

# Rohingya problem



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

- The word Rohingya is derived from Rohang, the ancient name of Arakan

Situated on Burma's south-eastern border with Bangladesh. Arakan is one of the provinces of Burma and has a population of five million 40 percent of whom are Muslims. Burma was officially renamed as Myanmar on 18 June with its capital at Yangon. Military rule covers the most of the history of Burmese politics. The Arakan Muslims are unhappy with the prevailing political system in Burma and some of them are harbouring an idea to establish an independent homeland[1].

The military regime in Burma have tried to contain the secessionist movement in that region and in the process they have unleashed reign of terror. Every instrument of torture and suppression have been used by the regime in Burma to terrorise the Rohingyas to submission[2]. This attempt of Burmese ruler has caused trauma and ordeal for the Rohingyas. Their plight have been highlighted by international media quite aptly and the problem has been quite known as well.

- There are reports that the Burmese government is promoting resettlement in the area and replacing the Rohingyas with the Magh tribe.

Rohingyas have been evicted from their homeland forcibly and driven out to seek refuge elsewhere. These refugees are taking place in Bangladesh cause tremendous problems for Bangladesh. On the other hand, the settlement of Magh tribe, who believes in Buddhist faith, are aimed at pleasing the ego of ethnic Burmans. 3. There are many reasons for the genesis of the crisis in the state of Arakan, but references to demography, social, cultural, religious

and historical dimensions are required to be studied to understand the problem. In Arakan, these people do not intermarry.

Rohingyas speak Bengali and they are under the influence of Bengali culture and civilization. At the religious level, there are irreconcilable differences. Burma has been a great centre of Buddhist learning and civilization for centuries, but the Rohingyas are proud of Islamic heritage. Constitutionally, and politically Buddhism and Muslims are antagonistic to each other and have the feeling of ethnocentrism. None of the communities are willing to accommodate the grievances of others. Finally there historical reasons for the two communities to feel different.

Our presentation on the subject will cover the following:

1. Background to Rohingya Problem.
2. Effects on Bangladesh.

because of historical references, in many places of our presentation we will be using the words Burma and Rangoon which are to be kindly read as Myanmar and Yangon.

- Aim

The aim of the presentation is to highlight the problems of Rohingyas in Myanmar and its effects on Bangladesh.

## **Overview on Geography and Demography**

- Geographically it is lying along the eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea, in south-east Asia, covering an area of 261, 226 square kilometers.

The country is bordered by Thailand and Laos on the south-east, China on the north-east and Bangladesh and Indian state of Assam on the north-west. It is considered to be the gateway to Indo-China peninsula as well as to China. Myanmar and Bangladesh share 171 miles of common border and have traditional commerce and cultural ties. There are 14 provinces and Arakan is one of them.

- The people of Myanmar are of Mongoloid stock and derive from three main branches[3]:

1. Tibeto-Burman.
2. Mon-Khmer.
3. Tai-Chinese.

- Tibeto-Burman

The Tibeto-Burman group includes the Proto-Burmese, Kachins, Karens, Chins, Nagas etc.

They entered Burma in three main waves from three directions. The Protoburmese probably came down the head-waters of Irrawaddy river and then from the north-east down the Salween valley. The Kachins entered from the north-west while the Chins and Nagas found their way in, a little further to the south. The Karens moved down the line of ridges to the east of the Sittang river and some of the earlier groups settled west of the Irrawaddy from where they moved into the delta.

- Mon-Khmer

The Mon-Khmer group which includes Austro-Asiatic races including Mon, Palaung, Khamti etc.

They moved down the Mekong river into the Greater Indo-China peninsula and some groups fanned out westward into the Shan plateau and south-eastern Burma.

- Tai-Chinese

Tai-Chinese includes the Shans, Lao, Shan-Bama etc. They also came down the Salween river and settled in the Shan plateau.

## **History of Rohingya**

### **Muslim Population in Myanmar**

- The most striking feature of the spread of Islam in Myanmar is that it started gaining strength not through conversion but through immigration of Muslims and progeny of mixed marriages.

