

REPORT ON CONTACT EXPEDITION TO JARAWA AND SENTINELESE AREAS

(10.4.96 to 12.4.96)

By

Dr. Kailash Chandra
Deputy Director & Officer-in-Charge
Zoological Survey of India, Port Blair-744102

Andaman and Nicobar Islands are the homeland of 6 tribal communities i.e. Great Andamanese, Onge, Jarawa, Sentinelese, Shompen and Nicobarese. However, there is a distinct racial difference between the Andaman tribes and their counter parts in Nicobars. The former two are Nigrito, while the latter are Mongoloid. Out of these 6 tribal groups, among the Mongoloid, the Nicobarese are well integrated and assimilated to the Indian mainstream and the Shompen, who are still shy and avoid to contact to outsiders are not particularly hostile, while among Nigrito groups Onge and Great Andamanese have accepted outsider interference and are rehabilitated by the Andaman and Nicobar Administration. Moreover, the Jarawa of South Andaman and Sentinelese still have hostile attitude towards the outsiders.

With the launching of Pilot Project to study the Socio-cultural, material, health, nutritional, language and ethno-biological aspects of Jarawa and Sentinelese by AAJVS, Directorate of Tribal Welfare, Andaman and Nicobar Administration, a multi-disciplinary expedition to Jarawa and Sentinelese area was carried out from 10.4.96 to 12.4.96 under the leadership of Chief Secretary, Shri Narendra Prasad. I was also a team member, who has been given the responsibility to study the ethno-biology of Jarawa and Sentinelese. In this regard, hitherto no study has been carried in context to Jarawa and Sentinelese. Therefore, it was the first contact expedition by the Zoological Survey of India except the visit of our former Director, Dr. A.K. Ghosh, who participated in seminar on "Future Policy Towards Primitive Tribes" as an expert and visited the Jarawa and Sentinelese area during the same period. He also made the recommendations to launch a Pilot Project for six months to have a multi-disciplinary studies.