



# THE INVISIBLE TRIBAL TOURISM IN ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Andaman Islands consist of 527 islands that lie in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal. A total land area of 8249 sq. kms forms this beautiful union territory. The island can sustain these tribes and carry them as one of the major attractions in tourism. Tribal tourism is one of the major sources of income and attraction for tourists. Tourism and agriculture are the primary sources of income on the island. The original population of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands consists of aboriginal indigenous people that are tribal. They dwell in the forest and remain isolated for thousands of years.

Tribal tourism connects to tribal culture, values, traditions, tourism products owned and operated by the tribal people. But the tribal population of the islands is not aware of the opportunity and challenges faced by them. Tribes lack in all the facilities provided by the Government because they don't like to surround or interact with the population and are indirectly the source and contribution to tourism.

The finding of the paper states that education is the key to tribal development. Tribal children have very low levels of participation in social-cultural activities. Though the development of the tribes is taking place in India, the pace of development has been rather slow. If govt. will not take some drastic steps for the development of tribal education

**KEYWORDS:** Tribal tourism, sustainable tourism, challenges and opportunities

**JEL CLASSIFICATION:** D00, E00, E71

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a union territory comprising of a unique blend of flora and fauna and blessed with emerald greenish-blue beaches. The south Andaman Island consists of vegetation, ferns, and orchids whereas the middle Andaman has moist deciduous forests. The union territory consists of 572 islands out of which 37 are inhabited and lies in the juncture of the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. Port Blair is the capital of Andaman and Nicobar and the territory is divided into three districts they are Nicobar District, South Andaman, North, and Middle Andaman. The Andaman Islands are the home to the uncontacted people. North Andaman is characterized by the wet evergreen forest. The interesting fact is that grassland is found in the Nicobar and while the deciduous forest is common in Andaman.

### **GEOGRAPHY**

The Andaman has 325 islands which cover an area of 6408 km<sup>2</sup> with the Andaman Sea to the east between the islands and the coast of Burma. The ten-degree channel separates the Andaman from the Nicobar Islands to the south. The highest point is located on North Andaman Island. There are at least eleven mud volcanoes on the islands. Rainfall is irregular and the islands enjoy a typical tropical climate all through the year with an average temperature of around 23 Celsius and not exceeding 30 Celsius. The Andaman Islands are hot and humid. The islands are situated in the hot zone. There are only two seasons, the rainy season and the summer season.

The natural vegetation of the Andaman's is a tropical forest with mangroves on the coast. Most of the forests are evergreen, but there are areas of deciduous forest on North Andaman, Middle Andaman, Baratang, and parts of South Andaman Island. The Middle Andaman's have mostly moist deciduous forests. North Andaman's is characterized by the wet evergreen type, with plenty of woody climbers. The South Andaman forests have a profuse growth of epiphytic vegetation, mostly ferns, and orchids. The Andaman forests are largely unspoiled, despite logging and the demands of the fast-growing population driven by immigration from the Indian mainland. Andaman forests contain 200 or more timber-producing species of trees, out of which about 30 varieties are considered to be commercial.

The Andaman Islands are home to several animals, many of them endemic. It includes mammals and birds. The islands also have several endemic reptiles, toads, and frogs. There are sanctuaries 45 miles (72 km) from Havelock Island for saltwater crocodiles.

The one thing that takes Andaman and Nicobar is well known for the list of tourist destinations in India is the adventure possibilities present here. The seas surrounding these islands are perfect to indulge in sports like Scuba Diving and snorkeling. The lagoons are full of diverse species of fishes and live coral that makes adventure in these waters a real treat. And there could not be a better place than the hills of Andaman and Nicobar Islands for a trekking experience that is heart pumping and tranquil at the same moment.

### **WHO ARE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE?**

An invisible area that is less explored and complicated at the same time is distinct from the cultural group who are wanting to be different and giving importance to self-identification. They



enjoy a unique relationship with the natural environment and can live and connect in harmony with nature from thousands of years. Indigenous people live a slow life because they want, through their experiences even though they are slow in progress according to the current scenario. As it is estimated that there are more than 370 million indigenous people spread across seventy countries worldwide. They practice unique tradition by retaining social, cultural, economic, and political characteristics that differentiate them from native people. These indigenous people have self-identification and the term indigenous states the first people, ethnic group, or Adivasi and hill people. Their occupation is hunting, gathering fruits, tubers, and honey from nature. They hunt turtle, fish with handmade bows and arrows. Indigenous diet is complex but is sufficient enough to gain the required nutrition. The food system is the knowledge that is evolved through culture and patterns through the ecosystem. The indigenous community is a group of tribes who are involved in sharing their own culture and hold unique language, knowledge, and beliefs holding a special attachment with their traditional land having a lack of social access to services. Most of the indigenous have a strong bond towards ecological belief and focus more on dance, costumes, masks, ritual, and sacred artifacts.

