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# The Andaman Islanders

**- a state of the art report 1996.**

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## 1.0 Introduction

From where they came, we don't know yet. Some may argue they ended up in South East Asia brought from Africa according to the continental drift theory, some may say their ancestors were trading slaves being shipwrecked on the green shores of Andaman Islands. And it's true that all ships from Africa and India to China were to pass through Ten Degree Channel and The Strait of Malacca. As true as the continuous drifting of the continents...

But we do know they are among the very few tribes in Asia belonging to the negrito race, having considerable ethnic affinity with two other aboriginal communities, the Semangs of Malaysia and the Aeta of the Philippines. Any ethnic relationships among them have not yet been established partly due to the fact that the latter have forgotten their own dialects, integrating the languages of their dominant neighbours.

Also we know they are the last remaining nomads of hunting-gathering communities on earth, living off the land on a palaeolithic level. While the discussions in the west nowadays are concerned with the benefits or malfunctionalities of the information society, their reality is quite a different one.

The Andaman islanders are none the less representing the human culture and way of living most common in the time line of homo sapiens. When for two million years humans have made a living on earth, 99% of this span has been as hunter and gathers, the last few thousands as farmers and the last few hundred years as workers in the industrial society.

According to this development, more than 60% of human inhabitants totally have been hunters and gathers, 35% have been farmers and only the remaining few percent have been witnessing

the lifestyle of the industrial society.

The isolation of the Andaman tribes is providing us with an opportunity to observe these forgotten conditions for human living.

The report is based on documentary material supplemented by oral accounts and observations on Andaman Islands July-August 1996. Indian regulations are protecting the aborigines, and on a yearly basis only 2000 foreign visitors are allowed to enter the islands. A permit allows You to stay for 30 days only, staying overnight permitted exclusively in the following places: Port Blair, Mayabunder, Diglipur, Rangat, Long Island, Havelock Island and Neil Island. The 1996-visit included staying all these places collecting information on the present condition of the aborigines.

## **2.0 Andaman Islands**

For many years Malays have used these islands for piratical activities in the Strait of Malacca and trading in Andamanese slaves, most popular being the Shompens from Nicobar Islands of bigger and stronger stature compared to other tribes. The slaves found their way to the courts of Siam, Cambodia and Indo-China accelerating the hostility on the part of the aborigines to all visitors to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Most accounts where the islands are mentioned - Hindu, Greek, Chinese, Italian and English - are indicating the tribes are being feared and avoided, and crews from wrecked ships or those coming for fresh water or seeking shelter from the storm were generally slain and their ships looted and destroyed by the natives.

In this way the use of iron for weapons and tools was learned, the metal being collected from many a shipwreck along the shores of the islands. As for the preparation of iron, local level of technology wasn't capable of producing fire, but only to reuse and preserve fire.

Among pirates the tribes appear to have earned them a reputation for cannibalism, a theory which has not been confirmed. Rather the practice of throwing the vivisected bodies of their enemies onto a fire according to their superstition may be the observations from where the theory had its origin.

To secure the sailing route from pirates as well as natives the British settled from 1789 onwards on Andaman Islands, initiated by Lord Cornwallis who sent Lt. Archibald Blair to survey the islands for the purpose of colonization. First on Chatham Island (Port Blair), later in the present Port Cornwallis in the north-east. The fever forced the British to abolish the settlement in 1796, and not until 1857-58 the colonization finally succeeded by the founding of Port Blair and a penal settlement for Indian freedom fighters from the Mutiny against the British on the Indian subcontinent. Kalapani - the black waters - still have a mytic connotation for Indians, and the penalty island at the edge of the world is still considered an outpost for Indians pilgriming here to salute the national heroes in the setting of Cellular Jail.

The Andamanese fought and resisted the settlement for many years, living as they had been used to on these islands for ages. Their population at the time of the second British invasion in 1957-58 was estimated to be about 5000, compared to a mere 400 in 1895.

