

National Seminar on  
**“Land, Forest, Water & Peoples: Competing Interests &  
Emerging Realities/Issues”**  
on the occasion of Diamond Jubilee Celebration of the  
Anthropological Survey of India, Andaman & Nicobar Regional  
Centre, Port Blair  
Date: -February 28-29, 2012  
At  
Auditorium, An.S.I. Port Blair

The other following aspects are coverable within the title cited above; they are suggestive to the issues to be taken up in the National seminar for deliberation.

- 1. FOREST, TRIBES & POLICIES: DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS & IMPACT**
- 2. TRIBES, IDENTITY, CULTURAL RESISTANCE & NEGOTIATIONS: ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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Carrying capacity of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands (A&NI) is one of the pertinent issues compounded with the natural environment with a high biodiversity that contains a large number of endangered species probably no where else on earth. Greater protection is much needed for the “Hotspots” of these islands especially; the peoples who dwell within the “Biodiversity Hotspots.” They have immense knowledge of the forest & without the forest they cannot continue their foraging activities. Prevailing circumstances indicate that they make their living from the diverse plants & animal life in such areas. On the one hand, lots of encroachment on revenue lands as elsewhere seems to have multiplied discernibly of late. The annual rainfall in these Islands speak volume for its proper harvesting, yet on the other hand water crisis is seeing the light of day & how to devise plan to cope with it can be articulated.

In the A&NI still traces of few most endangered and vulnerable hunters-gatherers tribal communities like the Ang (Jarawa), Sentinelese & Shompen etc are discernible in isolated marginalized pockets. They seem to have been playing a very important role in preservation & management of natural resources within the framework of their traditional knowledge. Since 2004 situation has changed significantly from providing protection & limited welfare to create a state of affairs & mutual understanding where Ang gain control over their own lives-a sort of process that fosters power in them for use in their own lives, for instance to protect/preserve their culture, language, habitats, resources etc by acting on issues they themselves define/consider as important. Two different propositions are prevailing-“Protect & Insulate Ang versus Mainstreaming &

their Progress.” Consideration of emic (Insiders’) views, to seek & listening them narrate their own vision, of course allowing them to make their own decisions, liberty & genius acceptance if any of their expectation of outside world, their free will, behavioural changes of the younger tribesmen especially, teenagers, toddlers even a few adults in interacting with the outside world; what they want, to what degree & how they articulates isolation or incorporation for instance, they want to leave the forest or not, looked forward to medical help, implements to carry on their daily foraging operations & some food articles to satiate hunger or special treat for taste etc are such debatable burning issues. These disturbing scenarios are discernible of late, not only in the fringe areas of dissimilar settlements; but also on the Andaman Trunk Road (ATR). The other disturbing propaganda is that the Ang are suffering from food anxieties. This seems to be half-truth, which many have inferred without research based evidences. The connections between the tribes & resources have emerged as a critical issue having inter-related internal & external dynamics. Undoubtedly, the trajectory development has been significantly a state medication through which the issue of connections between tribal communities and their resources provides both opportunities & changes. As a matter of fact, peoples inhabiting different pockets of these Islands can play vital roles in preservation & management of the natural resources according to their traditional knowledge.

Dynamic processes of the ever-increasing negotiations of group identity with reference to the history of migration, status, privileges, rights & duties compounded with the political competition for recognition & access to its sinecures through quota reservation, which the present light of the day have witnessed considerably. The precarious existence of tribal peoples in the A&NI is under the threat of annihilation, stiff competition & conflict in exploiting the resources, expansion of settlement areas, physical development of these Islands that are exceedingly complex, disturbed ecological conditions & social milieu, mushrooming activities of tourism etc for over a decade; pose an open question how the tribal communities may protect their lands or habitats, identity & sources of sustenance etc. Bureaucrats, political leaders & influential peoples have had contributed their own ideas in formulating the policy of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands (A&NI). Considering the diverse communities, tribal peoples, levels of living & history of these Islands etc the Andaman & Nicobar Administration (A&NA) have categorized the inhabitants of these Islands as below: -

