

Original article

## Occupational Changes among Island's Tribals & their socio-economic status

Hema Bannerjee<sup>1</sup> and Swapan K. Biswas<sup>2\*</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

The paper primarily deals with traditional occupation of Aborigines of bay islands. With the passage of time how the tribes of this of islands have been shifted from century old traditional occupations to modern occupation. How Nicobaree, the only advance tribe of Nicobar group of islands have adopted the new modern kind of professions with the advent of education and reservation benefits .What is the economic status of island's tribe in terms of below poverty line with rest of Indian tribes .What is the present position of island's tribe even after enjoying special recruitment drive by administration .

**Key words:** Primitive tribes, Bay Islands, Special Recruitment Drive, Traditional occupation

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### INTRODUCTION

Time and again every society has to change their way of life with changes of environment . From pre- historic time to modern age it is applicable to every society including the tribals on the earth.Occupational changes is a natural phenomenon ,according to the changes of materialistic world.Tribals society is the last , who adopted the change. They are not the orthodox , but they surrounded with a world of their own , which they build with a strong will. The surrounding atmosphere is changing fast , with the need of the hour . In the era of

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<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor & Head , Dept. of Economics , JNRM , PG College , Port Blair -744104

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor, P.G. Dept. Political Science, JN Govt. PG College, Port Blair -744104  
(\*corresponding author, Jeet06123@rediffmail.com)

globalization , the tribals are the easy victim and prey in the hands of the modernity and modernization .They are forced to either come to the changing world and adopt the new occupation or victim of the system ( Kar 2012).

### **Population aspect :**

The tribals are constituted around 6-7 % percent of world population , especially African is concentrated majority of tribals ( Srikanth:2010) . However , India is the second in position where a good number of tribals are living with rest of the people . They are considered as original inhabited of Ancient India .According to 2011 Census , tribals constitute a total population size of 104 million ( 10.4 crors ) , constituting 8.6 % of the Indian population . Mostly they live in forest , hill track , mountain and also in islands like Andaman & Nicobar in Bay of Bengal,Laksha Dweep in Arabina Sea . Since time immomrial they are living in these isolated islands with limited movement .Their origin or satge of immigration to these islands is still curious & debating before the world of scholars & researchers.

The Andaman & Nicobar Islands , the home land of six Primitive & indigenious tribes . The small size of population of tribals are facing extinct condition expect tribals of Nicobar . They are fairly growing and adopting all modern facilities . The Nicobarese are original inhabitant of Souh- East Asia (?) , migrated to these islands with many stories and contractory opinions. However , they are the decendent of Mongolied race .Perhaps , the tribes of Andaman group of Islands are identified as Nigretos and obviously migrated from African Contenant thousand years ago .With the passage of time the Nicobarese came into contact with many European merchnaries &invaders .

The total population of the A &N islands is 380581(Census 2011) of which the tribal population is 28530,as per 2011 census costituting 7.5%.Census data, released by directorate of census operations of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, has revealed that the tribal population of the islands declined by 3.19 per cent in the decade between 2001 and 2011. The overall population in these islands, however, increased by 6.86 per cent. While the government says the 2004 tsunami could be a reason for the decline in population. An anthropologist says that increasing contact with outsiders, which has made the forest dwellers prone to diseases, could be a probable reason. .The main tribes living on different islands are the Great Andamanese, Onges, Jarawas,

Sentinelese, Nicobarese and Shompens. The tribal population in the islands decreased from 29,469 in 2001 to 28,530 in 2011—a decrease of 3.19 per cent. The other reason Yesodharan (Deputy Director of census operations in Andaman and Nicobar Islands) says could be that many among the Nicobarese tribe have settled in cities and do not want to be identified as tribal people; they got themselves registered on the basis of religion. The literacy rate of ST population is 75.6% (2011) which was only 66.8% as per 2001. Census showing an increase of 11%. The literacy rate among male & female is 80.9% and 69.9% respectively. The number of school going STs is 5942, of which 3080 are boys and 2862 are girls (AAJVS: 2017).

The overall literacy gap amongst the various groups and STs has come down from 19.77 percent in 1961 to 14.03 percent in 2011. A scrutiny of state-wise literacy data reveals that in most of the north eastern states like Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland, STs are at par with the general population. While in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, which have sizeable ST population in remote areas, the literacy gap is as high as 18 to 26 per cent (Census 2011).

