

## Policy Analysis: Population and Distribution in Andaman and Nicobar Islands

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### Abstract

Anthropologists have impacted policymaking as subject specialists in the recent past. Of late, they have been taking a much keener interest by making a more exhaustive in-depth study of policy analysis. In this paper, we take a contrarian view and examine the policy of tribal policy as developed over the years in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands from the perspective of other inhabitants of these islands, collectively called the non-tribals. The present paper is a departure from the usual description of the tribal population and their need for isolation. We adopt a narrative and historical approach to look at the growth of the non-tribal population and the conflict situation it generated. We outline the policies of both British and Indian administrations from time to time in populating these islands and note the voluntary migration. The earlier situation of only conflict has transformed into one of the natural resources and land use. The post-independence tribal policy of Nehru-Elwin and its variation has been extensively used in these islands in protecting Sentinelese, Jarawa, Great Andamanese, Onge, Nicobarese, and Shompen. All three authors have first-hand field experience in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

**Key words:** *Tribal polices, Settlers, Andaman and Nicobar Islands*

### Introduction

Anthropologists have had a profound impact on policymaking as subject specialists. Of late, they have been taking a much keener interest by making a more exhaustive in-depth study of policy analysis. Several critical reviews have appeared in the last two decades. Most of these reviews indicated to traditional academic researchers that policy science (Geilhufe, 1979) is somewhat different and needs to change. Hinshaw's review of 'Anthropology and Policy Studies' (Hinshaw, 1980) is an essential path setting in the same Cochrane *et al.*, (1980) pointed out various characteristics of policy studies. It would be beneficial when anthropological insights are available to policymakers.

It would be helpful to introduce the word "policy" at the beginning. Much of the general understanding of what constitutes a policy (Gil, 1973) could be just management of public affairs or decisions taken from time to time. However, repetitive decisions of a similar nature: do not

entitle to be called a "policy." The term "policy" is more appropriately used in the context when of considerable thought and perspicacity, will, and purpose. Further, when speaking of policy, it must refer to its context, to a given period. A "policy" must have relevance to the circumstances—political, social, and economic—and since circumstances tend to change over time, policy necessarily becomes a time-related concept. *Per se*, a policy adopted and accepted at one point may cease relevance at another (Titmuss, 1974; Donnison, 1975; Madison, 1980). Therefore, it may be said that defining what constitutes "policy" is rather challenging. Considerably, it is possible to state that a policy decision holds relevance for the community at large or a fair-sized group of people and, compared to other decisions, has broader implications and a longer timeframe. It could be termed as a policy decision for a certain level in an organization (Madan, 1982), but maybe only an operation of a tactical decision for another level; also, a policy decision about a particular point in time may cease to be relevant at another.

India is home to a diverse cultural mosaic: a vast array of tribes in varied environmental settings. The cultural diversity is immense with rich cultural uniqueness. The need to protect these cultural heritages can broadly be divided into two distinct phases.

In the pre-independence period, the policy was basically driven by the need to achieve administrative needs and connivance. The administrative needs of the British Government had guided mainly the policy of tribal protection. The approach during this period was one of pacification. The post-independence marked the beginning of a more liberal and democratic period; in the decade of the 1950s, there was heightened enthusiasm to bring tribal people into the mainstream of the newly independent nation. Much of the debate centered on ways of integrating of the tribal communities—while maintaining unique cultural diversity. The measure of integration and at the rate at which it was to happen became a matter which dominated the arguments. At the other end of the lay the need for the isolation of certain tribes ultimately—this was the complete antithesis to the democratic neoliberal policy which was being spoken in the corridors of power in New Delhi under the leadership of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his confidant Verrier Elwin (Elwin, 1959). The policy related to this line of thinking is more or less popularly known as the “Nehru-Elwin” tribal policy (Patnaik and Prasad, 2005).

