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When we look at the treatment meted out to indigenous groups by governments in the Americas, Australia, Africa or New Zealand we become doubly conscious of our responsibility to ensure that this does not happen to our tribes in Andaman Islands. Our own experience of what has become of two of the four Andaman tribes after colonial and then official intervention is not reassuring. Both these tribes, the Great Andamanese and the Onge, may soon become extinct. Great Andamanese have suffered severe depletion of strength first because they were killed by the British, and second because of disease and adverse social contact. In the sixties, Administration shifted the few survivors among them who were scattered in South and Middle Andamans, to Strait Island. Their strength had then shrunk to nineteen. Today they number fifty three, having increased almost three times. But what are they now? Inert, enervated, alcoholic, shorn of vitality and purpose. Similarly, the Onge are today less than 100. Pre-Tsumani they were settled in two places in an island called Little Andamans. Today Administration has placed them in a small portion of this island, Dugong Creek. Their present existence is fragile partly because of disease and partly due to loss of traditional means of existence. Here again the challenge is to ensure that the Jarawa do not go the same way.

Unfortunately, our own approach towards the Jarawa has not been very different. This is evident from the manner in which the Jarawa territory has been squeezed over a period of time and non-tribals settled in its vicinity. Development projects have been executed in their area for the benefit of settlers. In this context, the construction of ATR was the most devastating project. Such development severely affected their mode of subsistence and often produced hostile reactions; the most hostile being against the construction of ATR. As a result, several Jarawa were killed as also some workers who were engaged in construction. These are some reasons why attempts of administration to encourage the Jarawa to come out of their isolation did not succeed. Earlier, it was their isolation and "hostility" which ensured their survival despite the reduced space in which they lived. But an incident which occurred in 1997 changed all this.² An injured Jarawa boy, Enmei, was found lying hurt in the forest. He was brought to the settlement for treatment, and that seems to have triggered the process of Jarawa socialization. Since then the "hostility" of the Jarawa

² Though "friendly contact" had been established with the Jarawa since 1974, they never ventured out of their forest homes to voluntarily seek contact with settlers before 1997.