### **Occupation of islands STs:**

The traditional occupation followed by Nicobarese is horticulture. They mostly engaged in their age old economic activities such as : Horticulture , Coconut plantation , Herding , fishing and hunting .The other tribes are basically called hunting and gathering community . They led a subsistence economy without any kind of cultivation . They fully depend on nature and natural resources .However, in case of Nicobarese, the department of agriculture is encouraging them to adopt modern technique in their economic life by undergoing training and methods to increase their productions .In their kitchen garden , they used to produce varieties of yam , pandanus, banana, papaya, leaf vegetables (Justin :1990). Nurturing coconut plantation is a basic and primary source of income and one of the main food item for every family .Copra, the dry coconut is main income generating source. They sale the copra through their primary cooperative society set up in every village. Every family is primary member of Village primary cooperative society managed by them.

Herding of animals and poultry birds is a symbol of tribal life of every part of the world .They live within nature and a big part of their population engaged with these activities as source of

income. Nicobarese are not exception of this occupational practice. They are fond of pig herding. Pig-herding is part & parcel of the day –to- day routine of life .The number of pigs is define actual social status among Nicobarese. Pig fighting and sacrificing of pigs in important occasion like marriage, feast, community gathering, festival and honoring the special guest is a symbol of their joy and happiness. However, the Animal Husbandry department also encouraging them to herd hybrid pigs, poultry birds, as commercial goods as alternative source of income .They are very fond of pet dog as an assistant of wild boar, iguana hunting. They are surrounding with deep and shallow sea water .Water sports and canoeing is their main sports. Sea foods is also their everyday meals .Fishing and collection sea foods during low tide by both male and female is a daily routine for Nicobarese and others indigenou . Even hundreds of Nicobarese shifted to Port Blair and other islands for government jobs are also enjoy fishing and hunting in shallow sea water. They are very much found of fishes (Esther: 2017).

Time and again the Nicobarese are now changing their traditional subsistence economy, with the changing policy of the administration. The government is encouraging them to accept new job opportunity through best education by using reservation policy .Hence , a sizeable number of them are now in govt. job in different departments as administrators , Medical Doctors, nurses , Professors , clerks , teachers , and multi-task services .

**Table-1: Schedule Tribe population in A & N Islands (31/12/2013)**

Sl. No.	Name of Tribe	Number of Population	Island where inhabited	Inhabited other islands /
1	Great Andamanese	57	Strait Island	Port Blair *
2	Onges	112	Little Andaman (Dugoan Creek & South Creek )	Hut Bay & Port Blair **
3	Sentinelese	50	North Sentinel Island	No Change
4	Jarawas	425	South & Middle Andaman	No change
5	Shompens	219	Great Nicobar	No Change
6	Nicobarese	27686	Nicobar Group of Islands	Port Blair and other islands ***
7		28549		

(Source: Office of AAJVS , Port Blair , 2014)

\*the Great Andamanese are frequently moving to Port Blair. Children are taking education in Vivekananda Kendrya Vidyalaya. Few of them are engaged in government jobs .

\*\*Onges are basically living in both settlements, Dugong Creek & South Bay demarcated by Administration in Little Andaman Island. However the adults are frequently moving to Hut Bay transit accommodation for treatments and other purposes.

\*\*\*Nicobarese are advanced community among indigenous tribes in Bay Islands .In terms of population, their numbers are 27686 (96.97%) out of total 28549 STs in these islands . At present 5896 (20.60%) Nicobarese are out of their inhabitant islands. Of which 2316 are female.

**Table-2: Employment profile of Schedule Tribes in A & N Administration in various capacities**

Group of Post	Total no of Employees	Total no. of STs employees	Post reserve for STs	% of employees	Islands STs, Presence in job in %	All India figure % (2004)
A-Group	566	19	70	27%	3.35	1.70
B –Gazetted & Non –Gazetted	7510	514	938	54.7%	6.84	3.75
C-Teaching ,Clerical, nursing	14309	919	1788	51%	6.42	65.62
D Multi-task staff (Peon etc)	762	39	95	41%	5.11	28.96
<i>Safai Karmchari</i>	120	10	15	66.6%	8.33	NA
Total	23267	1501	2908	48.2		

(Source: Office of AAJVS, Port Blair, 2018)

The impact of Colonization & rehabilitation undertaken by the Government of India at the earlier 50's & 60's and subsequently development projects for islanders, the vulnerable primitives of Andaman were the first victim /worst sufferers (Kochar 1969 ). They have been uprooted during Penal settlement of British Raj and free India administration also continue the programme for the welfare of the non-tribal families ( Hema 2016).

