Cultural Contact and Changing Ongees Culture
The tribals are not living alone. Contacts are there between them and the Hindu and other neighbouring communities. Modern forces have been actively moulding their life (Vidyarthi - 1968). As culture is dynamic, the tribals have forced and are facing changes. Nevertheless the tribe have retained the principal elements of their ways of life, though these are modified to a greater or lesser extent. The factors responsible for the transformation are broadly of two types: traditional and modern.

The traditional process, characterized by the impact of certain traditions of the major neighbouring communities on the tribal group, has long been in operation and has led to be resultant concepts like Hinduization, Sanskritization of tribals.

The modern process includes such factors like Christianity, urbanization and industrialization. Tribal development, community development schemes, democratic set up of the area, modernization in education. Communication and administration and the like, are of recent origin, and are directly or indirectly external factor which do not emerge as a result of normal contacts of the tribal people with the non-tribal people of that areas.

The Ongees of little Andaman have been influenced by certain traditions of the communities around them. The major neighbouring communities in both the areas have been Hindu, Muslim and Christian. As a result from the very early periods there have been several points of contact between the non-Ongees communities of that area and the tribal
communities living within it. The nature and extent of contact, the pattern of mutual participation and the characteristic of revitalization movements have been different in different parts of the islands.

The implementation of various types of development, welfare and community development schemes meant for the tribal areas has brought about certain economic and social changes in the tribal communities. During the pre-independence period it was the policy of the British Government to let the tribes live in isolation and maintain their statuesque. However, after independence in 1947 the national leaders undertook the programmes of tribal welfare on a top priority basis and the policy and programmes of the nation are reflected in the constitutional provisions especially in Articles 46, 275 and 339 which put special emphasis on the promotion of tribal welfare and safeguard the interest of the scheduled tribes and the scheduled areas.

Attempt has been made for bringing the tribal a comprehensive and integrated change in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the tribal people. But overall result of this great effort has not been as encouraging as expected. It was mainly to - (i) Socio-Cultural factors hindering the acceptance of an innovation and (ii) lack of personnel or right motivation and correct aptitude to work in the tribal areas.

With the formation of the Indian Republic, however, the tribal voters, some of them in inaccessible areas, are being approached by the leaders of various types, and exposed to their views, A new set of Western
educated, and Hindi speaking tribal leaders is fast replacing the old-age, traditional oriented leadership. These modern leaders of various levels and types are spearheading the socio-economic and political change. Still these tribals politically be have in their traditional style that is in 'group' with headman feeling, village/band and regional feeling and the new democratic experiments have given more impetus to these feelings.

These hunting gathering and fishing people maintaining their communal band, group system, when up-rooted had to face manifold problems. The first was regarding their alternative place for rehabilitation as well as an alternative occupation to earn their livelihood. Though these affected families were given reasonable facilities in and around their new settlement area. However, they had to face numerous social problems, cultural crisis, economic disorganization and social disintegration. The problems of their rehabilitation were not tackled with adequate foresight and planning and they continued to lead a life of cultural disequilibrium.

The Ongees of little Andaman before 1976-80 was characterized by isolation, homogeneity, collective "style of living" was thus affected by the first wave of rehabilitation. Though with the coming of the outsider communities and government machineries, the situation in little Andaman has partly changed, the whole island, however, for all practical purposes, has become part of the industrial complex, the Ongees were then pushed or settled in two corner of the island. Their hunting ground, scattered communal huts are no more in existence they have now learnt to lead a heterogeneous style of life in terms of language, religion, occupation, and
social ethics. In general, it is now providing a good example of blending of rural and industrial "style of life".

In general, it becomes that the traditional process, in the past, was exclusively responsible for forgoing transformation in the secular, social and sacred spheres of the tribal culture. This process directed the change of the respective tribal cultures on the original pattern of modern "life style." As it was indigenous, continuous, non-competitive and voluntary earlier, the "rate of change", was slow and selective, reciprocal and accommodative as well as integrative and or assimilative.

While the traditional process brought the modern model and placed before the tribal, it will bring about a marked change in the social, educational and economic status of the tribal group. Under these circumstances, the unevenness of social changes led to a large amount of internal stress and strain between one section of the population and the other and owing to all these the course of integration of the tribal with age-old traditional processes was considerably distributed.

In general, however the tribes in different part of Andaman Nicobar Islands, are passing through an accelerated phase of transformation and the equilibrium in the traditional society has definitely been greatly distributed. A phase of transition marking the meeting of the two worlds, traditional and modern, is in the process. But, and in spite of the universal modernization process in operation, it seems the different tribes or section of a tribe will continue to respond to the change differently, and thus the
identity and variety of the tribal culture, of course in changed form, will be maintained.

