CHAPTER 2
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It is hard for me to classify a form of research like my own within philosophy or within the human sciences. I could define it as an analysis of the cultural facts characterising our culture... I do in fact seek to place myself outside the culture to which we belong, to analyse its formal conditions in order to make a critique of it, not in the sense of reducing its values, but in order to see how it was actually constituted.

—Michel Foucault, In 'Who are you, Professor Foucault?' (1999) [1967]

This chapter introduces the research problem and the rationale of this research. It explains the deductive conceptualization, research objectives, research questions, lines of inquiry, methodology, and the ethical issues concerning the research.

2.1 Research Problem and Rationale of the Study
Historically, the Nicobarese and the Shompen have lived in isolation in the Nicobar Islands with sporadic cross-cultural contacts. After the independence of India, the entire Nicobar archipelago (except for few pockets) was declared as a tribal reserve, wherein the entry of outsiders is strictly prohibited. Both the communities inhabit the most secluded spaces of the country and are least researched. There is limited scientific literature concerning these indigenes and the process of sociocultural change among them has largely remained undocumented.

As the Nicobar is a reserved space, the independent researchers have few opportunities to conduct research among the indigenes. The government officers posted in the islands and the Anthropological Survey of India (ASI) have undertaken most of the research and documentation work in these islands. However, these sarkari24 anthropologies have their own limitations, the most pressing of which are: (a) sweeping generalisation of research findings and (b) non-engagement with critical issues. These two limitations of the existing literature provide the rationale for our research among the Nicobarese.

24 A Hindi word for government
2.1.1 Research Problem 1: The Southern Nicobar

A common limitation that cuts across literature is that most of these studies, though conducted in a limited geographical setting, have generalised their findings on all the Nicobarese. All the indigenes (except for the Shompen) in the three zones of the Nicobar Islands: northern, central and the southern Nicobar are called as the Nicobarese. However, the indigenes of each zone have distinct dialects, natural and built-up environment, sociocultural specificities and livelihood practices. Therefore, the findings of the research conducted among the Nicobarese of one island or a group of islands do not represent the rest of the communities.

Most of the research work among the Nicobarese has been undertaken in the northern and the central Nicobar Islands, while the indigenes of the southern Nicobar have been barely researched. Their sociocultural specificities and the process of change among them have remained unresearched. These indigenes are not only the least researched and documented people; they also inhabit one of the most isolated spaces of India. Until the settlement of military ex-servicemen on the Great Nicobar since the 1970s, only the Nicobarese and the Shompen inhabited these islands.

Since the process of modernisation has been slow in the southern Nicobar, the Nicobarese of these islands experienced far less sociocultural change vis-à-vis the rest of the Nicobarese. As per census 2001, the southern Nicobar had a total Nicobarese population of 1,181 that was sparsely scattered in 14 villages and two or three hamlets in the Great Nicobar, and 20 villages in Little Nicobar islands. Besides horticulture, livestock rearing, hunting and gathering as the conventional livelihoods of the Nicobarese, *copra* (dry coconut) production helped their semi-permeable community to strike up limited trade relations with the outer world. Due to smaller community size, difficult terrain of the islands, historical insignificance, lack of connectivity, an absence of basic amenities and infrastructure, the southern Nicobarese have not attracted the attention of the researchers and have remained almost unresearched.

Relying on the traditional knowledge and the resources provided by their ecosystem, the Nicobarese across the islands subsisted independently until the Indian Ocean tsunami struck the Nicobar archipelago on 26 December 2004. The catastrophe subjected the Nicobarese to many hardships and disabilities. On top of a huge destruction of property, livelihoods and livestock, almost one-third of the
Nicobarese community perished. It warranted governmental humanitarian interventions in the form of rescue, relief and rehabilitation drives in the islands. Post-tsunami, the Nicobarese experienced a sudden sociocultural change. The studies conducted in the northern and the central Nicobar Islands by Singh and others conclude that the traditional Nicobarese society has undergone numerous changes.

Post-tsunami, the southern Nicobarese, whose cultural practices had almost remained unaffected by the modernisation drives, came in direct contact with the outer world and experienced a drastic sociocultural change. It was intriguing for me to find how an isolated indigenous community, which had maintained its cultural practices for centuries, not only underwent swift change post-tsunami but also acquired a behavior that was diametrically opposed to its cultural ethos.

The change among the southern Nicobarese was discernible, but the reasons, nature, direction and patterns of it remained unexplored. The unprecedented sociocultural transmutations, which appeared as a spontaneous aftermath of the tsunami, were nuanced and with layered meanings. In order to make sense of these layered meanings, an inquiry into the Nicobarese post-tsunami sociocultural milieu was necessary. This change seemed to be intricately related to the post-tsunami humanitarian government, and therefore, needed to be understood against the backdrop of the same.

While it was imperative to question if the Nicobarese after the tsunami were governed too much, too less or too carelessly; equally significant was the identification of the rationality of the humanitarian government. A mere description of sociocultural change would not have fully unpacked the puzzle of the tsunami, which Singh et al (undated) argue as a “complex disaster”. A study of the symbolic ideology inherent in the humanitarian interventions was also crucial to analyse the change.

