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The Center for South Asian Studies,
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

東京外国語大学　南アジア研究センター

FINDAS International Conference Series 3

Gender and Ethnicity in Bangladesh: Life as a Rohingya Refugee

Edited by
Toshie AWAYA and Maya SUZUKI

Center for South Asian Studies, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (FINDAS)

Literature, Social Movements, and Gender Issues in South Asia

The purpose of the Center is to deepen the understanding of structural changes in contemporary South Asia, using as axes the historical, political, social, and literary analyses of social movements as well as the perspective of gender. Regarding the targeted fields of research, we aim to become a repository of documentation within Japan through further systematic and conscious augmentation of the documents and historical materials in the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) collections.

Through the first phase during FY 2010–14 of our research activities, it became clear that the dramatic changes in personal awareness and gender relations on an individual, family, and community level have been brought about by structural changes in modern India accompanying economic liberalization and globalization. We also realized that complexity and variability of the issue of identity have been increasing, and that it would not be possible to understand the lively form of democratic politics that characterizes India without the vigorous objections of groups until now positioned on the social periphery. In the second phase FY 2015-19, along with focusing on the changes in human ties—particularly various aspects of social movements as well as aspects of emotions and sensitivities that support them—and further expanding the region of focus to South Asia, we will emphasize taking the lead in building a theory through consciously organizing comparative research with other regions, including China, Southeast Asia and Islamic nations. While the "politics of emotion" has recently gained attention, by no means has this deepened in the area of South Asia studies. Concerning South Asia, experimental studies and the positing of new theory in this field will serve as an effective opening to understand modern contemporary India. Furthermore, comparative research with other regions will also contribute to the understanding of global structural transformation.

Research Unit 1:
Practice and Theory of Crisscrossed Social Movements: With Emphasis on Human Ties and Sentiments
Research Unit 2:
Social Transformations and Literature

Gender and Ethnicity in Bangladesh: Life as a Rohingya Refugee

Edited by
Toshie AWAYA and Maya SUZUKI

Assisted by
Minori YOSHIKAWA and Tamiyo KOYAMA

Contents

PREFACE

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2018, published by the World Economic Forum, Bangladesh is ranked 48th out of the 149 countries considered; this puts it far ahead of Japan (ranked 110th), mainly because of its high score in the field of political empowerment. This, in turn, raises the question of the extent of "political empowerment" at the grassroots.

For the last few decades, the issue of violence against women has attracted international attention. Because of Bangladesh's dramatic economic development, women's participation in the workforce is highly visible; however, the problem of violence against women is not only prevalent, but also, in some cases, intensifying and multiplying. Instances of sexual harassment at the work place, the ever rising demand for dowry, forced prostitution, and human trafficking, to name a few, are on the rise.

The so-called Rohingya refugee crisis witnessed recently has added another dimension to the violence against women in Bangladesh. It is now widely acknowledged that ethnic conflict is steeped in gender violence. The Rohingya refugee crisis, which can be traced back to the 1970s, has assumed serious proportions in this century. Because of the restrictions on media imposed by the government, it is important to explore the kind of gender-specific violence being perpetrated and the gendered representation of this crisis. The experiences of displacement and violence vary according to gender, age, and so on. We believe that the Rohingya refugee issue is a suitable point of entry to gain a deeper understanding of the complex interface between gender and ethnicity in general.

Over the past few years, the Center for South Asian Studies (FINDAS) has been organizing regular research seminars, as well as international workshops, on the theme of "literature, social movements, and gender issues in South Asia."

The FINDAS International Conference Series 3 is the outcome of the international workshop, "Gender and Ethnicity in Bangladesh: Life as a Rohingya Refugee," which was held at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies in January 2019. It contains two papers of Abantee Harun and Hasan A. Shafie, who were the main speakers at the workshop. In addition, Naonori Kusakabe wrote the overview of Rohingya's historical

and political issues. We are especially thankful to Naonori Kusakabe for his contributions to the workshop and the collection of papers. We are deeply indebted to the contributors, for submitting their revised papers within the scheduled deadline, as well as the commentator, Masaaki Ohashi, and other participants in the workshop. Our deep-felt thanks go out to all the graduate and undergraduate students who made the workshop successful.

March 2019

Toshie AWAYA and Maya SUZUKI

Photos

Hasan A. Shafie

Abantee Harun

Naonori Kusakabe

Masaaki Ohashi

Discussion

Audience

FINDAS International Workshop
"Gender and Ethnicity in Bangladesh: Life as a Rohingya Refugee"

Chair ◆日下部 尚徳 （東京外国語大学）

16:05 – 16:35 (incl. 5 mins Q&A)
◆Abantee Harun （University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh)
"Regarding the Pain of being Rohingya Woman: Gender and Ethnicity
issues of the Rohingya Community"

16:35 – 17:05 (incl. 5 mins Q&A)
◆Hasan A. Shafie （Department of Anthropology, University of Dhaka)
"Living on the Edge: History and Life of Rohingya People"

17:05 – 17:20
Comments ◆大橋 正明 （聖心女子大学）

17:20-18:00 Discussion

Date and Time: Jan 17 (Thur), 2019. 4 pm - 6 pm
日時： 2019年1月17日(木)16：00〜18：00
Venue: Research and Lecture Building Rm. 214, TUFS
場所： 東京外国語大学　研究講義棟214室
Language: English

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Hasan A. Shafie is a Professor of Anthropology at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. He authored several books including 'Endowed Wisdom: Knowledge of Nature and Coping with Disasters in Bangladesh' and 'Anthropology of Climate Change: Culture and Adaptation in Bangladesh'. His areas of research interest are: Ethnicity and Politics of Difference; Human Ecology and Sustainability, Climate Change Adaptation, and Social Protection and Justice.

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Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh

Naonori Kusakabe

(Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

Asia's largest refugee population, Rohingya

On August 25, 2017, an armed force calling itself the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attacked police and military institutions with hatchets and bamboo spears and killed 12 border guards and police officers. The Myanmar national army responded to this attack with a large-scale cleanup operation of Rohingya villages. According to a survey by Doctors Without Borders, within one month, this operation resulted in the deaths of 6,700 Rohingya people. Namavanee Ratna Patten, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, visited the refugee camps in November 2017 and issued a condemnation to the Myanmar government for organized brutal actions, such as the collective rape of women by Myanmar national army soldiers, which qualifies as a "crime against humanity." Local media reported that, in the latter half of the year, as many as 700,000 Rohingya people have crossed the border. This has led to a situation in which approximately 1.11 million individuals, including those Rohingya people already in Bangladesh, are living in refugee camps.

History of Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh

This is not the first time that the Rohingya people have flown into Bangladesh en masse. In 1978, about 200,000 refugees entered the country fleeing the persecution of the Myanmar military government. Almost all are believed to have repatriated within a year following diplomatic talks between the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Also, in mid-1991, the Rohingya people continued to cross the border to escape from robberies, forced labor, and violence, all of which were carried out by the Myanmar army. During the peak period, over 5,000 people were crossing each day, and about 270,000 in

total were accommodated in the 21 refugee camps set up in Cox's Bazar district in the Southeast as well as in the hilly district of Bandarban. The Bangladeshi government initially expressed support for fellow Muslims and received refugees, but there were so many people requiring assistance that the government sought early repatriation through bilateral negotiation. Around that time, there were 60,000 refugees from Bangladesh's Chakma tribe (an indigenous ethnic minority who are frequently victims of murders and violence by Bengali settlers and the army) in Tripura State in Eastern India. Therefore, in terms of diplomatic relations with India, Bangladesh's suspension of that issue and subsequent acceptance of Rohingya refugees was unfavorable. As a result, Bangladesh and Myanmar released a joint statement regarding the refugees' repatriation on April 28, 1992, and the situation was brought to an end with the involvement of the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees. However, a large number of Rohingya people did not repatriate and still remain in Bangladesh.

At the end of May 2012, in Rakhain state, a Buddhist Rakhain girl was assaulted and killed by a group likely comprised of Muslim Rohingya. This incident triggered an intensification of the retaliation conflicts between both ethnic groups and on June 10, a state of emergency was declared. During this process, hundreds of Rohingya people also sought asylum in Bangladesh.

As such, the Rohingya people who were denied the ability to return to Myanmar and stayed in Bangladesh either lived in one of two official refugee camps remaining in the country or lived among the general public of Bangladesh. According to the UNHCR, in 2016, more than 300,000 Rohingya people lived in Bangladesh. However, since the British colonial period, these people have freely entered and exited the country by crossing the bordering Naf River located between the two countries. They speak the Bengali language with a Chittagong accent from Southeast Bangladesh. It is not easy to distinguish between the Bangladeshi and Rohingya people, as many have Rohingya ancestors or relatives in the border area. Therefore, it is difficult to grasp the exact number of Rohingya, and it has been said that the actual amount could outnumber the estimate made by the UNHCR.

As a further complication in this situation this situation, on October 9, 2016, an armed group, which later declared themselves as Harakah al-Yaqin, attacked three police

facilities and killed nine police officers in Rakhain state. The Myanmar national army regarded this incident as an attack by the Rohingya people and took military action in the form of a crackdown, which led to the exodus of nearly 70,000 Rohingya people, who crossed the border to Bangladesh within two months. Prime Minister Hasina of Bangladesh held talks with the Vice Foreign Minister of Myanmar on January 12 of the following year in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, to negotiate for repatriation, and included the request to "bring back" Rohingya evacuees to the Myanmar side. Meanwhile, the Myanmar government began exhaustively exposing Rohingya armed forces within the country. On February 15, the State Counselor Office announced the completion of the National Army's cleanup operation of armed forces and the restoration of order.

