CHAPTER 20

Political Autonomy and Economic Development of Indigenous Peoples: A Comparative Study of North-East India and British Columbia

H. SRIKANTH

When colonialism was making inroads into continents and countries little known to Europeans at large, both apologists as well as critics of colonialism in the West contended that the indigenous peoples inhabiting the colonies and semi-colonies would perish as communities unless they learnt to adapt themselves to the changing times.[1]

It was then assumed that penetration of the market economy, expansion of the institutions of private property, development of modern education, spread of Christianity, and growth of liberal values and practices in the colonized world would overshadow and replace the pre-capitalist structures and traditions and subsume the native communities in the capitalist mainstream. Such predictions, however, did not come true. Despite all the hardships and sufferings that they had to encounter, the indigenous peoples survived the onslaughts of colonialism and made their presence felt in the post-war world by leading many a struggle for recognition and restoration of the aboriginal identities and rights. Far from giving up their identities, the indigenous peoples are reorganizing themselves as communities and fighting for restoration of their dignity and rights as indigenous peoples. Compelled to address the indigenous peoples' demands, liberal democratic states like Canada and India are now amending their constitutions, restructuring their

political and administrative structures and reviewing their development strategies.

To make sense of the ongoing indigenous peoples' struggles and their impact in liberal democratic countries, the present paper attempts to make a comparative study of the experiences and movements of Native Indians in British Columbia (BC) and hill tribes in north-east India and then analyse the responses of the governments in the two countries to the indigenous peoples' demands for autonomy and self-reliance. Since the histories of indigenous peoples in the two countries have different trajectories, the paper first presents the case of hill tribes of north-east India and then contrasts it with the experiences of Native Indians in British Columbia. Later it examines how far the governments in the two liberal democratic countries have been able to fulfil the indigenous peoples' aspirations for political autonomy and economic self-reliance.

HILL COMMUNITIES OF NORTH-EAST INDIA

The hill areas of north-east India are inhabited by several Mongoloid tribes belonging to different linguistic groups. The communities seem to have migrated to the region from the East and South-East Asian countries. While some of them like the Bodos and Karbis had migrated to the region several centuries ago, some like the Kukis came to settle only during the colonial rule. Prior to the British colonization, barring a few tribes like Jaintias, Dimasas and Bodos which were to some extent Hinduized, most hill tribes in the region did not have any cultural or economic contacts with the mainland India. The communities had village councils headed by tribal chiefs. Each tribal community had its own unique social and political organizations and they survived for centuries relying on shifting cultivation, food gathering and hunting. In times of scarcity, they were attacking the villages in the adjacent plains areas and plundering food and other essential items from the non-tribal communities. Inter-tribal conflicts and wars between hill tribes and adjacent kingdoms in the plains were common in the region. There were occasions when the kings in the adjoining plain areas defeated the tribal chiefs and punished the tribal communities who used

to attack them.[2] But the hill communities at no point of time were subjected to the political rule of any kingdoms or empires that ruled the mainland India. It was only in nineteenth century that the hills were colonized and brought under the British colonial rule.

HILL TRIBES UNDER THE BRITISH RULE

By the middle of the eighteenth century almost all the territories in the mainland India came under the British colonial rule. But it took more than a century for the British to subjugate and tame the hill communities inhabiting the north-eastern region. In the mainland India the British did not make distinction between tribal and non-tribal areas. The colonial land and forest policies pursued during the British period deprived the tribes in the mainland India of control over their traditional land and other resources and subjected the tribal communities to worst forms of exploitation and oppression.[3] However, when it came to the hill areas of north-east India, the colonial authorities followed altogether a different kind of policy towards the native tribal communities. As these areas constituted the borders or frontier areas of British India, both for strategic and economic reasons the British felt it unnecessary to impose political and administrative institutions that were in force in mainland India. Instead they sought to realize their colonial objectives by taming the traditional tribal elite and using the traditional institutions. In the name of protecting the hill tribes from the plain people, different acts were enacted to keep the tribal areas aloof from the plains and even positive interactions between tribal and non-tribal communities were forbidden. Only the Christian missionaries were allowed to enter these hostile hill areas to preach the Gospel and to provide basic education and health facilities for the tribal communities. On their part, the colonial authorities did not make any sincere efforts to bring about drastic changes in the socio-economic base of the tribal communities. The hill districts that the British gave shape to were included as part of Assam, but the elected governments in Assam virtually had no control over the hill areas.[4] By confining the tribal communities to the hills and restraining their

movements, the British made the tribal communities feel that they belong to the hills and only the hills belong to them. By developing scripts and by starting schools in tribal languages, the missionaries contributed to the formation of distinct ethnic identities as hill tribes.[5] As the Indian nationalist movement failed to touch most tribal communities, the natives in the hill areas could not fully identify themselves with the emerging Indian nation and Indian people.

