



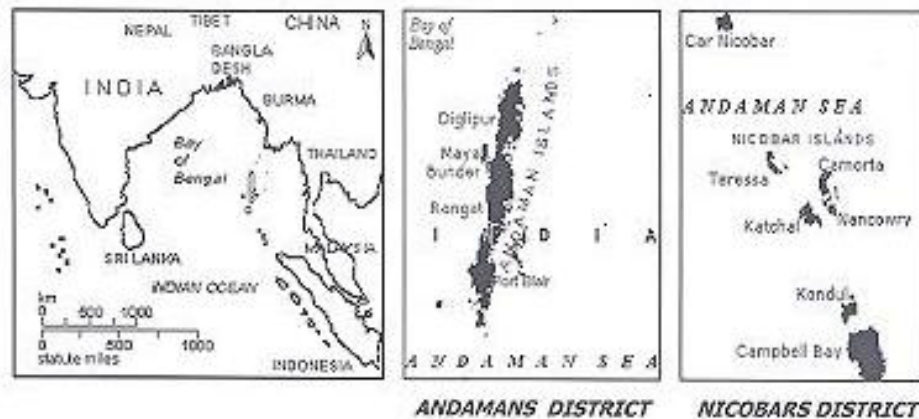
## *Chapter I*

### **THE LAND**

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands were shrouded in mystery for centuries because of their inaccessibility. They are a paragon of beauty and present a landscape full with scenic and picturesque extravaganza. These islands shimmer like Emeralds in the Bay of Bengal. The dense forests which cover these islands and the innumerable exotic flowers and birds create a highly poetic and romantic atmosphere.

The Islands have a great maritime importance. During the British period political leaders considered dangerous to the interest of the Raj and other dreaded criminals were deported from the mainland to the Cellular Jail -the Indian Bastille, situated on the sea coast of Port Blair at Atlanta Point in the North Eastern part of the settlement. These islands were infamously known as the 'Black Water Prison' or 'Kala Pani'.

The Islands are a group of picturesque islands, big and small, inhabited and uninhabited, a total of 572 islands, islets, lying in an arch in a long narrow broken chain, approximately covering 900 Kms. It is logical to presume a former land connection from Cape Negris in the Southern part of Burma to the Achin Head (Cape Pedro) in Andalas (Sumatra). The flora and fauna of these islands however indicate that this land connection if it existed, should have been prior to the development of their present life form.



The topography of the islands is hilly and abounds in evergreen forests. The sandy beaches on the edge of a 1900 Km meandering coastline are fringed with coconut palms that sway to the rhythm of the sea.

The sea around the islands *offers* excellent scope for water sports. The flora and fauna, underwater marine life and corals, with crystal clear water and mangrove-lined creeks, offer a dream view of the rare gifts of nature. Adventure tourism like scuba diving, trekking, island camping, snorkeling are the prominent attractions. A visit to these islands is an enchanting experience.