The above-mentioned attack by ARSA then happened, directly resulting in as many as 700,000 refugees. The Myanmar government undertook a cleanup operation since they perceived ARSA as the same organization as Harakah al-Yaqin. The operation was mainly conducted by the Myanmar national army but apparently the police, border guards, and general public of villages also partially participated. In this operation, which evicted a large number of Rohingya to Bangladesh, the army set fire to villages with the aim of erasing all places for ARSA members to hide. The series of actions exceeded the initial scope of the operation, which was to "clean up terrorism," as it included firing shots from the bank at those crossing the river to flee, and laying landmines to prevent their return. The UN and international NGOs criticized the activities, which included tortures, prosecutions, and rapes, and were openly taking place in the name of the search for ARSA.

Between Myanmar and Bangladesh

Rohingya is the name that Bengali Muslims living in the Rakhain state of Myanmar use for themselves. The Myanmar government, however, does not recognize the existence of the ethnic group of Rohingya in the country at all, claiming that they are Bengali illegal immigrants. According to the Nationality Act of Myanmar, which came into effect in 1982, those who are not members of ethnic groups whose residence was recognized prior to 1823 would be individually examined and classified into the categories of "associate

citizens", "naturalized citizens" or "foreigners." The Rohingya are called "Bengali" and are legally treated as "foreigners."

Despite the fact that a number of Rohingya have lived in Myanmar for generations, many Myanmar people take the government's official position as self-evident. In addition to the government's historical understanding of the Rohingya as a non-indigenous ethnic group, their status as minority Muslims in Myanmar is leading to conscious discrimination with the aim of elimination. Theravada Buddhists, who comprise nearly 90% of total citizens, do not strongly feel conscious discrimination towards Christians or Hindus but have strong feelings of hatred towards Muslims. Therefore, ungrounded stories and rumors, such as the notion that Muslims who bear many children will take over Buddhist Myanmar one day, or the belief that Muslims deceive Buddhist women to get married and convert them to Islam, have spread among the public.

Furthermore, unlike so-called "Myanmar people," the Rohingya people have Bengali features, such as darker skin and craggy facial features. Many speak their own unique language, which is one dialect of Bangladesh's national language, Bengali, and do not speak Myanmar's official language of Burmese very well. These characteristics encourage discrimination towards the Rohingya. In this way, it can be said that from the viewpoints of history, ethnicity, religion, language, and race, the Rohingya have been the subject of persecution in Myanmar.

Meanwhile, the Bangladeshi government does not recognize the Rohingya as their citizens either. As stated above, a mass of Rohingya refugees flowed into the country in the late 1970s and early 1990s, but the Bangladeshi government feared that they would continue coming and stopped granting them refugee status in 1992. Since Bangladesh has not ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol, the decision whether to grant the people asylum as refugees depends on the government's judgment at a given point in time. When Buddhists and Muslims clashed in Rakhain state in 2012, the government not only refused to accept the Rohingya but was not even willing to provide different types of humanitarian assistance. In terms of national sentiment, they sympathize with the Rohingya, who are also Bengali-speaking Muslims; however, in reality, it is difficult for Bangladesh to accept many of them, given the severe financial difficulties of that nation.

Repatriation agreement discord

In terms of the repatriation of refugees, the number of which increases by the hundreds each day, the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh held meetings in Naypyidoaw, Myanmar, beginning on November 15, 2017, and signed an agreement on the 23rd. However, they neither agreed on the concrete process of repatriation and due date of completion, nor disclosed the agreement. According to local press reports, this agreement is based on the treaty concluded for the repatriation program in 1992, in which Bangladesh requested the completion of repatriation within one year, accompanied by the UN organizations' involvement in the repatriation process. The Myanmar side requested that repatriation start within two months of the signing but made objections to Bangladesh's requests. Based on the agreement, both countries began compiling a list of Rohingya people who had crossed the border. Because work on the Bangladeshi side has not yet been completed, the repatriation of refugees did not start on January 23, 2018, as planned.

Situation in the refugee camps in Coxbazar

The author visited some Rohingya refugee camps in February 2018. Driving south from the touristic center of Cox's Bazar, a banner stating "Mother of Humanity" is stretched across the road every few kilometers, fully emphasizing the achievements of the assistance provided to the Rohingya by the current government. After about two hours of driving, one arrives at Kutupalong Refugee Camp. In this camp, which has been developed into a hill, about 100,000 Rohingya people live in what one staff member of an assisting organization describes as a "mega camp." From the flat, level land to the hill, the area is so crammed with houses made of bamboo and vinyl, as well as tents showing the logos of assisting organizations, that it is not possible to view the vast campsite all at once. There is a large market where dried fish, vegetables, chewing tobacco, and other daily goods are sold. Wells, simple plastic-made water facilities, toilets, and free clinics, all built by assisting organizations, demonstrate that many organizations provide assistance there.

However, in addition to the density of its living accommodations, unhygienic toilets, as well as running sewage without any drainage systems, reveal the camp's extremely poor sanitary environment. In Bangladesh, it starts raining in April and the full-scale rainy season begins in June. For the toilets without roofs, filthy water overflows very quickly, which could be expected to cause infectious diseases. It is easy for those with low resistance to illness, such as pregnant women, children, and the elderly, to catch these diseases; therefore, it is not only necessary to improve the sanitary environment, but also to spread awareness of basic sanitation practices.

One worrisome phenomenon during the rainy season is landslides. Many people live on the very soft ground of a hillside and it is clear that only a few days of heavy rain could cause landslides immediately. May is the season of cyclones, and disaster management authorities should therefore not delay in assisting those living in the camps with finding other accommodations. According to a survey conducted by the government and the UNHCR announced in March, 100,000 Rohingya people must move for their safety.

Forced prostitution is sadly becoming a norm in the camps. Women and girls are being bought, sold, exported, and often lured to brothels under the pretext of marriage or with the promise of employment. In South Asia, a huge trafficking network of women and girls exists, and one risk of the camps on the Bangladesh-Myanmar border becoming permanent will be that traffickers could systematically begin targeting Rohingya refugees, using the camps as potential hubs for trafficking. At the end of last year, nearly 40 people were identified as active participants in trafficking women and children in the Rohingya refugee camps. These people were endeavoring to traffic Rohingya women and children from Cox's Bazar to locations as far away as the Middle East and Malaysia.

The role of Japan and the international community

In terms of Japan, it has been highly praised by the international community that Foreign Minister Taro Kono visited the refugee camps at an early stage in November 2017 and promised assistance. Conversely, Japan abstained from the resolutions condemning the Myanmar government at the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on November 16, 2017, and the UN Human Rights Committee on December 5

in the same year, which provoked some discontented voices from within the Bangladeshi government. The Japanese government hopes to restrain Myanmar and China from becoming closer to each other, while Western countries have strongly condemned the Myanmar government. Also, Japanese officials likely aim to resolve the issue through dialogues with both the Bangladeshi and Myanmar governments. Moving forward, the key will be determining the best means by which this goal may be realized.

In the camps, as stated earlier, crises caused by sedimentary disasters during the rainy season and the spread of infectious diseases are expected to increase. International cooperation is urgent and essential to protect the lives of the 1.11 million people living there. It is also necessary for a third-party perspective to examine the progress of the repatriation program based on the bilateral agreement to determine whether it is being implemented, is securing the safety of Rohingya people in Myanmar, and is carried out with their consent. We have arrived at the point in which the issue of Rohingya refugees should not only be addressed bilaterally by Bangladesh and Myanmar, but also as a refugee issue in Asia as a whole. The international community must continue providing support through effective government, Official Development Assistance, and NGOs to ensure that the future of the Rohingya people is not affected by the internal politics of Bangladesh.

【Note】

This article is based on a study first reported in the Asia Peacebuilding Initiatives.

Images of Violence and Politics of Empathy: Case of the Rohingya Women

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0.0 Introduction

It is well acknowledged that digital technologies of images and overwhelming presence of social media are changing the conditions of production, distribution, circulation, remediation, consumption and reception of communication. Advancements in internet technologies and new forms of equipment have extended access to the World Wide Web (although not in all parts of the world), and billions of images of different type, genre (and partly unclear) origin are available to a virtually global audience '24/7'. In everyday life, Nicholas Mirzoeff writes, seeing has become the dominant mode of postmodern cultures with 'the visual as a place where meanings are created and contested' (Mirzoeff 1999:6).

As a consequence of these trends, scholars from different disciplines have been interested in understanding the ambivalences and contingencies, and the normative and ethical questions that are related to communication in general as well as to images in particular. In a time of global digital media, social networks and a mass production of images by all types of actors, images themselves are considered a weapon of war. One commonly ascribes images' specific qualities that words lack such as immediacy and authenticity. They possess mimetic qualities and have a visual circulability, i.e. the 'capacity to transgress linguistic boundaries – those visuals can be "read" by all' (Hansen 2011, 57). However, social scientists have to focus on the construction of the meaning of images, the political use and misuse of images and the surrounding discourses. Equally important to what is shown is that which is not shown, which is not seen, which is excluded from a visual representation. Thus, tremendous political power resides in deciding on the visibility or invisibility of someone or something.

