

Reversing 'Adverse Inclusion'

The story of the Ang or Jarawa people of the Andaman Islands

(Based on the Chapter *Reversing 'Adverse Inclusion': The Jarawa or Ang People of the Andaman Islands* by Rhea John in *The India Exclusion Report 2015-16*)

Introduction

A nation like India is held together by our belief that the people we elect to power will represent us and work for our common 'good'. When we talk about public policy and government action, we think of the ways in which the state should enable all its citizens to live life with basic human dignity and worth. In doing so, we hold the state accountable to equitably deliver public goods such as health and education that allow a person to live her life with dignity. But what about communities who have their own unique systems of living and surviving in a unique ecology of their own, often on the peripheries of mainstream society? Communities who

have their own indigenous knowledge systems, worldview, technology, and cultural and political systems and are far removed from so called 'modern' society and its accompanying institutions. Do you know there are communities who do not recognize governance, democracy or private property – in the way we do? How does a government plan for the rights and development of these people?

No government in the modern world has been able to strike the right balance between isolation and contact with such indigenous communities. Also to be noted, it is rare to find isolated indigenous communities with rich self-contained cultures to be integrated with the outside economies and societies in ways that are genuinely voluntary, humane, non-exploitative and egalitarian.

India's Andaman Islands are home to some of the most isolated peoples in the world. The four major tribes in the Andaman Islands are: the Jarawas or the Ang people, the Great Andamanese, the Onge and Sentilenese. **In this fact sheet, we focus on the tribe which is neither completely isolated nor entirely integrated. This is the story of the Jarawas or as they refer to themselves, the Ang people.**

The Jarawas and their relation with the State

Jarawas are listed under Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti (AAJVS), a welfare society forms the interface between the state and the tribe. The Administration proscribes interactions with the Jarawa except with a permit.

Public Good

Public Good is defined as 'a good, service, attainment, capability or freedom – individual or collective – that is essential for every human being to be able to live a life of dignity.'

(Source: India Exclusion Report 2013-14. Pg. 2)

Until the 1990s, the proud Jarawa people fiercely defended their forest homelands from outsiders of all kinds. Since then, they have started occasionally accepting 'friendship' and a wide range of things that came with it: from health-care support and foods that were never part of their hunting-gathering existence to trinkets and clothes. With the state administration building a road within the Jarawa reserve, they have also been exposed to intoxicants, tourists, and sexual and economic exploitation.

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups or PVTG's are groups with 'pre-agricultural level of technology, stagnant or declining population, particularly low levels of literacy, subsistence-based economy and forest-dependent livelihoods'.

It is hence important to discuss the story of the Ang people and understand it within the larger debate of 'development' in India. Before we delve deeper, let us understand the historical context and trajectory of the Ang people.

Historical Background

British era

The Jarawa were considered a 'hostile' tribe by the British, subjected to extreme violence.

World War II

The Japanese occupation of the islands during this time further alienated them from outsiders.

Partition of India

Thousands of refugees after Partition were sent to become "settlers" along the borders of the Jarawa reserve. This paved the way for their growing interaction with outsiders.

1950s

The Indian government sent 'friendly contact' expeditions with gifts of food, cloth and iron.

1970s

Building of the **Andaman Trunk Road (ATR)** starts. Some of the construction workers start settling along the road. The Jarawas were not consulted and they opposed the construction with violent attacks and ambushes. Anthropologist RK Bhattacharya referred to the road as "...like a public thoroughfare through one's private courtyard"

1974

'First voluntary contact' by the Jarawa. Some of them emerged to collect the gifts themselves. However, they continued to be suspicious of outsiders.

1975

The Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti (AAJVS) was created under the aegis of the government to work directly with tribal groups for their welfare.

1997

Jarawa boy Enmei, having been treated for a broken leg in Port Blair for three months, returned to the Reserve with positive news about the outsiders.

1998

Because of this, small groups began to initiate friendly contact with the outside world by asking for bananas and coconuts. However, the vast majority of Jarawas remained in the forest. 'The administration fulfilled the Jarawa's demands, trying on the one hand to prevent or minimize contact with outsiders, while on the other considering demands to integrate the tribe into the mainstream.'

2002

Based on the Court-commissioned report by the Anthropological Survey of India which argued that the ATR disrupted the Jarawas' lives, livelihoods and rights over their territory, the Supreme Court ordered the closure of the Andaman Trunk Road. It was never implemented.

2004

A new 'Jarawa policy' advocated a stated policy 'of maximum autonomy to the Jarawas with minimum and regulated intervention', such that they would be left at liberty to develop 'according to their genius and at their own pace'.

