

The computerised Data generated on the sample survey of the Pre-1942 and Post – 1942 settlers inhabiting 30 villages in South/Middle and North Andaman was placed before the Commission in April, 2000. This is the Classification Table copies of which have been provided in the separate files meant for each of the Communities which are being submitted with the Report. To have a first hand knowledge of the situation prevailing with the Post-1942 settlers the Commission decided to meet some of their representatives. On 22.4.2000 the Commission went to Kadamtala in Middle Andaman and had discussions with Pradhan and Up-Praddhan of Kadamtala Gram Panchayat and Pradhan, Sarpanch and Members of Uttara Gram Panchayat. On the same day the Commission went to Ranagt in the further North and met and had discussions with two Members of Zilla Parishad, Nimbutala, Pradhan Sabari Gram Panchayats, Pradhan, Gram Panchayat, Parnasala, Members of Panchayat Samities of Rangat and Parnasala, Pradhan of Bakultala Gram Panchayat and Pradhan and Sarpanch of Rangat Gram Panchayat, and the Executive Officer and Secretary of Panchayat Samiti and Gram Panchayat Rangat. On 23.4.2000 the Commission reached Diglipur at the Northern end of North Andaman and had discussions with the Pradhan of Shibpur Panchayat, the Sarpanch, Member Panchayat Samiti and the Panchayat Secretary, Shibpur, (Copies of the statements recorded are being inserted in the file meant for the Bengali Settlers).

On way back, the Commission had a meeting at Mayabunder on 24.4.2000 with the Pradhan, Sarpanch, Up-Sarpanch and members of Pokadera Panchayat and Pradhan and Members of Panchayat Samiti Mayabunder. Excepting for a few Pre-1942 families, living in Pokadera and Mayabunder are near about all the places visited by the Commission on this occasion are inhabited almost exclusively by the Post-1942 Bengali settlers. On 29.4.2000 the Commission went to Tusnabad and had a meeting with the Pradhan, Up-Pradhan and Members of Tusnabad Gram Panchayat, Sarpach of Hobdaypur and Member, Zilla Parishad. These are areas inhabited principally by Pre-1942 settlers; (copies of the statements recorded are being inserted in the file meant for the Local Born).

The Commission found that the data/information generated from the sample survey of the Pre and Post-1942 settlers broadly tallied with the results of interaction with their

representatives. Finding the said informations thus reliable and workable broadly, the Commissions felt that the representatives of the Pre and Post – 1942 settlers should be confirmed with them and that the Commission should also hear what they have got to say with regard to the same . Invitations were sent out accordingly.

Mr. Nelson Prashad, Pradhan of Ferrargunj Gram Panchayat and three others – all Bhatu – met the Commission on 8.8.2000. They were confronted with the informations collected by the Commissions with regard to the Bhatu and their comments and views were recorded; (copy of the statements in Bhatu file).

Similarly Mr. Abdul Salam, President of the Andaman Mopila service Organisation met the Commission on 7.8.2000 along with three other members of the same Organisation. They were also confronted with the data with regard to Moplahs and their comments and statements were also recorded; (copy of statement in Moplah file).

Similarly view and statements of Mr. Govind Ram, General Secretary, Local Born Association, Port Blair, were also recorded. He met the Commission along with Mr. John Lobo, President and Dr. Rasheed, member of the said Association on 10. 8. 2000; (copies of statements recorded in Local Born file).

The Karens approached the Commission as late as 11.8.2000 for getting the OBC status. As there were enough materials in official records of the Administration, about the Karens, collection of further information was considered unnecessary. The Commission met Smti. Frieda George, Member Adviser of the Karen Youth Organisation on 13.9.2000 and recorded her views and statements . She was accompanied by Mr. Ashuangthong, President, Rev. Bwehla, Adviser and Messrs/Shri Saw Andrew, Issac and Nawrry – all members of the Association ; (copy of statement recorded in Karen file).