HILL COMMUNITIES IN POST-COLONIAL INDIA

Despite the fact that the Indian nationalist struggle had little influence on the hill tribes, by mere accident of history the hill areas of north-eastern region became a part of independent India. On the eve of transfer of power, the hill tribes had their inhibitions and reservations against joining the Indian Union. They were afraid that they would lose their autonomy and their control over the resources once they become a part of Indian State. The native response to the post-colonial state's intention to integrate them into the Indian Union was not uniform. Most tribes in Northeastern Frontier Tracts bordering China and Bhutan (later NEFA) remained oblivious of the political processes taking place in the country. Whereas some like the Garos and the Khasis aspired for greater autonomy for themselves within the Indian Union, the Mizos found themselves divided. While the Mizo Union representing the emerging educated middle classes were in support of joining India, the Mizo chiefs were against it. But on the other extreme were the Nagas who were reluctant to be a part of the Indian Union right from the beginning.[6] The Indian nationalist leaders who had by then become the ruling political elite tried to accommodate the aspirations of the hill communities of composite Assam through the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution which made special provision for autonomous district councils (ADC) and autonomous regional councils (ARC), granting the hill tribes of the state of Assam powers to protect their respective culture, social institutions and resources. Barring the Nagas who rose in revolt right in 1948, other major hill communities of composite Assam more or less accepted the Sixth Schedule and

experimented with ADCs and ARCs. In order to contain the Naga insurgency, the Government of India created a separate state of Nagaland in 1963, guaranteeing greater powers to the Nagas within the Indian Union.[7] This political concession was, however, not palatable to the radicals among the Nagas, who continued to fight for independence from the Indian Union. Meanwhile, the communities that experimented with the Sixth Schedule also began to feel that they had too little powers and resources to control their destinies. The emerging educated middle-class elites among the hill tribes aspired for more powers and began to fight for separate hill states for the tribes. To accommodate their aspirations, the new states of Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh were created in course of time by reorganizing the north-eastern region.[8] Only North Cachar Hills and Mikir Hills inhabited by the hill tribes such as Dimasas and Karbis could be convinced to remain in the state of Assam by guaranteeing enhanced powers to their district councils. As on date, 90 per cent of seats in the district councils and the newly constituted tribal dominant states are in the control of the representatives of the indigenous tribal communities. The district councils and the tribal dominant states have enacted several laws to prevent land alienation and to protect the customs and traditions of native tribal communities. They exercise control over agriculture, horticulture, forests, education, health and police. The Government of India guarantees special concessions to these communities in matters relating to taxation and financial allocations. Practically these district councils and hill states of north-east India acquire special status in Indian federal set-up.[9]

As such the Indian State has gone far ahead of many other democratic nation states as far as accommodating the interests of the indigenous peoples is concerned. However, several critics hold the view that far from benefiting the natives, these initiatives have adversely affected these traditional communities. It is pointed out that introduction of modern constitutional political structures and practices have marginalized the traditional tribal institutions. After the district councils and tribal state governments came into existence traditional political institutions were either abolished, like the Mizo chieftainship, or were made weak and

dependent. Assuming the role as protectors of tribal interests, the modern constitutional institutions now control and dominate all aspects of tribal life. As powers and roles of these formal institutions increased, community control over natural resources has gradually started diminishing. Class divisions started making their appearance in the tribal societies and the newly emerging middle class elite have started controlling the economy and politics of the hills, at times much to the detriment of the interests of majority of the tribal people. Hence it is often held that the formation of tribal dominant states has only benefited the ruling tribal elite. Further, the ethnic nature of the leadership in the ADCs and the state governments in the hill areas has widened the inter-tribal differences in the hill areas and compelled many other smaller tribal communities to come out with demands for separate states for themselves. Inability of the ADCs and state governments to mobilize internal sources makes them heavily dependent on the financial support from the central government. Naturally, they fail to innovate and implement programmes and policies appropriate and beneficial to the overall interests of the tribal communities.[10]