1. A person who is permanently residing in the A&NI and is
  - a) (I) an old inhabitant, i.e. one who has been living in the Islands, since prior to 1942; or  
(II) A person either of whose parents were born in the Islands; or  
(III) Spouse/children of persons mentioned in (I) & (II) above or
  - b) (I) A person settled in the Islands under any scheme of rehabilitation/colonization; or  
(II) Spouse/child or children’s spouse of such a person; or
2. A person who does not belong to any of the categories at (I) above, but who has had a minimum ten years continuous education in the Islands leading to acquiring of the minimum educational qualifications laid down for the post under the A&NA, to which appointment is sought:  
Provided that a person either of whose parents has been residing in the Union Territory for a continuous period of not less than ten years shall deemed to be

‘Local’ in respect of appointment to the post of Mazdoor for which the educational qualification is less than Class X.

3. “Permanent residence” for this purpose will mean a period of continuous residence in the A&NI for ten years.

The A&NA did issue a notification in 2005 declaring the Local Born, Bhanu, Mopla & Karen as OBC, which indicate a political competition in terms of identity; rights etc a status enough for them to obtain lands, privileges and so on. Indeed, a coexistence of several religiously diverse communities, the tribal peoples compounded with the prevailing present of Government servants from the mainland of the Indian subcontinent in the A&NI. These Islands have witnessed a consistent growth of heterogeneous peoples, expansion of settlement of settlers & repatriates under rehabilitation post-colonial policies, increasing social complexity, autonomous migrations of labourers & traders of different culturally amalgamation practices and creolized communities noticeable due to a variety of historical migration processes have now given a shape to a distinct culture refer to as “Mini India.”

As per direction of the Kolkata High Court vide their Order date April 9, 2001 in WP No.048 of 1999, the Central Government through the Principal Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, within two months from the communication of this order had formed a Committee of Experts with the Lt. Governor of the A&NI as the Convener, comprising of renowned anthropologists, sociologists, Nutritional experts, doctors for immediately undertaking a scientific study, research & survey in the aforesaid change in the behaviour of the Ang & find out the cause of the same. It was laid down therein that the said Committee shall submit its report within six months from the formulation of such Committee before the Central Govt. & Lt. Governor, A&NI & also file a copy thereof before the Circuit Bench of this Court.

After six months thereafter the Central Government through the Home Secretary himself and the Lt. Governor of the Andaman & Nicobar Administration shall formulate a policy, plans and programmes on the aforesaid questions whether the step should now be taken for bringing the Ang in the mainstream of the society or they should be left to their own way of life as before or the balance between the two should be struck following the peaceful existence theory as suggested by Mr. Awaradi in his Master Plan or any other experts. For the aforesaid purpose, the Central Government shall, arrange seminars and open discussions of the different experts, National and International on the line, Anthropologists, Sociologists and other as also Individuals and non governmental organizations having knowledge and experience in the matter inviting them by issuing public notification in widely circulated news papers and sending them letters of invitation and thereafter shall frame the policy decision within the stipulated period after deliberation and discussion on such opinion with the approval of the concerned Ministry. The Central Government shall also publish the papers, discussions and deliberations of such seminar, at its cost, for future reference.....

After formulation of such policy, the same shall be notified by the Central Government and the A & N Administration and shall also be placed before the Circuit Bench of this Hon’ble Court for appropriate order.”

In pursuance of the aforesaid order of the Hon'ble High Court of Calcutta, Committee of Experts was constituted by the Central Government vide the Ministry of Home Affairs' Notification No. U 14040/24/99-ANL dated July 21, 2001.

The Committee of Experts submitted its report before the Hon'ble High Court of Calcutta on July 28, 2003. As per the aforesaid directions of the Hon'ble High Court, the Central Government was required to formulate policy, plans and programmes in respect of Ang in consultation with the Lt. Governor, A & N Islands after organizing seminars and open discussions with the different experts, national and international, Anthropologists, Sociologists and other as also Individuals and non-governmental organizations having knowledge and experience in the matter. Accordingly, the Central Government organized two such seminars one at Kolkata on April 7-8, 2004 and another at Port Blair on May 27-28, 2004 wherein experts, non-governmental organizations and Individuals deliberated on various issues relating to the Ang and their well being.

