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History of Rakhine State and the Origin of the Rohingya Muslims

Haradhan Kumar Mohajan[1]

Abstract

The Rohingya, a Muslim ethnic minority group in Rakhine, are considered among the most persecuted, vulnerable, and oppressed minorities in the world. Recently, the persecution on the Rohingya Muslims has increased due to Buddhist nationalism in Myanmar. The Rohingya continue to suffer from several forms of restrictions and human rights violations in Myanmar due to them being denied Myanmar citizenship. They are victims of various forms of oppression, such as arbitrary taxation, land confiscation, destruction of mosques, torture and ill-treatment, extrajudicial executions, restrictions on movements, forced eviction and house destruction, forced laborers on roads and at military camps, and financial restrictions on marriage. Since the 1970s, a number of crackdowns on the Rohingya in Rakhine have forced them to flee to neighboring countries. More than one million Rohingyas have migrated to refugee camps in the Bangladeshi district of Cox's Bazar. This article deals with the origin of the Rohingya, the form of their citizenship, and recent oppression in the Rakhine State of Myanmar.

Keywords: Myanmar, Rohingya, Refugee, Citizenship, Persecution.

[1] Assistant Professor, Premier University, Chittagong, Bangladesh. *Corresponding e-mail:* haradhan1971@gmail.com

Introduction

Myanmar is the least developed country in the Southeast Asia. In the 1947 Constitution, the name of the country was proclaimed Burma, and in 1989, the military junta changed the name to Myanmar (Ullah, 2011). Some scholars believe that Burma is derived from the eponym 'Brahma Desha' after Brahma, one of the gods of the Hindu trinity. Some other scholars believe that "Burma" is the name derived from the spoken form of Bamar (the language of the majority ethnic group), and was also used during the independence movement in 1948. "Myanmar" is taken from the literary form of the language, and is supposed to be more neutral than Burma. "Myanmar" supposedly is associated with democratic and federalist ideologies, while "Myanmar" recalls military enforcement and hierarchal units (Dittmer, 2010). The official name of the country according to the 2008 constitution is "The Republic of the Union of Myanmar" (Government of Myanmar [GoM], 2008).

Rakhine is a state located in the west coast of Myanmar, one of the poorest regions of the country. Its area is 14,200 square miles (Islam, 1999). In Rakhine, it is estimated that 59.7% of the 3.8 million people are Buddhist, 35.6% are Muslim Rohingya, and the remainder are from other religious groups. The Rohingya Muslims did not originate from just one single racial stock. They are the mixture of diverse ethnic groups, including Arabs, Moghuls, and Bengalis (Alam, 2013). In Myanmar there are 7 million Muslims, which are 15% of the total populations of the country, and half of them live in Rakhine (Jaha, 1994).

Buddhist nationalism began to emerge in response to British colonial rule, and saw Buddhists identifying with Burmese culture and history. During the colonial period, the Burmese military Tatmadaw and the founders of several armies including Aung San were patronized and trained by the military of imperial Japan to defeat Allied forces and the British colonials. Myanmar's Buddhist nationalism was influenced by Japanese fascism (Zarni, 2013). The Rohingya crisis is not only on religion but also on economical and political related (Shams, 2015). The Buddhists of Myanmar claim that the Rohingya are economically developed, and their culture is under siege than the Rohingya. The Rohingya are confronted with a deeply-entrenched Islam phobia with Rakhine in Myanmar. Myanmar is surrounded by some Islamic countries, such as Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia. The Buddhists think that if any Islamic country attacks Myanmar, the Rohingya will fight against Myanmar.

As a result, they are culturally discriminated, economically exploited, and politically sidelined by the GoM (Wolf, 2017).

There have been many debates on the origins of the Rohingya and the Arakan State. The two conflicting theories are that i) Rohingyas are illegal immigrants from neighboring Bangladesh (Saw, 2011; Ahmed, 2012), and ii) Rohingyas are native to Arakan, and are descendents of the original Muslim converted on Ramree Island (Bahar, 2010a; Forster, 2011). Although there are two opposing debates about the origin of the Rohingya, it is true that a large number of Muslims have resided in the Arakan for hundreds of years (Azad & Jasmine, 2013; Leitich, 2014).

The sectarian conflict has been especially focused in the Muslim areas that lie in the northern part of Rakhine State: Maungdaw, Rathedaung, and Buthidaung Townships (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2013). During the last few years the Rohingya ethnic violence in Rakhine became extensive, which has transformed into ethnic cleansing and genocide (Nawoyski, 2013).

In Bangladesh, more than 21,677 Rohingya children under the age of 5 have been treated for severe acute malnutrition, and 315,000 children under 15 have received a five-in-one vaccination, which includes cover for diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough.About 44,493 temporary emergency latrines have been built by the Bangladesh military, and about 21,000 metric tonsof aid has been delivered.The UK has pledged £59 million in aid to support the Rohingya fleeing to Bangladesh (United Nation's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [UNOCHA], 2018).

