

CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

Andaman and Nicobar Islands is situated in the Bay of Bengal. The Nicobar archipelago in the Bay of Bengal as well as a part of it in the Indian Ocean is the abode of the Nicobarese a scheduled tribe of India. It is separated by the turbulent ten degree channel from the Andamans and spread over 300 kilometres. The Archipelago comprises nineteen islands namely Car Nicobar, Batti Malv, Chowra, Tillangchong, Teressa, Bompoka, Kamorta, Trinkat, Nancowry, Kachal, Meroe, Trak, Treis, Menchal, Pulo Milo, Little Nicobar, Cobra, Kondul, And Great Nicobar. These geographical names, given by the foreigners, are not used by the indigenous people of the islands. The native names of the islands as well as their dimensions are set out in descending order from north to south.

Of the nineteen islands only twelve are inhabited while seven remain uninhabited. The inhabitants of these twelve, Teressa, Bompoka, Nancowry, Kamorta, Trinkat and Kachal, Great Nicobar, Little islands are divided into five groups again, depending on language differentiation among the Nicobarese living in different islands. Accordingly, the groups are located in Car Nicobar, Chowra Nicobar, Pulo Milo and Kondul Islands.

Broadly the Nicobars can be divided into three groups:

1. Car Nicobar: The Island of Car Nicobar popularly known as Carnic, the headquarters of the Nicobar Islands, is a flat piece of land with an area of 24 sq.kms. It has an airfield which receives a Boeing 737 every Monday from Calcutta, via, Port Blair. In fact, this is the only airlink with the rest of the world.
2. Nancowry group of Islands: These group of Islands, 145 km South of Car Nicobar are the most beautiful islands among the southern group of Islands. Nancowry which lies between Katchal and Trinket has a perfect natural harbour which offers land locked shelter to ships. Telecommunication with the Nancowry group of islands is very poor. The Nancowry group of islands consist of Jhoola, Munak, Ramzoo, Zungur, Liman katagum, Mun, Dindima, Dan, Mohean, Jansin, Hintona, Changua, Itoi, Neang , Trinkat villages.

3. Great Nicobar: Great Nicobar with 865 sq.kms. of area is the largest and the southernmost tip the Pygmalion Point (Indira Point) which also happens to be the southernmost point of the Indian Union- not Kanya kumara- is hardly 145 km north of Achin Head at the northern tip of Sumatra.

The Nicobar Islands are inhabited by only two tribes: The Nicobarese and the Shompens. The Nicobarese unlike the Shompens are the most dominant and advanced. Many of the Nicobarese people have migrated to the Andaman Islands and have excelled in education and have adopted our lifestyle. But few people back there are still firm with the tradition they follow.

The Nicobarese back there in the Islands are dependent on agriculture, mainly coconut plantation. They have a very strong cooperative base. The texture of the Nicobarese social and cultural life is more elaborately woven. Their existence in permanent coastal villages has been made possible by better control over their food resources such as coconut plantation and herds of domestic pigs.

The Nicobarese are a very cohesive group, with a headman known as the Captain in charge of each village. The various village captains constitute the Nicobari Council and one of them is elected as the Chief Captain or RANI if a woman is elected to the post. Women enjoy a very high degree of equality and freedom in the joint families. This includes the freedom to marry a person of their choice within the prescribed norms.

The single most important advancement made by the Nicobarese is in the field of education. Economically, also they have made considerable progress by selling the surplus coconuts and arecanuts for money in the open market. This allows them easy access to a large variety of consumer goods which they use freely. The Nicobarese are one of the most prosperous tribal communities.

Coming to the tradition and the religious beliefs, religion can be considered as the human response to the apprehension of something, or power, which is supernatural and suprasensory. It is the expression of the level of adjustment of the people of any particular society with the supernatural being. Religion and magic are two

ways of tiding over crisis – the sole objective of both the ways being to help man out of difficult situation of life. Malinowski has aptly stated that ‘both magic and religion arise and function in situations of emotional stress: crisis of life, lacunae in important pursuits, death and initiation into tribal mysteries unhappy love and unsatisfied hate.’ Religion and magic are thus unique and universal phenomena in every human society. The Nicobarese are no exception to this. Like many other people, the Nicobarese also believe in supernatural power and thus in the existence of soul, ghost and spirit. They have certain magical beliefs which they follow and practise. One of the practises include sacrificing wild pigs or hunting the animals in wild which is their tradition and they practise it with independence in their area (talking about the typical tribes of that island). This however is a crime according to the Section 9 of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 of the Indian Penal code. This is where Wildlife Forensic comes in act. But since this is practised in the wild by these indigenous tribes it goes un-noticed.