The fundamental cause of the cultural decadence is apparently the Culture contact of the advanced civilization with the primitive Ongees Community. The contact of the people with advanced technology has resulted in destabilization of eco-cultural equilibrium of the people with primitive technology. However no society can remain static forever. Changes do take place and changes are desirable. But there is an absence of adequate assessment of its impact.

As far as the culture change is concerned in the tribal society of India a number of scholar and Anthropologist had conducted the study regarding the subject. We may refer some of them are, Roy (1920) studied the Oraon religion and customs, Brown (1922) presented a study on tribals of Andaman and Nicobar island, Roy (1931) presented a study on the effect on tribals of Chotanagpur due to the contact with western civilization. Srivastava (1958) studied the Culture Dynamics on the Tharur tribes. Ghurye (1959) studied on the tribals (scheduled tribes). Sharma (1958-59) studied on Socio-Economic condition of the Scheduled tribes. Kalia (1959) studied on Sanskritization and Tribalisation. Tondon (1959-60) presented a report on Rourkela industrial complex. Majumdar (1962) studied the marriage among the tribals of India. Rai (1963) presented his study on a HO village. Sengupta (1966) worked an assimilation of cultural traits, Srinivas (1966) worked in social change in modern India. Sahay (1967) presented study in the process of Transformation from tribes to cast.

When the Andaman Administration and the Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti (AAJVS) approached the Onges, they were living in groups at Dugong Creek and Jackson Creek (Little Andaman) were rehabilitated at Dugong Creek, and the South Bay (Little Andaman) group of Onges was settled where it was during the year 1976-77 and 1980 respectively. Before rehabilitation of the Onges, they were scattered all over the little Andaman in different Bands/Groups. As a result of rehabilitation and welfare measures, the Onges now live in the wooden huts allotted to individual families (26 Huts at Dugong Creek and 5 huts at South Bay) the Huts are similar in shape and size.

Since Onges were settled in to two different Settlement with almost all modern facilities by the Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti (Andaman Administration). It has been observed a series of cultural changes among
the Ongees. Aspects of Cultural changes may be discussed in a systematic order, under the following heading: a) Material Culture, and b) Non Material Culture.

5.1.0 MATERIAL CULTURE

The observations related to cultural contact and changing material culture are presented in the following manner:

5.1.1 THE COMMUNAL HUT (BEYRA)

The indigenous communal hut of the Ongees was once an important integral part of their life and culture, the main social institution, serving as a common residence for the member of the band, the meeting/discussion hall mainly during the heavy monsoon months, and as the venue of all the social/cultural events and rituals associated with life cycle. The Ongees called - “Gainborale-beyra” its mean gainboral – i.e., forest and beyra i.e. hut, combining to mean ‘forest-hut’ or a permanent hut in the forest. The hut appears like a huge umbrella, its framework made of wooden poles and cane. A number of cane rings, varying in diameter, are tied firmly to a number of upright poles planted on the ground, corresponding to the diameter of the cane rings. The roof is covered with a mat made by weaving the leaves of cane after they have been split into two halves through the midrib. A number of such mats are spread over the skeletal frame and the ribs, and tied to the cane rings to make the roof water proof. Inside the communal huts are a number of beds arranged radially along the periphery, starting from left side of the entrance. The beds of
communal hut, as that of temporary hut or Korale are simple raised *platforms made by binding split canes in a row*. The Ogees use them as beds, placing their heads, while sleeping, towards the centre of the hut. A number of skulls of pigs and turtles, jaws of the dugong and human mandibles, along with cane baskets and wooden buckets, are found hanging from the poles and roof of the communal hut.

![The Traditional Communal Hut of the Ogees](image)

Nowadays Ogees were living in settlement area the wooden hut provided to them, they are now not making their communal hut. Till recently they use to construct a model type communal hut with in the settlement area, and the social functions and rituals are observed in that communal hut. But presently the Ogees have no time to construct such type of communal hut. The welfare agency had provided them a community Hall, but the Ogees never use it except for viewing the television.
Due to cultural contact and changes thereof, the Ongees are start living in nuclear family, in individual wooden hut the earlier conditions of common residence for the constituent families in a band holds, no longer in practice. Since the Ongees bands today is no more a corporate unit in the true sense, the families are also not very organized. However they do practice the collection of pig's skulls, turtle skulls, jaws of the dugong and human mandibles in their wooden huts. It seems that they are still associated with their cultural beliefs and practices.

