



THE JARAWA TRIBE OF ANDAMAN ISLANDS AND IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT ON JARAWAS

KEYWORDS

Indigenous people, Jarawa Tribe, Policy on Jarawa Tribe

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ABSTRACT

Jarawa or Jarwa means "stranger" in the language of the Great Andamanese. They call themselves "Ya-eng-nga" which means "human being". The Jarawa are one of the four tribes in the Andaman which is a group of islands in the Indian Ocean. The Jarawa are hunters and gatherers and live on two large islands. They number between 200 – 400 which is a large number compared to other tribes in Andaman Islands. They are nomadic, living in 30 – 40 people bands. An epidemic of measles in 1999 and 2006 wiped away about 10% of the Jarawa population. Alcoholism, obesity, diabetes and depression are other ailments which are now appearing as the other causes for decrease in their population.

INTRODUCTION

It is not known when the Andamanese indigenous people first arrived in these islands. Analysis of the contents of shell middens, have put the oldest records at 2,200 years ago. However only a few of the middens were excavated and dated. Even the survey of middens was undertaken only in a few areas. The deposits in more than 250 limestone caves spread all over the islands, where the indigenous peoples might have taken shelter have not been surveyed, excavated or dated. So, how the indigenous groups, including the Jarawas, reached the Andaman remains shrouded in mystery. They could have arrived in the islands ten thousand years ago or even more.

The ancestors of the Jarawa and the other tribes of the Andaman Islands are thought to have been part of the first successful human migrations out of Africa. The tribes of Andaman Islands divides themselves into two groups, the ar-yoto or coast dwellers and the rem-taga or jungle dwellers. The Jarawas are considered to be erem-taga.

The Jarawa habitation is situated in a tropical region, the vegetation of area can be described as tropical rainforest. The Jarawas divide the space into five categories: pilleh(sea shore area), tagidh(marshy area), chanhannap(plain forest land), tinon(hilly dense forest) and wa(streams and inlets). There are three broad resources seasons in the area:

Mid March to mid May: The islands receive lowest rainfall during this part of the year, when the average temperature remains around 30 C. It is a season of collection of wild jackfruit and honey.

Mid May to November: The islands receive two monsoons. During the raining period the Jarawas largely depend on pig hunting and collection of seeds of few plants.

December to mid March: During this part of year monsoon comes to end. For Jarawas this is the season for honey and turtle egg collection. The Jarawas move from one part of their habitat to another in groups. Jarawas generally moves for two reasons, firstly to ensure procurement of various resources, including food, secondly to visit other members of the tribe.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the culture of Jarawas, their biodiversity and ecology.
- To know the impact of development on Jarawas and on their environment.
- To study the policies that has been implemented to preserve the Jarawa Tribe.

CULTURE OF JARAWAS

The Jarawas call their hut or settlement as "chadda". Hut used by a couple is called "tutime chadda". A semi-permanent shelter is called "chadda de thuma". A hut where widow resides is called "thorkalong chadda". The Jarawas of both sexes go complete naked, they don't where any clothes. However some ornaments are worn by them but these are in the sense to cover their nudity. The adorning articles used by Jarawas are head band, necklace, armllets, and waist bands. These are mainly made of palm leaves and shells. The headband is called "oetachi" in the Jarawa language. The Jarawa of both sexes decorate their body with clay.

The marriage generally occurs between adolescents. A widow/widower can marry in the Jarawa community. Though Jarawa are strictly monogamous, subsequent marriages are common. The child after six or seven years of age does not share the sleeping place with their parents.

Gathering wild edible plants is an important subsistence activity for the woman. The major edible plant resources are wild tubers, seeds of various plants and various seasonal fruits. The Jarawa eat many kinds of seeds, the most common one is the comin. Both men and women collect honey, there is no gender difference in this pursuit. The Jarawas males and females climb the trees even tall ones, cut the beehives and bring them down in containers made of wood. They use leaves of canarium euphyllum as a repellent. If the person cannot collect the honey immediately, a few shrubs around the trees are broken to notify others that the beehive has already been located. The Jarawa also collect larvae, mostly of woodborers. They are collected when the larvae falls from the canopy to the ground just before metamorphosis. Sometimes Jarawas also cut the tree trunks with an axe to extract the borer larvae inside.

Fishing is a very important subsistence activity for the Jarawas. The fishing activities of Jarawas are confined to shallow coastal areas. In addition to catching fish, they also collect molluscs and other aquatic species. Both women and men take part in fishing. While men use bow and arrow to shoot the fish, women use hand nets.

