

TRIBES OF ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS

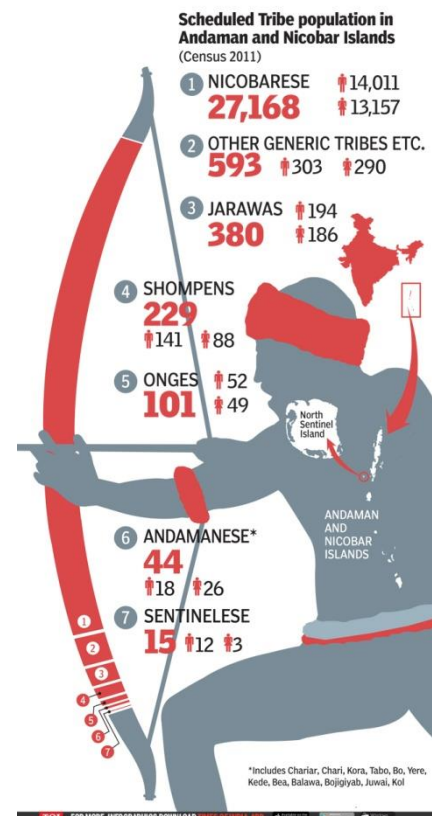
GS 1, MAINS: Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India, Social empowerment, regionalism.

TRIBAL SCENARIO IN THE ISLANDS:

- There are four ancient Negrito tribal communities in the Andaman Islands (the Great Andamanese, Onge, Jarawa and Sentinelese) and two Mongoloid tribal communities in the Nicobar Islands (the Shompen and Nicobarese). Except the Nicobarese, the populations of the other tribes have reduced drastically over the decades.
- The 'Negrito' tribes are believed to have arrived in the islands from Africa up to 60,000 years ago. All are nomadic hunter-gatherers, hunting wild pig and monitor lizard, and catching fish with bows and arrows. They also collect honey, roots and berries from the forest. The 'Mongoloid' tribes probably came to the islands from the Malay-Burma coast several thousand years ago.

FEATURES OF THE DIFFERENT TRIBAL GROUPS:

- The Great Andamanese: Andamanese peoples were preserved from outside influences by their fierce rejection of and by the remoteness of the islands. But after the coming of the British, things changed. The battle between the great Andamanese and the British regime is known as 'The Aberdeen war'. The tribe organized a well planned attack on the high ranking british officials but they were betrayed by an escaped convict Dudhanth Tiwari who had lived with the tribals for several months. As a result of the betrayal, the great Andamanese suffered heavily. They were fighting with bows and arrows against guns and artillery. Most of the young male population was killed in the battle. Population dwindled as and threatened the genes for the future survival of the tribes.
- Onge: They are dependent on the food provided by nature and are a semi-nomadic tribe. The onge population fell post british colonization. At present the Onge population have opened up to the locals in the island. They have now experienced the impact of



ACHIEVERS IAS ACADEMY

outsiders, as efforts at befriending them have proved successful. They have been provided with pucca houses, food, clothes, medicine etc. by the administration.

- Jarawa: The Jarawa are still at the primitive stage of life on earth. They entirely depend upon forest and sea for food. They have forever been hunter gatherers in the true sense however things have changed since the 1990's especially after the building of the old trunk road.
- Sentinelese: The Sentinelese people are said to be so hostile that their home has been named the 'hardest place to visit' in the world. They inhabit the North Sentinel island, and are the only remaining tribe in the Andamans to still maintain their isolation from the rest of the world. Presently the policy of the Indian government is to leave the Sentinelese alone. Any access to North Sentinel island is strictly forbidden.

PROBLEMS FACED BY THE ISLANDERS:

- The Andaman Trunk Road, among other projects, has cut into the heart of the Jarawa reserve, which has not only disturbed their ecological environment but also changed their lifestyle and dietary habits and endangered them.
- The tourists entering their land treat them like animals in a safari park. Outsiders, both local settlers and international poachers enter their rich forest reserve to steal the game the tribe needs to survive.
- They remain vulnerable to outside diseases to which they have little or no immunity. In 1999 and 2006, the Jarawa suffered outbreaks of measles – a disease that has wiped out many tribes worldwide following contact with outsiders. An epidemic could devastate the tribe.
- Many Andaman Islanders also succumbed to diseases like small pox, syphilis and ophthalmia (an eye disease which blinded many of them). They also have also had problems with goiter, bronchitis and hookworm.

EFFORTS IN THIS REGARD:

- Jawaharlal Nehru's Tribal Panchsheel were the guiding principles after Independence to formulate policies for the indigenous communities of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Based on them, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation (ANPATR), 1956 was promulgated by the President. This Regulation protected the tribals from outside interference, specified the limits of reserved areas and said no land in a reserved area shall be allotted for agricultural purposes or sold or mortgaged to outsiders.
- A policy of non-intervention was also proposed by an expert committee on the directions of the Supreme Court. The committee submitted its report in July 2003. The trigger for this was a 1999 petition that sought to bring the Jarawas into the mainstream. The committee recommended protecting the Jarawas from harmful contact with outsiders, preserving their cultural and social identity, conserving their land and advocated sensitising settlers about the Jarawas.

- While the Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957, of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) insisted on an integrationist approach towards tribal communities, the 1989 convention insisted on a policy of non-intervention, recognising the aspirations of these peoples to exercise control over their own institutions, ways of life and economic development. India ratified the 1957 convention but has not ratified the 1989 convention. However, despite not signing it, India tried to tread the path of non-interference.

PANCHSHEEL APPROACH BY JAWAHARLAL NEHRU:

- People should develop along the lines of their own genius, and the imposition of alien values should be avoided.
- Tribal rights in land and forest should be respected.
- Teams of tribals should be trained in the work of administration and development.
- Tribal areas should not be overadministered or overwhelmed with a multiplicity of schemes.
- Results should be judged not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the human character that is evolved.

PREVIOUS YEARS UPSC MAINS QUESTIONS:

- In the context of diversity of India, can it be said that the regions form cultural units rather than the states? Give reasons with examples for your viewpoint. (2017)
- What are the two major legal initiatives by state since Independence, addressing discrimination against Scheduled Tribes (ST) ? (2017)
- The spirit and tolerance not only an interesting feature of Indian Society from very early times but it is also playing an important role in the present. Elaborate. (2017)
- Why are the tribals in India referred to as the Scheduled Tribes? Indicate the major provisions enshrined in the Constitution of India for their upliftment. (2016)
- What is the basis of regionalism? Is it that unequal distribution of benefits of development on regional basis eventually promotes regionalism? Substantiate your answer. (2016)
- Describe any four cultural elements of diversity in India and rate their relative significance in building a national identity. (2015)
- How do you explain the statistics that show that the sex ratio in Tribes in India is more favourable to women than the sex ratio among Scheduled Castes? (2015)
- Growing feeling of regionalism is an important factor in generation of demand for a separate state. Discuss.