

Punam Tripathi, *The Vulnerable Andaman and Nicobar Islands: A study of Disasters and Response* (New Delhi: Routledge India, South Asian Edition, 2018), Rs. 1495, Pages 354, Hbk, (ISBN 1138323551).

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Andaman and Nicobar Island is one of the Indian territories that is known for its natural scenic beauty in terms of its diverse forests cover, the azure sea, white beaches and rich biodiversity. It is one of the most important tourist destinations today. The presence of colonial architecture further adds advantage to the island which makes it more attractive destination for both domestic and international tourist in the region. It is the island inhabited by six aboriginal tribes who were later brought into contact with the population from the mainland India after Independence.

The Island though today presents a glorious picture of its abundant natural resources and rich diversity of flora and fauna however have a bitter history when it is seen in terms of disaster. The tribal population of the region have witnessed multiple forms of disaster which were more of anthropogenic in nature rather than the natural disaster. The author has well documented the human induced disaster in relation to its history in different episodes or phases. Keeping the tribal inhabitants at the centre of the study, the work presents the nature of vulnerability that the tribal population were exposed in three different stages.

The book follows unique orientations of its chapters with first two chapters dedicated on general introduction of Andaman and Nicobar Island and its geographical aspects and introduces different episodes

of disasters in different time periods. It slowly touches the other crucial aspects of vulnerability and various stages of responses and threats to the tribal population. It then critically analyzes the causes of failure of different responses from the concerned authorities. Hence, the chapters interestingly justify the whole idea of the book along with its contents.

Three different phases that brought about the vulnerability among the aboriginals were the Syphilis epidemic of late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, World War II of 1942 to 1945 and the Tsunami of 2004. All three disasters that have been taken into account were of different magnitude, time period, distribution and intensity of damages. For instance the Syphilis epidemic that existed for around 30 years wiped around 90 percent of tribal population from the region. Roughly 7000 tribal inhabitants lost their lives due to the epidemics. The Britishers invaded their homelands and started keeping them in confinements which made them more vulnerable due to exploitation. There were several stages of confrontation between the tribal and the Britishers in different phases. However, they could succeed in taming them in their own homeland and in no time these groups of the population were exploited for domestic and non domestic activities. It was evident that the Tribal population were not treated well by their colonial masters due to which they could not thrive in their own environment.

World War II was another event that made the tribal of Andaman more vulnerable. The A&N Island was captured by the Japanese forces in 1942 with various other island regions including Burma, Malaysia, Singapore and Rangoon. The British forces fled to the mainland India leaving the tribal population in their Island. Even the Car Nicobar Island was captured in 1943 by the Japanese troops. There were continuous war, air raids, submarine attacks, injuries and killings. All the means of transportation, communication and industrial resources which were used by the enemy was destroyed. The Island was not self sufficient in terms of food grains and other essential means of living including clothes, medicines, equipments, tools and other household items. All the supply of all these essential items were cut off during the War due to which,

A&N faced famine. This phase was indeed a phase of massive disaster. The Britishers further defeated the Japanese forces in 1945 and took charge over the Island. They distributed civil supplies and medicines in the Island. Port Blair and Car Nicobar were the two most affected areas and much of the investment was made in rebuilding these two places that later turned to be the hub of growth and development.

Earthquake measuring Mw 9.3 on Richter scale that hit the Island on 26<sup>th</sup> December, 2004 and within no time the Island was engulfed by Tsunami. Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, Thailand, Maldives and other countries were severely affected by it. Altogether 100000 people were killed by Tsunami that affected 14 countries. In India total number of person killed was 12,405 and nearly 2.8 million people were affected. Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Union Territories of Pondicherry and A & N Island were mostly affected. In A&N itself the official figure of total killed by Tsunami was 3513 person. However, the actual deaths were much higher than the official figures. There were several forms of damages that were seen other than the ones that were killed. Forest Destruction, Impact on Coral reefs, effect on agriculture, fishing, livestock, tourism, small and micro industrial units, Infrastructure, communication networks, transport services, damages on houses were severe by the Tsunami. People lost their livelihoods along with the loss of resources.

The book presents not only the disaster and its impact on the population but also reflects the nature of responses to it. Different disasters that had unfolded in different times with different intensity were seen from the nature of responses and the failure of the system keeping in mind the vulnerability aspects of it has been clearly shown. The way the authority had taken disaster for granted without adequate concern for vulnerability in their poor responses further added greater degree of threats to the lives of the tribal population.

The author has well presented her work with great articulation. Extensive data have been used in all the aspects to show the real damages, figures and maps have been extensively used keeping in mind the

intensity of disaster in different time period. The most interesting part of the book is the way it has been organized in different episodes and the assessment of vulnerability of the population in different forms of disaster. The book itself is very informative as it provides the overall picture on history and nature of disaster that had unfolded in A&N Island keeping the vulnerability aspects of its population into account. The book has covered multiple dimensions of disaster that the A&N Island has witnessed and the intensity of its effects on the tribal as well as non tribal inhabitants of the region. This book is a great treatise for the academicians of different disciplines ranging from Geography, History, and Disaster Management to Tourism. It's indeed a great contribution from the author for the future researchers in the region due to its in depth information and excellent articulation of thoughts.