The Commission met Messrs. A.K. Biswas, President, N.C. Maitra, General Secretary, Gautam Mandal, Advisory Committee Member of Bengal Association, Andaman and Nicobar Islands (BAANI) and Dr. R.K. Haldar, the Founder President of the said Association. They were also confronted with the informations

gathered by the Commission with regard to Post-1942 settlers and the views and the statements of Dr. Haldar – who did most of the talking were also recorded. The Association challenged the correctness of the informations with which they were confronted the requested the Commission not to recommend and Bengali Settlers for the status of OBCs. They informed the Commission that they were trying for the Scheduled Caste status and they sent to the Commission a written statement later. (copy of statement recorded in Bengali Settler file). The Commission sent intimation to 11 (eleven) Pradhans of Gram Panchayats – all representing Post – 1942 Bengali settlers – and they were requested to hold meetings of their Panchayats and to pass resolutions on the point as to whether they wanted the OBC status or not and to make the copies of the same available to the Commission. Of the eleven served with the notice Pradhans of 6 (six) Panchayats have informed that their Gram Panchayats want to come under the Category of the OBCs. Pradhan of one Panchayat has intimated that they do not want to come under the category. Pradhans of 4 (four) Panchayats have not intimated the Commission the desire of their Panchayats in this regard; (copies of notices issued, statements made by Pradhans and resolutions filed by them in Bengali settler file).

With all informations collected and all relevant persons met- as far as practicable – we now proceed to consider as to whether the information gathered will be sufficient to identify all or any of the Pre and Post – 1942 settlers as OBCs of these Islands. We take up the Pre-1942 settlers first.

Pre-1942 settlers

We have already stated why we are treating the Bhatu, the Moplals and the Karens separately even though they come under the category of Pre-1942 settlers. We propose to take up the case of the Bhatu first.

The Bhatu or Bhatu.

The Bhatu were the members of a roving tribe of North and Central India. They earned a very bad name for organised robbery and decoity and for this reason prescribed 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 Bhatu voluntarily came to Andamans in 1926 from the Indian Jails and the free Bhanu 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 Bhatu at pages 35 and 57 of the census report of 1931 – copy marked Annex B/1 and B/2. All the Annexure and other papers having to do with the Bhatu are being furnished with the Report in a separate file designated Bhatu – File.

The Act prescribing various Tribes as Criminal Tribes having been repealed after independence, it may be taken for granted that the Bhatu 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 Bhatu.

1. The very fact that the Bhatu 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 Broucher containing the lists of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes issued by Govt. of India – copy marked Annex – B/3.
2. As per the Classification Table (copy of classification Table filed in Bhanu File and the other files separately) drawn up on the basis of the sample survey Source of Income of the Bhatu in % is as follows:-

Agriculture	-	13.06
Wages	-	10.92
Others	-	74.53 (Daily Rated Workers, small businessmen etc.)

The figures were not agreed to by the leaders of the Community. It was stated to the Commission at the meeting held on 30.10.99 at Ferrargunj that the then Government gave 4 acres of land to each family when they were brought to the Islands. The members of the extended families hold and cultivate these lands and divide the crops amongst themselves. In the meeting held on 8.8.2000 Mr. Nelson Prasad, Pradhan of Ferrargunj Gram Panchayat and a leader of the Bhanut community asserted unequivocally that his community in its entirety depended on agriculture. He was fully supported by Mr. Sunder Singh, Retired cattle Development Officer, Animal Husbandry Department, who said that the people of his community were engaged in agriculture from April to December every year and that thereafter they were free to work anywhere else. The Commission accepts the contentions of Messrs Prasad and Singh. The figure 74.53 shown as 'Others' under col. 8 of the first page of the Classification Table must be the figure showing off season agriculturists, though some of them may be regular day – labourers'.

3. The figure 1.49 under col. 9 of the first page of the Classification Table showing Women's contribution to the Income of the Community has also been challenged. Smti. Kamalavati, Member of Panchayat said during the meeting held on 30.10.99 that the women of her community do all the agricultural work in the fields except ploughing which is done by the males. This is also the version of Mr. Deepak Johnson, a Govt servant. The Commission finds their assertion reasonable and acceptable.

4. The Commission is also told that 70% of the males if not 100% drink country made liquor made from molasses – perhaps – by the members of the community themselves and illicitly. This must be a hangover from the tribal days. Pitted against the general standards of acceptability in the country, this practice of making and drinking illicit liquor must be considered as a sign of backwardness.

The leaders of the Community also claimed that the agricultural land shown in col.10 of table as 156.50 acres must be much more and that the urban land shown as 19800.00 sq.mtrs. must be less since at most 12 families lived in urban area. The Commission finds this assertion since most of the Bhatu live in the rural areas.