However, the government has also launched many a welfare and well protected policies for these tribes to ensure their socio-economic developments. Time and again , the administration has been started many schemes for streamline their livelihood by providing free ration , new settlements areas ,with all modern and comfort facilities .New employment opportunity has been given by

absorbing them in various departments as skilled & unskilled workers. Out of 57 Great Andamanese and 112 Onges, 19 and 6 were employed in various government departments respectively. The local administration rendering their services in the departments of education , Health , Electricity , Police , Forest , Social welfare , as Ayah, Lascar, Constable, Attendant Dresser , *Mazdoor*, *Chowkidar* etc. in multi-task category ( Biswas , 2015).

According to the size of population the Nicobarese availed the more advanced changing economic along with other communities in this islands .In education , the Nicobarese students avail 20% reserve seats in islands educational institutions and in mainland professional colleges. They also get 7.5% reservation in all government jobs in Islands. Hence, the education has changed their livelihood and occupation. However, as per record available, in group ‘A’ gazetted post only 27% are filled by them, remaining 73% posts are still vacant. They are mainly doctors, education officers, college teachers. All the administrative and technical posts reserve for notified tribes of Union Territory are remain vacant . At all India level ,employments among tribes in all category is so grime, as per data .Only 1.70 % are in group ‘A’ post in central govt. services (2004) , whereas ,islands tribals are occupied only 3.35 % post out of total group ‘A’ post in Islands administration , which is higher than All India level .In case of Group ‘B’ gazetted and non-gazetted post , the Nicobarese are occupied only 54.7% , which is more than half of total post . Whereas, all India figure in group ‘B’ post only 3.75 % engaged by STs. Islands tribals have occupied only 6.84 % post out of total group ‘B’ post working in Islands administration , which is quit higher than all India level .But in Islands , the ‘B’ group , is exclusively occupied by Nicobarese. The posts are like School teachers, Tahsilders, Police Officers, etc. In this category, the technical posts in electricity, PWD, Marine, engineering sectors, their presence is very negligible.

In group ‘C’ posts under local administration, 51% post have been occupied by Nicobarese under reserve category. Their presence in school teachers, (primary to Sr. Secondary ), clerical grade, nursing profession , Police & foresters are quite encouraging .However, the Nicobarese are still struggling to fill up remaining 49% post in the group C category .The employment of tribals at all India level in the group ‘C’ post is 65.62 % which is higher than 51% post occupied by Islands tribes under group ‘C’ grade in local administration .

The presence of other tribes like the Onge and the Great Andamanese from Group 'A' to group 'C' posts under local administration is totally blank. They occupied only in the category of post like as Ayah, Lascar, Constable, Attendant Dresser, *Mazdoor*, *Chowkedar* etc. under multi-task category. The information in the field of employment in government sector under A & N administration, the Nicobarese are mainly employees in all category. However, their presence in Technical, engineering section is negligible. In an average, more than 50% reserve posts meant for Tribals are remain vacant, due to non-availability of suitable qualified candidates among Nicobarese and other notified tribes in these islands. Other than doctors, the important posts hold by Nicobarese in local administration is in finger tips. Shri Justin Austin, (Retd.) Supt. Anthropologist, Shri Nathaneal, DEO (Edn.), Shri Cephas (redt.) Director, Social Welfare, Shri Lucas Robert, DEO (Edn.), Shri Chasspher, Assistant Commissioner, A & N Administration, Ms. Esther Samuel & Ms. Jochibed Vincent are college teachers among few officers' occupied important posts in administration. However, every department such as Banks, Post office, other central government offices, the Nicobarese are working by taking the reservation benefits. Though, education has given opportunity to every Nicobarese family to avail education and job benefits.

The administration, for further accelerating tribal employment scope at all India level, efforts have been made by providing scholarships to the STs Students for perusing their studies at various levels in mainland institutions. An MOU has also been executed with Manidha Naeyam Free IAS, IPS Academy, a charitable trust located at CIT Nagar at Chennai, for preparing aspirants belonging to Nicobarese tribe for Civil Services Examination, the expenditure of which is being borne by the Administration through the Integrated Tribal Development Agency headed by Deputy Commissioner (Nicobar).

Special Recruitment Drive (SRD) was done by local administration to fill up the vacant tribal posts in various departments under A & N administration. The SRD report revealed from the available data on 31/3/2012 backlog regarding vacancy filled up by various departments. Accordingly, education department filled up 230 posts out of 410 posts. In electricity 78 & Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Science 25 posts were filled up by SRD schemes.

