

## **Rohingya Crisis a Big Controversial Issue in Myanmar: An Overview**

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**Abstract:**India and Myanmar had a long historical relationship in antiquity,cultural exchanges and religion.Myanmar was a part of British India, it was separated in 1937.India built its diplomatic relationship with the nation in 1948.The relationship was good at that time.When the Junta government came into its power the relationship was worsed.But NarshimaRao's Look East policy change the whole circumstance,India starts economic relationship with Myanmar from that period. Thinkers says that now Myanmar is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest partner of trade of our country.India built up highways, set up SEZ in this country.So India is least concern about Myanmar's internal problems.

Myanmar government started 'Ethnic cleansingprogramed' from 2012.In 2014 census report Myanmar government announced that Bhudhasistsare majority in this country (88%), Christians and Islams religion peoples are minority.Rohingyas are practiced by the Islam.In '1982 citizenship act' the Rohingyas are announced as not a citizen of the country. They have not any kind of rights like right to education or rights to works in the country. So the government started ethnic cleansing programme for the Rohingyas.Rohingyas are Indo-Aryan people ,who are called Arakanese-Indian also.The government called them Bengalies.Colonial rule and pre- colonial period they are called Roingya and Rawangya.The term rohingya was coined by the British raj.U NU government called them rohingya.After ethnic cleansing programme was announced they are homeless, because the government's ruthless activity.Riots take place in 2012,2015 and 2017.Refugge crisis felt in Bangladesh ,Indonesia, Malaysia,Thailand and India also.Rohingya refugees are suffered many problems.Inspiteofinternational voices feelings ,to maintain rule of law Myanmar govt. .does not felt to bothered.Army persons barbarically raped,murdered,burnt many villages.

Big south Asian brother India was only concern about the terrorist activity of rohingyas.Because the northeast is the neighboring part of Arakan.But aid is important for the refugees but Indian government are only interested in economic and diplomatic relationship to Myanmar.

In this paper the autherdiscussed about the Rohingyas, their origin and if they are truly a citizen of Myanmar or not. The crisis of 2012,2015 -2017 and the geo-political aspects of the crisis .

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Date of Submission: 28-03-2018

Date of acceptance: 12-04-2018

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

India and Myanmar had long historical relationship in antiquity, cultural exchanges and religion(Buddhism ).Formerly Burma now known as Myanmar was a province of British India and separated in 1937.It was in Japanese occupied Burma where NetajiSubhas Chandra Bose delivered his slogan 'Give me blood I will give you freedom '. India made herdiplomatic relationship with Myanmar since 1948 . For many years the two countries relationship was good due to cultural heritage,flourishing in commerce and common interest in regional basis. But in the time of Rajib Gandhi's visit in this country made the relationship worsed due to military Junta govt.In 1993 NarsimaRao government again made a strong relationship for Look East Policy.Now India is the largest market for Burmases exports and Burma is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner of India .India built not only economic relationship to Burma but also she emphasis on Agriculture ,Telecom Industry, road and pipeline Inceasementprogramme,oil and gas,hydrocarbons and food prosseing industry to enhance bilateral relationship .India used border points of three states Mizoram,Manipur and Nagaland to increase economic relationship . India's move to forge close relationship with Burma are motivated by a desire to counter china's growing influence as a regional leader and enhance its own influence and standing.India was hesitant in reacting to the 2017 Burmese anti-government protests that had drawn overwhelming international condemnation.India also declared that it is a internal matter of Burma and she has no intention to interfere . In contrast to much of the international community ,prime minister NarendraModi decline to criticize SuuKyi's handling 2016-17 Northern Rakhine State Clashes or Mynamer government's treatment of its Rohingya people.

Myanmar is a multi-religious country. According to 2014 census there is no official religion in this state but it has been seen that the government supports is mainly Theravada Buddhism people because they are majority in this country (88% in total population). The Buddhism is practiced by the Barmer, Rakhin, Shan, Mon, Karen people and Chinese Ethnic Groups. Chin, Kachin and Karen are Christian (6.2%), Islam is for Indians, Malays, and other minority (4.3%), those are Rohingya, only .5% are Hindu in these country.<sup>[1]</sup> In these context we only discussed about the Rohingya. The article of the writer only emphasis on the Rohingya people in this context. India and Burma's relationship is change in a new horizon from the 90's. The paper also discussed about India and Burma's stand about those people. The author of this paper also discussed how the Arkan people (known as Rohingya) became now a victim of Myanmar government ruthless killings. Who are Rohingyas and if they have any citizenship rights in Burma.

