

1. The Moplahs are a backward community in their State of Origin;
2. The financial capability of the members of the community is rather low. Half the population have no agricultural land. The area of the land held by those who have land is very small. A few have become Doctors or Engineers or Govt. Officers due to the concessions given by the Local Administration towards their education; but they are far outnumbered by those who have no significant resource base and depend upon jobs of the lowest rung, or daily labour or small businesses.
3. The Women of the Community labour on the land of the family apart from doing household work and some even work as maid servants.
4. The performance of the members of the community in the field of Education is not at all encouraging. The percentage of literacy, matriculates and graduates is extremely low and this may be due to lower financial capability and general backwardness of the community.
5. General condition of the Housing of the community also point to general backwardness.
6. the hopelessly disproportion share of the community in the Govt. services of the higher echelon also reveal their backwardness.

All these factor that taken together indicate the backwardness of the community have succeeded in coming out of the rut, but hey are far out-numbered by those who are still suffering from the ill effects of their backwardness. Taking all these elements into consideration the Commission is of the view that the Moplahs may be declared as a backward community.

A few more words before we pass on to consider the case of another community. On 6.11.99 when the Commission met the representatives of the Moplahs Stewartgunj, an elderly member of the Community complained to us that even though they were freedom fighters having risen against the British govt. of those days, they were very improperly labeled with the derogatory description of convicts or criminals. He pointed out that Dr. R.C.Majumdar mentioned in his "Penal Settlement In Andamans"( see P.291 in Annex -M/1) that the revolutionary political prisoners of India and others regarded the Moplahs as political prisoners fighting for freedom and that they were

treated by them at a par with the Sepoy Mutineers of 1857, Wahabis, and Thadwady rebels of Burma who were all kept as prisoners in the Andamans. The Moplahs request the govt. to take these facts into consideration and to take appropriate action for washing away the stigma from which they have been suffering and to give their ancestors their due by describing them as freedom fighters. This demand of the Moplahs has nothing to do with the Commission; yet it is included in the report as the Moplahs want that they be recognized by the govt. as descendants of freedom fighters rather than convicts. The Commission request the Govt. to consider this demand of the Moplahs with all the seriousness it deserves.

### **The Karens.**

Next we take up the case of the Karens . They are Mongoloid tribals from Bruma. They migrated from Bassein in Burma in 1925 on the promise of a grant of land and employment in the Forest Department. They formed a separate free colony in the Middle Andaman near Stewart Sound. They are all Christians of the Baptist sect. At the time of the Census in 1931, there were 133 males and 130 females; see p.35 of the Census Report of 1931;(Annex-B/1 of Bhantu file).

The Karen families were allowed to settle in pockets near Mayabunder by clearing the Forest. In due course the Karens worked not only as labourers in the Forest Department but also started cultivation in the cleared patches. They have been living in nine villages viz. Webi, Deopur, Latav, Lucknow, Karmatang IX and X, Bourang and Chipo- all situated near Mayabunder. Their present day number may be 2000. though Christians they retain much of their traditional tribal way of living and have the reputation of being a simple, honest and hard working people who ordinarily keep themselves to themselves.

### **Social condition of the Karens**

From the statement of Smti. Frieda George, Member-Advisor of the Karen Youth Organisation another before this Commission and a report drawn up by Sri S.A.Awaradi, the then Director(Tribal Welfare) of the Andaman and Nicobar Administration(Annex-K/1) it appears that the Karens are mainly agriculturists. They cultivate their own land. Area of holding per family is about 5 acres and they grow-paddy the yield being about 5 quintals per acre. The women labour on the

fields belonging to the family and so also do the children on holidays. Previously they used to go for hunting and shell fishing; but they go no more since these have been banned. Boys of the community labour under Schemes sponsored by the Govt;(copy of the statement made be Smti Frieda George is in Karen file).

### **State of Education among the Karens.**

Previously the Karens did not find any interest in higher education since they felt quite happy with their free hunting, fishing and cultivating pattern of life. But the restrictions on hunting and shell fishing made them to realise the necessity of education. Thereafter, gradually there has grown a tendency to go for higher and technical studies.

