

Tribal Leadership in the Nicobar Islands, India

An extensive conversation between Prince Rasheed Yosuuf and Lars Cederholm

Prince Rasheed Yosuuf is the leader of the people of Nancowry group of islands in the Nicobar Islands archipelago. Prince Yosuuf has represented the islands interests in various national and international forums for the last twenty-four years. The Royal family has been serving the Nicobarese community for generations.

Lars Cederholm has a background as a corporate leader and academic from University of Lund (MBA) and Columbia University in NYC (MA Org. Psych). What you are about to read is not a scientific study but rather an honest attempt to reflect on his observations and extensive conversations with Prince Yosuuf during several meetings each lasting for a week. The last meeting took place in February 2017.

Background

In the winter of 2009 my wife Anna Rochegova and I were spending healing time in India at an Ayurvedic spa not far from Bangalore. During our stay we became friends with another guest, Prince Rasheed Yosuuf, and we began a conversation about life, recovery, tribal obligations and leadership challenges, which were occupying his mind at the time.



Prince Rasheed Yusoof on the Beach of Pilpillow Village, Kamorta Island

Prince Rasheed Yusoof (from now on Rasheed), like many other Nicobarese, was trying to recover from the Tsunami trauma. Our friendship has sustained itself over the years through letters and mail and now, in the first weeks of

January 2016, I am back in the Andaman for my second visit, again as the invited guest of the family and the world of this extraordinary leader. The trust and openness that I have experienced over the years in these extensive conversations is deepening my understanding about authenticity and valour, about the constant stretches between opposing forces, about what it takes when you have to come down on one side of several unfavourable choices. This is a conversation about leadership, responsibility, courage and deep values.

This is also a story of despair when Rasheed's sense of responsibility and obligations made him move on with his work even when he was experiencing an existential crisis of hopelessness, confusion and maybe even betrayal. One might say that his known world fragmented and now Rasheed had to put things back to something that he and others could understand. A young man, alone and confused but with enough presence of mind to have a some idea that inevitable changes was coming fast, not finding much help and few people to talk to. In spite of all this, the feeling of obligation and his place in the history offered no choice, making his personal crises background and the service of his people foreground.



Nicobar village (Ramjaw) on the Island of Kamorta before the Tsunami. Photo Manish Chanti

The disaster

At 6:15 AM on December 26, 2004, the first of eight tsunamis hit the Nicobar Islands with stupendous force. The biggest wave measuring over twenty meters completely destroyed coastal villages and in some instances washed over entire islands. An estimated 5.000 to 10.000 people instantly perished. The remaining survivors looked on in horror and confusion at the disappearance of a whole world as they had known it. Their buildings, their cultural artefacts, ancestral places of worship and livelihood were suddenly wiped off the face of the earth. Having no written language and due to the sudden death of so many storytellers and other culture-bearers, the islanders were facing the loss of their oral history and intricate traditions. **Rasheed had to take an active role to prepare his people for the consequences of a catastrophic event. A story that I hear over and over is that outside cultures brought changes that touched every aspect of the tribal**

people of the Nicobar Islands. For the first time they were described as “the victims” who took the spectator place as relief organizations were in an “all in race” to mobilize resources to rescue what was left of this costal people, not only in the Nicobar Islands but many places around South East Asia. There is a long list of actions of good intentions that are truly amusing had it not been for adverse social and spiritual consequences.



Tsunami left a ravaged cost, no village standing. Photo Dennis Giles

Becoming a leader

At the age of 17 years Rasheed was already the appointed leader of the Nicobar Islands Youth council. His grandmother, Queen Rani Lakshmi who died in 1989 had a very strong presence in the lives of the Nicobarese people. One of her many actions was to form a cooperative which was started back in 1975. The purpose of this coop was to facilitate the supply of services and goods to 29 different villages in Central Nicobar Islands. Queen Rani Lakshmi had early on spotted talent in her grandson, the young Rasheed, and let him know that she believed in him to take on important roles on the islands. She was the one who sent him to study in India at the University of Ooty.