Literature Review

Anthony Ware explores aspects of the Muslim-Buddhist conflict in Rakhine State (Ware, 2015). Cresa L. Pugh stresses that granting citizenship to the Rohingya is necessary to find a permanent solution to the crisis in Arakan (Pugh, 2013). According to Siegfried O. Wolf, the persecution and discrimination of the Rohingya are a politically- and economically-motivated religious conflict (Wolf, 2017). K. M. Atikur Rahman has tried to find out the root causes and consequences of ethnic conflict of the Rohingya in Myanmar. He stresses that the Rohingya conflict began with mainly the denial of separate identities and rejection of Rohingya citizenship (Rahman, 2015).

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has observed that villages, homes, and properties of the Rohingya across northern Rakhine State

have been destroyed by armed Rakhine Buddhist individuals. It also indicates that Rohingyas are victims of killings, disappearances, torture, and rape and other forms of sexual violence in Rakhine State (OHCHR, 2017). Al Amin Rabby has indicated that the Myanmar junta is forcing the ethnic Rohingya either to leave the country or face execution, mass killing, forced labor and deportation. As a result, the Rohingya Muslim minority is suffering and facing ethnic cleansing in Myanmar (Rabby, 2016). Md. Salman Sohel has stated that the Government of Myanmar (GoM) and Myanmar Buddhists treat the Rohingyas as ugly animals. He has indicated how the GoM was implicated in ethnic cleansing day after day (Sohel, 2017).

Bilveer Singh has proposed to condemn and punish Myanmar for the recent persecution on the Rohingya (Singh, 2014). Helal Mohammed Khan proposes interpreting migrant culture through understanding its principal components, namely language, ethnicity, religion and economy, using the Rohingya as a case study (Khan, 2017). Mahalia Gaskin McDanielhas made attempts to address a gap in studies offering a deeper insight into the situation of the persecuted the Rohingya minority in Myanmar by comparatively researching them against the Kachin and Wa (McDaniel, 2017). Santiago Ripoll and his coauthors have reported that there are very little facilities providing for health, water and sanitation, nutrition, and mental health of the Rohingya both in Myanmar and refugee camps in Bangladesh (Ripoll et al., 2017).

Objective of the Study

This study analyzes the origin of Arakan State and the ethnic Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. We have tried to indicate the legal rights of this persecuted ethnic minority in their native land. This study will bear the following specific objectives:

a. To identify the origin of Arakan State and the Rohingya Muslims.
b. To provide the history of the Rohingya Muslims.
c. To know the background behind the persecution and ethnic violence against the Rohingya in Myanmar.

Methods

Research methodology indicates that the logic of development of the process used to generate theory that is procedural framework within which the research is

conducted (Remenyi et al., 1998). The methodology of this article is to discuss the citizenship of the Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar. The data of this article has been collected to achieve results for the purpose and scope of this study. In this study secondary data are used to enrich the article. For the collection of secondary data we have used both published and unpublished data sources. The data are collected from books of various authors, hand books, theses, magazines, newspapers, journals, websites, public records and statistics, historical documents, and research reports.

Discussion

Importance of Citizenship

Citizenship within the context of liberal democracies consists of three components: civil rights, political rights, and social rights (Marshall, 1950). According to Aristotle, humans are political animals by nature, and without membership in a polis, we are not fully human (Pugh, 2013). According to the 1954 convention, a stateless person is a person who is not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR, 2010). The 1961 Convention requires state parties to reduce and prevent statelessness status, giving protection to stateless persons (UNHCR, 2014). This Convention explicitly mentions the importance of citizenship as follows: i) everyone has the right to a nationality, ii) statelessness shall be avoided, iii) no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his/her nationality, and iv) non-discrimination (Azad & Jasmine, 2013).

Citizenship status is very important for a human being. It is an entrance for the recognition of the other rights. Aristotle stated that, by nature, man is a political animal and has a group. Without recognition as a member of a group, the person is not in fact a human (Pugh, 2013; Patgiri, 2017). A stateless person has no right to exercise voting. He/she cannot access various public services, such as studying in educational institutions; participating in social activities, health services, and international travel; applying for any job, and facing any justice system. Even he/she has no personal safety (Buitrag, 2011). A stateless person is not only unequal before the law, but there are also no laws that apply to him/her. He/she has lost both domestic and international protections. After World War II, thousands of people have become stateless. For example, the Nazis made all the Jews in the region become stateless (Parra, 2011). At present the Rohingya face substantial difficulties in education, social safety,

international travel, jobs, justice system, vaccinations, healthcare, etc. (McDowell, 2013).

In 1958, the first president of Burma, Sao Shwe Thaike, declared that the Muslims of Arakan belonged to the indigenous races of Burma (Green, 2015). In 1982, a new Citizenship Law (consisting of 8 chapters) effectively rendered the Rohingya stateless. The Law allows for three categories of citizens: full citizenship (in chapter 2), associate citizenship (in chapter 3), and naturalized citizenship (in chapter 4). Full citizens are those belonging to one of 135 national races that settled into the territory before 1823. Associate citizenship is for those whose application for citizenship under the former citizenship law was pending at the time the new law was passed, and naturalized citizenship could only be granted to those who could furnish conclusive evidence of entry and residence before Burma's independence in 1948, who could speak one of the national languages well, and whose children were born in Burma (Lewa, 2009).