Escobar (2005) argues that development is not only a process that involves improving material conditions of living, modernisation of productive apparatus and upgrading living standards. It is also a mechanism by which certain rationality is learnt through the introduction of specific practices and forms of knowledge. In the light of this argument, the post-tsunami humanitarian interventions and development drives needed to be analysed not only in terms of economic and social domination, but also in relation to their influence on the cultural meanings.
and traditional practices of the indigenes. Therefore, this research also focused on understanding how the Nicobarese rationality, their sense of a set of institutions, actions, perception about the world and themselves (which were an integral part of their culture) were influenced by the humanitarian government.

The cultural practices of the Nicobarese symbolise their inner selves and subjectivities, which are formed by power-knowledge relations. Therefore, an analysis of the post-tsunami power-knowledge relations was also seminal to understand: (a) how the humanitarian government reconstructed the power-knowledge dynamics in the Nicobarese society; (b) how these reconstructions redefined the social relations and restructured the Nicobarese at various levels; (c) what relations the governmental apparatus and the Nicobarese shared before the tsunami and how these power relations changed after the tsunami; (d) how the Nicobarese negotiated this change through various strategies of resistance and acceptance. A coherent explanation was essential to understand how the cultural practices, meanings and social relations among the Nicobarese had altered through transformations in their subjectivities.

Therefore, as a maiden attempt to unpack the process of change among the southern Nicobarese, this research problematised the post-tsunami humanitarian government in the islands. It explored “all those more or less calculated and systematic ways of thinking and acting” (Inda 2005:1) that regulated and shaped the Nicobarese conduct. In other words, it explained the sociocultural change among the Nicobarese through analyzing the post-tsunami ‘conduction’ of the Nicobarese ‘conduct’— governmentality and subjectification amongst the indigenes.

2.1.2 Research Problem 2: The Central Nicobar

The second limitation of the sarkari anthropology conducted among the Nicobarese is that generally these studies do not engage with critical issues concerning the indigenes and governance in the islands. Since, the government administration permits, funds and conducts these studies, the focus and the findings of these studies are usually ideologically motivated and pro-government. There are numerous governance and policy related issues in the central Nicobar Islands, which have serious implications for the Nicobarese. Three major issues that demand immediate solution are: (1) land encroachment in the central Nicobar;
(2) the Navy-Nicobarese Kamorta island land conundrum; (3) the Katchal island Sri Lankan Tamil Repatriates’ Issue.

The first issue concerns the non-Nicobarese encroachment upon the Nicobarese land, especially Kamorta Island. The ex-government employees and other non-Nicobarese have encroached upon a substantial portion of the Nicobarese land in Kamorta, which has caused serious social tension in the islands. The second issue concerns another long-pending land dispute between the Indian Navy and the Nicobarese community on Kamorta Island. The dispute is over the ownership of 317 acres of land, which affects 400 Nicobarese families spread across 15 villages. It has caused numerous conflicts between the Nicobarese and the defence personnel, which were temporarily assuaged by the interventions of the administration, including the lieutenant governor of the islands and the defence minister of India. Despite numerous negotiations in Port Blair and New Delhi, the issue could not be resolved and it has reached an impasse.

The third issue, again a long pending one, concerns the rehabilitation of the Sri Lankan Tamil repatriate families on Katchal Island. In 1975, 48 Sri Lankan Tamil repatriate families, with a total population of 193, were settled on Katchal Island in the central Nicobar. Since Katchal is a tribal reserve, this settlement created several problems both for the Tamil repatriate families and for the Nicobarese community. Decades ago, these communities took up the issue with the Island’s administration and the central government, which has been lying pending ever since then.

All the three issues have serious implications for the Nicobarese; some incidents concerning them have made headlines in local and national media. For instance, “Kidnap Drama in Katchal”25; “Andaman and Nicobar: Islands for sale”26; “Navy grabs tribal land”27; “Atrocities to Tribals by Senior Defence Officers at Nancowry: Civilains and tribals threatened at the Gun Point”28; “Tribal Population agitated over the approach of Defence establishment: Tribal council of Nancowry threatens to boycott Lok Sabha polls if no solution is met soon.”29

25 The Telegraph, June 16 2000
(https://www.telegraphindia.com/1000616/national.htm#head3)
27 The Light of Andamans (8 October 2007)
28 The Andaman Express (24 December 2008)
29 Aspect (12 February 2009)
These issues are intricately linked with governance in the islands. Despite their serious implications on the Nicobarese, these issues have been lying pending for decades. The disillusioned Nicobar Youth Association (NYA) and Katchal Settler’s Welfare Association also filed writ petitions in the High Court with regard to two of the three issues.

There is negligible scientific documentation concerning these issues, which has made the Nicobarese quest for justice difficult. For instance, in the case of the ‘Navy-Nicobarese Kamorta Island land conundrum’, the community is unable to prove its legitimate ownership over the disputed land because of lack of documentary proof. All the records, the official communications between the island’s administration and the Rani (Queen) of the Islands/tribal councils have been washed away during the tsunami. The loss of documents has jeopardised the survival of a large number of the Nicobarese families. It is for the same reason that the tribal councils of the Nancowry and Kamorta Islands asked me to study these three issues and produce scientific documents. These scientific documents/research papers would facilitate the councils to put across their version and seek justice from the authorities.30

This research studied all the three issues in terms of their implications for the Nicobarese and the legal provisions (ANPATR, 1956) governing the islands.