Queen Rani Lakshmi with former Prime Minister of India and his wife Sonia Gandhi in Rani Residence on Nancowry Island, Dec. 29 1986



Admiral Nirmal Verma presenting a 'Visitor Book', recreated by ANC, to Smt. Rani Fathima, Queen of Nancowry. The original Visitor Book maintained by the Queen got washed away in Tsunami 2004

Queen Rani Lakshmi passed away having only one daughter, Fatima who had nine children, six girls and three boys. Rasheeds mother Fatima Lakshmi, the only child of Queen Rani, took over the formal role from her mother in 1989.

Fatima did not feel that she was needed to provide leadership in the cooperative, instead she let the villagers decide on the governance. The result was a collapse of the cooperative and the villages were facing some real supply problems including famine in some cases. All money was gone and banks refused to resurrect the cooperative under the circumstances. At the age of 17 Rasheed was approached by Mr. Basu Kumar, a high official representing the Indian Government who challenged the young boy to take charge of the relief effort and accept full responsibility for the job to clean up and get the cooperative back in business. There was a Ration Card agency, the supply of the Public Sector Scheme and other entities to consider. No guidelines, no idea of where,

what and why. No one to help and guide and a sense of urgency with some lives in the balance. After assessing the situation Rasheed quickly went back to the Indian Government and convinced them to guarantee new loans from the Bank of India, all in record time and with a high risk on behalf of the local government official who pushed the financing through the bureaucracy. Rasheed then went ahead to put the cooperative back in operation. This was a time when Rasheed discovered that it was possible to move the Indian bureaucrats into action in the face of a pending disaster. The cooperative got back on its feet and the banks were satisfied. Now Rasheed was well known and respected both among the village chiefs and representatives of the Indian Government including the Chief governor and the Chief Secretary of the Andaman and Nicobar Island. This story of ending up in unknown territory, with no real help or resources is the story told by many leaders who tell their version of the archetypal fairy tale of how the young hero goes to the underground, subdues the dragon and comes up on the other side, with a deep sense of having conquered fear. In this fairy tale our hero receives the reward in the form of the hand of the princess and the kingdom.

Some key stakeholders

The administration of the Indian Government for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is situated in Port Blair, the capital of the Andaman Island. The relationships with the different agencies are clearly workable and often frustrating since decisions for tribal affairs often come top down from Delhi with the Governor left to implement decisions often going against the will of many tribal Nicobarese. An example would be making laws that prevent people from living by the coast; people who only know how to live from what the coast has to offer in terms of their livelihood. Instead these coastal people had to accept the offer to settle up on the high hills deepening their dependency on the Government's aid with consequences such as coronary disease, diabetes and obesity, earlier unknown to the Nicobarese. Within the Indian Governmental administration, Rasheed has to manage the relationship with agencies such as construction, shipping, employment etc. The man who challenged and believed in Rasheed when he was only seventeen, Mr. Besu Kumar, has just retired and has kindly offered to join Rasheed's team with the purpose to use his expertise in helping to navigate the Indian bureaucracy with its complexity and massive amount of paperwork which for Rasheed continues to be a huge distraction from leading for a greater purpose.



There are times when the paper work takes over the task of creating the future.
Photo Rasheed Yosuf

The Indian Navy is a powerful force and has a presence on one of the Nicobar Islands and looking to expand their physical presence against the explicit will of the local Island and village chiefs. The pressure on Rasheed to make concessions on behalf of the tribal people is constant and the power of the Navy is very visible wherever you go on the (Andaman) Islands. There are five or six different tribal groups in need of protection against exploitation and therefore the Tribal Development Council of tribal affairs coordinate 'between the tribes and the Indian Government. Rasheed is the Chairman of that body of tribal leaders with contacts into the Central Indian Government in Delhi.



From Left To Right: Chief Secretary Anand Prakash, Sri Thayini Das, Secretary Tribal Welfares, Lt.Gen.(Retd) AK Singh, Lt.Governor of A & N Islands, Prince Rasheed Yusooof, Shri.Hamid Ansari, Vice President of India, New Delhi, Representative of Onge and Great Andamanese

