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DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS  
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No. Ling.2007/7079

Dated : 31 January, 2008

To,  
The Resident Commissioner,  
Andaman and Nicobar administration,  
Andaman and Nicobar Bhavan,  
Chanakyapuri,  
New Delhi 110021

दिनांक स DC-1868 (उपायुक्त)  
Diary No. .... (DC)  
दिनांक / Date ... 1/2/08

Dear Sir,

Through: The Head, Department of Linguistics, University of Delhi.

DC lu  
AC(MG)

I am writing to request permission to carry out linguistic research in the Nicobar Islands between the months of February and March 2008. The purpose of my research trip is to study the languages of the tribal communities living in this area. This work is of utmost importance because linguists estimate that languages like these, which are spoken by minority groups with very small populations, are in danger of dying out within the next 50-100 years - these languages are, therefore, considered endangered languages. Just as scientists work hard to study and protect endangered animals and plants, linguists consider it an urgent priority that endangered languages should be studied in depth as quickly as possible and that every effort should be made to help preserve them.

As a Reader in the Department of Linguistics, University of Delhi, my research specialization is the documentation of endangered languages. As the enclosed CV shows, I have worked previously on Betta Kurumba, the language of a tribal community living in the Nilgiri Mountains of Tamil Nadu. My goal is to work next on the tribal languages of the Nicobars. For this work, I will need to visit settlements on various islands, where I will interview speakers of Nicobarese. In my interviews, I will ask speakers for a list of words and sentences in their mother tongue, which I will analyse so as to discover the rules of their languages. I will then ask them to tell me a few short stories in their mother tongue, and ask them next to translate the stories into Hindi or English (the Nicobarese speakers I will work with must know Hindi or English in addition to their mother tongue). The stories will be analysed for further information about the language. This basic method will be used to gradually gather more and more language data, which will be analysed to discover the unique structure of each of these languages.