This project “Criminological Aspects of False Beliefs in Nicobari Tribes” deals with the crime these tribes commit unknowingly which goes unnoticed. Many researchers studied these tribes which includes studying about their religion, lifestyle, their habitat and many more but there is no work performed on the topic where the false belief of the tribe is linked with the crime they commit unknowingly. Hence this project works as a bridge between the false belief of the indigenous tribe and the crime they commit unknowingly; which is of forensic significance.

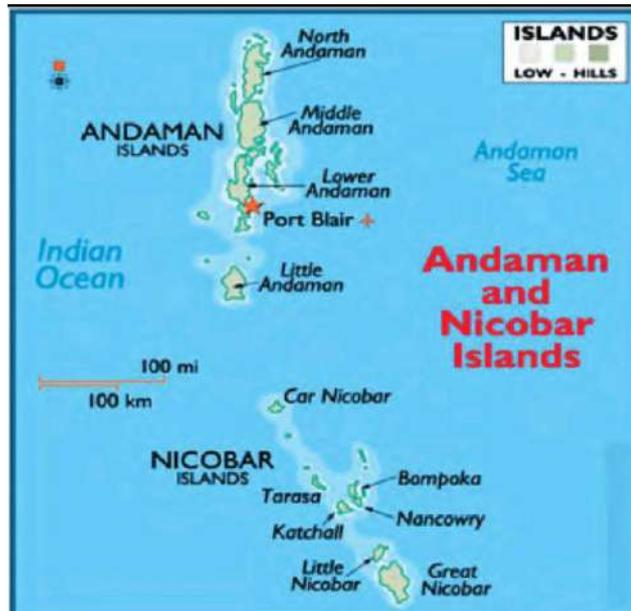


Fig. 1.0:- Map of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.



Fig. 1.1:- Image of Nicobari Tribes



Fig. 1.2:- Nicobari Tradition



Fig. 1.3:- Nicobari Wild Pig

CHAPTER-II

LITERATURE REVIEW

- 2.1 K Vijay (2012), studied about the social organization of the Nicobarese which is marked by unity, fraternity and mutual co-operation. The strong sense of belonging to a community is expressed in their life cycle rituals. They have a deep sense of loyalty which is imbibed through the social network of tuhet. He also studied about various practices one of which includes smearing the pregnant women with the blood of a pig, which keeps both the mother and the unborn baby in good health.
- 2.2 Rabin Roychowdhury (2011) studied about the sequence of migration and settlement in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and explains the development process leading to the formation of a unique island society demonstrating the cultural pot-pouri of the territory.
- 2.3 Pankaj Sekhsaria (2017) studied about the key issues in the Islands and provided an important consolidated account that is relevant both for the present and the future of the beautiful but also very fragile and volatile island chain.
- 2.4 Adam L. Alter, Daniel M. Oppenheimer (2009) studied about Processing fluency, or the subjective experience of ease with which people process information, reliably influences people's judgments across a broad range of social dimensions. Experimenters have manipulated processing fluency using a vast array of techniques, which, despite their diversity, produce remarkably similar judgmental consequences. For example, people similarly judge stimuli that are semantically primed (conceptual fluency), visually clear (perceptual fluency), and phonologically simple (linguistic fluency) as more true than their less fluent counterparts. The authors offer the first comprehensive review of such mechanisms and their implications for judgment and decision making. Because every cognition falls along a continuum from effortless to demanding and generates a corresponding fluency experience, the authors argue that fluency is a ubiquitous metacognitive cue in reasoning and social judgment.

2.5 Virginius Xaxa (1999) studied about the transformation of tribe into a caste or religion or just another socially stratified group, or the merger of the tribe in the peasantry. Questioning the assumption of loss of tribal identity, he studied tribes not as communities in their own rights but in terms of affinity and non-affinity with mainstream communities.

CHAPTER -III

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim:

To study about the false beliefs of the Nicobarese and the crimes they commit on this aspect.

Objectives:

- To study the false beliefs of the Nicobari tribes.
- To analyse the criminological aspects.