Before 1962 the Rohingya possessed government-issued identity cards, and also had British-issued ration cards which confirmed that they are citizens of Burma. In 1962, authorities forcibly took these identity cards on the pretext of checking to deny their legal identity (Parnini, 2013).

The 1982 Citizenship Law deprived the Rohingya of citizenship in Myanmar, and they lost national protection due to their non-citizenship. It has been applied in a discriminatory manner to deprive the Rohingya from their citizenship. Under the law, the Rohingya was not recognized as one of the country's 135 ethnic groups (Abdelkader, 2014).

In Myanmar, citizens age 10 and above are eligible to apply for a national identity card which is essential for travel, business, medical care, higher education, etc. Those who have no identity card may be detained and imprisoned (Karen Human Rights Group, 2002). Obtaining full citizenship, it is primarily based on membership of the national races who are considered by the State to have settled in Myanmar prior to 1848, as well as fluency in one of the national languages (Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK [BROUK], 2014).

According to the 1982 law the Rohingya are not eligible to apply for the national identity card, and consequently have not been granted full citizenship. Instead they have only obtained foreign identity cards. As a result, their rights to study, work,

travel, marry, practice their religion, exercise to vote, and access health services continue to be restricted.

Myanmar Demographics

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar is an ethnic dominant country in Southeast Asia. Its capital city is Yangon and the official language is the Burmese. Its estimated populations are to be 60,584,650 (including the Rohingya) and estimated area of more than 261,000 square miles (676,578 km^2) (Demographics of Myanmar, 2018; World Bank, 2012). It is bordered in the south by the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, in the northeast by China, in the east by Laos, in the southeast by Thailand, in the west by Bangladesh, and in the northwest by India (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2013). It is subdivided into seven regions and seven States. It was colonized by the British in 1824, and had achieved independence in 1948.It was colonized, in three attempts: i) the first Anglo-Burmese war took place from 1824 to 1826, ii) the second from 1852 to 1853, and iii) the last in 1885. It is ethnically diverse, with 135 officially recognized races (Dittmer, 2010). The majority population of Yangon (capital of Myanmar) during the colonial period was not Burmese. The government officially recognizes eight ethnic races: The Burman, Mon, Karen, Karenni, Shan, Kachin, Chin, and Rakhine.

There are several different sub-ethnic groups in each ethnic group. For example, the Chin has 53, the Shan has 33, the Kachin has 12, the Karen has 11, the Burman has 9, the Karenni has 9, the Rakhine has 7, and the Mon has 1 sub-ethnic groups (Than, 2007). The majority ethnic group is the Burmans that make up 68% of the population. Most of the population are Buddhists and speaks Burmese, the official language of Myanmar. Other ethnic groups are the Shan (9%), the Karen (7%), the Rakhine (4%), the Chinese (3%), the Indian (2%), the Mon (2%), and other (5%). In terms of religious basis, it is consisted of Buddhists (89%), 4% Christians (Baptists 3%, and Roman Catholics 1%), 4% Muslims, 1% animist, and others 2% (Ullah, 2011; Singh, 2014; Warzone Initiatives, 2015). The minority ethnic groups Kachin, Chin, Shan, and Rakhine live on the borders of neighboring countries (HRW, 2013). In the country there are more than 200 languages, and dialects that are spoken among ethnic minority groups (Warzone Initiatives, 2015).

For the strong economy and food production, once the country was recognized as the 'rice bowl' of Asia. But, at present it is considered amongst the least developed countries in the world (Rogers, 2013). More than 32% of the population is living below the poverty line. But, it is abundant in natural resources, including petroleum, timber, tin, lead, coal, and hydropower (CIA, 2013).

Etymology of Arakan

The name of Arakan is very ancient. The word Arakan is of Arabic or Persian origin, having the same meaning in both of these languages. Early Buddhist missionaries called Arakan "Rekkha Pura". In a Latin Geography (1597) by Peta Vino, the country was referred to as Aracan. Friar Manrique (1628–1643) mentions the country as Aracan (Ullah, 1997). The British travelers Relph Fitch (1586) referred to Arakan by the name of Rocon. Tripura Chronicle Rajmala mentions the name of Arakan as Roshang. Famous European traveler Francis Buchanam (1762–1829) in his accounts mentioned Arakan as Reng, Roung, Rossawn, Russawn, and Rung. The Muslims who have long settled at Arakan called the country 'Rovingaw' and called themselves 'Rohinga' or native of Arakan. The Chakmas and Saks of the 18th century called it 'Roang'. At present the Muslims of Arakan call the country 'Rohang' or 'Arakan' and call themselves 'Rohingya' or native of Rohang. The Burmans call themselves 'Rakhine' and call the country 'Rakhine Pye,' or country of Rakhine (Ullah, 1997).