Throughout 2000s

Andaman tour operators began to promote what Survival International termed 'human safaris': travel along the ATR with the specific intent of seeing and interacting with 'uncivilised tribes', or 'junglees'. Bribes to policemen could also purchase dances by nude Jarawa women and photographs with them.

2007

A buffer zone of 5 km radius was added, within which no large-scale commercial activity was permitted. This was upheld by the Supreme Court in 2012.

2012

A media storm broke out over videos made public by The Guardian newspaper, UK, of Jarawa girls being made to dance by men in uniform - either police or armed forces. Investigation revealed that the video was actually shot in **2008**, by a group of armed forces personnel who had been exempted from the convoy system. Locals were quick to point out that such exemptions are also regularly made for 'VIP' guests of the Administration visiting the Islands.

2015

The deadline given by the Supreme Court to construct an alternative sea-route to Middle and North Andaman so that the Jarawas do not suffer because of ATR. Nowhere in sight.

The Debate - Isolation, Integration, Assimilation, Agency

“With tribes that have been **mostly isolated till date, like the Jarawa, the policy debate in India has largely oscillated between positions of ‘isolation’ and ‘integration’**, with implicit and sometimes explicit **calls for ‘assimilation’** —while assuming **the right to decide** on behalf of the tribes in question.”ⁱ

The two positions are:

Isolation

- Keeping the tribes in isolation and away from mainstream society so that they can preserve their unique ancient cultural heritage from the assimilative tendencies of mainstream culture;
- Supported by anthropologist Verrier Elwin who advised Jawaharlal Nehru, making isolation the underlying principle of independent India’s initial tribal policy;
- The increasing value of the scarce natural resources now found almost solely in the well-preserved tribal reserve ecosystem has ensured that total isolation is no longer an option.

Integration

- Tribes should be able to participate in the mainstream society and polity;
- They should not be allowed to continue being backward;
- Supported by anthropologist G S Ghurye, who said that, “They deserved the benefits of modern technology, education and healthcare, and to *allow* them to continue without these was a *denial* of their humanity.”ⁱⁱ

Assimilation

- Historical experience shows that ‘assimilation is ethnocide’ⁱⁱⁱ as it exposed the tribes to diseases to which they had no resistance – leading to vast casualties and decimation of the tribes;
- Left them culturally alienated and at the very margins of the economy—as was the case with the Great Andamanese and Onge;
- Such Adverse inclusion^{iv} left them uprooted and alienated, sometimes in anomie and without the confidence of the past.

Agency

- The right to self- determination is recognized as an extremely important right, in order to preserve the identity, culture and way of life of tribes such as the Jarawa.
- Unlike the other tribes, Jarawas have demonstrated their agency by choosing to continue their traditional lifestyles alongside new interaction with the outsiders.
- The administration must enable them to exercise this agency to decide their future and level of outsider interaction while also protecting them from exploitative practices.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) recognizes the rights of groups such as the Jarawa to ‘self-determination.’ India as a signatory to the UNDRIP has also formally recognized the right to self-determination of its indigenous populations, including the Jarawa.

(Contd.)

Jarawa and Policy Framework

- **Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation (ANPATR), 1956** reserves areas predominated by PVTG's for the exclusive use of the tribal groups. Though strong, the bail is quick, multiple cases are pending and even video testimonies by Jarawas have proved to be insufficient to secure a conviction.
- **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989** - This act was promulgated to prevent and punish a wide range of discriminatory practices against these historically marginalized groups. However this is not leading to greater justice due to the refusal of authorities to register cases under this act and difficulty in getting Jarawa witnesses who are articulate and unfazed by the unfamiliar courtroom situation.
- **Jarawa Policy 2004** was to uphold the Jarawas' right to 'develop according to their own genius and at their own pace.' It specifically forbids any further attempts towards mainstreaming, relocation and rehabilitation, as well as exploitation of natural resources within the reserve. But refusal to close down the ATR, shut down tourist traffic and poaching in the reserve, as well as curtail dependence on agriculturally raised crops amongst the Jarawas, shows failure on the part of the state government.
- **Forest Act 2006** is not notified in the Andaman Islands. If it were, Jarawas would be more empowered.

The Current Situation of the Jarawas

Andaman Trunk Road (ATR) and Increased Contact

Before ATR, the Jarawas had the agency to preserve their culture and ecology from outside interference. Despite violent opposition from the Jarawas, the state government went ahead with the construction of the road. The building of the ATR has subsequently exposed the Jarawas to a range of outsiders and has forced them into an unequal and exploitative interaction with the outside world that they never agreed to. Jarawas are often found exchanging highly valuable forest produce such as crab and venison for rice and plastic containers. Apart from the terribly exploitative 'Human Safaris', ATR has also allowed outsiders to lure Jarawas into cooperation by giving them alcohol, tobacco and marijuana. The AAJVS workers 'persuade' Jarawas to stay away from the ATR rather than regulating the road. The state government's regulation of the road remains tardy at best.

