrival of Ahoms, the region was occupied by the tribal formations.

The period from the 13th to the 16th century saw the emergence and development of a large number of tribal political formations in Northeast India. The Chutiya, the Tai-Ahom, the Kach, the Dimasa (Kachari), the Tripuri, the Meithei (Manipuri), the Khasi (Khyriem) and the Pnar (Jaintia) all these tribes crystallised into rudimentary state formations by the 15th century. The most developed of them all, the Chutiyas, were
absorbed by the Tai-Ahoms in 1525; the other tribes, however, went on elaborating and sophisticating their respective formations.³

Of all the tribal states referred above, Ahoms ruled over the region for the largest period and that too over the biggest area of the region and this state has only left a number of Burunjis, the royal chronicles full of very valuable information of the region including those of natural calamities. All the earthquakes referred in this study beginning with that of 1548 could be traced from those chronicles only. The Ahom state can rightly take the credit of being the earliest keeper of earthquake record even during that early phase of history. It is a matter of regret that a number of Burunjis have been destroyed during the Moaariya rebellion⁴ which might have been able to provide earthquake records of still earlier period.

Ahom rulers had contributed towards the welfare of its subjects in general. During the Ahom rule a Public Works Department came into existence in the region. To ensure drinking water to their subject Ahom state excavated a good number of tanks. The construction of temples formed an important part of the public works activities of the Ahom rulers. Raising of embankments to protect plain people from the incessant threat of raids from the surrounding hills was another very important task done by the Ahom rulers. Flood being another natural calamity affecting the region almost at regular interval, Ahom

State had to raise the level of roadways to save the land from the ravages of inundation by the river Brahmaputra and its affluent on both its banks. The high Bar-Ali 35-40 feet wide at the top, served as an effective dam against the floods of the Brahmaputra. All these records, placed above are again the parts of Burunjis. But these Burunjis are not that explicit about the role of Ahom state at the hours of crises of its subjects after the great shocks even when they could draw the attention of the royal chroniclers. This silence of Burunjis perhaps indicate that shocks had little impact on the population. There were mentions of destruction of temples, royal palaces and bridges in the Burunjis, but it did not mention any other earthquake related destruction. Ahom State's role against flood has found its mention in British records also.

Robinson in 1841 wrote about them as follows:

These river embankments were crossed again joined by smaller bunds graduating down, and, connecting the mauzas, villages and fields, at once formed the most commodious means of communication, and affordable opportunities for retaining or keeping out the inundation.

To highlight this unprecedented role of Ahom State Amalendu Guha the leading expert on Medieval Assam informs us that:

...the embankments are not confined to the main lines but branch off in all directions whenever roads or bunds seemed to have been convenient or necessary, and certainly in respect to good solid embankment and

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commodious roadways no part of India I have visited appears to have been so well provided as Assam.\(^7\)

It may therefore, be said that Ahom State had very little to do after those earthquake shocks other than the reconstruction, repair of their own palaces and temples.

**COLONIAL STATE**

The Ahom rule was replaced by altogether different state order by the 1\(^{st}\) quarter of the 19\(^{th}\) century with a small interregnum of three/four years in between during which Burmese people entered into the region. With the Yeandabu treaty, Burmese rulers were pushed out of the region in 1826 and the region was gradually annexed to the British Imperialist order. Like any other parts of India here also prime motive of the new state was nothing other than exploitation. That is why even though the new rulers came from a background of industrial set up and so with a knowledge of Science and Technology, the new state did very little for the development of the region. A bare minimum communication network of both rail and surface was developed in the region for the comfortable and faster transportation of mineral resources of the region including both coal and oil. The communication had to be developed a little further to establish tea gardens and then to transport tea to the outside world. In the process an administrative machinery came in the region along with the further development of minimum required infrastructure for education, health

\(^7\) Ibid.
care and disposal of justice. Under the new state structure entire region was divided into a number of districts including those areas with inner line restriction. Thus, in the name of infrastructure European housing constructions, railway lines, metal roads, and even water transport associated constructions were raised in the region.

The structure and surface communications so developed were being soon threatened of their level of tolerance as just within the very 1st quarter of their existence in the region as was seen in the 2nd chapter that the region was rocked quite a number of times. Literate colonial administrators could not just ignore them anymore. So, a number of reports carrying the contemporary seismic records were prepared and published in the then Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal.8

Since, the structures or other constructions, primarily belonged to the state, were gradually coming under the risk, as the involvement of the state in the affairs was also approaching very fast.

At the entry of British Raj, the region was sustaining itself only on its agrarian production and so far as the state’s revenue was concerned, the colonial ruler was solely dependent on land. Therefore, any threat on land was difficult to be ignored by the colonial state. On the other hand colonial state was on the look out of covering more and more waste land under cultivation to enhance state revenue. But this agrarian land of the region was a regular victim of

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flood and so the colonial state used to provide time to time relief to the cultivators during their period of distress owing to flood.

Any potential natural calamity like earthquake involving destruction of both land and property of the region, thus, soon became a state subject. With the occurrence of Cachar earthquake on the 10th January, 1869 the state just could not remain a distant onlooker. If not anything else the state desired to prepare a detailed report on it.

REPORT BY THE ADMINISTRATORS

European state administrations took note of this particular behaviour of this region from the very early years of their arrival in the region.

The very first report which was published in the Asiatic Society Journal under the title "Earthquakes in Assam" communicated by the Major Jenkings Bulter, Agent to the Governor General was of the earthquakes of January, 1819.9

Another record, bearing the title "Register of Indian and Asiatic Earthquake for the year 1843" by Lieutenant R Baird Smith, FGS, Bengal Engineers, carries a good amount of information on Indian earthquakes, of which most of them were from Assam. The register

has one significance that it covered the whole year and it is not that brief.10

Journal of Asiatic Society is the repository of another great Memoir on Indian Earthquake including that of 1833 Nepal Earthquake. However, none of the earthquakes reported there are from North East India.11