## **II. WHO ARE ROHINGYA PEOPLE**

Rohingya people are historically termed 'Arkanese Indians', those are now stateless, Indo-Aryan – speaking people from Rakhine state, Myanmar. The modern term Rohingya emerged from colonial and pre-colonial term ROOINGA and RWANGA. In dominant language they are called *ru hang ga* in Burmese and *rohinga* in Bengali. The term *rohinga* means that inhabitant of *rohang*. According to Myanmar government they have not any voter rights, after 2014. So they are not a citizen of this country.<sup>[2]</sup> The term *rohingya* has been historically documented from British raj. The classical journal of 1811 identified *rooinga* as one of the languages spoken in the 'Bumrahempire'. In 1936 when Burma was still British rule the 'Rohingya Jamiyatt-ulma' was founded in Arakan. Accordingly Jacques Leider the Rohingya are called Chittagonians during the British colonial period and it was not controversial to refer them as Bengalis<sup>[3]</sup>. The govt. of Myanmar prime minister U NU, when Myanmar was a democracy during 1948-1962 used the term *rooinga*. There were an estimated 1 million *rohingya* living in Myanmar before the 2016-17 crisis, on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2017, the UN reported that an estimated 603,000 refugees from Rakhine, Myanmar had crossed the border into Bangladesh since August 25, 2017. This number increased to 624,000 by November 2, 2017 and over 625,000 by December 6, 2017<sup>[4]</sup>. As told by United Nation that most of the people are Muslims and some are Hindu people flee. In 2013 UN says that they are one of the most persecuted minorities in the world, and the *rohingya* population is denied Citizenship under 1982 Myanmar Nationality Law<sup>[5]</sup>. Before the 2015 Rohingya refugee Crisis and military crackdown in 2016 and 2017, the Rohingya population was around 1.0 to 1.3 million, UN officials noticed that after 2015 around 900,000 *rohingya* refugees have fled to southeastern Bangladesh alone and other Muslim Nations. In 2017 August attack, many *rohingya* people died, raped, many villages burned<sup>[6]</sup>.

## **III. Origin of Rohingyas**

The Rohingyas are an inhabitant of Arkan, an old coastal country of southeast Asia. But it is not clear who was the original settlers of Arkan. Burmese nationalist claims that the Rakhine inhabited Arkan since 3000 BCE are not by the archeological evidence. Arakan was ruled by Chandra Dynasty. Arkan was a key-centre of maritime trade and cultural exchanges between Burma and outside world, since the time of Mauryan empire. Arab merchants had been in contact with Arakan since the third century, using the Bay of Bengal to reach Arakan. At that time many Marchantants was converted their religion i.e. Islam. Many scholars have speculated that Muslims used this trade route to go India and China<sup>[7]</sup>. Thinkers told that Rohingas came in that time. Besides the Arabs are married Arakan women and later settled in Arakans. Many thinkers said that in an early evidence of Bengali Muslims settlements in Arakan date back to the time of Min Saw Mon of the kingdom of MarukU. After 24 years of exile in Bengal he regained control to the Arkanese people. At that time Bengalis are inhabited in Arakan. With the help of those Bengali people the king made sovereignty in Bengal. After that independence from the sultans of Bengal the kings continued the custom of Muslim titles<sup>[8]</sup>.

The population increased when the slaves were brought by the Arkanese raiders and Portuguese settlers following raids into Bengal in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In 1660, prince Shah Shujafled to Arakan, being defeted by his brother Aurangajeb. Shuja was sent to asylum and his family members were killed by then Arakanese king Sanda Thudhamma. But the Shuja's entourage remained in Arakan and they were recruited as army men<sup>[9]</sup>. In 1666 empire Aurangajeb army's made an expedition till the Kaladan river, the northern part of Arakan became a part of their dynasty. After that in 1960 the Burma's health minister Sulta Mahmud cited the Kaladan river as the boundary between Rohingya and Rakhaine areas.

During the Konbaung Dynasty in 1785 many Arakan people fled into Bengal (Chittagong). According to an article on the 'Burma Empire' published by the British Francis Buchanan Hamilton in 1799 'the Mohammedans who have long settled in Arakan call themselves *rooinga*, or natives of Arakan'<sup>[10]</sup>.