The Central Government in the Ministry of Home Affairs considered the report of Committee of Experts vis-à-vis the views that emerged during the two seminars/open discussions organized by the Central Government on the said report of the Expert Committee in Consultation with the A & N Administration and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the administrative Ministry for the matters connected with tribes and tribal affairs.

The Central Government in the Ministry of Home Affairs has consequently decided to frame policy/guidelines for the protection and welfare of the Ang in Andaman & Nicobar Islands with the following objectives in view:

### **Objectives**

- (I) To protect the Ang from harmful effects of exposure & contact with the outside world while they are not physically, socially & culturally prepared for such interface;
- (II) To preserve the social organization, mode of subsistence & cultural identity of the Ang community;
- (III) To provide medical help to the Ang to reduce mortality & morbidity in case of sudden affliction with diseases which their systems are unaccustomed to;
- (IV) To conserve ecology & environment of the Ang Reserved Territory & strengthened support systems in order to enable the Ang to pursue their traditional modes of subsistence & way of life, and
- (V) To sensitize settler communities around the Ang habitat & personnel working for the protection & preservation of the Ang about the need to preserve this ancient community & to value their unique culture & life styles.

The A&NA treat the Ang as a unique human heritage thereby; the utmost need to protect their cultural identity. The Islands Administration is maintaining the policy of **“Maximum Autonomy with Minimum & Regulated Intervention”** in the cultural life of the tribesmen & no attempt of any kind is being made to bring them in the ‘mainstream society’ or to rehabilitate them. The A&NA does not keen to intervene in

their traditional life & the tribesmen are continuing their hunting-gathering activities in the entire TRF. The main objective as specified is to avoid dependency syndrome as well as to ensure their culture, identity, and pace of development according to their genius determination as a vibrant hunters-gatherers. The quality of intervention will be managed with care & sensitivity through suitably trained & re-oriented personnel & anthropologists & experts would be consulted to evaluate such intervention. As stipulated, the traditional knowledge of the Ang including ethno-medicine shall be preserved & documented.

The Nicobar group of Islands has been declared a “Tribal Reserved” under the Protection of Aboriginal Tribes (PAT) Regulation 1956. Nonetheless, a significant proportion of non-tribal such as Govt. officials, local traders, Ex-Servicemen (Ex-Defence personnel), Air Force, repatriated population from Sri Lanka as well as descendants of these diverse communities & illegal settlers from the mainland of the Indian subcontinent. Hybrids-offsprings of a few marriages with tribal peoples also formed a fraction of such diversified population in these Islands. Barring some tribal reserved pockets, most of the south, middle & north Andaman Islands are non-reserved areas with tribal & non-tribal communities living in close proximity of the “Tribal Reserved Forest (TRF).”

The Administration of Union Territory of A&NI is concerned about the increasing biotic pressure on forest resources in these Islands in order to meet the basic demand of fuel wood, fodder, small timber for agricultural implements & land for habitation with ever rising population. As laid down in the Resolution for Joint Forest Management Committee (JFMC), A&NA, Department of Environment & Forests published on May 20, 2005 there are no rights & concessions recognized in the Reserved Forests/Protected Forests & any other forests except easements recognized in the Protected Forests under the A&NI Protected Forest Rules, 1986 to the inhabitants of A&NI to meet their basic domestic needs in respect of ‘Minor Forest Produce’ herein termed as Non Timber Forest (NTFP) & small timber for agricultural implements. Etc. The facility extended to the inhabitants of the A&NI for supply of timber & NTFP free royalty under the abovementioned Rules, has been totally discontinued as per the recommendations of Shekhar Singh Commission Report accepted by the Hon’ble Supreme Court in its order dated May 7, 2002 in I.A. 502 of 1999 in WP(C) 202/95. Whereas, the participation of villagers residing in the vicinity of the forests is considered essential for effective protection & management of the forest areas to meet the bonafide domestic needs of villagers. The collective responsibilities of the JFMC is to protect forest, against encroachment, unregulated grazing, fire, illicit felling, theft of forest produce etc & at the same time to prevent, detect & report forest offences & pass on relevant information & intelligence to the local Forest Officials; besides create awareness among villagers about the importance of forests in meeting their domestic needs of forest produce on a sustainable basis.

