

## Globalization, Deforestation and the Disappeared Islanders: Challenges in Andman & Nicobar Islands

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### Abstract

Globalization has been one of the highly-debated topics over the past few years. Rapid economic growth and poverty reduction in developing countries has been positive aspect of globalization. But globalization has also generated significant opposition over concerns that it has increased inequality and environmental degradation. Today, the Andaman & Nicobar, an Indian archipelago is facing multifaceted challenges of globalization in the form of deforestation, degradation of biodiversity, water scarcity and the extinction of indigenous. The problem of nature covers a whole cycle of history and its proper interpretation can play a crucial role in shaping our understanding and guiding our decisions. Indian history only says that the archipelago was once a glorious chapter of Indian freedom struggle. The history is silent on the past, present and future of original inhabitants and their environment. However while tracing the references of globalization on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in a historical perspective it is found that the first wave of globalization reached at Andaman coast in the form of Malay pirates which started the slave trade. Second wave of globalization reached in the form of British. They set up a forest department here in 1883 with the sole purpose of to fulfill the increasing need of timber. The recent and third wave of globalization is looking it exotic paradise as the target of massive tourism promotion. These islands are now dominated by the outsiders brought by the different waves of globalization. Present paper would take a comprehensive look at the way the indigenous people and their environment have been subjected to alienation in the wake of the exploitation of natural resources during the different phases of history. This will also examine the role of state and the rights of marginalized.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Deforestation, Indigenous, History, Andaman

### Introduction

It is increasingly become important to make a choice between economic development and the protection of socio-cultural values and environment. Globalization leads to economic development by integrating regional economies, societies and cultures through a global network of trade and communication. While globalization contributes to gradual economic development, it has to be adapted to specific region in order to mitigate any adverse consequences. The focus of this paper is on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in India –an environmentally fragile region that suffers hugely from environmental changes due to different waves of globalization. Environment preservation in the Andaman has a significant link to not only the certain socio-cultural rights associated with the indigenous communities but also the survival of these people. Their environment, identity, culture, language and overall survival are under serious threat. The paper while addressing the basic issues of the

indigenous people of the Andaman's, also shows how they are continuously affected by globalization at the different point of history.

### **Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Its Indigenous People**

The Andaman & Nicobar islands are situated in the Bay of Bengal, mid-way between peninsular India and Burma, an off-shore outpost of the Indian union, in the shape of an arc in a North-South direction. The closest continental area is Burma and is about 190 km. to its northeast. To the west, about 1200 km of sea separates these islands from the mainland of India and far in the north lies the giant mangrove belt of the Sunderbans. The Andamans consist mainly of two groups of islands, viz., the Andaman group and the Nicobar group. They are separated from each other by a stretch of sea of about 100 km, which is popularly known amongst the navigators as the dreaded 10° channel.

These islands have a tropical climate throughout the year with the temperature varying from 18° C to 34° C. The mean annual rainfall is about 3000-3500mm. Due to the proximity to the equator, these islands enjoy a hot and humid uniform climate. (Aul Bandana)<sup>1</sup> Since the islands have a tropical, hot and humid climate with abundant rains, all the major islands support very luxuriant and rich vegetation. There are six indigenous communities that live in these islands. The Great Andamanese, Onges, Jarwas, and Sentinlese live in the Andaman group of islands while the Nicobarese and the Shompens, which are of Mongoloid origin, inhabit the Nicobar group of islands.

### **Three Waves of Globalization: Civilization, Development, Deforestation and Depopulation**

*A. First Wave: Piratical Activities:* The process of globalization can be defined the way it has to be seen, economic, political, social, cultural or any other, there are examples that globalization is not at all a new phenomenon which started early ages of the recorded human history. (Bhagawati, 2004)<sup>2</sup> Andaman and Nicobar Island witness the first wave of globalization when the Malays started using these islands for piratical activities in the Strait of Malacca. They also started trading of Andamanese slaves, most popular being the Shompens from Nicobar Islands of bigger and stronger stature compared to other tribes. The slaves found their way to the courts of Siam, Cambodia and Indo-China accelerating the hostility on the part of the aborigines to all visitors to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Therefore after some time among pirates the tribes appear to have earned them a reputation for cannibalism, a theory which has not been confirmed. The practice of throwing the vivisected bodies of their enemies onto a fire according to their superstition may be the observations from where the theory had its origin. This first wave led disappearance of indigenous people at the Andaman Islands.<sup>3</sup>