Muslim seamen first reached Myanmar in ninth century. During the fifteen and sixteen centuries, Tenasserim and Mergui were known as Muslim cities, traded with Malacca, Bengal and Mecca. During the seventeenth century Muslims proved to be capable traders. They owned flourishing business houses and with their wealth had become so important that they also held some important key administrative appointments. But these Muslims, mostly from southern India were not acceptable to the native population. With the arrival of the British and French in the area at the end of seventeenth century, most of the Muslims were removed from the office and some were even killed.

- The Muslims continued to settle near coastal towns of Myanmar and marrying the Burmese women despite maltreatment given by the local administrators.

Many Muslims sea traders took this opportunity to get settled in these region of Burma and the descendants of these Arab, Persian and Indian Muslim traders formed the nucleus 'Burman Muslim" community, which known as "Kala". With the arrival of the Portuguese, Dutch, British and French Muslim domination of the seas began to decline. From the middle of the sixteenth century to the middle of eighteenth, Muslims served the Burmese Army.

3. During the nineteenth century Muslims again dominated not only in military services but also in administrative posts. Some of them were later on executed because the kings were not pleased their insistence on following their religious tenets. In the sixteenth century the Burmese Kings started settling Muslims in upper Burma, near Mydeyu in the district of Shwebo. These villages still exist today. The settlers were mostly Muslim prisoners who had been brought there at variuos periods. These Muslims received lands as their payment for their services to the king. 50 musketeers used to be supplied to the palace guard and this service was passed to the generations.

Another group of Muslims from north India came to offer military service. The Burmese took care to distribute the Muslim settlers in small groups and in many villages to prevent the Muslims from forming a majority in any particular place. Gradually the Muslims were being looked down by the Burmese and their privileges began to fall. Further transfer of Muslim took place to the places where the Burmese refused to go. Muslim Population in Arakan 14.

Arakan province renamed Rakhine by the Myanmar government came under the influence of Indian subcontinent in the 9th century A. D. In 11th century

A. D. Arakan was made part of unified Burma. In the fifteenth century A. D. Arakan became an independent Muslim state under the rule of Sulayman Naramithla. The rule of Muslim King continued till it was conquered by Burmese Buddhist King Budapaya in 1784. Though Persian was the state language of this Muslim Arakan state, Bengali literature and poetry also flourished under direct patronage from Arakan Royal Court.

Once a powerful state, Arakan Kingdom included Chittagong up to Feni river. During Aurangzeb's period the Mughuls captured Chittagong and the area east and south of river Karnaphully i. e. the present district of Banderaban and Cox's bazar which remained within Arakan Kingdom. In 1784 the Burmese King conquered Arakan including Cox's bazar. However, the British drove the Burmese from Cox's bazar in late 1790's and then conquered Arakan in 1823. Arakan was under British occupation since 1826, and an enterprising Rohingya commercial class emerged in Akyab- a fishing village turned capital of Arakan division.

The post-independent upheaval of a group of Arakan Muslim under the banner of " Mujahideens" brought about the religious ambitions of the Muslims in Myanmar. Upto 1955 the Mujahideens posed a serious law and order problem though they did not have much significance as a military threat to Rangoon as posed by other anti-government forces. In general, local Arakan Buddhists community suffered a great deal of atrocities inflicted by them. This left a scar in the relation between the Buddhist and Muslim communities, especially in Arakan.

The Mujahideens failed to achieve the support of other Arakanese and Burmese muslims, and their insurrection came to an end in 1955. The 1963-

64 nation wide census revealed a large number of Arakanese Muslims scattered about in Rangoon and Delta area. This caused considerable alarm to the Burman Buddhist authorities. Origin of Rohingya 16. Arakan is inhabited mainly by the Rohingyas and the Maghs. The Maghs are of Mongolian origin and Buddhist by faith. The Rohingyas are Muslim. The present estimated population of Arakan is 2.2 million.

