

ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

Introduction

In the pre-independence period A & N Islands was a little known area and was popularly known as "Kalapani" to the rest of the Indian people due to its geographical isolation. It holds a unique position in the primitive tribal map of India, as six primitive tribes are living here from time immemorial. Andaman & Nicobar Island consists of 306 islands with a geographical area of 8249 Sq. Kms and having a population of 280,661 as per 1991 census.

2. The tribes are separated in two distinct groups namely Andaman and Nicobar of which four primitive tribes of Negrito stock namely Andamanese, Jarawas, Onges and Sentinelese are living in the Andaman group of islands which encompasses a total area of 6808 sq. Kms and has a total population of 2,41,453 of which the tribal population is only 400. Onges have settled in Dugong Creek and South Bay of little Andaman. The population of Onges as on date is 85 and 19 respectively in two settlements. The Andamanese are settled at Straight Islands and their population is 35 only.
3. In the Nicobar group of Islands, two Mongoloid tribal stock are living namely, Nicobarese and Shompens. The total population of Shompens is 214 approximately, Nicobarese are about 6000 in number as per 1991 census. They are spread over 156 villages of Nicobar Island known as Nicobar District with a total population of 39208 and are distributed in 1841 Sq. Kms. area of the Nicobar District. Except Nicobarese other 5 tribes of A & N Island are primarily food gatherers, hunters and live in a primitive stage of economy. The Western coast of South Island and middle Andaman Islands have been declared as tribal reserve exclusively meant for Jarwas. Apart from the six primitive tribes, other tribal people are also living in the Islands and their total population is about 26,770 which constitutes 9.54% of the total population of the A & N Island.
4. It is seen from the Census 1991 that the Island does not have any Scheduled Caste population where as it is well known that a good number of Scheduled Caste people who migrated from erstwhile East Pakistan now Bangladesh as refugees, were rehabilitated by the Refugee Relief and Rehabilitation Department, Govt. of India, in 1950 in the Island. It is a matter of deep concern as to how these Scheduled Caste people are out sighted/unnoticed since then. Andaman administration and Census Department may throw some light on this problem.
5. No data is available on Poverty Alleviation Programmes initiated for the development of Schedule Tribes under JRY, IRDP and other Rural Employment Schemes. Data are also not available on the tribal families living below poverty line.
6. The Nicobar District has been constituted into ITDP and most of the schemes adopted under TSP are implemented in this district only.