British policy encouraged Bengali inhabitants from adjacent regions to migrate into then lightly populated and fertile valleys of Arakan as framlabours. At that time the boundary was not formed between Bengal and Arakan and there was no restriction of migration, and many Bengali family inhabited in Arakan. But it was hard to know about that the Bengalis were the same population that was migrated from Chittagong or as a result of British policy (Divide and Rule policy)<sup>[11]</sup>. Thinkers said that in Indian subcontinent migration is a problem. For this reasons historioansbelived that most rohingyas arrived with the British colonialists in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries with some tracing their ancestry much further. According to Thant Myint-U, historian and adviser to president Thein Sin, “At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Indians were arriving in Burma at the rate of less than a quarter million per year. The numbers rose steadily until the peak of 1927, immigration reached 480000 people, with Rangoon exceeding New York City as the greatest immigration port in the world. This was out of a total population of only 13 million it was equivalent to the United kingdom today taking 2million people a year”<sup>[12]</sup>. In the 1931 census the Muslim population of Burma was 584,839, 4% of the total population of 14,647,470 at that time. 396,504 were Indian Muslims and 1474 Chinese Muslims while 186,861 were Burmese Muslims. The census found a growth in the number of Indian Muslims born in Burma, primarily due to their permanent settlements in Akybe. 41% of Muslims of Burma lived in arakanat that time<sup>[13]</sup>.

During World WAR II, Imperial Japanese Army invaded British controlled Burma. British army retreated, an inter communal riots take place among the arkanese and villagerors (Arakan Massacres in 1942). At that time Japan was supported by Rakhines, and Rohingyas are for British. At that time IJA committed rape, murder and tortured against Muslims in Arkan. During this period, some 22000 Muslims in Arakan were belived to have crossed the border into Bengal, the part of British India to escape the violence. In a study of 1955 in Standford university author Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff write ‘the post-war illegal immigration of Chittagones into that area was on a vast scale, and in the Maugadaw and bhudhidang areas they replaced Arakanese’<sup>[14]</sup>. The numbers and the extent of post independence immigration from Bangladesh are subject to controversy and debate. The newcomers of that time are called Mujahidins in contrast to the Rwanga or settled Chittagonian people. According to ICG those people are ROHINGYAS who were displaced after the world war two and to return began to Arakan after the independence of Burma but rendered as illegal immigrants while many were not allowed to return. After 1960 Burmese election PM U Nu built rohingya separated zone during 1961-1964. This zone was known as Mayu Frontiar District.

#### **IV. ROHINGYA REFUGEES**

Rohingyas have been leaving Myanmar and heading mainly into improvised Bangladesh since the late 1970's. The biggest influx occurred in 1992. Some 30,000 Ethnic refugees live in an official camp in Bangladesh and another 200,000 live in makeshift settlements or surrounding areas. At that time Bangladesh government ordered three humanitarian operations for rohingyas. After the violence against Rohingya in 2012 and 2013 the U.N. refugee agency said that 40,000 rohingyas in Bangladesh were living in two unofficial sites and the government had given an assurance that would get help<sup>[15]</sup>. In 1978 the Myanmar government launching a massive attack to these people named Operation King Dragon. In 1990's Rohingya solidarity organization was formed between the Rohingyas<sup>[16]</sup>.

#### **V. ROHINGYA CRISIS IN 2012**

2012 Rakhine crisis were a series of conflicts primarily between two ethnic group Rakhines and Rohingya Muslims in the northern state, Myanmar. The riots was started between the two groups and it was said that a gang rohingya women were raped and murder by the rakhines. On 8, 2012 rohingas started to burn Rakhines Buddhist and other ethnic houses after returning from Fridays prayers in Maungdaw township. At that time emergency was declare in the Rakhaine by the government. Many rohingyas fled away at that time. Rohingya NGOs have accused the Burmese army and police of playing a role in targeting Rohingya through mass arrests and arbitrary violence though an in-depth research by ICG reported that members of both communities were grateful for the protection provided by military. USA and EU prasiad the Government's decision but UNHCR denied the process of resettlement of Rohingyas<sup>[17]</sup>. Again violence began in the time of Muslims and Budhasists in late Ocotober. UN secretary general Ban-ki-moon Issued a statement on 26<sup>th</sup> October that ‘the vigilant attacks, targeted the rats and extramist rhetoric must be stopped. If this is not done... the reform and opening up process being currently pursued by the government is likely to be jeopardized’<sup>[18]</sup>. In June 2012, Human rights watch said in a new report the role of the Burmese government and local authorities in the forcible displacement of more than 125000 rohingya and other Muslims and the ongoing humanitarian crisis. The government engaged in an ethnic cleansing against the rohingya through the denial of aid and restriction on movement<sup>[19]</sup>.