Page No.2 of the Table gives the details of the state of education amongst the Bhatu.

The leaders of the community say that the literacy rate at best can be 60% and not 83.65% as shown in col.6 of page No.2. The literacy rate is really not very relevant since the Govt. here provides free school education to all children up to Higher Secondary level. However even at 83.65% it is below the State Literacy which is 97%.

The percentage of Matriculates has been shown in col.7 of page No.2 as 31.56. This is slightly above the State percentage which is 30.7%. the leaders of the Community contend, however that not more than 15/20% of their community are Matriculates. Considering the state in which the Community is at present, this may as well be true.

The percentage of Graduates as shown in col.8 is 4.37% which though a bit higher than the State percentage of 4.8% is accepted by the leaders. This also shown the low standard of education among the members of the community. Page No.3 of Table 1 contains details of economic condition.

Col.6 of page 3 shows that 37.50% of the community live in Kutcha houses. The leaders of the Community say that about 30% of their houses are semi-pucca and that about 10% have pucca roofing. The leaves out about 60% which may be kutcha. The Commission feels that even 37.30% is quite a high percentage and that the percentage indeed may be higher considering that almost all the members of the community are agriculturists.

As for service , only one person of the community holds a Group A post. Similarly only one person holds a Group B post. Number of Group A posts in the Islands is 344 and that of Group B posts 458. it is pretty clear that the representation of the Community in the Group A and B Service is very much below the population – equivalent proportion of the Community. From the statement of Shri Prasad it appears that the Community has 24 Group C and 10 Group D Holders. This preponderance of representation in Group C and D also shows the backwardness of the Community.

CONCLUSION.

The very fact that the Bhatu are a denotified tribe and further that they have been listed as a scheduled caste in the State of their origin clearly establish their backwardness as a community. Their backwardness is also revealed by the overwhelming involvement of both the men and women of the Community in agriculture and other labour intensive jobs and occupations. Their habit of taking country liquor is another indication. Unsatisfactory performance in the field of education also reveals their backwardness. The fact that quite a large proportion of the community lives in Kutcha or semi-pucca houses indicates their socio-economic backwardness. Lastly their inadequate representations in the higher echelons of the State Service very convincingly reflect their backwardness. In view of all these factors the Commission is of the view that the Bhatu may be considered as one of the OBCs of these Islands.

Moplah/Mopla/Mappilah

They are the descendants of a racial mix between the Arabs and the Malayalis. They lived in Malabar. Being excited by the Post First World War Khilafat movement in India, they rose in revolt against the then British Government in August, 1921. Many British officials as well as Moplahs and local Hindus were killed in the process. The British Govt. of the day put down the rebellion ruthlessly. A large number of Moplahs were arrested, tried in courts and convicted. A large number of the convicts were transported to these Islands and some of them were allowed to take their families with them. In 1921, they were settled in villages in the South Andamans where they were allotted free agricultural land (4 acres per family) and other facilities. At present, most Moplahs are found in the villages of Bambooflat, Stewartgunj, Govindapuram, Wimberlygunj, Mannarghat, Wright Myo, Ograbraj, Malapuram, Calicut and Panighat. Their population was 1885, according to the 1931 Census(i.e the last census when community-wise figures were given): see the Govt. of India's Resolution No.F-20/26 dated the 27th February, 1926 as printed in Appendix I to Dr. R.C Majumdar's 'Penal Settlement in Andamans', printed and published by the Gazetteers Unit, Department of Culture,

Ministry of Education And Social Welfare, Govt. of India and the article headed 'MOPLAH' appearing in pages 122 onwards in the same publication, and the para on the Moplahs(Mappilla) appearing in page 35 of the Census Report of 1931-copies provided marked Annex- M/1,M/2 and B/1 in Bantu file. The number of the members of the Community stood at 16000 in 1995 as per their own estimate.

1. Social condition of the Moplahs.

In the Home Department of the Govt. of India's Resolution No.F-20/26 dated 27.2.1926 reproduces in Appendix I of Dr.R.C.Majumdar's book 'Penal Settlement in Andamans' (Annex-M/1) the Moplahs were described as a band of Muslims, poor and ignorant. In their State of origin the Moplahs have already been listed as OBCs see Page 313 in Swamy's Reservations and Concessions in Govt. Services, serial No.39 (Annex-M/3). Presumably in their State of origin there has been no improvement in their status-social or economic-over these years. There is no reason to believe that the things are otherwise with regard to the branch of the community which was brought to the Islands and settled here. In the background of the situation prevailing in the Mainland the Moplahs here may be described as a socially backward Community straightway.