**Table-3: Special Recruitment Drive (SRD) for STs in various departments in A & N Administration-2017-18**

Name of Dept.	Backlog Vacancy filled up of SRD 31/3/12	Backlog vacancy as on 1/4/12	Vacancy arisen period 1/4/12-31/3/16	Vacancy filled up period 1/4/12-31/3/16	Backlog vacancy as on 1/1/17	Vacancy filled up period 1/1/17-31/3/17
Transport	3	5	0	0	5	0
Edn.	230	0	56	27	29	0
ANNIDCO	7	5	2	0	7	0
APWD	6	0	8	2	6	0
Social welfare	1	1	3	0	3	3
PBMC	0	5	8	1	7	1
Power	78	14	23	5	18	0
AH&Vs	25	25	22	3	3	0
Forest	0	6	24	10	17	0
Agriculture	0	8	61	64	0	0
Police	12	0	21	21	0	0
DC (SA)	0	0	6	0	29	0
Health	11	0	2	0	9	0
ZP (SA)	6	4	2	0	8	0
Others	31	8	32	8	26	0
Total	410	81	270	141	167	4

Source: Office of AAJVS , Port Blair , 2018

Departments of Health also filled up their vacancy posts against tribals of these islands .Vacancy raised in between 1/4/2012 – 31/3/2016 in various departments is very significance. The highest vacant posts raised in Agriculture department (61) followed by Education (56). The vacant posts found in electricity (23), forest (24), Police (21), Animal husbandry (22) and other departments, (32) under A & N administration for tribals. The posts found vacant reserved for tribals are



basically group 'B' & 'C' including multi-tasks. Vacancy filled up period from 1/4/2012 to 31/3/2016 for the above mentioned posts in various departments under backlog for STs stated that in agriculture 65 posts had been filled up. Whereas in education the filled up position is very poor i.e. 27 out of 56. Most of the science teacher posts under tribal quota, could not filled up due to non-availability of qualified trained candidates among tribes. Except Police department, the department like electricity, Animal Husbandry, Municipality, APWD and forest could not filled up all vacant posts raised during this period under backlog through SRD by administration. Basically, all technical posts reserved under tribal could not be filled up due to less number of qualified candidates found among Nicobarese.

Further backlog vacancy shown in 1/1/2017 in major departments under administration like education (29), Electricity (18), Forest (17), Deputy Commissioner office (29) and Health (9). The departments such as education, forest and electricity could not filled up their backlog raised in between 1/4/2012 – 31/3/2016 due to non-availability of tribal candidates. Therefore, in 1/1/2017 backlog vacancy has shown same number of posts already existed in their previous vacancy position. The table shows that the administration could not success its mission to fill up vacant posts through SRD under tribal heads, due to non-availability of technical /skilled candidates among Nicobarese tribes in A & N Islands.

### **Economic Status of tribes:**

### **Incidence of Poverty among STs in Different States**

**Table-4: Incidence of Poverty (%) States**

Extremely High (> 50)	A & N Islands, Orissa, Jharkhand, M.P. (Including Chhattisgarh)
High (35 to 50)	W. Bengal, Maharashtra, Assam, U.P (Including Uttarakhand)
Moderate (20 to 30)	Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Rajasthan
Low (< 20)	North- Eastern States

*Source: NSSO, 55th round, 1999-2000*

As per the NSSO survey reports, poverty among Schedule Tribes in different states have been leveled under four categories, according to their nature of income and livelihoods. Accordingly, A & N islands tribes including Odisha, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh are coming under extremely high poverty line, i.e. more than 50% category. The state like West Bengal, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Assam and Uttarakhand are coming under

high poverty line, i.e. in between 35-50 % . Population under Poverty line in between 20-30 % is declared as Moderate. The states coming under third category are Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, and Rajasthan. The economic condition is some way better among North-Eastern States. Around 20 % populations are coming under BPL category. Out of total 28549 Scheduled Tribes of these islands, 26519 were found to be BPL which constitutes 92.55% of the ST population of the islands.

#### State-wise Percentage of population Below Poverty Line (social groups wise) -2004-05

Sl.No.	State	Rural( STs) %	Urban (STs) %	Total
1	Andra Pradesh	30.5	50	40.25
2	Bihar	53.3	57.2	55.2
3	Chhattisgarh	54.7	41	47.85
4	Jharkhand	54.2	45.1	49.25
5	Madhya Pradesh	58.6	44.7	51.7
6	Maharashtra	56.6	40.4	48.5
7	Orissa	75.6	61.8	68.7
8	Uttarakhand	43.2	64.4	53.8
9	West Bengal	42.4	25.7	35.1
10	A & N Islands	92.55	NA	92.55
11	All India	47.3	33.3	40.3