*B. Second Wave: Colonization and Forest Revenue for State:* To secure the sailing route from pirates as well as natives the British settled from 1789 onwards on Andaman Islands, initiated by Lord Cornwallis who sent Lt. Archibald Blair to survey the islands for the purpose of colonization. First on Chatham Island (Port Blair), later in the present Port Conwallis in the north-east. The fever forced the British to abolish the settlement in 1796, and not until 1857-58 the colonization finally succeeded by the founding of Port Blair and a penal settlement for Indian freedom fighters from the Mutiny against the British on the Indian subcontinent. The Andamanese fought and resisted the settlement for many years, living as they had been used to on these islands for ages. Redcliffe-Brown did his fieldwork in the

Andamans from 1906 to 1908. He was the first anthropologist to make a clear distinction between the Great Andaman Group (including all Great Andaman tribes except Jarawa) and the Little Andaman Group which includes: The Onge of Little Andaman, the Jarawa of South Andaman and the Sentinelese on North Sentinel Island.

On the adjoining Nicobar Islands the Danes were fighting the fever too, and colonization expeditions from Tranquebar settled on the islands from 1756-59 and again from 1768-87, until Denmark finally quitted the devastating conditions in 1869 and sold the Nicobar Islands to the British. The health condition was quite simple threatening for Europeans and the profit from the trade much too low.

This was the second wave of globalization which came in the form of colonization largely contributed disappearances of indigenous people. The main purposes of colonialism included economic exploitation of the colony's natural resources, creation of new markets for the colonizer, and extension of the colonizer's way of life beyond its national borders. Natural resources of colonies were indispensable for the functioning of colonialism and modern economies. It is without question that globalization has affected all corners of the earth. Due to the neoliberalism and structural adjustment practices of contemporary globalization, the forest of Andaman has been especially exploited. The following some paras will briefly discuss the nature and pattern of deforestation and depopulation during the British time.

This second wave led the history of Andaman to be known as the history of deforestation and depopulation of its original communities. The history of deforestation started with the appointment of Dr. James Pattison Walker, who had appointed as the first Superintendent of the Penal settlement of Port Blair. His remarks on the jungle are of interest. He wrote "The magnitude of the task of clearing the primeval jungle of the Andaman Island can only be appreciated by those who have witnessed the nature of the vegetation and the difficulty of affecting a clearance. The jungle is so dense, and its entanglement by gigantic creepers so complete, as to render it passable, except along the few pathways used by the aborigines. The jungle, so far as is known, is continuous, no open plains having been observed. Even when cut, often trees cannot be got to fall without great force, nor brushwood when cut removed, owing to the intricate binding by creepers of great strength. There is great difficulty even during the present dry weather in getting brushwood that has been several days felled to burn, and the largest heaps are constantly extinguished at night by the very heavy dews that fall, drenching everything exposed."<sup>4</sup> In this way the clearing of forest started with the arrival of so called civilization on these islands. The forests were "wasteland" that needed to be tamed, settled and developed. It did not matter that these forests were the home of myriad plants and animals that had evolved over aeons. It did not matter that ancient tribal people were already living here for centuries, neither that they were physically and spiritually sustained by these forests. The idea that forests could mean more than just the timber the trees provided had not even taken seed in the national consciousness.

The timber extraction continues even after the independences. But the civilization story not stops only with the extraction and supply of timber for the essential demand. Shekhar Singh Commission report says that timber extraction operation involve crores of rupees annually

is common knowledge. There have also been allegations that many top forest officers and administrators have made a lot of money through illegal timber extraction and transport operations. Concrete proof of this was unearthed in February 2000 before the Supreme Court. The matter also involved the issue of unnumbered transit passes for the transport of nearly 400 cu. m. of timber from Mayabundar in North Andaman to Chennai. As a conservative estimate, the total consignment was worth over Rs. 27 lakh and it is being described as only the tip of the iceberg.<sup>5</sup> The apex court of country had passed detailed order in May 2002 banning the transport of timber from the islands to any part of country. However, the production for local demand remains on.