5.1.2 THE TEMPORARY HUTS

The typical indigenous (Korale) temporary huts of the Ongees may be considered as one of the simplest type of human shelter. The Ongees, preferring them to build in forest especially near the hunting area and sources of water with the intention to take rest during hunting pursuits, or even when they are late in the evening to return to the communal huts. The temporary huts constituted with two parallel poles at the front and two at the back, are tied with the pair of front poles and back poles, few centimetres below the top of the roof. A roof of cane leaves, slightly bigger than the slanted frame of the roof, is spread over and tied to the frame with bark / cane strips. A number of slender wooden sticks are placed casually below the roof in the gap between the two parallel poles of the roof to complete the structure. A raised sleeping platform used as a bed is constructed below the roof exactly in the same way as in the communal hut. The Ongees men often sing while constructing a Beyra or a Korale.
As Ongees are settled, they do go for hunting but never halt at hunting place, or in forest, they must return to their settlement, where their family members (wife and children) are alone. So the Ongees are almost dropped the utilisation of a Korale in the forest, however they do practice it in their settlement along with their wooden hut and used as store for coconuts, drifted items collection etc. it is also observed that the Ongees do construct Korale in the coconut plantation. However, with some modification for taking rest during collection of coconuts and cleaning the coconut plantation, structure of the Korale is the same but roofing was made by coconut leaves instead of cane leaves, and material used for tied the pole is plastic twig instead of barks or cane strips. One can observes the cultural influence of modern society.
5.1.3 DRESS AND PERSONAL ADORNMENT

Traditionally the Ongees had no proper concept of dress to cover the body till 1976. The women have used the indigenous "Nakuinyagae", a tassel made of tender Pendanus leaves, to cover their genitals. The Ongees could successfully adapt themselves to the tropical climate of the island and survive for thousand of years without dress. The concept of dress to cover nudity never existed. Ongees girls generally remain without clothing up to the age of about five years, when they start using the tassel, Boys go without clothes up to the age of six and seven years, Loin cloths are commonly used by most of the men and grown up boys. The "Nakuinyagae" tassel is a tuft of tender Pendanus leaves is suspended in front of the genital with the help of a cord worn round the waist. The necklace of dentalium or tusk shell is an important traditional ornament of the Ongees women. On ceremonial occasion both men and wear round their waist the traditional apparel (Keye) made of strips of cane, bark and coloured bark fibre. The head band (ataki) is a strip of bark worn round the head by both men and women on ceremonial occasions. During the adult hood ceremony both boys and girls wear bark strips inter woven with the bright yellow sheath of the dendrobium plant in a criss-cross fashion on the chest and the back, and necklaces and garlands of beads round the neck, arm and wrist.

After they came in contact with the people of other culture and rehabilitated in Dugong Creek settlement, they adopted the habits of wearing the clothes, in fact they were forced to wear clothes by the AAJVS
workers. Nowadays, of course, the Ongees boys and men often wear colourful vests, shirts, shorts, trousers etc. They usually get these clothes as gifts from either the welfare agency (AAJVS) or other visiting parties. Some of the Ongees even purchased them from the market at Hut Bay (the head quarter of Little Andaman) or Port Blair. They also buy the clothes from their Ongees Multipurpose Cooperative Society (OMPCS, Ltd.) at Dugong Creek itself. Most of the Ongees women and grown up girls wear saris, petticoats, blouse, lunghis, even brassieres, but they never part with their tassels, which bulge out from the underneath. Younger women have taken to wearing petticoats or lunghis and blouse most of the time, as they feel nudity in only tassels. There are a few Ongees female also at a South Bay who still always remains with tassels. Nowadays women rarely use the necklace, which has been almost wholly replaced by colourful plastic beads necklaces received from outsiders as gifts. Some of the women use to buy the necklace, nail polish, powder, etc. from hut bay when ever they get a chance to visit to hut way. The Ongees have now come to wear shoes, wrist watches, sun glasses, gold covering ornaments some are even using perfume and cosmetic face cream etc.

5.1.4 POTTERY

The existence of pottery among the Ongees in the recent past is proved by the find of Potsherds in the kitchen maiden deposits. The later as are found in various places on the little Andaman particularly at the places where the communal huts were located. The indigenous earthen cooking pot is known as 'tobuchue'. The pots used to be made by coiling
long and thin clay rolls and shaping them with controlled pressures of thumb and first finger. The pots were first dried in the sun and then baked.

Since the Ongees came in contact with outside world - the art of pottery is not practised by the Ongees any more. The Ongees, except a few elderly ones, cannot even describe an earthen pot. They were now accustomed with modern aluminium pot called 'Buchu'.