2.2 Deductive Conceptualization

This section of the chapter would explain the deductive conceptualization of this research through a concept map.

30 I published a discussion note, “The Nicobarese ‘Letters of Sufferings: In Protest, Respectfully Yours’” in Economic and Political Weekly (21, February 2015). Later, the Andaman Chronicle republished it (20, April 2015). This note discussed and analysed the Navy-Nicobarese Kamorta Island land dispute. The tribal councils sent this article to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Tribal Affairs, India. This article also attracted the attention of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ANIs) administration and raised the issue at numerous fora that strengthened the agency of the community. The Member of Parliament (MP), Andaman and Nicobar Islands, called me and discussed the whole issue. The MP, along with the tribal councils, lobbied with the authorities at Port Blair, who have assured the community of a quick settlement of the dispute.
Figure 1: Deductive Concept Map

CULTURAL CONTEXT CHECKLIST
1. Geography and Environment
   - Location/Access/Accessibility/Natural Resources
2. Subsistence and Livelihood
   - Livelihood/Livestock/Housing/construction/illness/medicine/funeral practices/Recreation arts/Cooking
3. Social structure
   - Settlement Pattern: (Size of community/Spatial distribution/fixedness of settlements) Type of family/household composition/Ceremonies, marriage/divorce practices/Socio-economic stratification/Law and order/Social behaviour and social relations
4. Political organization, community leadership/intra-inter community relations

Governance of a population
- Art of governance' governance at a distance
- Specify: techniques of power biopower, disciplinary power, combination

External Gaze
- Subjectification

Domination of the subject
- (contra Marxist approach)

Analysis: focus on practices that materialize norms
- Analyse: focus on practices that permit one to know oneself, constitute one's own subjectivity via critique

G

Agnostic Relation

Governmentality

Governance of the self, art of living, create distance between oneself and the system
- Specify: techniques of the self-self-disciplining-rendering the self autonomous

Internal gaze
- Subjectification

Progressive constitution of the self (contra psychoanalysis) to permit critique, resistance to norms

Methodological triangulation
Governmentality, Content Analysis, Discourse Analysis, In-depth Interviews, Focus Groups, Observation

Ethnography

Subject formation/Technologies/Rationality
- Post-tsunami sociocultural change

Issues concerning the Nicobarese survival

Research Questions/Lines of Inquiry

Post-tsunami humanitarian intervention
- Evacuation and relocation
- Welfare and development work: shelters, monetary compensation, free rations, household utensils, medical, electricity, water supply, employment and livelihood generation and so on...

Socio-cultural Readjustment
- At individual level
- At intra-community level
- At inter-community

Immediate Impacts
- Altered bio-physical environment
- Natural and built-up environment destroyed
- Transitory socio-cultural collapse

Nicobarese socio-cultural milieu/Survival Issues

Nicobarese Subjectivity/Identity

A/F

Governing self, art of living, create distance between oneself and the system

Origin/Implications/Response

A2L

A2

A1L

A1
Figure 1 shows the deductive conceptualization of this research. The circle A/F represents the two phases of the Nicobarese society: the pre-tsunami (A) and the post-tsunami (F) sociocultural milieu. While the upper half of the circle represents the Nicobarese milieu and their survival issues, the lower half represents their subjectivities and identities in these two phases. There are complementary relations between the sociocultural specificities of the Nicobarese and their subjectivities/identities.

Before the tsunami (A), the Nicobarese had a certain sociocultural context along with certain subjectivities and identity. The centuries-old traditions, norms, customs, discourses, existential experiences and inter/intra community power relations formed the Nicobarese subjectivities. The indigenes attached meaning to their actions in accordance with their interpretation of the same, whereby the community constituted a sociocultural milieu for itself. As shown by the arrow in the circle, the relations between the Nicobarese sociocultural milieu and their subjectivities/identity are complimentary and mutually reinforcing.

On 26 December 2004, the Nicobarese society was hit by the ‘Indian Ocean tsunami’ (B), the ‘immediate effects’ (C) of which were manifested by major alterations in the bio-physical environment of the islands. With the inundation of large tracts of land, the topography of the islands changed and the natural and built-up environment of the Nicobarese, the very base of their society, was badly affected. The Nicobarese experienced massive loss in terms of human lives, livestock, plantations, livelihoods, material artifacts and settlements. A multitude of all these losses led to a transitory sociocultural collapse among the Nicobarese.

The degree of destruction warranted immediate ‘post-tsunami humanitarian intervention’ (D) for rescue, relief and rehabilitation of the distressed community. The Nicobarese were evacuated from their tribal reserve and relocated in relief camps (later in the intermediate shelters) at Campbell Bay, the Great Nicobar. Monetary compensations, free rations, household utensils and amenities such as, medical, electricity, water supply, schooling, employment opportunities, and so on were provided to the community. The indigenes spent six years in the intermediate shelters before the allotment of permanent shelters to them in 2011.

The post-tsunami humanitarian interventions caused a ‘sociocultural readjustment’ (E) among the Nicobarese, which could be understood at three
levels: individual, intra-community and inter-community. It ushered numerous changes in their society and subjectivities. The post-tsunami milieu of the Nicobarese and their subjectivities (F) are a product and by-product of all these complex processes: ‘immediate impacts’ of the tsunami, ‘post-tsunami humanitarian intervention’ and ‘sociocultural readjustment.’

