

Post Tsunami Rehabilitation and Resettlement in Nicobar Islands: An Anthropological Approach

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Abstract:

The Nicobarese and Shompen are the indigenous inhabitants of the Nicobar Islands who belong to Mongoloid stock. Though there are many comparable cultural traits, the Nicobarese of different islands exhibit distinct features in terms of geographical nomenclature, language, material culture, seasonal or lineage related ceremonies, and folklore, etc. Furthermore every village and lineage group in each island had its own identity and it is manifested during village and lineage related festivals. The rich cultural heritage and knowledge is maintained through the various cultural practices of the Nicobarese of each island and it is exhibited on different occasions.

But the invaluable traditional knowledge is being gradually extinguishing by natural as well as man made factors. The earthquake and tsunami that wrought the entire Nicobar Islands in 2004 has had impact on the lives of medicine men, magico-religious practitioners, craftsmen etc. Soon after this, the islands are inundated with many developmental programmes with the initiation of international and national voluntary agencies and government in the name of rehabilitation and resettlement. But these efforts are working for cross purposes and had impact of the traditional knowledge of the Nicobarese. Despite of this fact, still the Nicobarese depend on this knowledge to a great extent in fulfilling the subsistence, health, psychological needs.

With this background, the present paper highlights the significance of traditional knowledge in rebuilding the lives of the Nicobarese and the consequences of modern development in Katchal Islands. The study also attempted to know how the modern developmental programmes are transforming the traditional life of the natives and eventual impact on the loss of indigenous knowledge.

Key Words: *Nicobarese, development, tsunami and earthquake, rehabilitation*

Introduction:

The Nicobar islands are a conglomeration of twenty two islands that are clustered in three groups i.e., Car Nicobar in Northernmost; Central Nicobar Islands consists of Kamorta, Nancowry, Trinket, Chowra, Bompuka, Katchal, Terressa, Trinket and Southern group of islands consisting of Pulo Milo, Little Nicobar, Kondul and Great Nicobar. The Central and Southern Islands are covered with hills and mountains, and coconut trees outnumber the rest of the fauna on its coast. Due to this undulating terrain, population is sparsely distributed in these Islands. The Mongoloid stock of Nicobar islands are further classified into six dialectical groups viz. Car Nicobar, Chowra, Terressa, Central, Southern and Shompen, which is spoken by another tribe of the same Mongoloid stock who live interior of Great Nicobar.

Though there are many comparable cultural traits, the *Nicobarese* of different islands exhibit distinct features in terms of geographical nomenclature, language, material culture, seasonal or lineage related ceremonies, and folklore, etc. Furthermore every village and lineage group in each island had its own identity and it is manifested during village and lineage related festivals. The rich cultural heritage and knowledge is maintained through the various cultural practices of the *Nicobarese* of each island and it is exhibited on different occasions. Similarly Katchal Island has its own identity in terms of traditional huts, material culture, folklore, myths, and kinship terminologies, etc. The earthquake and tsunami in 2004 has had impact not only on the human lives but also on material culture. Soon after this tragedy, the islands are inundated with many developmental programmes with the initiation of international and national voluntary agencies and government in the name of rehabilitation and resettlement. But these efforts caused mixed reaction and had impact of the traditional knowledge of the *Nicobarese*. Despite of this fact, still the *Nicobarese* depend on this knowledge to a great extent in fulfilling the subsistence, health, psychological needs.

Objective:

The present paper attempts to highlight the significance of traditional knowledge in rehabilitation of the lives of the *Nicobarese* and the consequences of modern development in Katchal Islands. The study also attempted to know how the modern developmental programmes are transforming the traditional life of the natives and eventual impact on the loss of indigenous knowledge.

Methodology:

For collection of primary data the qualitative anthropological techniques are conceived as important for the study. These are mainly participant observation, case study, key informant interviews, group

discussions, and non-formal interviews using a detailed checklist. Data from secondary sources such as books, articles, published reports, Census reports, and government documents have been collected.

