

Traditional medicine of the *Nicobarese*

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Medical beliefs and practices play an important role in every culture. All cultures have a set of ideas for defining and treating disease and ways of prescribing cures. The paper deals with the traditional system of medicine prevalent among the *Nicobarese* of Car Nicobar Island. The aim of the study was to cover all the aspects related to their traditional system which includes their traditional beliefs and practices regarding health and sickness, home remedies, magico-religious treatment and plant folk medicine. Although Tsunami has caused total destruction of the medical infrastructure, tremendous loss to the villages many of which are almost washed away, but this vast knowledge of ethnomedicine certainly is a most valuable thing to treasure before it gets lost with the passage of time.

Keywords: Traditional medicine, Ethnomedicine, *Nicobarese*, Car Nicobar Island

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Medicine has been practiced one way or another since man became a cultural animal. Health is of universal interest and concern¹. Health status of different communities particularly the tribal groups is influenced by their way of life including their social and economic conditions, nutrition and living conditions, dietary habits, housing, education, child rearing practices, socio-religious beliefs, taboos and superstitions, etc. The set of medicines consists of these cultural practices, methods, techniques and substances, embedded in a matrix of values, traditions, beliefs and patterns of ecological adaptation, that provide the mean for maintaining health and preventing or ameliorating disease and injury in its members². Ethnomedicine refers to those beliefs and practices relating to disease which are the products of indigenous cultural development; and are not explicitly derived from the conceptual frame work of modern medicine³. Ethnomedicine also refers to the study of traditional medical practice. Traditional medicine include all kinds of folk medicine, unconventional, medicine and indeed any kind of therapeutic method that had been handed down by the tradition of community or ethnic group⁴. As tribal communities are insulated from the impact of wider world, there is every probability that it would have its own medical system. But in the contemporary world,

tribal societies are giving way to the outside world, and other medical systems. It may not be possible to find a community thriving on its own medical system with no impact of the modern medicine. There has been a wide spread of modern medical system but at the same time, indigenous system co-exist with deep rooted belief in curing and giving possible explanation behind the cause of disease and illness. The study deals with the ethnomedicine of the *Nicobarese* of Car Nicobar Island. People of the archipelago have been endowed with many natural blessing in terms of health, congenial tropical climate, soil for rich plant growth and herbal drugs. There are reports on indigenous people of Car Nicobar on various aspects of their life culture and environment⁵⁻¹⁴. In spite of so much interest in the island, the studies on the ethnomedicine are quite few. At Car Nicobar, the studies related to ethnomedicine are limited to plant folk medicine only, which reveals only single aspect^{15,16}. The aim of the study was to collect empirical data on the entire traditional system of medicine of the *Nicobarese* of Car Nicobar.

Andaman & Nicobar Islands is a Union Territory consisting of 293 islands (of which 39 are inhabited) situated in the Bay of Bengal and lying in an arched string stretching between 6° and 14° North latitude and 92° and 94° East longitude. Its administrative headquarter is Port Blair. The Union Territory

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consists of two districts, Andaman and Nicobar. The head quarter of Nicobar district is Car Nicobar (study area), which is the most northerly island of the group and is 228.8 km from Port Blair and about 120 Km 10° Channel, which separates it from little Andaman. Car Nicobar stretches between 9°00' and 9°20'N latitude and 92°30' and 92°50' E longitude and has an area of 126.90 sq km. The people of Car Nicobar have adopted a form of Roman script for their language, called the Car Nicobarese script, is an Austro-Asiatic sub family language like Munda and Mon-Khmer languages once widespread in Burma and Malaysia¹⁷. The Nicobarese have yellow brown skin, straight coarse hair, scanty beard and body hair, thick lips, oblique and Mongoloid type eyes, internal epicanthic fold, receding type of chin, well marked cheekbone, shovel-shaped incisors and and of short stature. In general, with their attenuated Mongoloid characters, the Nicobarese show resemblances more towards the Indonesian – Malays than to the classical Mongoloids farther North in the main land of Asia. It appears that the people of Car Nicobar are racially closer to the Proto-Malays, while the people to their South are closer to the Deutero Malays¹¹.