During 1870s very higher number of earth tremors were reported from the North Eastern Region by the state. The reports are in a tabular form having five columns. The columns heads are, Data (1), District (2), Time of occurrence (3), Duration (4), Extent of damage if any and general remarks (5). These reports for the year 1874, 1875, 1876, 1877, and 1880 were communicated by the Chief Commissioner of Assam Col. P H Keatinge under the heading 'Record of the occurrence of earthquakes in Assam during 1874, 1875, 1876, 1877, 1878'12 and for 1879, 1880 the list of earthquakes recorded were communicated by the Meteorological Reporter to the Government of Bengal.13 One earthquake of 19th December, 1872 was reported from the Kamrup district of Assam.14 There are other records on

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10 Baird Smith, R, 'Register of Indian and Asiatic Earthquake for the year 1843', *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, no. 164, 1845, pp. 604-672.
12 Kentinge, R H, 'Ill Record of Occurrence of Earthquake in Assam during 1874, 1875, 1876, 1877, 1888, 1879, 1880' no. 3 (1877) No. 1878, No. 1, 1879.
13 V. List of Earthquakes recorded in Assam during the years 1879 and 1880 by the Government of Assam', *Journal of Asiatic Society*, 1881, No. 1, pp. 61-67.
earthquakes of North Eastern Frontier during 1842 and that of Punjab earthquake of March 2, 1878.\(^{15}\)

All these records of earthquakes together constitute a good volume of data for the earthquakes of India and to be specific, the major share of this data comes from North East India. The earthquakes records of the colonial period till 1880 before the arrival of seismography thus appears almost sufficient in placing, the region as one among the seismic prone zones of the world. The state's role in the accusation of seismic data the 19\(^{th}\) century though may be in a preliminary form – seems to be quite praiseworthy.

It was at the initiative of the then Lt. Governor of Bengal that the 1\(^{st}\) detailed report on any earthquake of India was prepared by Geological Survey of India (GSI) under the personal supervision of T Oldham, head of GSI that time. Oldham records this initiative of the authority in his report itself.

William Grey then Lt. Governor of Bengal asked me if I could make it possible to visit the principal places where the damage done was most sever, and note what had occurred on the spot. To this I at once acceded.\(^{16}\)

T Oldham prepared an excellent report on the Cachar Earthquake of 1869 in great details and it was an unprecedented report which provide an appendix containing catalogue of Indian Earthquakes, culled from a number of sources. This report is considered as a

\(^{15}\) Baird Smith, R, 'Notes on the Recent Earthquakes on the North Western Frontier', *Journal of Asiatic Society*, no. 123, 1842, pp. 242-255.

\(^{16}\) Oldham, T, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
pioneering work of Seismology in general and for seismic history of the region in particular and therefore, it is extremely valuable. The second major state sponsored report was prepared by R D Oldham, son of great T Oldham, on the great Shillong earthquakes of 1897. The report was popularly known as 'Oldham Memoir' and it laid the foundation of modern seismology as testified by Charles F Richter the father figure of seismology, while commenting on this report he noted:

His monograph is one of the most valuable source books in seismology.\(^{17}\)

Thus, Oldham's Memoir is a classic contribution to the seismology. Shillong earthquake of 12\(^{th}\) June 1897 had also attracted the attention of the British Government of India at the highest level and immediately after the event, the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department made the telegram to the Chief Commissioner of Assam:

Telegram No. 1204 Public, dated Simla, the 20\(^{th}\) June, 1897.

From : Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department

To : Chief Commissioner of Assam

Government of India propose to have full account of earthquake drawn up. Scientific aspect of enquiry is being taken up by Geological Survey of India, and to complete report, Government of India will be obliged if full report is made by letter as soon as possible, giving details of inquiry done.\(^{18}\)


\(^{18}\) Proceedings of the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Home, March, 1898.
Consequently a report entitled *Report on the Earthquakes of the 12th June 1897*\(^{19}\) sent to the Government of India by the Officiating Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, E A Gait. The Report also contained thirteen Appendices, primarily comprising the reports from the Deputy Commissioners of the districts of Assam, besides having a number of very important enclosures including the medical reports. Thus, the Reports contain information on the effects of the earthquakes on the region and their possible mitigation. Thus, the report may safely be a guide book for any future exigency of its kind in the region.

The report provide us district wise death toll due to this calamity (Table 7.1).\(^{20}\)

**Table 7.1  District wise death toll**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Number of deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khasi and Jaintia Hills</td>
<td>916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylhet</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garo Hills</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nowgong</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cachar</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1542</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The report itself records the immediate measures taken by the states:

The most urgent needs at this time of the crises were to home to homeless, to feed the people, and to restore communications. No efforts were spared to provide temporary huts and shelter, and in a few days these were ready. The orders passed by the Chief Commissioner authorized the construction free of cost, of temporary huts, or bashas, for private residence in Shillong, as well as for Government officers, but it was made clear that temporary shelter only could be afforded... It was pointed out that the case of the native residents differed materially from that of the European residents, in that it could not be said that they had been made absolutely homeless. But it was added that if clerks or others applied for assistance from the Public Works Department in the construction of temporary huts and shelters, it should be afforded to them free of charge in the same manner as to European residents. At the same time, an advance of a month's pay was made to all ministerial officers in Government service, to enable them to meet their immediate necessities, and they were allowed very favourable terms for repayment. It was also directed that the rules for building advances should be interpreted very liberally in their case.\(^{21}\)

**RELIEF/RESCUE BY THE STATE**

One very immediate measure taken by the Chief Commissioner was to allot to every officer in Shillong his own special duty in repairing damages and restoring confidence. Communications were repaired and established by the PWD in a very effective manner. At the request of the Chief Commissioner, Government of India immediately granted the services of two additional Executive Engineers, one temporary Engineer and three subordinates to this province.\(^{22}\)

\(^{21}\) *Ibid.*, p. 4
In a number of districts immediately following the earthquake there was apprehension of price rise of food grains. But this did not take place because of the interference of the state administration. At Gauhati to prevent this and the exportation of grain in large quantities from the town, the Deputy Commissioner temporarily fixed the price of some of the chief articles of consumption in consultation with the principal dealers, and prohibited the exportation of the food grains from the town.\(^{23}\)