In the first page of the Table - 1 their source of Income in % has been shows as :-

Agri.	Wage	Others
4.64	11.83	78.96

The percentage of income from agriculture i.e. 4.64 is not disputed. It was stated by Abdul Salam, the President of the Andaman Mopila Service Organisation that some and not all Moplahs were allotted land when they were brought to these Islands. With the passing of times families have grown bigger and bigger, but there has not been any fresh allotment of land to them. As a result there has been fragmentation of holdings due to expansion of the families. Agriculture thus is not the main occupation of the people of the community. More than 50% of the people of the Community are landless, so was the Commission told ; (Copy of the statement of Shri. Abdul Salam is in Moplah file).

The percentage of 11.83% shown as income from wages is not disputed. 78.96 shown as income from other sources is not also disputed. It is said to comprise the earnings of small business men such as shop keepers.

The community does not sustain itself by agriculture. But the fact that besides those who sustain themselves as labourers, an overwhelming portion off the community, in the absence of any significant resource base, tries to make their ends meet by running small business is a factor which shows their true place in the society.

The women's contribution to the income generated by the Community has been shown in Col. 9 of the first page of the Classification Table as 1.49%. This is disputed by Mr. Abdul Salam, the President who says that the women of the community besides doing all sorts house-hold works, also labour on their own lands and some also work as maid servants. Considering the general economic condition of the community this sounds very probable.

The area of 20444.00 sq.mtrs of land shown to have been owned by the members of the Community in col.11 is not accepted by Mr. Salam according to whom the area must be considerably less. This may as well be the case considering the general economic condition of the community.

In the Educational field the literacy rate as shown in col.6 of page 2 of the Classification Table is 79.34% which seems to be rather low since school education is absolutely free here. Percentage of Matriculates shown as 22.53% in col.7 has not been accepted. Mr.Salam contends that the percentage may be 10% at most. Percentage of Graduates shown in Col 8 as 2.53 also seems to be very low. The low percentage in the field of education also shown the backward character of the Community.

In col.6 of page 3 of classification Table the percentage families living in Kutcha houses has been shown as 7.90. This is contradicted by Mr. Salam who asserts that more that 50% of the Moplahs live in semi-permanent houses having mud floors, tin sheet roofing and walls made of timber. He says further that

those who works as peons etc. live in Govt. quarters and others live in Kutcha houses. Mr. Jainuddin, the Secretary of the Association said during the meeting at Stewartgunj on 6.11.99 that since people of this community live in joint families, savings from the income of all the members are used for raising pucca walls. It was also said in the occasion that the walls of many houses were built with bricks taken from buildings left by the Japanese. (Copies of the statements in Mopla file). Considering that the people of the community in general are cultivators or labourers, or small time businessman or Group D job holders or holding similar jobs under private employment, it is difficult to believe that all of them would be in a position to build regular pucca houses. Since the community has been living in these Islands for the last eighty years or so, it is possible that over the years it was possible for them to effect improvement to their houses.

Columns 8 and 10 of the third page of the Classification Table shows that there are 8 Group A and 6 Group B post holders in the community. Whereas the number of the latter is not challenged seriously, the number of the former is. It is said by the President of the Association that there are only 5 Group a Officers amongst them not 8 and he name all of them. They are all doctors. Mr. Jainuddin, the Secretary of the Association said on the earlier occasion that apart from 5 doctors, the community had 3 Govt. Officers and 20/25 teachers. There are bus-conductors-20/30 in numbers and 20/25 drivers employed in different Govt. Departments. Some are peons or Chaprasis, and other work as labourers under private employers. It was asserted on the earlier occasion that even though the traditional occupation of the Moplabs is agriculture, but since agricultural land is not available to expanded families they have diverted to other occupation like running small business or working as day labourers etc.

As the table will show (page3) the share of the members of the community in Govt. posts and service is not equal and in fact much below to the population-equivalent proportion of the community. This factor taken together with the fact that the greater number is employed is small jobs clearly establish backwardness of the community. The relevant factors are therefore as follows:-