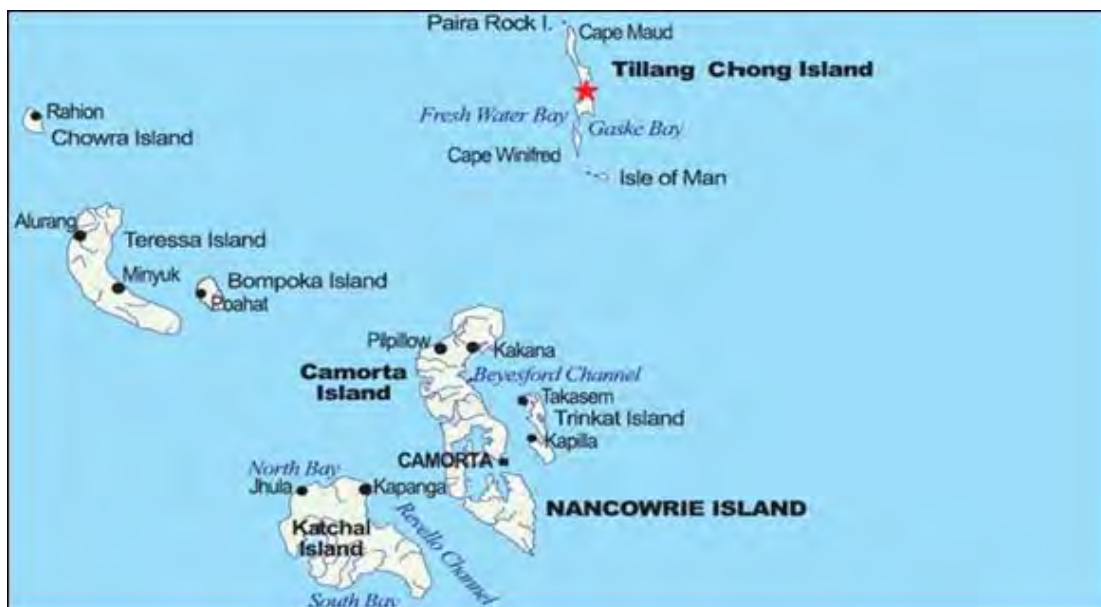
Rasheed is also an active member of the Chamber of Commerce. He is well known in many foreign countries where he is an engaging speaker to cast light on the most vulnerable cultures of the world. In the year 2013 Rasheed was

awarded a commendation from the Lieutenant Governor for outstanding performance in his role as a leader for the tribal community. The relationship between Rasheed and the press is a very good and there are many stories where the “power of the pen” has worked in positive ways in the interests of the Nicobarese people.

There are several religious groups where boundaries of power and vulnerabilities have to be continuously negotiated. Many of the religions leaders (Hindus, Muslims, Christians and animists) have strengthened their influence over people on the islands as they respond to a need for spiritual hope in the face of very confusing change. Change is generally viewed negatively and not as a source of new possibilities. There are a whole range of projects aimed at building infrastructure in the central Islands but, at the moment there is a perceived lack of tribal people with the right skills and attitudes to take ideas and recourses into action.

The Map Over the Central Nicobar Islands

The twelve central Nicobar Islands form a chain stretching 300 kilometres from north to south. The islands are situated just south of Burma and west of Thailand and together with the Andaman Islands form the eastern-most of Indias Union Territories. The Nicobar Islands are classified as tribal reserve areas by the Indian government and have been effectively isolated from any kind of tourism or foreign influence since 1947, when India annexed them from the British colonial empire. Before that, visits to the islands were rare with little impact on the unique island culture. The family palace was situated on the Nancowry Island and was completely washed into the ocean by the Tsunami. The Royal family has gifted the people of Nancowry all their land and have rebuilt their family quarters on the neighbouring Camorta Island.



A balance between friendship and keeping a professional distance

Like in any relationship there are layers of realities that can only be surfaced over time when the parties truly understand and care deeply about each other. I

can honestly say that I have enjoyed free access to Rasheed as a person; he has unconditionally arranged private meetings with people close to him to make sure we have different perspectives on how he leads. Most of the people I have talked to are members of the Royal Nicobarese Lineage. I have also been given access to local anthropologist and even the secretary of General of the Islands representing the Indian Government. At no point in our relationship has the thought crossed my mind that Rasheed is anything but authentic and courageous in how he represents both his strengths and weaknesses.



Lars Cederholm and Prince Rasheed Yosuf at work

My job in the relationship has been to listen and summarize; to reflect using the view from the outside and, as much as possible, let Rasheed take the lead how he will best use my presence.