Selection of Study Area:

The 2004 tsunami disaster has had tremendous impact on the *Nicobarese* village as well as their homestead. The relief has not reached in time to Katchal Island due to its remoteness and roughness of sea voyage. To tide over the crisis, all the *Nicobarese* are shifted to forests of their respective ethnic boundaries. With the age old traditional knowledge and wisdom, they exploited the forest resources i.e, roots, tubers, wild leaves for their survival. Further, major chunk of their forest coverage is annexed for rubber plantation and settlement of Sri Lankan settlers. As a result, the *Nicobarese* are facing shortage of forest for their livelihoods in post tsunami scenario. Hence, the Katchal Island is selected for the present study.

Population Details of Katchal Islands:

The total population of study area i.e., Katchal Island is 5312 consisting 2847 male and 2465 female (2001 Census). Of which, the *Nicobarese* population is only 2662 consisting 1372 male and 1290 female. After tsunami the demographic scenario of Katchal Island has had tremendous impact due to mortality in giant tsunami waves. As per household census in 2008, the total population of Katchal is 1514 consists of 797 male and 717 female. The percentage of male population is slightly higher than female. When compared to 2001 population of Katchal, more than 45% of the *Nicobarese* population has come down. It is attributed that due to tsunami and earthquake majority of the population died and the rest are migrated to Port Blair city.

Ethnographic Background of the Nicobarese:

The Nicobarese of Nicobar Island belongs to Mongoloid stock and they are listed as one of the Scheduled Tribes of India. The Nicobarese of all these islands are similar in physical appearance, food habits, and other material and non material cultural traits. But each island has its own identity in terms of origin folktales, language, material traits, and island specific rituals. They generally speak the Nicobari dialect for communication within family and kin groups. Nicobarese of Katchal Island has their own their dialect which is slightly different from Car Nicobarese one, but all the Nicobarese understand and follow the written script of Car Nicobarese language. Besides this, Hindi is widely spoken with outsiders. However, Urdu and Gujarati also conversed by few Nicobarese who converted to Islam. Now-a-days the traditional dress ngong (petticoat) and kisat or ning (loin cloth) are being replaced by modern clothes. But the

traditional dress i.e., loincloth is worn on during ritual occasions and it is customary for magico-religious practitioner. The present dress pattern of women i.e., lungi or sarong and a blouse, resembles the dress pattern of Burmese, Karen or Malay women. Among the Nicobarese Muslims, the men wear pyjama and round cap and women wear Lungi and blouse along with head scarf.

The Nicobarese are non-vegetarian and they eat fish, mutton, beef, pork and chicken. Their traditional vegetable foods are pandanus, yam, banana, coconut and wild roots, tubers. Further they also consume rice and pulses with the contact of non-tribes. Pork is their staple food and it is a religious taboo for Nicobarese Muslims. However it is observed that rearing of chuok's piggery still practiced and the pigs are freely roaming in Muslim households too. Further certain foods are prohibited for women during their life-cycle rituals and these restrictions were followed irrespective of their religious faith.

The social organization of Nicobarese could be understood from its maximal lineage system as it facilitates socio-economic integrity of its members. It is popularly known as tuhet in Car Nicobar and chuok in Central Nicobar. However, tuhet is more popular in the entire Nicobar Islands. Earlier it is the joint family who take care of its members in the chuok. The tendencies of nuclear family are emerging with the inter-religious marriages. Monogamy is the social norm among the Nicobarese, whereas rule of residence is bi-local in nature depending on the need of the members in the chuok and family. As a rule, marriage is not permitted among the consanguineous kins. Marriages within a chuok or kinem is allowed but provided they are not related consanguineously for at least below three generations. The custom of bride-price is prevalent in Chowra and Terressa islands only and rarely observed in other islands. Though divorce is allowed, it is discouraged by their chachah (traditional Village Council). Remarriage is permitted among the Nicobarese. The frequency of inter island and inter religious marriages are more in the study area when compared to other Nicobar Islands.

