Historical Background of Cultural Contact
The tribals living in the islands of Andaman and Nicobar in the Bay of Bengal have not been lost sight of British administrators. Archibald Blair was the first administrator deputed to prepare a survey report on Andaman. He considered the Andamanese Negros the sons of slave Negros brought by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century. But this was not acceptable. The Andamanese, the Ongees, the Jarawas and the Sentinelse belong to Negrito stock which has been accepted by modern Anthropologist. Among the earlier works on the Andaman mention may be made of the voyage reports of Duguesne (1696), Dampier (1729), Blair (1788), Leigh (1839) and Moute (1862), Portman (1899), presented an historical account. Man (1883) wrote a number of papers and gave detailed information about the aboriginal inhabitants of Andaman and Nicobar Island Taylor (1911) narrated the native life in Andaman Island for the first time in 1922 a social study was made of the islander by Brown (1922).

The census report of Temple (1901), Lowies (1911–1921) and Bonnington (1931) are also informative. Apart from giving ethonographic details they contain several articles as appendix by authorities like Man (1902), White head (1924), Mout (1963) etc. Kloss (1903) also attempted to trace the racial history and believes that the Shompen are a remnant of the Malay race.

In modern times the islands have been accounted in the census report of 1951 and 1961 Cipnani (1951) stated about the origin of the Andamanese. Chengapa (1951), Chatterjee (1953) along with Kumar (1954)
describe the Ongees. Mathur (1968) gives ethnographic details of the
tribals of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The survival of hunting gathering communities, e.g., the Jarawas,
the Sentinelese, the Great Andamanese and the Ongees, has been unique to
the Andaman group of islands in the Bay of Bengal. The isolation and
remoteness of the islands have made the tribal situation a subject of
challenge and interest to social scientists. The Andaman hunter-gatherers
are typical representative of simplest level of human culture existing in the
world. These hunters and gatherers have been living in Andaman Islands
for thousands of years. They were the only people inhabiting these islands
till the early nineteenth century, and they were ignorant of the rest of the
world. Particularly nothing was known about them until the British set
foot on these islands in 1858. The Andaman had been subject to frequent
raids by sea-pirates of Malay who deliberately created an impression of
terror and horror to keep others away from these islands. The Malaya and
Chinese traders visited these islands in search of edible birds nest and sea-

In terms of racial unity and similarities in Cultural traits the Semang
of the Malay Peninsula and the Aeta of the Philippines are believed to be
the closest surviving Counterparts of the hunter-gatherers of the
Andamans. The Malays are also said to have used these islands for a trade
in Andamanese slaves for many centuries. These slaves found their way to
the courts of Siam, Cambodia and Indo-China and naturally brought about
the deepest distrust and hostility on the part of the aborigines to all visitors to the islands (Census of India, 1931: 5).

For a considerable period the Ongees could successfully evade all attempts at contact for conciliation by outsiders through their hostility towards all strangers. In 1867 the captain and seven crew members of the ship ‘Assam valley’, who landed Little Andaman to cut spar never returned. A research party led by Mr. Homfrey was sent for the missing persons, but the party failed in its mission due to the hostility of the Ongees. Then the ICS Aracan, sent on a punitive expedition to the island, located the remains of murdered men. The expedition resulted in severe fighting, with the Ongees killing at least seventy of them (Census of India, 1931).

The next expedition was sent from Port Blair in 1873 under the leadership of General Sir Donald Stewart. When the members of the expedition tried to land at Jackson Creek, they were attacked by the tribal people. After that, some sailors of a Burmese ship ‘Quangoon’ landed for water at Hat Bay, (the present Head quarter of Little Andaman) also to be attacked and killed by the tribal people. As a consequence and in retaliation, a punitive expedition under Captain Wimberly was sent to Hat Bay, and the Party killed a number of tribes and burnt down a number of communal huts and canoes. After this massacre the island was not visited by any outsider until 1878. It was in the same year that Colonel Cadell and Portman, on their way back from the Nicobar Island, had succeeded in meeting a group of the Ongees in Little Andaman Who were not hostile and, in fact, embraced the Great Andamanese who accompanied the
expedition party. But the strangers were attacked by another group of the Ongess at another point of the island. Numerous gifts were left with the group that showed the first sign of friendliness, for future encouragement.