Of these 1.4 millions are Muslim. The word "Rohingya" came from the word "Rohang" which is the ancient name of Arakan. The Rohingya Muslim constitute the dominant portion of Arakan, known earlier as Rohang. The Muslim of Arakans who were ancestors of present Rohingyas came to the main land in three waves: a. First Wave. In the 8th centuries A. D. immediately after the advent of Islam Arab traders started visiting Bengal and Arakan. Many of these Arabs settled down in Arakan and intermingled with locals in various forms. b. Second Wave.

In 1660 the Mughul prince Shah Shuja having been defeated by emperor, left Bengal and on the invitation of the Arakanese Magh King landed in Arakan. Shah Shuja had a train of five thousand followers who accompanied him to Arakan. Subsequently Shah Shuja and his family perished due to the treachery of Magh king Chandathu Sharma. However, Shah Shuja's followers settled in Arakan. Being the Indian muslim they also merged with the local Rohingya community. c. Third Wave. The third wave entered Burma during the British rule when the Muslim population rose significantly.

These Muslims went for work including from Bangladesh and got settled down over Arakan and other parts of Myanmar. 17. The arrival of Muslims in Arakan started few centuries earlier and predated the arrival of many other people



and races now inhabiting in Myanmar including Arakan. There are 153 registered ethnic races living in Myanmar where Rohingyas are not included. Though Rohingyas became gradually majority in Arakan but the political power remained with the Maghs.

### **Problems of Rohingyas in Myanmar**

Since the independence of Myanmar in 1948, the Myanmar government has always been disarray due to multidimensional socio-political disorders. Ultimately, number of armed separatist movements have been organized and the number of insurgency groups continued to rise. Insurgency activities in Rakhine state along Bangladesh Border has also increased over the years. The suppressive attitude of the Military Junta gave rise to the political movement of the ethnic minorities all over Myanmar, where the movement of Rohingyas is no exception. The major problems of Rohingyas are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

- Depopulate Arakan of the Muslims

The withdrawal of British troops after the Second World War created a serious administrative vacuum in Arakan. The Magh communities in connivance with the Burma Independent Army killed approximately 100,000 Rohingyas and drove out 50,000 across the border to the then East Pakistan. The idea was to depopulate Arakan of the Muslims. The relation between Arakan Muslims and Buddhist communities deteriorated [4]. 20. Right of Secession. During the independence of Myanmar from British, Rohingyas were kept away from all negotiations.

Aung San and leaders of other nationalities signed the historic Union Treaty, where the Union of Burma was formed consisting of individual nation states

with the right secede after ten years if the nationalities so wished. The agreement was adopted and included in the Union's constitution under the heading " Right of Secession". Unfortunately, no Rohingya representative from Arakan was invited to attend the convention. Thereby, Arakan lost her identity and constitutional guarantee of their rights and freedom[5]. 21. False Hope to the Rohingya.

Some of Rohingya took up arms to redress their grievances after the independence. They were persuaded to lay down their arms on the false promise of granting political rights and similar treatment as other nationalities by Burmese authority. The Burmese authorities repeatedly broke their promises forcing the Rohingyas wander into the neighboring countries. Since 1942, approximately 1. 2 million Rohingyas were either forcibly expelled or had to flee the country to escape persecution[6]. 22. Ethnic Diversity. Most of the problems of Myanmar are genetic in nature.

As many as fifty groups speaking over 100 languages and dialects have been identified for which the nation had to be administratively organised along ethnic lines, with seven so called states with non Burmese majority. All non Burmese majority states are located near the border. Somehow, the other people of the non Burmese majority states have traditional ties and bondage with their respective bordering neighbours in the form of religion, language, culture etc. During the independence from Britain, some of the states even opted to be the part of some other country and not Burma.

The fact that concerns us is most Arakanese opted to be the part of the then East Pakistan, which remained a dream to them. Right from the inception of Burma, the government had been always reluctant about socio-political

development of those non Burmese majority states. Most of the time the people of non Burmese majority states were oppressed. In consequence, insurgent activities continued to increase in those states[7]. 23. Muslim Imprisonment. Everything in Myanmar started degenerating as the Burmese way to socialism came in.