Methodology

The fieldwork was conducted during November and December 2000. A sample of 300 individuals was selected which included both males and females. The respondents were selected from four villages out of fifteen villages which represented the entire tribe as the life style, traditions and customs were almost the same in all the villages. The four villages selected were Big Lapathy (Jayanthi) Mus, Small Lapathy, and Kinmai. The data was collected by both the primary as well as secondary sources followed by interviews. Along with it, several elderly tribal men and women, local witch doctors (*tamiluono* or *totorong*), priests and other related people were also interviewed (Fig. 2). Traditional doctors were accompanied to interior forests to identify and collect the medicinal plants. Enquiries regarding the Nicobarese names of plants with their uses and methods of use were recorded. Besides interview, observation technique was also used. Besides these, some case studies were also recorded, relevant photographs were taken, and field notes were prepared. Among the Car Nicobarese, there was a universal belief in evil spirits. In this context, they worship and appease only those supernatural powers which can do some harm to

them. Along with it, they believe in sorcery and evil eye also. There were many superstitions and taboos in Car Nicobar related to their traditional beliefs and practices pertaining to health and sickness.

Results

Traditional system of medicine was studied under home remedies, magico-religious treatment, and treatment based on plant folk medicine. The practice of self treatment was prevalent there. They took self treatment for common cough, cold, fever, cut, burn, stomachache, body pain and other simple ailments (Table 1). Some of the self treatments used by Nicobarese of Car Nicobar include leaves of fuk (*Sterculia rubiginosa*) used in cough; leaves of lurong (*Morinda citrifolia*) used in stomachache, cuts, wounds, body pain and fever. Leaves of mu-pet (*Ephorbia hirta*) used in cuts and wounds; leaves of bitter gourd (*Momordica charantia*) used in stomachache. Leaves of *likup* (*Ocimum sanctum*) in cold and cough; leaves of banana (*Musa paradisiaca*) mixed with *tari* (local preparation of alcohol made from coconut) used in fever. The mixture is taken orally and applied on the body also. Blood of hen mixed with grinded raw coconut (*Cocos nucifera*) is used in asthma; silver wires (traditional jewellery) are tied in headache, arm ache and leg ache (Fig. 1). The magico-religious treatment is very much prevalent among the people of Car Nicobar. Mostly in case of those diseases, for which they assign that supernatural causes are responsible, they go for magico-religious treatment. Magico-religious treatment among them could be observed by treatment by Witch Doctors (*Tamiluonos*); treatment by the doing prayers from fathers of Churches; and treatment by Muslim priest or *maulvi*. In Car Nicobar, the witch doctors are called *tamiluono* or *totorong*, who possess the power to recognize evil spirits control and drive them away.

Israil who lived in mus village of Car Nicobar and Ivy in the village Kinmai were two very well known and famous *tamiluounos* of Car Nicobar at the time of study. Leaves of *Huyua*, a medicinal plant were ground and mixed with cosmetic powder and red wild flowers. The *tamiluono* and other relatives of the patient go to the forest interior to call and entice back the spirit of the sick. After *huyua* was mixed with coconut oil and applied, the sick man gained normal health thereafter. Ivy, another *tamiluono*, who specialized in magico-religious treatment, had very good and vast knowledge of local herbs used them to