At Shillong also administration had to intervene. For first three or four days there was considerable scare, so much so that many persons laid in stock enough to last for a month. I accordingly found it necessary to arrange with a Marwari, Ram Chadnra, the only man who came forward, for the import of 5000 maunds of rice by 1st July. The rest had formed a ring prepared to charge anything which panic-stricken people were willing to giver. The rice-eating population of Shillong is largely composed of clerks and their families, so in order to prevent extortion, while not interfering with legitimate free trade, I fixed the price Rs. 8 a maund, which gave the vendors ample profit on the stocks they had in hand. At the same time I informed the ring that I would seize their rice and have it sold by the police, if my orders were any way infringed.\(^{24}\)

Besides, informative details of the districts were separately put as appendices, an extra-ordinary abridged write up with several constructive suggestions forms the main body of the report, which along with its many other aspects had also brought to the notice of the state, a very important findings of the entire exercise:

There is one important result of the earthquake which calls for special notice. Sylhet is a district which is permeated with river communications and water

\(^{23}\) Ibid., p. 17.
\(^{24}\) Ibid., p. 26.
channels, and it is the usual custom to construct villages along the banks of rivers for the reason that during the rains the only dry ground in the country is found in such a position. This of course is due to the fact that the rivers following through an almost level country deposit silt when in flood more rapidly along their banks than further inland, and a strip of comparatively high ground is thus formed immediately along their banks, while behind this the land is permanently under water during the rainy season. This strip of high land is often not more than two hundred yards broad, and the effect of the earthquake has been that in many places a great portion of this bank has fallen into the river. In these the damage has been already done. In other places, the land has been cracked by the earthquake, the fissures running parallel to the bank, and so long as the river remains in flood, the water will support this bank, but as soon as it falls to any considerable extent, there is imminent danger that the bank will slip forward and downward into the river bed. It is not improbable that a tract of ground farther from the bank than the fissured portion will also sink when the land which supports it is withdrawn. A general subsidence of this nature will lead to very serious consequences and necessitate the removal of the site of many villages in Sylhet, and to a lesser degree in the Assam Valley. There is also another grave danger to be apprehended from this cause. An enormous amount of silt has already been thrown into the river by the subsidence of their banks, and much more is likely to fall. The Sub-divisional Officer of Sunamganj observes in his report that “the Surma and other rivers seem to have been widened”, and it is stated by the Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet that at Manumukh in the Maulvi Bazar subdivision, at the junction of the Manu and Kusiara rivers, “the river appears to have been widened by some hundred yards”. It is obvious that as the amount of silt a river can carry away depends on its fall, which in Sylhet is extremely slight, the rivers will not be able to carry away at once the amount of silt which is accumulating, but that it will be distributed over their beds, which must consequently be raised. If, therefore, any heavy floods come down the rivers, the water will quickly rise over the banks, and it is not unlikely that these will be broken through in places, and that great changes in the course of the rivers may be the result. Something of this kind has already happened, and the floods of the year are already spoken of as abnormal, although the rainfall up to the present time has not been above the average, and the depth of water, according to the river gauge, is far from having reached its maximum limit. It
is impossible to foresee at present what the full effect of this widening of the rivers and the raising of their beds may be, but the whole question appears to be one calling for very careful examination and consideration, and the Chief Commissioner’s anxious attention has already been drawn on it. It may be added that the free navigation of the rivers on which the prosperity of the Province so largely rests is also dependent in great measure on the vagaries of this riparian subsidence. 25

The observation seems to be an apocalyptic one and would be valid even today for most of the valley areas of North East India. The great Assam Earthquake of 1950 has further revalidated the observation as discussed above.

The total Governmental loss under PWD was estimated. The estimated amount was a staggering one of Rs. 35.00 lakhs, 26 and so the Chief Commissioner sought aid from the Government of India:

The Chief has therefore been compelled to say that the unaided resources of the Administration will not enable him to meet the heavy expenditure which this earthquake has entailed, and has had no alternative but to apply for a grant from Imperial revenues to assist the Administration to recover from the effects of the earthquake. If funds are made available it is hoped that in two years’ time, or at most within three years the Public Works of the Province will have been restored to this former condition. 27

The secretariat press was severely damaged but it was due to the strong power of organization of Gait, the secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Assam that the records were said with so little loss and the current work was resumed so promptly. 8 The records so salvaged included the manuscript of Hemchandra Barooah’s great

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25 Ibid., pp. 7-8.
26 Ibid., p. 6.
27 Ibid.
8 Gait’s Report, p. 4.
Assamese Dictionary which was recovered from under the debris. The dictionary was published at Government expense in 1901.  

After the great shock of 1950, among many other actions India Metrological Department also installed three seismographs at Shillong, Tezpur and Tochlai temporarily mainly for the purpose of studying the aftershocks and the seismic development in Assam Region. Two strong motion seismographs were received in India. One of them was installed soon after the earthquake at the CW INC Station at Chatra, and the other proposed to be installed in the Central Seismological Observatory at Shillong.

The Provincial Government had also despatched Lees, an ICS officer on special duty to investigate the circumstances of the raiyats in the district of Kamrup and Nowgong to make appraisal of direct and indirect damages to the agriculture caused by the earthquake. The enquiry established that Kamrup was more effected than Nosgong. Mr Lees, as a follow up of his investigation in the Mauza Dharampur, where large areas of land belonging to rupit category was buried by the sand and become unfit for Sali cultivation, recommended that the rupit lands wherever affected to the extent be converted to faringati for remaining period of the current settlement.

The Chief Commissioner had agreed to the recommendations of Mr

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28 'Report by D H Lees, ICS on the circumstances of the raiyats of Kamrup and Nowgong district', *Proceedings of the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Revenue & Agriculture*, June, 1899, p. 7.
Lees partly on the conversion of *rupit* land to *fraringati* for the remaining part of the current session for the districts of Kamrup, Nowgong and the Mangaldai sub-division of the Darrang district.²⁹

The Army personnel had provided remarkable relief work on the dreadful night of 12th June, 1897 at Shillong. The Government Press was full of compositors, engaged in printing the Gazette, when the building fell on them. The Sepoys were employed all night to extricate those who were entombed and might still be alive. The gallant little Gorkhas worked indefatigably amid drenching rain, depressing darkness and continuing earth tremors.³⁰

Gait while expressing the Chief Commissioner's acknowledgement also records a part of the relief work extended by the army:

