

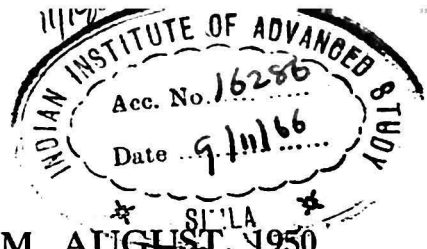
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## EARTHQUAKE IN E. ASSAM, AUGUST, 1950

**T**HE following eye-witness account may be of interest to members :  
The last twelve days have been very thrilling for us here, for we have been on the edge of the epicentre of the fifth largest recorded earthquake. It even puts Quetta in the shade!

The first shocks were felt about 7.45 p.m. Indian Standard Time on August 15. It had been a holiday, due to the fact that it was Independence Day. The ground shuddered and then seemed to tremble quietly. This went on for a second or so and we decided to evacuate the bungalow, for it seemed more than a mere tremor. The trembling increased and a rumbling resembling muffled thunder came from the ground. It seemed as if the earth beneath us had turned into water, for definite waves of movement could be felt as well as vibrations. It is difficult to recall any special features except to say that it was most unpleasant to feel one's knees sagging and knocking. The whole performance lasted for some three and a half to four minutes, and as it died away the falling of landslides down the mountain-sides could be heard very plainly. There were several minor quakes during the next half-hour and then at frequent intervals of fifteen minutes or so all night and next day. We were in an uncertain state for seventy-two hours, as some of the tremors were large enough in intensity to drive us outdoors. We have, in fact, had several tremors a day up to this time. The epicentre seems to have been in the Himalayan foothills in Sadiya. The main damage was done in the area from North Lakimpur, Dibrugarh Dum Duma, Pasighat and in the Abor country. North Lakimpur was badly damaged, and roads for miles cracked open with deep fissures which quickly filled with water. Blue sand was forced up over roads and covered quite a lot of paddy land, thus destroying the newly planted crop.

The Subansiri River where it leaves its gorge at Pathaliapam ceased to flow, and we were all anxious lest it should break its block and rush down, sweeping all before it. The other theory was that it might change its course and appear elsewhere. Rain started just after the main earthquake and has gone on intermittently ever since. This prevented a plane recce of the blocked river and hampered supply drops. Above all, it made the lot of the homeless even more miserable. Several tea gardens up here have been temporarily put out of action. They are Seajuli, Cinnatolliah and Pathaliapam. A small garden, Bordesbam, the opposite side of the Subansiri, was covered with sand forced from the earth and has since disappeared under water. There was no wall of water when, after five days, the Subansiri started to flow again, but the water gradually rose until it covered the Pathaliapam village and area with 4 feet of water. In this area isolated villages have been swept away, and in others the inhabitants can be seen clinging to roof-tops. Food already prepared has been dropped in some places.

shocks were very heavy, and most of the

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Dafla paths have been blocked by slides. On the few days when the hills have been visible we have seen huge bare patches which were once jungle-covered stretching thousands of feet from top to bottom. A few Daflas whom I have seen say that they have had no communication from the interior villages, but a wireless message from the Apa Tanang Plateau  $93^{\circ} 50' \text{ E. } 27^{\circ} 35' \text{ N.}$  says that shocks of great intensity were felt and that the tribesmen danced and beat drums all night in an effort to placate the spirits.

Some damage was done to the oil wells at Digboi, but not much. What has happened, of course, is that, due to the rains and the shifting of river beds, the whole Subansiri delta has been inundated. Farther north the Dihang and Dibang have flooded, and this has caused the waters of the Brahmaputra to pile up and flood.

Our own local river, the Ranganadi, which changed its course in an earthquake years ago and left its bed near our tea garden, last night decided to return. It has cut off a number of villages, and we have spent to-day fetching marooned families off their roof-tops. There seems to be no sign of the rain ending and no promise of any dull moments for days to come.