With the idea of and the felt need, to establish friendly contact with the tribal people of Little Andaman, frequent conciliatory expeditions from Port Blair carried presents for the tribals. They were instructed not to adopt a hostile attitude even if the tribals tried to attack the party. The British administration at Port Blaire adopted the policy of capturing a few Ongees, bringing them to Port Blair, trying to conciliate them by friendly, humane treatment and then sending them back with numerous gifts to spread the word of friendship through them. Colonel T. Cadell and Portman were given the main responsibility of carrying out the expeditions and establishing friendly contact. As to the idea behind such expeditions for establishing contact; it was claimed:

It is not possible ....... that we shall ever occupy it, all that remains to be done there now is to keep the Ongees from murdering shipwrecked crews who may be cast away there, and teach them to treat outsiders in a friendly manner, which can be accomplished in time without much difficulty (Portman. 1888: 2-6).

Though as a matter of policy presents were left on the shore at different places as tokens of friendship, the outsiders were attacked by the tribals on most occasions in the beginning. But the parties refrained from counter-attacking as far as possible. During an expedition to Cinque
Island in 1885, twenty four tribals (eight men, six women and ten children) were caught. They were thought to be Jarawa, In fact, they were a group of tribal people from Little Andaman who had come to Cinque Island in search of turtle eggs in their own Canoes. Eleven of the Captive tribals were brought to Port Blair and the rest were released with their canoe. The Captives were kept under the personal care and supervision of Portman that was when Portman came to know that the tribal people of Little Andaman call themselves ‘Ongee’. The Ongees were treated well at Port Blair and the released at Bumila Creek and Hut Bay in Little Andaman, loaded with various presents. Portman, who was to a great extent successful in establishing friendly relations for the first time with at least the captive Ongee, adopted the policy of using them in befriending all the Ongees of Little Andaman.

In 1886-87, Portman became the first man who dared to stay on a little Andaman which he did for about two and a half months in all on subsequent visits when he made a coast line survey of Little Andaman. Portman and his party never encountered any hostility from the Ongees during that period, which could be marked as a milestone in the history of contact with the Ongees in the history of contact with the Ongees. In 1930 three Ongees were persuaded to accompany the Census Superintendent, Mr. Bonington, to Car Nicobar along with a few Great Andamanese as guards. The Ongees were frightened by the Nicobarese and as a consequence one of them fled and never returned, another jumped into the sea and drowned himself and the remaining one had to be kept locked up,
to be released in Little Andaman subsequently. Since then the contact established by Portman has been further consolidated through regular visits by various outsiders during the last hundred years, inducing thereby changes in the Ongees society to the extent of their living face to face with the people of other cultures in the same settlement.

The Ongees learnt the use of iron during the visit of Malay pirates or Chinese traders. They might have also obtained iron from the shipwrecks near the island. In other words, iron was being used by the Ongees before they came into contact with Portman and his party, as evident from the remains of earlier Kitchen-midden deposits containing only artefacts of wood and shell (Cipnani 1966 and Pandit 1978). In fact, the exact replica of artefacts like the Chenokae (hunting arrow) and the Kurangae (fishing arrow) made of wild areca wood, and Knives made of cane, which were used by the Ongees in the distanced past.

Portman (1888) mentioned in his notes “A History of our relations with the Andamanese”, that “In February 1892 seven aborigines of Great Andaman and four Ongees from Little Andaman accompanied me on a visit to Calcutta. This was the first occasion on which the Ongees had visited any country outside the Andaman Islands, and when they were brought away from their own lands. I was not able to explain what was going to happen to them they seemed nervous on the voyage up, and during the first few days in Calcutta, but kind treatment and the assurance that they would soon return home, reconciled them to the visit in a short time,” he add.
"On board the Shahjehan (the Andaman Mail Steamer) great care was taken of them, and special arrangements were made for their comfort by Captain Edge and by Mr. Sandilands, the Chief Officer. In Culcutta they lived at Spence's Hotel, where a room for them had been previously engaged, and their privacy and security from annoyance ensured. They were received in the Government House Gardens by His Excellency the Viceroy (the Marquis of Lansdowne) on the 5th when they danced, showed their skill in shooting with bows and arrows, and did gymnastic exercises. His Excellency expressed his pleasure at having seen them, and completely won their hearts by the large quantity of really valuable presents he gave them. They were taken through the town to the Howrah Bridge, up the ochterlony monument, to the Museum, and to the Zoological Garden. They were also shown through the principal shops, where they were uniformly treated with great courtesy by the proprietors, who put themselves to considerable trouble to show the Andamanese mechanical figures, toys, arms etc. which they thought would amuse and interest them."

