

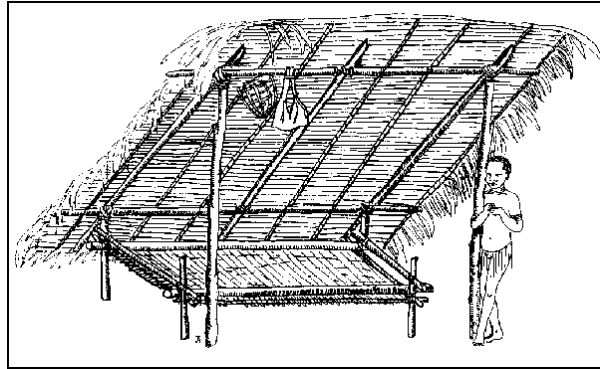
Chapter III

THE TRIBES

Since pre-historic times these islands were the home of aboriginal tribes. The tribes in the Andaman group of islands are the Great Andamanese, Onges, Jarawas and Sentinalese, all of Negrito origin, while the tribes in the Nicobar group are the Nicobarese and Shompens, both of Mongloid stock.

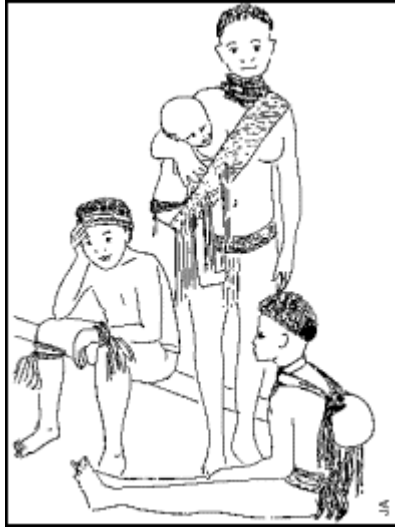
The **Great Andamanese** were once the largest in population among the various tribes inhabiting the Andaman Islands. Their estimated population in 1789 was 10,000. By 1901, their number had decreased to 625 and by 1999 their number had decreased to 41 only. They have been rehabilitated in a small island named Strait Island. The Great Andamanese were foragers. They can cook food and use spices as ingredients. At times, they still go for hunting and gathering. Their traditional food items are fish, dugong, turtle, turtle eggs, crabs, roots and tubers. They also eat pork and Andaman water monitor lizard.

Onges are one of the most primitive tribes in India. They belong to the Negrito racial stock and they have been relegated to the reserved pockets both at Dugong Creek and South Bay of Little Andaman Island. They are also diminishing in number. They are the semi-nomadic tribes and fully dependent on the food provided by nature. They have now experienced the impact of outsiders. Efforts at befriending them have proved successful. They eat turtle, fish, roots and jackfruits. They have developed artistry and craft and can make canoes.



Jarawas inhabit South Andamans. They do not have good canoes but can make rafts, which they build to cross the streams. Isolated for long, the Jarawas otherwise appear to be healthy, with smooth skin, deep curly hair, long and sturdy hands and legs and sturdy bones. They are physically fit for hunting and fishing. As nomadic tribes subsisting on hunting, fishing and gathering activities, their traditional food articles consist of boar (wild boar), turtles and their eggs, crabs and other shore animals, etc. wild pig fruits and honey.

The **Sentinelese** are the inhabitants of North Sentinel Island. The area is about 60 Sq. Kilometers. They are probably the world's only Paleolithic people surviving today without contact with any other group or community. They are considered as an off-shoot to the Onge-Jarawa tribes and have acquired a different identity due to their habitation in an isolated island and have lost contact with the main tribes. The Sentinelese are very hostile and never leave their Island. Very little is known about this hostile tribe.



The habitation of **Shompens** is the Great Nicobar Island, which is the largest among the Nicobar group of Islands. Like the Nicobarese, they belong to the Mongoloid race. The Shompens have two divisions, the smaller division being known as Mawa Shompens. They inhabit areas very close to the coastal region along the river valleys. They are very shy. They are quite intimate with the Nicobarese and from the major group of Shompens. The hostile Shompens live in Alexendra and Galathia river areas and also on the east coast of the area in the interior of the Island.