Etymology of Rohingya

The term "Rohingya" is derived from the Arabic word *Rahm* which means mercy. It has its origins with the arrival of Arab traders on shores of Ramree Island in the 18th century (Ullah, 2011). The myth tells of a ship of Arab traders that arrived on shores of Ramree Island in the 18th century and wrecked off the Burmese coast, and the survivors asked for Rahm of the local king. The king allotted a piece of land for them, and they were allowed to settle there. Over time Rahm changed to Rhohang and eventually to Rohingya (Chowdhury, 1996; Bahar, 2010b).

There is an alternate concept that the term "Rohingya" is actually used to describe the Ruha people who migrated from Afghanistan (Ahmed, 2012). Another version of the "Rohingya" is that the 'Roh' in Rohingya means 'mountain' in Sanskrit

and that the region of mountains in northwest India was known as Roh (Ahmed, 2012). MaungThaHla (2009) noted that the term "Rohingya" was not included in the 1824 census conducted by the British. KhinMaung Saw claims that the term "Rohingya" was unknown prior to the 1950s and invented by the Red Flag Communists to please the Mujahid rebels whom they wanted to work with (Saw, 1993). Aye Chan argues that the term "Rohingya" was created in 1951 by a Rohingya MP from the Akyab North constituency. He writes that the Muslims from northwestern Arakan who were the descendents of immigrants from Chittagong who had migrated into Arakan during the British colonial period (Chan, 2005).

Chan (2005), Saw (2011), and Rosenblat (2015) categorize Muslims residing in Arakan into four categories as: 1) the Chittagonian Bengalis living on the Mayo Frontier, 2) the descendents of the Muslim community of Arakan during the Mrauk-U Period (1430–1784) currently living in the Mrauk-U and Kyauktow townships, 3) descendents of the Arab mercenaries from Ramree Island, and 4) Muslims from the Myedo area of Upper Burma that remained in Arakan following the Burmese conquest in 1784.

During the colonial period Muslims in Arakan were referred to in many different ways; Muslims, Mohamaden, Chittagonians or Bengalis, Rooinga, and Rossawn. In 1799, Francis Buchanan, a Scottish surgeon with the British East India Company, traveled to Burma and met members of a Muslim ethnic group who have long settled in Rakhine, and called themselves Rooinga (Buchanan, 1799).

Muslim leaders in Rakhine State have promoted the use of the term "Rohingya" to describe themselves as part of their assertion of rights along ethnic lines. The first formal acknowledgement of the ethnonym "Rohingya" dates to 10 March 1950 in an official address by a group of elders from North Arakan to Prime Minister U Nu on his visit to Maungdaw (Jilani, 1999).

Michael W. Charney states that the derivation of Rohingya from Roainga is very clear. Roainga can be traced to the 17th century to Rosanga (Charney, 2005). Although the language of Rohingya was widespread during the era of Arakan Kings, today its existence as a written language has diminished, as it was mainly destroyed by the Burman invaders in 1784, andwas not preserved well by subsequent colonialists (Yunus, 1994).

The Rohingya armed groups formed in the 1980s, such as the Rohingya Solidarity Organization and the Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front, but they never posed a serious threat to the Burmese military state (HRW, 2013).

History of Arakan State

Arakan was a sovereign and independent state till 1784, shortly before the British colonial era, mainly due to its geographical position. But it is now one of the states of Myanmar. The Rakhine State (Sittwe, formerly Akyab, is the capital city) comprises a narrow mountainous strip of land along the eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal from the Naaf River to Cape Negaris, and stretches north and south touching Bangladesh on the northwest. The river Naaf separates Rakhine from Chittagong of Bangladesh (Qanungo, 1988). About 2,000 meters high The Rakhine Yoma Mountains form a natural barrier between Rakhine State and the rest of the land of Myanmar. It is one of the poorest states in the country with ghetto-like camps and a lack of basic services and opportunities (Aung, 1967; Chowdhury, 1996). Its 360 mile long coastal belt in the west makes Arakan easily accessible by sea. There are seven rivers in Arakan: the Naaf, Mayu, Kaladan (longest), Lemro, Ann, Tangup, and Sandoway. The total area of Arakan during the British period was about 20,000 square miles, but the Arakan Hill-Tracts District (5,235 square miles) and the southernmost part of Arakan were partitioned from Arakan. So, it has now been reduced to 14,200 square miles (Karim, 2000).

Arakan was an independent State until it was invaded by Burman King Bowdawpaya in 1784, and annexed to the Burman Kingdom (Euro Burma Office, EBO, 2009). It is believed that the Muslims first reached Arakan in the 8th century, and through a gradual process of expansion in the 15th and 16th centuries, a distinct Arakanese Muslim community was formed (Grundy-Warr & Wong, 1997). Some believe that they are descendants of Moorish, Arab, and Persian traders who had arrived and settled in Arakan between the 9th and 15th centuries. Migrants arriving from Afghanistan, Persia, Turkey, northern India, and the Arabian Peninsula were later added to these settlers that create a distinct dialect which is a mix of Persian, Urdu, Pushtu, Arakanese, and Bengali (Ahmed, 2010). During the 12th and 13th centuries, larger groups arrived in Arakan and rapidly integrated as well. The second wave of Muslim immigration into Arakan began in the 15th century and lasted until

1784, when the Burmese king Bodawpaya conquered Arakan (FIDH, 2000). In the 17th century Arakan reached its peak of glory through the contribution of Muslim poets, Muslim learned men, saints, and administrators (Karim, 2000).

