



Culture Of Andaman And Nicobar Islands: An Overview

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Abstract

The research paper consists of detailed explanation of the term culture in international relations and politics. As well as, culture specifically in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The culture of Indigenous tribes Great Andamanese, Onge, Jarawas, Sentinelese, Shompens, Nicobarese. Apart from that the culture of local residents. It has detailed discussion on language, festivals, the structure of administration unit, the similarity of culture of mainland India and people's participation in politics and policy formulation.

Keywords: Culture, Indigenous Tribes, Settlers, language, lifestyle

Introduction

The "Culture" is basically behaviour of human beings, with material objects together plays an important role of a particular action. The concept of culture has language, beliefs, idea, customs, codes, tools, institutions, techniques, rituals, art, ceremonies with other elements (White 2022).

The presence and importance of culture has been dependent on to influence human being. According to Edward Burnett Tylor in his work on Primitive culture 1871, "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom. And any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society", (White 2022).

The international relations in global politics, the foreign policy of a particular country in all over the world, Culture plays a dominant role for the strong relationships between two countries. For example, India itself has strong soft power approach in its diplomatic relations with other countries. Realism theory has legitimacy

on material might. In the dominance of world politics, culture existing everywhere. The growth of non-western powers, “the return of ethnonationalism, violent extremism justified in the name of religion, the white resistance and so on (Smith 2019),”.

“Politics since the end of the cold war has been structured less by ideological rivalry and more by issues of cultural difference, especially those related to identity. Identity politics, in its various forms, seeks to challenge and overthrow oppression by reshaping a groups identity through a process of politico-cultural self-assertion. ‘Clash of civilization’ theorists argue that twenty first century global politics will increasingly be characterized by conflict between nations and groups from ‘different civilizations’. However, such a view ignores, amongst other things, the complex and fragmented nature of civilizations, and the extent to which different cultures have coexisted peacefully and harmoniously. The most prominent aspect of the growing political importance of the culture has been the rise of religious movement. This has been most evident in the fundamentalist upsurge, in which fundamentalist is expressed through a religio-political movement sometimes, but not necessarily, linked to a belief in the literal truth of sacred texts”, (Heywood 2011).

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands is a union territory of India. It is called ANI and the capital of the city was Port Blair, but recently the capital renamed as Shri Vijaypuram. It’s situated in the Indian Ocean, southern part of Bay of Bengal nearer to the south east Asian countries Thailand and Indonesia. The two groups of Islands Andaman and Nicobar separates with the Andaman Sea from the east to the Indian Ocean, as well as the two Islands separated by the 10 degrees north parallel. The Andaman is in north latitude and Nicobar in the South latitude (A & N Administration 2024).

The administrative set up and the structure of the Islands is one Lieutenant Governor, one Member of Parliament and the Chief Secretary.

Table:1

Administrative Unit of Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ANI)

District	03
C. D. Block	09
Lok Sabha Seat	01
Gram Panchayat	69
Sub Division	06
Statutory Town	01
Municipal council	01
Panchayat Samiti	07
Tehsil	09

Census Town	02
Municipal Ward	18
Zilla Parishad	02

Source: *A&N at Glance 2011 handbook by Directorate of Economics and Statics, ANI Administration.

Culture of Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ANI)

ANI is a part of India and having cosmopolitan population from different parts of India. Basically, at ANI we can witness two groups of population. One is primarily the indigenous tribes. From thousands of years these population has been living peacefully with their comfort zone. Another one we can say the freedom fighters against the colonial power of British had participated actively for the Indian Freedom struggle brought here in Kalapani for the imprisonment. As well as the settler population placed by government of India different period of time.

We can divide them into two groups one is the Indigenous Tribes and another one is the Settlers (Islanders or non-Islanders).

Table:2

The Indigenous Tribes of ANI

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs)	Living Area
Great Andamanese	Strait Island
Onges	Little Andaman
Jarawas	South and Middle Andaman
Sentinelese	Sentinel Island
Shompens	Great Nicobar
Nicobarese	Nicobar

Source: *ANI Administration 2024

As per the above table we can see primary population of ANI is the indigenous people. These peoples are living into this land from thousands of years. When it comes to Great Andamanese and their cultural imprint. As per the ANI Administration report, “These group were largest in numbers on the year 1789 estimated probably 10,000. But further, their population has been decreased drastically year by year. As in the year 1901- 625, 1969- 19, 1971- 24, 1999- 41. (ANI administration report 2024). Therefore, as per data we can clearly found the fluctuation of the numbers of this group. As a result, the ANI administration started the plan to protect and preserve the particular tribe. The steps have taken to rehabilitate in an Island called Strait

Island. By nature, these groups were foragers. But presently, they eat Indian traditional and modern food items. Their traditional diet and foods were sea foods in general as well as tubers and roots of the tree, pork, Andaman water monitor lizard so on. The occupation of this group was hunting, gathering but later on some of them indulged into cultivation and established poultry farms. After the contact with non-tribal and local people they had witnessed communicable diseases (ANI administration 2024).

The Onges are by nature is primitive tribes, and semi nomadic, they are highly dependent of nature for food. They live in Dogong creek of Little Andaman Island. They are kindly related with the Negrito race. The Andaman administration has provided them food, clothes, medicines, concrete house. The group has skill like artistry and crafts. The food style of this group is basically natural roots, jack fruits and all the sea foods. They are educating themselves and the primary school has been set up in their place. The population is stable and the total number is presented 94, which is very less.