This paper examines how significant social media sources such as Facebook have become in distributing information and images of violence with particular focus on women; and how the effects of social sharing and communal coping enhances the construction of an emotional sphere. In the case of influx of the Rohingya refugees from Myanmar to Bangladesh in August-September 2017,

circulation of images and videos through Facebook triggered public emotion of the citizens of Bangladesh and drew attention of the international community. At the same time, how the real struggles women disappeared from these social sites after their settlement in Bangladesh, and why the daily struggles and agency remained unnoticed in the social media.

1.0 Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh: Context and Background

Bangladesh, the most densely-populated country in the world, is also known as the fourth largest Muslim–populated country, where both patriarchy and Islam prevail as the dominant sources of defining gender relations in the society. Strict gender segregation as well as conventional social norms tied up with religious ideologies and patriarchal values define women's subjugated role as well as entrust men with the power to control women and responsibility to protect them. As such, the status of women, in general, remains to be one of the major concerns for the policy-makers. According to the 2011 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey, 87% of Bangladeshi women and girls experience sexual and gender-based violence in their lifetime. According to the 2015 Hunan Development Report, Bangladesh is ranked 142 out of 188 on the Gender Inequality Index. [1] Nevertheless, the situation of women is even worse among the marginal groups that include religious and ethnic minorities as well as the refugees.

The Rohingya are one of Myanmar's many ethnic minorities mostly living in the Rakhine state. As they are Muslims and their ethnic features resembles the Bangladeshis, Myanmar's government denies them citizenship and sees them as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, which is also a common attitude among many Burmese. As a part of a campaign of oppression Myanmar government started a military crackdown on insurgents in the western Rakhine state and burned the Rohingya villages, tortured and killed men and children, even babies, raped women --which the United Nation has called a 'textbook example of ethnic cleansing'. On August 25, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army attacked again, targeting police posts and an army base. Security forces cracked down on the wider population, and rights groups accused them of killing, raping, burning villages and shooting civilians from helicopters. A report published in New York Times says at least 6,700 Rohingya people, including 730 children, were killed by the Myanmar military and others in response to the attacks on police posts

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[1]http://www.hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII accessed 12 January, 2019

by Rohingya insurgents in Rakhine State in August 2017. The exodus into Bangladesh began Since 25 August 2017, around 700,000 Rohingya refugees have fled Myanmar and taken shelter in different refugee camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf of Cox's Bazar district in Bangladesh. Before 25 August 2017, a total of 200,000 of the Rohingya have been already living in Cox's Bazar for years. As a result, Bangladesh is now hosting at least one million Rohingya refugees in various refugee camps in Cox's Bazar district in the existing camps and settlement extensions that have been established to accommodate the newly arrived refugees. A huge number of settlements have also been built by the refugees themselves with or without support of the locals and the authorities in the extended and adjacent forests of Kutupalong and Balukhali, two main settlement locations in Cox's Bazar. The other camps are located in Jamtoli, Bagghona, Potibunia, Leda, Nayapara, Unchiprang and other areas. Many of the refugees also left Cox's bazaar in search of job and some others had taken shelter in the local households in Cox's Bazar Sadar, Ramu, Teknaf and Ukhiya.

Once the Rohingya arrived in Bangladesh, the refugees faced an uncertain future too as Bangladesh government did not want to keep them . Rejected by the country they call home and unwanted by its hosts, the Rohingya have become one of the wretched communities on earth - impoverished, virtually stateless and have horrifying stories both from back home and of miseries in their destination. In this backdrop, citizens of Bangladesh stepped up. Thousands of images that depict the atrocities and range of cruelties have been circulated, shared and reproduced again and again in social media, especially in Facebook. Such photographs are taken by the international news media, national and local news media, and most importantly by ordinary Bangladeshi citizen. This has resulted in a huge outpouring of support from Bangladeshis living within and outside the countries, — people from all over coming together and pulling together donations to drive down in trucks to where the refugees are living. As the Rohingya crisis starts to get more coverage in the media, UN and international organizations also began their interventions along with local public supports. Finally, Bangladesh government decided to accept the refugees and provide necessary supports. Time, BBC, Al-Jazeera and some other news agencies have published series of photo-stories portraying these atrocities.

1.1 Aims

This paper aims to analyze how visual representations of suffering/violence/victimization of the Rohingya ethnic group of Myanmar in social media that had drawn enormous public sentiment/empathy that generated unprecedented social sharing and collective supports and how women symbols to depict the plight and how they gradually disappeared from the social media as soon as they got engaged in their daily struggle. In doing so, I intend to: identify specific patterns in the visual images of violence that connote characteristic meanings and convey frequent visual frames drawing public sentiment;

- explore women's condition and sufferings in the camps
- analyze specific differences and interactions between social and professional media in their use of visual representations of conflict;
- contextualize the use of visual frames in the social media against the respective intensification of the empathy and target audiences – including representations and perceptions in the media, to measure their relevance within wider media discourse.

1.2 Theoretical Consideration

There has been a good amount of research done on the issues of photographed violence and effects. In her book *Civil Imagination, Azoulay* developed the notion that 'photography is an event" (2012 : 26). Focusing instead on "the new relations that emerge between people through the mediation of photography," she develops a "political ontology of the many, operating in public, in motion," an ontology that approaches photography in terms of "a certain form of human being-with-others in which the camera or the photograph are implicated" (2012: 13, 18). This sense of plurality and the potential boundlessness of action are indebted to Arendt, but Azoulay recognizes that among the "many" are diverse kinds of actors and actants. Leshu Torchin (2012), on the other hand, provides us with a complex analysis of how witnessing publics are created and mobilized through visual technologies typically associated with mass media and popular culture. In her book *Creating the Witness* (ibid), Torchin investigates and discusses the communicative effectiveness, documentary power and socio-ethical usefulness of various operative tools, practices and visual media technologies (e.g. pictures, posters, reports, film, video, Internet) in producing virtual witnesses of human rights

violations and crimes against civilization, humanity and peace. She analyses how the encounter with visual testimony hails audiences, encouraging them to take both responsibility and action. Bearing witness is an ethical and transformative process, and each testimony of trauma and injustice has a great political value. These two approaches in general will play a major role in my essay and I will mainly be discussing the images (circulated in Facebook) in relation to these theories. To some extent, I will also be using Mirzoeff's 'countervisuality' approach in discussing the photographs I have picked. In discussing community feeling, public sentiment and collective action, I would draw upon Azoulay, Torchin and Sontag.

I have primarily used the photographs that have been widely circulated and shared in social media, and made headlines in other news media. I have chosen these images on the extent of sharing among Bangladeshi Facebook users in first months- from August to December, 2017. In addition to those, I would also attempt to look at the public response and initiatives shared on Facebook such as 'appeal' made for donation and charity for the Rohingya. Altogether 10 images have been taken into consideration.

Later, I relied on organization reports, newspaper and my personal visits to illustrate the condition of the Rohingya women.

2. 0 Images of Rohingya Plight: Portrayal of Women

Hundreds of heartrending photos have emerged and shared online as the mass exodus of the Rohingyas started since August 2017. The images produced by international professional agencies like AFP, AP as well as by ordinary public and the victims themselves contain certain themes –routes of exodus from Myanmar through enormous distress, death and brutal violence encountered by the Rohingya people, terrible predicaments in their life in refugee camps and critique to the role of states including Myanmar, India, Bangladesh but particularly targeted towards Aung San Suu Kyi, the national leader of Myanmar. In this section, in order to identify specific patterns and the strength of messages, some images are analyzed that have been widely circulated through social media.

2.1 The Escape, Walk and Float

Most of the refugees fled from Myanmar in overcrowded boats or improvised rafts across the Naf river that separates the country from Bangladesh. A number of these refugee-carrying boats capsized while some of the passengers could finally reach the shore. Possibly most of the circulated images depicted the plight of their exodus and distress of the journey.

Image 1

Image 1 is one of the most disseminated photos since 2015 while a number of Rohingyas started to leave Myanmar following the atrocities there in June 2015. This photograph has been repetitively used in news reports in major news papers, editorials and columns as well as social media iconizing the distress of the community and their dreadful chase for a place to survive. However, it is difficult to assume which particular event has been depicted in this photo. Some news channel published the image in 2012 when the first phase of 'cleansing operation' began in

June 2012[2]. However, the image became almost iconic in 2015, referring to the migrants in boats who had been rescued off the coasts of Indonesia and Malaysia a day after some 600 others were dropped off Indonesia's Aceh province[3]. At that time, government of Bangladesh refused to accept Rohingya refugees that finally pushed thousands of Rohingyas floating in the sea. However, once

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[2] https://muslimvillage.com/2012/08/14/26882/turning-a-blind-eye-to-the-massacre-of-burmese-muslims/

[3] http://www.iran-daily.com/News/117803.html

again in 2017, this image became one of the most-publicized frames as a number of boats packed with Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar's Rakhine state sank in the Naf river and the stream of Rohingya refugees began to enter Bangladesh. The image contains some Rohingya women and children sitting on a boat, moist in the rain, while the man in front with folded hands and tears in his eyes, became the defining icon of plights of the Rohingyas, appeal to the international community to their stateless and floating situation. This image has been copied more than thousand times, both in social and other news media without any reference to the photographer, only in some news reports and columns it is mentioned that the photo was taken by AFP.

Image 2

Image 2 depicting the arrival of an old woman on   shore being dragged by a middle-aged man, both of them were all wet, was taken from the cover story of *Time* (October 2, 2017). This image along with the logo of *Time* has been shared by numerous Facebook members as that endorses their point. Hundreds of similar photographs are available online where the refugees are seen on the boat floating in the sea

These images that are being circulated since 2015 when fleeing Rohingyas were refused and pushed back by all neighboring states they were seeking refuge at -Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand.