5.1.5 SINGLE OUTRIGGER CANOE

The single outrigger canoe called 'Dangae' is only means of navigation used by the Ongees. It is a simple dug-out canoe fitted with a float at one side. The canoe is quite comfortable and safe for sailing in the sea. The process of making a canoe starts with selection and felling of a suitable tree, usually of the Stericula species. The bark is carefully stripped off without chipping the wood just underneath. The surface selected for the keel of the canoe is kept on the grounds while the other surface is chipped flat with the indigenous hatchet or adze. And thus starts the long process of chipping and carving leaving about one to two feet of flat space on the surface for the platform at each side. The light and soft float is made of either Hibiscus tiliacus or Strecilia villosa. The float is almost of the same length as that of the dug-out tree trunk. At least two sets of three pegs each (slender hard branches of trees made pointed at one end) are driven into the float to form triangles at its two opposite ends. Two outrigger booms of hard wood are fitted parallel to one another in the holes made on each side of the canoe near the platform. Curved tree trunk has been carried from
the forest, with the help of a few friends and relatives, to the sea water. The float is adjusted and the booms fixed after the vessel is set a float in the water near the shore. Each communal hut is having one or more dug out canoe for its own.

After the cultural contact of Ongees we may find one or two dugout (not in very good quality) canoes for the whole Ongees community at Dugong Creek. They were now provided and also purchase the modern implements like hatchet, Adze and Chisel, axe etc. from the welfare agency and from the nearby market (Hut Bay). They are not very interested to construct the dug out Canoes because it takes too much time. Moreover the Ongees settlement were facilitated with three modern in-boarded engine fitted with small boats for transporting means from Dugong Creek to South Bay, Hut Bay, Jackson Creek etc. for their traditional activities as well as personal needs. The welfare agency also used the engine fitted Dinghi for transporting their (Ongees) monthly food item from Hut Bay, and coconuts from Dugong Creek to Hut Bay through the Ongees Multipurpose Co-operative Society (OMPCS). The engine Dinghi is found suitable for these purposes even during rough weather. Ongees were witnessing the practice since they were settled in this settlement. Thus some psychological attachment and attraction is found among the Ongees towards this engine fitted Dinghi.
5.1.6 BOW AND ARROWS

The Ongees bow is generally made from a single piece of wood of *Mimusops littorilis* or *Pterocarpus dalbergoides*. The bow is almost straight and is about 1.5 metres long. It is thicker in the middle and gradually taper at the two ends. While the inner surface is almost flat, it is markedly curved or convex on the outer surface. There are necks or notches at the two ends to hold the loop of the bow string which made up by twisting a long thin strip of ficus bark. The bow is generally decorated with ficus bark fibres and strips of dendrobium orchid by winding them serially round the stave of the bow. The bow is called by the Ongees ‘Aah’. The Ongees have two type of arrows one for fishing and other for pig hunting. Pig hunting arrow is further divided in to two types, detachable arrow head and other is fixed arrow head. Both the arrows have small barbs attached to the neck of the arrow-head called ‘Chenokwa or Tena.’ The pig hunting arrow consists of a shaft about 80 cms. in length made from a straight and slender stem of *Tetrathera lancifolia*. The thinner end of the shaft has a notch to take the cord, while the slightly thicker end has been hallowed about one centimetre to take the arrow head. The cord about 30 centimetres made from hibiscus fibre is attached firmly to the fore shaft and the neck of the arrow head in such a way that the neck of the arrow head along with the barb can be comfortably fitted into the hole at the top of the shaft. As the arrow strikes a pig, the shaft gets detached and the animal drags it along on the end of the cord until it catches in a bush and holds the pig fast. The fishing arrow called ‘Korangae.’ The shaft is a
slender piece of bamboo measuring about seventy cms. to a metre in length. The end of the shaft, where it takes the string of the bow, is made into a notch and bound firmly to avoid splitting. The arrow head is made of a slender iron rod of about two to three centimetres in thickness. The arrow is used for piercing the fish.

The Ongees of Dugong Creek and South Bay are found to hunt wild pig and also trap them in the forest. A strong stem from a tree that could be bent is connected to the trap, which is laid in the ground. The bent tip of the stem is connected to a string loop, which is covered with the fallen dried twigs and leaves in the ground. When the pig crosses the line, which also holds the bent stem, by disturbing it, the bent stem is released and the loop tightens where by the wild pig is caught in the loop. Most probably the trapping expertise has been borrowed by the Ongees from the non-Ongees community surrounding them. The practice used to be going and check their respective traps the next day or once in two days. Sometime the trapped wild boars being stolen by the poachers, the Ongees who goes to the forest, checks all the traps enrooted, irrespective of whose trap it is. When a wild boar caught in the trap the Ongees kill the boar with the knife. Ongees are now completely depending on their dogs for hunting the pigs. People, who have no dogs, restrict themselves to the traps. As far as fishing is concerned, most of the Ongees do fishing with fishing line, hooks and cast net provided by the welfare agency. However some of them use bow and arrow for fishing during low tide in the Creeks area, but prefer nylon fishing line and different size of fishing hooks.
5.1.7 FISHING NET (CHIKA)

