

of Trans-Himalayan and Central India have attracted the ethno-botanists of our country but very little attempt has been made to document the traditional health care habits of the tribes of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Many studies particularly of plants used in traditional health care systems of indigenous communities have been made in various parts of the country but the studies on ethnobotany of different tribes of Andaman and Nicobar Islands are rather scanty<sup>2</sup>. The medicinal plants constitute important biological resources of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. There are about 250 medicinal plants reported from these Islands and 80 are having potential for commercial exploitation<sup>3</sup>. The Andaman and Nicobar Island is an abode of five primitive tribes, viz. Jarawas, Onges, Nicobarese, Shompens and the Sentinelese. Of these, only Nicobarese are able to maintain their sustenance under the influence of outsiders. They have been living in harmony with the nature since ages and depend on plants for the treatment of various ailments<sup>4</sup>. However, with the present pace of shrinking of the forest and rich traditional heritage under the influence of outside world, these tribes are loosing the knowledge of medicinal plants, which can otherwise be tapped for the betterment of the society.

The present study aims to identify and document, based on field survey, some of the plant species used for medicinal purpose by the Nicobarese tribe of Car Nicobar Island.

#### Methodology

A field visit was carried out to the Car Nicobar Island during November to December 2002. Interview with Mr. Alben

(Second Captain of Passa Village) was conducted and documentation of some folklore claims used by the Nicobari tribe has been carried out. The photographic records with correct botanical names of all the documented plant species were also made.

#### Study Area

Car Nicobar is the headquarters of Nicobar district, about 250 km south of Port Blair, lying south of Ten-Degree Channel in the Bay of Bengal. With a total geographical area of 127 sq km, this Island is also a center of Nicobarese culture and language. Most of the vegetation is presently in degraded form with scrub and scattered trees. Weeds such as *Lantana camara* Linn., *Chromolaena*, etc. are common. *Catharanthus roseus* (L.) G. Don near Arong village and *Ocimum sanctum* Linn. near Mallaca grows in abundance.

The Nicobarese are one of the tribal groups inhabiting the Nicobar Group of Islands in the Andaman Sea. The Nicobarese belong to the Mongoloid race. Their population has doubled in the last 50 years and figures 26,142 according to 1991 census. Bulk of them live in Car-Nicobar Island, and to a lesser extent in the Nancowry, Katchai, Camorta, Teressa, Bompuka, Chowra, Little Nicobar and Great Nicobar<sup>5</sup>.

#### Observation

Nicobarese depend on plant resources for the treatment of various ailments. Most of the plants used by them are herbaceous; however extracts derived from shrubs and trees are also used. Although they depend on several rare and endemic plants growing