Portman further stated that "The presents they chose naturally consisted of knives, axes, and other similar weapons; also pipes and tobacco; but I added two English footballs (to which game, since their return, they have taken a liking) and some English Bows and arrows, which they admit are far superior to their own......... while there. His Excellency the Viceroy, and the Bishop of Calcutta, who happened to be visiting the gardens, stopped and spoke to them. Of course they excited
considerable interest in Calcutta, and frequent visits were paid to the Hotel by both residents and travellers anxious to see them. The visit was such a surprise to the aborigines of Ongees, but the whole of them were interested and pleased, and there can be no doubt that such visits do great good and indirectly influence the savages in their treatment of people who may shipwrecked on their coasts."

Since Indian independence in 1947 many different plans for the economic, social welfare and development of the islands and the tribal population have been implemented. It was only after the formation of the Andaman Adim JanJati Vikas Samity (AAJVS) a tribal Welfare agency that certain welfare measures were taken up among the Ongees, The Samiti was constituted under special assistance from the Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs in March, 1976. When the Andaman Administration and the Samiti approached the Ongees, they were living in three groups in Little Andaman, one each at Dugong Creek, Jackson Creek and South Bay.

Table 4.1: Showing year wise settlement of Ongees population at Little Andaman

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Ongees Band / Group</th>
<th>Year of settlement</th>
<th>Nos. of families</th>
<th>Total nos. of individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ongees of Jackson Creek and Dugong Creek</td>
<td>1976-77</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ongees of South Bay</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>98</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.1 shows that the Ongees of Jackson creek and Dugong Creek were settled at Dugong Creek during the year 1976-77 at that time they were 25 families comprising 78 individuals. Where as the Ongees of South Bay was settled at South Bay itself during 1980 (only five families) having total population of 20 individuals. The Ongees could have been settled in one place for the common place administrative convenience, logistics and economic welfare. However, different Ongees bands reportedly expressed their willingness to settle in one place but the Ongees of South Bay refused to shift to Dugong Creek. The historical events in the Indian subcontinent following the termination of colonialism have however led to far reaching influence on the Ongees. Bengalee refugees form the then East Pakistan (present Bangladesh) were settled in the Little Andaman Island also though later to similar settlement in Great Andaman Island. The settlement started in 1969 with Bengalee refugees and continued with similar settlement of Tamilian repatriates from Sri Lanka and Burma apart from the settlement of Nicobarese from Car Nicobar to reduce the population pressure in the small island. Some families of the moplah Community form the South Andaman Island were also settled in the Little Andaman. The following table shows the community wise number of families settled in Little Andaman Island (Danda 1987-67).
Map 3: Little Andaman Island Before Rehabilitation (1969)
Table 4.2: Showing information regarding Settlement of Non Ongkees at Little Andaman

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Community (Non-Ongkees)</th>
<th>Year of settlement</th>
<th>No. of families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bangalee</td>
<td>1969-79</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nicobarese</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tamil (Sri Lanka)</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tamil (Burma)</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Moplah</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As usual the rehabilitation or settlement of families by the colonization of the island requires huge government machinery and manpower to execute the programme. Apart from the rehabilitation department there came up the other major department like the Andaman Harbour works, Forests and Andaman public works Department. Of course the trader also arrived in big number to make their fortune. Thus the population of non Ongee grew fast and grotesquely out numbered the Ongees. Little Andaman Island was populated with 7214 heads including 100 Ongees in 1981 which might have further grows to 12000 by 1988. The eastern coastal region of the Little Andaman Island was colonized to begin with. There are six villages connected by a track road. Adjacent to the revenue area the plantation of red oil palm has been raised by the Andaman and Nicobar Island forest and plantation development corporation. The present land use pattern in the little Andaman island is as follows (Danda-1987: 67), Revenue land: 3435.96 hat. (4.75 per cent), Forest Plantation:
1768.70 hat. (2.44 per cent) and Reserved / Tribal land: 6709.60 hat. (92.80 per cent) though lion's share (92.80 per cent) of land and forest is still notionally with the Onges, the non-Onges with their advanced technology would deprive the autochthons, their natural resources.