Radcliffe-Brown did his fieldwork in the Andamans from 1906 to 1908. He was the first anthropologist to make a clear distinction between the Great Andaman Group (including all Great Andaman tribes except Jarawa) and the Little Andaman Group which includes: The Onge of Little Andaman, the Jarawa of South Andaman and the Sentinelese on North Sentinel Island.

On the adjoining Nicobar Islands the Danes were fighting the fever too, and colonization expeditions from Tranquebar settled on the islands from 1756-59 and again from 1768-87, until Denmark finally quitted the devastating conditions in 1869 and sold the Nicobar Islands to the British. The health condition was quite simple threatening for Europeans and the profit from the trade much too low.

Whereas the tribes on Andaman Islands are negritos, the Nicobares and Shompen tribes of Nicobar Islands are both mongoloid, signifying a quite different origin. The Andaman tribes are primary hunter-gathers, while the Nicobar tribes are farmers and herders. At present the Nicobar Islands are not open to foreign travellers, only Indians being allowed to visit the islands.

Around Mayabunder on North Andaman Island decedents from a Burmese tribe, the Karens, are found. They were brought in by the British as labourers in 1925 and has partly been assimilated, partly forced to return to Burma. On Interview Island the remnants frequently poach for spotted deer, wild pig and turtles.

During The second World War the Andaman Islands were occupied by Japanese forces. Much harassment took place also involving the Jarawa who were captured and their settlements in the jungle bombed from airfighters. When the islands were liberated by Mountbatten in 1945 thousands of aborigines and convicts were released from their Japanese custody. Two years later Andaman & Nicobar Islands joined the independent India, in fact Port Blair was the first place where the new Indian national flag was officially raised in 1947.

### **3.0 The Sentinelese**

The sole inhabitants of North Sentinel Island, the Sentinelese, are one of the most isolated and least known human tribes in the world today. They are a true hunting-gathering society with a considerable reliance on sea resources. The island is fringed by a barrier reef affording natural fortification.

The estimates of the population have in this century varied from 50 to 100, with an actual estimate around 80-100 (1990).

Brief visits have been paid to the island, but the Sentinelese have so far succeeded in defending their shores against the influx of civilization. First the British later the Indians have both been held at a distance by the Sentinelese, mainly by means of bow and arrow from the shore. An isolation and refusal to succumb lending an impact on the very statue of the tribemembers, being exposed as a more fearless and prouder bodylanguage, akin to the African Zulus, compared to other Andamanese tribes. Their appearance is indicating an abundance of health, the social interaction between sexes that of tenderness and continuing intimate hugging.

Their reaction to visits has been one of extreme hostility and disapproval, refusing for years the soft contacts and Indian gift dropping parties although these missions seem to have worked with the Jawaras. First successful Indian gift-dropping mission did not take place on North Sentinel Island until 4.1.1991, whereas the Jarawa have a tradition for these contacts since 1974. At present gift-dropping missions every second month are providing the Sentinelese with coconuts, bananas, iron pieces and tools. Unlike the Jarawa red cloth is not collected and used by the women, but left untouched in the sand.

The first professional anthropologist to land on the island was T.N.Pandit on 26.4.1967 making observations on their settlement and material culture. Discovered were 18 temporary huts in the middle of the island where fires were still burning and things were lying around while the aborigines were hiding in the jungle. Each hut had four fires burning at the corners of the hut and each fire was fenced off from inside by a row of vertical sticks to prevent any accidents

during sleep. Obviously the arrangement of the fires also was a protection against outside snakes and poisonous insects. Skulls from the endemic local wild pig were noticed around the huts.

The expedition party was heavy armed and protected on the April 1967 entry, and its approach to the aborigines that of exploitation. Artefacts were collected from the huts in exchange for 'gifts' placed in the hut instead, Pandit was objecting to this practice but being overruled by the police officials. Among the artefacts was a wooden 'chessboard' engraved with 64 squares, now in the Anthropological Museum, Port Blair. It is not clear whether the Sentinelese have made it or it has been washed up by the sea.