> The Chief Commissioner desires to acknowledge the invaluable services which were rendered by the military authority to the Administration. Fatigue parties of Sepoys under the command of Captain Chalterton were employed day and night immediately after the earthquake in rescuing those who are entombed in the fall of the Secretariat Press. They also assisted in building huts for the civil population, and temporary sheds for the secretariat records, and were detailed on round and bridge repairing under Captain East. Mr. Cotton heartily thanks the officers and men of the 42nd Gurkha Rifles for their willing aid and active cooperation. He is also much indebted to Brigadier General Hammond, VC, CB, whose energetic counsel and cheerful presence proved an encouragement to all. Owing to a misunderstanding on the part of the Bengal Government, the Swiss Cottage tents which were telegraphed for by the Chief Commissioner did not arrive until too late to be useful, but, through General Hammond's kindness, 15 E.P. tents, which had been

²⁹ 'Resolution on Mr Lees Report', *Proceedings of the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Revenue & Agriculture*, June, 1898, p. 3.

obtained from the Ordinance Department, were placed at the Chief Commissioner's disposal, and afforded shelter to many at a time when a little comfort of this kind were sorely needed.31

Government of India's response to help as sought by the Chief Commissioner of Assam was very poor. In the words of Sir Cotton in his memoir:

But I venture now to say that we received no adequate assistance from the Govt. of India. When I went down to Calcutta at Christmas I bearded the Finance Minister in his den, but he would give me no satisfaction. I appealed to Caesar, and got some conclusions from the Viceroy, but they were quite insufficient for the needs of the province.32

Whatever might have been the state's support by the time Cotton departed Assam, Shillong became evermore beautiful than before. Cotton testifies,

When I left the province no trace remained of the catastrophe. Shillong was more beautiful than it had ever been. Houses, Public Buildings, Churches and Jails had been rebuilt. The new roads and bridges were better than the old ones.33

Similarly two other very devastating earthquakes of 1918 and 1930 commonly known as Srimangol & Dhubri earthquakes had also been investigated and studied by the experts from Geological Survey of India under the state's directives. Both the reports were entitled as Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India, vol. 46 and vol. 65, has proved to be of immense value to the study of seismology and other various impact of those earthquakes in this region. Two other great

31 Gait, E A, op. cit., p. 5.
33 Ibid., p. 241.
earthquakes of India – one known as Kangra earthquake took place on April 4, 1905 and the other known as Bihar-Nepal earthquake which took place on January 15, 1934 were also studied and memoirs prepared by the GSI. These Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India constitute vol. 38 and vol. 73 of their published report. These reports beginning from 1897 earthquakes were published in 1899, 1910 and 1939 respectively for the Shillong, Kangra and Bihar-Nepal earthquake. These five memoirs are acclaimed as path breaking contribution in the field of earthquake studies.

The reports indicated that the state had taken some benevolent measures, but close scrutiny reveals the nature of the reports, which appear to be basically imperialist in characters. The report reveals mostly the loss of the state administrative centres – destruction to the state buildings such as cutcherry, jail, the communications – rail and with details of damage to the bridges. The estimated amount required for rebuilding the same are also available but even when the main content of the report admitted the deteriorating health conditions of the region after the 1897 earthquake, the state report is silent about the measures taken by the state against this ill.

It was inevitable that the sickness should ensue. In Shillong, there was a temporary but complete dislocation of the station water supply and station drainage. In the native quarter, cholera broke out and fever and dysentery have been rife; while in the station itself and in cantonments there has been much sickness, especially among the ladies and children and enteric fever has laid many... In the plains stations also there has been an unusual amount of sickness, and cholera prevailed at Gauhati for some time until
the municipal water works are reopened. Very gloomy
reports have been received of the public health in most
districts and all have suffered.\textsuperscript{34}

Not only the follow-up measures, Government report was
mostly oblivious of the great loss. After earthquakes and floods in
1897 and immense loss of crop and land in Kamrup district, the state
had commissioned D H Lees, ICS to investigate and report the
details. Lees recommended that a part of the effected rupit land be
converted faringati to provide some relief in land revenue to the
concerned peasant.\textsuperscript{35} The concerned Director, Departments of Land
Records and Agriculture while forwarding the Lees’ report reveals the
attitudes of the colonial state.

I now append a list of mauzas in the Kamrup district to
which such order might apply. They are 28 in numbers
and contain an estimated area of 23,768 bighas of rupit
damaged. I have left out mauzas less than 100 bighas
is said to be damaged. The total area reported to be
damaged in the mauzas for which I have figures is
23,767 bighas. I cannot say exactly to which class
each area belongs for the purpose of assessment, but
in any case the difference in rates between rupit and
fairinagi never exceeds 4 annas per bigha. Consequently, the reduction of revenue by lowering
classification from rupit to faringati cannot exceed 4
annas per bigha of the area effected. The total being
23,768 bighas, the reduction of revenue cannot exceed
Rs. 5,942/- in the district of Kamrup unless the Deputy
Commissioner finds a greater area affected then has
been reported. This is not likely, as the figures I give
were reported to Mr. Lees by mandals and supervisor
Kanungos, who would rather over than underestima'te
the area damaged.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{34} Gaits Report, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{35} 'Report by Mr D H Lees, ICS on the circumstances of the raiyats of Kamrup and
Nogwong district, May, 1898', Proceedings of the Chief Commissioner of Assam,
Revenue and Agriculture, June, 1898, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{36} Henniker, C C, Continuing forwarding note to the Secretary to the Chief
Commissioner of Assam, R. 44-45. ‘Circumstances of raiyats of Kamrup and
Nogwong as affected by earthquake’, Proceedings of the Chief Commissioner of
Assam, Revenue and Agriculture, June, 1898.
The resolution on the report of D H Lees was further prudent in ensuring any relief to the agrarian community in the district of Kamrup and Nogwong. "It is the policy of the Administration to encourage the development of a permanent interest in their holdings on the part of settlement-holders, and the Chief Commissioner is therefore, pleased to direct that in the districts of Kamrup and Nowgong, as well as the Magaldai subdivision of the Darrang district, the assessment of rupit lands held under periodic lease at full rates which were damaged by sand deposits resulting from the earthquake and floods of 1897, so as to be rendered unfit for the cultivation of transplanted rice, and which have not since been relinquished, shall be reduced to faringati rates for the remainder of the term of the current settlement. The Chief Commissioner agrees with Mr Lees that no concession is required in the case of nist-khirajdars, who already held their lands at a very low rates.

