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A Seaweed of Ornamental Value among the Jarawa people of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India

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Abstract: A marine green alga *Caulerpa peltata* (Turner) Lamouroux is reported for the first time as an ornamental article by the Jarawa tribe of Andaman Islands.

INTRODUCTION AND RESULTS

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are the homeland of six tribal communities, viz. Great Andamanese, Onge, Jarawa, Sentinelese, Shompen and Nicobarese. However, there is a distinct racial difference between the Andaman tribes and their counterparts in the Nicobars. The former four are Negrito, while the latter are Mongoloid. Out of these six tribal groups, among the Mongoloid, the Nicobarese are well integrated and assimilated to the Indian mainstream and the Shompen, who are still shy and avoid to interact with the outsiders are not particularly hostile. Among the Negrito group Onge and Great Andamanese have accepted outside intervention and are rehabilitated by the Andaman and Nicobar Administration. However, Jarawa and Sentinelese still have a hostile attitude towards outsiders and are totally dependent on nature (Man, 1973; Sarkar, 1990).

To study the socio-cultural, material, health, nutritional, language and ethno-biological aspects of Jarawa and Sentinelese, a pilot project is launched by the Andaman Janjati Vikas Samiti, Directorate of Tribal Welfare, A & N Administration. For this, a multi-disciplinary expedition to Jarawa and Sentinelese area was carried out from 10 to 12 July, 1996 under the leadership of the Chief Secretary, A & N Administration. The author was also a team member, and was given the responsibility to study the ethno-biology of these tribes.

The Jarawa of all age groups inhabiting the tribal reserve forests of Middle and South Andaman are nomadic and remain naked. However, a chest-guard made of thick bark of kekar is generally worn by the adult men (Sarkar, 1990), particularly whenever they go out for hunting and gathering. Both men and women are fond of adorning themselves by various ornaments like head bands, necklaces, armlets, waist bands, etc., made of naturally occurring materials. Besides, they also paint their bodies with white clay in different geometrical

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