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Minorities in Japan and India: A Comparative Study of Ainu and Borok Tribals

M. Kamlianlal Zou

Minorities are often subjected to unjust exploitation and desisted from social, political and economic opportunities. The government's machineries and constitutional provisions for protecting the minorities sometimes become a tool in the hands of the dominant group to exploit the minorities. As a result minorities feel alienated, suffer from inferiority complex and may lead to a rebellious attitude depending on the social setting in which differential treatment operates. This paper analyses the difficulties faced by minorities in Japan and make a comparative study between the Ainu of Japan and the Borok tribals of Tripura in India. These two tribals are indigenous peoples, and they maintained an independent kingdom and administered themselves before their ancestral lands were annexed by the dominant community. As a result, they were reduced to a minority and became a stranger in their own land.

Keywords: Minorities, Japan, Northeast India, Ainu, Borok tribals, Discrimination, Constitution, Ancestral land

Introduction

Minorities are the disadvantageous groups of people in the society who are distinguished from the dominant group by cultural or physical marks. An American sociologist Louis Wirth defines minorities as "a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination" (Wirth 1945:347). The existence of a minority in a society is always corresponding to the existence of a dominant group enjoying greater privileges and higher social status. The minorities are subjected to unjust exploitation and refrained from social, political and economic opportunities. As the minority occupies the subordinate position in a social stratum, unequal access to educational opportunities further hindered professional and occupational advancement. The government's machinery and constitutional provisions for

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protecting the minorities sometimes becomes a tool in the hands of the dominant group to exploit the minorities. As a result of this differential treatment the minorities feel alienated, suffer from inferiority complex which may lead to a rebellious attitude depending on the social setting in which differential treatment operates (Wirth 1945:348). The case of Ainu and Burakumin of Japan, and Tripuri tribals in India serve as one of the sounding illustration of the native indigenous people who become minority in their own land as a result of migration of population.

Japan thinks of itself as uniquely homogenous in terms of language, culture and origin. This perception has been disseminated by various scholars in a number of studies. In his book, 'The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness', Peter Dale has pointed out that "Japanese constitute a culturally and socially homogeneous racial entity, whose essence is virtually unchanged from prehistoric times down to the present day (Dale, P 1986)". James Abegglen analyses Japanese social structures and observes: "the Japanese... treat the nation and its people as a compact and homogeneous unit with little or no note of the diversity and complexity of this modern nation (Abeggelen 1958)". Catherine Lu spelt out the homogeneous culture of Japanese from Tokugawa period which she asserted that: "by reputation Japan is one of the most ethnically and culturally homogeneous societies in the world. Japan's relative cultural homogeneity is frequently traced to its status as an island nation characterized by long periods of seclusion from the rest of the world, especially during the 350 years of Tokugawa rule (Lu, C 2005:103)".

Furthermore, the image of Japan's culturally homogeneous population has not only been endorsed by some prominent authors, the media and politicians also promote the same. In 1986 Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone openly insisted on Japan's racial purity in the parliament by asserting that there was no minority racial group and racial discrimination in Japan (Morris-Suzuki, 2015:11). Since there is no official census conducted on the ethnic composition of Japan and even the ethnic background of foreign nationals who acquired Japanese nationality were not officially recorded, there is a belief on the part of the Japanese that Japan is highly homogeneous society (Mitake Naoya, 2014:2). However, for the first time in Japan's history, the number of foreign residents in Japan exceeded more than two million in 2005. With the decline of Japan's population, many politicians and political leaders including Prime Minister Shinzo Abe felt the need to open its borders to the inflow of foreign workers. In 2008, the Japanese Diet also officially recognised Ainu as an indigenous people in Japan. Unlike the past decades, public acknowledgement and recognition of ethnic diversity has been rapidly expanding which led many local governments to actively pursue a policy of promoting multicultural coexistence.