The fishing net used by the women call the ‘Chika.’ They use to catch smaller fishes in shallow water, coral reef and creeks at the time of low tide. The ‘Chika’ was made of cane, a pliable cane, about 3 centimetres in diameter, is bent to form a circular ring of about 50 centimetres in diameter, the two ends of the cane are crossed and bound with barkship. The thread used for knitting the net is prepared from bark fibre just below the outer layer of bark is taken out carefully by using cyrena shells. The net is knitted with the help of a needle made of wood and coloured black with bark juice. The net is then tied round the cane ring with bark strips.

After cultural contact with the outsiders no Ongees women are found to be fishing with this net ‘Chika’ some of the oldest women do use it, however, with full modification. The net is fully knitted with the piece of nylon net which is borrowed or purchased from the fishermen of Hut Bay or adjoining village Vivekanandapur or some time supplied by fisheries department of Andaman Administration.

5.1.8 CHISEL AND ADZE

The implement comprises of a shaft, about a metre, fastened to an iron blade about 15c.m. in length, 1c.m. in thickness and 5c.m. in breadth. The sharp cutting edge of the blade is slightly broader than it butt. The cutting edges are sharpened by rubbing it on stone. The butt of the blade is firmly tied with fine cane strips. They called the chisel as ‘Cherangetokabe.’
Adze the 'Toinyagae' may be different sizes and shapes and generally used for chipping or chiselling out flakes of wood. The L-shaped branch of a tree is cut short to from the fore shaft for holding the blade. The outer surface of the fore shaft is flattened to the blade which may vary in length from five to ten centimetres. The blade may be flat and broad or concave or rounded to the edge. The handle of the main shaft is generally slightly bent, inward or outward, to increase its effectiveness. The iron blade is placed on the outer flat surface of the fore shaft and bound tightly to it. The length of the part of the fore shaft where it takes the blade is always more than the other end.

Both the Chisel (Cherangetokabe) and Adze (Toinyagae) have already been replaced by market made Chisel and Adze. The Ongees generally obtain these items form market or through the welfare agency at their co-operative society. Both the implements used for making wooden bucket and dugout canoe, respectively. However, the Ongees are using the Adze for digging the roots and tubers, whereas previously they used their own made Chisel as digging sticks.

5.1.9 WATER CONTAINER

Bamboos of different size, which float up from the South Asian countries, are picked up by the Ongees to make the water-containers called (Koborangae). A piece of the bamboo having at least two nodes in it is selected for making the Koborangae. The seal of the upper node is then opened and cleared to form the mouth of the container the lower node is
kept as it is to form the base of the container. Barks strips are also tied longitudinally between the two rings of bark strip below the nodes. This is done at least at two places. The two ends of another strip of the bark strips are tied in such a way that they do not slip over the nodes, and can be used as handles.

The beautifully made indigenous water container/carrier is simply replaced by Plastic Jerry cans, and iron/plastic drums, when the Ongees need to carry water with them, especially during working at plantation, they do carry water in the plastic bottle instead of the traditional Koborangae.

5.1.10 DUG-OUT WOODEN BUCKET

The wooden bucket called "Ookoo". A log of a suitable size of soft and light wood is selected for the bucket first a small cavity is made right at the centre of the surface selected for the mouth of the bucket. The wooden chips are first taken out carefully with the help of an adze till the cavity becomes big enough for the use of the chisel. The digging with chisel is simultaneously done horizontally as well as longitudinally, in a circular fashion. The thickness at the bottom of the bucket remains slightly more than that of the wall. A thin layer of wax is applied all over the inner surface. This is done by putting pieces of wax inside the bucket and rotating the bucket against fire. The wax makes the inside of the bucket smooth and waterproof, and small cracks will be filled up. Two strips of
bark are tied around the outer surface of the bucket, both the ring of bark strips are joined longitudinally at several places. This is done all over the outer wall of the bucket. The two ends of a long strip of bark are tied to the ring of bark strip near the upper rim to serve as the handle while carrying honey. The Ookoo is especially meant for collection of honey.

