

Indian MP (member of parliament) Bishnu Pada Ray's proposals regarding the Jarawa tribe, taken from his agenda points submitted to the Island Development Authority ahead of its July 2010 meeting

Future of the Jarawa tribe: The Jarawa population of around 300 individuals consists of dark skinned, short structured men and women akin to their African cousins. They live in the forests of South and Middle Andaman islands in mysterious isolation, stuck in time somewhere in between the stone and iron age. They have been scheduled as a Primitive Tribe Group in the Constitution of India, being hunter-gatherers and till recently, hostile to all outsiders.

During the British administration a large population of Jarawas, at that time spread over the entire Andaman group of Islands, were decimated in a bloody battle. Compounded by the effects of inbreeding, difficult living conditions of the forests of Andamans and constantly shrinking habitats, the Jarawa population decreased year by year to stand at a mere 300 nos. Owing to their food gathering and hunting habits, requirement of land per head is very large.

Although the Administration, guided by a collective decision of experts, has adopted a policy of isolation/no contact with the mainstream population, the drastically reduced hostility has emboldened both sides of the populations into frequent meetings and interactions of friendly as well as frictional kinds. There is, therefore, a situation of conflict, which does not pose that much of a problem but the friendly interaction are resulting in inculcation of undesirable knowledge and habits as well as injection of race impurity. Therefore, it can be concluded that the isolation policy of the Administration has failed totally and if the current policy and treatment continues, it will not take much time in total annihilation of the Jarawa entity.

Demand — Quick and drastic steps be taken to bring the Jarawa up to the basic mainstream characteristics. Example can be taken from the treatment given to Birhore and Sabar tribals of Jharkhand in Singhbhum and Khunti districts. In a nutshell, children in the age of 6 to 12 years were weaned away from the tribe and kept in a normal school atmosphere, where they were very quickly trained in personal hygiene, use of clothes and basic reading and writing skills. They were also exposed to eating habits of simple mainstream people and modern amenities such as television and motor vehicles. After 6 months they were returned to the tribes and re-contacted after a month. When they

were found to have lost some of their clothes and mainstream habits; it was also observed that members of the tribe had acquired some of the mainstream characteristics such as personal hygiene and use of clothes. The exercise of schooling the same children were repeated, this time over a longer period. Over time, trainers were able to infiltrate into the main pockets of tribes and inculcate skills of personal hygiene, wearing of clothes and their maintenance, partaking of cooked food and basic agricultural and horticultural activities. The final result was training the entire population into a village identical with any other village of ST population in Jharkhand.

A similar drastic mainstreaming treatment be given to the Jarawa population to ensure their survival against the adverse effects of unregulated contacts with the mainstream.

Removal of restriction on development in Tribal Reserve areas of South & Middle Andamans

— Two vital link projects of National Highway and Railways connecting Port Blair with Diglipur, passing through several settlement areas of South, Middle and North Andamans are facing restrictions due to two stretches of Tribal Reserve for the Jarawa tribe in South & Middle Andaman. With all sympathies for the Jarawa, one finds it not very logical to halt development of facilities and amenities for four lakh people to provide resource domain to merely 300 individuals in a primitive stage of development. Even otherwise, the current policy of isolating Jarawa adopted by the A&N Administration does not seem to be doing any benefit to the Jarawas. A model for development/mainstreaming of the Jarawa has been suggested earlier. It is high time that realization dawns on the Policy makers to adopt the correct Policy for the survival of Jarawa tribals and not go for the fashionable option. This would also remove the hindrance posed to essential development.

Demand - Restrictions imposed on development activities for national highway level maintenance of Andaman Trunk road be lifted immediately. The restrictions posing to be an impediment to the laying of railways linking Port Blair with Diglipur are lifted immediately to facilitate initiation of the project. This would require to go hand in hand with the lightening mainstreaming of the Jarawas, which will also ensure survival of the Tribe as an entity blatantly threatened in the present context.