

The battle for isolation of the Jarawa was lost about 50 years ago when a decision was taken to construct the ATR and create settlement villages in and around Jarawa habitat. There can be no going back on these developments and there is only one way forward (i.e) increasing exposure and interaction of jarawas with the modern world. Jarawas cannot be put back into the time capsule of Stone Age civilisation, even if we desire to do so. The genie appears to have escaped from the bottle.

Field visits suggest that Jarawas are not a homogenous group and there are several subgroups in different parts of the Jarawa reserve with different levels of interaction with the outside world. Jarawas from Middle Strait and Tirur have picked up local languages including Hindi, are familiar with the outside world and have started wearing modern clothes. They have started chewing tobacco and eating rice and sugar. They are sharp, intelligent and confident. Their articulation is clear and self assured. Jarawas no longer live in splendid isolation. The effort to protect the Jarawa tribe from external influences is therefore an exercise in futility. Their isolation has been breached irretrievably.

The Jarawa policy envisages maximum autonomy for the Jarawas with minimum and regulated intervention, with Jarawas being left at liberty to develop according to their own genius and at their own pace. **No attempts are to be made to bring them into the mainstream against their conscious will.** While A&N Administration follows this policy of non-intervention strictly, **the dilemma is about what should be done as the Jarawas reach out to the modern world as per their conscious will.** The Jarawa Policy is silent about the manner in which the A&N Administration should respond to these overtures of the Jarawa tribe. The response at present is to persuade the Jarawas to remain confined within the Jarawa Reserve areas and stop interacting with their brethren in the modern world. This response is wholly inadequate. It cannot be the mandate of A&N Administration to confine Jarawas within the Tribal Reserve Areas and prevent them from reaching out to the modern world for all time to come. As free human beings, Jarwas should be free to move beyond the Tribal Reserve areas and interact with whomever they want. The objective of Jarawa Policy certainly cannot be to keep Jarawas confined to primitive mental and physical spaces for all time to come. The challenge is to ensure that the Jarawa are **empowered** to deal with the outside world without losing their vitality. **The key policy issue facing A&N Administration is about how Jarawas should be empowered to deal with the modern world as per their free will.**