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The plight of the Bru (Reang) tribe has remained vastly unheard in the Indian subcontinent. It has been almost 23 years since their exodus and no media house has bothered to consider covering this issue of great concern. The Bru are a community indigenous to northeast India, living mostly in Tripura, Mizoram, and Assam whose existence is on the brink of extinction, owing to their displacement from their homeland and the fact that they have been

forced to live in relief camps without basic necessities like safe drinking water, access to proper healthcare services, and most importantly access to education.

Though the government has indeed tried to help the ailing tribe, the relief has been “too little, too late.” Their existence has been threatened to such an extent that they have been recognized as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) by the Tripura Government.

In the initial months of this year, the Ministry of Home Affairs presided over the signing of an agreement between Union Government, the governments of Tripura and Mizoram, and Bru representatives to end the 23-year old Bru-Reang refugee crisis and strike the final nail into the coffin. But the terms of the agreement have forced us to ask if this is really the solution.

The agreement provides that all Bru tribals currently living in temporary relief camps in Tripura will be settled in the state, however, those who returned to Mizoram in the eight

phases of repatriation since 2009 won't be entitled to go back to Tripura for settlement. Though the agreement would look agreeable and appealing because it promises an end to the existing plight of the Bru tribe, the equation shifts when we consider such agreements as precedents for future ones.

The agreement explicitly tries to settle the Bru tribal people in Tripura and not in Mizoram from where they were displaced. By doing so it has provided an incentive to the perpetrators of their state exodus and could encourage similar exodus in states of the northeast where similar ethnic conflicts between tribes exist. India has already made a mistake once by not acting timely on the Kashmiri Pundit Exodus from the Valley, and critics have seen the Bru community exodus as a furtherance of the same propaganda.

Apart from maligning its image as a supporter of exodus, any inaction on the Indian government's part could have potentially life-threatening impacts on Bru tribals. Such

settlements could bring them to the forefront of conflicting interests with the other indigenous tribes of Tripura; ethnic conflicts in the northeast have not only been an issue between “settlers” and “indigenous” people, but inter-tribe too. Hence, putting a tribe, whose existence has already been threatened, to the forefront of tribal conflict can only ensure their doom.

There is no denying that the Indians have failed their indigenous people at various points of time, and 23 long years of Bru agony is a clear example of such repetitive failures. The Indian constitution under **Article 46** specifically lays upon the government the duty to promote and protect tribal people from exploitation, yet not much has been done because of the non-binding nature of the duty.

A part of the problem lies with the people too, for while the Bru tribe continues to fight for its survival, people are busy watching pointless debate shows. It's time that we, the people of India, understood not just our rights, but our

duties as well. Everyone is a proponent of human rights, but have we tried to make a change?

The government, on the other hand, needs to shift its focus to these ailing people and take stringent actions to reinstatement them to their rightful home. It's not a question of politics, where indeed the states have a minuscule number of seats in the legislature, but rather the dignity of the Bru people. Exoduses are never justified, let alone incentivizing them. At this point, we all can only hope for a better future and wish that Bru tribe continues to thrive, and that this does not become yet another chapter of our education curriculum.