Smti. Frieda George informs the Commission that even though most of the Children go for primary education they usually stop at that since their parents are too poor to provide for their uniforms, text-books etc. Up to date only 20/25 boys and girls have passed the Secondary Examination and 10/15 Higher Secondary. There are only one BE and one Diploma holder in Civil Engineering and only one has passed out from a Technical Institute as a welder. There is only one doctor.

### **Economic Condition among Karens**

The Karens – as a whole are not a very prosperous community. By their agricultural pursuits and working as labourers they just manage to pay their way. This is also because they are accustomed to lead a simple, tribal life without much want.

Most of the Karen houses are built on stilts traditionally, with a very large number having floors made of plank, sticks, mud or mat. The walls are mostly made of mat, planks, or mat and thatch. The houses mostly have thatched roofs and tins are also being used. Without an hesitation these may be called katcha houses. The doors of the these housed have no door leaves and there is no provisions of locking up the openings.(see report of Sri Awaradi at page 4 and the Appendix attached thereto- at page 12, Annex- B/1 of Bhantu file).

Smti Frieda George informs that Commission that the only doctor of the Community is in Class A service and that she herself along as the Principal of the Nursing Training School of the Islands is in Group B. there are 58/59 in Group-C in Medical, Police, Transport, Education, Veterinary etc. and about 10/15 in Group D as watchmen, ward-attendants etc.

From the informations detailed above, it becomes quite clear that the Karens fully deserve being designated as OBCs.

1. They are a tribal people and it is common knowledge that tribals are backward everywhere. The Karens are no exception. Their almost total dependence on agriculture and working as labourers, and the part played by their women and children show their backwardness. Nobody says that they ever had a member in any Gram Panchayat.
2. Their poor participation in the educational activities whether in the lower or the higher rungs also indicates their backwardness.
3. The kutcha houses of the Karens indicate their backwardness. So also do their representation in Group A and B Posts by only one member of the community each. The greater representation of the community in C and D Groups of Posts also show just that.

Had the Karens been an Indian Tribe they would have in all certainty been given the status of a Scheduled Tribe in recognition of the general backwardness of tribals. Here in these Islands all we can do in view so their being Tribals together with their backwardness in social, Educational and Economic fields is to recommend for their inclusion in the list of OBCs of the Islands.

### **Local Borns**

Now we take up the case of the Local Borns. We have already stated how this community has come into being(see P.6) we now proceed to consider their condition-social, educational and economic.

**Social condition of the Local Born.**

As a community the Local Borns are considerably more numerous than the other pre-42 communities. Proportionately there are more educated and more qualified men amongst themselves. But for historical reasons over which the Local born had no control and the ensuing non-adherence to the orthodox customs of caste, especially in matrimonial alliances, the Mainlander did not and still does not consider the Local Born quite the same as himself. This discrimination acts as a negative force in keeping him tied to this moorings and stands in his way of spiraling up and competing with the Mainlander.

2. As per the Classification Table(See Page I) drawn up on the basis of the sample survey, the income of the Local Born source wise is as follows:-

Col.6.	Agriculture =	7.94
Col.7.	Wage =	8.88
Col.8.	Others =	81.34

Mr. Govind Ram, General Secretary of the Local Born Association who met the Commission along with Mr. John Lobo, President and Dr. Rasheed, Member, Executive Council of the said Association asserted that the figure against Col.6 ie. Agriculture should be more than 7.94 as shown in the Table. His view finds support from the Office bearers and Members of the Tushnabad Gram Panchayat, Sarpanch, Hobdypur and Smti. Sumitra Devi, Member, Zilla Parishad whom the Commission met on 29.04.2000. The Commission was told that there are 80 pre-1942 families at Tushnabad Village and 50 pre-1942 families at Hobdipur village. It is asserted that agriculture is the main occupation of the villagers whose predecessors were settled in these two villages in or about 1900. At the time of the settlement each family was allotted 3 to 4 acres of paddy land, a house site and 7/8 bighas of land for horticultural purposes. After so many years each married family has 1/2 bighas of land and many have no land at all. Yield of paddy is about 25 mds. per acre. From agriculture a family earns about Rs.8000/- a year. The supplement their income the male members works as daily rated labourers for about three months in a year during off agricultural season and also go for fishing. The situation is

quite the same in Hobdypur village also; ( Copies of statements recorded in Local Born files).