Cultivation of coconut, areca nut and other horticultural crops is a main economic activity besides fishing, and pig herding. Apart from this, they do engage in making cane and bamboo baskets, canoes, wooden or iron spears. Inter island exchange is a marked feature of the Nicobarese society which facilitates them to obtain scarce resources. The Island Council consists of Chief Captain and Vice Chief Captain, Secretary and members who are the Captains of all the villages of that particular island regulate the behaviour of Nicobarese and settle the disputes. In turn each village consists of village Council which consists of five captains who administer the activities in the village. Further each lineage is headed by one head who is known as ma-ku-tuhēt also taken into consideration for council meetings by the Captains. They are in turn responsible for controlling their own group and assist village headman as and when required.

Though majority of them converted to new religious faith i.e., Christianity, and Islam still they believe in the animistic powers i.e., kareava (fetish of human and animal figurine) and hentukui (a fetish wooden board consists of sketches of their habitat and ecology) and hence appease both malevolent and benevolent spirits during ceremonial occasions. Observance of elaborate ancestral and spirit worship, magico-religious practices, and seasonal festival were part of their belief system and it is strictly followed by all the Nicobarese.

Impact of Tsunami and Earthquake:

In pre tsunami, the total population of Katchal Island is 5312 consisting 2847 male and 2465 female (2001 Census). After tsunami i.e, 2005, the total survivors consists of 3013 of which 1487 are recorded as dead or missing and the remaining were migrated to Nancowry and Port Blair. Further, so many injury cases are reported within the existing population. It was adversely affecting on the fertility and mortality rate of the *Nicobarese* in the post tsunami scenario. The erstwhile settlements and their material belongings were washed out in giant waves. The damage further extended to coconut and areca nut plantation and livestock also badly affected. Fishing in traditional outrigger canoes in shallow waters and creeks were hampered abruptly.

Rehabilitation and Resettlement:

Keeping in view of the exigency, immediate relief was initiated to provide temporary relief to the affected *Nicobarese* with the active co-operation of Non Government Organizations. As a part of financial package, government has provided one lakh rupees each to those who expired as well as missing persons and made a provision of Rs. 3000/- available as temporary relief for all the affected families. Besides this, Andaman and Nicobar administration taken up the immediate relief works like supply of tents for temporary shelter, solar equipped lighting and phones, ration, vegetables, clothe, medicine, electric generators, farming implements and tools, household kits, etc. All the villages shifted their habitation from their original settlement to new location in the elevated areas of their horticultural plantations.

Soon after the tragic incident, the relief was reached very lately to Katchal since the Jetty is washed out in tsunami waves. *Nicobarese* took immediate shelter in their plantation houses in *tavat* area (place inside the forest where they practice shifting horticulture) where traditional huts were built on stilts. Since the water is contaminated, they survived on the left over coconuts. Slowly they started clearing the new location after arriving consensus. The choice of selection new plot or location is purely based on their traditional knowledge on availability of water in the form of well (*Kuva*) and streams (*Nallas*). The

present new location also resembles to earlier *tuhet* pattern i.e., construction of tin made intermediate shelters in clusters of their respective *tuhet* areas. Majority of the temporary habitats are constructed near.

Even some of the *tuhet* people are adjusted temporarily in the neighboring ones where horticulture resources were intact. It is based on their traditional way of sharing resources under *Sinyounglose* and *Misang* (cooperation). Since the traditional houses are washed out in giant tsunami waves, temporary shelters were made with iron and cement floor. But, in due course these temporary shelters are replaced by pucca houses those resemble urban model. But it took almost four to five years to complete the pucca houses due to scarcity of raw material, inclement weather conditions, and remote location. The resettlement of *Nicobarese* in new locations has had repercussions on the rearing of livestock. The traditional houses having stilt platform had the facility of leaving the unused food to their piggery and fowls. But it is missing in the newly constructed pucca houses.