My first task was to understand the post-tsunami sociocultural milieu of the Nicobarese (F). In order to unpack the process of change in terms of their sociocultural domains, I developed an understanding of the Nicobarese pre-tsunami sociocultural milieu and then juxtaposed it with the existing milieu. However, it only answered the research problem partly. The main challenge was to unpack the process of change among the Nicobarese in relation to the reformation of their subjectivities through the post-tsunami humanitarian government.

Therefore, I focused to analyse the nuanced relations between ‘immediate impacts’ (C) of the tsunami, ‘post-tsunami humanitarian intervention’ (D) and ‘sociocultural readjustment’ (E) through Foucault’s governmentality framework (G). This framework not only helped in a better problematisation of research but also helped unpacking the research problem in a holistic manner through three lines of inquiry: the rationality of humanitarian government, techniques/technologies and strategies employed to materialise the rationality and the ultimate subject formation.

Through using governmentality as an analytical framework, this research answered two research questions: (1) What are the post-tsunami sociocultural changes among the Nicobarese in the southern Nicobar Islands and how has the post-tsunami humanitarian government influenced these changes? (A1). (2) What are the major issues concerning the Nicobarese in the central Nicobar Islands and how has the government addressed them? (A2).

The first research question explained the post-tsunami sociocultural change among the Nicobarese in the light of their subjectification. In other words, the research unpacked the post-tsunami techniques and strategies, which have acted upon the Nicobarese actions, have turned them into objects and subjects of power and have ushered change within their society. This research question had three lines of inquiry (A1L), which inquired into the post-tsunami rationality of governance, technologies of government and the self, and the formation of the Nicobarese as subjects.
There is almost negligible literature on the pre-tsunami sociocultural milieu of the southern Nicobarese. Therefore, an understanding of it was developed during the data collection process by juxtaposing the pre and the post tsunami milieus. The cultural context checklist (X) was used for collect data. The Nicobarese sociocultural milieu was understood by analysing its various components—(1) ‘Geography and environment’: which included various sub-components such as the pre-tsunami location of the Nicobarese, accessibility to various areas and availability of natural resources. (2) ‘Subsistence and livelihood’ was comprehended by analysing livelihood, livestock, housing patterns, methods of construction, major illnesses, medical practices, funeral practices, recreation and decorative art and cooking practices. (3) ‘Social structure’ of the Nicobarese was analysed by taking into account the size of the community, settlement patterns, type of family, household composition, ceremonies, marriage/divorce practices, socio-economic stratification, law and order, social behaviour and social relations. (4) ‘Political organisation’ was traced through the analysis of community leadership and intra-inter community relations.

Our second research problem, which concerned the Central Nicobar Islands, proffered an analysis of the three major issues concerning the Nicobarese survival (A2)— Land encroachment in the central Nicobar, the Navy-Nicobarese Kamorta island land conundrum and the Katchal Island Sri Lankan Tamil repatriates’ issue. This question also had three lines of inquiry (A2L): the origin of the issues, their implications for the Nicobarese, and the response of multiple stakeholders on these issues.

Ethnographic approach (H) was used to conduct this research with an application of triangulation at the methodological level. Along with governmentality framework, the research also used multiple tools of data collection such as content analysis, discourse analysis, in-depth interviews, focus groups and observation.
2.3 Research Objectives

1. To document the pre and the post-tsunami sociocultural milieus of the southern Nicobarese, which have hitherto remained undocumented.

2. To study multiple discourses on the Nicobarese lifestyle and analyse how these discourses (de)constructed social realities for the Nicobarese and shaped their subjectivities/identities.

3. To describe the process of post-tsunami sociocultural change among the southern Nicobarese.

4. To analyse the process of change against the backdrop of the post-tsunami humanitarian government.

5. To explain the long-term effects of the humanitarian interventions on the Nicobarese society.

6. To document the major issues concerning the Nicobarese in the central Nicobar Islands.

7. To study the discourses of multiple stakeholders involved in these issues and proffer an analysis of the same in the context of ANPATR, 1956.

8. To locate and discuss the broader rationality, the raison d'État of the state in the context of the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago and its indigenous communities.

2.4 Research Questions

With a two-pronged focus, this research: (a) unpacked the process of post-tsunami sociocultural change among the Nicobarese in the southern Nicobar Islands and (b) documented and analysed the major issues concerning the Nicobarese survival in the central Nicobar Islands. Both these research problems were studied in the context of governance in the islands. In others words, an analysis of the post-tsunami humanitarian government in the southern Nicobar, and government’s modus operandi while addressing the three issues in the central Nicobar, was the prime focus of this research. This research has two research questions with their specific lines of inquiry:
**Question 1:** What are the post-tsunami sociocultural changes among the Nicobarese in the southern Nicobar Islands?

*Sub-question*

How has the post-tsunami humanitarian government influenced these changes?

**Question 2:** What are the major issues concerning the Nicobarese in the central Nicobar Islands?

*Sub-question*

How has the government addressed these critical issues concerning the Nicobarese?