8. No direct measures of relief have been required either in Kamrup or in Nowgong, ample opportunities of employments on road and railways works, as well as in tea gardens being available in both districts to all who might wish to take advantage of them.37

The report of the Chief Commissioner is an ample evidence to show the concern of the state for the existing industries established by the foreign capital.

It is feared that the great loss has been sustained in the lime-quarries and coal-mines near Cherrapunjee. The coal-mines near Margherita and the oil-wells at

37 'Resolution on Mr Lees Report', Proceedings of the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Revenue and Agriculture, June 1898, p. 3.
Digboi, both in the Dibrugarh district, were not affected by the earthquake. The damage done to the cultivation and manufacture of tea both in the Assam and Surma Valley has also been found to be much less than was anticipated. The area of tea cultivation lies almost entirely outside the zone which was most seriously affected by the earthquake, and though masonry buildings were damaged, and some gardens have undoubtedly suffered considerable loss, the tea industry as a whole has escaped from the earthquake without any very great injury.  

The imperialist intent of the state was evident.

**JAPANESE EXPERT'S VISIT**

Professor Omori, the leading Japanese Seismologist visited Shillong after the great earthquake of 1897. Professor Omori reported that the earthquake was due to a fault in the earth's crust about twenty miles below the surface and being non volcanic, it was different type from those great cataclysms which had occurred at Krakatoa in Japan. He also pacified the public regarding the subsequent shocks –

Professor Omori had succeeded in explaining to us that these after-shocks were merely the residual effects of the first big disturbance, subject to definite laws, and had nothing dangerous in their character.  

**IMPACT ON CONSTRUCTION DESIGN**

All the stone buildings since Ahom rule – be it royal palace or temple – till the colonial period up to 1897 suffered the same fate of utter destruction in and around epicentral zone extending over a large area.

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Frank admission of the colonial ruler about the impact of 1897 earthquake in this respect was conclusive.

In every affected districts within the area mentioned above the general failure of stone structures such as, cutcherry, treasury, jail as well as the Deputy Commissioner's residence and the church building drew the attention of the colonial rulers and the contemporary Commissioner of the Assam Valley districts desired to note it down with all seriousness and report the same to the higher authority:

The earthquake in the afternoon of the 12th June was, however, of extreme severity, and has pointed out the defects in our system of constructing houses and bridges. I venture to think no stone or brick built houses are capable of resisting such shocks and that in future they must be constructed of more pliant materials.⁴⁰

This observation received a serious consideration and the construction pattern in the region had to be changed. The reconstruction of the state structures (followed by others in general) at Shillong with lighter materials, i.e., ikra and plaster under wooden framework with tin over head as roofing materials was nothing but the result of that great observation of the colonial ruler. This change in construction pattern that followed has been rightly referred in the 1930 Dhubri Earthquake Report of the Geological Survey of India:

Since the 1897 disaster, almost all of the houses of Shillong have been constructed of light materials (wood, ikra, and bamboo with plaster) on 'earthquake proof' lines, so that in spite of their location in many

cases on steeply sloping hillsides, they were, in the great majority of instances, undamaged.\textsuperscript{41}

The earthquake of 1897 thus brought in a great change in the construction of overall boarding structures in the region.

\textbf{INSTRUMENTAL RECORDING}

After a number of sharp seismic events starting from the year 1869 at Cachar, two Mallet seismograph were installed at Shillong and Silichar respectively in 1882. The instrument at Shillong comprised of a number of cylinder – a primitive type – were completely thrown out of measure by the 12\textsuperscript{th} June, 1897 great shock. At Shillong it was housed in a room attached to the Civil Hospital. Though thrown out still the first main shock of 1897 could be recorded by both the equipments.\textsuperscript{42}

There was distinct shift in the state's approach after 12\textsuperscript{th} June, 1897 earthquake which had attracted attention of the scientists all over the world. After the occurrence of the Great Assam Earthquake of 12\textsuperscript{th} June 1897 the necessity of installing some seismographs in the country was keenly felt and the Seismological Committee of the British Association recommended the installation of a few seismographs in India to assist in the study of seismic wave propagation and determination of seismic foci. The Government of India agreed at that time to establish seismological observations at


\textsuperscript{42} Oldham, R D, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 358.
Alipore (Calcutta), Colaba (Bombay) and Madras. The instrument at Alipore was installed on 1st December, 1898 and at Colaba and Madras (after shifted to Kodaikanal) in 1898-99. The instruments installed at these places were Milne's self registering seismographs. The records obtained from these were regularly sent to the Seismological Committee of the British Association.\textsuperscript{43}

Subsequently, in 1905 another great earthquake known as Kangra earthquake rocked India and need for more equipments with low magnification to record these type of very high shocks was felt and professor Omri of Japan had loaned an instrument to the Meteorological Department, Government of India, which was installed at Simla. After first world war the Milne-Shaw seismographs were installed at the Colaba observatory, Bombay, in 1822-23, gradually at other places like Agra, Calcutta and Dehra Dun, Hyderabad and Kodaikanal.\textsuperscript{44}

Bihar-Nepal earthquake of 1934 was catastrophic due to the heavy loss of life and property which led the Government of India to appoint a Committee consisting of the Surveyor General, the Director of Geological Survey of India, and the Director General of Observatories, to review the state of existing seismological organisations in India and to provide recommendations for the establishment of a seismological branch under the Director General of

\textsuperscript{44} Seismology in India, a publication of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Publication Division, Delhi, 1967, p. 18.
Observatories. The Committee submitted its report in 1936. The recommendations of this Committee were accepted in principle by the Government but could not be implemented immediately due to the financial constraints. However, one special officer was appointed under the Director General of Observatories to look after exclusively the seismological works in India Meteorological Department. All seismological works were so far being worked after by the Meteorological Officers of the Department in addition to their own works.\(^{45}\)

Government of India also appointed a Planning Committee for Geophysics in 1945 to prepare a plan for all geophysical works in the country. The Committee submitted its report in 1948 as a result of which the present set up of seismology was born with the main objective of expanding the network of seismological observations and carry on research in various fields of seismology including development of seismograph, study of the distribution and frequency of earthquakes, fore-shocks, after shocks etc.