Minorities in Japan

Although many literatures have been disseminated in promoting Japan's homogeneity, scholarship in recent decades challenged and contested the myth of Japan's homogeneity. In fact, Japan has been multiethnic and multicultural entity since pre-modern times. However, the ethnic minorities are the victims of the nature democracy in the contemporary world which relies on numbers and majority. Democracy,

though widely accepted as people's power, it's a number game and operates on the basis of people who acquired majority of the population. Ethnic minorities in Japan were politically discarded from their existence as they constitute only 5 percent of Japan's population. The past 10 years has been a turning point for the ethnic minorities in Japan. Their efforts and struggle to protect and preserve their culture, tradition, language and identity has got the attention of the Japanese government. However, the ethnic minorities in Japan have a long way to go to compete with the ethnic Japanese. A mere recognition from the government has nothing to do in the absence of legal provision to protect their land and resources. Various categories of ethnic minorities who suffered from social injustice and discrimination in Japan shall be discussed here as under.

Burakumin

The term *buraku* means a settlement, hamlet, or village community and *burakumin* denotes the residents of such units. Burakumin are the largest minority group in Japan and believed to be the descendants of slaves from the ancient period (Yoshio Sugimoto 2010:197). The origin of Burakumin could be traced back from the sixth century. They have no biological differences with the majority ethnic Japanese, and there is no means of distinguishing at sight. Nevertheless, they were outcast and have fallen victim to the bigoted belief that their ancestors belonged to a social category outside the four main caste divisions in Japanese society during Edo period (1603-1867) viz. samurai warriors at the top, followed by farmers, artisans and traders. As such the burakumin were secluded from other communities and allocated separate neighborhood. With the beginning of the Meiji period in 1871, the caste system was abolished and the burakumin were granted equal status before the law. Nevertheless, the abolition of the caste system did not prevent the burakumin to suffer from social and economic discriminations.

As per the latest survey conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, of the current 127 million Japanese population, the Burakumin population is accounted to 1.8 million (Ramseyer and Rasmusen 2017:4). However, they continued to be in a disadvantaged and excluded position as the other Japanese regarded them as polluted and did not want to be in contact with them. The unfounded prejudice against the Buraku members forced them to live in secluded communities under conditions of relative impoverishment. The persistence of prejudice and marginalization against the Burakumin existed in the form of education, employment and marriage. There are several cases relating to ethnic Japanese parents opposing marriages with Burakumin, refusing to attend the marriage ceremonies and disassociating with them after marriage. The illiteracy rates among the Buraku communities are extremely high as the older generation was not in a position to access compulsory education during their childhood. Despite shortage of labour forces in Japan, members from Buraku communities could not get employment in retails, construction or other blue collar jobs, but they are engaged in small business with low wages.

Zainichi Korean

The Zainichi Korean or Korean residents in Japan comprise the largest minority group among the foreign origins. Majority of Zainichi Korean in Japan are the third, fourth and even fifth generation residents whose native language is Japanese but did not acquire Japanese citizenship. As per Ministry of Justice data, the population of Zainichi Korean is estimated to be four hundred thousand (Sugimoto 2010:202). Unlike the other minority groups in Japan, Koreans were brought to Japan after the former annexed Korean peninsula in 1910. In the aftermath, the Koreans fill the increasing demand of labour required to increase production of supplies during the war. In the post annexation period of Korean peninsula most of the Koreans worked as cheap labour in construction, shipbuilding, mining, and performed other menial labours. It is estimated that the Koreans constituted about 32 percent of the industrial labour force in Japan in 1945. By 1945, over 2.3 million Koreans lived in Japan (Young-Min Cho 2016:2). After the end of World War II, around 1.7 million returned back to the peninsula. It is estimated that the remaining 600,000 Korean chose to settle in Japan as they felt that they have lost contact and connection with Korea, and would find difficulty in earning their livelihood.

Before the end of World War II, the Japanese government integrated the Koreans into broader imperial power so as to ensure political expansion of imperial Japan. The Koreans were given Japanese citizenship, the right to vote and contest election in the local and national legislatures. In fact, some of them were elected as city legislators and parliamentarians. However, after Japan suffered a crushing defeat in the World War II, the Japanese government took different view on the Koreans settled in Japan. With the proclamation of independence to South and North Korea, the Japanese government formally derecognised the Korean as Japanese citizen and deprived of its voting rights. As per Alien Registration Ordinance of 1947, the Koreans were identified as foreigners and required them to carry alien registration cards at all times. Despite having a large number of populations, the Zainichi Koreans suffered from discrimination even in the 21st century. In order to escape anti-Korean prejudice in housing, marriage and employment, the Zainichi Koreans have to assume Japanese name and hide their ethnic origin.