Source: NSSO, 55th round, 2004-05

The occupational status of a community is one of the indicator of evaluation of its economic condition .The Tribal community in India is basically socio-economically poor and backward. Some of them are vulnerable like aboriginal /Primitives .The union and state governments have launched a number of welfare schemes in order to protect their life and livelihoods .In spite of special programmes , their daily life condition is so grim and pathetic . Hence along with other community among non-tribes, as per their quality of life and income –expenditure is very low so Islands tribes also fall under below the poverty line (BPL). State-wise data on BPL category among tribe in India living both in rural and urban areas stated picture of their living conditions. The states like Orissa, Jharkhand, and M.P. Chhattisgarh & Maharashtra, the BPL among the tribes are above 50% , in which Odisha is 75% identified as BPL. However, as per the BPL survey carried out in the year 2002 by A & N administration, the ST populations of 26519 were found to be BPL which constitutes 92.55% of the ST population of the islands. This is

all time highest in India. The Onges, Great Andamanese, Sentinelese, Jarawas & Shompens tribes are availing 100% BPL facilities. The Local Administration is providing free rations, and other facilities free of cost. The surprising thing is, the Nicobarese are advanced in all respect. They are employed in every department in local administration under 7.5% reservation quotas. Many families are having good source of income from coconut plantations. However, more than 92% are enjoying BPL benefits. After Tsunami in 2004, many Nicobarese families have lost their family members, property have damaged; many areas in coastal line and low land have submerged by sea water. Hence, they have lost their traditional horticulture & cash crops economy. Every family, who had lost their members in Tsunami in 2004, received adequate compensation in cash from local administration. However, Tsunami has left a human catastrophe ever happened in their human history. So, basically after human disaster, many families have moved to Port Blair city and other islands along with their head of the family. The killer Tsunami had submerged many fertile lands under their occupation in coastal areas, so they have lost their earning source. Secondly, the education has been welcomed by Nicobarese. The children used to move out from Nicobar district after completing school to city for further education. The employees among Nicobarese are crazy to send their children in good convent schools for better education. Educated employee in Nicobarese community always adopted children of poor family of their own community to give education along with their kids. Hundreds of Nicobarese children are getting education under this noble mission in Port Blair and mainland too. The Education officer, Mr. Nathaniel, Miss. Jocibed Vincent, Mrs. Esther Samuel professors of college are among who cared dozens of Nicobarese children of poor parents for pursuing higher education. Hence, migration of hundreds of Nicobarese family in city and other islands is a revolution in their socio-economic life and occupation status.

The Administration has given special attention towards the socio-economic developments of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) by implementation of welfare schemes. The administration provides free ration and clothes to the Onges & Andamanese along with fishing kits, iron tools and other equipment for alternative livelihoods. Multi-purpose Coop. Societies have been formed by the Onges & the Andamanese tribes for their economic development. All the members of the tribes participate in the management of the society and the profit so earned by

is being equitably distributed amongst the members .The PVTGs rely on the forest and their produces for their sustenance. In order to augment their food resource base, the administration has been assisting them with the saplings to plant in the Jarawas reserve and Strait Islands settlements of Great Andamanese and Dugong Creek and South bay settlements of Onge (Biswas 2015).

## CONCLUSION

Some of the important schemes undertaken for their socio-economic developments by key departments under administration. The Animal Husbandry has been providing them livestock such as poultry –farming, piggery at 50% subsidy .To promote tribal handicrafts and provide them a small source of income, the industry department extending marketing assistance to their entrepreneurs through *Khadi Gramyudyog Bhavan*, Port Blair. The entire Nicobarese society has been covered under Village Primary Cooperative Society and Central Cooperative Society. Every villager is member and shareholder of this Village Primary Cooperative Society and selling their coconuts and aeronauts through society.

In the higher education institutions, their response is very good. In social science, including literature, the Nicobarese children are good in numbers. Nonetheless, in Science stream their presence is very thick. They are average in study. As much number of Tribal students is passing out from higher education institutes, the number of vacant post in group ‘C’ or ‘D’ is limited. However, majority of them are not competing the recruitment test held time to time. Therefore, the young generation among Nicobarese is shifting from government job to private sectors. Though, in private sector, job opportunity is very limited. Hence , a good number of educated Nicobarese are showing interest to engage as ordinary workers in hotels, restaurant , cloth shops, security guard , general merchants purely on temporary basis . The present generation, among Nicobarese, Great Andamanese and Onges, who have moved out from their native places are not ready to go back and take their traditional occupations. They enjoy the city life and modern changing lifestyle. Even they have changed their food habits and dresses. Very slowly, this community is also facing scarcity of job like other non- tribal community in these islands.

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