

Shompens

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About Shompens

- They are one of the most **isolated tribes** on Earth.
- They are one of the **least studied Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)** in India.
- They reside in dense **tropical rain forests of the Great Nicobar Island** of Andaman and Nicobar group of Islands. Around **95% of the island is covered in rainforest**.
- Shompen have different origins from most Nicobarese, although both groups have **Mongoloid ancestry**.
- The Shompen habitat is also an important **biological hotspot**, and there are two **National Parks and one Biosphere Reserve, namely Campbell Bay National Park, Galathea National Park, and Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve**.

Shompens Population

Though according to the Census (2011), the estimated population of Shompen is **229**, the exact population of Shompen is unknown till today.

- Most of them remain in the forest and have little or **no contact with outsiders**.

- The Shompen are **nomadic hunter-gatherers, living in small groups**, whose territories are identified by the rivers that criss-cross the rainforest.
- Being nomadic, they typically set up forest camps where they live for a few weeks or months, before moving to another site.
- They collect a wide variety of rainforest plants, but their **staple food is the pandanus fruit**, which they call **larop**.
- They also plant small gardens, cultivating lemon, chillies and betel, amongst other plants.
- Shompen **speak their own language**, which has **many dialects**. Members of one band do not understand the dialect of the other.
- They are of short to medium stature, have a round or nearly broad head shape, narrow nose, a broad facial profile, and distinctly exhibit Mongoloid features such as light brown to yellow brown skin and oblique eye features.
- They have nuclear families comprising husband, wife, and their unmarried children.
 - A Shompen family is controlled by the eldest male member, who controls all activities of the women and kids.
 - Monogamy is the general rule, although polygamy is allowed too.
- The Shompen **worship the moon, known as Houou**, as their goddess, whom they believe created the universe.

Shompens FAQs

Q1. What is the religion of the Shompen?

Ans. Their belief system is generally animistic.

Q2. Which Mongoloid tribes are in Andaman and Nicobar Islands?

Ans. The Andaman Islands are home to four 'Negrito' tribes – the Great Andamanese, Onge, Jarawa, and Sentinelese. Whereas the Nicobar Islands are home to two 'Mongoloid' tribes – the Shompen and Nicobarese.

Q3. Which is the oldest tribe in Andaman Nicobar?

Ans. The Jarawa of the Andamans are the oldest existing hunter-gatherer tribal populations of the world.

Source: DH

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