## **VI. ROHINGYA CRISIS IN 2015**

The 2015 Rohingya crisis in 2015 refers to the mass migration of thousand of rohingya people from Myanmar and Bangladesh in 2015 collectively dubbed 'boat people' by international media. Many Rohingya people fled to traveled to southeast Asian countries including Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand by boat via the waters of the straits of Malacca and Andaman sea. The UNHCR reported that estimates 25000 people fled at that time, many also died<sup>[20]</sup>. In October 2015 International State Crime Initiative relased a report said that ghettoistain, sporadic massacres and restriction on movement on Rohingya people happened<sup>[21]</sup>. Thus Thailand government told they had given aid for the migrants in its waters and it may allow them to refugee camp but does not want them as a permanent settlers. Malaysia ordered their navy to reple the Rohingyas. Bangladesh government allows the migrates in the southeastern side of their country .Indonesia also made it clear that they are not welcome them<sup>[22]</sup>

## **VII. CRISIS IN 2017**

In 2014 the government held a UN backed national census, its first in 30 years. The Muslims minority group was permitted to identify as rohingya, but after Buddhist nationalist threatened to boycott the census, the government decided the rohingya could only register as Bengali. Similarly in pressure from the Buddhists nationalists protesting the Rohingyas rights to vote in a 2015 constitutional referendum, then president Thein Sein canceled the temporary identity cards in 2015 february. In the election no minorities were allowed to vote or as a candidate which makes a difference in the Rohingyas. The begins when the difference made by the governments. Muslims are continue to consitate under one Rohingya identity. Moreover rakhine state is Myanmar's least developed state, with a poverty rate of 78%, compared to the 37.5% national average, according to World bank estimates. Widespread poverty, poor infrastructure, and a lack of employment opportunities in rakhine have exacerbated the clavage between Buddhists and Muslims.

The exodus begins in recent time on 25<sup>th</sup> august 2017, when Rohingya arsa militants attacks police post. The government also took military action after that, many rohingyas fled into Coxbazar, Bangladesh, militants of the government burnt many villages, raped women and children below the age of five, at least 6700 people and 730 children were killed<sup>[23]</sup>. Human rights watch said that most damage occurred in Maungdaw township in the time of 25<sup>th</sup> august from 15<sup>th</sup> September.

When Aung San Suu Kyi rose to power there were high hopes that the Nobel peace prize winner would help heal the country's entrenched ethnic divides. But she has been accused of silently standing by while violence is committed against the Rohingya. International pressure is growing on her to curb the military operations.

Last year she appointed Kofi Annan, the former UN secretary general, to lead a commission looking at long-term reconciliation in Rakhine state. But she has failed to criticise violence against the Rohingya.

Some argue that Aung San Suu Kyi fears an unpredictable military. Despite her position as state counsellor, the military has retained significant political power, with an allocated 25% of seats in parliament.

On Thursday 7 September, Aung San Suu Kyi defended her handling of the crisis. "It is a little unreasonable to expect us to solve the issue in 18 months," she told the Delhi-based Asian News International. "The situation in Rakhine has been such since many decades. It goes back to pre-colonial times.

"Our resources are not as complete and adequate as we would like them to be but still, we try our best and we want to make sure that everyone is entitled to the protection of the law," she said.

A statement on Aung San Suu Kyi's Facebook page blamed "terrorists" for "a huge iceberg of misinformation" about the violence, and made no mention of the Rohingya who had fled<sup>[24]</sup>. International voices about the crisis:

The ASEAN members (like Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand) and UN comments their own way. As the Rohingyas are fled into the neighbouring countries of Burma, they also went to India and Bangladesh by boat. So the refugee crisis was began. UNHCR told that before August, there were already around 307,500 Rohingya refugee living in the camps. Many people reaching with barely any belongings, made shelters in the camps, they need aid, safe drinking water, food or healthcare.