In 2017, either because of Bangaldesh's silent approval or the irresistible torrent of Rohingyas, allowed thousands of Rohingyas to enter inside Bangladesh. Therefore, the images of this span mostly illustrate, instead of floating, their arrival at Bangladesh but the distress of the painstaking journey. The

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escape route included both land and waterways, and there are remarkable differences in the images where refugees are seen on water and on the land. Long streams of refugee movements are snapped inside Bangladesh –where the women were seen heading towards some refugee camps or shanties walking through the paddy fields with their meager belongings packed into plastic sacks in a desperate quest to find drier shelters, young children on lap treading on muddy walkways leaving behind the burning houses (Image 3)[4].

Image 3

Their misery has been compounded by strong monsoon rains which have flooded their flimsy shelters made only out of bamboo and plastic sheets. In addition to be represented as one of the most ravaged and wretched people on earth, these images describe not only the mass and their plight, but also survival, struggle and urge for living in a safe place.

These images draw to their plight, but more importantly to the fact that they are already inside Bangladesh and struggling for shelter and life. Hence, their wretched bodies, scarred images not only called for careless gaze but responsible actions for the witnesses.

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[4] https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/13/world/asia/myanmar-rohingya-muslim.html Credit:Adam Dean for The New York Times..

2.2 Death

Compared to sufferings, death was not a regular content of the circulated images. This is partly because most of the killings and massacres took place inside the Myanmar territory where the survivor family members had to run off and taking photographs was almost impossible. Horrifying experience of the survivors is circulated in recorded forms. However, a few images of death that had been circulated, appear to be specifically powerful with strong messages to notify the intensity of the Rohingya plight caused by indifference of others- civilians, state and international community.

Image 4

Perhaps Image 4 taken by AP is the most-circulate image of death since October in all media including social media, facebook, online news media and published journals. This snap emerged of a Rohingya Muslim mother desperately clutching her dead baby after the boat they were travelling to escape from Myanmar capsized as the family was fleeing to Bangladesh.

However, images 5 contain the same illustration of a child floating in water, also has similar resemblances with to Aylan Kurdi's image, at the same time there are certain other distinctiveness too. This image taken in September, 2017 sparked instant strong civil reaction in Bangladesh and abroad. The image of a 6/7 years-old girl, a little older than Aylan, floating in water, with her eyes closed and no grimace of pain in her face as if she is sleeping in water, was shocking and loving, and her slightly open mouth which is a common feature for sleeping kids made her adorable too. This image asked each spectator to look at it and reckon possible actions to stop more deaths.

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Image 5

In almost all civil processions and protests against the Rohingya Crisis in Bangladesh, this image has been repeatedly produced and reproduced. In first two weeks of September, Facebook was flooded with this image with hundreds of shares and 'sad' emojis. Almost all protest-arranging organizations holding entirely different ideologies, used this image in their banners and posters.

Image 6

It will not be an exaggeration to state that this photo –with its distinct and powerful appeal has been used in raising awareness and trigger off emotional response from all corners of the society. The first poster (Image 5) has been used and posted on the Facebook by a 'progressive' 'left' liberal secular organization in Bangladesh; whereas the second poster (Image 6) makes plea by a UK based faith organization to Muslim community (Ummah) of the world. Targeting different audience and conveying similar message,

Nevertheless, images of women and children purport strong testimony of plight as well as connote strong emotional relevance for the witnesses. Having a careful look at the popular images, some specific drifts could be identified. Hundreds of other images of death and violence are available both online and other media illustrating the range and magnitude of brutality experienced by the Rohingyas. However, such photographs of deformed and burnt corpses, lacerated wounds of the survivors have not turned out to be as appealing (to be shared) as the certain images were. Psychoanalysts might have the best answers to explain why the trend was so. But we can assume that the widely circulated emblematic images of violence, with its very content and frames wrench the spectator's heart with certain emotional motivation. In this regard, women and children are much appealing and also soothing for the eyes compared to the burnt or lacerated corpses. So, while poised imagery of women and dead children, pull out emotions of the witnesses, also soothe the gaze of the spectator as well. As such these images could be produced and reproduced and shared, making fewer ordeals for gaze while creating profound impact on mind. What else do the photographs convey? As Sontag argues, photographs of the suffering and martyrdom of a people are more than reminders of death, of failure, of victimization, rather they invoke the miracle of survival. And the photographs also aim at the perpetuation of memories means, inevitably, that one has undertaken the task of continually renewing, of creating, memories—aided, above all, by the impress of iconic photographs. People want to be able to visit—and refresh—their memories. And this is how connectivity and belongingness are created through images that open spaces for actions too.

2.3 Commonalities and Belonging: Representation and Action

Collective memory is a strong determinant of sharing sufferings as Kleinman argues that social suffering is only communicated through collective memory. In this section, I will try to explore how collective memories have been operative in mobilizing emotions and responsibilities for the Rohingyas through posing similarities of events.

The latest arrivals of the Rohingyas in Bangladesh create an unprecedented strain on already over-populated country with limited resources. Huge responses came from ordinary citizens of Bangladesh. Local families, even those with very little, donated what they could. People posted online bank account details asking others for charity. Local mosques organized donations and relief programs. Almost all political and social organizations raised their voice against persecution and organized relief program.

It was also reported that on the Muslim holiday of Eid-ul-Azha they had shared their sacrificial animal with the refugees. While the state of Bangladesh was to monitor the seemingly endless stream of Rohingya refugees crossing the border from Myanmar, many Bangladeshis felt that helping the Rohingya is what they owe to the memory of 1971.

In late March 1971, Bangladesh, the former East Pakistan, declared independence from West Pakistan and became independent after a bloody war in 1971. During the nine-month-long war, the Pakistani military and supporting political groups killed up to 3,000,000 people and raped between 200,000 and 400,000 Bangladeshi women in a systematic campaign of genocide.

Image 7

During the ensuing violence and repression, around 10 million of Bangladesh fled to India and stayed over there for throughout the nine-month period. In recent influx of Rohingyas, often the reference is made to Bangladesh's war for independence in 1971, when millions became refugees in India. Since September 20117, a number of Facebook users posted images (for example, Image 10) of 1971 in juxtaposition with recent frames that represent conspicuous resemblance to the stream of Rohingyas.

Images of the streams that visualize two different times -1971 and 2017, two communities – Rohingya and the Bengalis, were often juxtaposed with the recall of collective memory of Bangladeshi people. The images of two different contexts appear to be spectacularly similar- people walking down the muddy roads, wretched, ravaged –moving with their sacks and families. Many Bangladeshi facebook users argued that the scenes resonated most with 1971. Captions with the images contain messages like 'This is 1971 all over again', 'We had been through the similar experience and we have a moral obligation' 'we were refugees too' and so on.

However, it is not to say that all voices were equally supportive of the Rohingya plight .Some visual images attempted to show that the images were fabricated while the Rohingya themselves were setting fire and reports of atrocities are fake. Nevertheless, such allegations did not create any impact in home and abroad as these were echoing the Myanmar government. There exists a nominal but persistent concern on the alleged connectivity of the Rohingyas with drug dealing, preaching militancy and other crimes. A section of facebook citizens also tried to draw attention to the fact that Bangladesh is already an over-populated country –the 1 million Rohingya refugees would add some extra burden to this already overpopulated country. However, all these oppositional voices were somehow flooded out with the torrent of mainstream public compassion. Finally, empathy and support for the Rohingya, created scope to endorse connection with global community- and it should not be an exaggeration to state that photographs of women have contributed much to the raising empathy all over. And the major media houses stepped in, UN, NGOS and voluntary organizations moved and more importantly, public responses organized and much later Bangladesh government officially responded.

3.0 Rohingya Women in the Camp: Daily life and Struggle

So what happened to the women after reaching Bangladesh?- The answer is blowing in the wind.

Back home in Myanmar, Islamic ideologies used to be the main sources of framing women's roles and responsibilities in the society. The Rohingya women traditionally stay indoors and do the household chores of the homes. Nevertheless, they become the worst victims of the atrocities of the military, who not only raped and evicted women from their homes, but killed men, women and children indiscriminately. Their tragedy even worsened when they started fleeing to Bangladesh with or without their family. After their horrific and exhaustive journey to Bangladesh, they found themselves to be stateless citizens, deprived of many basic human rights and services. Different studies reveal that low income status of their families, losing breadwinner male members and without having citizenship, put them in horrible condition where they started living in inhuman living conditions, compromise their social and religious values to start work for the family, became victims of polygamy, forced marriage, trafficking, sexual and gender based violence, with deteriorated general and reproductive health.

3.1 Poverty and Food Insecurity

A number of studies and reports demonstrate that most of the refugee families are of low income status and have little access to assets. Many families either lost their bread-winning male members or have been abandoned by the males who moved on to other place (inside or outside Bangladesh) for income or earning. As women, lacking any previous experience of income, it was not easy to earn in a foreign land, especially without a citizenship identity. This makes the families, especially the women more vulnerable, and drives them to be involved in forced marriage, and other forms of marriage deals. Rohingya women are then hired for jobs where they are low paid for their hard works. In worst cases, they become victim of illegal trafficking, drug dealing, prostitution and sometimes become part of the organized crimes.