Ryukyuan minorities

The Ryukyuan or the Okinawans are the indigenous people of the Ryukyu Island, ethnically distinct from the people of mainland Japan. The Ryukyuan constitute the largest ethnic minority group in Japan with a population of 1.3 million. In 1879 it was annexed by the Meiji state and incorporated as Okinawa Prefecture. Before the annexation of Ryukyu kingdom by the empire of Japan in 1879, Ryukyuan maintained an independent and prosperous kingdom, playing an important role in trade and commerce with the Asian nations. Though the Ryukyus Kingdom or the present Okinawa prefecture is a tiny island it is rich in culture and history. It also acted as the centre of trade in luxury goods shipped from the market of Southeast Asia to the ports of China, Korea and Japan (Koji Taira 1997:140-141). The Ryukyu Island or today's Okinawa prefecture served as a strategic location for Japan as well as for

eign invaders. That was the main reason why the Japanese annexed the kingdom in 1879 and the American reduced it to rubble in the Battle of Okinawa in 1945. Even though the Ryukyuan has the desire to maintain its independence, they were the victim of foreign invaders since the 19th century.

In Japan today the Ryukyuan culture, which is distinct from the ethnic Japanese culture still, survives in the island and people from Okinawa prefecture identify themselves first as Okinawan. Identifying as Okinawan does not imply they are not Japanese, but it is a reflection of how the Ryukuans or Okinawans wishes to maintain their sub-identity despite the Japanese government tried to assimilate them for several decades. The Ryukyuan felt that they were subjected to discrimination and disproportionately made to pay the price by permitting the US military to use the land of Okinawa without the consent of the people. Though the Japanese government recognised the Ainu and Koreans as minorities in recent years, the Ryukyuan were completely refused to be considered as culturally distinct or indigenous people. Despite the Ryukyuan demand to the Japanese government to make a greater use of its languages in the government during the 1980s and 1990s, the use of these languages is not legally guaranteed in the public services. Without recognising the distinct culture, tradition and languages, the Japanese government continues to assimilate the Ryukyuan into mainstream Japanese culture and language throughout amongst the younger generations in Okinawa.

Ainu minorities

Before the Japanese and Russian began to expand their territories, the Ainu people inhabited Hokkaido, Sakhalin, northern Honshu and the Kurile islands. The Ainu claims to inhabit all of Japan about 2300 years ago, due to the influx of immigration from Asia during the Yayoi period of Japanese history, they were pushed toward the North of Japan. In 1872 Hokkaido, which is the homeland of Ainu, was annexed by Japan and the Hokkaido Land Regulations declare the land of Ainu as unoccupied land without legal ownership. Later the lands were offered to Japanese buyer at an attractive price. In 1876, Ainu's traditional modes of subsistence - hunting and fishing, were outlawed and they represented a cheap and unemployed labour force, giving advantages to the ethnic Japanese people living in the island. At the end of the Meiji period, the Ainu can no longer live according to their traditional way of life. The use of their native language is restricted and they can no longer practice their religious customs. They are no longer considered as Ainu but could not find their place in Japanese society.

The Ainus are distinct from the ethnic Japanese which they called 'wajin', have different physical appearance, taller than the average Japanese and Caucasian features. Similarly, the Ainus have different and unique language which has no relation with the Japanese or Asian language. Since the Japanese census made no distinction between ethnic minorities in Japan and the ethnic Japanese the number of Ainu population cannot be ascertained. It is roughly estimated to be around 24,000 while some other authors estimated to between 20,000 to 60,000 (Sugimoto 2010:192; Brent Swancer 2015:2). With a view to protect the Ainu from acute threats of survival,

Japan passed Hokkaido Former Aboriginal Protection Act (HFAPA) in 1899, which is nothing but a social welfare measures to assimilate Ainu in Japanese society. Almost after one century, the act was finally replaced in 1997 by the Act for the Promotion of Ainu Culture and Dissemination of Knowledge Regarding Ainu Traditions. On June 6, 2008 the Japanese Diet recognised the Ainu people as an indigenous people with a distinct language, religion and culture and resolved to end discrimination against the group.