As Arakan is the least developed province in Myanmar, the economical hardship was worst and a large number of Arakanese migrated into Myanmar proper. The 1963-64 nation wide census revealed a large number of Arakanese Muslims scattered about in Rangoon and Delta area. This caused considerable alarm to the Bhamu Buddhist authorities. Then the Ne Win regime imposed a law, which restricted the movement of Muslims in Arakan, especially prohibiting the movement of Akyab district. Thus the Muslims were put into a sort of imprisonment since 1964.

However, poverty in Arakan could not stop all migration effectively. In the 1974 census, the authorities again found out the Arakan Muslim spreading over the commercially mobile areas of Myanmar. Ne Win, the socialist did not want that. The Muslims should be in Arakan only so that the Arakan Buddhist and Muslim could be used against each other. This was the best way to keep the national liberation movement of the Arakanese checked. Subsequently, the military regime imposed tighter restrictions on the movement of the Muslims. They could not even move inside their township or from village to village.

Thus they were virtually imprisoned[8]. 24. Demand of an Independent State. The Muslim movement in the British India for separate Muslim nation brought about great impact upon the Muslim of Burma. Especially Arakanese

Muslims, being in touch with the Muslim League in East Bengal, were very much motivated with the idea of an independent state. The motivation turned into Jihad or Holy War in 1948-54 after the independence. The Mujahids demanded a separate Muslim state inside Burma in name of Arakanistan with the active patronization of Pakistan. However, the movement failed.

But later they realized their struggle under the flag of Nationalism with the name of Rohingya[9]. 25. Migration from East Pakistan. While the Mujahideen subsided, East Pakistan faced poverty and famine. Arakan in Burma being close to border, some of the then East Pakistanis entered Arakan for their survival and possible future. This was helped by the corrupt immigration, army, police and other officials. This illegal entry was also to be believed to be the master mind of the then Burmese Minister of Home Affairs to gain vote for his party in the election of 1956 and 1960[10]. 6. Political and Armed Movement.

Since the day of independence, the Rangoon government has been keeping the Muslim population in Arakan as a balancing force against the Arakanese Buddhists to put down struggle for the national liberation. But the Muslims gradually realized that since 1964, the Buddhist and Muslim of Arakan forged unity to oppose military regime together. Many of the Muslims joined Arakan National United Organization. Similarly the Arakan National Liberation Party patronized Muslim guerrillas, who emerged under the name of Rohingya.

Such an alliance alarmed the Rangoon government. Meanwhile the emergence of the Arakan Liberation Party added much worry to the Junta. In 1977, the Ne Win forces wiped out the main army of these two groups along

with their leaders. The event spread a cloud of misery over the Arakanese population. At the same time, a coup attempted by Arakanese was also foiled[11]. 27. Operation “ King Dragon Offensive”. Burmese Army General Ne Win ruled the country from 1962 to 1988. As many as nine operations were carried out by Burmese Army /Territorial forces.

Of which the major offensive was launched under the code name of “ King Dragon Offensive” in 1978 to oppress the Rohingyas and the remnants of Arakanese Liberation forces. A large scale of atrocities were recorded by the ruling Junta. Ne Win ordered that small villages be abolished and concentrated in one large village which was fenced and stockaded with only one gate. Subsequently, hundreds of villagers were uprooted by force and driven into stockaded villages.

Opposition and disobedience were met with stern and severe punishment. The table below will show the degree of atrocities carried out by the ruling Junta[12]:

Ser	Township	Men Killed	Women Raped	Vills Destroye d
1	Kyauktaw	1855	891	74
2	Ponnakya nn	353	930	105
3	Rethedau	91	340	19

	ng			
4	Minbya	135	315	25
5	Mrohaung	55	239	19
6	Buthidaun			
	g	142	560	6
7	Maungda			
	w	295	1121	5
8	Mry Pon	-	-	6
Total		2926	4396	259
				28

#### . Rohingya Refugee Crises in First Phase.

The operation King Dragon Offensive of Ne Win forced about 30, 000 Rohingyas to enter Bangladesh. The efugees started arriving daily in an ever increasing number. By June 1978, the total had swelled to over 200, 000 and housed in 13 camps in bordering districts of Bangladesh and Myanmar.