Prior to settlement / rehabilitated the Onges population they were traditionally inhabiting various part of the island (Little Andaman) were divided into a number of bands/ group. Each of the bands comprising of at least one beehive shaped Communal Hut or (Gaiborale - beyra). These bands are exogamous in nature. Nigam (1955-56) stated that the Onges have as many as 31 bands over Little Andaman. However, as per the Census of India (1931) there were only 15 exogamous groups/ bands or Communal hats. Cipriani (1955-56) recorded 29 bands. Basu (1981-87) identified the Onges bands at Dugong Creek and South Bay, in fact the band was maintained as per the members of the respective bands and no such band/communal huts are still in existing in practical. However the Onges do maintained the band exogamy and other restriction as old days.

Altogether twenty six wooden huts with raised platforms have been distributed among the head of the Onges families at Dugong Creek apart from the Onges houses there are good wooden buildings for the community hall, dispensary, power house, Onges multi-purpose Co-operative society and for the residence of the staff of the welfare agency. The houses provided to the Onges do not have any structural resemblance either with indigenous temporary (Korale) or the communal hut (beyra) of the Onges. A school/ Balwari (middle) with two teacher,
(initially one) appointed by Education Department, Andaman and Nicobar Administration (initially by AAJVS) has been establish in Dugong Creek, Ongees settlement for the education of Ongees Children.

Another settlement was situated at South Bay, is small with only five wooden houses constructed by the welfare agency. The houses are similar to those of Dugong Creek. The founding of the Ongees settlement particularly at Dugong Creek added another dimension to the effects of their cultural contact with non-Ongees. The human habitat at the Ongees settlement has turned inhospitable due to environment degradation. The standing trees were clear felled to build the high rise pile-house. The introduction dog, in the Little Andaman Island by the Britishers in 1880 (Venkateshan, 1988: 418) has led to the second revolution in the subsistence activities among the Ongees. Dogs first arrived in the South Andaman Island with the founding of the Penal Settlement here and spread to other islands in due course. The Burmese Police officials taught the aborigines the use of dog as the aid in the pig hunting.

Summing up the results of historical background of cultural contact of the Ongees, it may be concluded that:

1. The Ongees inhabit in the Little Andaman since time immemorial.
2. They were with the contact of outside world till early nineteenth century.
3. They were in contact with Malay and Chinese traders who visited these Islands in search of birds nest etc.
4. The Ongees have the Cultural similarities with the Semang of the Malay Peninsula and the Aeto of the Philippines.

5. They show their hostility towards the strangers till 1888.

6. They killed all the visitors to little Andaman till 1867.

7. A numbers of Ongees were killed by the British during colonial administration.

8. M.V. Portman who had succeeded in meeting a group of Onges, in Little Andaman, who were not hostile on 1878.

9. Great Andamanese were paid a vital role in contact the Ongees friendly.

10. Frequent visit to Little Andaman with presents for the Ongees were made by the British Administrators.

11. Presents were left on the Shore at different places at little Andaman as a token of friendship by the British Government.

12. Eleven Ongees were caught at Cinque Island during collection of Turtle eggs, and captive Ongees were brought to port Blair and were kept under the personal care and supervision of the British Administrator.

13. The Captive Ongees were release to little Andaman (Bumila Creek) and (Hat Bay) loaded with various presents.
14. In 1930 three Ongees were persuaded to accompany the census team to Nicobar.

15. Ongees learn the use of Iron during the visit of Malay pirates or Chinese traders.

16. In 1892 four Ongees visited Calcutta with the British official accompanied by some Great Andamanese.

17. The Ongees are like the presents, like-Knives, axes, weapons etc.

18. During 1976-77 and 1980. The Ongees were settled in to two settlements at Dugong Creek and South Bay by the Andaman Administration.

19. Little Andaman was open for rehabilitation of the non-Ongees during 1969-79.

20. Wooden huts were providing to the Ongees of both the areas with all other modern facilities.

In all it could be concluded that prior to settlement the indigenous population in to two areas (Dugong Creek and South Bay) they were scattered all over the Little Andaman. Intervention of Andaman Administration and rehabilitation of Little Andaman with non-Ongees caused a series of changes in the Ongees Culture, and further caused decline of population. They were fully dependent upon welfare agencies as they were accustomed with presents and gifts. There is an urgent need to aware the Ongees towards welfare programmes, and towards
utilization of their skills and resources. They should be encouraged to cultivate their traditional craftsmanship, of course with modern materials. Further settling of non-Ongees families and extraction of timber form the forest area should be immediately stopped.