Role of State Actors

- The State buffer that is supposed to protect the Jarawa has itself been a source of exploitation by the Bush Police and early recruits to the AAJVS. They engaged in sexual exploitation, introduction of intoxicants and poaching of pork and venison.

- ANTRI has conducted sensitization workshops for AAJVS workers over the past year on gender, health, settler-Jarawa relations, and the politics and ethics of photography in order to build awareness and prevent exploitative practices.

Health, Education, Clothing

- **Health** - The health and survival outcomes of the Jarawa people are still far better than most PVTGs. They now use traditional medicines for diseases that they are familiar with and accept allopathic medicine and treatment from state government hospitals for other illnesses.
- **Education** – The AAJVS provides education within the reserve through an Ang Katha program, described as ‘bilingual and bicultural education.’ At various education ‘hotspots’ within the reserve, young and old gather and the elders of the tribe teach the children about the rituals, myths, medicines and the environment of the tribe. The curriculum and lesson plans are synthesized with the seasonal calendar of activities, including hunting and foraging, and performance and aesthetics. AAJVS staff also teaches the tribe Hindi, numerical literacy and hygiene.
- **Clothing** - Since Jarawa women are prone to exoticization and exploitation by virtue of their lack of access to clothes, under the Kangapo project ANTRI determined that Jarawa women wanted clothes to wear while travelling on the ATR. The administration now provides clothes to the Jarawa women.

Recommendations

The Great Andamanese, and to a lesser extent the Onge, demonstrate the consequences of **adverse inclusion**. The process of assimilation has made them vulnerable to disease, intoxication, economic and sexual exploitation. The experience of ‘friendly contact’ of the Jarawa is much shorter: a little over two decades. The **census data** shows an increase in population, which signifies that their situation is much better than other PVTGs. The story is mixed so far. While there are unmistakable signs of adverse inclusion setting in quite early in the contact with the outside world, the Ang are still exercising agency and choice, and the **administration must enable them** to do so, not only in letter but also spirit.

The India Exclusion Report 2015-16 believes that the future of the Jarawa people remains strongly tied to the:

Adverse Inclusion - The kind of inclusion that does not consult the group which has to be included, and sometimes tends to cause them more harm than exclusion. For example, migrant labour from nearby states was called to engage in construction work during the Delhi Commonwealth Games 2010 which later became known for its labour right violations. The enterprise could be viewed as something that generates employment and includes migrant labourers, but over 70 people died at the site.

- 1) **Early closure** of the Andaman Trunk Road highway.
- 2) Far more **effective policing of the Reserve** to prevent penetration of outsiders, poachers and tourists.
- 3) **Prompt punishment for those found poaching** in the reserves, with the full force of the law. The administration must economically assist and support the settlers so that they do not need to resort to poaching.
- 4) **Strengthening and popularising sea transport services**, originally planned to have been completed by March 2015 to meet the legitimate interests of settlers.
- 5) A **complete mapping** (preferably using satellite technology) of settlements, both legitimate and encroachments, would give a more realistic picture of the condition and prospects of the reserve.
- 6) **Visibilization of borders** of the Reserve on the ground, to concretise what so far is still an ‘imaginary line on a government map’.

Also, **the rights of the PVTG to the forest reserve must be legally notified through the application of the Forest Rights Act** in the Islands. Further affirmation of their legal community rights to the forest will also give them greater legal protection in the future from incursions like the ATR.

Most importantly, all those who interact with the Ang need to treat the tribe as equals, possessing the agency and wisdom to decide their best interests. **The Jarawas must be effectively in charge of their own futures and as such only changes and/or projects that are initiated by the tribe themselves should be implemented.** No ‘development’ or ‘welfare’ programmes should be devised by outsiders and then handed down to the Jarawas.

ⁱ Source: Reversing ‘Adverse Inclusion’: The Jarawa or Ang People of the Andaman Islands – a chapter from the India Exclusion Report, 2015-16.

ⁱⁱ Xaxa, Virginius. 2008. *State, Society and Tribes: Issues in Postcolonial India*. p. 6.

ⁱⁱⁱ Mukherjee, Meenakshi. 2014. [<https://in.news.yahoo.com/why-the-andaman-islands-are-headed-for-disaster-045113050.html>]

^{iv} The phrase was first used by : Nathan, Dev & Xaxa, Virginius, 2012. Introduction and Overview” in Nathan, Dev & Xaxa, Virginius (ed.) *Social Exclusion and Adverse Inclusion: Development and Deprivation of Adivasis in India*, Oxford University Press: New York. pp 1-19