As another one of the important tribes of Andaman is Jarawa. As the number of populations of this tribe is estimated 341 in the western coasts and Andaman Islands. They are living with hunting and gathering. For the protection and preservation of this tribe, government of India with the consultation of ministry of Tribal Affairs and collaboration with Andaman and Nicobar administration made a policy for the Jarawa tribe and implemented this policy in the year 2004. The policy consists of the protection and welfare of the Jarawa tribe, the Jarawa reserve area has been increased from 847 to 1028 sq.kms. the base of exclusive marine resource increased by coastal water upto 5km high tide line as tribal reserve. The primary medical facility as primary Health Centre, Tushnabad, Kadamtala as well as at Shri vijayapuram government hospital of Govind Ballabh Pant Hospital (ANI administration 2024).

Sentinelese tribes has estimated population some 50 to 250. This is the isolated tribe as compare to another indigenous tribe. There are not mingled with the outside local population as well as outsiders. By the occupation, they indulged into hunting and gathering. Main weapon of this tribe is bow and arrow, with fire they Warne outsiders. These people are completely self-sufficient to live peacefully with their community. Another tribe is Shompen, their number is approximately 380. Similarly, they are hunter-gatherers, they have very limited contact with the outsiders. Lastly, the Nicobarese tribe as compared to other tribe's large level contact with outsiders or the local people. They are in numbers approximately 30,000. These people are mostly educated, and largely doing horticulture. The religion they had adopted is dominantly converted into the Christianity. After the interconnection with the local people, they do religiously or maintaining their own culture (Grig and Ross 2005).

The Andaman and Nicobar is basically having vibrant culture of unity in diversity. The total population of the Island approximately consist of 4,34,192 Est in the year 2019, total area of the Islands is 8249 sq.km., the total inhabited Islands are in number 31, Total Islands/Rocky Outcrops/Islets are 836, total districts are

3, Tehsil are 9. The official language of the Islands is Hindi and English. The literacy rate is 86.2 percent, which shows a positive sign of the administrative behaviour into the education sector. (Andaman and Nicobar Administration 2024).

Table: 3

The languages Spoken in Islands

Languages	Total Percentage
Bengali	26%
Hindi	18.23%
Tamil	17.68%
Telugu	12.81%
Nicobarese	8.05%
Malayalam	8.11%

Source: *Andaman and Nicobar Administration 2024

The above table shows the dominant languages spoken in the Islands is called the Hindustani. And by the percentage Bengali is highest above the mostly speaking language. Second, largest speaking language is Hindi followed by Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam as well as Nicobarese.

The population of Andaman is mixed. We can see people from west Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Assam, Gujarat and so on. In short, the ANI can be labelled as “Mini-India”. When we will see the religious aspect, we can find all the religion namely Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain. Therefore, we can say the ANI is multi-cultural, multi-lingual as well as multi-religious.

Basically, the inhabitants of ANI, we can categorize them as settlers. They are having vibrant cultural practice. The people of ANI are mostly speaking Hindi language. And celebrating all kinds of festivals. The Administration of ANI is organizing some specific festivals like Island Tourism Festival, Monsoon festival, food festival, Subhash Mela etc.

As compare to mainland India, specifically the people of Andaman are not practicing untouchability, majorly caste-based discrimination is not taking place. Majority of the people are non-vegetarian but the vegetarians are non-discriminatory of the non-veg food. Inter-religion marriage as well as inter-caste marriage is not a big issue for this Island. If we will see the data, owner killing, communal riots have not taken place on a larger level. The key words - equality, cooperation among Islanders, peaceful co-existence, tolerance for other people's culture, the respect for other people's culture. These all aspects are practicing by the Islanders actively in day today life. The actual essence for the nationalism is practising by the islanders in unity in

diversity. When it comes to security, crime rate is lesser, this place is safer for women also. The people are by nature hospitable for outsiders. We can say this is the land of peace to relax from the hassle and bustle from outside world.

Conclusion

“In Plato’s ‘allegory of caves’ people was untortured chained in a cave makes theory of forms, and they are unable to turn their heads. The prisoners are basically able to see the wall of the cave. Behind the persons burns fire. the prisoners and in front of the fire a puppeteers can walk. Basically, the puppets who are behind the prisoners can create and cast shadows on the cave wall. As a result, the prisoners were unable to see the real objects passes through the wall. The prisoners were able to see and hear the shadows and echoes cast by objects they can’t see (Cohen 2006),”. This is the perfect example for the Islanders of these land. The basic argument and the critical analysis of this research paper is that, the residents of this Island have the culture of acceptance for any kind of policy formulation or evaluation, we strongly hardly resist. Some of the examples are education sector, particularly for higher education we need the central university but the deemed university has been taken into consideration, secondly the highway project very poorly implemented, but we hardly resist etc. I can say in our lifestyle we always maintain peace. Culturally, the locals in particular are intermingled with outsiders. And as compare to mainland India, local people are lazy. When it comes to political representation, the number is lesser.

At last, we can say the land of Andaman Nicobar Islands has vibrant colours instead of Kala Pani. This land is perfect example of secularism as per the Indian constitution. If we will see the preamble of India, this land and the peoples would perfectly fit in the practising manner.

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