Borok Tribals in India

Like the other ethnic minorities in Japan, minorities in India suffered the same gravity of discrimination, probably much worse than their counterparts in Japan. These people are called the Borok tribals of Tripura, which is situated in the northeastern part of India and surrounded on three sides by an international boundary. The Borok tribal people are indigenous people, first occupant and son of the soil from the erstwhile Kingdom of Tripura/Twipra. The Boroks share common features and identity; and comprises of many sub-clans namely Debbarma (Tipra of Tipperah), Reang, Jamatia, Kolo, Noatia, Rupini, Halam, Hrangkhawl, Ranglong, Kapieng, Morasing, Molsom, Darlong, Mog, Bongcher, Chorai, Uchoi and the likes. Except one or two of these sub-clans, all of them speak a common language called the Kokborok. Prior to its merger with the Indian Union on October 15, 1949, Tripura was an independent princely state ruled by the indigenous Borok rulers. According to the Rajmala, or the Kings' Records, a succession of as many as 189 indigenous rulers ruled over the state (Debbarma 2007: 83). The princely state had its own administrative and legal systems. The independence of India in 1947 and the Partition that accompanied it had deep impact on the demographic makeup of the state.

Before the partition of India, the Muslims from East Bengal came to Tripura to cultivate the land and returned to their homes. The number of Bengalis in Tripura was also insignificant. However, the partition of India has drastically affected the demographic scene of Tripura. There was a sudden spurt of immigrant population from Bangladesh and they settled down permanently. The Indian state failed to check the sudden flow of refugees from Bangladesh to Tripura, which threatened the territorial integrity and identity of the indigenous tribal people in Tripura. The total number of refugees from Bangladesh to Tripura from 1949 to 1959 accounted to 3, 73,500. The number of refugees between 1964 to 1965 was significantly high, accounting to 1, 00,304. The situation can be gauged from the fact that within a period of about 24 years i.e. August 15, 1947 to March 24, 1971, 609,998 illegal immigrants settled down officially in the state. Many more came in unofficially (Bhattacharyya 1988: 14).

In a short span of 24 years the immigrants began to outnumber the indigenous Boroks in Tripura. In fact the tribals were reduced to a minority beginning from 1960s. The Borok tribals, whose population constituted 95 percent of the population and enjoyed independent kingdom before Indian independence now constituted only 30 percent of the state population. The Boroks are not only marginalised in their own land; all the state machinery, all spheres of political, economic and social activities of the state are dominated by the immigrants. This historical blunder committed by the

government of India has shaken the foundation of Boroks' socio-economic, cultural, religious and political structures in Tripura. As a result, the Boroks are constantly insecure, discontented and believed to be denied of their basic right to self-determination.

Similarities between Ainu and Borok tribals

Though the Ainu and Borok tribals differ in culture, tradition, language, place of origin and history, yet they share the same form of marginalisation, discrimination and assimilation in their respective homeland. The Ainu and Borok tribals are the indigenous people who dwelled in their land, practice their culture and religion, settled disputes based on customary law and governed themselves without any hindrances and external threat. The Ainu occupied Hokkaido islands, the Kuriles and southern half of Sakhalin since the ninth century. They controlled the rich natural resources for subsistence and provide the surplus for trade extended to the south and Asian continent. Similarly, the Boroks also maintained their independent kingdom since the medieval period and has a history of being ruled by as many as 184 kings belonging to the Boroks. The king is responsible for the welfare and security of his subject, provide land for jhum cultivation and defend the kingdom from external aggression. In the medieval period, the Borok king defended the Borok Kingdom or now called Tripura from the Muslim invaders of Bengal. Later, the king of Borok maintained a close relationship with the Nawab of Bengal and his youngest son Ratna Fa was also sent to the Council of the Nawab of Bengal. The prince of Borok and the Nawab of Goul further made unholy alliance and get military help from the Nawab to capture the entire Borok kingdom after the death of his father.