The historical and geographical uniqueness presents an immense challenge to govern and develop the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which lie in the Bay of Bengal (Iqbal Singh, 1978). We shall not go into the details of these islands as much is written about them and published by explorers, civil servants, anthropologists, environmental activists, writers, deputed experts, and influential persons from many backgrounds. Numerous coffee-table books are also available. We take two significant aspects of “policy” and look at them from a perspective of a contrarian view. The policy of protecting the indigenous tribes and their habitat is widely known and well described, and much of the policy dictates are readily available. The second lesser-known “policy” is the 1857 to 1970s resettlement of outsiders (often some of them known as “locals”) to these islands (Majumdar, 1975). We also touch upon the tourism policy as it has started to play a significant role in

the Andaman and Nicobar Islands’ future. The reason for looking at these three policy issues and their sociological implications is that all these involve the permanent or temporary movement of people on these islands.

## Material and Method

In this paper, we take a contrarian view and examine the situation over the years in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands from the perspective of non-indigenous inhabitants: collectively called the non-tribals, settlers, or temporary visitors. We adopt a narrative and historical approach to look at the general growth of the non-tribal population, the influx of non-indigenous populations, and the socio-legal implications. From time to time, we outline the official policy of the British and the Indian in populating these islands and note the voluntary migration.

## Population of the islands

The original inhabitants of Andaman and Nicobar: They are consisted of two distinct major indigenous ethnic groups - The Negritos and the Mongoloids. These native populations consisted of several tribal groups distributed on various islands. At the time of initial contact for which we have historical records, it was estimated that around 5000 tribal were living (Pandit, 1972). It was reported that a relatively large number of people inhabited these islands. The earliest reference to their numbers is mentioned by Radcliffe-Brown 1257 for the Andaman group of islands (Radcliffe-Brown, 1948); estimates for the tribals inhabiting the Nicobar group were 6511 (Census of India, 1911). The first recorded census puts the figure of the tribal population as 24,649. With increasing contacts from outside, the tribals found in the Andaman group of islands have been reported to have shown a sharp decline in their numbers. This fact has been attributed to several reasons like diseases, conflict, etc. The post-independence general tribal policy of Nehru-Elwin and its variation has been used extensively used in these islands in protecting Sentinelese, Jarawa, Great Andamanese, Onge, Nicobarese, and Shompen who are the indigenous people of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The only tribal population which has sown steady growth is the Nicobarese. The rapid decline in the population of natives can be seen among the Andamanese, which

dropped from 1257 in 1901 to a low of 24 in 1971. As of now, it is said to be 70 in 2017. Table 1 gives the variation in tribal population during the past eight decades.

**The non-tribal population:** In the islands it is cosmopolitan in its composition. These are people from almost all parts of undivided India. Apart from Punjabis, Sindhis, Tamils, Telugus, Bengalis etc., are Pathans, Baluchis, Sri Lankans, Burmese. Let us investigate the various categories of settlers in the islands.

### Locals

This category includes the bulk of criminals and political offenders labeled as convicts. They were mostly sentenced to long terms and had to be able-bodied for hard labor between the age group of 18-35 years. They came from almost all parts of undivided India. The convicts were received into the Cellular Jail for the first six months, where discipline was of the severest. They were then transferred to the Associated Jail for 18 months. The convict lived in barracks for the next three years, locked up at night, and labored in the mornings. For his labor, he received no reward, but his capabilities were studied. During the next five years, he remained a laboring convict but was eligible for petty ports of supervision and easier forms of labor; he also got a small allowance. After ten years, he could receive a “ticket of leave.” In this condition, the convict could earn his living in a village, keep forms, keep cattle, and many or send for his family. However, he was not free; he had no civil rights and could not leave the settlement or be idle. With 20 or 25 years spent in the settlement, with approved conduct, the convict could be absolutely released. The women convicts were similarly dealt with but on easier terms. They were kept in the Female Jail. Women were eligible for marriage or domestic employment. After five years in the settlement, and if married, they had to leave the settlement after 15 years with their husbands; all married couples had to wait, each for the other’s full term under the rules, whichever came last. Some of the stations, where the laboring convicts were kept and ‘villages’ where the free settlers or the self-supporters dwelled are listed below.

**Stations:** (1) Ross, (2) North Bay (3) Monut Harriet (4) North Conbyno’s Co, (5) Madhoban (6) Middle point (7)

Phoenix Bay (8) Raddo (9) Rangachag (10) Garacherana (11) Pahargaon (12) Biper Island (13) Dundas Point (14) Port Mouat (15) Elephant Point (16) Namunaghar (17) Manglutar, (18) Baghelsinghpura, (19) Brindabar etc.

