

The Jarawa (*Ang*) in Transition: Theoretical Appraisal and Empirical Issues

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Abstract: The Ang one of the four negrito (from Spanish diminutive for 'Black') populations of Andaman islands are popularly known as Jarawa. They are also known for their self-sufficient and self-reliant society which satisfies all their needs from birth to death (cradle to grave arrangements). Until recently they lived in complete isolation and maintained a disassociated relationship with the outsiders. However, since October 1997 they have come out of this isolation and the scenario has changed drastically. Increased contact with outsiders brings about changes in Jarawa (*Ang*) society and culture. The self-sufficient Jarawa (*Ang*) society gradually started to depend on different need based, contextual outside elements. Barter relation have established between Jarawa (*Ang*) and non-Jarawa. The relationship is basically need based exchange of different commodities. Notably, unlike the days of disassociation, the urge of barter is often from the side of Jarawa (*Ang*) and a symbiotic relationship exists between both the bartering partners. They like to barter those required articles which they can't manufacture from the available forest resources or the articles to which they are fond of or addicted. Besides different socio-cultural impact of this bartering relation, one significant aspect is that as Jarawa (*Ang*) are unable to manufacture any of the bartered items, they gradually become depended on bartering partner for continuous and subsequent supply of the bartered item or part of it. Both the theoretical and empirical aspects of this particular issue have been discussed and analysed in this research manuscript.

Introduction

Today nowhere in the world we can found hunter-gatherers are living in the domain of hunter-gatherers. Most of them are surrounded by dominant neighbour groups. So, history and culture of any hunter-gatherer society must have to be understood as the product of a complex triple dynamics: part of their culture needs to be understood in terms of the dynamic of the foraging way of life itself, part from the dynamic of their interaction with (often more powerful) non-foraging neighbours, and part from the dynamic of their interaction with the dominant state administrative structures (Leacock and Lee, 1982). Andaman and Nicobar group of Islands with a geographical area of 8298 sq. km consists of 572 islands and islets spread in Bay of Bengal at a distance of about 1200 km from the any cost of mainland India. It is the series of islands extending from Cape Negrais of Myanmar at north to Achin head of Sumatra at south. It stretches between 6° to

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14° North Latitude and 92° to 94° longitude. The Andaman group of islands are also known to be inhabited by four negrito population namely Jarawa, Great Andamanese, Onge and Sentinelese. Only in recent years we came to know from the Jarawa that they call themselves as *Ang*. It has been argued that Aka-Bea, one of the Great Andamanese tribes used to refer the *Ang* as 'Jarawa'. As during early period of British colonisation the Great Andamanese tribes were used to be the jungle guide for different administrators and surveyors who have pick-up the term Jarawa to refer this particular group of Jungle dwellers. So, Brown (1922) was rightly assumed that "The natives of Little Andaman refer to themselves as Onge (men). It is probable that the so-called Jarawa of the South Andaman have the same word." During the present study voice of few Jarawas were recorded during pronunciation of the name of their own community i.e. '*Ang*'. It is noteworthy to mention that their pronunciation of '*Ang*' often heard like 'Ong' which is quite close to the pronunciation 'Onge' (the negrito community of Little Andaman). Moreover Brown (1922) also mentioned that "there can be no doubt the Jarawa are the descendants of emigrants who at some time in the past made their way across from the Little Andaman and thrust themselves in upon the inhabitants of Ruthland Islands and the South Andaman, maintaining their footing in the new country by force of arms." So, the area which is inhabited by the Jarawa (*Ang*) today is a recent phenomenon, probably not more than two centuries. Jarawa (*Ang*) were distributed in Ruthland Island and Southern most parts of Great Andaman Island. Due to different colonial forces and other different reasons, they were pushed further northwards and occupy the present position. At present the Jarawa (*Ang*) are inhabiting in Middle and South Andaman area along with the west coast and dense forest. Their area of habitation has been declared as tribal reserve (1028 km²) by the administration. As on July, 2011, their total population was 381, having 196 male, 185 Female and sex ratio of 944. Till 1997, Jarawa (*Ang*) avoided any interaction with the non-*Ang* migrant population, who have settled down in the vicinity of their habitat indifferent phases.