The tribals too had to be civilized and brought into the Indian mainstream. There was no question of trying to understand, forget about asking what it was that the tribals themselves wanted. And the result is very obvious. The Great Andamanese have been wiped out as a viable community. This community, which had an estimated 3,000 members about 150 years ago, is today left with only about 48.<sup>6</sup> Even in 1883 E.H. Man also mention this "There can, moreover, be no doubt that the effect of our clearances of jungle has been prejudicial to the health of the aborigines, while the excessive tobacco-smoking among members of both sexes, which has been unrestricted, has seriously undermined their already enfeebled constitutions. If the evil ended here there would be ground for regret, but a graver cause exists in the deterioration which has taken place in their morals through their unavoidable contact with the alien convict population, the lamentable consequences of which will be found under the head of "Pathology". So widespread is the evil influence that has been exercised, that on no point probably will future writers differ so strongly as on the social and moral virtues of the Andamanese. I wish, therefore, to make it clear to my readers that my remarks and observations on all, and especially on these points, are restricted to those communities who have been found living in their primitive state, and who may therefore be fairly considered as representative of the race, being unaffected by the virtues or vices of so-called civilization".<sup>7</sup> Not only the Great Andamanese but the fate of all other tribes remains same. The most serious problem being faced by the five small tribes of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands has been their sharp demographic decline following their close contact with outsiders. The Director of Census Operations 2011, N K Sharma while releasing the data, announced the total population of the islands as 3,80,581 comprising 2,02,871 males and 1,77,710 females with the growth rate of 6.86 per cent. Despite the increase in the general population, the population of tribal people was decreased from 29,469 to 28,530 as compared to 2001 Census, registering a decrease of 3.19%. The 2011 census data for individual tribes is not available. (Please see table 1 & 2)

### **Detailed Account of Second Wave: Globalization, Tribal Policy and the Andaman**

The process of globalization has made unprecedented change in the lives of indigenous people across the world. Tribals as a homogeneous group across India has also paid the price for the globalization process led development which is reflected through displacement from the forest, alienation from the land and livelihoods, violation of rights with the forest and its resources and threatening their existence. Some studies carried by eminent authors clearly established contributions of second wave that led to disappearance of indigenous people in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Simron Jit Singh very aptly analyzes the tribal policy of India in his book "In the sea of Influence: A World System Perspective of the Nicobar Islands, Lund University, 2003".

According to him India followed a policy of rapid economic development for its aboriginal populations. Already from the 1950s, innumerable schemes and enormous amount of money began to be sanctioned for tribal areas in the name of “welfare” and “development”. The concept of a tribal policy was not a novel idea for India. From the beginning of British rule, the colonial administrators treated the “tribes” and “non-tribes” as two different categories of subjects. On the advice of Mills and Huttons, two prominent administrator-anthropologists, the British colonial administration set up the so-called “excluded” or “partially” excluded areas in regions with high concentration of aboriginals.<sup>8</sup> Verrier Elwin, the British anthropologist and a close friend of India’s first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, identified three reasons for this laissez faire policy of the British: firstly, the task of administration, especially in the border areas, was difficult and unrewarding”; secondly, “from a desire to quarantine the tribes from possible political infection”; and thirdly, “a number of officers sincerely held the view that the people were better and happier as they were.” From the second half of the nineteenth century, the colonial interests of commercial exploitation of the rich and vast forest in tribal areas clashed with aboriginal interests. There took place an organized transfer of forests to the state that originally belonged to the inhabitants and the regional rulers. Having lost their right to the forest, taxes were levied on the use of forest resources by natives. Adding to their rootless ness was a growing dependency on the officials of the Forest Department. Besides, several parts of tribal India witnessed, to a degree, organized infiltration of landlords, money lenders, and Christian missionaries who were very active inside these “excluded areas”. Independent India was bequeathed this tribal policy of segregation and exploitation.<sup>9</sup> India inherited along with its independence in 1947, some 533 tribal groups, of which 75 were classified as “primitive Tribal Groups” ( Tribal affairs 2002) . However, at that critical moment, when the young nation was still very much preoccupied with the larger issues that demanded immediate attention, the aboriginals of India were not the priority. Also, independent India’s first Prime Minister, Jawahar Lal Nehru, was of the opinion that the tribal population had remained more or less insulated from British rule and the long anti-colonial struggle for freedom. This was not completely true. Nehru’s own involvement in tribal affairs had been only marginal in relation to the other major achievements and issues he had been constantly confronted with. Only distantly aware of the activities and administration of tribal areas during the British rule, Nehru paid little attention to these areas at the beginning of his tenure. On the face of it, he maintained a rather romantic view of the tribes:<sup>10</sup>