Hunting is primarily a male activity. There are only three game animals available to Jarawa hunters pig, monitor lizard and turtle. The Jarawas cook much of their food in pit hearths called aalaav. The pit hearths are made in open in dry season and during monsoon inside a hut. A fire is created at the bottom and covered with pebbles. The food to be cooked is placed on pebbles and then covered with another set of pebbles. If the item to be cooked is meat, it is packed in green leaves. The pit is then covered with loose earth. It normally takes 3-4 hours to cook food in aalaav. Meat of pig is smoked and kept for weeks or even months. Pig fat is stored for a longer period of time. The important objects made by Jarawas include the bow arrow, chest

guard, honey container, torch, raft and different types of huts. The wood used in making bow is *Sagera clyptica* and bow string is usually made of estwined tree bark collected from the *Sterculia Villasa* tree. Chest guards are made from bark of *Sterculia Villasa* tree. The Jarawas do not make boats, they use rafts.

IMPACT OF THE GREAT ANDAMAN TRUNK ROAD

The Jarawas have been able to survive and continue their traditions for millennia because they have had at their disposal a territory that did not face the problems of encroachment or being reduced. The Andaman Trunk Road has truncated their area of habitat. The Andaman Trunk Road runs north-south and the Jarawa territory extends both along and on either side of the highway. Their economic system that is dependent on hunting and gathering requires a large area and as a result of Andaman Trunk Road, the eastern part of the territory is almost out of bounds of these people. This has resulted in more indiscriminate poaching and the eastern part is like no man's land. The maintenance of the Andaman Trunk Road further depletes the natural resources of the area. The people who are engaged in the regular maintenance of the Andaman Trunk Road bring with them diseases against which the Jarawas are not immune. In 1999 and 2006, the Jarawa suffered outbreaks of measles a disease that has wiped many tribal people. The road that cuts through their territory brings thousands of outsiders, both local settlers and international poachers enter their rich forest reserve to steal the game. Jarawa women have been sexually abused by poachers, settlers, bus drivers and others. The regular commuters like vehicular drivers, cleaners and tourist touts deployed for maintenance of law and interaction with Jarawas. they have introduced the addictive habit of chewing tobacco among them for which they are ready to barter items procured from the forests or by them.

IMPACT OF TOURISM

A major problem is the volume of sightseeing tours that are operated by private companies, where tourists view, photograph or otherwise attempt interactions with Jarawas. 500 tourists being taken to view Jarawas daily by private tour operators and whole day will be spent inside the reserve. The tourists coming to see the Jarawas give them alien foods of all kinds and thereby cause health hazards like caries the teeth, diarrhoea, and other food born diseases. Tourists treat the Jarawa like safari attractions as animals and disturbing the animals which they hunt for their survival. Construction of hotels near Jarawa Tribal Reserve are the major concern as they disturb their environment and use their resources, even they are discharging garbage nearby areas which is creating pollution to the Jarawa environment. Tourists offer alcohol and cigarettes to women and children. Tourists are violating the rules and regulation of government that are made to protect the Jarawa Tribe.

Some Indian tourism companies bring tourists close to their secluded areas where the natives are tossed food from the caravans. In 1012, a video shot by a tourist showed encouraged to dance by an off camera policeman. On 21 January 2013 a Bench of Justices G.S. Singhvi and H.L. Gokhale passed an interim order banning the tourists from taking trunk road passing through Jarawa area. The Supreme Court therefore, on 5 March 2013 reversed its interim order, allowing the road to be fully re-opened, but with vehicles only being allowed to travel in large convoys four times a day.

POLICY ON JARAWA TRIBE OF ANDAMAN ISLANDS AS APPROVED BY THE KOLKATA HIGH COURT 2004

It was the outcome of sustained collaborative action by independent researchers, activists and committed government officers.

OBJECTIVES:-

- To protect the Jarawas from harmful effects of exposure and contact with the outside world while they are not physically, socially and culturally prepared for such interference.
- To preserve the social organisation, made of subsistence and cultural identity of Jarawa community.

- To provide medical help to the Jarawas to reduce mortality in case of their sudden affliction with diseases which their systems are unaccustomed to.
- To conserve the ecology and environment of the Jarawa reserve territory and strengthen support systems in order to enable the Jarawas pursue their traditional modes of subsistence and the way of life.
- To sensitize settler communities around Jarawas habitat and personnel working for the protection and preservation of the Jarawas about the need to preserve this ancient community and to value their unique culture and life styles.

CONCLUSION

The Jarawa Reserve exemplifies this sort of coexistence that people such as Jarawa have achieved over millennia. The settlements on the edge and around the reserve are dependent on the ecosystem services provided by the forests and biodiversity within the reserve. Rather than polarize nature conservation and development, it would serve the indigenous islanders and settlers to appreciate the benefits of each other ideologies and work towards producing a conducive environment for sustainable livelihoods and progress.

There is an urgent need to enforce laws for maintaining territorial boundaries. More than trying to keep the Jarawa people within the reserves, all out effort should be made to keep outsiders and poachers away from the reserve.

To promote tourism, local people or settlers should make the same environment as the Jarawas live in and represent their culture by performing their rituals, ceremonies and activities to make the tourist aware about the Jarawa tribe and their importance.

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