

A Note on the Primitive Tribes of A & N Islands.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are the homeland of probably the most primitive tribes of the world. **In all, there are six tribes in these islands. Five of them are primitive.** They are the **Great Andamanese, the Onge, the Shompen, the Jarawa and the Sentinelese.** The sixth tribe, namely, the Nicobarese is a comparatively advanced tribe. The total population of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, as per 1991 Census, is 2,80,661 out of which 26,770 (about 9.5%) are tribals. Further, out of the tribal population, Nicobarese alone number 26,170. In other words, the population of the primitive tribes is quite small. This has been a matter of great concern for the Government. The Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti, which is an autonomous body set up in 1976, looks after the welfare of the primitive tribes. The Samiti is headed by the Lt. Governor. The present state in respect of each of the primitive tribes is described below.

The Great Andamanese :-

The Great Andamanese, **presently 35 in number** were settled at Strait Island near Havelock Island of Ritchie Archipelago on the north-east of South Andaman in 1969. Many welfare and developmental schemes are being implemented for the Great Andamanese. Their level of **literacy is around 37%** today. A coconut plantation has been raised on the Strait Island. Besides, a Balwadi, a Primary School, a Medical dispensary and a poultry farm have also been established there. A pharmacist has been posted to man the dispensary and the Medical Officer of Long Island visits the Settlement once in a week to provide medical care to the Andamanese. A Police Radio Station for communication and a Police picket to guard the Andamanese with their resources have also been set up at the Strait Island. Each Andamanese family has been provided with a timber house, a couple of cows, goats and poultry birds. A TV set has been installed in the Community Centre. Electricity has also been provided to the Settlement. In addition to the scaled free ration and clothes, the Andamanese are given some cash allowance also to meet their petty requirements.

But the stress of welfare/developmental programmes has been on the materialistic aspect only. With the dependence on govt. **they have lost their traditional way of subsistence and interest towards any economic activity.** Since they have lost their traditional way of a wholesome life, and no new activity has been taken up with full interest many of these people