**Villages:** (1) South Point, (2) Aberdeen (3) Chatham (4) Phoenix Bay. (5) Janglighthat (6) Niagaon (7) Bunlitor (9) Tuglakabad (10) School line (11) Garacharama (12) Protheroepore (13) Austinabad (14) Pahargaon (15) Lamba Line (16) Dudh Line (17) Bamkoflat (18) Alipur (19) CadleGunj (20) Bindraban etc. The villages listed above are located around Port Blair in the South Andaman. The table-2 will give us an insight into the convict population of the islands.

Between 1906 and 1942, the population of convicts fluctuated according to the strength of the penal settlement. However, the three years of Japanese occupation between 1942 and 1945 showed a sharp decline in their numbers. It was estimated around 18,000 in 1945. In October 1945, the Government of India abolished the penal settlement, remitted all sentences, and offered to repatriate at the Government expense all those who wished to return to the mainland of India. Some 4,200 availed of this offer. At the end of 1946, the population was estimated to be around 14,000 individuals. These convicts professed almost every religion and were agriculturalists by occupation. Today the descendants of this convict population are termed the “locals” - they form a homogenous Hindi-speaking distinct group in the islands with a culture woven by the thread of different castes, religions, languages, customs, beliefs, and practices. They are gainfully employed in government jobs, private businesses, or farms.

### Free Settlers

The free settlers consisted of those people who had finished serving their terms and their families, guards, supervising, clerical and departmental staff and their families, and trading settlers. The villages of the free settlers were different from those of the “self-supporters convicts”. Every effort was made to prevent unauthorized communication between the “free settlers” and the “convicts” during the pre-independence era (Majumdar, 1975).

### **Moplahs and Bhandus**

The *Moplah* community resulted from social interaction between Arab traders and Dravidian women on the Malabar Coast. When the Indian the National Congress took up the cause of the deposed Sultan of Turkey and started what came to be known as the *Khilafat* Movement. The *Moplahs* felt that the British were against Islam, so they declared a 'sort of Independence in the areas in Malabar.' Large-scale violence followed. It was these *Moplahs* --who had either been captured or had surrendered who were transported to the Andaman Islands. These people formed the nucleus of the *Moplahs* community on the islands. After six months of initial imprisonment, the *Moplahs* were given a "self-supporters ticket," Consequently, they settled in the lovely places west of the Mount Harriet range. Some of their villages are named after the names of villages or towns which they left behind, like Calicut. As in Malabar, the coastal people are engaged in fishing in trade, and the inland people in cultivation, the *Moplahs* in Andaman have adopted similar occupations to their environmental setup.

*Bhandus* are a tribe of Uttar Pradesh with habits of theft and dacoity. Around the year 1925, members of this tribe were deported to the islands. They found the surroundings relatively congenial. They chose to settle around hillocks and lived on forest produce and fishing. Today, *Bhandus* are an integral part of the island's community, and some hold responsible positions.

### **Burmese Convicts and Karens**

The Burmese convicts were sent first to the islands in 1907-08 and a large batch in 1923. After Independence, many of these people were sent back to Burma. However, the remaining are concentrated in the villages of *Mainyo* and *Herbertabad*. Karen, on the other hand, is able-bodied person who responded to the call of the administration to work as a laborer in the forest department. In March 1925, 45 Karen families came to the islands. They were settled in a village called *Wobi* near *Majabunder* in Middle Andaman; Today, their settlements constitute the villages of *Wobi* base camp; *Lotaw*, and Lucknow. They are mostly farmers though some of them are employed

with the Bush Police and the Forest Department till date apart from those employed in other occupations.

The categories mentioned above of ethnic settlers are together called the "pre-42 group". Though each one of the groups maintains its ethnic identity on specific issues, they strike a familiar chord.