Table 1—Plants used by Nicobarese of Car Nicobar in folk medicine—*Contd.*

Ailments	Plant / Local name (s)	Family	Uses
Allergy	<i>Phyllanthus amarus</i> Schum & Thonn. <i>kin-fil-ha- yööm</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaves mashed and mixed with coconut oil are smeared on body.
	<i>Phyllanthus fraternus</i> Webster. <i>kin-fil-ha- yööm</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaves mashed and mixed with coconut oil are smeared on body.
Anti-abortion	<i>Ardisia solanacea</i> Roxb. <i>min-küön</i>	Myrsinaceae	Mashed leaves are tied in cloth which is dipped in boiling water; leaf decoction is given to women with complaints of frequent abortion.
Anti-emetic	<i>Macaranga indica</i> Wight. <i>kin-rul</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaves are slightly warmed, squeezed in water and drunk. Also taken, when pork is eaten as it causes vomiting sensation.
	<i>Phyllanthus emblica</i> L. <i>küpū-u-töh</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Pounded leaves are used against vomiting.
Blisters and sores	<i>Plumeria rubra</i> L. <i>tayuk saka</i>	Apocynaceae	Latex is applied directly on blisters and sores.
Body pain	<i>Breynia retusa</i> (Densst.) Alston. <i>fa-nöt-pi- tēong</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Macerated leaf juice is taken for body pain.
	<i>Drynaria quercifolia</i> L. <i>ranok, hinlo, kumla</i>	Poszpodiaceae	Plant mashed and boiled with coconut oil is smeared on body to relieve pain.
	<i>Phyllanthus amarus</i> Schum. & Thonn. <i>kin-fil-ha-yööm</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaves of all these three plants are rubbed to relieve pain over entire body.
	<i>Carcharus aestuans</i> L. <i>pan-rāv</i>	Tiliaceae	
	<i>Tylophora indica</i> (Burm.f.) Merr. <i>milahan</i>	Asclepiad-aceae	
Bodyache during fever	<i>Cassia occidentis</i> L. <i>mā-roh-ah</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	Leaves of all plants are pounded in coconut oil and rubbed on body to decrease pain during fever.
	<i>Datura metel</i> L. <i>kāta hul</i>	Solanaceae	
	<i>Solanum nigrum</i> L. <i>tōla-a-rah</i>	Solanaceae	
	<i>Morinda citrifolia</i> L. <i>lū-rōng</i>	Rubiaceae	Leaf paste in coconut oil is massaged on the body for relieving pain during fever.
	<i>Tylophora tenuis</i> BL.	Asclepiadaceae	
Boils and Sores	<i>Phyllanthus amarus</i> Schum. & Thonn. <i>kin-fil-ha-yööm</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaf paste mixed with water is taken. Plant extract & plant decoction are used. Plant bark paste is applied on sores.
	<i>Phyllanthus fraternus</i> Webster <i>kin-fil-ha-yööm</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaf paste mixed with water is taken. Plant extract & plant decoction are used. Plant bark paste is applied on sores.
Cholera	<i>Punica granatum</i> L.	Punicaceae	Decoction of leaves and fruits are administered as an anti-dysenteric and anti-emetic in cholera.
Conjunctivitis and eye abrasians	<i>Ageratum conzyoides</i> L. <i>sō-pāk-rē or tö-pi-nyöm</i>	Asteraceae	Leaf extract is used as eye drop.
	<i>Argemone mexicana</i> L.	Papaveraceae	For treating conjunctivitis, yellow latex of tender shoots is used as eye drops.
	<i>Cupania jackiana</i> Heirn. <i>tōng-kal</i>	Sapindaceae	Leaf juice is used as eye drops in injured eyes.
	<i>Globba marantina</i> L.	Zingiberaceae	Aqueous extract of leaves is used as eye drops against severe conjunctivitis.
	<i>Passiflora foetida</i> L. <i>kin-val</i>	Passifloraceae	Leaf juice mixed in equal amount of water is used to treat conjunctivitis.
Constipation	<i>Samanea saman</i> Merr. <i>töö-nö-ka</i>	Mimosaceae	To treat conjunctivitis, aqueous extract of green leaves is used.
	<i>Acalypha indica</i> L. <i>kul-ching</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Aqueous extract of tender leaves is administered as mild purgative.
	<i>Cucumis Callosus</i> (Roltler) Cogn.	Cucurbitaceae	Unripe fruit is crushed and mixed in water and a pinch of mine salt is administered for constipation.

Contd.

