

Something 'normal' in Korea, but not in a 'good' society

. The movie 'Susan Brink's Arirang' was released in 1991 and led public discourses on overseas adoption in Korean society. Since overseas adoption was started right after the Korean war, adoptees of the early period of overseas adoption reached their middle-age or elderlyhood. The late president KIM, Dae-Joong made an apology to those adoptees who were sent to the Western societies against their volition, but the apology did not bring about much change in the society. Domestic adoption began exceeding overseas adoption from 2007 and overseas adoption has been decreasing by 10% every year since 2008. The Korean government is in the preparation for sanctioning the Hague Convention on Adoption scheduled in 2016 and an NGO for the rights of overseas adoptees contends that Korea stop giving adoption to overseas countries at latest by the year 2018 when the Winter Olympic Games is held in Pyeong Chang, Korea. However, there have not been ingenious solutions for those 'discarded' children so far.

On the other hand. "Korea that celebrates winners only" used to get excited with such news as a Korean adoptee who became a Minister in French government. The society which seeks after material abundance and achievement forgot those "numerous Susan" who could not become a Minister or a celebrity.

Many adoptees I met past two weeks in several cities in Switzerland testified that they had been gone through tough and rough lifetime because of identity crises that were rooted in 'different' appearance from their Swiss family and yearning for and resentment at their Korean family. An adoptee currently in depression therapy remembers herself being in depression even when she was in the custody of Korean orphanage back then. Another one said that he could identify the real nature of smell that had been staying around his nasal sense with "Kimchi" upon tasting it as an adult. While these adoptees were missing their "home" that had carried certain voices, faces, smells, and rhythms, people of their home have totally erased them and led quite happy lives doting on their precious children.

However, 'certain' children, as if they did not have their father or any relatives, are now being given up to the society like they were back in the 1970s. The development-oriented Korean society, then, barter these children for money by sending them to either North America or Europe. When a few of these countless 'bartered children' become a celebrity in the adoptive society, Korean society gets excited, comforting itself "Yes! it was right for you to be sent away. Who could you turn out to be if you had been here?" What was on the mind of Korean society when sending its own children overseas? Spacious houses and colorful dishes on dining tables? Altruistic parents who would treat their own children and adopted ones equally?

What if not a few adoptees managed to survive under the opposite ways of environment and foster parents? What if they went to a movie theater for the first time at the age of 25, and had their first vacation at 40? What if some adoptees went alcoholic due to desperate loneliness and depression? Nonetheless, would Korean society reiterate, "Yes! it was right for you to be sent away!"?

Korea, which had overcome the extreme poverty level of the 1950s and achieved industrialization in two decades, went into the category of 'low birth rate nations' in the early 1980s. However, 'certain' children are now being discarded to be sent overseas like back then. How can we solve the contradiction that Korea suffering from

m the low(est) birth rate is still giving oversea adoption?

It is human rights for mothers to give birth to and raise their children and it is duties of a 'good' society to protect the human rights of its citizens. In the 'advanced' societies willing to take this duty, mothers' human rights are realized regardless of their marital status or social class. Thus, oversea adoption should be defined as a 'commercial activity against human rights' that takes place in an irresponsible society. Although a society fulfills its duties to protect mothers' human rights, if a mother gives up her rights to her child, then adoption, only domestic adoption, could be 'considered.' Oversea adoption, therefore, is something normal in Korea, but not in a 'good' society