Nowadays after cultural contact with outsiders, Ookoo is not made for honey collection, in fact Onges have no time and patience to design a Ookoo, they ofcourse made the wooden dug out bucket, but only in the model forms, as and when demanded by the outsider and workers of the welfare agency. However for their collection of honey the Ookoo is substituted with halves cut plastic jerry can. Onges stated that the plastic jerry cans are good for carrying in the jungle, that have to have the modified jerry can putting a bark strip on the mouth of the jerry cane for handle.

5.1.11 CANE BASKET

The cane basket the ‘Toleh’ is one of the common possessions of the Onges, serving as a container for everything except honey and other liquids. The cane baskets of the Onges are among the finest baskets of the negritos of the Andaman. Little Andaman is famous for its many varieties of cane. The free ends of the canes are bent and tied with a circular ring of cane, the rim forming the ribs of the basket. The gaps between the ribs are
filled up by the weaving them with soft and fine cane strips. The weaving starts from the bottom of the ribs and gradually proceeds upwards spirally on the outer surface of the basket. While weaving the basket, the cane strip is passed round each of the ribs and a small gap between each ring of cane strip on the outer surface of the basket is maintained uniformly all through. A strip of cane is tied at two points on the rim to form the handle of the basket.

Situation change, forest area also changed, forest produce also shared by non Ongees also. Scarcity of cane and easily availability of plastic basket as drifted items, Ongees just accommodated the plastic bucket in place of their traditional cane basket 'Tolek'. However it has been observed that when ever they weave the cane baskets, they use less cane only for construction of the ribs and for weaving, they use the plastic cords.

5.1.12 APPAREL

The garment known as the 'Keye' is used by both men and women on ceremonial occasion. A few strips of cane are interwoven serially by placing one strip of cane above the other, with the yellow skin of the stem of dendrobium orchids and with vegetable fibre, to form a belt. The cane strips and vegetables fibres are smeared with red ochre to give a colourful effect to the belt. Several bunches of bark fibre, about thirty centimetres
long are tied all long the length of the belt, so that when worn the thread remain suspended form the belt.

The apparel 'keye' seems to be replacing with the belt made of pendants tender leaves during the ceremonial occasion. However most of the Ongees due to their cultural contact with the modern society had started wearing more or less clothing. They remain in the settlement with less clothes i.e. Petticoat and Blouse and half pant or underwear the female and the male, respectively, whereas children are also seen wearing underwear and frock. As the Ongees have developed the concept of shyness to the welfare agency's workers, who have been with them at their settlement for executing the welfare programme.

5.2.1 NON MATERIAL CULTURE

The non material culture of the Ongees, constituent of a few we may count them, associate them with birth rituals and performing adolescence, marriage and death. However Ongees have not been involved in any religious worship, the rites and passage of the Ongees are to be discussed.

5.2.2 ADOLESCENCE AND ADULTHOOD

The transition from adolescence to adulthood in the life of the Ongees is marked by certain rituals as part of the ceremony called the 'Tanagiru.' The ceremony begins with the setting out of a hunting party led by the chosen boy. If he succeeds in killing a toothed male wild boar by himself, he comes back to the Communal hut with the party. As this marks
the beginning of the rituals connected with the ceremony. The ceremony will performed for five to fifteen days till the boy hunt as many as twenty pigs however the twentieth pig must be a female one. It seems to be possible by the Onges when they were lived through out the little Andaman, now the tanagiru ritual is remains as a matter of story. Forest area is very limited to the Onges and they are facing hard to hunt even a pig in three four days. In this situation it is not possible for them to perform the tanagiru ritual. There are four to five Onges known to me whose tanagiru is yet not been performed, while they had got married and having two - three children.

As far as the ‘Tamleangabe’ ceremony which is connected with first menstrual discharge of a girl, is concerned, the girl was kept secluded or separated from the society temporarily and allowed to accommodate in a temporarily hut or Koralae. She remains secluded throughout her menstrual flow. During this period she is specially given roasted seeds of ‘Buludaugae’ (wild jackfruit) during this period about four to five days when the menstrual flow stops, the girl is taken by her women relatives to the sea for bathing. She is then adorned with ceremonial clothes. She is given clotted blood and the meat of female wild pig to eat and regain her strength.

If we go through the settled life of Onges at Dugong Creek and South Bay, it is observed that the ‘Tamleangab’ ceremony is not performed as they performed it during their earlier days. The girl is not secluded in a separate temporary hut or Korale but she is allowed to live with her parent
in the hut provided to them. Normal food i.e. rice, wheat (Rooti) and fish, whatever prepared in the house is given to her. She is allowed to take food without any restriction. No girl, whose menstrual flow stops, is taken to sea for bathing rather then does take bath in the communal well. It is also observed that no clotted blood and meat of wild sow (female pig) was given to the girl as an especial food, after the conclusion of the menstrual flow.