Another view, one that is supported by the GoM, is that the Muslims of the Rakhine State are descendants of Bengali migrants, particularly those from the Chittagong area of Bangladesh, who migrated only in the 15th or 16th centuries. The earliest Muslim settlers were those Bengali followers who were allowed to settle during the Mrauk-U Dynasty (1430–1785) or those who fled to Rakhine State during the Mughal invasion of Bengal in 1575 (Rosenblat, 2015). The fall of the Mrauk-U Rakhine Dynasty encompassed parts of modern day Bangladesh and Rakhine State and continues to be one of the roots of contemporary Rakhine nationalism (Varshney, 2007). This Kingdom was founded by Rakhine King Narameikhla (Solaiman Shah) with the military support of the Sultan of Bengal, gaining independence in 1531 (International Crisis Group, 2014). For almost a century, from 1582 to 1666, Chittagong remained under the affective rule of the Arakanese (Yunus, 1994).

Muslims Communities in Myanmar

The Muslims are the most vulnerable and persecuted citizens in Myanmar. In Myanmar there are eight main groups of Muslims. The Rohingya is the largest group lived in Rakhine State. The Buddhist Burmese call them by the pejorative 'Kalar' (black-skinned). The Indian Muslims are Muslims of South Asian origins. The Zerbadees are descendants of mixed marriages mainly of Muslim fathers and Burmese mothers (Singh, 2014). The Panthays are Chinese Muslims lived in the Burmese-Chinese border in the northern part of the country. The Kamans (population about 300,000) are descendants of Shah Suja, son of famous Mogul Emperor Shahajan, who took shelter in Arakan, after being overthrown by his brother, Mogul Emperor Aurangzeb. All of the family members of Shah Shuja were massacred by the King Chandra Sudarma who had previously hosted them, but many of the surviving soldiers remained in the Arakanese territory, increasing once again the Islamic presence in the zone. At present they live in Ramree Island (Saw, 2009; Sohel, 2017). The Tambukias came from Arabia and were allowed to settle in southern Arakan by King MahaTaing Chandra (788-810). The Turks and Pathans are found in Mrohaung and came to Arakan in the 15th century when King Min SoaMuwn was in throne. The Myay Du

Muslims live in the Rakhine State and are believed to be descendants of assimilated Muslims from both Bengal and Burma who had served in Burmese royal armies. The Burmese Muslims refer to Bamars who have converted to Islam. The Zerbadees, Tambukias, Turks, Pathans, Panthays, and Kamans distance themselves from the Rohingya and Indian Muslims (Yin, 2005).

The History of the Rohingya

In Rakhine State, there are two main distinct Muslim groups: i) the Kaman (Myanmar Muslims) and ii) the Rohingya. The Kaman speak Rakhine or Burmese language and share common customs with the Buddhist population. They are recognized and granted citizenship by the GoM (Minority Rights Group International [MRGI], 2008).

The Rohingya speaks in Rohingya or Ruaingga which is similar to the language with Chittagonian language (dialect) of Bangladesh. This language is distinct to others spoken in Rakhine State and throughout Myanmar. It is not only mixed primarily with words from the Urdu, Hindi, and Arabic languages but also from the Bamaand English languages. The Rohingya have the same physical appearance with the Chittagonian. Nearly all of the Rohingya live in the western coastal State of Rakhine, and are not allowed to leave without permission of GoM (Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2012).

According to Aye Chan, the term "Rohingya" was first introduced in the 1950s. He claims that it was first used by educated Bengalis living in Arakan (Chan, 2005). But, according to Buchanan (1799), the Rohingya have long settled in Arakan. Yin (2005) claims that the inception of the word "Rohingya" took place before the 20th century. According to Rogers (2013), however, many Myanmar citizens maintain that the Rohingya people began arriving illegally from Bangladesh in the 19th century. According to Smith (2006) Muslims and Buddhists have lived on both sides of the Naaf River for over a thousand years.

The GoM and Burmese historians argue that the Rohingya are actually Bengali Muslims (Sunni), an ethnic minority group living mainly in Rakhine State. The GoM claims that the Rohingya migrated to Rakhine State in Myanmar from Bengal during and after the British colonial era (Bahar, 1981). The language of the Rohingya is not a written type, and many of the Rohingya population are illiterate. During harvest

season, a massive number of Muslim from India and Chittagong immigrated into Myanmar as laborers, merchants, or administrators to help the rich landowners (Smith, 2006).

The present Rohingya Muslims, who settled in Arakan in the 7th century, were not an ethnic group at that period. It is widely accepted by scholars and historians that Muslims inhabited Rakhine State hundreds of years prior to independence (EBO, 2009). The relation between Chittagong and Arakan is influenced by geographical, ethnological, cultural, and historical considerations. From 1575 until 1666, for nearly a century, Chittagong was under almost uninterrupted Arakanese rule which is undoubtedly an important period marked; a company of eight sovereigns successively ruled Arakan only with Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts with full dictatorial power (Scott, 2009). It is estimated that at least 60,000 Bengalis were brought to live in northern Arakan by the end of the 17th century (Charney, 1999).