On the 1974 expedition a somewhat softer approach was practiced, but still arrows flew around as warning shots on the party. Photographs were taken for the first time, and gifts landed on the shore. Among these a white pig, being instantly speared by one male and buried at night in the sand at the beach without anyone eating any part of it.

The isolation of the tribe led to only few references of brief and confusing nature in literature. Not until Radcliffe-Brown were the Sentinelese distinguished and separated from the Jarawa, both belonging to the Little Andaman Group, but the former inhabiting North Sentinel Island and the latter inhabiting South Andaman. Radcliffe-Brown describes a type of communal hut, a long rectangular shelter, 40 feet long and 12 feet wide, with the roof supported by three rows of small posts. There were 12 fireplaces in the hut, each with an attached platform on sticks for preservation of food. They sleep on the ground where some leaves are spread, and bury their infants in their hut, placing a nautilus and other small shells over the grave.

The Sentinelese has worked out a outrigger dug-out canoe different from the Onges and the Great Andamanese but suitable only for the shallow reefs surrounding the island. Baskets for collecting food in the jungle, wooden buckets for honey and fishing nets are manufactured. Hunting gear is bow, arrows and spears.

As it is not known what the Sentinelese call themselves, the name of the tribe is derived from the island they inhabit. Their social organization is unknown, but it is anticipated that they move around and lead a semi-nomadic existence on the island.

With the Jarawa the Sentinelese are the tribes most efficiently resisting the impact of outside Indians, knowing on what their survival entails: keeping a firm distance to other homo sapiens around. Being left alone is by all means the best that can be done for the long time survival of the Sentinelese.

#### **4.0. The Jarawa**

By the neighbouring Great Andamanese the tribe was referred to as Jarawa, 'the other people' or 'stranger', indicating a somewhat later migration than the Great Andamanese, both tribes being traditional territorial rivals.

This fact was exploited by the British who utilized the services of the Great Andamanese to track down the Jarawa. Also the British mounted punitive expeditions in Jarawa areas on South Andaman to capture men, women and children. Those who resisted were killed and their huts burned. In official language the Jarawa were referred to as 'the hostile people'.

They now inhabit the west coast and jungle of the South and Middle Andamans, possibly migrating from the region of lower Burma, according to Radcliff-Brown. According to Cipriani the Jarawa have migrated from Little Andaman to Great Andaman. The presence of the Negritos in the Great Andamans are by examination of the kitchen-middens estimated to have lasted for at

least 2000 years.

Of species the endemic wild pig and the monitor lizard are the largest dwellers in the tropical jungle, the wild pig as main provider of both meat and skulls preserved as trophies in the huts. Early this century, from 1905 -1930, the British chose for cultural reasons to import spotted and barking deer, animals considered by the Jarawa to be brought by the gods and thus never hunted but instead adored and celebrated by the aborigines.

Hunting of the wild pig is by means of bow and arrow, spear and harpoon arrow too, the shaft from the harpoon getting entangled in the bushes and helping the hunter to catch the animal. For the gathering digging rods, baskets of cane strips and net bags are used.

The surrounding sea is as rich in marine life as the forests are devoid of large wildlife. Migration of the tribes on the Andamans has been by crossing the sea using the islands as stepping stones, but in due time their knowledge confined to the sea was lost.

Colebrooks reports that in 1790 he came across a few tribes plying a canoe near the present Dandas Point. Some words collected by him were later found to be of the Jarawa language. This leads to the inference that the Jarawa had canoes about 200 years ago. But when the second penal settlement was established in 1857-58, no Jarawa could be seen near the coast. The entire coastal area was under the control of the Great Andamanese. If they were coastal dwellers once, speculation started why they had entered the deep forest. According to some, the Jarawa had to face the problem of depopulation because they acquired some vices from the men of the first settlement. As a result, the Jarawa became weak and the Great Andamanese pushed them into the deep forest. Later the Jarawa spread all over the forests of South Andaman. And since they could not come to the coastal area for about half a century they forgot how to ply canoes.