**2.4.1 Lines of Inquiry of Question 1**

The key concept of both these research questions is government. Rose and Miller (2008: 54) argue government as the “historically constituted matrix within which are articulated all those dreams, schemes, strategies, and manoeuvres of authorities that seek to shape the beliefs and conduct of others in desired directions by acting upon their will, their circumstances or their environment.” Therefore, our first research question, which studied the post-tsunami sociocultural change among the Nicobarese had a sub-question that inquired into the process of shaping of the Nicobarese conduct. It elucidated how the humanitarian government reconfigured the Nicobarese society by acting upon their desires, will, environment and circumstances. In other words, this sub-question examined how the Nicobarese were subject to and reproduced through power exercised by the humanitarian government.

Drawing insights from the opus of later Foucault, Miller and Rose (1992, 1999, 2004, 2008) and Dean (1994, 2010a), this research delineated three lines of inquiry for the sub-question, which focused on the reason/rationality, the technologies of the government and the subject formation. All these lines of inquiry are interrelated, which helped us unpack the governmentality and subjectification amongst the Nicobarese.

*The First line of Inquiry:* What was the rationality of the post-tsunami humanitarian government in the Nicobar Islands? This line of inquiry broadly dealt with the “moral justifications for particular ways of exercising power by diverse authorities” (Rose and Miller 1992:175). It unpacked the tacit political reasons or
the rationalities of governance inherent in the post-tsunami humanitarian interventions in the Nicobar archipelago. It explained how and why certain phenomena, such as the tsunami and various characteristics of the Nicobarese society were formulated as problems. It dealt with a set of questions and explained how the humanitarian interventions intertwined with specific regimes of truth, what counted as truth, and who had the power to define and circulate it.

**The Second line of inquiry:** What were the technologies or strategies through which the government implemented its agenda? In the words of Rose and Miller (1992:175), governmental technologies are “the complex of mundane programmes, calculations, techniques, apparatuses, documents and procedures through which the authorities seek to embody and give effect to governmental ambitions.” This line of inquiry identified and explained these governmental technologies—the procedures, apparatuses, mechanism or manoeuvres through which the government shaped the conduct of the Nicobarese, influenced their decisions and aspirations to bring the desired change in their society. In other words, it explained how the Nicobarese conduct was conducted by acting upon their desires, environment, hopes and circumstances through various post-tsunami humanitarian programmes.

**The Third line of inquiry:** What type of subjectivities have the Nicobarese developed after the tsunami? This line of inquiry studied the traits of the conduct of the Nicobarese and the subjectivities that they have formed after the humanitarian government in the islands. In other words, this line of inquiry inquired into the “diverse types of selves, persons, actors, agents or identities that arise from and inform governmental activity” (Inda 2005). It inquired into the type of conduct and subjectivities that the post-tsunami humanitarian government presupposed for the Nicobarese and the type of subjectivities that the Nicobarese have actually attained.

**2.4.1.1 Analysis of the First Research Question:**
Chapter 6 ‘The Post-tsunami Sociocultural Milieu’ proffers the analysis of the first part of our research question. The sub-question and its three lines of inquiry are analysed as: (a) the first line of inquiry—Chapter 7 ‘The Southern Nicobar Islands as Imaginative Geographies’ and Chapter 12 ‘Discussion: Governing the Indigenes in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands; (b) the second; and (c) the third lines of
2.4.2 Lines of Inquiry of Question 2

The second research question studied the major issues concerning the Nicobarese in the central Nicobar Islands. It also had a sub-question that analysed how the government has addressed these issues. The following three lines of inquiry were delineated to answer this question:

**The first line of Inquiry:** How have the three issues concerning the Nicobarese originated? It studied the origin of the three issues: (a) land encroachment in the central Nicobar; (b) the Navy-Nicobarese Kamorta island land conundrum and (c) the Katchal Island Sri Lankan Tamil repatriates’ issue. The analysis of this line of inquiry explained how certain events in the islands coalesced and emerged as major problems.

**The second line of inquiry:** What are the implications of these issues on the Nicobarese and other stakeholders? This line of inquiry analysed how these long-pending issues have been affecting the communities at different levels.

**The third line of inquiry:** How have the Nicobarese and other stakeholders, especially the government dealt with these issues? This line of inquiry studied how the Nicobarese leadership responded to these issues in the form of resistance or submission. The main focus of this inquiry was to understand the raison d'état of the state.

**2.4.2.1 Analysis of the Second Research Question**

The second research question, along with its sub-question and the corresponding lines of inquiry, is analysed in chapter 9 ‘Land Encroachment in Central Nicobar’; Chapter 10 ‘The Navy-Nicobarese Kamorta Island Land Conundrum’; Chapter 11 ‘The Katchal Island Sri Lankan Tamil Repatriates’ Issue’. Chapter 12 ‘Discussion: Governing the Indigenes in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands’ and Chapter 13 ‘Conclusions’ discussed and concluded the analysis of this research question.
2.5 Research Setting, Method, Sampling, and Data Collection: An Overview

This research was conducted in the central and the southern Nicobar Islands. It is based on the qualitative paradigm and used ethnography as a research method. The theoretical sampling method was used and samples for the research were chosen purposely. Triangulation was applied at the methodological level, whereby multiple tools of data collection such as observation, in-depth interviews, discourse analysis, content analysis and focus group interviews were used. Discourse analysis was the main method for analysing the positions and views of various actors. Governmentality framework was the major analytical tool for analysing the reason/rationality of the regime of power, the techniques of government and subject formation.

