CHAPTER 13
CONCLUSIONS

_I think it is us who make the future. The future is the way we react to what is happening, it is the way we transform a movement, a doubt into truth. If we want to be masters of our future, we must fundamentally pose the question of what today is._

—Michel Foucault, In ‘Dits et Ecrits’ (1994)

Through studying governmentality in the Nicobar Islands, this research explained how the Nicobarese have been subject to and reproduced through power. Traditionally, the Nicobarese have lived in secluded spaces with an early exposure to the colonial forces. The colonizers across the world have used brutal sovereign power against the indigenes and usurped their natural resources. The indigenes of the Andaman Islands, especially the Jarawa and the Great Andamanese, were also killed in large number by the British as they resisted the colonisation of their spaces. However, the colonial experiences of the Nicobarese were different from the rest of the indigenes. They remained insulated from direct threats to their mode of living or natural resources. Except for the Japanese regime, when the Nicobarese were tortured, coerced and murdered, the rest of the colonial epochs in the Nicobar (the Danish, the Austrian and the British) were peaceful.

The Christian missionaries came to the Nicobar Islands to preach the gospel to the indigenes. The power exercised by the Christianity on the Nicobarese was what Foucault (1984:783) calls as “pastoral power”, which is “salvation oriented”, “oblative”, “individualizing”, “coextensive”, “continuous with life” and linked with truth production. In ‘The Politics of Truth’ (1997b:165), Foucault argues that individuals do not discover self, rather it is constituted through the force of the truth. The Nicobarese self was reproduced by the force of the missionaries’ discourses that produced certain truths and beliefs concerning life and salvation among the indigenes.

The community internalised these truths and beliefs through the technologies of self such as self-examination and confession. The indigenes were obligated to hold a certain set of propositions as truths, which constituted a dogma. They were also expected to accept the decisions of certain authorities and hold certain texts as the permanent source of truths. For instance, the indigenes of the Car Nicobar, as
Srinivasan (undated) writes, regarded Soloman as their “father” and they could do “anything” for him. The indigenes consulted Soloman and Richardson on all the matters, who induced them to embrace Christianity and give up their animist lifestyle.

Religion acted as a technology of power and modulated the Nicobarese behaviour in sync with the morality preached by the Bible. The pastoral power gradually disciplined the Nicobarese and formed them as subjects, which were in consonance with the ethos of Christianity. Gradually, the Nicobarese centuries old totems, superstitions, rituals and idiosyncrasies lost their significance for the community. The change in the sociocultural fabric of the community was slow and sensitive to the sentiments of its people. It was not directly imposed. Rather, it was a by-product of their adoption of Christianity, its values and the allied practices. Since the urge for change was intrinsic, self-realized and not coercive in nature, it did not affect the Nicobarese adversely and had a positive effect on them.

After the Independence of India, numerous protective programmes and welfare schemes were launched for the Nicobarese. These welfare measures brought change among these indigenes, which they actively negotiated. The government did not impose change or coerced the indigenes to adopt modern culture. Rather, the change was brought gradually through various governmental technologies such as welfare schemes, setting up governmental apparatus, cooperative movements and public infrastructure development: hospitals, schools, police stations and so on (Saini 2015f).

Since 2000, the habitats of the Nicobarese are viewed as one of the most sensitive strategic zones, which led to an exponential increase in defence establishments in the islands. The Nicobar archipelago is also an extremely isolated tribal reserve, where the indigenes live independently with limited exposure to the governmental apparatus and the outer world. Since these islands are scattered and isolated, defence surveillance is difficult without the cooperation of the indigenes. A large number of foreign poachers visit the Nicobar Islands to exploit marine resources. They develop contact with the local people and operate clandestinely.

Such intrusions in these spaces of immense geopolitical value seriously undermine defence maneuvers. The administrative control over the Nicobarese seemed a viable way to check poaching menace and to secure the remote islands. It
is only post the tsunami, when the community virtually lost everything that the government found an opportunity to shape the Nicobarese as a desirable subject. Therefore, the post-tsunami humanitarian interventions were characterised by modernisation and infrastructural development agenda, which was motivated by an overarching and tacit rationality of national security.

As already elaborated in the ‘raison d’état’ section of the last chapter, the post-tsunami socio-cultural change among the Nicobarese is also linked with the strategic significance of the islands. The GoI views the Nicobarese normalization and modernization essential for checking poaching and strengthening surveillance in the islands. Since land in the Nicobar is limited and the traditional livelihood of the community is land intensive, the Nicobarese resist land acquisition. For instance, 317 acres of land on Kamorta Island is disputed, which is being claimed both by the tribal council of Kamorta and the defence. It is only through modernization that the Nicobarese dependency on land-based livelihoods could decrease that would ease the process of land acquisition for defence establishments. The post-tsunami permanent settlement of the Nicobarese in Campbell Bay also seems motivated by this rationality. A decrease in the number of the Nicobarese villages in the tribal reserve has also weakened their claim on their traditional land that could now be used for defence establishment.

The Nicobarese protracted stay in the intermediate shelters, hefty monetary compensations, lack of focus on the traditional livelihoods, the introduction of MGNREGA scheme (culturally insensitive), allotment of shelters (culturally insensitive) and permanent settlement of the Nicobarese at Campbell Bay are the characteristics of the post-tsunami humanitarian intervention in the Nicobar islands. Instead of viewing them as a repercussion of a poorly executed disaster response, these need to be seen as shrewd governmental maneuvers guided by a raison d’état, which is national security. The same raison d’état is also reflected in the analysis of three main issues concerning the survival and well-being of the Nicobarese in the central Nicobar, especially the ‘Navy-Nicobarese land conundrum’ and the ‘Sri-Lankan Tamil Repatriates’.