Hunting is performed in their smallest social group, the family. A band consists of a few related families and a number of bands form a 'local group'. This social structure is essential for the hunter-gatherer tribe and their successful resistance to colonial intruders for about 130 years.

While two other negrito tribes, the Great Andamans and the Onge, grew friendly towards outsiders during the British period, the Jarawa maintained a tense relationship with all non-Jarawa. Clashes were frequent and the second settlement from 1858 often raided by Jarawa attacks, resulting in British punishing expeditions and firing and looting of Jarawa territory. For this purpose Great Andamans were used as informants and supporters by the British, a crucial error intensifying the hostile attitude towards the British as well as the inherent rivalry towards the Great Andamanese. Thus these attempts became unacceptable to the Jarawa.

These punitive expeditions and the decline in Jarawa population they caused were soon to be supplemented by the Japanese occupation 1942-1945 with its bombing and firing upon Jarawa territory.

A reserved area was declared according to Andaman and Nicobar Regulations 1956, providing a Jarawa Reserve forest on 765 sq km of South and Middle Andamans. Somehow information on the project was hard to get through to the Jarawa who continued to use the natural resources of the tropical forest in their traditional way.

The Indian colonization of the island and the subsequent deforestation increased the tension and conflicts followed at an accelerating scale. The construction of the Andaman Trunk Road (ATR) over Jarawa territory and the large number of Indian labourers and settlers added to the polarization. The Andaman Trunk Road is bordering the Jarawa territory and at some points even cuts it.

The Jarawa hunting and gathering areas have shrunk and the number of water sources has

been reduced due to the ATR. In recent years it has been largely agreed upon by the administration that the construction has been an error, and that ATR has the potential of escalating the conflicts between Jarawas, travellers and settlers. Armed guards are safeguarding the passage of buses from Port Blair to Diglipur through the rainforest. Incidents are still frequent at Jirkatang and around Rangat where aborigines are stealing coconuts and bananas from the settlers as a response to the provocations but also responding to the taste for new food supply caused by the Indian contact parties.

First gift-dropping mission by the Indian Contact Party took place in 1974, and from 1994 they are receiving gifts on a monthly basis, still being 'hostile to outsiders'. These contacts with one group of Jarawa may present inherent risks to the very healthy Jarawa, who are free of even the common cold.

Poaching by settlers are constantly disturbing the aborigines on their traditional territory, and it is evident from the events during the years that the Jarawa do not hurt others without provocation. But of late, provocative incidents are increasing. These are standing evidence of intruders or poachers who are indulging small game hunting, fishing etc., and thus provoking the aborigines. Also the timber merchants, their dogs and work elephants are killed in an attempt to keep them off the tropical rainforest. Work elephants were imported by the Indians in the 1960'es.

The following number of recent incidents may be a clue to the deep structures of the conflict:

- Jarawa kill four men at Jirkatang 26.12.1993. They had all buildt their huts on Jarawa territory for the poaching of wild pigs. More than 50 Jarawa were participating in the attack at full moon. A total of ten Indians were killed during November-December 1993, among them five fishermen, all corpses penetrated by arrows.
- Jarawa attack 29.3.1996: 2 killed and 3 wounded. Three forest labourers had their hands cut off by the Jarawa with the very same axes they used to cut down the rain forest. A total of 12-15 Indian labourers were attacked and treated in this symbolic way by the Jarawa, defending their natural resources. More than 100 Jarawa are reported to have taken part in the attack, and the Forest Procection Force initially opened fire but had to escape from the aborigines. (Indian Express, 16.4.1996. Delhi edition, frontpage).

Not only the natural forest resources have to be defended but also the biological genes of the tribe. A sexually disturbed Bush Policeman had with his gun fired at the genitals of a female Jarawa sitting in a tree. In the punitive raid March 1996 mentioned above one Indian male was killed in a hut and a fleeing Indian woman persued and killed by the shooting of multiple arrows in her genitals.

- July 1996: A male Jarawa was found by Bush Police caught by the leg in a trap set up by settlers for deerhunting. He was treated at the hospital in Port Blair, where Indians invaded the hospital to have a look at the wild native. It is not known wether he was accepted by his social group after the return.