Table 1—Plants used by Nicobarese of Car Nicobar in folk medicine—*Contd.*

Ailments	Plant / Local name (s)	Family	Uses
Cough and bronchial complaints	<i>Physalis minima</i> L. <i>talā-rah</i>	Solanaceae	Aqueous extract of leaves is taken against constipation.
	<i>Sterculia rubiginosa</i> Vent. <i>fuk</i>	Sterculiaceae	Leaf decoction is taken for cough and asthma.
	<i>Triumfetta rhomboidea</i> Jacq.	Tiliaceae	Leaves of <i>T. rhomboidea</i> mashed with <i>Zingiber officinale</i> rhizome, lemon juice, and fried in coconut oil are taken.
	<i>Zingiber officinale</i> Rosc. <i>Triumfetta repens</i> (Bl.) Merr. & Rolfe.	Zingiberaceae Tiliaceae	Root decoction is taken for the treatment of cough.
Cuts and Wounds	<i>Callicarpa longifolia</i> Lam. <i>Kin-vi-tai</i>	Verbenaceae	Leaf paste of both the plants boiled in coconut oil is applied on severe cuts and wounds followed by sea bath.
	<i>Leea indica</i> Merr. <i>tō-ki-ti-nyu</i>	Lecaceae	
	<i>Chromolaena odorata</i> (L.) King & Rebinson. <i>u-rë ha-un</i>	Asteraceae	Calcium Carbonate powder and leaves are rubbed between hands and applied on cuts and wounds.
	<i>c-Claoxylon indicum</i> Hassk <i>sing-ke-ra</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaf paste is applied on cuts and wounds.
	<i>d-Euphorbia atoto</i> Forst.f. <i>mu pet</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaf paste boiled in paraffin wax is applied on old cuts and wounds.
	<i>e-Euphorbia hirta</i> L. <i>mu-pet</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaves boiled in coconut oil is applied on wounds.
	<i>Morinda Citrifolia</i> L. <i>lū-rōng</i>	Rubiaceae	Leaf extract is applied for blood clotting.
Dental problems	<i>Cocos nucifera</i> L. <i>octa</i>	Arecaceae	Decoction of coconut fruit pericarp and <i>Adenostemma</i>
	<i>Adenostemma lavenia</i> (L) Kuntze. <i>mi-töp</i>	Asteraceae	<i>lavenia</i> leaves is gargled to treat severe toothache.
Diarrhoea, dysentery	<i>Casearia grewiaefolia</i> Vent. <i>kil tūōng</i>	Flacourtiaceae	For the treatment of dysentery, crushed leaves of both the plants are taken in water.
	<i>Tamarindus indica</i> L. <i>Peperomia pellucida</i> H.B.K. <i>völ-tök</i>	Caesalpiniaceae Piperaceae	Juice is administered orally in diarrhoea and dysentery.
	<i>Phyllanthus amarus</i> Schum & Thonn <i>kin-fil-ha-yööm</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Plant decoction is used.
	<i>Phyllanthus fraternus</i> Webster <i>kin-fil-ha-yööm</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Plant decoction is used.
	<i>e-Plumeria rubra</i> L. <i>tayuk-saka</i>	Apocynaceae	Bark decoction is taken to kill intestinal worms
	<i>Trichosanthes bracteata</i> (Lam) Voigt. <i>ku-la-cha- ul</i>	Cucurbitaceae	Tender leaf extract is given in inflammation of bowel with severe evacuation of blood and mucus.
	<i>g-Tabernaemontana crispa</i> Roxb. <i>tö-ku-rö-tōng</i>	Apocynaceae	Fruit is taken in dysentery.
Ear pain	<i>Ricinus Communis</i> L. <i>sā-mak-löi</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaf extract with sea water is dropped in ear to ease ear pain.
Fatigue	<i>Bruguiera gymnorrhiza</i> Lam. <i>ta-föö-to</i>	Rhizophoraceae	Pounded twig tips of <i>Bruguiera gymnorrhiza</i> , leaves of <i>Ocimum sanctum</i> and coconut oil is rubbed on body for tiredness after hard physical work.
	<i>Ocimum Sanctum</i> L. <i>li-köp</i>	Lamiaceae	
	<i>Pandanus leram</i> Jones <i>keori</i>	Pandanaceae	Tender leaves are pounded with coconut oil and rubbed on body to remove fatigue.
Fever	<i>Aerva lanata</i> Juss. <i>kamā-ha-la</i>	Amaranthaceae	Leaf decoction is drunk & leaf paste is smeared on the body.
	<i>Breyria retusa</i> (Densst.) Alston. <i>fa-nöt-pi-tëōng</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaves of both the plants are pounded in coconut oil and rubbed on the body to drive off fever.
	<i>Cassia occidentalis</i> L. <i>ma-roh-ah</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	

Contd.