Acquiring land for various development perspectives is no child play that many an individual or firm has to strive in any contemporary situation. Land Acquisition Act 1984 stipulates certain benefits that may be used for obtaining land. The Land Acquisition Relief & Rehabilitation Bill 2011 has come in vogue recently; it is believed to have a proposal stipulated for compensation four times higher than the market rate to the owners. It also proposes Govt. help for acquisition of 20% of the land for a private project in the case of firm acquires 80% of the land needed for a

project. Utilization X Consumption=Depletion of resources. Land, resources & their sustainable use have occupied the centre stage of not only development dialogue but also in pertinent perspectives. The discourse has streamed from the awareness of the contradictions in the relationship between resources use & level of development: high level of consumption depletes resources at a higher rate & depletion of resources cause the level of consumption unsustainable. Notwithstanding the awareness, the per-capita consumption of key natural resources is high in rich countries, even in developing countries. A recent World Bank Report records that 2.3 billion residents of low-income countries consumed less than 3%, while one billion residents of high income countries consumed more than 80% of the total global resources. Yet according to another report, while 10% rich countries consumed more than 70% of world resources, the remaining 90% depend only 30% of the entire world. But a trend has emerged in the countries from this 90% bracket in which people are increasing the utilization of resources resulting to their falling upon consumerism. In view of this, a recent paper of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) predicts that the consumption of resources would escalate from the current level 60 billion tones to 140 billion tones by 2050.

One may not be surprised to find that about 80% of the worlds cultural & biological diversity have been reported inhabiting their respective regions. But the connections between tribes & resources have emerged as most critical issues, consequent upon induced development interventions, which they have to be conserved so far owing to subsistent livelihood pursuits within the traditional knowledge system. Understandably, the emerging interests have invariably linked the land or resources to the market demand hence expanding the demand base beyond the community, carrying capacity of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands or any State. The expansion of demand base is further facilitated by the Union Territory or State, which often accesses these resources in the pretext of national development, however, caters to the consumption level of rich section of the populations. Added to it is the global demand for resources in order to maintain the consumption level of rich advanced countries. It is not surprising to witness the complexity of development & involvement of the well dominant politically rich peoples in sand mining, quarrying & establishing industries for instance wood industries, shell craft, fishing etc mainly eyeing the abundant resources in the “Tribal Reserved Forests.” The Andaman & Nicobar Islands have witnessed the entry of influential traders, businessmen etc through the existing legal devices.

In fact, the course of human development has been considerably the Union Territory contemplation through the competing interests & emerging realities or even health issues have direct & indirect connections between the tribes & other well-dominant communities & the latent complacency in obtaining opportunities & coping with stern challenges are bound to emerge in the womb of times. A critical scrutiny of it has been the growing interests in contemporary situation for instance, the dynamic processes of the ever-increasing negotiations of identity, status, privileges, rights, sovereignty of claim over the other & duties compounded with the political competition for recognition & access to its sinecures through quota reservation. All caused implication of group identity with reference to the history of migration to any State or Union Territory as the case be. The interest has further inferences firstly, the concerns for preserving cultural identity & simultaneously formulating sustainable strategies of development & over utilization of land, resources use, secondly, the

response of tribal communities & analogous peoples to these connections with enormous regional cultural resilience & negotiations as well.

With the backdrop of a two-day seminar during ensuing Diamond Jubilee Celebration of the AnSI, ANR Centre, Port Blair in the last fortnight of February, 2012; it is proposed to address the following issues with the primary aim to disseminate knowledge to understand the operational dynamic use of land, resources, policy of the A&NA on the tribes, cultural identities of the tribes, sources of their sustenance & development perspectives both in principle & practice with emphasis of forces & processes of interventions. The negotiation of the tribes, their land, resources, identity etc with forces of interaction & intervention etc to be dealt with from the perspectives of both the *emic* (insiders) & *etic* (outsiders) views & of course the intervening agencies & the A&NA.