

Jarawa Tribal Reserve Dossier

A project¹

By

Kalpavriksh

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And for

Enhancing Linkages between Biological and Cultural Diversity

D) Andaman and Nicobar Islands

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands of India are the largest archipelago system in the Bay of Bengal, consisting of 306 islands and 206 rocks and rocky outcrops, and covering a total area of about 8200 sq. kms. The islands are situated about 1000 kms from mainland and less than 10% of their total number inhabited.

The islands of the archipelago lie in a crescent that stretches from Cape Negrais of Myanmar to the Banda Arc of Sumatra (Indonesia). The Andamans are considered to be the extensions of the submerged Arakan Yoma mountain range of Myanmar, while the Mentawai Island to the south and south-west of Sumatra are presumed to be a southern continuation of the Nicobars.

1a) The Great Andaman group of islands is made up of North, Middle and South Andaman Islands, with Baratang Island situated between Middle and South Andaman Islands. Ritchie's Archipelago is a group of islands located to the east of Middle Andaman while the Labyrinth group of islands is situated south west of South Andaman. 90% of the total land area of 6408 sq km of the Andaman group is constituted of reserve forests and protected areas. Nearly 30% of this land is designated as tribal reserves in the name of the four indigenous communities here, the Great Andamanese, the Onge, the Jarawa and the Sentinelese.

1b) The Nicobar group is spread over an area of 1841 sq. km of which 1542 sq. kms are forests. The Nicobars are separated from the Andamans by the 10 degree channel, a wide gap of 160 km. This group consists of 24 islands in three distinct clusters. The northern group consists of Car Nicobar and Batti Malv; the central or the Nancowry group consists of Tillangchong, Chowra, Teresa, Boinpoka, Trinkai, Karnorta, Katchal and Nancowry, and the southern group which consists of the two large islands of Little and Great

¹Prepared on behalf of Kalpavriksh by Pankaj Sekhsaria

Kalpavriksh is an environmental action group that has worked in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands for over a decade in fields of documentation, research, environmental education and legal action aimed towards the protection of the fragile environment and indigenous peoples of the islands.

Pankaj Sekhsaria is author of the book *Troubled Islands - Writings on the indigenous peoples and environment of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands*. He is presently, also moderator of a very active electronic discussion group dedicated to the issues of these islands.

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