The strategies and techniques used by the government to execute its agenda are a mix of “sovereignty-discipline-government” triad, discussed in the theoretical framework of this thesis. In the process of making the Nicobarese as a desirable subject, the indigenes have been softly coerced, disciplined and their future actions
have been shaped through a systematic conduction of their conduct. All these maneuvers have drastically ruptured their sociocultural milieu and the repercussions of the post-tsunami interventions such as dependency, alcoholism and adoption of a sedentary lifestyle by the community are a result of a mismatch between the intended and the actual subject formation. As the Nicobarese community seems merely a pawn in a sophisticated and calculated defence game being played in the Indian Ocean, the administrative control on the Nicobarese would increase further and the community might experience more sociocultural change.
Figure 3: Deductive Concept Map

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

Governmentality
Governance of a population Art
of governance' governance at a
distance
Specify: techniques of power
biopower, disciplinary power,
combination
External Gaze
Objectification
Domination of the subject
(contra Marxist approach)
Analysis: focus on practices
that materialize norms

G

Agnostic Relation

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
Analysis: focus on practices that permit
one to know oneself, constitute one’s
own subjectivity via critique

GOVERNMENTALITY

Origin/Implications/Response
Issues concerning the Nicobarese survival

Subject formation/Technologies/Rationality
Post-tsunami sociocultural change

Research Questions/lines of Inquiry

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

Ethnography

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

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

Subject formation/Technologies/Rationality

Post-tsunami sociocultural change

Research Questions/lines of Inquiry
Fig. 4: Inductive Concept Map

Nicobarese post-tsunami sociocultural milieu/Survival Issues

Subject formation
- Acculturated
- Dependent/Fragmented
- Subjugated/disciplined/docile
- Consumerist/sedentary
- Alcoholic/anxious
- Semi-modern, but unsustainable
- Resistant (counter-conducts)

Rationality: Raison d’etat,
National security,
modernisation

Technologies of domination
Humanitarian Aid as an assemblage of strategic-spatial interventions.

FIRST WAVE
- Panoptic-type spatiality (gaze)/heterotopia of deviation
- Protracted stay in the intermediate shelters
- Appointment of the tsunami captains
- Hefty monetary compensation
- Free food/social amenities
- New technology (mobile tsunami)
- Culturally insensitive schooling
- MGNREGA

SECOND WAVE
- Tsunami Shelters as Differentiated space
- Permanent Panopticon-type spatiality

Technologies of self
- Self-hermeneutics
- Internal Gaze
- Self-surveillance
- Self-control
- Self-discipline,
- Self-observation

Post-tsunami sociocultural milieu

1. Geography and Environment
- Accessibility- Improved
- Natural Resources- Inundation/Destroyed

2. Subsistence and Livelihood
- Livelihood/Livestock- Destroyed/Not replenished
- Housing/Construction- Tsunami shelters
- Illness/medicine- New diseases
- Funeral practices/Recreation arts- Changed
- Cooking- New food

3. Social structure
- Settlement Pattern (size of community/spatial distribution/fixed of settlements) – smaller and individual shelters.
- Type of family/household composition- Nuclear
- Ceremonies/Rituals- Changed
- Socioeconomic stratification- Age to monetary based
- Law and order/social behaviour and social relations- Disintegration/change in social norms

4. Political organisation
- Community leadership- Tsunami captains/Weak leadership
- Intra-inter community relations- Strained/distrust and biases

A1

A1a

A1b

A1c

A1b1

X

A2

A2a

A2b

A2c

Land Encroachments in the Central Nicobar
Navy-Nicobarese land conundrum (Kamorta)
Sri-Lankan Tamil repatriates’ Issue (Katchal)

Nicobarese Subjectivity/Identity

Survival Issues

R: #3

1. Location- Changed
2. Accessibility- Improved
3. Natural Resources- Inundation/Destroyed
4. Livelihood/Livestock- Destroyed/Not replenished
5. Housing/Construction- Tsunami shelters
6. Illness/medicine- New diseases
7. Funeral practices/Recreation arts- Changed
8. Cooking- New food
Figure 3 and Figure 4 represent the deductive and inductive conceptualizations of the research. Figure 3 conceptualized the research problem through using various concepts/variables, the interrelations among which are shown by ‘X’, ‘A/F’, ‘B’, ‘C’, ‘D’, ‘E’, ‘G’, H, ‘A1’, ‘A2’. Circle ‘A’ represents the broad research problem: (a) the post-tsunami sociocultural change amongst the southern Nicobarese; (b) the major issues concerning the central Nicobarese. As indicated in the deductive concept map, the research used multiple concepts, research questions, lines of inquiry and analytical framework to understand the governmentality and subjectification amongst the Nicobarese.

In figure 4, the inductive concept map, ‘A1’ and ‘A2’ represent the two research questions of this research: (a) post-tsunami sociocultural change among the Nicobarese in the southern Nicobar; (b) the major issues concerning the Nicobarese in the central Nicobar. ‘A1a’, ‘A1b (A1b1)’ and ‘A1c’ are the three lines of inquiry, which studied the ‘rationality of governance’, the ‘technologies of government’, and the ‘formation of the Nicobarese subjectivities’.

‘A2a’, ‘A2b’ and ‘A2c’ represent the three major issues concerning the central Nicobarese: ‘land encroachments in the central Nicobar; ‘Navy-Nicobarese land conundrum (Kamorta)’; ‘the Sri Lankan Tamil Repatriates’ Issue of Katchal Island’. ‘X’ represents the post-tsunami sociocultural change among the Nicobarese and ‘F’ shows the Nicobarese as the post-tsunami subjects, and also alludes to the raison d'état of the state, which is shown by ‘A1a’.