The Leader of Ainu and King of Borok tribals exercised administrative, executive and judicial power until they were internally colonised by a dominant ethnic group. A series of attempts had been made from the Tokugawa period (1600-1868) to assimilate Ainu to Japan's homogenous society and invade their ancestral land – Ezochi or the present Hokkaido islands. Immediately after the Meji Restoration in 1868, Kaitakushi- a Colonisation Commission was established in 1869 (Richard Siddle 1997:23). The Colonisation Commission renamed Ezochi as Hokkaido and designates Hokkaido as *terra nullius* to confiscate the land of Ainu. The Borok tribals of Tripura, on the other hand endure the same form of marginalisation by a dominant group migrating from the neighboring country. As a result of India's partition and the government's reluctance to check the influx of refugees from the neighboring country, the indigenous Borok tribals paid a heavy price. The trans-border migration toward Tripura can neither be controlled nor opposed by the Borok tribals. Within one decade the immigrants or refugees from across the international border outnumbered the indigenous people in Tripura, and they eventually occupied all the important position under the state government. Despite the Ainu and Borok tribals were reduced to a minority in their ancestral land they continue to fight for their land, rights and identity, prompting the government to relent and recognise the genuine history of their existence.

Constitutional protection of minorities - Ainu and Borok tribals

The issue relating to the protection of the rights of minorities could be traced from every international forum and human rights organisation. The first significant attempt to recognise and protect the rights of minorities was made by the League of Nations through a number of treaties which addressed many key concerns of the minorities. With the establishment of the United Nations, it recognise that the rights of minorities are essential to protect, preserve and develop values and practices which they share with other members of their community. In 1948, the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which declared that the United Nations “cannot remain indifferent to the fate of minorities” (Hunnam 2012:2-4). Similarly, in 1965, the United Nations adopted the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which prohibits any distinction “based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin”. In 1966 the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights included in article 27 a specific provision concerned with minorities, a principal legal tool to advance minority rights. The 1992 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities is the fundamental instrument that guides the activities of the United Nations in this field today.

The concept of Japan’s homogeneity developed since the Meiji period has made it difficult for the Ainu to avail constitutional protection in Japan. Even some Japanese opined that every citizen in Japan should be treated equally without giving special treatment to the Ainu. It may not be possible for some Japanese to understand the pain and language of discrimination toward what they called ‘the same Japanese’ or Ainu, as this form of unseen discrimination is inherent since time immemorial. The Meiji government has began grabbing of the land of Ainu and assimilating them to the Japanese society by enacting Hokkaido Former Aborigines Protection Act in 1899. While the Act allows the Ainu to use the land for the purpose of agriculture, it empowered the Governor of Ainu to exercise administrative authority over their land. However, as the Ainu strive to scrap the Act by knocking the door of the United Nations agencies the Japanese government replaced the Hokkaido Former Aborigines Protection Act of 1899 into an ‘Act Concerning the Promotion of Ainu Culture and Promotion and Education of Knowledge of Ainu Tradition’ in 1997 (Shigenori 2011:177). The new Ainu Act attempted to preserve the distinct culture of Ainu people; nevertheless, it does not guarantee any special rights or privileges as an indigenous people. It was only in 2008 that the Ainu were officially recognised by the Japanese government as an indigenous people in the northern part of Japan.

Unlike the Ainu of Japan, the Borok tribals of Tripura enjoy more autonomy and constitutional protection in Tripura. Soon after the immigrants swamped the ancestral land of the tribals in Tripura and the populations of the immigrants outnumbered the indigenous people, a serious of democratic movement was launched by the indigenous Borok tribals. With a view to empower the indigenous people, govern themselves, to protect and preserve their culture, customs and tradition and bring all round development to the Borok tribals of Tripura, the Government of India passed Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) Act in 1979. The Act

was finally upgraded under the provision of the 6th Schedule to the Indian Constitution by the 49th Amendment Act of 1985. Therefore, the Autonomous District Council covers 68 percent of the total area of the state. Under 6th Schedule of the Indian constitution Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council enjoys both executive and legislative powers. The TTAADC is governed by a council of 30 members in which 28 members are elected through adult suffrage, and two members are nominated by the Governor.

Even though the minorities are said to be protected by the constitution, they still felt insecure as the implementation of the law often needs official red-tapism. The minorities didn't dare to fight for their rights due to indifferent attitude of the government. As a signatory of United Nations Civil and Political Rights, the governments of Japan and India have to ensure that the minorities feel secure in their ancestral land. The minorities may constitute a very small percentage of the country's population, nevertheless, as a citizen they should also enjoy the constitutional rights like their fellow countrymen and avail the benefit or facilities relating to economic, political, health, education and preservation of cultures.