5.2.3 MARRIAGE

The Ongees have probably one of the simplest forms of Marriage rituals that ever existed. It is performed either in the communal hut or at the bride’s hut. Two separate beds, raised platform of wood and cane, are kept ready for the ceremony. Relatives of both the sides assemble at the venue along with the bridal couple in the evening. Both of them are ceremonially dressed and adorned with white clay painting. The bride and groom sit on their respective beds and the bridegroom goes up to the bed of bride and leads her to his own bed by holding her wrist of her left hand. The bridegroom first sit on his bed and then makes the bride sit on his lap and they ritually embrace each other. The other members are start singing and dancing. After some time they all left to their bed or huts leaving behind the new couple alone. The following morning, the couple visit all their relatives and are greeted with embraces. Marriage between close, recognisable consanguineous relations is strictly forbidden and will amount to incest. One can marry with in or outside one’s local groups. Remarriage of widows and widowers is allowed. A widow may preferably
marry another man within her husband’s local group. Divorce is rare. Men and women bearing same names cannot marry. The above mentioned traditional forms / type of marriage are no more in existence due to changes in Ongees culture. The marriage is fixed by the parents and elderly members of the respective bands. All of a sudden the consent was obtained from both the boy and girl; Decision of the girl and her mother is the final. If they agree, the new couple is allowed to live in a separate house or in one of the room of the bridegrooms’ house. Next day they use to paint their body with white paint and wear new clothes and visit to all the fellow members’ house. However with sharp decline in numbers, many of the rules and prohibition have been diluted as an adjustment to changing social conditions (Pandit) 1993.

5.2.4 PROPERTY

The resource area consisting of forest and sea coast belongs to a local group collectively. Others can hunt fish and collect only with prior permission of the members other wise quarrels will ensue (Pandit 1993). This is the immovable property of the local group as also is the communal hut shared by the individual families. Maintenance of the allotted part / portions of the hut are done by the families but roof etc. is made and maintained by joint effort. The ornaments, tools, weapons and utensils are individually owned and disposed by being given as presents etc. to anybody. Offspring have a right over the property of the parents and these rights may extend to other close consanguineous kin.
Due to the contact with the culture and livings in settled life, they have been seen to use one another's possession in turn. They even shared their clothing, tools, weapons etc. However living house is maintained family wise and major maintenance, like roofing, walling etc. will be done by the welfare agency.

5.2.5 AUTHORITY STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL CONTROL

The traditional authority structure in the Ongees community is still dominant and operates within its existing normal framework. (The Ongees are not much influenced in their traditional customary law although contacts between the Ongees and non-Ongees till the latter half of the 18th century). In them there is a clear cut distinction between secular and served institutions. The band head acts as the chief of the band and the priest is the religious head. The chief when he acts as leader, his office is called 'Enata' in Ongees dialect. (Bose.1993). The chief will take decisions in the matter relating to territory, assemble and decide matter related to territory, assemble and decide matters of common interest, subsistence, shelter etc. Thus he plays a crucial role in the Ongees social control mechanism.

The office of the chief of a band is always hereditary, this eldest son is always supposed to be the chief. They have some special qualification of the man who acts as their chief. 1) He must be an elderly person with in a particular Band. 2) He shows have a thorough knowledge of the ecology of the territory and natural boundaries of the group. 3) His contact with other
bands and other territorial groups must be very cordial. 4) He must be well versed regarding Ongees customs and traditions. 5) He must be a married man with wife living with him in a particular band territory.

The chief performs three important functions: a) Administrative, b) Executive c) Judicial. Propose of the chief in particular band is to maintain peace and harmony among the respective members who comprise the band and the same time to guard the Ongees custom particularly in respect of social and economical matters against breaches. The chief sits in the communal hut with all the members of the band for the redressal of grievances. He decides cases of quarrel, abuse, illicit sexual relationship, trespass upon others land, damage of property, theft of particular possession etc. When the chief tries any case the members who attend the court are not supposed to use any weapon. Ongees women are also permitted to attend the meeting of the chief.