A study reveals that refugee-inhabited parts of the Cox's Bazaar district constitutes one of the poverty-ridden regions in Bangladesh, where food insecurity is a general problem which also affects nutritional status of women in family and makes them vulnerable in power relationships (WFP-UNHCR, 2012).[5] This has great relevance for making women and children vulnerable to gender-based violence.

3.2 Social Life

As the majority of the Rohingya people are strong believers of Islam, women, even the young girls always wear a Burqa (a veil), when they go outside home. For instance, if they go out to bring water from the nearby tube-well they ensure that they are wearing their brurqa before going out to collect water. Now days, when women are coming out of the home seeking job, going to the market, collecting ration, they are seen to wear burqas, or at least covering their heads with *Hijab*.

Marital relations are embedded in power relations and hence the women in patriarchal systems in general, and Rohingya women in particular, enter such relations with a disadvantageous position, subjected to the gendered stereotyping of their roles in the family and their dependent relationship with the male that in turn is driven by unequal laws of inheritance and asset transfer ensconced in religious

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[5]Neelsen, Nicolai Steen et. al 2012. The Contribution of Food Assistance to Durable Solutions in protracted Refugee Situations: its impact and role in Bangladesh, WFP and UNHCR

strictures. Such oppressive structures make women lacking the protection of a male guardian (father, husband, son), more susceptible to violence than others in the community.

For their inhuman living conditions in the camps, sustaining poverty and absence of citizenship of any country, Myanmar or Bangladesh, both men and women, take marriage as a strategy to survive. It is a common practice for many married Rohingya men, who had come to Bangladesh without their families and remarried shortly thereafter. Sometimes they even got married to poor Bangladeshi women to obtain a National Identity Card or some money for business. On the other hand, missing any income-earner of the family or lacking a proper guardian, Rohingya women could be lured easily into marriage as second wife by either Bangladeshi or Rohingya men. As life inside the camp is impoverished and insecure, many families consider early marriage to be a strategy of ensuring safety for their young daughters. In order to avoid the potential risks of sexual assault or rape, many young girls are married to elderly married men. Therefore, polygamy is also found to be prevalent among the Rohingya refugees, as Islamic marriage, permits men to have up to four wives, which may not require much paper works except oral commitments on the basis of holy words. Therefore, some solvent or powerful men had several marriages in order to engage their wives in economic activities, or at least creating more scope for collecting ration that will enhance his financial solvency. On the other hand, a number of women are found, who have been deserted shortly after the marriage or abandoned as the husband had migrated to a foreign country where they became imprisoned or faced execution, which results in their second marriage as mode of survival. Often the marriages occur in the forms of transaction, Rohingya families are lured to marry their daughters to marry Bangladeshi men at the exchange of ration, housing or some other facilities. Practically, promises are rarely kept. As marriages lack proper paper works, and also because of the fact that they lack citizenship, women cannot claim their marriage rights to the courts.

3.3 Sexual and Gender based Violence

Issues of gender-based violence cannot be understood only as forms of relationship between individual man and woman, instead it has to be comprehended with regards to the greater social context. Violence against women is more deeply embedded in the social and political contexts, and therefore, the practices of violence and/or normalizing oppressive roles are endorsed by the patriarchal values of a given society. As such, it is also important to understand that violence can take many forms, physical

and nonphysical, social as well as psychological, even through consent, as violence could be made acceptable by social customs and norms, practices, legal and religious codes and beliefs, which may often be sustained and supported by the structure.

By and large, the Rohingyas came from a male-dominant social structure, where women's subordinate roles are sanctioned by social norms and religious values. As such, polygamy, early marriage and/or forced marriage, wife battering had been accepted as normal practices. After their exodus to Bangladesh, the notion of acceptance even extended up to abduction of young girls, verbal harassment, sexual assaults, transactional sex and so on. People in the camps rarely complain about these issues except these turn to rape or murder. It is also important to take into consideration that domestic violence is not a criminal offence even in Bangladesh, as patriarchal values prevail all over. As such, while most of the Bangladeshi women do not place official complaints against domestic violence, the Rohingya women, who lack the right as citizens, dare to think of complaining. Sometimes, cases are resolved in local arbitration involving community leaders, who are without any exception, males.

3.4 Health

In traditional patriarchal societies, women's health is often a negligible concern. The case of Rohingya women is no exception, it is even worse. Because of sustained poverty, and their inherent tendency to feed the family first, women usually suffer from dearth of food. Malnutrition is common as after feeding their family, they rarely have enough for their own. Often the women are to starve, which affects their health, especially during pregnancy.

The environmental condition of the densely-populated camps lacking proper sanitation and water supply impacts women's health in many ways. As there are inadequate sanitation facilities, people are to wait in long queues, while women have to wait even more. In most of the camps, men get privilege, while women wait for long and finish early as men are always in a hurry. Therefore, women prefer to go in the dawn, even before the sunrise, or in the late nights when the pressure of the camp resident is lower, but their privacy and security are always at stake at that time. Such day-long waiting for urination or defecation impacts their health, and many women reported to have suffered from complications.

In the camps, it is the women who are responsible for fetching water. This basic task is quite tedious as the tube wells are sometimes distant from their houses, and often they are to fetch water several times a day.

Nevertheless, when women are deprived of basic health facilities, reproductive health gets even lesser attention. In addition to the lack of knowledge on menstrual hygiene, dearth of items and private places for disposal affect the young girls most. Among the Rohingyas, adopting family-planning methods were not so common. After coming to Bangladesh where many got married quickly, child-birth also increased significantly. Inside the camps, women give birth without any support of trained doctors or nurses, sometimes they receive support from birth-attendants. In the big camps like camp in Kutupalong, some organizations offer limited services by trained birth-attendants, while other camps have no such services. Furthermore, either because of their early marriage or being rape victim, many young girls gave birth to children, who are extremely malnourished as well as deprived of all sorts of reproductive health care, which do/will affect their own as well as their child's health.

In addition to the above mentioned issues of economic deprivation, structural violence and deteriorating health, concerns for security, inadequate facilities for child care, risks of getting involved (intentionally or unintentionally) in drug dealing and other crimes made Rohingya women's position even more vulnerable.

At this moment, a number of national and international organizations have been operating in Cox's Bazar, Teknaf, Ukhiya and adjacent areas, addressing many issues. In fact, women and their issues have been receiving primary attention from the donors, NGOs and other organizations. Although lot more efforts need to be put to address women issues, slow but steady changes are also visible in the camps. Nevertheless, women are the major vehicles of these changes. Being widow or abandoned by husband, they are taking entry to the job market as the mothers they are to take the responsibility of their children. Lacking proper skill, training and education, they are extremely over-exploited and low-paid. Still their entry as a bulk of labor force will make significant impacts which are to be addressed in future. Economic needs of the family could not restrict them inside the households, rather by receiving trainings and participating in different programs, women have become primary agents of the forthcoming transformations of the social dynamics among the Rohingyas. Interesting enough, these everyday sufferings, their daily struggles and revival of energy have never received attention in the social media. Compared to the way women and their pains, were portrayed and widely circulated in social media, their agency has rarely been recognized. In order to investigate the reasons for

disappearance of Rohingya women from the social media, answers might be sought in the complexity of nationality, victimhood and also the rules that underline what images are to be made with what purposes targeting which audience, and why women are major contents of certain images.

4.0 What Can and Cannot be Seen

Both Azoulay and Sontag argue that because of the failure of other media, images create stark and striking appeal that other media could not. At the beginning of Rohingya influx, there was censorship from the Bangladesh state as the government denied the entry of the Rohingyas. Instead, the state-regulated newspapers and television channels tried to establish the fact Border Guards of Bangladesh had been pushing the Rohingyas back to Myanmar as they did before. By and large, national and local media remained more or less silent about the Rohingya plight that sustained for first two weeks. In this period, only the images and videos by the local people and international media have been circulated and re-circulated in order to draw attention to the atrocities and brutalities faced by the Rohingyas. The circulations of images were so widespread in reaching a vast audience and strong in conveying messages that at some point both visuality and production reversed. Because of these immense production and circulation, there was little room left for ignoring or denying the fact, especially when the major media houses stepped in, UN, NGOS and voluntary organizations moved and more importantly, public responses organized and much later Bangladesh government officially responded.

Many actors and subjects became engaged in this in this entire endeavor- the victims, the image producers, circulators/sharers, relief-organizers, and thus making the making and sharing images a compound project. However, while many issues received extreme attention, some other issues were never looked at or investigated through the images. The role of Bangladesh government, especially how they pushed back many Rohingyas in the beginning have never been photographed. In a similar vein, government of Myanmar was not as much targeted as Suu Kyi was. Instead, Myanmar leader and Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi has been criticized internationally for her lackluster response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, with some even calling for her to be stripped of her award. Hundreds of cartoons of Suu Kyi have been posted on facebook identifying her as monster. In fact, Suu Kyi is an enemy who can be easily targeted because of her public celebrity image.

Favorable conditions also allowed to the production and dissemination of particular images of plight. Cox's Bazar, the southernmost district of Bangladesh bordering Myanmar, is the most adored tourist

spot for its longest beach. Every here and there visitors are roaming around with their camera and phones. Entry points of the Rohingya refugees were located in different border areas of this district and shores, though far from the main tourist spots. However, once the tourists and others came to know the Rohingya influx , people, mostly visitors moved to those places. Surprisingly, unlike many other borders, Bangladeshi citizens did not face any restriction of movement to visit the border areas where the Rohingya shelters and camps are located. On the other hand, Bangladesh government and state agencies have tried to control images and information depicting or indicating violence at all times. Surprisingly, such strong government surveillance by Bangladesh government that has been monitoring people's movements and statements on social media has never found to be functional in Rohingya crisis.