In my personal relationship with Rasheed I have had to balance our friendship with my role to give professional and “objective” and sometimes feedback that may have been less easy to take in. This balance of friendship and professional distance has been defined and assumptions put on the table to avoid misunderstandings and disappointments. Trust is an interesting word with many perspectives. Cultural values play a big part in understanding the concept of trust. The truth is that both Rasheed and myself have participated on equal terms to build a good atmosphere between us. To be transparent with the reader I am charging 100 Indian Rs per visit to contribute to my professional services. From another view, the experience of falling into this world, not unlike Alice in Wonderland, and be given free access to these very different realities is in itself a reward that is hard to measure.

Cultural Differences and the management of boundaries

There are many cultural boundaries and filters between us that need consideration. Beside a kind and soft disposition, one obvious characteristic of all Nicobarese people that I have met is silence. This tolerance for silence is just remarkable and, I must admit, my patience is tested from time to time. The silence is combined with stillness and very subtle body language that I do not claim to understand. I am learning to just sit quietly and conquer my need to keep the flow since patience is not one of my virtues. It is easy to assume that silence is a form of resistance (and sometimes it is) but that is clearly not the case here. I have been told by a native Nicobare that silence is a gesture of respect towards the guest. If the guest is saying nothing then “he will be taken care of with a smile”. The view on time is also very different. The idea to take time to focus just on my interviews takes some doings to achieve. Life around Rasheed and his family runs in a steady stream and is not dictated by a calendar or a specific plan of action but often in response to concerns, request for help, small crises on some Island, papers that need signatures, all in a mighty parallel stream that does not seem to ever stop. Everything happens in a circular way rather in the linear time that we are used to in the west.

In all fairness I must say that we have had a few very long uninterrupted conversations far from family and office. Rasheed tells me that some people consider the Nicobarese lazy, an opinion that he rejects and says that “we just tend to do things on our own schedule but what has to be done gets done”.

It is a privilege to be given access to the inner world of someone with such impressive commitment to take his people into a new world while saving the wisdom of this unique and isolated culture. It is an honour to present the man and his work in this portrait that is not yet finished.

Some questions for Prince Racheed

What are some of the forces working against you?

“Whatever actions I take some people will be for and some against. Again, the big issue is the disputes regarding the occupation of tribal land from the Indian Defence forces. The active resistance from me and the various Nicobar Island leaders has set me up against the will of the Navy and I have even been accused for being unpatriotic. I am very strict in recommending to issue tribal passes to outsiders who intend to visit the Nicobar Islands for business reasons and, as a consequence there are people who are trying to undermine me. Some people approach me to support personal work of illegal character, which I have refused to endorse. Some Governments servants even ask me for help regarding transfers, promotions and postings and my policy is to never interfere with such requests from Government servants. Mostly I represent the grievances from the people of the Central Nicobar directly to the Indian Government in

Port Blair on the Andamans and this displeases some people on Car Nicobar which has its own independence from my leadership. There are some contractors on the islands who want me to give them permission to store illegally extracted sand on tribal land which I will not allow. It also happens that various Non-Tribal organisations approach me to join them in all kinds of protests against the Government of India which I always refuse to do. This refusal to cooperate has made me unpopular among some of these associations. Non tribals have been appointed to posts in the government departments and I have protested to some of these appointments and requested to appoint from the local tribes which has made enemies out of some non-tribal groups. Some social organisations and researchers want me to support them in organizing events on the islands. These events often have the character to exploit the tribals and, as a consequence, they hold grudges against me. Other issues are very trivial such as getting tickets for helicopter and ships and since I cannot accommodate everybody, people are annoyed. We are having an increasing encroachment of non-tribals on tribal land and I am complaining to have them removed which also has made me into an adversary to these encroachers.

A question that keeps coming up against me is that I am involved in some business activity for my family and at the same time I am the representative of my community in issues and grievances before the Indian Administration. This does upset me because I am the most knowledgeable and reputable person representing my people. I am known for all my philanthropic activities and my books are always open to anyone who wants to see them.

What resources can you draw on in support of your role as a leader?