**POST-COLONIAL STATE**

Though nothing extraordinary followed immediately after independence even than a welfare state like India could not just remain indifferent to various natural calamities including earthquakes. India occupies a unique position so far as earthquakes are

concerned. The northern part of India, the Himalayan frontal arc, in seismically one of the most active intracontinental region in the world, where four great earthquakes, i.e., the 1897 Shillong earthquake, the 1905 Kangra earthquake, the 1934 Bihar-Nepal earthquake and the 1950 Assam earthquake, occurred in a short period of 53 years.\textsuperscript{46}

The impact of Bihar-Nepal earthquake of 1934 killing over 10000 people was also quite green to a nascent state. So, the action of the state which started with 1934 Bihar earthquake took a meaningful turn immediately after the transfer of power in 1947. The Planning Committee formed in 1945 submitted its report before the Government of India in 1948 and as a follow up of that the Central Board of Geophysics was constituted in 1949. The Chairman of the Board in his presidential remark in a symposium on Assam\textquoteright Earthquake 1950 held at Calcutta on 24 April, 1951 exposed the imperial state of India for its precious little deeds done in the field of calamity studies, particularly in seismology.

The seismological work in India has not so far received adequate attention and when compared with Japan, USA and some other countries, it is lagging far behind. India has altogether 7 seismological observatories whereas Japan has 25 and USA over 40.

The Central Board of Geophysics was constituted in 1949 by the Government of India with aim to coordinate the existing resources of the scientific departments, universities and training of personnel in geophysics and to consider plans for the development of geophysics.

In its meeting on 3r October, 1950 the desirability to collect all factual information concerning natural catastrophic phenomena, such as earthquakes, cyclones, storm tides, floods, draughts, etc. through various departments and agencies engaged in their investigations was considered, and also decided to hold a symposium on the Assam Earthquake of August 15, 1950.\(^4\)

As it is evident from the records of the Board of Geophysics (speech of the Chairman on the symposium of the Assam Earthquake of August 15, 1950) that the Planning Committee for geophysics had submitted its report in 1947 with an unambiguous recommendation to set up seismological organisation for India at Shillong. The Chairman A N Khosla further informed the symposium that a suitable site at Shillong for the central observatory was already been approved by the Surveyor General and the approval of Government of India was awaited. The Central Board of Geophysics had also recommended to the Government of India to establish the seismological organisation on a permanent basis in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Scientific Research.\(^6\)

The symposium on 'Assam Earthquake of August 15, 1950' which was organised by the Board of Geophysics at Calcutta on April 24, 1951, brought together geologists, geophysicists, engineers, and others representing departments of Government of

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\(^6\) Ibid., p. 2-3.
India and private agencies. They contributed on the different aspects of their observations and investigations concerning this earthquake. These papers shed vital light on different facets of this earthquake. The symposium organised by the Board of Geophysics happened to be the pioneering effort in the field of seismology in the country. Hence, if 1897 earthquake through Oldham’s Memoir opened the era of modern seismology, then the 1950 great Assam earthquake through the establishment of Central Seismological Centre, Upper Shillong in 1953 triggered the beginning of scientific study of earthquakes in a newly born independent state.

As per the recommendation the Central Seismological Observatory was established at Three and Half Mile, Upper Shillong in 1953 under the Meteorology Department. This contrast the colonial rule and free India, when the British Government did not install a single equipment in North East India since 1869, amplifying the imperialist intent of the state whereas free India could establish a full fledged establishment within 5 years of its independence. Thus, with the establishment of CSO at Upper Shillong a new chapter was added to the history of seismology of the region and a new beginning was made.

This observatory at Shillong being the Central Observatory was receiving data from other observatory for experimental as well as epicentral location and though was not a separate organisation was progressing satisfactorily. By the early sixties United States
Geological and Geodetic Survey desired to expand the seismic network globally and Shillong was identified as one spot for that global network. It was in 1963 Shillong observatory became a part of that World Wide Standard Seismic Network commonly known in abbreviated form as WWSSN with the installation of three components of short and long period electromagnetic seismographs and arrangement for automatic impinging of time marks on seismograms and also absolute time directly from radio stations broadcasting time signals. These steps increased the accuracy of time measurements on Seismograms to a fraction of a second as against a few seconds in the pre-war period. This has instantly improved the accuracy of location of both epicentre (i.e., the point on the surface of the earth just above the actual point of origin inside the earth) and hypocentre, the actual point from where the shock starts.

By 1960 to look after the construction pattern as well as their safety, Earthquake Engineering Department was introduced in the University of Roorkee. Immediately following that preparation of seismic zoning map of the country depending on the level of seismicity became an utmost necessity. Entire Himalayan border from Quito to N E Corner of Assam is on the seismic belt but it not necessarily mean that entire Northern India are equally prone to earthquake. The first seismic zoning map after independence came into being in 1962 which was a very general subdivision depending mainly on epicentral location map, a few isoseismic maps prepared by
GSI for some strong earthquakes, and GSI's 1935 zoning map. By 1966 Indian Standard Institute came up with a much improved zoning map on incorporation of most of the required features. There were six zones in 1962 map, which on amalgamation of fifth and sixth zone ultimately reduced to five zone map. Obviously North East India was placed in the zone five i.e., in the zone of highest intensity. This zoning map being a part of earthquake mitigation effort so far as the constructions were concerned, its finalisation was a great technical move for a country which was liberated only very recently. This seismic zoning map happens to be the primary tool to design any earthquake resistant structures in an earthquake prone zone.