Images play a role in all realms of politics, their significance and impact are far more obvious if they depict violence. Pictures of unrest, riots and violence travel easily and render it difficult to ignore 'the pain of others' (Sontag 2003). In the case of Rohingya crisis, through the circulation of iconic images of violence, plight and suffering a responsible witnessing was created and that also resulted in creating a space of social action. Following Leshu Torchin, it can be argued that this witnessing is a dynamic field of cultural-historical production and engagement, and witnessing publics are created and mobilized through visual technologies typically associated with mass media and popular culture. Instead of dismissing the popular culture as trivializing and commodifying phenomenon, Torchin argues that popular culture can "serve as an active site for engagement, political debate, and the practice of citizenship" (2012: 13). In this way, witnessing, as it happened in citizens' response to Rohingya issue, becomes an ethical and transformative process and of a great political value. This response could be read as 'countervisuality', while dominant modes of visual representations failed or was reluctant to represent the extent of violence.

However, there still remains question to what extent such civil (Azoulay 2012) actions could challenge the structure. Apparently, massive response to Rohingya crisis, instead of questioning the structure of violence, was mainly aimed at mobilizing support, relief and targeting safe enemies. As soon as the Rohingya women entered Bangladesh, they got engaged in the daily struggle, which are not very different from any Bangladeshi women, although the intensity and magnitude may vary. Therefore, their struggles and experience failed to appeal the prevalent patriarchal structures and its overwhelming ideological presence in social media. In fact, this image-motivated activism may always have the tendency to ignore the underlying structure of violence and to response only towards

symptoms. Kleinman (1997) asks us to consider the implications of representations of violence that dehistoricize and depoliticize suffering, whether through now common- place media images of the unimaginable (to us) suffering of others or by the enumeration of suffering in development statistics. In representations of this sort, violence as a technique is condemned but the principles on which violence is being perpetuated-the structural wellsprings of that violence-are left untouched.

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State Onslaught and Ethnic Faultlines:
Oscillating Identities of the Rohingya between Myanmar and Bangladesh

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Introduction

Onslaught of the Rohingya people in Myanmar constitutes the textbook example of ethnic cleansing in contemporary time. The Rohingya, an ethnoreligious and ethnolinguistic group living in the Rakhine state of Myanmar, are considered among the most persecuted, vulnerable, and oppressed minorities in the world. They are victims of human rights violations and oppressions in various forms including, extrajudicial executions, forced eviction from settlements, land grabbing, bonded and forced labors and so on (Mohajan 2018). Several episodes of crackdown on the Rohingya people have forced them to flee and take refuge in Bangladesh, the Middle East, and Southeast Asian countries, forming a transnational body of Rohingya communities. Scholars are divided in their opinions regarding the origin and historical roots of the Rohingya. Their distinctive identity claims have evolved within a context largely defined by Buddhist-Muslim tensions and their ethnic recognition has reached a premature end due to the authoritarian regimes (1962–2011) in Myanmar (formerly Burma). The present paper would shed light on the making of contested Rohingya identity in various political and cultural contexts and explore the implications of their forced migration to Bangladesh.

The term Rohingya denotes an ethnoreligious identity of Muslims in the Rakhine State of Myanmar. The name came into existence in the 1950s and term became part of public discourse since then. A few Muslim intellectuals of the North Rakhine State of Myanmar used the term 'Rohingya' to refer themselves (Tha 1960, Chan 2005, Rozali 2006). However, the meaning of Rohingya identity today is rooted in the precolonial past of the Buddhist kingdom of Arakan (present day Rakhine State) and significantly shaped by Buddhist-Muslim tensions. This religious tensions have been intensified under the auspices of political and geopolitical factors. As a result, the history of the Rohingya has been subjected to political manipulations by the historians based on their respective sides of ethnic faultlines. Rohingya historians claim a native status for them based on many treatises indicating their ancestors'

presence in present-day Rakhine State for over a thousand years (Bhattacharya 2012), which the Burmese historians find as to be 'fictitious stories, myths and legends' (Chan 2005). The Burmese identifies the Rohingyas as the direct descendants of 'immigrants' from the Chittagong District of Bangladesh (formerly East Bengal) during colonial period. Following from this line of reasoning, the Burmese administration do not recognize Rohingya as an ethnic category, rather they define the Rohingya as Bangladeshi (a nationality) and Bangali (an ethnolinguistic category), which provide the justification for state sponsored oppression and onslaught on the Rohingya. However, these contested and opposed historical explanations essentially call for a reexamination of Rohingya origin, ethnohistory and the earliest presence of their ancestors in Rakhine State.

Historical Landscape and Shifting State Boundaries
Ancient and Medieval History of Arakan and Chittagong

Arakan is composed of a complex ethnoreligious setting and situated between Muslim Bengal and Buddhist Burma. Arakan is a strip of coastal plains, mangrove marshlands, and river valleys that runs in a north-south direction along the eastern Bay of Bengal. The history of Arakan province suggests that this region remained contested between the rulers of India and Burma (present-day Myanmar) (Tha 1960).

A part of the Muslims in Arakan state of Burma also trace their origin to the Arabian traders from the Middle-East who came through the Maritime Spice Routes. The Spice Routes, also known as Maritime Silk Roads, is the name given to the network of sea routes connecting the East to the West particularly, in this case, linking the Arabian Peninsula to the Far East (See Map – 01). The Maritime Spice Routes were, and still are, trade routes. Since our very earliest known history trade has been playing an important role in human life exchanging not only goods and services but also exchanging ideas, faith and religion among other things. A long chain of buyers and sellers were interwoven in relationships along the coastlines of the Maritime Routes. Besides exchanging goods, the sea ports along the Maritime Silk Roads (Spice Routes) acted as melting pots for cultures, ideas and information. Among all other forms of exchanges, the most important was the exchange of knowledge. The ships carried, along with valuable cargos on board, knowledge of new peoples and their religions, languages, expertise, artistic and scientific skills. The Arabian trade ships carried Islam along the coastlines of the South and Southeast Asia. Many Muslim Arabian traders had settled down in port towns of India,

Bangladesh, Burma and other countries during the middle ages. They developed affinal relations with local people in the processes of settlement.

The Muslim settlements started along the coastline of the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean started long before the Muslims came into power of this region which can be traced to 7th to 8th centuries(Pearson 2003). Many historical accounts and evidence show that the Arabs had business terms with Bengal that started during the Pala empire (750-1174 C.E) (Chaudhuri and Chaudhuri 1985). Along with the business and trading, a Muslim settlement began in the coastal areas, especially in Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and adjacent areas long before official Muslim rule began in Bengal. It is also assumed Arab Muslims formed an independent state in the areas of Chittagong to Arakan in the tenth century (Pearson 2003). This empire was mentioned in 'Radjatuya' -the royal chronicle of Arakan where an account describes that the Arakan king Surtan invaded an area in 953 AD and marked it with 'Chettagoung'. Also suggested that the term Surtan came from 'Sultan' (king) and the invaded place is now known as Chittagong. However, it can be noted that there are significant number of Arabic and Persian words in the vocabulary of Cox's bazaar dialect and the natives of this area claims their Arabic ancestry. A king of Gaur (North-west Bengal) sultan Jalauddin supported the Arakanese King Normikhla (later known as Solainman after being converted to Islam) in his fight against the Burmese king. Chittagong remained part of Arakan till it was conquered by the Mughals.

The early modern Buddhist kingdom of Arakan had its own independent history centered on Mrauk U. King Min Saw Mon, the founder of Mrauk-U Dynasty (1430-1784) was exiles in Bengal for twenty-four years and received military assistance of the Sultan of Bengal to regain his kingdom (Subrahmanyam 1997, Van Galen 2008). He allowed many Bangali to settle down in Mrauk-U and built the Santikan mosque. They were some of the early Muslim settlers in Arakan. The Moghal historian Talish, a Moghol historian, noted that the Portuguese pirates used to sell their captives to the Arakanese who employed these prisoners in agriculture and other kinds of services (Talish 1907, Chan 2005). Moreover, the Mrauk-U kings were Buddhist yet they adopted some Islamic traditions of using silver coins with Persian Muslim titles and occasionally used Muslim costumes in the style of the Sultan of Bengal (Charney 1998, Leider 1998, Van Galen 2008, d'Hubert 2014). There were some Muslim élites at the court of the Arakanese King who served the King perform these Islamic conventions (Charney 1998, Charney 1999) and transcribed the Bengali, Persian and Arabic literature. The linguistic traces of Arab and Persian in Arakan Muslims' eastern Bengali dialects point to these multifaceted contacts. During the 15th century, the use of Muslim titles by Arakanese kings and

inscribed coins suggests that the Bengal sultanate had a cultural impact on the court elite of Mrauk U (Leider 1998). In the 15th and 16the centuries several Muslim ministers, court members and poets were employed in the Roshanga royal court (Alam 1999). Daulat Kazi, Alaol, Kureshi Magon are such famous names. Alaol, the greatest Bengali poet in the medieval period, known as was the official poet in the Roshanga Royal court (Alam 1999, d'Hubert 2014, d'Hubert 2018). Different sources also validated the presence of Muslim in early modern period including the presence of Sufi saints, respected as the protectors of sailors and resident communities of Muslim traders in Arakan. Again, Chittagong, the affluent port of Bengal ruled by Muslim lords, was conquered by the Arakanese during sixteenth century and Chittagong's Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist populations significantly contributed to the economic prosperity of Arakan.