The US urged BURMA government to respect the rule of law, stop the violence and end the displacement of civilians from all communities.

The UK pledge pound 59m in aid to support those fleeing to Bangladesh, UK also urged to stop the violence. China said that the international community should support the efforts of Burma in safeguarding the stability of its national development.

Most of Rohingyas have sought refuge in nearby Bangladesh, which has limited resources and land to host refugee. According to UNHCR at least 950,000 people are refuge in this country. The World health organization visited the camps, they observed that most of the people are a victim of many diseases like measles, tetanus, diptheria, jaundice etc. Moreover more than 60% of the available water supply in refugee camps is contaminated. Many are involved in smuggling and other unlawful activity to earn money. As of

September 2017, 62,000 Rohingyas are lived in Malaysia according to the UN. They also go to Thailand which is hub for regional human smuggling and serves as a common transit point for Rohingyas. Indonesia's military chief expressed concerns that easing immigration restrictions would spark an influx of people<sup>[25]</sup>.

In this flurry of diplomatic activity, it would be natural to ask why India has been so soft-footed and silent in comparison. As the subcontinent's biggest nation, neighbour to both Myanmar and Bangladesh as well as the country most likely to be affected if the numbers of Rohingya refugees continue to grow, India in fact should be showing the most initiatives in this crisis. PM Modi's visit to Naypyidaw, Myanmar, India has allowed its voice to be muffled. But PM Modi refused to say anything about the Myanmar government's action to Rohingyas and the migration problem of them. He does not say anything about the brutal activity by the government. Bangladesh PM Hasina conveyed his statement of concern about India's view. India also refused to go to the 50-nation parliament conference. Later in September, the government began to dispatch humanitarian aid in an operation rather grandly named 'Operation Isaniyat' but was only one of several countries including the U.S., Turkey, Azerbaijan, Malaysia and others to do so. Shushama Swaraj, the foreign minister of India, was visited Bangladesh but she was silent too in this issue<sup>[26]</sup>.

### **VIII. ROHINGYAS IN THE WEST BENGAL**

It is in news about the Rohingyas are fleeing in various countries in south and southeast Asia, due to crisis in Myanmar. They also fled into India. It is in news in few days ago with eight families, 29 adults and 11 children aged 75 days to six years, some Rohingya refugees have come over in a colony under Baruipur police station area in south 24 pgs. West Bengal. They also in northern India relief camp. At least 800 people lived here. But the situation of the camp was unhealthy. The women were fallen sick with diarrhea from the dirty water. Many NGOs help them but the government are still speechless<sup>[27]</sup>.

### **IX. GEO-POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP REGARDING ROHINGYA CRISIS**

Geo-political relationship is very important in this context regarding Rohingyas. India and China the two nation states use their strategic relationship to Myanmar. India uses this country as its economic gateway to ASEAN and China also an investor in this country. China built gas pipelines through this country. So the crisis of Rohingyas is not a bothering factor to these countries. India thought that the problem of Rohingyas creates terrorist activities in the northeast. As for Myanmar, India initially made a pragmatic outreach to the military dictatorship with a view of seeking Naypyitaw's cooperation in dealing with insurgents who use Myanmar territory for sanctuary. But thereafter, it has sought to develop economic and trade ties to compete China. India lost the bid in 2008 to use the Shwepyithar gas which passing through Bangladesh. But India has bigger achievement in its relationship, it is at its work in building the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highways, which was extended with a proposal with Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. India also announced to build a Special Economic Zone nearby Sittaweb port. China also developed oil and gas pipelines to Kunming originates at Kyaukpadaung and they have offered to take an 85% stake in the port to develop it further<sup>[28]</sup>.

While China which barely notes human rights issues in other states, has little problem with Myanmar, India could find itself in a difficult place, especially some Rohingyas have already found refuge in the country and more could surface in the coming year. The way out is for New Delhi to assume a more forward policy to head off such an eventuality. Instead of focusing its effort on expelling some poor refugees, it would be better off in ensuring some that they do not become refugees in the first place or helping create conditions for their safe return. This requires active and value-based diplomacy, which New Delhi seems to have shunned in recent years in the belief that it gives an advantage to the Chinese. But the Bangladesh-Myanmar situation affects us more directly than it does China, so we simply do not have the option of sitting on our hands. We stand to lose not just our good name, but the aiding the transformation of a vast region that is wracked by ethnic strife, poverty and backwardness.

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