The overwhelming majority of the refugees, thus, appeared to be children and old people. The refugees arrived principally from the townships of Akyab, Kyauktaw, Minbya, Myank-U, Kathe-taung, Pauktan, Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathidaung. While the villagers were suffering, Ne Win tried to get the support of city folks by showing that they were driving out " Kalas" a word used derogatively for foreigners. This was entertained by some ignorant Arakanese in the cities.

Most believed that the Ne Win regime started thinking about pushing the Muslims out into Bangladesh after the 1974 census, which revealed the migration of the Muslims into Burma proper and Eastern border. Whatever their origin, they are Burmese officially, and they have every right to move inside their own country. The restriction of their movement since 1964 and final forceful expulsion of the Arakanese Muslims is the infallible proof of the racist nature of Bhamu Military regime led by General Ne Win[13].

29. Reasons for Rohingya Exodus. a. Refugees' Viewpoint. The refugees stated the following as the principal reasons for their exodus into Bangladesh[14]: 1)Harassment by the Burmese Government agencies which reached a climax during the 'Operation Dragon' mounted to get rid of the Muslim from Arakan. (2)Lack of adequate security in the areas of their residence. (3)Restriction on their free movement. (4)Rice levy with intolerable severity amounting to oppression. (5)Omission of names of Muslims from the population returns of the census of 1973. b. Viewpoint of the Burmese Government. The viewpoint of the Burmese Government were different and these are as following[15]: (1)The 'Operation Dragon', a semi-military search operation was not directed against the Muslims but against the illegal immigrants.

They maintained that traditionally the movement of population was from the west to the east and it was well known that many people from Bangladesh had come to Burma without valid authority. In 1971, people from Bangladesh in thousands took shelter in Burma. (2)It was claimed that the Burmese Government that a survey was carried out to detect the illegal immigrants. It revealed that some Arakanese Muslims left Arakan as they did not like to

submit themselves to this checking operation. Hence, those who had fled were considered by the Burmese Government as illegal immigrants. 30. Repatriation of Refugees. The effective diplomatic effort of Bangladesh and with the assistance of UNHCR, both , Bangladesh and Myanmar settled down the issue.

Some of the salient of the agreement are as under[16]: a. 'A' category refugees holding National Registration Certificate (NRC) would be repatriated immediately in the first phase with their family members. b. 'B' category refugees, who could show any document issued by Burmese authority or any other proof as to their residence in Burma would be repatriated in the second phase. c. 'C' category refugees are the left over ones and would be considered at the last. d. It was mutually agreed that the repatriation would start not later than 31 August 1978 and be completed within a period of six months from the date the first batch would return to Burma. e.

It was also mutually agreed that the two governments would, after completion of repatriation of all Burmese refugees, initiate measures to cooperate for the prevention of illegal crossings of the border by persons from either side and be prepared to receive repatriated residence found to have crossed the border subsequent to the enforcement of the two governments.

As agreed upon, the repatriation started on 31 August 1978. The operation, however, ran into difficulties with 'C' categories refugees numbering 11, 149. Following a series of discussions between the two governments, the government of Burma finally agreed that these refugees should be allowed to move into the reception camp located within Burma, where Burmese



officials would take their oral evidence and after verification repatriate them to their respective villages.

By 29 December 1979, the repatriation operation was virtually completed. All the repatriates, on arrival in Burma were given a repatriation card and eventually resettled in their respective villages. But the problem of who should be granted rights and privileges of citizenship remained an active issue. 31. Burma Citizenship Law. The Rohingyas came to Arakan about thousand years ago and made a significant contribution to her culture and heritage. They became an integral part of Arakan's political, social, economic and cultural life. But the citizenship laws passed in 1982, made the Rohingyas alien in the land of their fathers and ancestors.