Several ethnic groups with their diverse culture and language, used to live in the region. These inhabitants included different groups e.g. Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto Burman speakers as well as Arabs, Bengalis and others. The Marma and Rakhine are the Tibeto-Burman speaking groups and they were colloquially called the 'Maghs'. During the medieval period, the Magh pirates in collaboration with the Portuguese pirates became a major threat for the coastal areas of Bengal and Arakan (Sengupta 2001). The popular Bangla phrase 'Magher Mulluk' refers to the state of anarchy and lawlessness developed by the Maghs. When the Mughal commander, Islam Khan Chishti, conquered Bengal in 1610, Chittagong remained beyond his control. Far later, Subahdar (governor) Shaista Khan conquered Chittagong and won over the Maghs and the Portuguese. Arakan still remained independent. The Mughal boundary extended upto Ramu of modern-day Cox's Bazaar region. When Shah Suja (brother of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb) fled to Arakan as a result of fraternal dispute, he was cordially received by the Arakanese King Sudhamma (Tha 1959). However, he was killed later on in 1661. Following his assassination, a number of Muslim populations from all over India started to come to Arakan. In fact, Shah Suja's death was followed by a total anarchy in Arakan.

Map – 01: Long Distance Trade Routes (Maritime and Silk) Connecting the West to the Far East.

The Colonial History

Although present boundaries between Chittagong District of Bangladesh and Rakhine State of Myanmar are clearly demarcated by international borders as separate geographic entities belonging to two different independent states, but this does do not go back very far in history when both these two places belonged to the same political unit, British India, until late 1940s. Arakan had been an independent kingdom until 1784, when it was conquered by the Burmese. Arakan had been an independent kingdom until 1784, when it was conquered by the Burmese. The Province remained under Burmese rule between 1784 to 1826. After that, the then Arakan Province was surrendered to British India as outcomes of the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826) under the terms of the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826 (Chan 2005). The war concluded in the winning of Arakan Province as to be the southern extension of Chittagong District for the British Empire. The movement of people between Chittagong and Arakan became more intensified during this period. Sir, Arthur Phayre, the first Deputy Commissioner of Arakan, mentioned about the local population of Arakan as:

The inhabitants are, In the Plains – 1. Ro-khoing-tha (Arakanese)- 2. Ko-la (Indian) – 3. Dôm (Low Caste Hindu). In the Hills – 1. Khyoung-tha – 2. Kumé or Kwémwé – 3. Khyang – 4. Doing–nuk, Mroong, and other tribes… While the Arakanese held these possessions in Bengal, they appear to have sent numbers of the inhabitants into Arakan as slaves, whence arose the present Ko-la population of the country (Phayre 1841: 680 – 681 cf. Chan 2005).
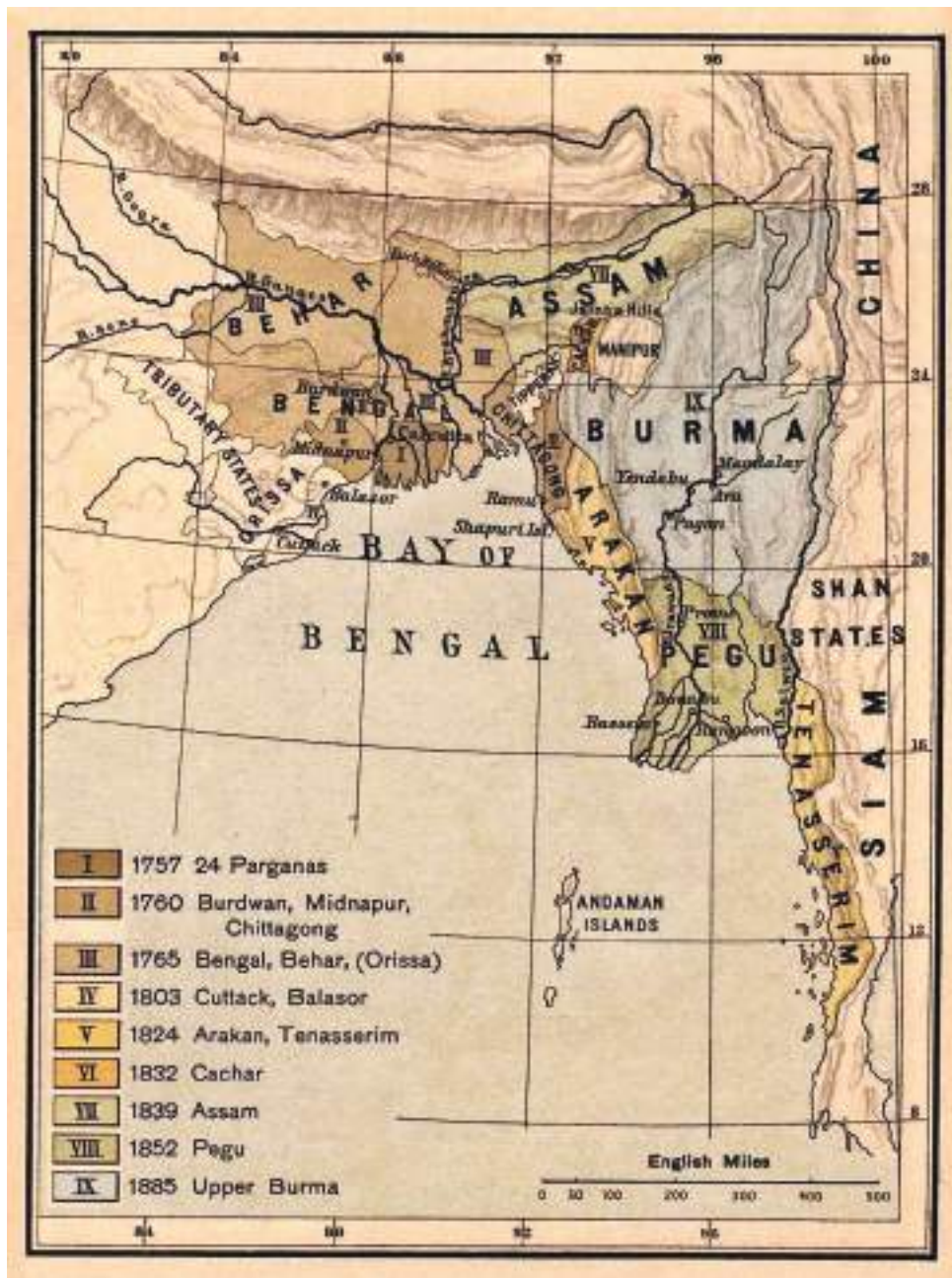
Map – 02: The Growth of British India and Burma during Colonial Period.

Source: (Joppen 1907)

42

Following the invasion of the Burmese king Bhodapaya in 1784, the Arakanese fled to the bordering hills that was governed by the British East India Company. Since then a number of Arakanese including both Buddhists and Muslims started to migrate to nearby Ramu and Teknaf area which are now parts of Cox's bazaar district. Around 1798-99 the British East Company appointed Captain Hiram Cox to rehabilitate the refugees. Each refugee family was granted 1 hectare (2.472 acre) of land and 26 maunds of food grains as food support for six months. The area was named after him as Cox's Bazaar. Some historians argue that these migrant Arakanese Muslims were known as Roains (Rohingyas).

Some of the Arakanese refugees formed a rebellion against the Burmese king and sought support from the British. The British, in return, handed over three rebel leaders to the Burmese. Later on, when the Arakanese rebellion began insurgency and fight against the Burmese king, the British East India Company supported the Burmese king. The Burmese took control of Arakan and proceeded towards Chittagong and Manipur claiming these areas as integral part of Burma. At one point, the Burmese force occupied Shahpari Island killing the employees of East India company. That was the beginning of Anglo-Burmese dispute that resulted in three major warfares in 1825,1852 and 1885 and the colonization of Burma by the British. As the British rule began, a number of fortune-seekers that included the Rohingyas once again moved to Arakan and other parts of Burma, while the refugees of Arakan were also appointed as laborers by the British to clear jungle and other construction works.

Rohingya Identity: Ethnoreligious and Ethnolinguistic Faultline

There are hardly any anthropological investigations carried out on Rohingya identity as a culturally distinctive category. There is limited access to essential information and documentation. The term Rohingya had been used in in the late 1950s in North Arakan to denote a religious identity for the region's Muslim community, as distinct from and in opposition to its majority Buddhist population. This identity also refers to an ethnopolitical category particularly emerged in the context of the sociopolitical challenges developed after the independence of Burma in 1948 (Chan 2005). According to Chan, the Rohingya identity claims can be understood in a narrative context that includes the simultaneous rise of Rakhine Buddhist nationalism in the 1950s, and later, the political oppression and impoverishment that constrained the lives of both Buddhists and Muslims between 1962 and 2011 (ibid). Similar to ethnic or social identities in other context, the Rohingya identity is an unstable signifier pointing to various features of organization. Moreover, the global media representations have signified

the Rohingyas as being stateless victims of systematic oppression, whose refugee status and disenfranchisement are defining elements of their public identity (ibid).