PARAMILITARY SUPPORT UNDER INDEPENDENT INDIA

Assam Rifles, the paramilitary force of Government of India has played a significant role in the rescue operation and rehabilitation of the people of the affected region after the 1950 earthquake. This effort of the state deserves a special mention. To have a brief review of their role it would be worthwhile to quote the then Chief Minister of Assam:

The splendid work of the Assam Rifles during this emergency deserves mention. For days after the earthquake, there was no news about the three Assam Rifles and Military parties marooned in the Holit Valley track at the time of the disaster, and of those who were standing geared at some of the remote outposts near our borders. It was due to the heroism of the Officer-in-charge of our last outpost at Walong in the Lohit Valley and his men, that contact was at least established with these marooned parties, as also with Mr Kingdon-Ward, the famous botanist-
cum-explorer, who was trekking near the Tibetan border at the time of the earthquake. The full story of the thrilling and daring adventures of the men of the Assam Rifles in rescuing their comrades from the face of danger, still remains to be told. It is through the efforts of the members of the Assam Rifles that the road from Sadiya to Nizamghat in the Mishmi Hills, and Saikhowaghat to Dhoa could be restored so quickly. They have also been busy making an embankment to divert the Dihang channel, preparing dropping zones, repairing the landing ground near Sadiya, the Pasighat-Kobo Road, the Pasighat-Pangin Road and the various tribal tracks in the interior of the Abor and Mishmi Hills district, so that the tribal people can once again move in safety to the district and sub-divisional headquarters for procuring their necessaries of life. A landing ground near Pasighat prepared by the men is nearing completion, and in a few days time it is expected that small planes will be able to land there. In the North Lakhimpur subdivision, in addition to assisting in the restoration of communications in the worst effected areas, a party of Assam Rifles, 150 strong, has started constructing bashas for housing the flood-stricken people. Again it was in Assam Rifles rescue party numbering thirty under Captain Limbu that face crossed the turbulent Subansiri, and brought back news of Baligoan and Bardoloni.  

Earthquakes are part of natural calamities and in the NER this has been proved so beyond any conjecture. Earthquakes in North East India were not just natural phenomena, they were disasters. The colonial state’s immediate response to these disasters, therefore, was to provide immediate relief to its affected subjects. In doing so, it used its bureaucracy, police, army and para-armed forces. But besides these, it endeavoured to gather information regarding the nature of impact such calamity has. So creation of a database was attempted. It also gave due weightage to the expert sent by the

Japanese Government and his suggestions were recorded. By then the earthquake measuring equipments were invented. The colonial state took initiative to install two such instruments though temporarily in the region. True to its bureaucratic characters over the years it appointed a Review Committee, a Planning Committee, a Board of Geophysics and a Central Seismological Observatory. These activities were of course taken up at the last phase of the British Rule covering the early phase of independent India. All these fostered scientific enquiry of the subject and benefited the region in the long run.

Thus even though colonial in character, the British in India proved its modernity by importing modern knowledge and inventions in the region.

NON STATE ORGANISATION

Though the concept of state is quite old in the region, the idea of NGO is a modern concept. Since medieval period, it was mostly the religious organisations who were playing the role of NGO’S. So is the case here in the region and the role of religious organization in the event of a social sufferings like that resulted out of a natural calamity became visible after the great Shillong earthquake of 1897. By that time, two religious organization – The Christian Mission and The Brahma Mission were quite old in the Khasi Jaintia Hills. As discussed above (Chapter V), both the missions suffered immensely due to that great shock so far as the destruction of their
infrastructures was concerned. The loss of Welsh Mission was of great measure.

Christian Protestant Mission reached there in the K & J Hills by 1840s followed by the other two – the Catholic Mission and the Brahma Mission.

CHRISTIAN MISSION

There is no denying the fact that the missionaries on their arrival in the region did a lot of social service during the initial period of their settlement. Their service in the field of education was enormous in the K & J Hills. A 10 yearly statistics of their various activities in the Hills including their role in the increase of day scholars given below could reveal the actual position:\(^{51}\)

Table 7.2 Ten yearly statistics of various activities of Christian Mission in the K&J Hills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item of Activities</th>
<th>1861</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1891</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Churches &amp; preaching stations</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preachers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deacons</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicants</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>2147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Members</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>2060</td>
<td>6862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday school members</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>2918</td>
<td>7909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day school scholars</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>1250</td>
<td>2666</td>
<td>4625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearsers</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>3326</td>
<td>9597</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* No returns

No statistics are obtainable for the year 1851 which closed the first decade of work on the hills.\(^{52}\)

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\(^{52}\) Ibid.
The beginning of medical service in the K & J Hills was another pioneering task of the missionaries. In 1878, Dr G Griffiths opened the first dispensary at Mawphlong, then shifted to Cherrapunji in 1891 and finally to Laitlyngkot in 1897. By 1887 Dr A D Hughes extended the medical mission in Jaintia Hills.53

Thus it could be seen that missionaries along with their assigned task of propagation of Christianity in the region also did a great service in the expansion of education as well as medical service in the hills during the first 50 years of their arrival. But all these efforts of missionaries received a great jolt particularly in the K&J Hills by that great earthquake of 1897.

The year 1897 will be long remembered in the history of the mission as the year of the great earthquake. Of all the dark years through which the mission had been called to pass, this was undoubtedly the darkest. The first shock occurred shortly after 5 O'clock on Saturday after, June 12th. In a few seconds every building in Sylhet, Khasia and Jaintia Hills was levelled to the ground; the Government Offices, Mission Premises, including the mission houses (sixteen in number), the two hospitals (Cherra and Jowai), thirty chapels; the Theological Institution, and a large number of schools, many of which in the principal villages, were handsome and substantial buildings; the fruit of the sacrifices of home and native churches for over half-a-century swept away at a single stroke! Whole villages were likewise completely destroyed, large portions being buried, with their inhabitants, under the terrible landslips following the upheavals.54

The irreparable loss that the missionaries suffered out of that earthquake in this connection in the K&J Hills was replenished almost in no

54 Morris, J. H, op. cit., p. 197.
time from outside sources. In addition to that, the splendid service of the native Christian in the crisis were also recorded in the history of Welsh Mission with due recognition.

Within less than six months, however from the time when the news of the disaster was received, the home churches had nobly responded to the appeal for help by a handsome collection of L 14,251 3s 5d. - this, be it remembered in addition to the ordinary collection for the year. The re-building of the Normal School and Dispensaries was undertaken by the Government, which also contributed L 1250 towards the re-building of the Day Schools. The splendid conduct of the native Christians throughout this time of great suffering afforded further indubitable proof of the depth and reality of their convictions, and impressed visibly their heathen neighbours, hundreds of home soon sought admission into the churches.55

Even though the earthquake of 1897 had shattered almost all the school structures which were mostly of Protestant origin, their reconstruction as well as their extension in the distant villages of the Khasi Hills went on unhindered. This extraordinary role of the Methodists’ Church in the expansion of the education in the K& J Hills even after that great setback of 1897 found a place and a frank acceptance in the Catholic Mission history of the region as well.