NATIVE CANADIANS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

As was the case with north-east India, the province of British Columbia in Canada was also almost the last post of British colonialism in Canada. It was almost three hundred years after John Cobot claimed Terre Nova in the name of King Henry VII in 1497, that the British fur traders and adventurers began to move westward exploring the islands in and the territories around the Pacific Ocean.[11] British Columbia became the Crown colony only in the middle of the nineteenth century. Prior to their colonization the territory was inhabited by several indigenous communities. Each had its own social, cultural and political institutions. They spoke different languages and were at different stages of economic development. While the coastal communities such as the Haida and Nootka were surplus generating developed communities with highly structured and distinct social strata, the interior tribes like the Carrier, Beaver, Sekani, and Slave, etc., were mostly nomadic with rudimentary political organizations.[12]

Ignoring all these differences, the colonial powers labeled all of them as Native Indians. During the heydays of fur trade the colonizers entered into agreements with the native communities and took their help in hunting the fur-bearing game. In return for fur, the natives sought metal items, firearms and ammunition, blankets, tobacco and alcohol. The fur traders interfered little in the social and cultural lives of the Native Indian communities. Paying respect to the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which laid down certain guidelines for the British colonizers in their dealings with the native communities in North America, James Douglas, the first governor of British Columbia entered into formal treaties with some native communities to acquire the land for colonization. Although the agreements and treaties were unequal, still there existed some semblance of equality between the British colonizers and the native communities till mid-nineteenth century. Advantages that the native communities had during the period disappeared once the fur trade declined. But after the decline of fur trade, colonization took the form of permanent agricultural settlements and mineral exploration. During this period several thousands of white settlers entered these territories to make fortunes. They occupied and settled in the lands habited by the native communities. In the name of reducing tensions between the white settlers and the native communities, the colonial government compelled the native tribes to live in designated reserves with limited resources. Due to decline of incomes, loss of control over natural resources, intensification of inter-tribal conflicts and spread of diseases introduced by the white settlers, several indigenous communities were wiped off and the native population in British Columbia declined drastically in the second half of the nineteenth century. Taking the decline of Indian population as a pretext, the land base of the reserves was further reduced, leaving very little for the Indian communities to sustain themselves.[13]

Even after British Columbia joined the Canadian Federation in 1871, there was no positive change in the plight of Native Indians. The Canadian Indian Act of 1876 put an end to traditional political institutions and created uniform band governments for all Native Indian communities in Canada. Treating the indigenous communities as wards to be protected,

Canadian government denied political autonomy and granted very little financial and administrative powers to the band governments. With the avowed purpose of bringing the natives into Canadian mainstream, the governments imposed compulsory residential education for Native Indian children through missionary schools and insisted that they give up Indian status in lieu of Canadian citizenship. Traditional religious and cultural festivities such as Potlatch and Sun Dance were banned and the Indians found to be taking drinks outside the reserve areas were punished.[14] Unlike the hill communities in north-east India, who enjoyed considerable autonomy during the colonial regime, Native Indians in British Columbia had to put up with worst forms of colonial and racist discrimination. Initially for a few decades, the shattered Native Indian communities in British Columbia could not put up resistance to the colonial policies pursued by the provincial governments. However, since the beginning of the twentieth century, the Native Indian communities began to form associations to pressurize the governments to settle their land claims and to grant them more powers to govern themselves. In response, the Canadian government passed undemocratic Acts to prevent all political and legal initiatives taken up by the native organizations in pursuit of their aboriginal rights.[15] The governments and the white Canadians used to look at all activities of the native communities with suspicion. However, active participation of several Native Indians in Canada in the Second World War in support of the Allied Forces changed to an extent the perceptions of white Canadians about the indigenous communities and helped Canadian government to look at the native problem in a more positive light.