*The tribal people of India are a virile people who naturally went astray sometimes. They quarreled and occasionally cut off each other’s head..... It is often better to cut off a hand than to crush and trample on a heart.... They are an extremely disciplined people, often a great deal more democratic than most others in India.... I would prefer being a nomad in the hills to being a member of the stock exchange.... I am quite sure that the tribal folk, with their civilization of song and dance, will last until long after stock exchange have ceased to exit (Nehru 1960 in Singh 1989:2)*

Nehru’s perception of Indian tribes found itself strongly represented in the nation’s tribal policy that emerged in the 1950s .Theoretically; he avoided the two extremes of dealing with the tribes: one that sought to isolate the tribes as museum specimens for anthropological study, and the other that demanded their assimilation into the Indian mainstream. Although he suggested a path somewhere in between these two options, in

actual practice his inclination was more towards the latter. Clearly, Nehru could not have completely denied his British education and privileged elite background.<sup>11</sup>

In all practical senses, Nehru's philosophies are more to be understood and felt than to be written, because the chances of them being interpreted according to one approach or another is higher and eventually risks the entire project at hand. In this sense, the most important problem that Nehru needed to address while laying down his tribal policy was how to raise a class of administrators and field-level workers who could "feel" the complexity of his ideology so as to execute it in the manner he envisioned. It required a deep understanding and sensitivity for tribal culture. Therefore the approach of Nehru continues to be problematic when transformed, into any practical terminology or legal regulations. In doing so, the possibility of misinterpretation according to one's approach is enhanced with the consequences that the violation of these principles became even harder to challenge through the law.<sup>12</sup>

Furer-Haimendorf (1985) estimated that these principles had hardly been applied in any region of India, apart from a few exceptions in the northeast. Particularly grave consequences of a forced industrialization have been observed in central India where the steel industry was developed. The result was the mass uprooting of people and impoverishment of indigenous people was the result. These were the consequences of the lack of sensitivity usually found in the lowest offices who eventually formed the link between policy and people and who made all the differences in implementing what Nehru meant to as "psychological approach"<sup>13</sup> The Andaman and Nicobar were no exception. In this context an important fact is that after 60 years of independence there is no single policy which looks at the issue of protection and development of the Scheduled Tribes in an integrated manner. So, The Group of Ministers (GoM), constituted to ensure the all-round development of the National Tribal Policy 2007, met on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2007 to discuss the issues of indigenous people, particularly their diminishing control over forests. One can only hope new policy will be able to deal this sensitive issue.

### **Third Wave: Tourism Promotion and other Developmental Activities**

A review of government efforts over last few decades in the Andaman and Nicobar brings to the fore an intense conflict of different world views, combined with persistent efforts to create a cultural hybrid. Ironically Government itself has contradicted its own law and showing how sensitive it is towards the primitive. For example to safeguard the interests of the vulnerable tribal communities of Andaman and Nicobar Islands In 1957, territories inhabited by indigenous population in the islands, namely the Jarwas, Great andamanese, Sentinelese, Onges, Nicobarese and the Shompens, were declared protected under the Andaman and Nicobar Protection of Aboriginal Tribes Regulation (ANPATR) of 1956. But these tribal reserves are today struggling to keep their status intact as tribal reserves. One of the biggest instances of blatant violation of this law is Andaman Trunk Road. The antecedent of Andaman Trunk Road present example of encroachment of the aborigines land and their rights.. The 340 km. long Andaman Trunk Road, which slices through the heart of the Jarwa researve , has opened up more areas for settlement. Trunk Road is quite revealing. The Jarwas raised barricades repeatedly at road head. They used to put up barricades in the night and road workers used to break it in the morning. The barricade raised at the road head warned the builders not to proceed further in felling the trees,