Data from the field was collected in two phases: (a) November 2011 to January 2012; (b) July 2014 to October 2014. Data collection and its analyses were interweaving processes since the commencement of fieldwork. Field visits were interspersed with taking time for data reduction, data display, drawing conclusions, data validation and testing the conclusions by collecting fresh data (Miles and Huberman 1984).

Phase 1

In the first phase of the fieldwork—November 2011 to January 2012, data was collected from the Great and Little Nicobar islands in the southern Nicobar. For data collection, three categories of samples: (a) the Nicobarese; (b) administrative Staff (GOs\(^{31}\), NGOs\(^{32}\), INGOs\(^{33}\)) and (c) the non-Nicobarese/settlers were chosen purposely. The population size of the Nicobarese (990) in the southern Nicobar vis-a-vis the settler population (7,153) is very small. In order to get a thick description, nearly 400 Nicobarese, with a specific focus on the key informants, were interviewed.

The indigenes from all the villages of Great Nicobar (New Chingenh, 7 km farm, Afra Bay and Rajiv Nagar) and Little Nicobar (Makachua, Pulopanja, Pulopatia, Pulo and Pulobha) were evenly represented. All the key government employees (including official documents) and important stakeholders from the

\(^{31}\) Governmental organisations
\(^{32}\) Non-governmental organizations
\(^{33}\) International non-governmental organizations
settler community (from Zero Point to 30 km, Campbell Bay, the Great Nicobar), especially the members of the Panchayati Raj Institutions were interviewed. Several focus group discussions were conducted with all the stakeholders. To develop a deep understanding of the lifestyle, food habits, traditions, customs, rituals and ceremonies of the community, I lived with the Nicobarese and observed them closely.

After the completion of fieldwork in the southern Nicobar, this data was analysed and published. Gaps in the existing field data were filled by collecting relevant data from secondary sources such as the official reports, government documents, civil societies, and through conducting interviews with local activists.

Phase 2

In the second phase—July 2014 to October 2014, data from the central Nicobar was collected through conducting fieldwork in Kamorta, Nancowry, Trinket and Katchal Islands. The study of the three issues concerning the Nicobarese in the central Nicobar included archival research as well as fieldwork. The official files of the Andaman and Nicobar administration were accessed from the Andaman and Nicobar Archives, Port Blair. All the files concerning the issues were studied meticulously in two phases: pre-field work and post-field work. Before going to the central Nicobar Islands for fieldwork, an in-depth and chronological understanding of the events concerning the research was developed, and a checklist of questions for fieldwork was prepared.

During fieldwork, data was collected from five sample categories: (a) the Nicobarese; (b) the non-Nicobarese; (c) the Sri Lankan Tamil repatriates; (d) the local leaders/activists; (e) the administrators. Several focus group discussions were conducted with all the stakeholders. In-depth interviews were conducted with the key informants such as the chairpersons of the tribal councils, village captains, assistant commissioner, defence/police personnel, secretary of the Katchal Settler’s Welfare Association, activists, and the non-Nicobarese leaders in the islands. The records of official communication of the tribal councils with the local administration and the union government were also studied. All the legal documents/judgments of the High Court concerning the issues: (a) land encroachment in the central Nicobar; (b) the Katchal Island Sri Lankan Tamil Repatriates’ issue’ were studied. On top of that, the relevant official files available
at the office of the assistant commissioner, Nancowry were also studied. During this phase, fresh data was also collected from the southern Nicobar.

After the completion of fieldwork, the data collected from the central and the southern Nicobar was further supplemented by collecting relevant data from secondary sources.

2.5.1 Methods and Data Analysis

2.5.1.1 Governmentality as Methodology
This research used governmentality as methodology, the rationale, application and usage of which are described in this section.

2.5.1.1.1 Why Governmentality?
In The Subject and Power, Foucault (1982:778) argues that “a prior objectification cannot be asserted as basis for analytical work.” Along the lines of Foucault, Alasuutari (2007:781) also articulates that “…we cannot bracket everything at the same time, but if we uncritically adopt others’ concepts to our own analytical language, we may miss an essential aspect of social reality.” Therefore, I did not use any unifying theory of power or state for this research. Rather, various perspectives and concepts “that draw attention to government as a heterogeneous field of thought and action— to the multiplicity of authorities, knowledges, strategies, and devices that have sought to govern conduct for specific ends” (Inda 2005:7) were used, with critical thought and constant checking.

Since governmental power is not simply the state, but also all these actors, organisations and agencies concerned with exercising authority over the conduct of human beings; government takes place both within and outside state contexts (ibid 2009:6). Hence, it was pertinent to study the research questions not only in terms of the governmental interventions but also in their relations with other actors—the non-Nicobarese/settlers.

While selecting the analytical framework for this research, Foucault’s later oeuvre appeared most appropriate, which offers an ideal analytical framework for engaging with the research questions such as the ones took up by this research. O’Farrell (2005:17), in Michel Foucault argues that the “experience of culture, of something that could be called the study of culture(s), lies at the very heart of Foucault’s own work.” In a Foucauldian understanding of the term culture “it is the way a society constructs and organises knowledge about the world and social
relations and defines particular behaviours and knowledges as either acceptable or unacceptable.”

In an interview titled as “Who are you, Professor Foucault?” (1967) Caruso asks Foucault a series of questions, one of which is concerning the disciplinary location of his opus; to which Foucault responds as:

“...I could define it as an analysis of the cultural facts characterizing our culture... I do in fact seek to place myself outside the culture to which we belong, to analyse its formal conditions in order to make a critique of it, not in the sense of reducing its values, but in order to see how it was actually constituted” (Foucault 1999).