The colonial era created divisions between the Burmans and minority ethnic groups. During World War II, the Burmans were with the Japanese, and the ethnic minority groups, such as the Karen (Christian), the Kachin, and the Rohingya, were with the British. When the British retreated in 1942 many Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh (HRW, 2013; Ullah, 2011). Daniel Murphy (2013) cites that the British forcibly divided Burma along ethnic and religious lines. After the 1962 coup in which General Ne Win and the Burmese Socialist Party came to power, Rohingyas in Myanmar were deprived from civil, political, economic, and social human rights (Rahman, 2010; Ullah, 2011).

In 1430, Suleyman Shah founded the first Islamic State in Arakan. From 1430 to 1784, Arakan was ruled by 48 kings. The most famous rulers are: Ali Khan, Mango Shah, Muhammad Shah, the Shah Jalal, Hussain Shah, and Salim Shah. During this golden period of Muslims in Burma, they dominated the business and had a lot of agricultural land and buildings. They have 60% to 70% of large real estate in the capital, Yangon (Driss, 2016).

Oppression on the Rohingya

The UN has identified the Rohingya as one of the world's most persecuted minorities, and one of the largest groups of stateless people (Kiragu et al., 2011). The discrimination and repression of the Rohingya Muslims in Arakan are due to the

negligence of the Government of Myanmar (GoM). The attempts to oppress the Rohingya are as follows (Jacques, 2005):

a. To oust Muslims from their jobs and replace with Buddhists.
b. To close Islamic institutes, schools and other Islamic organizations.
c. To confiscate their property and distribute to the Buddhists.
d. To imprison or exile Muslim leaders outside their home countries.
e. To incite Buddhists to kill Muslims, and prove the Muslims as terrorists.

Muslim persecution in Burma started during the reign of the King Bodawpayar (1782–1819). The first suffering of the Muslims of Rohingya in Myanmar began in 1784 due to the fear of the spread of Islam in the region (Bahar, 2010a).

Under military rule led by Burmese Army General Ne Win between 1966 and 1988, the Rohingya have been faced with severe oppression. In 1978, a wide-scale census operation known as *Nagamin* (Dragon King) supposedly intended to clear out illegal immigrants. A brutal operation performed by the GoM destroyed mosques and historical schools of Islamic monuments. The types of violence faced by the Rohingya include: brutality, rape, starvation, torture, and the murder of 50 Rohingyas; which forced the exodus of more than 200,000 Rohingyas from northern Arakan to Bangladesh (Grundy-Warr & Wong, 1997; Matthieson, 1995).

Since the 1970s, a number of crackdowns on the Rohingya in Rakhine have forced more than one million to flee to neighboring Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand, and other Southeast Asian countries (The Rohingya Patriotic Front, 1978). The Rohingya have been suffering not only from exclusion by the 1982 Citizenship Law but also from social deprivation, such as violating their fundamental human rights (Azad & Jasmin, 2013). In the 1983 nationwide census, Rohingya were completely excluded (Mathieson, 2009). From 1991-1992, more than 250,000 Rohingya refugees fled from Myanmar and arrived in Bangladesh, living in temporary camps (Grundy-Warr & Wong, 1997; Coutts, 2005).

The antagonism toward the Rohingya originated from deeply-rooted Buddhist nationalism and accumulated sentiments, such as disbelief, hatred, and imagined the fear of the Rohingya in a Buddhist society. They have to live in more than two dozen camps around Sittwe. In Rakhine State the intense violence between the Buddhist and the Rohingya has increased between June and November 2012. At least 200,000 Rohingyas in the Rakhine State have fled their homes since June 2012 (Fortify Rights,

2014; Holmes, 2015). The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that more than 143,500 remain internally displaced in Rakhine as of August 2015 (UNOCHA, 2015).

From 2012 to 2016 the violence in Rakhine State has taken at least 1,000 lives and has internally displaced over 140,000 (Arnold, 2016). In May 2015, about 139 graves suspected to be Rohingya from Myanmar were discovered on the Thai-Malaysian border (Pitman & Gecker, 2015). The Nay-Sat Kut-kwey ye (NaSaKa), a security force consisting of police, military, intelligence, customs officers, and riot police, operated in Rakhine State until 2013 under the control of the Ministry for Border Affairs (Selth, 2012). The Rohingya are forced to live in camps and ghettos. The Myanmar Army and NaSaKa compelled the Rohingya to participate in forced labor. They destroyed unauthorized mosques and about 5,000 homes of the Rohingya. The GoM has closed mosques and Islamic schools, and used them as government administrative offices. The GoM imposes strict restrictions on the freedom of movement of the Rohingya (HRW, 2012). The Myanmar Army, NaSaKa, Myanmar Police, and Rakhine villagers have raped and sexually assaulted Rohingya women and girls. Some women have died as a result of gang rapes (UNHCR, 2016). At least 6,700 Rohingyas, including at least 730 children under age of 4, were killed in the month after the violence broke out.