### **Settlers between 1949 and 1963**

A scheme was formulated by the Government of India in late 1949 to increase the islands' population, as a result of which 128 refugee families of erstwhile East Pakistan arrived on the island in July 1949. In continuation of this scheme, 2363 families from West Bengal, 125 families from Kerala, 105 families from Bihar, 26 from Tamil Nadu (Madras), five from Burma (evacuees), and four families from Mahe (Pondicherry) were re-resettled in the islands between 1949 and 1959. Totaling 2628 families up to 1959. Table 3 will give the year-wise break-up of the number of families settled:

### **Agriculturists and Artisans**

The pattern of assistance provided to the agriculturalists and artisan families under the scheme is as follows:

Each agriculturist family was allotted 5 acres of cleared land for paddy cultivation and an equal extent of un-cleared hilly land for homestead and horticultural operation. Each family was further given *ex-gratia* of Rs.1,050/- and a recoverable loan of 1,730/- (which included the cost for passage, House Building, plough animals, cost of utensils and seeds). The artisans were given a subsistence allowance of Rs 200 per month, a passage of Rs 210/- and a loan worth Rs 930/- towards house building and utensils.

### **Ranchiwalas**

Though the earliest reference of migration of Ranchi laborers to Andaman and Nicobar Islands dates to 1906, in 1959-61, these people, who were engaged as laborers in the Forest Department, P.W.D., Marine and Timber industries of the island, were settled at Baratang. These Ranchi laborers comprise tribals of the 'Chota Nagpur

area.' They include predominantly the Oraon, Hunda, and Kharia, apart from others. Baratang appears to be a "Mini Chota Nagpur" in all its features. Till 1976 rough estimate of 15,000 members can be cited as the population of this group. (Verma,1976).

### **Settlers between 1964 and 1971**

#### **East Pakistan Refugees**

In 1964, an inter-departmental team was constituted to draw up what was described as 'an integrated resource development plan' for the islands. Considering the recommendations made by this team, 339 families of migrants from erstwhile East Pakistan were settled in Betapur in Middle Andaman Island after reclaiming 2,050 acres of land. Another batch of 100 families, also refugees from East Pakistan, were settled on Neil Island after 1,190 acres of land had been reclaimed. However, another batch of 800 refugees has been resettled in Little Andaman Island. The settlers are also engaged in agriculture and other occupations; the East-Pakistan refugees have transformed the Island's virgin forest lands into a 'farmers' paradise,' growing almost every kind of crop, though in small quantities.

#### **Ex-Servicemen Settlers**

As a scheme taken up by the Government of India to rehabilitate ex-servicemen in the borders of the country, around 330 ex-servicemen families have been allotted land and resettled in the Southernmost Island of the Nicobar group, the Great Nicobar Island. The total land reclaimed is 1499.66 hectares. The population consists of families from Punjab, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh. Each linguistic group has its colony. The General pattern of the settlement of assistance provided to each family in five acres of cleared land, 5 acres of forest land, one acre of land for a homestead plot, as well as rehabilitation assistance amounting to Rs. 19,750/-

#### **Ceylon Repatriates**

Around 60 families of Ceylon repatriates are also resettled in the islands. Out of the 47 families are in

Katchall, and the rest are in Little Andaman Island. Other Settlers:

Amongst the other settlers include people from mainland India who have come from different linguistic states of India either for service, for business or trade. Many families of fishermen have moved to Andamans from North Coastal Andhra Pradesh:

#### **Discussion and conclusion**

In order to understand the composition of the island population, we must look at the population's rate of growth and the decadal percentage variation. Table 4 illustrates the population of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands since 1881 and self-supporters. However, from the data above, it is evident that the population showed a sharp decline during the 1940 decade. This is primarily a consequence of Japanese occupation during this period, wherein several people were killed or forced to leave the islands. The boom in the growth rate can be observed after 1951, and this is mainly due to (1) Natural growth amongst the pre-42 population, (2) Rehabilitation of refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan, Burma, and Sri Lanka (3) Migration of other settlers who came to the islands either in search of employment or were hired by the Government for various projects on the islands.

The next important aspect is the huge influx of tourists to these islands. Much has been written about the rapid increase of tourism in the last ten years. The Directorate of Tourism, Andaman and Nicobar Administration, Port Blair, put out statistics in 2016. The overstated maxim of "High-value low volume" (Reddy, 2007) is neither a workable nor an entirely ethical policy.

There is an immense strain on the infrastructure and recourses of these islands. On part of the Administration, they are not empowered to regulate the flow of tourists except use the Tribal Acts passed by the Government of India and the Parliament. Besides, the revenue earned by Tourism is a large part of the net revenue of the Andaman and Nicobar administrations.