Table 1—Plants used by Nicobarese of Car Nicobar in folk medicine—*Contd.*

Ailments	Plant / Local name (s)	Family	Uses	
Fracture of bones	<i>Dendrobium Crumenatum</i> Sw. <i>mān-anch</i>	Orchidaceae	Pounded leaves are boiled in coconut oil and rubbed on body as febrifuge.	
	<i>Alstonia macrophylla</i> Roxb. <i>ta-chō-rōi</i>	Apocynaceae	Root bark is pounded slightly with turmeric powder and tied tightly on fractured bone(s).	
	<i>Annona reticulata</i> L. <i>olka</i>	Annonaceae	Pounded leaves of both the plants are tied on dislocated or fractured bone(s)	
	<i>Clerodendrum inerme</i> (L.) Gaertn. <i>mā-nyyō</i>	Verbenaceae		
	<i>Barringtonia asiatica</i> L. <i>tufil</i>	Borringtoniaceae	Leaf paste mixed with coconut oil is smeared on body.	
	<i>Calophyllum inophyllum</i> L. <i>in-yānng</i>	Clusiaceae	Pounded leaves of both the plants mixed in coconut oil and sea water are tied on fractured bone(s) as plaster.	
	<i>Piper betle</i> L. <i>humō</i>	Piperaceae		
	<i>Ficus ampelas</i> Burm. <i>chōrhi</i>	Moraceae	Mashed leaves of all plants boiled in coconut oil and pig fat is attached by a bandage to fractured part.	
	<i>Morinda Citrifolia</i> L. <i>lu-ròng</i>	Rubiaceae		
	<i>Colubrina asiatica</i> Brongn. <i>inmay</i>	Rhamnaceae		
	<i>Plumeria rubra</i> L. <i>tayuk saka</i>	Apocynaceae	Leaf juice is applied on fractured part.	
	Gonorrhoea	<i>Phyllanthus amarus</i> Schum & Thonn. <i>kin-fil-ha-yōōm</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Plants decoction is used.
		<i>Phyllanthus fraternus</i> Webster. <i>kin-fil-ha- yōōm</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Plant decoction is used.
Gynaecological disorders	<i>Ochrosia oppositifolia</i> K. Schum. <i>ma-tāk</i>	Apocynaceae	Mixture of equal quantities of leaf extract of both the plants is taken by women.	
	<i>Colubrina asiatica</i> Brongn. <i>inmay</i>	Rhamnaceae		
Loose motion	<i>Plumeria rubra</i> L. <i>tayuk sākā</i>	Apocynaceae	Plant bark boiled in water is taken to control loose motions.	
Muscular Swelling	<i>Pipturus argenteus</i> (Forst.f.) Wedd. <i>pēn-kām</i>	Urticaceae	Leaf paste is applied on muscular swelling as emollient.	
Parturition	<i>Grewia acuminata</i> Juss. <i>kitah</i>	Tiliaceae	Leaf decoction is given to women after delivery to reduce pain in swollen intestine and to cleanse parturition wastes.	
Rheumatism	<i>Euphoria longan</i> Steud. <i>cham-rēv</i>	Sapindaceae	Aqueous leaf is prescribed in rheumatic pain.	
	<i>Euphoria atoto</i> Forst.f. <i>mu-pet</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaves of both the plants are boiled in coconut oil; extract is rubbed on body in rheumatism.	
	<i>Ipomoea pescaprae</i> (L.) Sweet. <i>la-nān-kap</i>	Convolvulaceae		
Snakebite	<i>Annona squamosa</i> L. <i>ampili</i>	Annonaceae	Incision of snakebite is washed by <i>Annona squamosa</i> juice	
	<i>Datura metel</i> L. <i>kata-hul</i>	Solanaceae	and then <i>Datura metel</i> leaf paste is applied.	
	<i>Microsorium punctatum</i> L. <i>fāh</i>	Polypodiaceae	Tender leaf paste is applied on incision of snakebite as an anti-venom ointment.	
	<i>Oplismenus compositus</i> (L.) Beauv. <i>ki-yōp</i>	Poaceae	For relieving snakebite pain, incised part is warmed in the smoke produced by putting green plants on fire.	
	<i>Parabaena sajittata</i> Miers. <i>tan kū</i>	Menispermaceae	Leaf paste boiled with coconut oil is applied on incision.	
Stomachache	<i>Cordia grandis</i> Raxb. <i>tō-rōi-ta- chōich</i>	Ehretiaceae	Leaf paste is taken in water to treat stomachache.	

Contd.