Keeping in mind the strengths of Foucault’s opus, I used Foucault’s framework of governmentality, which as O’Farrell (2005:16) argues, has been widely adopted in culture studies for analysing the role of social institutions and public policies in producing and governing cultural practices. The significance of governmentality framework for this type of research is well articulated by Rose and Miller (2008:174), who argue that while studying transformations in identity, one should not only study it at the level of culture or “solely in terms of the history of ideas about the self.” Rather, the study should address the practices that acted upon the conduct of the people in particular domains of existence and the systems of thought that supported and are embodied in these practices.

Along the same lines, Dean (1994:174) also argues that governmentality as a methodology is suitable for the analysis of government of self and of other. It brings into focus “the substance worked on by the respective techniques; the mode of subjectification; the self-forming activity; and the telos of the practice.” It also provides us an ideal framework to explore how people are privileged as autonomous self-regulating agents or are subordinated, disciplined and marginalised as invisible (Nadesan 2008:1).

**2.5.1.1.2 How Governmentality Framework Works**

Rose and Miller (2008: 32) emphasize that an investigation of grand political schemata, economic ambition or general slogans is not enough to understand the modern rule. It also requires an investigation of all those mechanisms, which seem mundane but make it possible to govern such as the techniques of calculation, notation and computation; standardization of system for training; professional specialism and vocabularies; invention of surveys; building designs; procedures of examination and assessments and architectural forms and so on.
The study of governmentality “indicates an empirical terrain of the rationalities, technologies, programmes and identities of regimes of government.” Government concerns both the practices of government and the practices of self. The analysis of government includes the analysis of those practices that intend to mobilize, shape and work through the desires, needs, choices and lifestyles of individuals and groups. Such analysis of government tries to connect the questions of government, politics and administration to the questions of identity, self and person (Dean 2010a:13-20). The analysis of governmentality is done through an investigation of the technologies that the government uses to give an effect to its aspirations; the technologies which “seek to act upon and instrumentalize the self regulating propensities of individuals in order to ally them with socio-political objectives” (Rose and Miller (2008: 51).

The governance of the self or the analysis of the ethical government of the self involves four aspects (Foucault 1985, 1986b: 352-7 cited in Dean 2010:26), which Dean (1995:564-65; 2010a:26-27) enlists as: (a) ontology, (b) ascetics, (c) deontology, (d) teleology. ‘Ontology’ is “concerned with what we seek to govern in ourselves and others”, the governed or the ethical substance. For instance, flesh in Christianity, pleasures in ancient Greece and sexuality in contemporary liberation ethics. ‘Ascetics’ are concerned with “how we govern this substance, the governing or the ethical work.” It refers to the self-forming activities or the work on self, for instance, the employment of the technologies of the self such as, listening, meditation, dialogue, prayer, diary keeping, self-examination, confession or adoption of procedures of management, surveillance and normalisation applied to deviant people.

The next is ‘deontology’, which is concerned with “who we are when we are governed in such a manner”, “the position we take or are given in relation to rules and norms”; for instance, an active jobseeker in social programmes. ‘Teleology’, is concerned with “why we govern or are governed”, the telos of governmental or ethical practices. It refers to the end, goal, aim or telos of these practices; or what we hope to create or produce in ourselves and others. All practices of the government of self or others have some goals that they want to achieve; for instance, self-mastery, salvation, noble life (Ibid 1995:564-65; 2010:26-27).
2.5.1.1.3 Application in this Research

In the light of the abovementioned arguments, a mere description of the post-tsunami sociocultural change among the Nicobarese and their survival issues would not have fully answered our research questions. Taking cues from the works of Michel Foucault, Mitchell Dean, Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose, this research studied how the government has governed these sociocultural practices through its disaster response and what is the broader rationality, the raison d'État, of the state while governing the Nicobarese in the Nicobar Islands.

While unpacking the process of the post-tsunami change and the survival issues concerning the Nicobarese, this research approached the questions concerning the formation and transformations of the Nicobarese identity through the governmentality framework. In other words, this research used ‘governmentality’ as a methodology to understand the post-tsunami humanitarian government and the broader raison d'État of the state.

For analysis, three themes of governmentality were delineated: Reasons—“analyzing what counts as truth, who has the power to define truth, the role of different authorities of truth, and epistemological, institutional and technical conditions for the production and circulation of truths” (Rose 1999:30 cited in Inda 2005:7-8). Technics, “through which authorities of various sorts have sought to shape, normalize and instrumentalize the conduct, thought, decisions and aspirations of others in order to achieve the objectives they consider desirable” (Miller and Rose 1990:8 cited in Inda 2005:9). Subjects—“what forms of person, self and identity are presupposed by different practices of government and what sorts of transformation do these practices seek?” (Dean 1999:32 cited in Inda 2005:10).

2.5.1.2 Power Relation Analysis: Foucauldian Methodological Injunctions

Power is a significant concept of this research and its analysis in terms of its: (a) form, (b) level, (c) effect, (d) direction, was the most challenging task. While analyzing power, this research followed the following Foucauldian methodological injunctions on power analysis:

Forms of power: While studying the ‘forms’ of power relations in the islands, I did not only zero in on the centralised and legitimate forms of power or identified who
held power against whom. Rather, the techniques of power, which were embodied in the local, regional and material institutions, were analysed.