### **SLOW FOOD IN TRIBAL COMMUNITY**

The tribal community is known for slow food movement where they encourage people to initiate traditional food and old methods of cooking by discouraging fast food. Slow food that is prepared using local and typical ingredients and promotes regional cuisines and encourages the framing of the tribal or local community. The slow food community faces numerous risks because of climate change and depending more on natural resources because of global warming like a rising sea. The focus is not just on promoting traditional food but preserve culture and heritage related to food. Tribal culture is more on the utilization of natural food products which is directly obtained from nature.

A fresh flavor is present in the local food which satisfies the tribe community and since it is clean and consumed directly from the environment. The tribes are efficient enough in sensing the right taste of food. It is about sustainable development, herbal medicine, forest conservation, climate change, water management, and tribal art and cultural identity. Slow food teaches us both ancient knowledge and establishing close contact with nature. The tribal community set an excellent example in term of slow food as the forest is the basic support system which offers watershed protection, prevents soil erosion, and mitigate climate change.

### **TRIBES OF ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLAND**

If we talk about the tribal culture of Andaman and Nicobar Island now called as the Swaraj Dweep or Shahid Island situated near the Bay of Bengal. It is home to the indigenous people, an uncontacted people. These islands are shimmering with turquoise water fringed surrounded by jungle with virgin beaches. Andaman invited the end number of travelers from different countries and states to explore the untouched beauty of the islands with the twinkling blue-green shoreline. The island is also famous for the indigenous tribes who are isolated from the world. There are six tribes such as Jarawa, Onges, Andamanese, Nicobarese, Shompen, and Sentinelese. There is a division among the six tribes, one is called the Negrito tribes under which the great Andamanese, Onges, Jarawa, and Sentinelese come and the other is group



is Mongoloid tribes of Shompen and Nicobarese. They are called as the schedule tribe of India. One of the interesting facts about these tribes is that Sentinelese tribes are considered to be the most dangerous tribes in the world, as they stay in one of the most isolated places in Andaman and Nicobar. Whereas Jarawa tribes live in parts of South Andaman and Middle Andaman island where they are

the present number is estimated to be two-fifty to four hundred and are considered to be friendly. The Andaman tribes do not practice cannibalism. They don't practice cultivation and are involved more in hunting, fishing, and probably live on fruits and tubers that grow wild on the island using their weapon made up of woods and stones. The traditional dress of men is girdles made of hibiscus fiber made to carry tools when they go for hunting, the women on the other hand wear dress containing leaves around their waist as a belt and paint their body with mud.

### **PHYSICAL FEATURES OF TRIBES IN ANDAMAN**

The physical features of the tribes consist of dark skin color, short in stature, and have frizzy hair. They have a weak immune system. These indigenous tribes are excellent craftsmen as they are skilled in making tools and arrows. They are fond of red color clothes and the majority of them are seen nude. They are known to attack with poisonous arrows. They wear seashells necklaces and paint their face and body with clay.

### **TYPES OF TRIBES IN ANDAMAN ISLAND**

**1. Jarawa:** Andaman including tourists, settlers that bring disease and transmit to the tribes. Many outsiders sexually abuse the Jarawa women by influencing them to take alcohol and tobacco and increase the chance of AIDS and STDs among tribes. Another major issue faced by the Jarawa community is tourism activities, the private owner such a tour operator encourages the tourists to take photographs and view their lifestyle as a commodity. The tourism department of Andaman and Nicobar has issued a legal warning to stop all these activities. Some of the tour operators bring tourists close to Jarawa areas and shoot their lifestyle and make a documentary, in 2001 a video shot by the tourists showed women encouraged to dance by an off-camera policeman. The Government had now banned all such activities and if anyone found misleading or violating the rule will be punished.

**2. Onges:** The Onges tribes are called the Asian tribes and Onges means men who are closely related to Negrito population and the common language is Onges. It is also noticed that the Onges community has less fertility rate because of the demographic problem some men and boys face problems as they are unable to have marriage mates and the population is decreased because of the change in food habits. Friendly contact with Onges was made in the year 1855 but before that, there have been several violent and aggressive encounters with the outsiders. The Onges are monitored by Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti set up by the Government. One interesting fact is that the groups are headed by a leader or the Onges king called Tai who is responsible for



giving advice and no orders. They are involved in collecting coconuts which available abundantly hence they don't have any idea on the storage of food articles and depending more on seafood. Another interesting fact about Onges is that men go out to the forest for hunting and the women stay at home and search the local fruits and roots. Onges have a little interest in cultivation and more involved with nature. The Onges rub special herbs to avoid the bee stings while they collect the honey from the hives. They depend more on sea products such as fish dugong, pig, and turtle. Andaman government has encouraged these tribes to learn cultivation by paying these tribes and issued clothes to them.