In the 1990s, Myanmar passed a law that required all people in Rakhine State to gain permission before obtaining marriage licenses. Because, the GoM claimed that the Rohingya population is reproducing faster than international standards. To obtain marriage licenses men have to shave their beards for their license photographs and women are prohibited from wearing religious head and face coverings. The Rohingya women are also required to take pregnancy tests before issuing marriage permits (Lindblom et al., 2015). Therefore, in brief we can reveal that the most documented abuses to Rohingyas are extra-judicial killings, torture, rape and sexual violence, two-child rule, political arrests and detentions, forced eviction, forced relocation, destruction of livelihoods and confiscations of land and resources, firing in homes and business areas, forced labor, child labor, human trafficking, herding people into fenced stockades, destruction mosques, and restriction on freedom of movement, assembly, association, expression, and religion (Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2005).

From 28 May 2012 to 25 February 2018, Immigration and Passports Department of Bangladesh has registered 1.07 million Rohingyas through biometric registration. Also unofficially about 300,000-500,000 unregistered refugees are living in conditions of abject poverty and malnutrition outside the formal camp areas. These unregistered Rohingyas do not have formal access to food, shelter or work permits in Bangladesh. Almost every day some Rohingyas are seen as 'boat people' in the Bay of Bengal who escape from Myanmar to Bangladesh. Besides Bangladesh, some Rohingyas have migrated in Malaysia, Thailand, and some other countries (FAO, 2018). Such a big number of Rohingya refugees have created many problems, such as shortage of foods and shelter, maintenance of sanitation, and deterioration of law and order in Bangladesh. There isamovement that is considered as the influence of recent conflict between the Burmese and the Rohingya as follows:

The 969 Movement

The 969 Movement is a social movement to preserve the cultural traditions of Buddhism in some Buddhist countries. It was formed by the extreme Buddhist monk Ashin Wirathu, called himself the "Burmese Bin Laden". The Movement is quickly growing in other countries, such as Thailand and Sri Lanka (Walton, 2013). Ashin Wirathu was jailed for 25 years in 2003 to stimulate religious conflict, and released as part of a general amnesty in January 2012. The numbers of 969 indicate as follows: the first 9 signifies the divine attributes of the Buddha, middle digit as His 6 teachings, and the last 9 the attributes of monks or the Sangha (Buddhist clergy). The Movement was first from a book that was written by U Kyaw Lwin (died in 2001), a public officer of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in the 1990s. It attributes the Three Jewels (*Tiratana*) of the Buddha. Extremist Buddhists claim that it does not tolerate criminal or sinful behavior, violence against religious groups, or the enslavement of women (The Seattle Times, 2013; Warzone Initiatives, 2015).

In Myanmar it has flourished on a form of nationwide symbolism. Stickers printed with the 969 logos were distributed for free to be attached at various spots, such as shops, vehicles, bus stops, and homes (Walton & Hayward, 2014). Former President Thein Sein's office has painted the 969 logos as an indication of the peace symbol, and the President called it a "sign of peace". Even the Minister of Religious Affairs of Myanmar has made a vow for 969's propagation. Wirathu's sermons, which

attract thousands of people, are sold as CDs and DVD copies by hundreds and thousands throughout the country, and are also circulated through loudspeakers in many restaurants and shops. The 969 Movement also spreads through *Facebook* and *Youtube* (Routray, 2014). Ashin Wirathu is considered responsible for the recent anti-Muslim violence of the Movement. The Movement has played a significant role in the persecution of the Rohingya Muslims (Downs, 2013; Ghosh, 2013). Wirathu believes that rapid growth and high fertility rates of the Rohingya will overtake local Buddhist populations, and in the future Muslims will dominate in Myanmar (Sohel, 2017). The cover story of the 20 June 2013 issue of Time Magazine called Wirathu "The Face of Buddhist Terror". Soon after the feature of, Wirathu was banned in Myanmar (Beech, 2013; Williams, 2013).

Reasons of Oppression to the Rohingya

In 1930, anti-Indian riots were started because of a labor issue at the Yangon port. The Burmese workers blamed Indian workers for their loss of jobs, and a riot broke out. In that riot at least 200 Indian workers were massacred and dumped into the river, another 2,000 were injured. Under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code British authorities fired upon armed rioters who refused to lay down their weapons. The riots rapidly spread throughout Burma, targeting Indians and Muslims. In 1938, again anti-Muslim riots broke out in Burma for anti-British and nationalistic sentiments. About 204 Muslims were killed and over 1,000 were injured, and 113 mosques were damaged in that riot. The reason of oppression to the Rohingya is from the conflict between two different religions from the British period, which can be seen to function as a root of later conflicts (Renaud, 2009; Yegar, 1972).

The second reason is hatred toward the Rohingya Muslims aroused by the divide-and-conquer strategy during the British colonial period, which is also deeply related to the fact that Tatmadaw has been persecuting the Rohingya Muslims. During the period from 1988 to 1996, the Tatmadaw grew from 186,000 to 370,000 soldiers. About 14% of country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is spent on the military (International Crisis Group, 2014).

