

Demography of Islands in India: Special Reference to Indigenous Tribes

Indian states and union territories also consist of islands that are spread in the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea. People view these islands as romantic view tourist places with varied cultures and distinctive traits that differ from larger landmasses. But, what do we really understand about living within the island environment in India? Therefore, it is noteworthy to study the socio-economic and demographic indicators of population living in islands in relation to mainland dwellers in India. It is also important to discuss the characteristics of indigenous tribes inhabited in these islands. In the present study two union territories namely Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep that consist of 36 and 10 inhabited islands respectively are selected.

The people of Andaman can be broadly categorized into two groups namely Indigenous or Aborigines and immigrants. In these islands 8 percent are tribal population. The Aborigines of Andaman Island consist of Great Andamanese (including the tribes of Andamanese, Chariar, Chari, Kora, Tabo, Bo, YereKede, Bea, Balawa, Bojigiyab, Juwa and Kol), Jarawas, Nicobarese, Oneges, Sentinelese and Shol Pens. The tribes belong to Negrito race and on the basis of the level of technological developments, can be classified as Hunters and Gatherers or Primitive. According to Census of 2001, tribal population in the Andaman & Nicobar is around 29 thousands. After the Tsunami it is difficult to estimate the extent of loss among the tribal population.

Lakshadweep is very small union territory with population of 60595 and majority belongs to tribal population (94.5%) but they are not indigenous tribes and most of them are Muslims (95% population is Muslim in this union territory). Most of the socio-economic and demographic indicators of population living in the Lakshadweep are much higher than main land.

A historical analysis of tribal population in these islands is carried out in the current paper using available information from all sources.