Ainu and Borok tribals armed resistance against the invaders

The history of ethnic minorities in different part of the world is replete with the history of resistance against the dominant group in the society. The Ainu of Japan and Borok tribals from Tripura in India are no exception. Before the arrival of the ethnic Japanese at Hokkaido the Ainu people enjoy peaceful and undisrupted lives. The community was ruled by a leader selected on the basis of ability and inheritance. He settled disputes based on customary law and also plays the leading role in trade. Likewise, the Borok tribals govern themselves before huge scale trans-border immigration took place during the partition of India. The way Ainu of Japan gathered their foods through hunting, fishing and trade and the King of Borok tribals allocated his people a land to cultivate on annual basis for their livelihood has similarity. The fertile and unoccupied lands that are in possession of the Ainu and Borok tribals have attracted the migrants to exploit and explore for furthering their means of subsistence and economy.

The armed resistance initiated by the Ainu and Tripura tribals may be several centuries apart, however they fought for the same objective and continue to struggle till today for the same cause. The Ainu or what the ethnic Japanese called 'barbarians' occupied and controlled the rich natural resources in the northern region of Japan in which the ethnic 'Wajin' desired to get at all cost. Flourishing trade around Ezogashima and the competition to control over the trade led to a friction between the Ainu and Wajin in 1456 where the Wajin blacksmith killed an Ainu. This friction led to an open warfare between the Ainu and Wajin. Under the leadership of Koshamain, the Ainu destroyed two settlement of the Wajin and almost drove them out of Ezogashima. For the Ainu people, losing the monopoly of trade network to the Wajin was not only about affecting their economy; it's all about subjugating their ancestral land and resources at the hands of the Wajin, which they have controlled since time immemorial.

Despite much smaller or lesser in population against their opponent, the Ainu and Borok tribals fought for what they believed is right for their next generation. During the 1669 battle against the ethnic Japanese at Hokkaido, the octogenarian Ainu chief Shakushain pitted 30,000 ill-organized Ainu tribesmen with Stone Age military technology against a nation of 25 million Japanese with modern firearms. Similarly, during the 1980s, the 5.5 lakhs Tripura tribals fought against 18 lakhs Bengali in Tripura for the restoration of their ancestral land. The Ainu army attacked trading posts and vessels over much of Ezochi, killing hundreds of Wajin (Richard Siddle 1997:20). However, they were defeated and Shakushain was ruthlessly assassinated as soon as the peace treaty was concluded. As a result, the autonomous regional groups in western and central Hokkaido fell under the Matsumae control. Similarly, a series a militant groups like Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti (TUJS), Tripura National Volunteers, National Liberation Front of Tripura and All Tripura Tiger Force have been established in Tripura to fight for the restoration of land to the tribal people under Tripura Land Reform Act of 1960. Even though several armed militant group were established in Tripura to fight for their land and deport the illegal immigrants from the tribals land, the militants were defeated by the government which is controlled by what the tribal term it as illegal migrants.

A series of subjugation occurred in the history of armed struggle led by the Ainu and Tripura tribals. But the new generations did not see the dark side of the movement; they were rather inspired by the valor of their ancestors. The Ainu was defeated in the 1669 battle; nevertheless, the new generations of Ainu nationalists drew inspiration from their leader Shakushain. Similarly, the tribal militants in Tripura succumbed to the pressure of the government and suffered from factional divisions among the group, but different tribal militant group pick up what was left by their predecessors. The militants at some point of time pressed for the creation of pure tribal states covering the geographical area of all the Autonomous District Council (ADC). It would be worth mentioning that the Autonomous District Council represents two-thirds of Tripura's geographical area but about 30 percent of the population. The geographical area covered by the ADC has five lakh tribal population and 95,000 Bengalis. The epicenters of violence perpetrated by the tribal militants are bordering the ADC area which they claimed to be the ancestral land of the tribals.

