

The Bhatus or Bhantus

The Bhatus were the members of a roving tribe of North and Central India. They earned a very bad name for organized robbery and decoity and for this reason proscribed by the Indian Government as a "Criminal Tribe". Quite a large number of them were convicted and jailed and the then Govt. of United Provinces (= Uttar Pradesh of present times) tried to confine the rest to settlements under the care of the Salvation Army. A large gang of Bhatus voluntarily came to Andamans in 1926 from the Indian Jails and the free Bantu settlements and they were settled and allotted agricultural land at places near about Port Blair, such as, Caddlegunj, Aniket and Ferrargunj. Their wives and children were allowed to accompany them. The adults settled down to an agricultural life and their children were educated in their village schools and when they grew up were employed in the saw mills and on coolie labour in various other industries. Here in the Andamans they have maintained a straight record; see the notes on Bhatus at pages 35 and 57 of the census report of 1931 - copy marked Annex B/1 and B/2. All the Annexures and other papers having to do with the Bhantus are being furnished with the Report in a separate file designated Bantu - File.

The Act proscribing various Tribes as Criminal Tribes having been repealed after independence, it may be taken for granted that the Bhantus now come under the denomination of a Denotified Tribe and in Uttar Pradesh they have been given the status of a Scheduled caste; see serial No;20 in page 10 of the Brochure issued by the Govt. of India - copy marked Annex - B/3.

Social condition of the Bhantus.

1. The very fact that the Bhantus are the members of a denotified tribe and further that they have become members of a scheduled caste in Uttar Pradesh clearly go to establish their status as a backward class; See Sl.No.20 in page 10 of Brochure containing the lists of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes issued by Govt. of India - copy marked Annex - B/3.

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