Looking into their family lifestyle Onges are so organized, but the economic burden is not shouldered only by the husband but wife too who takes care of the children in rearing the responsibility. Onges have an interesting ceremony to celebrate adolescence and adulthood whether it is a boy or a girl. In the case of the boy, the ceremony begins with setting out of hunting, if he succeeds in killing a male wild boar and then the ritual starts followed with celebration by the beating of the tree buttresses and the boy enters the hut through a small open of the hut and the main entrance carrying a pig in his back and then the elder member helps the boy to sit on the belly of the pig, then the pig is cut and then he is made to drink the clotted blood of the pig and hence there is no ritual performed in the next day. The third day the boy is beautifully decorated by his elder brother's wife as per the customs and he is carried to the sea on the back of his sister's husband followed by some men and then they dip the boy till the waist by residing some rituals.

There are certain rituals described when a girl gets her first menstrual discharge where she is restricted to eat any kind of meat during her period at the end of the menstrual period, she is taken to the sea for a bath along with some women followed with rituals. Marriage in Onges a beautiful bond between two souls where is restricts marriage with close relatives or with the same band instead, they encourage cross-cousin marriage. The remarriage of widows and widowers is a common feature among the Onges. The simple ceremony takes place in the night with the help of relatives

**3. Nicobarese:** The Nicobarese people are settled in the main and largest island of great Nicobar and the term Nicobarese refers to the dominant tribes of Nicobar Island and belong to Mongoloid race. These people are an Austroasiatic speaking people of the Nicobar island of India. The Nicobar tribes follow Christianity religion which was taught to them by Father John Richardson which they follow and practice till today and celebrate all festivals. These tribes have learned Hindi and English to communicate with the outer world and are vibrant in government jobs because the Andaman governments have given them relaxation in terms of age, caste, and education to raise them in the society and avoid discrimination. They have upgraded themselves with time and consider themselves among us as both the men and women have equal



status, the men give equal importance to the women as they take care of the households and also involve themselves in agriculture. They also hunt, fish, raise a pig, and make pottery and canoes. Nicobarese is becoming educated over time and is active in every field.

**4. Shompen:** The Shompen are shy in and are prompt to diseases. They are the indigenous people of great Nicobar island who practice hunting and gathering food and keeping with the tropical climate of the islands their traditional attire includes clothing below the waist made up of bark cloth, decorating themselves with bead necklaces and armbands and women wear a knee-length skirt of bark cloth along with bamboo earplug and bead necklace and both sexes are barefoot. They keep pigs as pet and farm yams, roots, vegetables, and tobacco. Their house is built for four people, whereas once a child is grown enough, he makes his hut. Because of their isolated lifestyle away from the city contact they were protected from the tsunami and earthquake.

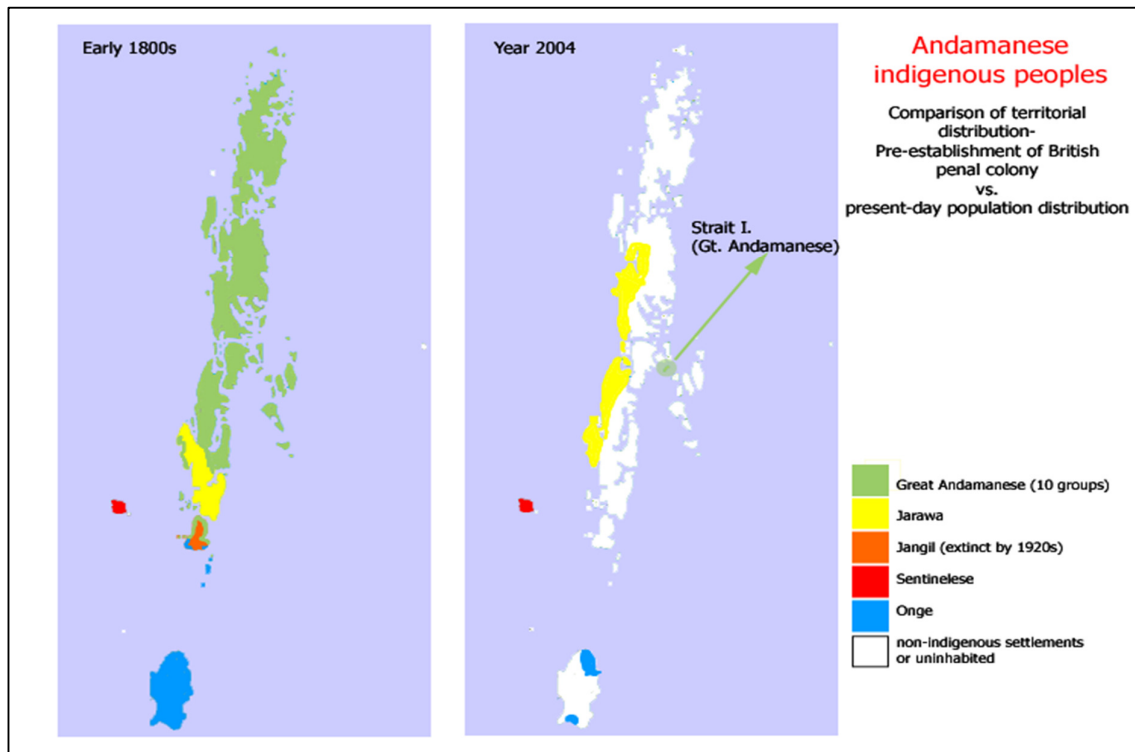
**5. Sentinelese:** This tribe is said to be so hostile that their homes have been named as the hardest place to visit in the world. They are isolated from the world and nobody knows exactly how they look like. Since 1967 the Indian Government with the help of anthropologists has tried to make contact with the tribe by giving them food, coconuts but the tribes showers arrows and stones on whoever comes near them, even the helicopters flying near their island is greeted by arrows. The Government had always got a poor response and whenever they tried to extend their helping hand that why the Government issued a notice saying that any access to North Sentinel Island is strictly forbidden.