In the summer of 1996 it is evident that not only the Jarawa have to defend their resources of existance in the forest, but also their genes and reproductive abilities are being threatened by Indian intruders. To this threat the tribe can only rely on their simple technology, the well-functioning of their social structure and their will-power.

On a larger scale this conflict of natural resources is dealing with the dismishing of the rain forest. The agreed maximum of forresting is each year surpassed by 1/3, being 1.3 million cubic metre/year instead of 1.0 million cubic metre/year. The surplus is sold illegally by corrupted civil servants on high levels to secure a additional income. This deforestation is a major threat to the surviving of the Jarawa.

It seems that the Jarawa tribe has been led to use hostility as an effective shield against

external onslaughts. The population is estimated to be around 200 Jarawa with a healthy and strong appearance and a large number of children, indicating a comparatively better position to future growth and infant survival.

## 5.0 The Onge

The Onge and the Great Andamans are the two Andaman tribes who have most felt the 'death touch of civilization'. In contrary to the Sentinelese and the Jarawa they have both been in regular contact with outsiders for over a century. The Jarawa, the Sentinelese and the Onge are believed to be of the same stock, all having what must be among the darkest skins in the world, whereas the Great Andamanese are believed to be of a different stock, according to Radcliffe-Brown.

The Onge inhabit Little Andaman, surrounded by coral reefs and the rich marine life: fish, turtles, crocodiles and the Dugong, the herbivorous sea mammal now close to extinction.

British 'punitive expeditions' have since 1867 been in contact with the Onge who revolted against shipwrecked crews and intruders on their island, and not until Portman's camps and staying on the island in 1886-87 much could be said about these aborigines who had been without contact to the outside world for thousand of years.

The use of iron was known to them prior to the contact with the British, probably learned from Malay pirates or Chinese traders and obtained from shipwrecks near the island. A great variety of artefacts from the Onges can be seen at the Antropological Museum in Port Blair, including items from the present settlements in Dugong Creek, Hut Bay and South Bay. The Onge at Little Andaman have since the Bangladesh warscene been pushed back by the large number of Bengali refugees in their settlements.

They are regarded as one of the purest of all surviving groups of negritos of the world, being most isolated and least mixed. With their very scanty body hair and unaltered genetic composition they expose a fingerball pattern similar to some Bushmen groups of Africa.

Their body is uncovered, the tassel being the only traditional dress of the women, but both sexes has a unique practice of painting the body and face with red ochre or white clay. Their material culture have weapons and tools mainly similar to the tribes already presented: Bow and arrow, turtle hunting harpoon, fishing net, wooden buckets, cane baskets and tools for cutting and chiselling. The dog was brought to Little Andaman at the beginning of the present century and have ever since been used for hunting.

The social organization is based on groupings that may be called bands, and altogether 24 bands have been identified among the 98 surviving Onge. Each band consist of a few families and share a beehive-shaped communal hut where the member families have their respective sleeping places and the family is the constituent unit of the band among the Onge. About 20% of the bands of the Onge appear to have become extinct during the last thirty years.

A few rituals and feasts are associated with birth, adolescence, marriage and death, not involving any religious worship but believing in Onkobowkwe, the spirit whose abode is in the sky over Little Andaman. For the yong boys the 'tanagiru' ceremony is the rite de passage for joining the hunting parties of the grown ups. After death the dead body is buried under the bed of the deceased person, often in a temporary hut.

Welfare for the Onge is carried out by an organization Samiti which in fact have been fairly unprofessional in terms of acting to the benefit of the aborigines, and initiatives are presently being taken to strengthen the supervision and guidance of the Anthropological Survey of India.

Plantations in Dugong Creek and in South Bay for growing coconut, banana and papaya are lacking the interest of the Onge who are receiving free food or additional food from the government. A formal education system is underway and some school books have been produced: 1. An Onge - Hindi textbook and 2. An Onge - Hindi - English picture dictionary.