Area of Study

Study was conducted among the Jarawa (*Ang*) and Settlers of Middle Andaman areas in two phases; initially for one month during November-December, 2011 and after that for another one month on April-May, 2012. Different *Chaddas* (Camp sites) of Jarawa (*Ang*) namely Julanpathar, Lakralunta, Tanmad, Philip Nala and Dhani Nala and adjacent non-*Ang* villages near Jarawa Tribal Reserve (JTR) namely Atergi, Kataidera, Bamboo Tikri and Phooltala etc. were visited and studied. (Fig. 1)

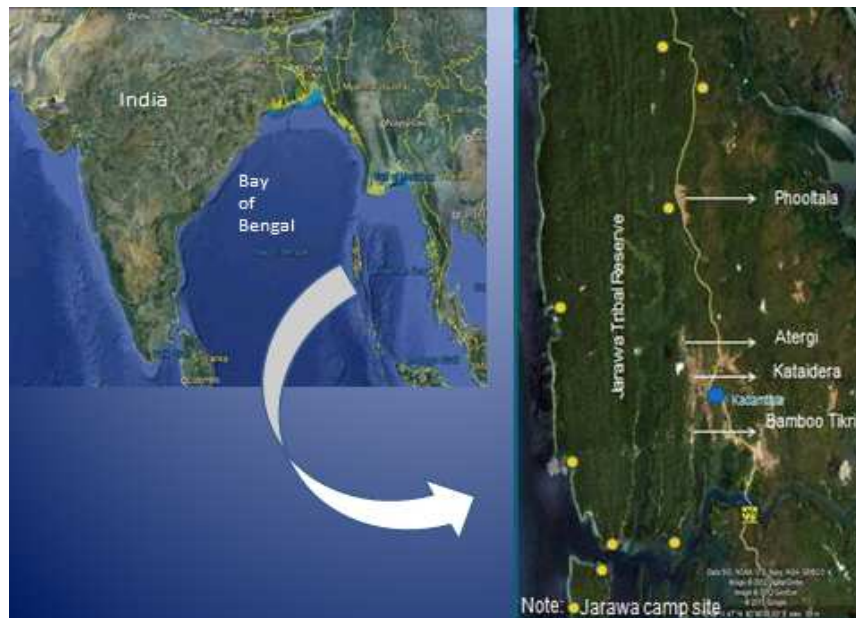


Fig. 1: Study area of Middle Andaman

Material and Method

The Jarawa Reserve of Middle Andaman is often broadly called Kadamtala area. As on July, 2011, the proposed study area of middle Andaman was inhabited by 152 Jarawa (*Ang*) (male 82, female 70), having sex ratio 854 and they live in the dense forest of the Tribal Reserve along with the western coast. To study interaction between Jarawa (*Ang*) and non-Jarawa, four above mentioned fringe villages of Kadamtala area are proposed to be selected. According to Health Survey (2010) total population of those four selected non-Jarawa villages were 2323 (male 1174, female 1149) of which total population of Bamboo Tikri, Kataidera, Atergi, and Phooltala were consequently 236 (male 115, female 121), 326 (male 166, female 160), 672 (male 351, female 321) and 1089 (male 542, female 547).

Methodological issue to study any hunter-gather community (viz. Jarawa) is always of immense importance. As language often become a constrain for in-depth study especially at cognitive level, it seems that observation and case study are the best suited method to study the Jarawa (*Ang*). Different methodological approach must have been adopted to study Jarawa (*Ang*) and Settlers separately. During the study different anthropological tools and techniques viz. observation, case study, interview, focused group discussion, social mapping etc. were utilised.

Jarawa (*Ang*), the Hunter-Gatherer

Defining a true hunter-gatherer is a difficult task. Any evolutionary definition may confine hunter-gatherer to those populations with strictly Pleistocene economics i.e., no metal, firearm, dogs, or contact with non-hunting cultures. Unfortunately such a definition would effectively eliminate most of the today's hunter-gatherer (Lee and Devore, 1968). Hunting-Gathering refers to subsistence based on hunting of wild animals, gathering of wild plant foods and fishing, with no domestication of plants, and no domesticated animals except the dog. In contemporary theory this mi-

nimal definition is only the starting point in defining hunter-gatherers (Lee and Daly, 1968). Some basic features of hunter-gatherer society are:

- Most (but not all) hunting and gathering people live in the **band or groups**, a small-scale nomadic group of fifteen to fifty people (may be varied) often related by kinship. Band societies are found throughout the Old and New Worlds and share a number of features in common.
- Jarawa (*Ang*) are also living in band or group. After family band is the basic unit of their society. Number of members in a particular band is subjected to seasonal variation, availability and accessibility of resources and other factors.
- They are relatively **egalitarian**. Leadership is less formal and more subject to constraints of popular opinion than in village societies governed by headmen and chiefs. Egalitarianism is also one of the basic features of Jarawa (*Ang*) society. No dominant leadership have been found among the Jarawa. Leadership is very much formal, they believe in freedom to live.
- **Mobility** is another characteristic of band societies. People tend to move their settlements frequently, several times a year or more, in search of food and resources. Jarawa (*Ang*) roam the forest in search of different resources and periodically shift from one chadda (camp site or settlement area) to another. This mobility is usually subjected to on availability and accessibility of resources.
- Another characteristic is the remarkable fact that all band-organized peoples exhibit a pattern of **concentration and dispersion**. Rather than living in uniformly sized groupings throughout the year, band societies tend to spend part of the year dispersed into small foraging units (especially during dry season in case of Jarawa) and another part of the year aggregated into much larger units (during rainy season for Jarawa).

Though there are many more features to mention about the hunter-gatherers especially about Jarawa (*Ang*) but besides that **Self-sufficiency** is one of the notable characteristics of Jarawa (*Ang*) society.

Notion of Self-sufficiency and Ang (Jarawa) Society

Self-sufficiency refers to the state of not requiring any outside aid, support, or interaction, for survival. Robert Redfield (1955) in his book 'Little Community: View points for the study of Human Whole', propounded the concept of Little Community with a view to study human whole. He also mentioned the following characteristics of a Little community: a. Distinctiveness, b. Smallness, c. Homogeneity and d. *Self-Sufficiency*. So, to Redfield, Little Community is also characterised by self-sufficiency. It satisfies all needs of its members from birth to death. It is because of this fact that he has called little community as a *cradle to grave arrangements*. Marshall Sahlins in his book 'Stone Age Economics' (1972), described hunter-gatherer as 'Original Affluent society'. The basis of Sahlins' argument was that hunter-gatherer societies are able to achieve affluence by desiring little and meeting those needs/desires with what is available to them. By stepping away from western notions of affluence, the theory of the original affluent society thus dispels notions about hunter-gatherer societies that were popular at the time of the symposium. Sahlins states that hunter-gatherers have a "marvellously varied diet" based on the abundance of the local flora and fauna. This demonstrates that hunter-gatherers do not exist on a mere subsistence economy but rather live among plenty.

Mode of subsistence of Jarawa (*Ang*) is predominantly hunting, gathering and fishing which includes hunting of wild boar, monitor lizard; gathering of different forest and sea resources and fishing in shallow sea, creeks and fresh water bodies etc. With few exceptions, hunting is predo-

minantly a male activity and gathering of food resources is mainly the domain of females. Beside the above mentioned resources they also collect raw materials for their different contextual specific needs like preparing chadda (hut), bow, u-hu (wooden bucket), basket, fibre for rope etc. Regarding subsistence and economy of hunter-gatherer, a related concept is James Woodburn's notion of *immediate-return vs. delayed-return societies*. Although both were subsumed under the heading of 'band society', in immediate-return societies food was consumed on the spot or soon after, while in delayed return societies food and other resources might be stored for months or years, with marked effects on social organization and cultural notions of property (Woodburn 1982). In case of Jarawa (*Ang*) immediate return economy is prevalent but some evidence of delayed return system of economy is can be observed. For example, preservation of pig fat for future use and processing of *amin* (cycus fruit), storage of honey underneath the soil etc. are few of those. But the noteworthy is that whatever they hunted or gathered, they usually do this by means of simple technology and in an ideal condition they don't need any outside interference for their livelihood. So ideally they used to be true self-sufficient community.



Fig. 2: Heap of household articles (both non-traditional and Traditional) during periodic shifting.



Fig. 3: Food (boiled fishes) served in non-traditional plastic tray



Fig 4: Jarawa huts inside the dense tropical rain forest of Andaman Islands

Being isolated from rest of the world and probably having antagonistic relationship with surrounding neighbours (i.e. Great Andamanese, colonisers and settlers etc) for a long time, there was least probability to develop any reciprocal relationship of Jarawa (*Ang*) with their neighbours in any historical specific or contextual specific situation. Thus the Jarawa (*Ang*) society was developed as a Self-sufficient entity. During the period of Hostility, Jarawa (*Ang*) are assumed to be

more self-sufficient than these days. By desiring little and meeting those needs/desires with the available resources might be one of the factors to reach towards so called affluence.