bulldozing and blasting. The Jarwas brought down and destroyed many log bridges of the Trunk Road to stall the further work on road. Apart from this directly communicative resistance the Jarwas kept up terrorizing tactics by attacking the road building site camps and labour camps to kill the workers and plunder the iron. Despite the resistance by the jarwas, The Andaman Trunk Road was built and maintained. But it is significant that the Jarwas too have not given up their efforts to extirpate the non-autochthons. They keep attacking the people traveling along this road in trucks and buses. There are instances of the Jarwas shooting the persons traveling in log carrying trucks. They lie in wait and arrow the individuals sitting on logs that are being transported by trucks from extraction point to saw mills. They organize the commando attacks on the erstwhile camps which in most cases, have become the permanent settlements along the road.<sup>14</sup> This road cuts through the heart of the forests that is the natural abode of Jarwas for centuries. Now it has become an important means bringing many unwanted influences to the Jarwas like epidemic of measles, tobacco and alcohol, a huge tourist influx and sexual exploitation as well. Significantly this area also known as the last reaming patch of tropical evergreen forests on islands and need to be protected.

In response to an intervention related to the islands filed in the Godavarman (forest) case, the apex court of the country had passed detailed orders in May 2002. The order was wide ranging. Among others, it also included the shutting of the Andaman Trunk Road (ATR) through or along the Jarwa Researve within the three month time.<sup>15</sup> But ten years passed and the road is still working through and along the Jarwa Reserve.

In January 2013 India's Supreme Court has again banned tourists from traveling along the Andaman Nicobar Trunk Road when in 2012 Gethin Chamberlin, a reporter working for *the Observer*, released a shocking video in which a group of Jarawa women and children are being forced to dance for tourists, which showed that the road was used as the Human Safari. But in March 2013 the Supreme Court of India again cleared the decks for opening the Andaman Nicobar Trunk Road to tourists going to the Limestone Cave on the island.

This was the third wave of globalization which was looking it exotic paradise as the target of massive tourism promotion. Andaman & Nicobar Administration is positioning the islands as a premiere eco-friendly tourist destination in the global market and therefore ignores the rights and interest of an aborigine tribe. Tsunami struck India on 26.12.04 and It has changed lives of thousands of people in the islands of Andaman and Nicobar (A & N).. The Administrators see this as an opportunity to rebuild the profile of islands, starting from the rebuilding of livelihoods to building of infrastructures, and also reviving and expanding tourism. It is being anticipated that developing tourism at a massive scale would by default generate employment. It would also rebuild the economy, In the last few years Andaman & Nicobar has seen a steady growth rate of 13 per cent in terms of tourist arrivals. The last two years have in fact seen domestic tourist arrivals grow by 20 per cent, and foreign tourists by 7-10 per cent.<sup>16</sup> The increasing number of tourist arrival increases the vulnerably of Islands tribal population. The extent and degree to which any community experiences the socio-cultural impacts of tourism necessarily depends on their own state of society, culture, historical processes of community building, intra-community cooperation and conflict, cultural sensitivities and social vulnerabilities. In the case of the Andamans, Dhingra (2005) writes: A set of people transplanted under traumatic circumstances to an isolated groups of

islands ...the need for a sense of belonging to the country, in circumstances severe and exacting, or attended by the hope of a new dawn, as the case may have been, still dominates their psyche and they cling to each other and to a national pride in a manner that is strongly reminiscent of expatriate communities. In her analysis on the post-independence history of the islands, Dhingra (2005) concludes that of the many primitive tribes to have lived in the Andamans, the tribe most impacted by civilization has been the Jarawas. An overview of promotional material on tourism brought out by the A&NI Administration indicates a change in the attitude towards these primitive tribes. The shift is clearly from an earlier stance of seeing the tribes as part of the tourism product that the Andamans offered to clearly stating in tourist material that while the Andamans are home to many primitive tribes interaction with them is prohibited. But, as various field surveys indicate, it is the perception in the mind of the tourist that continues to expect to get a glimpse of a "naked tribe".<sup>17</sup>