Rasheed:

The one loyalty that Rasheed can count on is the family; all members who are fiercely loyal to the vision and the leader of change. In most of the western hemisphere this would be considered nepotism. The question is the issue of trust and if trust and loyalty is more important than professional management.

Rasheed is clear about the need for promoting family members into important positions where loyalty is a key concern. Some of the jobs occupied by members of the family are: Nicobarese tribal food (Super Moms) Rasheed trading, Legal affairs, the representative of the Development Council of tribal affairs in Central Nicobar, and the warehousing and distribution to the different islands and villages. From Port Blair all functions that need to be close to the Indian Government are taken care of from the office of Rasheed trading, legal and accounting, trading and distribution of food, building materials etc.

Key family members are moving into key positions and various study programs for the younger working family members are being offered to ensure increased professionalism. There are two key functions in the support structure occupied by non-family members, namely accounting with Mr. Karim and Mr. Basu Kumar the administrative advisor for filings and paperwork between the islands and the Indian Government. Several people of mainland Indian origin are working under Rasheed Trading in matters of warehousing and distribution to the various islands and villages.

Modern mobile phone technology is available on the Andamans and parts of the Nicobars. Internet is available on the Andamans (intermittent and slow) but not on the Nicobars, clearly a disadvantage.

The physical travel between the Nicobars and Port Blair is handled by a helicopter service that shuttles officials at a 75% subsidized price. A regular boat service between Port Blair and Kamora operates a very low prices but takes almost three days to reach its destination.

“It must be said that my relationship with the Indian Government is workable though we have many potential boundary issues to manage together. Having said that The interdependent public structures of Indian life contain many dimensions which are challenging to understand let alone operate. Favours and resources are distributed between major stakeholders and trust of the insider and the outsider relationships of these structures can have major consequences”.

What key challenges lay ahead of you?

“ My primary work is to ensure that the people of the Nicobar Islands survive in this world. I do not want my people to be slaves under people who know how to operate in the new world of mobile phones, cement, roads, cars etc. I really do not want to see that day coming. We, the Nicobarese must find a way to protect our deepest sense of belonging , not losing the traditions and values that have made us into who we really are. We just need to talk about what our deepest sense of belonging really is and how we will talk about it. Education is so important and education will give us a chance. The educational process must have the aim to help people to acquire skills and knowledge but it must have a central purpose to help our culture and our families into the future, otherwise it can just harm us. We need dedicated teachers who are willing to join this vision, not just government employees who come for the salary. This issue really needs my full attention.

In the Central Nicobars we have 39 different villages, spread over 7 islands, each island with their own language. They are all in very different stages of

readiness for change and it is difficult to create favourable conditions under which their leaders are able to articulate their own dreams and hopes. For me to lead and meet their future, I need to understand deeper how I can help. This is a constant struggle for me to have them articulate their needs and dreams and not just expecting the future to come from me. Our people are very used to be in “the now” – the present, but have difficulty to articulate hopes for the future. Maybe because the future is difficult to visualize. It saddens me to notice that we have been slowly losing our self-respect and I feel that I must help to change this and come back to something that helps us to look at ourselves with greater confidence. The different religious groups are moving into this vacuum of confusion and uncertainty and peoples limited resources are more than often being spent on building temples, churches and mosques which can be seen as a diversion depending on who is looking. We were never poor or at least we did not know that we were, but now we are experience poverty for the first time. Roads are built, food is imported and suddenly many people who lived off the land and sea experience that they are poor and not having enough money for gas, cooking oil, electricity and other modernity which have become a necessity for this new life on our islands. Only 5% of our people have jobs for the government, most of us have had to move inland far from the sea. Large amounts of the cocoanut trees, our main crop, were swept away by the tsunamis with serious consequence on livelihood and self identity. Another issue is the illegal influx of people from other cultures who come in to take over trade, all this in various form of cooperation with representatives from the government who may well have personal benefits from “looking the other way”.

At times I am getting involved in seemingly petty issues that should be handled by other people than me. Some time ago I received a call from a person who was complaining that his illegal neighbour had his goat helping itself to his vegetable garden and had refused to discuss the trespass. I told him to slaughter the goat. If there was any further problem then I promised that this man would be made to conform to the rules of the land or be removed from tribal land. I should not really get involved with such issues but from a symbolic point of view it is important that individual know that I am there for them in matters that are important to them.”