The new citizenship law defines citizen as those nationals who are the members of the ethnic groups that had settled in Burma before 1824, the date that marked the beginning of the British colonial period, during which foreigners, especially Indians and Chinese freely entered the country. The non nationals were eligible to be classified as " associates" or " naturalised citizens", according to the detailed procedures specified in the law. The new law bars non nationals from holding important state and party positions, serving in the armed forces and police and pursuing higher education in the national institutions. These provisions have seriously affected the individual rights and privileges of non nationals, which they had previously enjoyed. This has further aggravated the socio-political disorders in the country[17]. 32.

Change in Traditional Identity. As already mentioned, Bangladesh shares about 171 mile long border with Myanmar and that entire border belt forms

part of the Rakhine state. Historically what was known as Arakan state has been officially changed to Rakhine state by the military rulers some time in early 1980, siding with the existing Buddhist population. This step of the government created a serious commotion among the Arakan Muslims. Perhaps this was one of the major reasons for which number of insurgency groups has drastically increased from 1983 to 1993. Along the Bangladesh border, there were only four insurgent groups in 1983 which has increased to seven in 1993.

Besides, latest reports reveal the existence of a new insurgent group known as “ All Burma Democratic Student Front” claiming themselves to be the armed student wing of Sun Kyi, the democratic leader of Myanmar. The details of various insurgent groups operating in Rakhine state is mentioned below[18]: a. Burmese Communist Party(BCP). b. National United Party of Arakan(NUPA). c. National United Front of Arakan(NUFA). d. Arakan Army(AA). e. National League for Democracy (NLD). f. Chin National Front (CNF). g. All Burma Democratic Student Front(ABSDF). h. Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO). j. Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front (ARIF). k. Harkatul Ziehadul Islam of Arakan (HZIA). As of now the socio political disorder in Rakhine state is considered to be quite alarming.

The gradual rise of insurgency activities has also seriously affected the historical peaceful relations between Bangladesh and Myanmar resulting into cross border violations and other issues of discord between the two countries. Role of SLORC 33. Deprivation from Voter List of 1989 Election. Through promulgation of Burmese Citizenship Act 1982, the Rohingya Muslims were deprived of their citizenship rights. They were made stateless.

To prepare the voter list for 1989 General Elections, the authorities initiated scrutiny through issue of National Registration Certificate (NRC) and Foreigner's Registration Certificate (FRC) in Rakhine state.

The Rohingya Muslims were then put through harassment as the Myanmar immigration authorities insisted on categorizing the Muslim inhabitants as "Bengalee Burmese". The Rohingyas on the other hand insisted on being categorised as Arakan Muslims or Rohingya Muslim or Rakhine Muslims. The immigration authorities refused to accept the citizenship application from the Muslim population which resulted in the exclusion of a large number of Rohingya Muslims from the voter list[19]. 34. Establishment of Cantonments in Muslims Owned Lands. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) after the 1988 military take over decided to set up a number of new military cantonments in Rakhine state particularly in the north, where the Muslims are a majority.

The authorities acquired homestead or arable lands belonging to the Muslims without any compensation. The Muslims found themselves homeless, when they refused to be rehabilitated in suitable mountainous region. The SLORC has taken up extensive programme of building cantonments and roads linking the cantonments and other military formations in the Muslims populated areas. The army forced local inhabitants to work in those projects with little or no wages at all. The Myanmar authorities do not provide fresh adequate ration to the troops deployed in the Arakan. As a result, they forcibly collect cattle and poultry from the locality at a much below market price.