The introduction of an intra-tribal chief among the Ongees, that is "Raja" system of government and authority, has reduces the power of the band chief to some extent but they continue to be influential. The introduction of the new system had led to confusing situations the idea and structure of the new system. In Ongees customary laws formerly decisions used to be taken either by the band chief or by consensus, but the introduction of the new system had tended to replace consensus by majority decision. Most of the major decisions were now taken by the welfare agency. The Ongees in all neither maintain their traditional customary law nor adopted the new one fully.
5.2.6 DELIVERY

The Ongees believe that none of their women can conceive without the grace of Onkobowkwe a sprit whose abode is in the sky over little Andaman, the souls of babies sent by onkobowkwe enter some food items such as honey, roots and tubers, they now believe that conception through sexual intercourse also can happen. Infact they now understand that women can conceive through intercourse. Before and after delivery they offer some foods to the pregnant lady in order to restore energy lost during delivery. It is observed that the traditional food is also accompanied the modern foods, like rice, dal, wheat, and green vegetable. Nowadays all the delivery was took place in the wooden hut not in the traditional hut. The Ongees now sometimes goes to the medical sub centre (within their settlement) to discuss the matter relating to pre and post delivery affairs. They used the modern blade instead of traditional cane strips or knife for cutting the umbilical cord. Delivery may be witnessed by young girl and females of the community they also permitted the health staff i.e. nurses to witness the delivery. The body of the newly born baby is gently cleaned with the cotton instead of ‘Tejomo’ or ‘Taikkutu’ leaves. The placenta, along with the blood-stained leaves/clothes, is buried in the ground at the back side of the wooden hut where the delivery took place, instead of under the bed where birth took place in their communal hut. The belly of the mother is comfortably tied with a piece of cotton clothes instead of the bark strips of the ‘Taibotilebe’ tree (Mimusops littoralis) to restore the normally of the uterus and the shape of the abdomen.
5.2.7 DEATH

A dead Ongee is buried under his/her bed in the communal hut. The ritual connected with death may be performed by the husband of the younger sister of the deceased. After removing the bed, a grave is dug. The corpse is then bent and tied with Kuebo bark. The corpse is laid on its back in the grave with the head facing the sea. The husband of the younger sister will exhume the lower jaw (innibirangey) of the deceased after a gap of three-four months or till such time as the flesh gets completely decomposed. All the relatives abstain from using red-ochre throughout the mourning period. The mandible then decorated with red ochre and bark fibres. The decorated lower jaw is worn round the neck by all the relatives in turn, and then reburied at the same place. All the relatives of the deceased invariably paint themselves with red ochre. All the relatives assemble in the communal hut and they had dance and songs. The ceremonial dance marks the completion of the death ritual.

After the Ongees came in cultural contact and settled in two specific areas the death ritual is performed by the Ongees at their settlement with some modified manner. The communal hut is no more in existing, so dead body is buried in one corner of the settlement at Dugong Creek and near the sea shore at South Bay, and covered with a tin sheet. Exhumation of lower jaw is still maintained but no one is found to wear the mandible in turn. However same was again buried at the same grave after painting with red ochre. No communal dance and songs are recorded during field work (witnessed three death ceremony). After reburying the lower jaw all
the members who had participated in the death ritual, invariably paint themselves with red ochre as a mark of completion of the mourning period.

On the basis of above facts and findings, it may be concluded:

1. The present population of Ongees at Dugong Creek and South Bay, the dress and personal adornment has invariable changed due to cultural contact.

2. The traditional communal hut, the main social institution has no more in practices, and replaced by community hall and wooden huts.

3. Temporary hut, found mostly not in practice due to non functional for the Ongees.

4. Pottery, the art of the Ongees has replaced by modern utensils.

5. Canoe making (dug out Canoe) skill was not encouraged, so found less interest to construct the dug out canoe.

6. Bow and arrow are partially in practice but the materials all are market made.

7. Traditional fishing nets are not found in the settlement, substituted with modern fishing nets.

8. Tools and techniques are burrowed from local neighbouring community and also supplied by welfare agency.
9. Some remarkable changes and modification are also found in the Ongees Birth, delivery, adolescence, marriage and death rituals performances etc.

Due to culture contact and settlement the Ongees of Little Andaman in both the settlements (Dugong Creek and South Bay) live in a transitional phase which may last long due to maximum intervention of the welfare agency on one side and the increasing non-tribal population in the Island and their irrational exploitation of the land and water resources, on the other side, deprived the Ongees of their natural wealth, which is threatening their social, cultural and biological existence. The entry of non Ongees population should be checked and the forest areas need to be demarcated as well as the sea boundaries. The Ongees could be motivated to cultivate their own culture and to maintain their existence by practising their traditions. The welfare policies should not be imposed on to the tribal rather there should be a selective option to be open to the tribal people. It is high time to seek the supervision and guidance of the anthropologist, and help/cooperation from various department of Andaman Administration to execute the welfare policies among the Ongees in a meaningful manner. It is of course a good indication that Ongees are adjust with the change of time and circumstance along with their long time traditional culture and beliefs, however with some modifications.