**Level of Power:** The ‘level’ of power was analysed by studying the practice or exercise of power, its field of application and its impacts. Foucault advocates an analysis that focuses on the way in which things “work at the level of on-going subjugation, at the level of those continuous and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviours, etc” (Smart 2002:72). The analysis, at the level of power, focused on varied complex processes through which the Nicobarese were constituted as effects of objectifying powers.

**Effects of Power:** While explaining the methodological take of Foucault on power ‘effect’ analysis, Smart (2002:72) argues that power circulates through the social body. Neither it is a commodity of a group or a class, nor is it a possession in the hand of an individual. Power functions in the form of a chain and it is exercised in a net-like organisation wherein everybody is caught. While analysing the effects of power, I was conscious that the subjects of the research, the Nicobarese, are also the agents of power, and the effect and element of its articulation.

**Direction of Power:** Contrary to the conventional analysis of power that proceeds from a macro-institutional level, for instance, the power of the state and its diffusion and permeation throughout the social order; the analysis related to the ‘direction’ of power in this research proceeded from micro to macro level i.e from the Nicobarese at micro level to the state and its paraphernalia at macro level. Such ascending analysis of power, which Foucault conceptualises as the “micro-physics” of power, was most helpful. As Smart (2002:72) argues, such kind of analysis helped in revealing the histories, tactics, techniques of power in the islands, and understanding how the mechanisms of power have been transformed, colonised, appropriated and extended by more general forms of domination.

**2.5.1.3 Data Analysis: More Reflections**
Since the beginning of fieldwork, data collection and data analysis were interweaving processes. Interactive model of data collection propounded by Miles and Huberman (1984) was used for the research, whereby data collection and its analysis were simultaneous processes. It helped in filling the gaps in data that were identified while analysis. Field visits for data collection were interspersed with
taking time for data reduction and data display so that conclusions could be drawn and tested by collecting fresh data.

**Contact Summary Sheets:** Based on the data collected from respondents, contact summary sheets were devised to reflect on the major codes and emerging themes, the major answered and unanswered research questions. Contact summary sheets were filled after few visits for data collection, which helped in revising the a-priori codes of data collection.

**Coding of Data:** Codes for data were created before, during and after the fieldwork. A start list of codes was devised from the conceptual framework of the research before the fieldwork. Coding for research was done in accordance with the research objectives, questions, corresponding lines of inquiry and the analytical framework of the research. The codes were revised once fieldwork began, new codes were devised and redundant codes were removed.

**Pattern Coding**: After general coding of data, patterns and recurrences were devised in it. Pattern coding was used to identify patterns, themes and explanation that emerged from the data.

**Interim Site Summary**

After collecting data from various villages for fifteen days, separate interim site summaries were written. A common formatting was done for all the interim site summaries so that a cross-site analysis could be possible. Interim site summary was written on the basis of the emergent codes from the write-ups. The summary was written while keeping both the research questions/objectives and emerged codes in mind.

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34 Pattern coding pulls a lot of material together into more meaningful units of analysis. Pattern codes are a sort of meta-code.

35 Interim site summary provides a synthesis of what researcher understands about the site and what is left to be understood. Interim site summary reviews the findings of the research and reflects on the quality of the data supporting them. It also fixes the agenda for the next round of data collection (Miles and Huberman 1984:75).
2.5.1.4. Ethical and Practical Issues in Data Collection

This research followed the ‘Statement on Ethics: Principles of Professional Responsibilities’ (2012). In specific, the following ethical issues were addressed:

2.5.1.4.1 Ethical Clearance

1. As the Nicobar archipelago is recognised as a tribal reserve under the Andaman and Nicobar Protection of Aboriginal Tribes Regulation (ANPATR) 1956, a tribal pass is required to visit these islands. The requisite tribal pass was procured from the deputy commissioner and all the conditions mentioned in the pass were followed strictly.

2. Before visiting the Nicobar archipelago for research work, the chairpersons of the tribal councils (CTC) were briefed about the research and their consent for the visit was taken.

3. For archival research at the Andaman and Nicobar Archives, (Port Blair), the secretary of the same was briefed about this study and his permission for accessing the archives was taken.

4. After arrival in the islands, the assistant commissioners (AC) of the central and the southern Nicobar Islands were briefed about the research.

5. After arrival in the islands, numerous meetings with the local leadership were conducted and the objectives of the research were discussed with them. On the request of the tribal councils, the focus of the research in the central Nicobar was changed.

6. Before collection of data in various Nicobarese villages, the permission of the respective captains was taken.

7. Data was collected after an informed consent from all the participants of this research.
2.5.1.4.2 Practical Challenges in Data Collection

1. Being an outsider to the Nicobarese culture, I was conscious of my own values, biases and prejudices while collecting data.

2. The sociocultural practices of the Nicobarese were observed in their social context.

3. The distinct culture of the community and the trauma that they had undergone in the form of the tsunami demanded utmost sensitivity, patience and understanding from the researcher while playing various roles during data collection.

4. Differences of age, gender, class and health while collecting data demanded sensitivity.

5. The power differentials rooted in class, gender, age and health status of the participants demanded sensitivity during data collection process.