

6. From the records available, previous experience of the members, knowledge gathered during their visit to the Islands, inspection and discussions, the Committee cannot but help observe that the so-called "hostility" of the Jarwa tribe seems to have led to its preservation while the Great Andamanese and the Onge which led continued to have friendly contact with the outsiders have been undergoing decline. It seems that the Jarwa tribe has been led to use hostility as an effective shield against external onslaughts. The existing administrative demarcation of the Jarwa Reserve, however, imperfectly observed in practice, might have also helped them to not only enjoy a command area for hunting and gathering but to also protect them. Thus nurtured in seclusion they have been able to maintain their culture and life-style in harmony with the ecosystem. Our view in the matter of their induction into the modern age and technology is that this should certainly be done on their own terms after they have gained some cognizance of the contact situation. In the context of our review of the fate of the other declining Negrito tribes in the Andaman Islands who have been exposed to massive friendly contact, we feel that the Jarwa need continued and effective protection for quite some time to come. At the same time, carefully planned measures under the guidance of specialists, particularly anthropologists, be taken up for establishing contacts with them which would ultimately lead to mutual understanding between the Jarwa and the outside population.

7. The question of resumption of construction on the present gap of 23 Kms i.e. 87 Kms-- 110 Kms is to be viewed in the foregoing context. The Andaman Trunk Road forms the eastern boundary of the Jarwa Reserve in South Andaman Island from its 46 Kms point to 110 Km Point. Hence any activity on this road is likely to affect the flow of life in the Jarwa Reserve. At the same time, the portion of the road abutting the Jarwa reserve forms a part of a trunk-line from south of Port Blair in the South Andaman Island to right upto Aerial Jetty in the North Andaman Island and an investment of about Rs. 12 lakhs Crores is reported to have been already made in this road. But on account of the gap between 87 and 110 Kms the trunk road has remained virtually unoperational. We have been impressed by the argument that although the trunk road has been in use in parts, its full utility from 0 Km at Chidiatapu to Aerial Jetty will be possible only if the gap of 23 Km is bridged. This will allow optimal transport of human and goods commerce, both from the mainland and between the islands. During the discussions we held with the Island Councillors and the Administrations Officials, they placed emphasis on the role of the Andaman Trunk Road in the Island's economy. In fact, its contribution to the overall development cannot be discounted the potentiality of the Road for the total economy and development in the Andamans is fully appreciated. This inclines us in favour of an uninterrupted link-up of communication from the South Andaman to North Andaman Islands.

8. We are also aware of a totally opposite view. According to it, abrupt exposure of a primeval tribal group to alien forces through opening of communications can sound its death-knell. In this particular context, the Jarwa have been able to preserve themselves owing to their isolation and the exiguity of contact with outsiders. Filling up of the gap would expose them to fatal risk. The proponents of this view would, therefore, like to keep the construction in abeyance.

9. We admit there is considerable force in the argument. But we are also aware that the imperatives of economy and development would militate against such a view the requirements of the Jarwa situation and the Islands' general economy need to be reconciled with each other. We are in the favour of a viable via media, while asserting the position that human survival could not be bartered away for immediate economic considerations.

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