What is going well for you right now?

“The extended family is growing up and coming along nicely. They are eager to learn, willing to do whatever is necessary and they feel responsible for doing the right thing. I just need to pay attention to their development. The days of micro management these young men are almost over and they have to figure out their way to reach the goal. I just try to be clear what I expect from them and make sure they have the right resources to get the

job done. I have tried to describe the goals and the responsibilities and they seem to understand. I need to think more about how to recognize their performance. I do think that my whole family and others working with me are hopeful and clear that the prime issue is the restoration of our pride. We must be role models of a positive outlook on life. The big picture must always be with us and no one should lose this view.

Car Nicobar is independent from the Central Nicobar Islands. The chief of Car Nicobar and I continue to have a very good working relationship and we often communicate and help each other always respectful of our boundaries.

The fishing project seems to be coming along. We need to buy a refrigeration ship where our fishermen can deliver the catch which will enable us to sell fish to new markets. Fishing is deep knowledge among the Nicobar tribes and we must continue building on that strength.

I am very grateful that Basu Kumar is coming on line. We know each other very well and I know what he stands for. He is already actively involved but his retirement has come and he will dedicate more time to important governmental formalities. My relationship to the press continues to be a source of satisfaction and they stay interested in my efforts related to the protection of my culture.

I am excited to launch the Nicobarese Restaurant (Super Moms) using our unique foods for people to experience. We are well underway in preparing for that launch.

I would say that the people who are in contact with me recognize what I am doing and are supporting me. I am getting many offers to take on new responsibility on the national Indian level but I am respectfully declining knowing my place is here. We all live with the consequences of the Tsunami, myself included but now I feel better and confident that I can take charge of the negative memories.”

What issues need attention in the short term?

- The one that keeps me busy is that I need many more people with me, who are ready to take on responsibility.
- My core team is very good now and I need to work more to make sure that all functions and roles are understood and coordinated.
- As mentioned before, I have enemies on the islands, who are going behind my back attempting to erode my impact as a leader. There are so many ways that we are differentiated and no matter what I do I will have people for and against. I have to get used to the facts that

there rarely is one perfect decision on issues. People think in different ways depending on different hopes and fears.

- Two new companies have been started, the Fish Factory and the Pan Asia Tourist corporation, both have failed due to lack of competence. Both companies were run by non-family members and I am learning some painful but also useful things from these experiences.
- Before the Tsunami I was a better organizer and I notice that I am loosing some of the sense of order. This is not just a bad thing since I need to make time for real leadership issues and try to stay away from too many small things. I just need to get more talent around me who can make sure that things are in good order!

Have you set up some clear goals for the next two years?

- Super Moms Nicobarese exotic cuisine is up and running
- We will give course in Nicobarese traditional fishing methods and we will arrange Nicobarese canoe cruises
- We will make a website for the Nicobar Island to help get our message public
- I will increase coaching and making sure that what needs coordination and teamwork will help to get the right thing done at the right time.
- Make a decision on what to do with Chidia Tapu land and the idea of building a village there.
- The cold storage fishing boat will be operating in 2017

In Conclusion: Some key dilemmas that need to be balanced

Traditional Values

versus

Modernity

Rasheed: Some of the happiness in the past came from having enough to do and enough to eat. Life circulated around some important rituals that marked the flow of life. We lived with and in the nature and we let nature determine time for us. Now, after the Tsunami, we have roads, electricity, bus service cars and motorcycles. We have cell phones and subsidies and dependencies that were not there before. The new life is up on us whether we like it or not. What came after the Tsunami, changed life as we all knew it. We seem paralyzed in coming to terms with how we can participate and make a difference. The alternative is just to give up, become dependent on others and government subsidies for our livelihood.

The question for Rasheed is how to accept the inevitable and at the same time prepare his people to come to terms with what they can abstain from and use our own age tested ways of getting things done. Can they decide on a future where they can become part of deciding the issues and participate in a

lifestyle which are embraced by the majority. There must be a mechanism for those who want very different life to choose their own future.