This Commission finds these assertions fully acceptable. The Situation in the town areas may be different. But in the rural areas, so we see, the people are still mostly agriculturists. Since the income from agriculture is not adequate, the people try to supplement their income by wages earned by working as daily rated labourers or by doing some other strenuous job, such as catching and selling fishes. The figure shown under Col.8 i.e 81.34 must be representing those off time labourers. The results of the sample survey should be read and understood in that context.

The wage earners shown as 8.88% represent Govt. Servants –who as we will see later-mostly comprise C and D group employees. This figure is not disputed.

It follows, therefore, that most of the Local Born people of the villages are agriculturists cum daily rated labourers- both labour intensive pursuits. This surely goes to show the backwardness of the people, which is further endorsed by the fact that of the meager section of the people serving the State mostly belong to Group C and D. What is true with regard to Tusnabad Hobdypur or Pokadera must be true with regard to the other Local born people living in the rural area.

Another factor is womens' contribution to the family efforts. The proportion in this regard has been shown under Col.9 as 1.84. Shri Govind Ram, the General Secretary of the Local Born Association, Port Blair, does not dispute this figure as- so he says- "our women usually do not go out for working in the fields". This however, is not the impression which the Commission got at Tushnabad or from the members of Pokadera Gram Panchayat. There the Commission was told that the women and the children of the Local Born Community also participated in agricultural operations, such as transplanting, harvesting of paddy, collection of fodder for the cattle etc. The Commission finds the latter view fully acceptable since the Commission feels that it is not very likely that the women would sit idly at home where the males of the families would go out for working as days- labourers. It may be that as in the mainland, the city bred ladies of the educated middle class families "Usually do not go out for working in the fields", but the

Commission refuses to believe that this is the rule also with the ladies of the rural areas.

### **Educational Standard among the Local Born**

As per the Classification Table(see page 2) the state of education amongst the Local Born is as follows:-

Col.6, Literacy Rate	=	84.33%
Col.7, Matriculates	=	30.66%
Col.8, Graduates	=	6.53%

The literacy rate seems to be much less than the State average of 97%. Even then Shri Govind Ram says that in the older generation the percentage of literacy will not be more than 20%. This surely is a mark of backwardness, since education is free in the Islands.

The percentages of Matriculates and Graduates are near the State average which are 30.7 and 4.8. These figures also appear to be low. Shri Govind Ram says that the percentage of matriculates amongst the Local Born may be around 22%. In Tushnabad and Hobdypur the percentage is said to be 10% which is very likely since there are rural areas.

We are also informed at Tushnabad that there are 1/2% dropouts at primary level, 5% at eighth level and 20% in School final level. The dropouts cannot prosecuted their studies any further due to the poverty of their parents.

The state of education amongst the Local Born, though perhaps a bit better than the other communities, does not appear to be very encouraging.

### **Economic Standard of the Local Born.**

In Col.6 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> page of the Classification Table the percentage of families living in Katcha houses has been shown as 17.80%. This is disputed by Shri Govind Ram who asys that the percentage should be at least 35% to 40% especially in the rural areas. At Tushnabad the Commission was told that 60% of the houses were Katcha or semi pucca. The remaining 40% were pucca, but with sheet roofing. We may take it, therefore, that of

the houses of the Local Borns at least 40% are Kutcha and 20% are semi pucca i.e. Having brick- built floors but without having pucca walls and roof and that in the remaining 40% the floors and the walls are brick built, but the roofs are made with sheet roofing. It will be quite proper to conclude that even though in the city area there may be some pucca houses, in the rural areas the houses are mostly kutcha or semi pucca i.e having brick built floors but walls and roofs made with flimsy material.