At the macro-economic level of the economy of the A&NI as a whole, data indicates that tourism currently does not play a significant role in the economy both in terms of its contribution to GSDP and employment. Despite a significant increase in tourist arrivals over the last two decades, the extent to which these increased arrivals have contributed to the economy is not clear. This is reflected by the contribution of tourism to the GSDP of the islands that has stagnated at approximately 8 per cent for the last two decades. In fact, for few years when arrivals did increase by around 10 per cent, per capita contribution of recorded tourism to GSDP has actually fallen, corroborating the previous point made. In terms of its contribution to revenue generation, tourism contributes 1.47 per cent to indirect tax collection, which is not significant.<sup>18</sup> However the tourism affected the Island's environment badly. The consequences are deforestation, critically endanger endemic bird species, massive poaching, erosion of sand, littered beaches, socio-cultural change in the lives of native people, decrease in fresh water availability, problem of the disposal of solid waste and sewage, air pollution and climate change.

Like Jarwas Onge has the same story. In 1965, Government of India prepared a plan specifically for the Little Andaman, proposed the clear felling of nearly 40 per cent of the Island's forests in the Tribal reserve, the bringing in of 12,000 settler families to the area and the promotion of commercial plantations, such as those of red oil palm, and timber based industries, in order to support the settler population. Had the plan been implemented fully, it would have destroyed Little Andaman and caused the extinction of the Onge tribe. The government team that suggested the development program ignored the Andaman and Nicobar Protection of Aboriginal Tribes Regulation (ANPATR), which had, in 1957, accorded the status of a tribal reserve to the entire island of Little Andaman. Further, about 20,000 hectares (roughly 30 per cent) of the island were denotified from its tribal reserve status in two stages, in 1972 and 1977. It has also been seen that the Andaman and Nicobar Forest Plantation and Development Corporation (ANFPDC) was logging within the tribal reserve, making a mockery of the law and also the rights of the Onges.<sup>19</sup> The Government of India started a similar scheme to settle the ex-servicemen in Great Nicobar since 1969 under its rehabilitation scheme. Taking into the strategic importance of the Island, government had a scheme to settle about 2000 families of ex-servicemen on South-Eastern coast. The land earmarked for this purpose was reclaimed by felling trees, North-South road (51 kms) was laid and the administrative headquarters was founded at Campbell Bay. 330 families of ex-



servicemen were settled in six villages on the South-Eastern coast which was however shelved subsequently by the government. But the infrastructure like laying of East-West road (43 kms.) across the Island connecting Campbell Bay on East to Kopenheat the Nicobarese village on the West coast was accomplished. This road, on which more than one thousand persons of the Border Roads Organization (Project Yatrik Unit of General Reserve Engineering Force) worked for five years since 1971, cuts through the Shompen areas. Great Nicobar was a also total tribal reserve area under Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956 before it was opened for the rehabilitation of ex-servicemen. The settlement area covering six villages and Campbell Bay was dereserved by the government subsequently. The Nicobar district had exclusively the tribal population and as such, there was restriction on free settlement by outsiders. The scene changed with the rehabilitation program in Great Nicobar. Number of government departments was established following the settlement of ex-servicemen. Simultaneously, many people arrived in pursuit of livelihood and business in this new territory. Therefore, the population grew very rapidly. The reclamation of forest land and settlement of ex-servicemen as agriculturists resulted in the retreat of the Shompens with usurpation of their territory. Encroachments on their territory by outsiders and depletion of their natural resources have not only affected their subsistence economy but also the socio cultural and the health aspects (Awradi S. A.)<sup>20</sup> The story of Nicobar is also not different. Since the Nicobarese inhabit almost all of the Nicobar Islands, the entire group of islands was declared a tribal reserve. Since the passing of the 1956 Act , the procedure normally followed by the local administration for obtaining land has been to make a request to the indigenous leadership who, if in favour , in turn, passes the request further to the actual owner. On compliance, the transfer is made via a “surrender certificate” issued by the owner in exchange for an agreed compensation. The land presently utilized by the government as administrative headquarters as well as by the Indian Navy on Camorta Island was obtained by similar procedure.<sup>21</sup>