Self-sufficiency to Dependency

Increased contact with outsiders brings about changes in Ang (Jarawa) society and culture. The self-sufficient Jarawa (*Ang*) society gradually started to depend on different need based, contextual specific outside elements. Barter relation have established between Jarawa (*Ang*) and settlers. The relationship is basically need based exchange of different commodities. Marshall Sahlins in his book 'Stone Age Economics' (1972), have identified three main types of reciprocity:

- *Generalized reciprocity* is the exchange of goods and services without keeping track of their exact value, but often with the expectation that their value will balance out over time.
- *Balanced or Symmetrical reciprocity* occurs when someone gives to someone else, expecting a fair and tangible return - at a specified amount, time, and place.
- *Negative reciprocity* is the exchange of goods and services where each party intends to profit from the exchange, often at the expense of the other. Negative reciprocity can involve a minimum amount of trust and a maximum social distance.

Now-a-days, Jarawa (*Ang*) have a contextual specific mixed reciprocal relationship with the settlers/neighbours where generalized reciprocity and balanced or symmetrical reciprocity is predominant. But in some specific cases negative reciprocity can also be observed. Unlike the days of hostility, one notable thing is that the urge of barter is often from the side of Jarawa (*Ang*) and a reciprocal relationship exists between both the bartering partners. It is also notable that they often select bartering partner from the villagers by the trial and error method where the basic criteria is to get the best deal. Most of the time barter occurs with specific and preselected individuals. Jarawa (*Ang*) men and women used to come to the fringe villages near to the Tribal Reserve with their bartering items and demands for the desired article in exchange. In some cases bartering also occurs on some pre-fixed consent between the partners. They like to barter those required articles which they can't manufacture from the available forest resources or the articles to which they are fond of or addicted. The bartering items which are **flowing inward** towards the Jarawa (*Ang*) are as follows: Rice, Biscuits, Spices and other different food items, Tobacco (Sukha, Jarda etc.), Cloth, Torch and battery, Iron implements, Metal utensils, Safety pin, Mirror, Plastic bottle to keep water, Polythene sheet, Nylon rope, Plastic drum, soap, Cosmetic cream and powder, Artificial ornaments etc. These are few non-traditional items which are bartered from outside, there are many more to mention. The bartering items which are **flowing outward** from the Jarawa (*Ang*) are deer meat, Resin, Mud crab, Prawn, Fresh water Fishes, Other forest resources as demanded by bartering partner.

Conclusion

As we know, nowhere in the world we can found hunter-gatherers are living in the domain of hunter-gatherers and most of them are surrounded by dominant neighbour groups, the dynamic of the foraging way of life, the dynamic of their interaction non-foraging neighbours is of immense importance.



Fig. 5: Non-traditional modern torch light hanging from roof of an Jarawa (*Ang*) hut.

Most importantly, none of the above mentioned inward flowing bartering item can be produced by Jarawa (*Ang*). They are unable to manufacture any of the inward flowing bartered items from their available resources and technology. Besides different socio-cultural impact of this bartering relation, one significant aspect is that as Jarawa (*Ang*) are unable to manufacture the bartered item, they are gradually becoming depended on bartering partner for continuous and subsequent supply of the bartered item or part of it. For example torch lights (two or three celled), an inward flowing bartered item have already been introduced to the Jarawa (Fig-8) and it can be found at every Jarawa family. Now the question is where will they get the required battery or cell ?, can they manufacture this ? These are few pertinent questions which are applicable to the most of the bartered items of Jarawa (*Ang*). So, for the continuous supply of battery or cell for their torch, Jarawa are gradually becoming dependent on their bartering partner. On the other hand this introduction of this modern torch, have already led to abolition of the traditional resin torch from their socio-cultural life. This is a simple example of a single bartering item and similar consequences may happen most of the other inward flowing bartering items also. In this way they are going to be trapped in the periphery of dependency and it is a crucial trend which is bringing about changes in Jarawa (*Ang*) society and culture. Moreover change is inevitable and culture is resilience. So, in-depth detailed study is required to analyse and understand the consequences of socio-culture contact so that probable adverse impacts can be minimised.

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Notes

1. Only in recent years (2000 onwards) researchers came to know from the Jarawa that they call themselves *Ang*. It has been argued that Aka-Bea, one of the Great Andamanese tribes used to refer to the *Ang* as 'Jarawa'.
2. *Chadda* is Jarawa term for their camp site or traditional hut in Jarawa dialect.

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