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century a thousand Onge were estimated, in 1995 a mere 99 are left. The depopulation is accelerated by a low productive index, the rate of mortality exceeding that of fertility due to high sterility and infant mortality, and incompatible pairing of marriage partners - widows remarriage with younger men according to tradition leading to unproductive marriages and leaving productive girls out of the game - are found to be the reasons of population decline among the Onge tribe.

## **6.0 The Great Andamanese**

Around 1788-89 the Andamanese tribes, with their total population of 5000-8000, were able to resist the first attempt of the British to colonize the Andaman Islands. The colony had to be moved further up to Port Conwallis in the north-east as the resistance from the tribes and the fever made the first attempt on Ross Island futile. At the time of the second arrival of the British in 1858, the Great Andamanese were living in and around Port Blair and other adjoining areas of South Andaman.

They were in fact the first group of negrito hunter-gathers of the Andamans to come into contact with outsiders including British administrators, army contingents and convicts deported from the mainland of India. This contact and the transferral of vices etc. caused a threatening reduction of their numbers and they were close to extinction before the removal to Strait Island.

The Great Andamanese were in reality not one but ten tribes with separate localities, dialects and names: the Cari, Kora, Jera, Bo, Kade, Kol, Juwai, Pucikwar/Bojigyab, Bea and Balawa. These tribes can be divided into two sub-divisions, a Northern group and a Southern group. All these different tribes were lumped together by the British administrators and outsiders in a broader group named 'Great Andamanese', later to be distinguished from the Jarawa, the Onge and the Sentinelese.

The tribes organized a well planned attack on the Port Blair settlement in 1859 and caused much damage in spite of betrayal by an escaped convict Dudhnath Tiwari on the eve of the attack, a sepoy of the 1857 mutiny who had lived with the tribals for several months. As a result of the betrayal the Great Andamanese suffered heavily as they were fighting with bows and arrows only against the guns and artillery of the colonial regime.

This 'battle of Aberdeen' May 1859 was probably the worst case of genocide in the British colonial history of tribal encounters, a veritable slaughter causing a sudden decline in the number of young male Great Andamanese and thus threatening the genes and future survival of the tribe. The deaths of the young Great Andamanese resulted in a decline of population as they constituted the core of the reproductive age group. The consequence was a long lasting impact on the entire population, who could never make up the loss.

The Great Andamanese population was large - estimated 3000-3500 - till 1859 when it started declining rapidly. In 1901, their number was reduced to only 625, in 1961 to a mere 19, 1975:23, 1987:28 and in 1996 to 37 after the inhabiting of Strait Island. The remaining Great Andamanese since 1969 inhabit Strait Island situated at a distance of 32 nautic miles from Port Blair.

The contact with the British led to the spread of new diseases like bronchitis, syphilis, measles etc. and the tribe gradually lost its former territorial rights. Escaped convicts from Cellular Jail



and naval staff transmitted syphilis to aboriginal women and the consumption of opium caused a lower birth rate. The outbreak of measles and smallpox took away during 1877 about half the total number of tribals of South Andaman who had survived the battle of Aberdeen in 1859.

The family is the only unit of social organization among the present day Great Andamanese. Earlier a group of families, consisting of 40-50 persons, used to form a social division which Radcliffe-Brown called the 'local group', a structure breaking down from the beginning of the century.

They live by hunting, fishing and food gathering, now supplemented by monthly provisions of food and clothes supplied free of cost by the Andaman administration. The rehabilitation on Strait Island ensured better health and regular supervision of a social worker to the tribe.

#### **Great Andamanese on Strait Island. 1996 figures:**

- Total number 37
- Children under 14:, total 14, of these 8-9 at school. The youngest is 1-2 years old and mixed with an Indian.
- Females, fertile: 12. Woman: chachi
- Males, fertile: 12. Man: chacha.
- The Raj, the elder: 80-90 years old, named Jirakey.

#### **Government staff:**

- Education: one teacher
- Health department: one pharmacist + one ward attendant.
- Electricity: one staff
- Police radio: two staff
- Tribal welfare: two staff.

