



Historical records of India's natural hazards

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India lies in the southern hemisphere, stretching between latitudes 8 N and 37 N and longitudes 70 E and 97 E it is a subcontinent bordered in the north by the Himalayas and in the east, south and west by the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea respectively. It is thus subject to extreme climatic variations and various natural hazards. Cyclones and floods are quite usual every year, while earthquakes too are becoming too frequent for the country's comfort, particularly in the last decade when they caused huge loss of life, damage to property, and even changes in the environment. There are references to these calamities in the ancient Sanskrit texts, some of them of research interest. In the modern period, recording of these events started with Baird's catalogue and later after the Geological Survey of India and the Indian Meteorology Department were founded. Thomas Oldham's "A Catalogue of the Indian earthquakes"(1883) is available while the next one was published a century later(1983), titled " Catalogue of earthquakes in India and the neighbourhood from historical period upto 1971" by Bapat , Kulkarni and Guha. "A New Catalogue of earthquakes in Peninsular India" was brought out by Shrivastav and Das in 1985, covering the period from 1849 July to 1897 July. "Earthquake studies in Peninsular India" since 1993 by Gupta and Gupta came out in 2003. "A Catalogue of major and devastating floods in India and their space-time distribution" by Dhar, Ghose and Kulkarni(1981) is one publication on floods, the Barren Islands in the Bay of Bengal erupted in 1795 and again 1885 and recorded by the GSI. Almost 100 years later it erupted again and accounts of these eruptions are available with the Geological Survey of India. Accounts of the cyclones are available with the Indian meteorology department and their journals as also from those of the Royal Society. The 1977 cyclone that hit the Andhra coast prompted the department of science and technology, Government of India to undertake a review of the cyclones as a result of which a report by the review committee consisting of Saha and others was released in 1984. The National Atlas and Thematic Maps Organisation(NATMO) has recently brought out maps on natural

hazards, earthquakes, flood-plain zoning and droughts and so on. “Mausam” of the Indian meteorology department now keeps record of these natural hazards.