Following the changed perceptions of the white Canadians, the Canadian government began to take certain positive initiatives benefiting the Native Indians. The Indian Act was amended in 1951 lifting the ban on festivities and political activities of Indian communities. Taking advantage of these changes, the Native Indian communities in British Columbia began to organize themselves into tribal and regional level organizations and started mobilizing public opinion in support of their demands.[16] Responding to their demands several committees and commissions such as the Hawthorn Committee (1966),

the Penner Committee (1983) and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) were constituted to study the problems of the Native Indians and to suggest appropriate remedies. Responding positively to some of the vital recommendations of these committees and commissions, Canadian governments began to delegate more and more administrative and financial powers to the band governments. The courts in Canada also played an important role in interpreting the meaning and status of aboriginal rights. The native organizations waged militant struggles forcing the Government of Canada to desist from policies that seek assimilation and recognize them as distinct communities, as First Nations. Their demands were partly fulfilled with the Constitution of 1982 recognizing them as aboriginal communities with distinct rights and later the governments accepting in principle to grant them self-government. The provincial government of BC was initially reluctant to concede to any demands for recognition of their right to autonomy and self-government.[17] But compelled by federal initiatives, court verdicts and militant movements of the aboriginal peoples, BC government had to formally acknowledge Indians' right to self-government and join the ongoing treaty negotiations that seek to arrive at honourable and mutually beneficial agreement between Canada and Native Indian communities.

Discourse on Strategy for Development of Native Indians

In the background of changes taking place in Canada in general and BC in particular, a lively debate has been taking place in Canada on issues concerning autonomy, self-reliance and future relations between Canadian governments and Native Indians. Although there has been a consensus among all parties involved in the discourse on the need to put an end to the racist and discriminatory Indian Act regime, there is no unanimity among them as to what could be the best possible arrangements necessary for promoting the interests of the native communities. A study of three dominant intellectual perceptions in the ongoing discourse on the future of Native Indians helps us to understand the future of indigenous peoples in Canada.

1. Liberal Cynicism

This point of view is effectively reflected in the writings of Tom Flanagan and Melvin Smith.[18] They contend that Native Indians should be treated like any other Canadian citizens and in their own interests the native communities should break down the thicket of laws, regulations, and procedures that separate them from their fellow Canadians and dissolve all stereotype attitudes and mindsets. In their view, self-government projects are disasters, producing wasteful, destructive, familistic factionalism. They advocate putting an end to federal treaty obligations and to pass out, over time, all native programmes, thus making existing federal and provincial programs applicable to all native peoples. In their view, possibilities of significant reserve-based economic development generating a reasonable standard of living are extremely limited. Concentration of all powers in band governments poses a threat to individual freedom and hence not conducive to economic efficiency. Aboriginal governments must be like municipal authorities subordinate to provincial and federal authorities. Native Indians can make progress only by acquiring the skills and attitudes that bring success in the market-oriented liberal democracies.

2. Radical Indigenous Perspective

In contrast, indigenous writers such as Menno Boldt and Noel Dyck[19] put forward a radical perspective, which views aboriginal peoples as distinct nations. In their view, recognition of the special status of Native Indians should become the starting point of treaty negotiations with indigenous communities. Coming out against all attempts aimed at political and cultural assimilation, the radicals argue that the indigenous peoples should be given the right to self-determination and internal sovereignty, so that they could protect and promote their aboriginal identities, interests and values. To restore aboriginal peoples to their place alongside Canada as First Nations, they advocate nation-to-nation relationship. They expect Indian self-governments to protect native culture and manage native lands and resources. In their view, Indian self-government should be radically different

from the municipal governments. It should be administered by Indian leadership committed to Indian traditional philosophies and principles. Indian self-government should work to revive the communal patterns of the past and jettison the formal, bureaucratic institutions imposed by the Indian Act. It should make an effort to revitalize native cultures, languages and social systems.

3. Citizens' Plus Approach

This approach is advocated by scholars like Hawthorn, and Alain Cairns.[20] Opposing both liberal and radical perspectives, this approach advocates a middle path. It does acknowledge the deprivations that the Native Indians had experienced in the past and advocates that the native peoples should be treated as 'Citizens Plus', meaning citizens with additional rights. But at the same time this perspective views integration of natives with Canadian nation as something necessary and beneficial to the Native Indians. In their view, Native Indians are already a part of a common project, Canada. Future of both natives and non-Natives are interconnected. Aboriginal future is in Canada. The aboriginal peoples are not only Canadians, but are and should be thought of as such by others and by themselves. This perspective recognizes the structural constraints that impede the development of on-reserve Indians and believe that their future lies in the urban areas. Its advocates sympathize with the native struggles for autonomy and defend different self-government experiments taking place in Canada. They view native struggles not as reactionary movements aimed at taking them back to pre-Columbus days, but as progressive steps that seek to engage with the modern world without giving up aboriginal difference.

