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 Director

First Project Report

Vanishing Voices of the Great Andamanese

Submitted by the Project Director
Prof. Anvita Abbi

1.1 The project, Vanishing Voices of the Great Andamanese, presently underway in the directorship of Prof. Anvita Abbi of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, is primarily about documenting the highly endangered Great Andamanese language. The project aims at a detailed descriptive grammar, a sociolinguistic description, a trilingual dictionary in Great Andamanese, Hindi and English, and an extensive archive of folklore, and oral texts of the nearly extinct Great Andamanese speakers, who live in the Strait Island and in Port Blair. We intend to record the language in its entirety. The aim is to probe into the phonological and morphological systems of the language so as to reconstruct its core grammar. This may reflect the degree of variation that exists in today's speech represented by different people in the same community. As we also wish to prepare a trilingual pictorial dictionary in Great Andamanese, English and Hindi, a major by-product of the project will be preparation of primers and other literacy material in the language. This could be given back to the community and, in particular, aspiring young children of the tribe, who sadly have no other means of learning the language and retaining the ancient culture as presently there is no transmission of the language from the elders to the young.

2.1 **Duration.** This is a three-year project which started on November 1, 2004. A team of three researchers employed in the project at the Centre of Linguistics and English, Jawaharlal Nehru University was sent to Port Blair on 26th of February 2005 for the first fieldtrip. The research staff was allowed to work with due official permission (letter no. 1-272/2003-TW/1009, dated 14th July 2004) within the premises of the Adi Basera as