The traditional headmen house in the form of elongated pole accompanied by *Nyhipool* (Gholghar or beehive hut) for celebration of lineage related rituals, ceremonies, decision making and merry making, etc., is pivotal in the village. The guests from other island either *Nicobarese* or non-tribes are given accommodation in such community hut temporarily. During celebration of events, all the lineage members gather at *Nyhipool* and perform the ceremonial events. But this identity of headman house and other *tuhet* (lineage) headmen are lost due to similar housing pattern for all the *Nicobarese*.

However, the pucca houses lack enough space for cultural/creative activities during ritual and ceremonial occasions as it is much more in their traditional village pattern. To overcome this problem, *Nicobarese* already built traditional houses nearer to their horticultural plot by using their knowledge of local raw materials and techniques. Construction of roads and other civic infrastructure facilities like school, community hall, delivery and mortuary houses, medical sub-center, *anganwadi* center, fair-price shops are undertaken by the administration after tsunami. But prior to building the permanent infrastructure facilities, *Nicobarese* had already built the pathways, sanitation pits, and wells, etc., in their temporary shelters by using their indigenous knowledge. The power supply is worse affected and people depend on the diesel operated motors during nights. Till the relocation of power supply i.e., arrangement of new poles, transformers to the new location, they depended on traditional coconut torches for movement in night as it is extensively used for fishing in night.

The undue delay in construction of permanent pucca houses in Katchal may be attributed to non-availability of construction material i.e., sand, iron and hollow bricks. Since, the building material is not available locally and lack of expertise; they are facing the problem of minor or major repairs during heavy

rains. As a result, the newly constructed ones are left unused. In E-wall, some of the houses constructed in new location remain unoccupied keeping in view of the distance from their horticultural plots. Some of the animist families whose ancestral spirits such as *Kareava* and *Hentukui* are not installed in such new houses as they generate excess heat during summer. Hence majority of them retain or reconstructed their traditional stilt houses in their horticultural plots.

Regeneration of Horticultural Plantation:

During tsunami, the coastal coconut and areca nut plantation is uprooted and thrown away one and half to two kilometers inside of the forest. Due to stagnation of saline water during high tide time, those withstand to tsunami also dried. As a result, they shifted to new location in Central Katchal. But the new location fall under the limits of Forest Department and it is entirely covered with Rubber Plantation and settlement of Tamil settlers and other non-*Nicobarese* population. As per the ethnic demarcations, the entire Katchal is divided into different *tuhets* and it is represented in map. As such they started clearing the forest area for new plantation through their age old slash and burn horticulture. As such, tense situation prevailing between *Nicobarese* and Forest Department. The Andaman and Nicobar administration started negotiation with other settlers for resettlement in and around Port Blair.

Nicobarese felt that carpentry tools and equipments are utmost important for removing the debris of coconuts trunks and preparation of sizes for house building. But it was seen that people had complaints of poor quality of farm implements and carpentry tools as they attribute that the issued material is not up to the mark and quite different from their traditional implements. Whatever the iron tools imported from mainland is distributed to *Nicobarese* that are lying idle in their houses as they are unfamiliar of its use. It is evident from the kind of hand-axe, and spade supplied by the administration against the carpentry tool requested by them through indents

Lack of proper awareness and orientation in using such alien modern farming tools making them face difficulties in plantation and gardening works.

Material Culture:

The cultural materials of the *Nicobarese* like *aap* (the fishing and racing canoes), *linreny* (Cross Bow) and *chouk* (detached arrows) used for hunting wild pig, *sanak* (spears) used for catching fish and turtles and other craft related materials like *kuvoko* (cane knitted baskets), *chatai* (Pandanus mats) made with pandanus leaves, earthen pots (exchanged from Chowra island), cane and coconut made handicrafts etc., are washed away in the giant tidal waves during tsunami and left no tools and raw material.