Table 1—Plants used by Nicobarese of Car Nicobar in folk medicine—*Contd.*

Ailments	Plant / Local name (s)	Family	Uses
	<i>Ficus hispida</i> L.f. ham-pam	Moraceae	To treat stomachache due to flatulence followed by sour belching, pounded leaves of both the plants are taken with water as carminative.
	<i>Guettarda speciosa</i> L. tu-ma-halū	Rubiaceae	
	<i>Macaranga Indica</i> Wight kin-rul	Euphorbiaceae	Decoction of leaves is taken in stomachache and poultice is applied on belly.
	<i>Morinda citrifolia</i> L. lū-ròng	Rubiaceae	Paste of leaves of both the plants mixed with coconut water is administered orally to treat sudden and severe stomachache.
	<i>Alstonia macrophylla</i> Roxb. ta-chō-rōi	Apocynaceae	
	<i>Phyllanthus amarus</i> Schum & Thonn. kin-fil-ha-yööm	Euphorbiaceae	Root juice is taken in aqueous base.
	<i>Phyllanthus fraternus</i> Webster. kin-fil-ha-yööm	Euphorbiaceae	Root is mashed and taken in aqueous base.
	<i>Tabernaemontana crispa</i> Roxb. tō-ku-rō-tōng	Apocynaceae	Leaf decoction is taken in stomachache.
Ulcers and sores	<i>Euphorbia atoto</i> Forst.f. mu-pet	Euphorbiaceae	Leaf paste is boiled in paraffin wax and applied on ulcers, sores, old cuts and wounds.
	<i>Phyllanthus amarus</i> Schum & Thonn. kin-fil-ha-yööm	Euphorbiaceae	Leaf paste mixed with water is taken. Plant bark paste is applied on sores.
	<i>Phyllanthus fraternus</i> Webster. kin-fil-ha-yööm	Euphorbiaceae	Leaf paste mixed with water is taken. Plant bark paste is applied on sores.
	<i>Tabernaemontana crispa</i> Roxb. tō-ku-rō-tōng	Apocynaceae	Leaf decoction used to wash ulcers and sores; fruit paste is applied in ulcers and sores.
Urinary troubles	<i>Hibiscus tiliaceus</i> L. tā-ū-ku	Malvaceae	Leaf juice is taken to check flow of blood with urine.
	<i>Peperomia pellucida</i> H.B.K. valtok	Piperaceae	Plant juice is taken to stop frequent urination.



Fig.1 A lady tied with silver wires



Fig.2 A tamiluono preparing medicine



Fig.3 The oldest church of Car Nicobar



Fig.4 A lady puts a Tavij around her legs

cure people. When a malevolent spirit possessed any person, she started the magico-religious treatment with the prayer:

*Kayaango el halingo, tóhet an ye
ngam minënyõ meh yih an ye
pulangõ meh, sa nagam lon meh nõ
ngaich nõ el halingõ.*

(Oh God! Please make my work successful. We are starting it with your name. So the person should be well totally from your blessings). Most of the Car Nicobarese have adopted Christianity, thus in Car Nicobar almost every village has a church where prayers are conducted (Fig. 3). The obligation of the presbyter is to call at the house of persons suffering from illness. He also made frequent visits to hospital to pray for the sick and conduct Holy Communion services for them. Holy Communion services were arranged at the residence for aged people who cannot attend the usual church services. A presbyter is treated with great reverence. *Maulvi* or Muslim priest conducted prayers for sick people and also gave *taviz* for protection to those who approached (Fig. 4). There were few *tamiluono* or *totarong* and local medicine men who used the folk medicines for treatment. For treatment, they used natural herbs, roots, plants and other natural products which were available in their ecosystem.

Discussion

In spite of the presence of modern system of medicine, the traditional system had its own significance. There were many traditional beliefs and practices in the culture of Car Nicobarese, related to health and sickness. For example, their belief in many superstitions and taboos for good health and to avoid sickness reflects an important religious aspect of their culture. But along with it they have also got the knowledge about the scientific aspect of health and diseases and took many logical or scientific precautions to avoid sickness and maintain good health. People had faith in both the systems. Even the *tamiluonos* advised people to go to the doctors first. Some diseases were directly connected with the ecology of the island so the cure also lied in their flora and fauna. Though the younger generation went to these *tamiluonos* for the treatment of certain ailments,

but they did not show any interest in learning those things. The knowledge remained confined to only few *tamiluonos* and this justifies the reason for preservation of this vast treasure of unwritten traditional knowledge.

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