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Draft of the Policies for Great Andamanese and Sentinelese



The Anthropological Survey of India held a series of meetings in August 2019 to prepare policy documents on the Great Andamanese and Sentinelese communities. The documents thus prepared were submitted to the Andaman and Nicobar administration for its kind consideration.

The Great Andamanese are one of the five Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTGs) of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. 'The Great Andamanese', which is an umbrella term, comprises ten subgroups. Among these, descendants of only three groups survive presently. They were truly 'great' in terms of their numbers and geographical spread that extended from North Andaman to South Andaman.

Objectives The salient objectives of the policy for the Great Andamanese are listed below:

1. To bring the Great Andamanese out of 'development dependency' state and make them a self-sustaining group.
2. To safeguard their traditional rights in land and forests and protect them from any form of exploitation.
3. To ensure appropriate medical and health care facilities, telecommunication and transport facilities as per their changing socio-cultural circumstances.
4. To provide them with adequate educational facilities in Strait Island, Port Blair or mainland India, as per their changing and growing aspirations.
5. To help them in protecting and preserving their cultural heritage according to their own genius and participation and to nurture in them self-esteem in such cultural preservation.

6. To augment sensitisation programmes for all those who are directly or indirectly involved in their development programmes and those who directly have a linkage with them, like the local fishermen, to ensure a healthy coexistence.
7. To promote further research into their life, culture and language for a better understanding of a brilliant culture and the people.

A Draft Policy for the Sentinelese

Of the five PVTGs, the Sentinel Islanders, also called the Sentinelese, are usually described as the 'most uncontacted', 'most reclusive' people on earth. They are perhaps the lone inhabitants of the North Sentinel Island of Andaman Islands, which lies south-west of Port Blair. Although the dwellers of this island are named so, it is not known till now what they call themselves.

Besides being commonly called the Sentinelese, some authors have also termed them Jarawa or Pathan-Jarawa. The first name may be because of an apparent similarity between the Sentinel Islanders and the Jarawa, although the observers of both these communities also say that in comparison to the Jarawa, the Sentinelese appear taller and healthier.

The second name, may be mythical, owing its origin to several of the valiant attempts that the Sentinelese have made to resist the entry of the outsiders to their land, and so, conforming to the proverbial image of a Pathan, they are strong, valorous, arousing awe in others, and protecting their territory and people against intruders with might and success.

Objectives of the Policy Below are listed the salient objectives of the Policy for the Sentinel Islanders:

1. The territorial sovereignty of the North Sentinel Island should be legally ensured.
2. The inhabitants of the island should be protected against the entry of outsiders, who may be desirous of visiting it for any reason - economic, touristic or out of sheer curiosity to travel terra incognita.
3. The need to gradually build up the knowledge bank on the Sentinel Islands and its residents.
4. To familiarise the local people of Andaman and Nicobar Islands as well as the tourists, who come in large hordes from all parts of the globe, with the diverse ways of living among tribal communities in the country and sensitise them to the problems of the tribes and the islands; the need is to work concertedly towards building up the ethic of responsible tourism, ecological sensitivity and social empathy of all, and these efforts should continue relentlessly.

For putting this policy into action, a team of dedicated anthropologists should be formed, who have spent their lifetime working for the Sentinelese and the other PVTGs of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and also learning a great deal about one of the ancient foraging traditions which is still alive.

The policy may be reviewed every five years.

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