In the period following independence, the question of forests had not arisen and the Nicobarese continued to manage their lands and forests in the way they did traditionally. In 1967, the Indian Forest Department, through the Chief Commissioner, declared 1,975 km<sup>2</sup> (762.4 square miles) of forest in the Nicobars as Protected Forests<sup>22</sup> (Notification issued by the chief Commissioner, dated 11 march 1967). Later, in 1971, another notification was issued by the Forest Department according to which the entire area of the Nicobars, except village land, was declared Reserve Forest<sup>23</sup> (Notification issued by Forest Secretary in the name of the Chief Commissioner, dated 15 March 1971). However, the entire procedure for declaring a forest as reserved was not carried out. Under the Indian Forest Act of 1927, a forest cannot be declared “reserved unless a proper survey is made and the rights of those who have traditional stakes in forest are settled. Since the Nicobarese were not notified about this intention via a formal (not informal) procedure as laid down in the Forest Act, the forests in the Nicobars do not legally fall under the reserved category. Further, the Nicobars being a tribal reserve under the ANTPATR (1956), all land belong to their traditional owners. Since nothing really happened on the ground, the Nicobarese too remained ignorant of the situation concerning their land rights.<sup>24</sup>

About seventeen years later, perhaps owing to some confusion over forest rights in an actual situation on the ground, the late Rani Lachmi, chief of the Nancowry islands, wrote of

her concerns to the Lt. Governor (Letter dated April 8, 1988). The Lt. Governor was quick to pacify her by writing that the “forests in the Nicobar group of islands were notified as Protected Forests on 11.3.67. The tribals living in the area enjoy full rights as regards the use of forests produce and wildlife. There is no change whatsoever in this status”. He further added that the “forestry activity in the island is mainly confined to planting trees, on a limited scale, under the Social Forestry Programme, with a view to bringing unproductive grasslands under proper use... with the full cooperation and active participation of the local people” (Letter dated 10 May 1988).

Rani Lachmi died the following year but the matter still remains unresolved. From time to time, the Forest Department lays claim to forest land owned by Nicobarese on the basis of the 1971 notification, stating that the forests are “reserved”.<sup>25</sup>

Be it the cutting and logging of woods in the regions inhabited by the Onges or the construction of roads through the regions marked by Jarwa and Shompen habitations or department of forest’s illegal encroachment on forest areas of Nicobarese people, it is evident everywhere that despite clear instructions in the 1988 forest policy, the government departments have never taken the intimate or say, inextricable relationship between tribal people and forests seriously. In this context, the ‘Draft Schedule Tribe (Recognition of Forest Right Bill 2005’ can be regarded as a healthy initiative which is being opposed by the Department of Forest. Ramchandra Guha writes that this Bill is an attempt to rectify the historic blunder of neglecting the traditional rights of forest dwelling tribes by the British imperialism. As it has been mentioned in the Draft Bill, we have continued these colonial legislations even after independence. Now, this mistake can be rectified by associating tribal people with the conservation and protection of forests and granting them permanent rights in the forests.

This initiative, which seeks to grant their rights to the forest-dwelling tribes, is certainly a welcome one. But it is a stark reality that even this Bill becomes an Act without any opposition, the motive of it will remain insignificant unless it is enforced in a proper way. Its clear evidence is the blatant violation of the Andaman and Nicobar Protection of Aboriginal Tribes Regulation (ANPATR) which was notified in 1957 for the protection of tribals of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

### **Conclusion**

So, apart from making laws and legislations, what is imperative is to understand the inextricability of the relationship between forests and tribes dwelling there. Vandana Shiva (2003) rightly says that the search for ecological balance in an era of globalization not only requires an assessment of the social and ecological impact of globalization but also require an imagination and a realization of an alternative order that puts ecological balance and social and economic justice rather than trade and commerce at the center of economic policy.<sup>26</sup>

### **End-notes**

<sup>1</sup> Aul Bandana, “Quantification of Damage caused by the Introduced Fauna, Spotted Deer (Axis axis), on the rate of Natural Regeneration in Small Island Ecosystems-Andaman And

Nicobar Islands “, M.Phil Dissertation submitted in Salim Ali School of Ecology and Environment Sciences ,Pondicherry University.

<sup>2</sup> Bhagwati Jagdish (2004), “In Defense of Globalization”, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Evald,(1996), The Andaman Islanders,A State of the Art Report

<sup>4</sup> Portman, M.V.(1899), A History of our relations with the Andamanese, vol I, Asian Education Services, pp 254.