CHAPTER -IV

METHODOLOGY

Visited the Nancowry Islands and interacted with the people of the Tundu Wada village. They shared information regarding their age old beliefs in the existence of soul, ghost and spirit. The Nicobarese believe that it is the ancestral power and spirits which govern the village.

4.1.BELIEFS:

According to them 'ghost is nothing but a shadow'. There are ghosts in and all around the island. When someone dies he or she becomes a ghost. Alike human beings, the ghosts have sexual division too. Sometimes they appear in dream in disguise of human being, in the form of Cloth, Pig, Dog and also in many other forms. They can take the shape of anything they like in the world.

According to the beliefs there are two kinds of ghost 'Malevolent Ghost' and the 'Benevolent Ghost'. The Malevolent Ghost is a vengeful spirit of a dead person who returns from the afterlife to seek revenge for a cruel, unnatural or unjust death. The Benevolent ghost is a friendly spirit. They believe firmly in the Malevolent Ghost.

According to the people, when a dead person is dreamt of, illness is a must. If anybody dreams about them, or if they see them, they believe the person will become ill very soon. The Malevolent Ghost appears only when the person does anything wrong and either makes them scared or cause some severe illness. Sometimes the ghost becomes so angry that it ultimately takes the life of the person. They added, this has been happening since ages and they believe in the ancestral spirit.

a) Case Study no.1:

The villagers spoke about the death of a tribe years before.

A few years back there lived a tribe in the Tundu Wada village. He was quite a rebellious person who always used to stand against the decision of the Head of the village (Captain). He used to fight with his fellow tribes as well. He had quite a bad nature and many people disliked him.

One fine day the man went missing. His family members were worried and they informed the Captain. People started searching for him. Finally they found him in the jungle.

The man died a very horrible death. He was found in a condition where his head was beheaded. The villagers, when they saw this got very scared. They just buried the person's body and head separately. They believed that the malevolent ghost was so angry that it took the life of that person. They stopped talking with the family members assuming that the malevolent ghost is very angry with the household and if they talk with any of his family members they would end up dying as well.

b) Case Study no.2 :

They shared another story of the death of another tribe of their village.

The tribe was a very good person and this made his relatives quite jealous of him. One fine day, the man started vomiting continuously. His wife was very worried. After a day the man started developing stomach cramps, pain in the joints and continuous burning of the throat. This went on few days and eventually he died.

The fellow tribe members got scared of this sudden death. They believed that the person must have committed very serious sin which made the spirit angry to take away his life so badly.

4.2. LAW PRACTICES:

They shared about their law practices. They said, earlier, the persons found guilty of serious offences in their land were often executed. A tribe named Patungsu of Tapoiming village pleaded for the abolition of this practice. He suggested that a certain number of wild pigs and domestic pigs belonging to the offender be killed and portions of meat distributed to the villagers. He believed by doing so, the sins of the offender or the crime he committed would be taken by the wild pig they sacrifice. In this way there is no loss of life and the spirits are pleased as well. This would also caution the other villagers to abstain from indulging in any criminal act.

The people of the village were not entirely satisfied with this proposal. It was proposed by them that attempts should be made in addition to foster a spirit of brotherhood and friendship amongst people of different villages so as to minimise crime and to please the god they worship; which are the spirits. It was further suggested that wild pigs should be offered to friends at feasts so as to develop more personal relationships. The proposal was accepted. And the practise still continues.

4.3. FESTIVALS AND THE ROLE OF WILD PIGS:

They spoke about their famous festival of remembering the dead. These days they aren't practising it, but earlier they used to do so with greater enthusiasm. Certain villages host the festival and invites the tribes from the neighbouring villages. Each family of the host village kills a minimum of 15 wild and domestic pigs apart from pigs which are given as presents to the invitees. During the festival the pigs are normally killed and enjoyed as meal. Also, during the festival they dig up the grave and take the Fat from the Pigs that are killed and use it for lighting the Elpanam and the graveyard. They then dig the grave up and take out the skeleton which has no flesh clinging to it, keep it on a chair and celebrate the festival.