In Rakhine state, more Muslims' lands were acquired by the SLORC for construction of cantonments and roads. The surplus land is given to Magh convicts and retired Army personnel on attractive terms, an attempt to change ethno-demographic pattern of the area[20]. 35. Military Atrocities. The Myanmar military authorities have destroyed or desecrated many Muslims places of worship. They have looted their properties, killed the inhabitants and raped their women. The SLORC took away rice from the fields belonging to the Muslims in the border areas to prevent from selling rice in Bangladesh. The Rohingyas had participated in the democratic movement of 1988.

The present military regime has reportedly forced Muslims to pay compensation for government property damaged during the mass upsurge[21]. 36. Refugee Crisis in Second Phase. In 1989, the popular unrest started for the restoration of democracy in Myanmar. The student led the movement for democracy and the government of Saw Mung suppressed it with an iron hand. There were a lot of casualties and the majority of the people who died or faced the tyranny of the army were Burmans. Thus the Burmans were unhappy with the political system. In order to divert the attention of the people, it was necessary for the military regime to do something. As a sequel they focussed their attention once again on the Rohingyas.

Again there was a search for the citizenship documents and in the absence of these documents, the Rohingyas had to face the atrocities. Therefore, once again the Rohingya issue surfaced in 1991 and this time approximately 270, 000 Arakanese, mainly the Rohingyas, crossed into Bangladesh. This

time surfaced with greater gravity bringing both the countries almost close to a war. However, due to indirect mediation by China and under the pressure of various International Human Rights Organization, approximately 250, 000 refugees have been accepted back by Myanmar and rest approximately 40, 000 is in the process of repatriation. Though apparently Rohingya issue has died down, but with no assurance to us that it will not recur in future.

As such, it is apprehended that Rohingya issue will continue to be a major stumbling block in the improvement of relations between Bangladesh and Myanmar.

### **Impact on Bangladesh**

The Rohingya problem has significant impact on Bangladesh. This can be stated as mentioned below: a. Effect on Population. Bangladesh is already an overpopulated country. The influx of the Rohingya refugees going to make Bangladesh more crowded with dense population. Besides this, the Rohingyas are having the same ethnic origin that of the people of the Chittagong area. They have got affinity with the Bangladeshis in terms of language and culture. The problem of differentiating them from local population make this problem more pronounced.

This provides the Rohingyas an easy opportunity to become floating population in Bangladesh. It is feared that, presently more than 15000 Rohingyas are at large without any accountability. The intermarriage between the locals and Rohingyas are also making things more complicated in this aspects. b. Effects on Economy. Bangladesh is one of the poorest nation in the world and one of the major causes of her poverty is over

population. Internationally the Rohingya problem has not been recognised so much, as such the outside support is not also very encouraging. Mostly it is the Bangladesh government who is dealing with this problem with her meager resources.

Providing ration ( 4. 5 kg rice and adequate quantity of oil and oil per refugee per week ) and other utilities to 19 Rohingya camps is costing Bangladesh heavily. Onrush of Rohingya refugees have already taken its toll on the resource constraint Bangladesh. The matter has put immense pressure on a densely populated country like Bangladesh. The poverty within region has increased many folds. It has already created a socio-economic imbalance in the area causing untold sufferings to the locals. Agricultural lands are being turned into sprawling refugee camps. Refugees allegedly sell rice and pulses rationed to them for buying vegetables and other essentials.

Such illegal trade caused tremendous impact on the market price in the local area. At times the refugees are making false ration card to draw more ration.

c. Effect on Ecology. The Rohingya refugees have taken shelter in camps which are located on 608 hectares of forestry land in Cox's bazar and Bandarban district. What is causing serious concern is that the surrounding rich forest are being destroyed by the refugees who are felling trees to use them as fuel or selling them for their livelihood. Already, the forest there has been denuded of the bamboo as they have been cut for making houses for the refugees. We are afraid that, if the refugees are to stay here for another year, nothing would be left for the forest.

The forest department claims that till September 92 the refugees have destroyed forest resources worth Taka 740 million. They estimate that the

refugees have damaged natural forest of 2021 acres and new plantation of 91. 05 acres. d. Effect on Law and Order. The situation in and around the camps is a hostile one. The locals who lived scattered in the villages are scared of the refugees who live together and who in a minute can organise a united attack on the locals. The local fears that they are being outnumbered by the refugees. It is alleged that thousands of refugees have already slipped out of the camps and settled in the nearby villages and towns.