The agenda of Government versus The agenda of the islands

The long term vision for all tribal areas of India is not so clear. In the case of the Nicobarese one could come to the conclusion that the main purpose is pulling tribes closer to the Indian lifestyle. Some decisions are really insensitive and based on what happens at some desk in Delhi. The Nicobarese may not know how to take hold of the future but they are faster to know when decisions are hurtful to them. Some clear examples in how roads are built between villages should not solely be a decision taken in Delhi. The Government representatives want Rasheed to support them just to keep peace with superior authorities in Delhi. Rasheed must continue to articulate what his core values are and what he is willing to stand up for. This back and forth can have the character of a hall of mirrors where things look different wherever you turn. The only thing that can guide Rasheed through the maze is to be very clear about values that hold up in meetings with Island and village chiefs back on the Nicobars.

Managing the family business versus Local and tribal concerns

The logistics of many of the provisions that are shipped to the Nicobars are managed through Rasheed Trading a company where the family own the controlling interest. To do this well the key staff of the Trading company must be present in Port Blair, the capital of the Andamans. There are many stakeholders in Port Blair far away from the Nicobars. The need for clear and honest communication to the leaders in central Nicobar is essential particularly in fast changing times. One of the core values for Rasheed is transparency and the open books and the sharing of the proceeds must be open and valued as fair. The welfare and happiness of the tribal people on the Nicobars are the key visions.

Family management versus Outside professionals

In this culture people are strongly identified with family including many different people more distant than the core family of father, mother and siblings. The family members expect to be given certain privileges traditionally related to kinship. They also expect to be consulted before any major initiative is launched. The family relationships are hard to understand for an outsider but they are special and have special significance from Rasheed. He also needs professional help that is not available within the

family. The reward system and the expectations from management inside and outside of the family circle is largely understood through implicit cultural expectations and therefore not clearly articulated. This dilemma is one that Rasheed talks about and he is clearly mobilizing to make sure that different stakeholders are heard and that they feel part of the vision and let that vision be part of every decision.

Inner family circle versus Different groups on the islands

What keeps a leader in place? Clearly rank and position. During her time as a ruler, Queen Rani Lakshmi, was a strong authority and she gave Rasheed the chance to prove that he had the ability to lead. Actions speak louder than words and Rasheed has time and again shown his ability to stand up for the Nicobarese. He also derives his power from the fact that he is one of the few Nicobarese who has been given academic training and has even received an honorary Doctor title. He is therefore well suited to relate to "high level" Indian IS (civil service) officers who are selected for their sharp intellect. The other type of power comes from being an expert on the needs on the Nicobarese and at least fairly fluent in how to get things done with and through the Indian Government. The real challenge for him is to gain the trust from many different people with different languages, different needs, different islands with different natural living conditions, ethnic backgrounds including religious groups and their leaders who compete for the hearts and minds of people. The importance is to be aware what is moving in different quarters and be of help as much as possible. It is my understanding from talking to different people that Rasheed is respected and admired for what he has done for his people and for his good intentions.

Learning on the job versus Professional development

This is a time when many initiatives are being considered and already in the planning phase. All resources are needed as the workflow is constant and nobody thinks about time off or vacation. At the same time the coaching, the learning on the job needs to be supplemented through academic skills in areas such as hospitality and service management, marketing and finance etc. The Nicobarese also need resources to take care of their sick people. A medical college has started in Port Blair with entry requirements that disqualified any one from the Nicobar Islands. Rasheed has recently negotiated a special quota for the Nicobarese to come and learn and hopefully being able to become doctors among their own people. Rasheed fully understands and is committed to continue sending his managers to programs and courses, to pay attention to coaching and follow up and to continue to look for talents.

These extensive conversations between Prince Rasheed Yusoof and me have been enriching for both of us and the conversations will continue. Based on what I've heard and seen, I have given Rasheed some advice and coaching in the complex leadership he is appointed. Amid the balance acts between formal governmental issues and the actual need of his people, I encourage Rasheed to continue striving for a professional attitude and presence while keeping his genuine and authentic leadership with welfare, happiness of his people and restoration of their pride and culture as the highest vision. An honourable and extraordinary way of leadership that would be desirable to see also among leaders in the West today.

Note: My summary of our weeklong talks has been read and fully approved by Rasheed Yosunuf.

Lars Cederholm,
Malmö 2017.08.30