4.4. HUNTING:

Speaking about the hunting, it is their favourite past time. The hunters, mostly the young boys between the age group of 18 to 30 years go for hunting. They accompany the dogs with them which are bathed before accompanying them for hunting. The dogs are made to go round a place clockwise where numerous hunted pigs were burnt before. They hunt the Wild Pigs in the wild and return back victoriously. They then cook the meat of the wild pig and consume it. They feed the meat to their dogs as well which accompanied them for hunting. However the bones of the hunted pigs are not given to the domesticated dogs but thrown in a basket at the time of eating the meat. These bones are burnt thereafter in a particular place at the end of the settlement. They believe that if the bones of these pigs are eaten by the dogs, they will lose their confidence in Pig Hunt.

4.5. SACRIFICES:

The villagers said that in all the rituals they practise they sacrifice the pig ,mostly the Wild pigs, and one leg of that sacrificed pig is taken by the witch doctor. Meat which is offered to a spirit as offerings are left to decay or thrown away and not taken by anyone.

On further questioning about the fact that why they prefer sacrificing mainly the wild pigs to this extend they answered, “The only way to satisfy the ancestral spirits after every ritual is by sacrificing the Wild Pig, or else who will bear the consequences of the anger of the spirit? Hence we sacrifice the Pigs.”

4.6. SUPERSTITION AND MURDER:

The villagers told a story of a miraculous saving of a girl child. They said it is a real incident. A few years back, very few people stayed in the area they are residing and it used to be a very lonely and eerie spot. There lived two men in that area whose name were Asungi- Tosung and Yanalo.

Ten years back, they said, the land was covered with tall grass. There were no other coconut trees. There was no stream and no wells. Water was not available

except the vast sea surrounding the island. On account of absence of water people died of thirst.

Now, Asungi-Tosung could perform certain strange feats. He could, for instance, take fresh water out of his elbow and in that way he used to quench his thirst. However, his friend was not aware of this fact.

One morning, these two friends wanted to clear the thick grass which grew around their hut. Before starting the work, they wanted to sharpen their long knives with the help of a grindstone. For that purpose water was to be used. Yanalo was worried. "I will get it", replied Asungi Tosung. He hid himself behind a bush, taking care not to allow his secret to be known by his friend. He then returned with a cup of water. Then they started sharpening their knives. After finishing this task Yanalo enquired from Asungi-Tosung the source of the water. But Asungi refused to divulge his secret. Yanalo asked again and again but in vain. He became very angry. He raised his knife and in one stroke chopped off the head of his friend.

Yanalo took the dead body of his friend and buried it. But he did not bury the head. Instead he kept it in his hut. Although the head was separated from the body it still spoke to Yanalo. It asked him to bury the head as well and it would be fruitful in the coming years. Yanalo got scared and he buried it as well, believing some hope of life would come out from the land. Within a month, a young tree grew out of the land. Yanalo felt lonely and so he went to the east coast and resided there. Later on, he got married and had one daughter. After six years of his stay away from Elkahoyo, he wanted to go back there. He took his wife and his daughter and returned to Elkahoyo.

The new place was not suitable for the young girl. She fell ill seriously. She felt thirsty. At a distance, there stood a strange tree bearing nice fruits which appeared to be full of water. He plucked the nuts, cut them open and found plenty of water inside. He tasted it and it almost tasted like blood. He gave it to his daughter to somehow quench her thirst.

Miraculously the child survived from her illness. To Yanalo's surprise the nut resembled a human skull and his belief of burying his friend's skull to find something hopeful was finally successful.

According to the villagers, the death of Asungi-Tosung made the place fruitful and the blood in the soil pleased the spirits, which brought a sudden increase of coconut in their islands and made them to settle with prosperity.

According to them, for any good thing to happen in the land a sacrifice is made to please the spirits. They said, as in the story, the killing of Asungi by his friend, though out of anger, pleased the spirits and the blood satisfied them.

CHAPTER - V

DISCUSSION

5.1. DISCUSSION BASED ON METHODOLOGY:

The first thing the old lady discussed about was a clear cut murder case. Even though it's their belief that the ghost killed the man, but scientifically it isn't true. The existence of the supernatural energies and power is not well accepted by Science. This is what might have happened, some random person committed the crime because of the rebellious nature of the man and killed him. And he escaped easily because of the false belief of the tribes on the spirit.

This is how the crime is committed but because of the belief of the tribe it just goes unnoticed.

The second thing she discussed were the symptoms of the Solanine poisoning. The person might have poisoned to death by the fellow tribe who had knowledge of the medicinal properties of the herb. Hence he might have poisoned the other person and he just escapes because the belief the villagers had on the supernatural powers.