Grievances of Ainu and Tribals in Tripura

Despite the Japanese government recognising Ainu as an indigenous tribe in Japan and the tribals of Tripura administer themselves under the Sixth Scheduled of the Indian constitution, the two tribals share different variety of grievances. The grievances range from discrimination and assimilation to stepmotherly treatment by the government. Discriminations in seeking job or rejecting marriage proposal to the Ainu forces the latter to conceal their root and identity even after the law that was enacted in 1997 recognises their culture as unique and officially promote their rights. In a survey exclusively conducted for the Ainu in 2016, 72 percent of the respondent said discrimination and prejudice are still directed against their race (The Japan Times, February 27, 2016). As a citizen of Japan, the Ainu felt that article 13 of the Japanese constitution which guarantees all citizens to be respected individually did not imply

to the Ainu people. The government failed to ensure and provide an environment in which every individual can live as Ainu if they identify with their culture.

While the Ainu people applauded the historic recognition of Ainu as an indigenous people in Japan, they continue to endure their grievances as they were dislodged from their land. The recognition of Ainu is associated with the promotion and preservation of Ainu cultures, their struggle to restore their land rights, economic and political right were put off the national agenda (Erik Larson 2008:56). Similarly, the Borok tribals in Tripura bear the problem of land alienation since the illegal immigration took place in 1947. A number of militant groups were established to restore the tribals' land acquired by the majority illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. It can also be assumed that the policy of alienating the tribals land in Tripura was engineered by Tripura government by means of declaring 'Reserve Areas' in the state and prohibiting the tribals to practice large-scale jhum cultivation and free movement in the forest. There were only few wetland left for cultivation in which the tribals are not adaptable to it, they fall prey to the Bengali money lender to mortgage their land. By 1972, large part of tribals land fell into the hands of the Bengali.

Even though the Land Reform Act was passed in 1960, it could not prevent the transfer of land to the non-tribals without the permission of the government. The act was further amended in 1974 to restore all the Boroks land transferred to non tribals on or after January 1969 (Govt. of Tripura, Memo no. F.4(19)-RCC/84, September 2, 1989). Despite the government's attempt to restore the tribals land, it cannot be successfully implemented due to two important reasons: i) ineffective measures taken by the government to implement the act which left many scope for its manipulations; ii) Rampant poverty among the tribals, and they were lured by the non-tribals to sell their land above the market price and value of the plot of land. Notwithstanding several land reforms acts passed by the government, it required the political will to implement in letter and spirit. For example, out of almost 1 lakh petitions received by the government to restore their land, only 4300 were disposed off in the petitioners' favor. And only 7700 acres of land have been restored till March 31, 1980 (Debbarma 2007: 88). The tripartite accord of Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) with the state and central government in 1998 also contained a provision to review the rejected application for the restoration of Borok's land. With a view to restore the land of Boroks tribals, the Tripura government passed Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reform (Sixth Amendment) Bill in 1994 to reinforce all provisions of Land Revenue and Land Reform Act of 1960, 1974, 1975 and 1982 to restore the land of the Boroks. However, it got stiff resistance from the non-tribals before it is implementation. The government is in dilemma, whether to pursue the restoration of land or listen to the voice of opposition who constituted majority of vote in the election. Resolving the grievances of Borok tribals in Tripura requires a political will to implement the law without considering the electoral consequences.

Conclusion

The essay analyses the predicaments endured by two indigenous tribes of Japan and Tripura in India. Both the Ainu and Boroks tribals were alienated by a dominant

community and reduced them to a minority in their ancestral land. As human wants are unlimited, people strive to move to green pastures not only for their sustenance, but also to enhance their needs. The ancestral lands of the Aino and Borok tribals are best suited to fulfill the needs of the ethnic Japanese and illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. As a minority and less developed than the dominant community, the two tribals failed to stand against the marginalisation and finally became strangers in their own land. Nevertheless, the marginalisation and assimilation of Aino and Borok tribals are not the result of its inability to defend their rights and land, but the failure on the part of their respective governments to provide necessary protection as enshrined in the constitution. As an indigenous people who administered and adjudicated their way of life before the annexation of their land, the Aino and Borok tribals deserve to maintain their self-respect and dignity by means of restoring their land and preserving their identity. Unless Japanese and Indian governments exercise a political will to implement the law enacted at the behest of the two tribals, the Aino and Borok tribals of Tripura will always be subjugated in their ancestral land.

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