### **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The scope of the study is found in middle Andaman and south Andaman. The middle Andaman and Nicobar Island is home for many indigenous people and the main occupation is agriculture and fishery. South Andaman is the third largest island, with Port Blair the capital of the islands. The Middle and South Andaman carries a lot of potential in tribal tourism because it the home for many indigenous tribes.



**Figure 1: Andamanese Indigenous people**



Source: <https://decolonialatlas.wordpress.com/2014/12/14/colonization-in-indias-andaman-islands/>

## **GOALS OF THE GOVERNMENT**

1. To protect the tribal culture and natural resources of Port Blair
2. To make the local community aware of the tribal culture importance and integrity in the island.

## **GOALS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

1. Provide information and educational experience to tourists
2. More accepting of the future, leave conservation and preservation to outside groups

## **GOALS OF THE PRIVATE INDUSTRY**

1. Promotion of culture and heritage of Andaman and Nicobar Island
2. Maintain cleanliness of the city.
3. Concerned with public image want to be friendly with the local community, through eco-friendly practices.

## **PROBLEMS FACED BY THE INDIGENOUS TRIBES**

Increase in the rate of sightseeing tours that are operated by the private company, where tourists attempt interaction with Jarawa, who are often found in the highways that had led to widespread encroachment, poaching, and exploitation of Jarawa lands.



The biggest threat to the Jarawas was from the construction of Andaman Trunk Road which is considered as the lifeline for the local community. The Andaman Trunk road is called as national highway NH4. This road running from the capital city of Port Blair to Diglipur connecting all major towns of Ferrargunj, Baratang, Kadamtala, Rangat, Billy Ground, Nimbudera, Mayabunder, and Diglipur. The Andamanese were the first victims

Due to more contact with other tribal cultures, the issue of Christian missionaries' problem of bilingualism has developed which led to indifference towards tribal language. This resulted in tribal people imitating western culture in different aspects of their social life and leaving their own culture. It has led to the degeneration of tribal life and tribal art such as dance, music, and crafts.

### **INITIATIVES TAKEN BY THE ADMINISTRATION TO PROTECT THE TRIBES OF PORT BLAIR**

Tribes of Andaman and Nicobar are vulnerable to diseases; the tribes are considering having low immunity. The current pandemic situation in Port Blair is critical and will affect the tribes. The tribes who are exposed to non-tribal passing through Andaman Trunk Road may have chances to get infected. Therefore, administration has restricted movement and only allows essential goods carrying vehicles, ambulance, and emergency travel of public on the ATR. The tribal have been sensitized about COVID -19 with pictures and videos in their language. All the Jarawas are shifted to west coast as a containment measure, where there is minimal possibility of interaction with outsiders. The administration is providing some food as supplementary nutrition to reduce their tendency to interact or return to ATR. Intensified patrolling has been put in place on the west coast to prevent any contact of fishermen or local communities with the help of the police and fishery department.

### **CONCLUSION**

The second group which came in contact with the outer world is Onges and their number is declining with time. Whereas the Nicobarese tribes are friendly and have grown rapidly and multiplied and Jarawa are the third group who is isolated and is at the urge of development with the help of Government and in recent time they were the topic of discussion because of the issues which took place because of outsider. The Andaman Adin Jan Jati Vikas Samti played an important role in the protecting the tribal culture, its focus is to protect the tribal culture. The Sentinelese are the most dangerous and hostile one and are less discussed and studied.

There is a question which had arisen with time is that when Nicobarese have developed themselves with time then why are Shompen and Sentinelese lagging behind.





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