A close look at the data presented in this paper, with the contemporary situation of the islands in mind, will help us understand the increase in the island's population.

From 1911 to 1941, due to the policy of colonization - The result includes the resettlement of the *Karens*, *Moplahs*, and *Bhantus*, apart from a sizable number of ex-convicts and self-supporters. However, from the data above, it is evident that the population showed a sharp decline during the 1940s decade. This is primarily a consequence of Japanese occupation during this period, wherein several people were killed or forced to leave the islands. The boom in the growth rate can be observed after 1951, and this is mainly due to (1) Natural growth amongst the pre-42 population, (2) Rehabilitation of refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan, Burma, and Sri Lanka, (3) Migration of other settlers who came to the islands either in search of employment or were hired by the Government for various projects on the islands. Only in the last decade, the population growth has softened, but this due a phenomenon of cost- effectiveness of living on the islands, especially in the Andaman Group of islands. Of late, we see that the urbanization and use of recourses from the mainland have increased. Much of the problem lies in the nontransparent way the policies towards the islands were developed.

We can look at the situation as it evolved over time for our discussions. The establishment of Penal Settlement

was a colonial method to subdue the freedom struggle and transport specific categories of prisoners away from the undivided mainland India. However, there are enough references to the British administrators' efforts to isolate the indigenous populations. After the abolishing the Penal Settlement and gaining Independence, the policies of sending settler populations were driven by nontransparent ideas of security and "nationalizing" the Islands, the extreme thinking of settling ex-servicemen families in the Great Nicobar Island, of course with then overstretched Naval forces this could have been the obvious choice. The tribal policy of keeping them isolated was and is logical, but it has its pitfalls; we have made some groups dependent on the Administration. The tourist policy on a long-term basis may not be sustainable; the influx of many people is likely to strain the infrastructure.

The social fabric of Andaman and Nicobar Island has been bearing on the policies made from outside and has never evolved from within the aspirations of nearly 400,000 people could in future express itself in some form of politico-socio disenchantment if proper insight into is not incorporated into development planning.

**Table 1: The variation in tribal population during the past decades**

Tribal Population in decade	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
<b>Andaman Islands</b>												
Andamanese	625	455	209	90	23	23	19	24	26	26	43	44
Onges	672	631	346	(250)	-	(150)	129	112	97	112	97	101
Jarawa	585	114	231	(70)	-	(50)	(500)	NE	(200)	89	241	380
Sentinelese	385	117	117	50	-	-	(50)	NE	NE	23	31-39	(15)
<b>Nicobar Islands</b>												
Nicobarese	6511	8818	-	9589	12252	11902	13903	17874	21739	26122	28651	27168
Shompen	348	375	375	(200)	-	(20)	71	92	147	214	398	229
NE- Not Estimated												
Note- Figures in brackets are estimated												

**Table 2: The convict population of the islands.**

Year	Male convicts	Female convicts	Total convicts
1874	6733	836	7,569
1881	10325	1127	11,452
1891	10874	864	11,738
1901	11217	730	11,947
Between 1905-06	13981	715	14,696

**Table 3: The year-wise break-up of the number of families settled at Andaman Nicobar Islands**

Year	No. of families settled
1949	202
1950	119
1951	78
1952	51
1953	79
1954	478
1955	431
1956	399
1957	238
1958	200
1959	335
Total	2628

**Table 4: The population of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands since 1881.**

Census Year	Andamans population	Nicobars population	Total population	%Decadal variation
1881	14,628	--	--	--
1891	15,609	--	--	--
1901	18,138	6,511	24,649	--
1911	17,641	8,818	26,459	+7.34
1921	17,814	9,272	27,086	+2.37
1931	19,223	10,240	29,463	+8.78
1941	21,316	12,450	33,768	+14.61
1951	18,962	12,009	30,971	-8.28
1961	48,985	14,563	63,548	+105.19
1971	93,468	21,665	1,15,133	+81.17
1981	1,58,287	30,454	1,88,741	+63.93
1991	2,41,453	39,208	2,80,661	+48.70
2001	3,14,084	42,068	3,56,152	+26.90
2011	3,43,739	36,842	3,80,581	+6.68

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