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BRIEF NOTE ON JARAWAS, A PRIMITIVE TRIBE IN
A. & N. ISLANDS

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The word Jarawa or Yerawa is derived from the Akaboada dialect and means stranger. The term was used for any of the Eramagdes (jungle dwellers). Some caution however, must be exercised in accepting that all the persons called Jarawa belong to the same tribe.

2. According to Portman, the Jarawas and Onges, were originally one people consisting of 'eremtaga' i.e. forest dwellers and 'aryoto' or coastal dwellers and these tribes were the first to come in contact with Blairs settlers during 1789-96. This contact with civilization reduced the group so considerably that they could no longer hold their own against the Aka Beas. Thus the Onges, the coast-dwellers, returned to Rutland and little Andaman, while the Jarawas, forest dwellers returned to the interior of South Andaman. Though there are many points of similarity between the Onges and the Jarawas which entirely separate them from the other Andamanese of Great Andaman, there are nevertheless distinct differences in dialect, custom of weaving, house construction, etc. which makes one believe that they have been separated for a long time.

3. The Jarawas continue to be still hostile to all outsiders, and are now clustered on the Western Coast of South and Middle Andaman Islands. According to 1971 Census their population is 212 (est.). These areas have been declared as reserved areas under the Tribal Regulations and entry into them is prohibited. The Jarawas like other Andamanese, are of Negrito stock with wooly hair and dark brown colour.

4. Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti, after the inclusion of Jarawas in the list of primitive tribes, has started making efforts to improve contact with the Jarawas. According to Samiti "There are reportedly two groups of Jarwas living in the Western Coast of South and Middle Andamans. These groups are further divided into a number of smaller groups. These subgroups are always on the move from one part to the other part of their territory in search of food and water. Only one group which is found roaming about Chotalig Bang in Middle Andaman has so far come in contact with the Jarawa Cell of the Administration as already mentioned.

5. Efforts are being made to learn the language of the Jarawas, some words have been noted. These words are being used by the Jarwa Cell to converse with the Jarawas when they meet them. Likewise, the Jarawas have also picked up a few 'Hindustani' words like Khana, Pani, Kela, Nariyal."

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