In the background of the intellectual discourse that has been taking place in Canada on issues concerning political autonomy and economic development, Native Indians are also debating over questions such as what kind of relations they should have with Canada in future; what should be the form of Indian self-government; what needs to be the primary focus of development—the reserves or the urban areas?; how should the Indian government mobilize resources for developmental

activities?, and in what ways one could ensure auditing and accountability of Indian governments. Although there is no consensus on any of the issues as yet, the emerging dominant perception appears to be that the Native Indians are aspiring for justice and greater autonomy within the system and that they have no aspiration to break away from Canadian federation.[21] They desire to acquire adequate land base and make their reserves economically self-reliant, but at the same time wish to keep their development options open outside the reserve system. Although the native communities are not yet ready for own-taxation, they are exploring avenues to generate adequate resources so that they could plan and implement their own activities for development of their respective communities. The native communities detest the Canadian governments' intervention in the name of auditing and accountability, but they do accept the need for the Indian self-government to be responsible to their respective communities.[22]

Self-Government Experiments in Action

While most native communities accept the need for an elected leadership there are still many like Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en citizens who think that reverting to traditional systems of governance is necessary to realize self-government.[23] Some like Hupasceth First Nation look for a middle ground, seeking to take advantage of the best of both worlds. Even in communities where there has been demand for handing over power to the traditional leadership it is accepted in principle that all decisions of the leadership have to be taken in public in consultation with all members of the First Nation. Native women's organizations have made considerable inroads to make their viewpoints clear and have been pressurizing the Indian leaders to accommodate their interests in the emerging political set-up. Several educated women are coming forward to take up executive and administrative positions in the Indian governments. About 20 per cent of the First Nations' leaders in Canada today are women.[24]

It is true that incidences of corruption, wastage, and mismanagement of funds are visible here and there, as Flanagan and others have pointed out. It would, however, be premature

at this moment to conclude that the First Nation governments have failed in all respects. If one evaluates the performance of Native Indian governments from modern administrative yardsticks one would probably jump only to negative conclusions. For, most Indian governments are inexperienced and lack professionalism. But if one evaluates their performance from the perspective of the needs of the Native Indians their achievements do not appear to be all that bad. Many have been trying to do justice to their communities by shouldering different responsibilities. Realizing the need for an adequate land base, all First Nations are pursuing the land claims. Many First Nations are negotiating agreements with different state agencies and private business enterprises to start joint business/development ventures. They have forced enterprises like BC Hydro and Royal Bank to take up initiatives for education, training, and employment of Native Indians in their projects.[25]

Today, not all Indian reserves are poor and underdeveloped. Taking advantage of their location, physical resources, and social capital, some First Nations have initiated economic development programmes that suit their interests and needs. By imposing taxes on non-aboriginal citizens, leasing reserve lands for commercial purposes, claiming royalties from non-aboriginal business enterprises operating on reserves, and entering into mutually-beneficial agreements with the corporate sector and state enterprises, the First Nations have been able to mobilize considerable resources for their governments. Gradually, many aboriginal Indians are entering business activities: approximately 20,000 aboriginal businesses are registered across Canada, about 4,700 of them in British Columbia. Native Indian enterprises are visible in the primary sector, manufacturing, and service sectors. Although most of them are small-scale enterprises catering to local markets, some even target international markets. About 72 per cent of aboriginal entrepreneurs reported profits in 2002; and 70 per cent of aboriginal entrepreneurs residing in BC anticipated growth in the next two years as well. Making use of different tax concessions granted to them Native Indian entrepreneurs are trying to create their own niche in the market in certain domains where they have advantages.[26] Since they earn their livelihood basically from land, seas, and forests, Native

Indians value the need for protecting biodiversity and advocate sustainable developmental strategies for development. Canadian government agencies and business enterprises operating in the reserve areas are, therefore, compelled to fall in line with First Nations' aspirations and reorient their development and business strategies in areas inhabited by aboriginal Indians. In collaboration with non-aboriginal business enterprises some First Nations have initiated culturally sensitive and environmentally sustainable development projects in forestry, horticulture and tourism. As such, hundreds of experiments in Indian self-government have been taking place on the reserves and in urban areas.