In post tsunami scenario, All these material artifacts are functional are requisites for their survival. In view of this, *Nicobarese* engaged in collection of cane and other resources for preparation and renovation of their material artifacts. To tide over the situation administration supplying fiber boats, household kits and metal vessels in place of their traditional material artifacts. Though modern fishing boats are available as a part of relief measures, *Nicobarese* prefer indigenous canoes since the entire gamut of canoe preparation involves lot of ceremonialism and they are more amenable for fish catch in creeks and shallow water. Thus, *Nicobarese* engaged in repairing of affected canoes and preparing new canoes with the available resources and tools. Presence of such repaired and new fishing canoes on the sea coast of Jhoola, Jhansin, Ponda, and West Bay and East Bay Katchal illustrate the significance of those traditional canoes rather than modern fiber boats.

Fishing:

After tsunami, fishing in off shore and on shore was stopped for many days due to fear psychosis of rough sea waves. To overcome the situation, administration had provided motor boats to each lineage group. But due to lack of diesel, majority of the *Nicobarese* depend on their *aap* (outrigger canoe). Slowly they started reconstructing their traditional canoes with the left over remains. Some of the *Nicobarese* with the wreckages of canoes and venturing in low tide for fishing with nets. Though, the traditional craftsman are present in the village, the scarcity of required carpentry tools and raw material making them helpless in preparation of canoes for fishing.

It is customary to venture for fishing in traditionally made small outrigger canoes by the entire community in small groups. The *tuhet* who does not possess fishing canoes, accompany with other *tuhet* members those possess canoes and share the catch equally. Under this village cooperation, they are venturing into sea for fishing with their traditional canoes.

Soon after tsunami, the crisis of food and water is felt by the Nicobar as the sea water inundated the residential habitats and water sources. Supply of ration is affected by detached roads and lack of proper conveyance. During that time there is no contacts with outside world and lived in the forest for many days. They were totally unprepared to this unexpected situation and hence depended on their traditional foods like preparation of pandanus, coconut, pork, extraction and processing of different kinds of tubers and wild vegetables along with coconut available in the forest. They are extracting resources from their surrounding small streams or stagnated water for water requirements, forest for edible leaves and tubers,

clearing of traditional horticultural gardens for banana and other fruits, and coconut trees inside the forest etc.

Livestock Management:

Nicobarese consider *houn* (pig) is the king of their country and highly valued for socio-cultural and economic purposes. Though tsunami affected the livestock in the *el-panam* (homestead area), no major loss was found since the major chunk of its population resides inside the *tavat* area. *Nicobarese* regained the lost piggery population in short span of time by using their ethno veterinary practices and its outstanding reproducing capacity. *Nicobarese* also depend on their indigenous poultry birds for self-consumption soon after tsunami.

In due course, the Veterinary Department made assessment of the loss of livestock from each village and initiated efforts for enhancing the alternative livestock. As a part of this, officials distributed broiler poultry chicks to each village as a part of relief and rehabilitation works. It is attributed to the large number of such chicks are died instantly with disease and people are afraid of being spread of bird flu to their country fowls. Further *Nicobarese* are not aware of its maintenance and careful rearing and hence they provided only cooked rice and scrapped copra as usually fed to their country birds. But the distributed chicks are died instantly as such poultry is not susceptible to their land. The chicks are distributed as a part of rehabilitation measures without establishing any proper poultry farm and its feeding fodder.

Socio-Cultural Adaptation:

To overcome the trauma of orphan children, almost all the children were adopted by other surviving families under the institutional framework. The injured and other patients are being provided treatment with local herbs by medicine-men. The serious patients were admitted in the headquarter hospital by carrying the patients through forest as they are aware of short-cut pathways. At this juncture, these pathways are of immense use for transportation of all the relief material to the villages. Some of the carpentry tools left at their *tāvat* and collected ones from the debris is used for clearing of forest for shelter and pathways.