The third reason is fear that is derived from two ideas: i) a few Rohingya organizations, such as the Arakan Rohingya National Organization (ARNO) and the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) had a close connection with leaders or

members of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and ii) Buddhists believe that the number of Muslims has increased rapidly as a demographical factor. These factors made the monks feel anxious because they thought that Muslims would overcome their Buddhist society (In, 2015). The fourth reason is the antagonism that the military junta manipulated as a political instrument to retain their regime by diverting the public attention from discontent with autocratic policies to the Rohingya issue, particularly during the military regime (Yunus, 1994).

On May 28, 2012, Thida Htwea, a 27 year old Buddhist woman, was allegedly raped and murdered by three Muslim men in Ramri Township in southern Arakan State, which once again set off conflict in the region. In response, about 100 Rohingya were killed (including 10 Muslim pilgrims travelling on a bus in Toungop) and 120,000 were displaced (The Economist, 2012; HRW, 2012; Ware, 2015). On 9 October 2016, about 400 Rohingya militants armed with knives and slingshots, attacked on three Border Guard Police (BGP) posts in Maungdaw and Rathedaung, killed 9 police officers, and stole 10,000 rounds of ammunition and 62 firearms. They also killed 4 Myanmar soldiers during 10-12 October 2016 (International Crisis Group, 2016).

In the respond to the attacks, on 10 October 2016, the GoM blocked all humanitarian aid to the Rohingya (Solomon, 2016). On November 12, a lieutenant colonel was killed and injured several others by 60 armed members of the Rohingya militants. After this incident security forces destroyed 1,500 Rohingya buildings, and helicopters fired indiscriminately into Rohingya villages. More than 100 Rohingya have died, and more than 90,000 have fled from Myanmar (International Crisis Group, 2016).

The current displacement of the Rohingya began after the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attacked 30 security outposts along the border with Bangladesh on August 25, 2017, killing over a dozen Burmese police officers, and at least one Tatmadaw soldier. In response, ARSA was officially declared a terrorist organization, the first time Myanmar used such a declaration for an insurgent group. The Tatmadaw also deployed more than 70 battalions (about 30,000-35,000 soldiers) into Rakhine State. More than 620,000 Rohingya refugees have fled to Bangladesh since 25 August 2017, and took shelter in established refugee camps in Cox's Bazar (Martin, 2017). In 2017, at least 1,000 Rohingyas, including children and infants had

died. Dozens of the Rohingya Muslims drowned when their ill-equipped, overloaded boat capsized in rough waters (Wright & Westcott, 2017).

Recommendations

GoM should revise the 1982 Citizenship Law of Myanmar, and ensure the citizenship for all citizens including the Rohingya. The government should issue one type of national identity cards for all citizens. For the establishment of citizenship for all, the country will benefit for various reasons: economically, politically and socially. Then all citizens will try to develop the country in all these areas. All the nations of the world will build cooperation with Myanmar. The country can enhance its relationship with the international community. As the country is rich in natural resources, it can enrich its economy very soon. The country has a probability to develop its economy like other countries of ASEAN. The country needs to develop its human resources to enhance its economy.

The GoM should close all the IDP camps in Sittwe, and return all the Rohingya to their own lands to develop the Rakhine State. Freedom of movement for all citizens in Rakhine State is a legal act for the Government, and the GoM should implement this right immediately. The Government should improve quality of education for all citizens. As the health and treatment facilities are very low in Myanmar, the government should increase budget for health to build a healthy nation in the country. The Government should take steps to build cooperative environment to all ethnic minorities in the country. Both Myanmar and Bangladesh form a Joint Commission to return all the Rohingyas to the Rakhine State safely. The GoM should train the human rights policy to the security personnel, so that they can treat all the citizens equally. The government should provide full and regular access for domestic and international media to all areas of the country.

Conclusion

In the study we have observed that the Rohingya crisis is complex and controversial. This is due to the controversy about the origin of the Rohingya. The Rohingya themselves claim to be indigenous of Rakhine State. The historical evidence is that the Rohingya has lived in the Arakan for several generations since 8th century.

So, they are the citizens of the Rakhine State. But, the GoM calls them Bengalis, and claims that they are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. The Rohingyas cannot take part in the formation of the nation, and are deprived of their fundamental human rights. They cannot access education or medical treatment or exercise the right to vote. Aung San Suu Kyi, the idol of democracy, has not spoken up for the rights of the Rohingya. Although the GoM and Buddhist monks have stated that the Rohingya are growing faster, but the census shows that the Rohingya are only 4% of the Myanmar total population. The GoM must promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all citizens including the Rohingya without discrimination based on race, sex, language, and religion. Therefore, the GoM will amend its 1982 Citizenship Act through humanitarian diplomacy. Then the stateless Rohingya will contribute to build democracy in Myanmar. ASEAN, a regional group of ten countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam) in Southeast Asia, has spoken out about the Rohingya situation, but it has done very little to create pressure on the GoM to change the attitudes about the Rohingya. All the countries in the UN and other organizations must create pressure on the GoM to return the right of citizenship and ancestral lands of the Rohingya.

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