CONCLUSION

The comparative study of the experiences of hill communities in north-east India and Native Indians in BC show certain similarities as well as differences. These native communities are racially, culturally and historically different from other citizens who share the dominant political ethos of the respective nations. They remain peripheral to national polities and economies, and are apprehensive of integrating themselves into the national mainstream. Conscious of their identity as indigenous peoples, they aspire to preserve their aboriginal identities and look for development that is in conformity with their traditional values and culture. Despite their demographic disadvantages, the native communities in Canada as well as in India waged many a struggle to preserve their autonomy and identities. Their uncompromising struggles and movements had brought pressure on the governments in both countries to initiate constitutional and political changes to accommodate the interests and aspirations of the aboriginal people within the broad framework of liberal democracies.

These commonalities apart, if one looks at the trajectories of the struggles and movements of hill communities of north-east India and Native Indians in BC, one can notice considerable differences in the experiences of these communities and also in the governments' responses to the demands and aspirations of the indigenous peoples. During the colonial period the hill tribes in north-east India enjoyed greater autonomy, compared to

Native Indians in Canada. Although both Canada and India were the colonies of the British, the colonial interests compelled them to act differently in different regions. While the geographic and military compulsions compelled the British to leave the hill communities in north-east India almost unadministered, the economic considerations and also the need to facilitate the white settlements forced the colonial government in BC to ignore the promises that the Crown had earlier made to the Native Indians in North America and impose highly discriminatory and authoritarian regime over the Native Indians. Transition from colonial to post-colonial regime in Canada mattered little to Native Indians since the political power continued to remain in the hands of the white people even after the formation of Canada in 1867. In contrast there was a distinct change in the nature of political power in India after 1947, as the nationalist elite took over the political power after India became politically independent. This change did affect the hill tribes in north-eastern region, who are racially, culturally and historically different from the people in the mainland India. While the Native Indians had to fight against the continuing colonial and assimilatory policies of Canadian governments, the hill communities had to organize themselves to defend their autonomy and identity against the possible encroachment by the post-colonial regime in India. Unlike Canadian State which remained indifferent to the aspirations of the aboriginal peoples for decades, the post-colonial state in India did take several constitutional and political initiatives, almost immediately after Independence, to accommodate the political aspirations of the indigenous tribes within the constitutional framework. Indian State has given state (provincial) status to some of the erstwhile hill districts inhabited by the native communities. But in Canada even to this day, none of the territorial units peopled by the indigenous peoples enjoy the status of a province.

These differences, however, should not lead one to conclude that the conditions of tribal communities in India are better than that of Native Indians in Canada. Many critics in India have pointed out that far from protecting the aspirations and interests of tribal communities, the creation of district councils and state governments have led to the decline of traditional

communitarian institutions and practices among the tribes. Financial dependence of these politico-administrative units on central government allow them limited opportunities for innovating and implementing developmental projects that suit the tribal milieu. In this respect, Native Indians in Canada seem to be making a slow but steady progress. They have been asking the right questions and exploring indigenous alternatives both within and outside the constitutional framework. They are pragmatic enough to understand that in the prevailing international situation they can aspire only for internal autonomy and not for independence from Canada. From experience, they realize that political autonomy makes sense only when they are economically self-reliant. Hence they are making efforts to seek maximum concessions from federal and provincial governments in the form of land and other resources. In this respect most hill tribes in north-east India appear to be bit impractical and adventurous. They have been indulging in violent and self-defeating struggles for autonomy or independence without realizing their own limitations. On its part, the Indian State did all that it could do within the limits of its underdeveloped capitalist economy and has reached its limits. It realizes that it cannot go on creating more and more states to accommodate the political aspirations of different tribal communities. India's economy and its over population will also not allow the Indian State to grant economic concessions beyond a point. Unable to handle the ever increasing and at times conflicting tribal aspirations in a democratic way, the Indian State is relying more and more on its armed powers to deal with the indigenous challenge. But in Canada, since 1990s the governments are coming forward to negotiate honourable and mutually beneficial treaties, guaranteeing considerable freedom for the native communities to determine their own forms of rule within the Canadian polity. Realizing the need for peace and development, the Canadian State is making economic and political concessions to the indigenous peoples, ignoring the white lobbies opposing such indulgences. Developing countries like India which have limited resources and more claimants aspiring for a share cannot afford to imitate developed countries like Canada which have

resources to share with its indigenous peoples. Because of all these factors, despite the similarities in political systems and ideologies, Canadian State appears to be better placed than its Indian counterpart in handling the challenges posed by the indigenous peoples.

NOTES

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