<sup>5</sup> Sekhsaria Pankaj,( 2002), Logging off, For Now, Troubled Island.Kalpriksh

<sup>6</sup> Sekhsaria Pankaj, op cit ,pp 4.

<sup>7</sup> Man ,E.H.,1883, Aboriginal inhabitants of the Andaman Islands, Sanskaran Prakashak Delhi,128

<sup>8</sup> With the adoption of an Act in 1874, the tribal areas were specified into “Scheduled Districts” to segregate the tribals to protect them. The areas were reconstituted at the time of the Government of India Act 1919. Subsection (i) of section 92 of the Govt. of India Act 1935 is the next landmark providing for the administration of the ‘excluded areas’ and the ‘partially excluded areas’.

<sup>9</sup> Mukhopadhyay, Kanchan, (1989), The Tribal Policy of Jawaharlal Nehru. In Singh, K, K.S. (ed), Jawaharlal Nehru, Tribes and Tribal Policy, Anthropological Survey of India, Calcutta, pp 12-32.

<sup>10</sup> Simron Jit Singh,( 2003), In the Sea of Influence; A world System Perspective of the Nicobar Islands, Lund University, Lund, pp 249.

<sup>11</sup> Simron Jit Singh,( 2003), In the Sea of Influence; A world System Perspective of the Nicobar Islands, Lund University, Lund, pp 250.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Awaradi, S.A. Computerized Master Plan (1991-2021), Andaman and nicobar Administration, Port Blair, pp. 153.

<sup>15</sup> Sekhsaria, Pankaj, To Save an Archipelago, Frontline , June 21, 2002.

<sup>16</sup> Andaman & Nicobar positions itself as premiere sustainable tourism destination, Express Travel World,10 August 2012

<sup>17</sup> Dhingra, K. (2005) The Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Twentieth Century – A Gazetteer, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, India.

<sup>18</sup> Rethink Tourism in The Andamans Towards Building A Base for Sustainable Tourism, June 2008 Published by EQUATIONS

<sup>19</sup> Sekhsaria, P. (2001) “Deforestation in Andaman and Nicobar – Its Impact on the Onge”, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 36, No. 38, 22 September.

<sup>20</sup> Awaradi ,S.A., Comuterized Master Plan (1991-2021); For Welfare of Primitive Tribes of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Andaman and Nicobar Adminstration ,Port Blair,26-27.

<sup>21</sup> Simron Jit Singh, (2003), In the Sea of Influence; A world System Perspective of the Nicobar Islands, Lund University, Lund, pp 105.

<sup>22</sup> A Protected Forest is defined as an “area notified under the provision of Indian Forest Act or State Forest Acts having limited degree of protection . In Protected Forest all activities are permitted unless prohibited (Forest Statistics 2002).

<sup>23</sup> A reserve Forest is defined as an “area notified under the provision of Indian Forest Act or State Forest Acts having full degree of protection. In reserved Forest all activities are prohibited unless permitted” (Forest Statistics 2002).

<sup>24</sup> Simron Jit Singh, 2003, *In the Sea of Influence; A world System Perspective of the Nicobar Islands*, Lund University, Lund, page 105-106.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Shiva Vandana, (2000), *Ecological Balance in an Era of Globalization in Globalization Reader* (edt by) Frank J. Lechner, Blackwell Pblication

**Table 1 Population of Andamanese Tribes**

YEAR TRIBE	1901	1911	1921	1931	1951	1961	1978	1980	1990	2001
Great Andamanese	625	455	209	90	23	19	24	25	29	40
Onge	672	631	346	250	150	129	106	97	98	100
Jarwa		114	114	70	50	300	250	250	200	250
Sentinelese	585	117	117	50	50	100	100	100	80	100

Sources: Census Reports 1901-61, 2001, Anthropological Survey reports,

**Table 2 Population of Shompen and Nicobareses**

YEAR TRIBE	1901	1011	1921	1931	1951	1961	1971	1981	2001
Shompen	342	375	375	200	20	71	92	214	250
Nicobareses	6501	8818	9272	10240	12009	14563	17874	21172	25000

Sources: Census Reports.