The people thought the nature and the behaviour of the man was quite offensive which made the spirit angry whereas on the other hand the entire scenario had a different reason which just went unnoticed.

The third thing she discussed was a belief of man who thought the sacrifice of the Wild pigs instead of the person who committed crime would save the culprit from death and in turn would also please the spirit to forgive the man of his crime.

But this is clearly a crime according to the Wildlife Protection Act where killing of scheduled animals are punishable. And the Wild Pigs are the scheduled animals and it is a crime to kill them.

Since it is practised by the Indigenous tribe in the wild who has no knowledge about the law this just goes unnoticed.

Speaking about their famous festival of remembering the dead, she mentioned about the killing of 15 wild and domestic pigs which they gift as presents to the invitees and also using the Fat of Pigs for lighting the graveyard. This is a clear cut crime since they kill the animals for honour and out of enthusiasm but this just goes unnoticed in the midst of the enjoyment and celebration. This also doesn't come as crime since it's a community festival and all are involved in it.

The tribes don't know much about the laws and they consider sacrificing pigs and any other animal as a part of their religious belief.

She further says that they go for hunting and adds it's their favourite past time. They mostly hunt wild pigs. Now, wild pigs are declared WILD under SCHEDULE III of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act 1972 (which was later amended in 1993). The animals listed under this schedule are protected and their hunting attracts penalties and punishments.

This is how they still practice hunting and this just goes unnoticed because they live in the wild.

They also believe in sacrificing the wild pigs as a means of impressing the spirits after every ritual, so that the spirit is pleased with them. This however is a superstition, and by following this they are keeping the life of the wild animals in stake.

The last story she mentioned was about how the murder of a person made the place fruitful. According to them the blood is needed to please the spirit and to bless them with good yield and health. Hence by the killing of Asungi-Tosung, the spirits were pleased by the blood and this led to the good yield of coconuts in the barren land and made them prosper.

5.2. DISCUSSION ON HOW TO REDUCE CRIME AMONG THE TRIBES:

The crime among these tribes can only be reduced by changing their mentality. They must be taught what is the difference between belief and false belief. They must know what harms they are causing to the nature as well as themselves in the name of superstition. They must be given proper education by their Captains and they should be taught to inform any death among them to the Captain so that he checks out the reason of the death of the person rather than jumping into the conclusion that the spirit might have taken the life.

In this way the crime might reduce to some extent and the activities of the tribes will be in a proper check.

CONCLUSION

There are various works already done on Nicobari tribes, like the study about their behaviour, beliefs, tradition, language, locality, economic condition and health condition. But there is no work done which relates their beliefs with the crime they might have done unknowingly.

This project mainly focussed on giving the report of the beliefs of the Nicobari tribes and acting as a bridge in connecting it with the possible crimes. This project would hence help the future researchers in understanding the false beliefs of the Nicobari tribes and linking it with the crime they commit unknowingly.

5.3. Curbing superstition among Tribals:

- Speaking of the Nicobari tribes they have well educated Captains and they know the local language as well. In order to curb the superstitious belief, the Captains should be made the main focus. The Captains must cooperate and preach that even though they did not follow superstitions, they turned out pretty well and established. The people will surely listen to their leaders and a wave of change can be seen.
- Campaigning:- Motivate and teach the tribal people what kind of drawbacks they are facing because of their superstitious beliefs. Campaigning must be done among them and there must be widespread among the tribal group.
- Education system:- Proper education must be implemented. Subjects like science, social science must be included and taught to the younger tribal generation. The local beliefs and their practices must be included as a foundational course and taught to the children. Proper knowledge of their false beliefs, and the drawbacks they face due to this must be taught among the younger generation.
- Tourism:- Tourism must be encouraged so that people with different culture and beliefs meet them and share their way of living.
- Media:- Media is a powerful weapon. A lot of knowledge can be spread through media and hence a way of change can be seen.

5.4. Forensic Science as an element in reducing the crime:

Tribal people must be taught that whenever some death or unusual thing happens they must inform the police. Proper police involvement is needed. Collection of evidences from the scene of crime must be done with care and the case must be analyzed with utter sincerity. In this way the police can keep a check on the activities of the tribal community and the crime can be reduced to certain extent. This is how Forensic Science acts as an element in reducing the crime.

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