Total government staff: 8.

Wednesday is 1996 the scheduled weekday for the visit of medical officer, Saturday for veterinary officer.

Myths and legends have been collected to a wide extent from the Great Andamanese and the Onge as these tribes have been victimized to a more systematic anthropological field work compared to the Sentinelese and the Jarawa. The social function of their religion has been studied by Radcliffe-Brown who interprets it in terms of a system of beliefs, symbolic practice and objects governed by obscure faith rather than by knowledge. Still quite a few of their practices have evolved around ecology, a field where the Great Andamanese traditionally had a deep understanding of the natural basis for their living.

At Strait Island the loss of their homeland territories and values has led to a trauma. Driven from their natural setting they have lost their traditional ties and personality to a considerable extent. Effort to convert them into cultivators have failed, and seed corn and pesticides leave them undisturbed. Instead they are encouraged to develop their traditional crafts which are sold in Cottage Industries Emporium in Port Blair supplemented by artefacts from the Onge at Dugong Creek.

Being a tribal reserve Strait Island is closed to visitors. The 36 inhabitants mainly belong to the Jeru tribe, although the former differences do not make any difference to the inhabitants these days. They now consider themselves as one and only tribal population, and no one is left with proper knowledge of their old life-circle rituals.

## **7.0 Perspectives**

The Jarawa is practicing an eye-for-an-eye and tooth-for-a-tooth policy in response to assaults on their natural resources and their women, trying desperately to preserve the genes of the tribe. It is hard to recognize much talent in the actions of the Bush Police who were supposed to make the co-living a friendly one. At present it is being considered to arm selected village settlers with firearms, a step which may in due course write the toom stone inscription of the tribe.

"The Jarawas of Middle Andamans are today approximately at the level of contact that we had with the Onge around the mid-twentieth century. They may in due course pass through the stages which the Onge and the Great Andamanese are passing through. The Sentinelese are now on the brink of making friendly contact and there is no reason to think that they will not repeat every phase of the cycle" (Pandit 1967, p.27).

For the administration the construction of the Andaman Trunk Road has led to a situation most counterproductive to the social well being of the Jarawa. Quite obvious, the Jarawa cannot distinguish exactly where their territory ends and that of the Forest department begins, to put it in plain words.

Views differ strongly on the optimal Government policy to the remaining tribes on the Andaman Islands. The present policy by the Indian administration of making contact during special 'contact expeditions' in order to establish friendly relations, will in due course lead to the extinction of the last tribes on earth living from the land in a paleolithic life style.

And the perspective of following a more scientific social anthropological and protective course and the policy of not-interfering in the living conditions of the tribes may eventually turn out to be too late. The impact of foreign cultures, first the British and later the Indian, is considered to add up to a level where the point of return has been exceeded since quite some time.

## **8.0 Fact box**

Principal information on the Andaman tribes can be obtained from the Anthropological Museum cum Library, Moulana Azad Road. At present plans are being considered for the removal of the museum.

INTACH, Cellular Jail, is very informative on the present status of the tribes. Also Samudrika Navy and Ocean Museum from 1993 in Hadoo is worth a visit on the natural conditions and marine life of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. A center for anthropology has been established in Port Blair since 1995.

All places mentioned are situated in Port Blair.

Statistics are from 1994, when otherwise is not indicated.

Inhabitants: 280.661 (1991)

818 females to 1000 mænd.

Urban: 75.000

Rural: 205.000

Tourists/year. App. 40.000 (1995).

Of these only app. 2000 international.

Port Blair, normal rainfall: 3180 cm. Air humidity: 78%

Area under forest, total: 7170.09 km<sup>2</sup>

Of total area two special categories:

- Reserve Forest 2928.76 km<sup>2</sup>

- Protected Forest 4241.93 km<sup>2</sup>

92.4% of total area is tropical rainforest.

25% of total area is Jarawa territory.

Literacy 1991:

- male 78,99%

- female 65.46%

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