Coping is possible not only of their traditional systems but led them to innovate and develop new forms adjustment with the help of Administration and other relief agencies. As the existing livelihood sources like copra and areca nut making, livestock, handicrafts, collection of wild produce have been affected during tsunami and right now administration involved in creation of sustainable livelihoods in the form of

new plantations of coconut, banana and *tapico*, supply of poultry birds, fishing boats, sewing machines, coconut driers, machines for oil extraction, loans for unemployed youth to open grocery and pans shops, opening of workshops for motor vehicles, training in cycle repairing and assembling, sewing, handicraft making etc. Besides this, minimum number of man-days has been guaranteed under rehabilitation works like construction of temporary and permanent houses, diggings of ring-wells, clearing of plot for vegetable cultivation, raising of different varieties of saplings in nurseries, laying of roads, digging of sanitary pits and other community asset building activities. Non-*Nicobarese* is deployed in only technical and skilled works that cannot be handled by the *Nicobarese*. Except for such technical works, the local *Nicobarese* were given preference in timely completion of the rehabilitation works. As a part of this, Agriculture Department had undertaken vegetable cultivation in massive way as *Nicobarese* never raises such vegetables in their horticultural lands earlier. Simultaneously goat rearing and poultry is also introduced to guarantee them livelihood security. The present Non-Governmental Organizations also working in this direction by providing necessary expertise and investment including raw material.

Manula (Village Council):

In post tsunami context, the role of Tribal and Village Council is noteworthy to mention in rehabilitation works. Regular meetings held with Deputy Commissioner and other visiting dignitaries of government by the Chief Captain, Secretary and other Captains from time to time. The Council's approval in the decision-making for construction of permanent accommodation, assessment of property and resources, selection of new location for habitat as well as plantation, arrangement of co-operatives etc., is mandatory. This demonstrates that the active participation of village and island headmen in the development process.

For making new plantation, Council elders persuaded the villagers keep away their livestock (piggery) from the new coastal plantation. In the Council meetings, they are making awareness and encouragement to involve the *Nicobarese* in rehabilitation despite the hardships as it is imminent for restoration community and previous life style. Some of the headmen voluntarily donated their residential and plantation area as a part of relief.

The problems of rehabilitation expressed by the people are noted in separate book for further enquiry from the concerned government departments. After the due discussion of problems in new location, health visitor explain the health care of pregnant and lactating women, personnel hygiene, immunization, steps taken to prevent hypertension, and other related health issues. The Block Development Officer explains

the assistance for extracting coconut oil, *chatai* (mat) making and tailoring works to womenfolk under *Swayamsetha* programme. As a part this meeting, village and *tuhets* related issues were also discussed with captains.

Women and children are engaged actively in clearance of debris in old settlement area, and rendering assistance in making of new plantation, horticultural plot, clearance of forest for new location, collection and processing of nuts and other household chores, etc. Earlier each village had one Mother's Union to control and safeguard the interest of young women in the village. These unions are strengthened after tsunami and succeeded in mobilizing Nicobari women towards self-employment i.e., coconut processing unit to extract oil, *chatai* making with pandanus and coconut leaves, garment embroidering and pillow covers, and other tailoring works. Their demands regarding self-employment and handicrafts are firmly dealt by Captains from time to time. The role of traditional midwives is noteworthy in reaching medical relief rather than health workers or ANMs

It-youch (Institutional Mechanism of Adoption of Orphan Children):

The practices of inter and intra *tuhets* adoptions are an important aspect of *Nicobarese* social system. It is common practice that in the event of change of residence by a girl or boy due to marriage, first born-child of this union has to revert to original *tuhets* from where they originated. Soon after childbirth, head of the family who wants to adopt the child, supply food, nuts and needed material for mother and child as a symbolic act. Continues supply of essential good makes aware to rest of the villagers that the child is being aimed at for adoption. Thus the continuity of *tuhets* population is thus maintained by mutual adoption of their children.