Now we turn to see how many are the job holders amongst the Local Born and of which Category.

From columns 8 and 10 of the page 3 of the Classification Table it appears that there are 54 Group A post-holders and 82 Group B post holders in the community. This is considerably more than the other three communities. But yet the percentages come nowhere near the population. – equivalent proportion of the Community, since there are 344 Group A post and 458 Group B posts in the local Administration. Even then Shri Govind Ram says that the number of Group A post holders will not be more than 45/46 and that of group B post holders not more than 70/75. We were told at Tushnabad that of the 30 graduates in the area, about 15 are unemployed. There are only two clerks and two teachers and of the two Diploma Holders of the Community only one could get a job. In Hobdypur there are 4 teachers, one clerk and one nurse. There is no doctor or Engineer in either village.

### **Conclusion**

1. The discrimination suffered by the Local Born is akin to caste-discrimination and acting as a damper to his spirit, it induces him to keep himself within his shell and not to prepare himself for competing with the mainlander who is already in a better position socially, educationally and financially.
2. Excepting the well educated city-based the Local Born in the rural areas are employed in agriculture and such other labour intensive jobs. Quite a large number has to work as day- labourers for survival and the women and children of the community also join hands with the adult males in their agricultural pursuits. Though mainly agriculturist



many of the community have practically become landless since after the settlement about a hundred years ago there was no further settlement of land with the members of the community. Thus many of the community actually lack a significant resource base. Dependence on labour intensive activities and lack of significant resource base for many indicate backwardness of the community.

3. The educational standard among the Local Born is not also very encouraging. The literacy rate is much below the state Average. The percentages of Matriculates is below the State Average, Whereas the percentage of Graduates is a bit above. All this shows backwards of the community even though a section amongst them succeeded in educating themselves in a proper way by their own efforts in spite of adverse circumstances.
4. The Economic Standard of the local Born is not also as could be desired. In and around Port Blair there are some amongst them who succeeded in getting Govt. Jobs and are in a position to maintain a reasonable standard. But that is not the case with those living in the rural areas. There quite a large number among them- the percentage maybe 40% or even above still live in Kutcha Houses. Many others live in mixed kutcha- pucca hosues and very few have fully pucca houses. The state of housing certainly indicates backwardness.
5. It also appears that even though there are a number of Group A and Group B post holders in the community their percentages come nowhere near the population- equivalent proportion of the community. This is also an indication of backwardness.
6. The hopelessly disproportion share of the community in the Govt. services of the higher echelon also reveal their backwardness.

We see, therefore, that even though the Community is a bit forward in comparison with the other communities, its members suffer from many deficiencies in social, educational and economic fields which reveal its backwardness. It will be proper, therefore, to recommend its inclusion in the list of OBCs of the Islands.

### **Bengali Settlers**

Lastly we take up the case of the Bengali Settlers. We have already stated elsewhere who they are, when they were brought and settled here and by home. We now turn to consider the materials collected to decide if the community deserves to be designated as one of the OBCs of the islands.

### **Social condition of the Bengali Settlers.**

Since after 1931, there has not been any census in these islands on caste basis. As such there are no official records to indicate to what particular caste or castes do the Bengali Settlers belong. It is common knowledge, however, that the overwhelming majority of them belong to the caste of "Namasudras" a caste included in the list of the Scheduled Caste in West Bengal. See Annex -BS/1, Sl.No.46 in Bengali Settlers' File. According to the statement submitted by the President of BAANI (Bengal Association, Andaman Nicobar Islands), an organization of the Bengali Settlers, the present day number of Bengali Settlers is 1,09,500 and their caste-wise proportions are as follows:-

- |                                     |   |     |
|-------------------------------------|---|-----|
| 1. Namasudras<br>(Scheduled Caste)  | - | 95% |
| 2. Sudras<br>(Scheduled Caste)      | - | 2%  |
| 3. Barai, Baishya,<br>Kayasthas etc | - | 1%  |
| 4. Brahmins                         | - | 1%  |