The Methodologists had made the school their principal activity. The number of their schools had grown to one thousand in the year 1910. Their influence among the people, therefore, was very great. As a result of such extensive efforts in education, the Khasi’s are considered the most progressive among the Hill’s Tribes of India according to statistical data.56

55 Ibid., p. 197-198.
Subsequently Catholic Mission reached the hill district and the catholic church was established there in 1890.\footnote{Ibid., p. 396.} By 1891 a small school was established by them in Shillong.\footnote{Ibid., p. 159.} The construction of the houses for the sisters and an orphanage in the large mission compound thus followed. As time passed three missions centres came into being in the Khasi Hills at Shillong, Shella-Laitkynsew and Cherrapunji.\footnote{Ibid., p. 157.}

Similar to Protestant Mission, Catholic also had service oriented programmes as part of their overall goal of spreading Christian faith in the hills. By 1893, the Missionaries Shelia for the establishment of a mission station. Within two years of their arrival one school was established at Shella and in course of time more schools were opened in the neighbouring villages. By 1896 first German Salvatorian Sisters arrived in Shella and within a short time opened a small orphanage.\footnote{Ibid., p. 187-88.} But the progress of the Catholic Mission in that area almost reached a zero state after the earthquake of 1897.

The earthquake of 1897, however, shattered the hopes of Shella Mission more than anywhere else. Among all the mission stations Shella, in fact, suffered most from the earthquake of 1897, since it was precariously perched on a steep slope. What the earthquake, had not destroyed was destroyed by the rocks rolling down to the valley... Six orphans who had gone out to get food stuff never returned, they were buried under a heap of rolling stones.\footnote{Ibid.}
The missionaries and the sisters with their orphans like others also left Sheila after the earthquake and first reached Mustoh, a village lay higher up in that very night itself and on the day break they finally reached hill top in a village called Laitkynsew. The condition at Sheila was beyond all description. In the wards of Missionaries.

Hunger and famine will disperse them in all directions; I am not in a position to help them, much to my regret. We ourselves are reduced to utter misery and poverty. We stay in damp hut which protects us from the heavy rains. 62

Sheila never recovered from the devastation and the missionary finally had to shift the Mission Station to Laitkynsew. 63 If rebuilding the mission station and reconstruction of school as well as the orphanage was any service to the people then these were built in Laitkynsew within a year of their destruction.

Now a year after the disaster, we have not achieved that degree of progress to which we had attained before the earthquake, but a good beginning has been made. The king who earlier did not want to give even a hut, left me free to choose a large compound in spite of the objections of the Protestant pastors. With the help of some friends of the mission I was able to build a house for myself, another for the Sisters, a school and few Khasi huts for the poorest of my Catholics. 65

By 1899 the mission chapel was also being built their at Laitkynsew with all seriousness and untiring effort. Here also they received generous help from home country for reconstruction of the

62 ibid., 131-92.
63 ibid.
64 ibid., p. 193.
65 ibid., p. 192.
destroyed structures etc. Not merely the financial support, the sincere effort made to get back the mission station as it was if not better received an heart felt appreciation from the historian of the Catholic Mission in the Region.

The bitter trails of the earthquake were forgotten and a new mission station had arisen again. This was achieved only at the cost of great sacrifice on the part of the missionaries who spared neither their health nor their strength.

**BRAHMO MISISON**

This is another religious organization which arrived Shillong earlier to that great earthquake of 1897. Subsequently the mission was extended to Shelia, Laitkynsew and by 1892-93 the mission headquarter was shifted to Cherrapunji. This mission took a great initiative in the prohibition of alcohol in this highly addict K & J Hills District of Assam. Their effort in the Laitkynsew Village area in particular deserve special mention. When this movement was started there were around 35-36 houses in the village who used to produce alcohol. This number gradually reduced to only 2 licensed centres.

Subsequent to the transfer of headquarters at Cherrapunji, the activities of the mission spread over the whole area. Here also

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66 Ibid.
67 Ibid., p. 193-94.
68 Chakraborty, Nilmani, Atmajiban Smriti (autobiography) (in Bengali), 2nd ed., 1382 Bangla, p. 75 & 140.
69 Ibid., p. 143 & 151.
spread of education as well as extension of medical support to the villages became an obvious part of their missionary activities. In the process Moasmi and a good number of other villages in the area also came within their network. Brahmo Mission Society as well as their temple and prayer halls got establishment at about eleven twelve places whose cost was also mostly borne by the mission though however, financial support of the respective locality was also there in a few cases.\textsuperscript{70}

All those missions centres including the schools were brought to the ground by that devastating Shillong earthquake of 1897 and here also if their reconstruction be a service to the respective areas, then it should be admitted, as those were constructed back within a few years with tin roof. Medical service of one Brahmo Missionary Nilmani Chakraborty after the earthquake is mentionable. The situation at Sheila after the earthquake was most pathetic and unfortunate. Most of the houses at Sheila collapsed and after the great casualty, whoever were alive had to spend days in open under the intense rainfall which accompanied the shock and continued for days. This ensued a devastating fever and every day 8-10 people were dying. The situation became still worse as the Government hospital at the place was destroyed and the two Christian Missionary - one Protestant and one Catholic who used to give medicine also left Sheila following the devastation. It was in this situation Nilmani

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., p. 140-41 & 146.
Chakraborty the Brahmo Missionary also a Homeopathic Doctor reached Shella along with the medicines almost alone. Thereafter, it was a whole day affair on the part of the doctor; visiting the patients house to house along with the medicines, which was everyday dawn to dusk task. Often he provided old cloths and food to the needy.\footnote{71} After 2-3 days, medicines as well as food were also exhausted and the missionary had to leave Shella under compulsion.\footnote{72} After getting back, the same missionary had provided the medical support at Cherrapunji as usual. It was very interesting to note that all the bottles whether small or big been destroyed by the shock. He managed to distribute the medicine there in bamboo cut container a part of which was also used at Shella for the distribution of medicine. He of course reported the crises there at Shella - due to shortage of food, inconvenience of the riverbank, continued sickness and death – to the Deputy Commissioner who had reportedly made the requisite arrangement to look after the situation.\footnote{73