The practice of *It youch* is instrumental in adoption of orphanage children whose parents died in tsunami by the concerned *tuhets* soon after the tragedy. Further *tuhets* head taken over the responsibility of the single-family members and aged people those who lost immediate kith and kin in tsunami. Not only from their own village, but they also looking after the felt needs of the children of those concerned *tuhets*' relative's those who are residing at other islands on government job. Whereas the administration was insisting the collection of census of orphan children for the sake of compensation and for sending them to boarding schools. But these efforts are working for cross purposes and had impact on their traditional institutional mechanisms.

Ungreung (Bi-Local Residence):

It is a kind of residence rule among *Nicobarese* wherein man or woman comes to live in either of the groom's house after marriage depending on the requirement of the man-power in the family where the groom supposed to live after marriage. In case boy loves girl who belongs to another village or *tuhet*, and convince the bride's party that his inclination to stay at bride's *tuhet*. The consent of the boy and girl is taken while negotiating the place of residence in presence of *ma-ku-tuhet* and Captain of the village. In case such proposal is accept, the bride's party has to bears the proposed expenditure of marriage including wedding feast and assign some portion of horticulture land for their subsistence. Then the groom has to work for the welfare of his wife's *tuhet* and the person concerned severe ties with his birth *tuhet* soon after marriage. After tsunami some of the *tuhets* in Katchal, the rise of dependency ratio proves that able man power shortage for reconstruction of homestead and plantation. Hence, arrangements were made through *ungreung* to tide over the crisis and sustenance of its families by the required families in the village.

Menlouna: (Sorcerers):

It is a common belief among the *Nicobarese* that malevolent spirits responsible for ill health, misfortunes including natural disasters. Hence they appease these spirits by offering nuts and pigs during preparation of horticultural and habitation plots, plantation of new gardens, felling of trees, and so on. This sort of ritualism is evident from the pacification of spirits for making hutment in village. Tender coconuts are pierced to the ends of those branches and these branches resembles human figurine. A pig is slaughter and the blood of the slaughtered pig is smeared to upper portion such figurine. They believe that, if they avoid such practice, spirits may cause unknown illness to one of its family members. Prior to this, concerned family who involved actively in house building, one of their family members attached severe fever performed the said ritual act to protect his son from unknown illness.

Nicobarese still rely on native herbal medicine and medicine-men that are immensely honored by virtue of their expertise for treatment of various kinds of diseases at first instance (i.e., who administer ritually spell coconut oil and concoctions of wild herbs to the patients). Though some of the folk medicinal practitioners died in tsunami, still there are knowledgeable persons who resumed the profession of traditional healing at domestic level.

Craft and Craftsmen:

Nicobarese are expertise in thatching of *nyihipool* (community house) and *pati* (residential house), making of *aap* (outrigger canoe), knitting of cane baskets and pandanus mats and other toy related crafts. During tsunami, some of the craftsmen are died and remaining those who survived are facing problem of carpentry tools for restoration of their traditional crafts. Despite this fact, some of the experienced craftsmen are engaged in making of fishing canoes and repairing of old and affected ones to venture for fishing in the shallow waters. Women are actively involved in making of mats and baskets even in the temporary shelters during leisure times.

Conclusion:

From the above data it is clear that though developmental efforts are undertaken in massive way to tide over the crisis, the inclement weather conditions, lack of supply of raw material, geographical isolation, lack of skill and technology, and so on led to undue delay in resettlement. However this crisis is overcome with the social institutions and traditional knowledge of the *Nicobarese* which facilitated them to adapt to the problems posed by the disaster. The knowledge of various forest resources and the island eco-system facilitating the *Nicobarese* in coping the crisis is being felicitated with their traditional knowledge and inbuilt institutional framework.

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