With Bangladesh and the UNHCR consolidating the relief operation for the refugees, an opposition backed group, Rohingya Repatriation Action Committee (RRAC ) has stepped up its campaign against the refugees. Launching a movement of 12 point demands, the RRAC's main focus is against the move to build new camps at Jammupara off Ukhia. They complain that the camp would destroy their firms and encroach upon government owned forests. Besides these, at least five refugees were killed, one hundred injured and nearly five hundred others were arrested following commotion that swept different refugee camps. It is alleged that at times the refugees have used fire arms.

There are instances where the agitating Rohingyas assaulted camp officials and on duty policemen. The militant refugees of the Dhuapalong camp also attacked a nearby village and looted the homes of the villagers. It is reported that some foreign NGO's and the UNCHR officials were involved in agitating the refugees. The UNCHR promptly denied such an allegation. e. Effects on Politics. Presently Bangladesh is not in a comfortable situation to deal with this matter politically. The attitude of the Myanmar government in regards to Rohingya problem is not conducive to diplomatic solution. At the same time

Bangladesh is not in a situation to enforce her desire in this aspect on Myanmar.

There are possibilities of deteriorating relationship between Bangladesh and China as China maintains extremely good relation with Myanmar. A perpetual enmity with Myanmar leaves Bangladesh to be sandwiched between two antagonistic neighbours India and Myanmar. Enmity with Myanmar also is likely to deprive Bangladesh of the opportunity of exploiting Myanmar's future economic and commercial potential. There are also strong public and political opinion in favour of internationalising the Rohingya issue especially involving the United Nations. Bangladesh is carefully avoiding to do so and trying for bilateral negotiations. It may be possible that China has played a covert role in convincing Bangladesh to settle for a bilateral solution to save Myanmar from embarrassment.

The relationship between the Bangladesh Government and some of the NGOs have also deteriorated as the NGOs were playing negative role in the repatriation process. f. Effect on Administration. The Rohingya problem has become a huge administrative burden on the Bangladesh Government. It has become a real problem to maintain accountability of the refugees and maintain the administration of their camps. Bangladesh had to establish separate administrative organisation where huge number of government officials are placed to look after the administration of the Rohingya refugees.

CONCLUSION 30. The arrival of Muslim in Arakan started few centuries earlier and predated the arrival of many other people and races now inhabiting in Myanmar including Arakan.



There are 153 registered ethnic races living in Myanmar where Rohingyas are not included. Though Rohingyas became gradually majority in Arakan but the political power remained with the Maghs. 31. Rohingyas are an unfortunately people. Although, they are a part of the Burmese race and have been living in Arakan for about thousand years, they have been persistently subjected to persecution by the successive Myanmar regimes. In the past they were driven out of their homes more than once. Contrary to the Burmese Laws, the Burmese Constitution and international Laws, these ill-fated people have been discriminated because of their race, religion and culture.

The last nail in the coffin in these series of repression and discrimination was the passing of the black law called, Burmese Citizenship Law 1982 by which the Rohingyas have been made aliens in the land of their ancestors. All these happened mainly because Myanmar has been ruled by the dictators where human right violations are common practices. 32. The Rohingya issue is not of recent origin. It has been there for more than hundred years. The exodus of Rohingya refugees is a recurrent matter and took place several times under the persecution of different Burmese ruler. The systematic manner in which the Burmese government is proceeding with its current actions apparently reveals that they intend to uproot the Rohingyas from Arakan alleging them to be illegal immigrants.

Rohingyas on the other hand, demand for the citizenship rights and full protection of their culture, religion, ethnic identity and property. The impacts of Rohingya refugees on Bangladesh are significantly. It is posing threat to

our socioeconomic condition, environment, security and bilateral relationship of Bangladesh.

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