The Rohingya are a multilayered Muslim community. According to Chan, "the Muslims in the Arakan State can be divided into four different groups, namely the Chittagonian Bengalis in the Mayu Frontier; the descendants of the Muslim Community of Arakan in the Mrauk-U period (1430-1784), presently living in the Mrauk-U and Kyauktaw townships; the descendants of Muslim mercenaries in Ramree Island known to the Arakanese as Kaman; and the Muslims from the Myedu area of Central Burma, left behind by the Burmese invaders in Sandoway District after the conquest of Arakan in 1784 (Chan 2005). The Rohingya identity formation is an ongoing process and differently being represented in international media as stateless and as a state-oppressed Muslim minority after riots in Rakhine State in the 1990s and onward. It is, however, an ethnic category that includes Muslim communities in the North Arakan region having similar cultural features but with a diverse historical background.

The Myanmar government officially rejects Rohingya as an ethnic denomination and consider them as a threat for developing political movements aiming at the creation of an autonomous Muslim area in North Arakan (Chan 2005). The Myanmar's military and authoritarian state governments have described Rohingyas as a political and demographic threat since 1980s. The ethnic tensions between the Arakanese and the Rohingya have aggravated by the discriminatory state policies of exclusion and deprivation of rights, and gradually led to the lasting and violent conflicts in Arakan Shate.

The ethnoreligious hostility between the Muslim Rohingya and Buddhist Arakanese, the demographic majority of the Rakhine State, has also been accelerated by the radical Buddhist nationalism of *ma bat tha* movement also known as 969 movement. This is a nationalist movement opposed to what they see as Islam's expansion in predominantly-Buddhist Burma and spreads islamophobia by communicating apprehensions about Islam's expansion in the Buddhist Burma. This anti-Muslim movement was launched and led by Ashin Wirathu, a Burmese Buddhist monk and communal leader, in 2001. The Movement continued in the Mandalay riots of 2013. Wirathu had deep hatred against the Muslims refused to call the Ronhingya community by the name, and instead claims they are from Bangladesh and prefers to call them Bangladeshi. Although there are about 5% Muslims in Myanmar which has a population of 5.4 million, according to 2014 Census, yet Wirathu pushes the idea that Islam and the Muslims tends to put Buddhism and essence of Myanmar in threat. On 20 June 2013, the cover story of Time magazine mentioned Wirathu as "The Face of Buddhist Terror". Referring to Muslims, Wirathu says, "you can be full of kindness and love, but you cannot sleep next

to a mad dog…. If we are weak, our land will become Muslim." In similar instance, he says, ""I am defending my loved one like you would defend your loved one. I am only warning people about Muslims. Consider it like if you had a dog, that would bark at strangers coming to your house – it is to warn you. I am like that dog. I bark."

The Rohingyas have always been subject to oppressions in the independent Burma. General Ne Win's Dragon Operation to suppress ethnic uprising resulted in the mass exodus of the Rohingyas to Bangladesh began in 1978. After an agreement between two countries, most of the Rohingyas repatriated although many of them were left behind. In the General Election of 1991, opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi 's party won all the seats in Arakan. As the government did not hand over the power to Suu kyi's party, they again began a repressive move which resulted in mass exodus of 250,000 Rohingyas to Bangladesh. Following a series of bilateral negotiation, only 7000 Rohingyas were

repatriated and many thousands refused to go back apprehending the repression and eviction. Since then flow of the Rohingya Muslims became common, which became intense in 2011 and 2014 following the inter-ethnic riots and attack on the Rohingyas in Myanmar.

The above accounts depict two major lines of history. The Muslims of Burma has diverse ancestral connection, Bengali connection is one of them but not the only one. In fact, like the Bengalis, they also claim Arab ancestry, and in many cases, Magh, Dutch and Portuguese ancestries are also found. Second, Arakan has been a region that was subject to repressions of both sides-on the one side, there were the Burmese who treated Arakan as their remote unreachable outpost but always eager to occupy it; and on the other, there were the Bengal – whose boundaries with Arakan often propagated. Although the local dialect of Chittagong sounds pretty similar with the Rohingya (roains) language, as it is with the Chakma dialect, the languages are not same. The Rohingya language can be easily identified as distinct by the people who are familiar with different dialects of Chittagong region.

Profiling Bangladesh: Challenges and Concerns
Historical and Politico-economic Settings

Bangladesh is a fairly recent Muslim nation that came into existence in 1971. Following from the about two hundred years of British colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent, Bangladesh appeared as East Pakistan as India partitioned in 1947, and of late, achieved independence from Pakistan (erstwhile West Pakistan) after a nine-month long war of liberation in 1971. During the partition, from the political point of view, emphasis on religious affiliation (Hinduism or Islam), and the Hindu-Muslim difference ultimately led to the creation of two independent states in 1947: Hindu concentrated India the Islamic state of Pakistan. Although religious identities influenced the post-colonial independence, but language difference (Urdu and Bangla) justified the second struggle for independence and the emphasis on a common Bangali identity led to the liberation war and finally to the creation of Bangladesh in 1971.

Today, almost 90% of Bangladesh's population adheres to the religion of Islam making the Muslims as the overwhelming majority followed by almost 8% Hindu population and the remaining 2% constituting the Christians, Buddhists and indigenous people. The political instability of Bangladesh, along with its ravaging poverty, famine, natural disasters and over population stigmatized the country with a hopeless image, particularly expressed in the words of Henry Kissinger, the American Secretary of State, as the 'bottom less basket' case during early seventies. Renowned Noble Laureate Amartya

Sen analyzed the situation of Bangladesh as a land not only whose 'granary is full of rice' and 'ponds are full of fish', but also a land that experiences famine and poverty (Sen 1981). However, the remarkable achievements of Bangladesh in the economic sphere, of recent times, along with its resilience against recurrent natural disasters and 2008 global economic crisis, suggest that Bangladesh's economic growth can outpace its population growth. Bangladesh's economy recently proved to have bypassed the global financial crisis of 2008 and the country has proven ability to withstand disasters brought about by recurrent floods and cyclones as well as the microfinance movement have been widely acclaimed globally as role model for poverty alleviation.

Extreme climatic events and recurrent disasters have swept the development achievements of Bangladesh from time to time over the centuries and imposed much havoc on the well-being and socio-economic situation of the people. Impacts and shocks caused by natural disasters have contributed significantly to the pauperization processes in Bangladesh. Researchers often argue that, frequent devastation by natural disasters have been one of the major causes for the country being so poverty stricken (Mirza 2003). It is believed that managing disasters is a vital prerequisite for the country's step towards any long–term development goals. The Government of Bangladesh has attached high importance to disaster management in pursuit to achieve and sustain its development efforts (Mirza, et al. 2003). It is evident that vulnerability of the country to climate change is the result of a complex interrelationship among biophysical, social, economic and technological factors of the country. Many anticipated adverse impacts of climate change would in fact aggravate many of the existing stresses that already pose a serious impediment to economic development of Bangladesh (Ali 1999).

Socioecological and Environmental Settings

Bangladesh is a disaster-prone country. Both in Copenhagen and in Cancun, the world community unanimously agreed that Bangladesh is the country most vulnerable to climate change impacts. Due to climate change, hydro-meteorological disasters (cyclone, flood, drought, etc.) will be more frequent with increased magnitude. Almost every year, the country experiences disasters causing heavy loss of life and property and jeopardizing the development activities. The country is already beset with many problems like increasing population density, food security, human health, illiteracy, and so forth. The global warming due to the increase in greenhouse gas concentrations in the earth's atmosphere and the consequent sea level rise (SLR) are going to exacerbate the situation (Dasgupta, Huq et al.

2010)(Ahmed and Chowdhury 2006). Almost every sector of socio-economic life in Bangladesh is likely to be affected by climate change (Karim and Mimura 2008, Dasgupta, Huq et al. 2010, Khan, Ireson et al. 2011, Dasgupta, Huq et al. 2014) Pouliotte, et al. 2009; Rahman 2008). Over the next 25 years, however, with the increase in the absolute size of the population, the per capita water availability in Bangladesh will progressively be reduced (Ahmad, et al. 2001). Under general climate variability, the annual per capita water availability in 2025 will become 7,670 cubic meters as against 12,162 cubic meters in 1991. Keeping in view the poor water availability in the dry season, the per capita available supply will be much less, while demand for irrigation and other purposes (i.e., industrial process water, domestic & municipal water supply etc.) will continue to rise (Ahmed 2006). In agricultural sector, the present production activities are impeded by too much water during the wet season and too little during the dry season.

The social impacts, though generally not well–understood, are likely to be profound and climate change will affect humans through a variety of direct (changes in climate variables) and indirect pathways (pests and diseases; degradation of natural resources; food price and employment risks; displacement; conflicts, negative spirals) (Heltberg, Siegel et al. 2009). Risks and uncertainties, associated with the impact of climate shocks and stresses, are typically embedded in agricultural practices in rural areas. The agriculture sector is reportedly more vulnerable to climate variations. Therefore, it is important to understand climatic impacts on agroecosystems and the farmer perceptions of climate change and its implications. Climate change is likely to have severe impacts on the food and livelihood securities, human capital and wellbeing of the poor people because of their reliance on subsistence agriculture in rural areas of Bangladesh. On the other hand, in urban areas, informal settlements are mostly built illegally and without formal planning. Limited availability of water, high child and infant mortality rates compounded with a very high morbidity rate (malaria, tuberculosis, diarrhea etc) are common characteristics of such informal settlements (Dodman and Satterthwaite 2008). Climate change also has implications for the urban poor and for rural–urban change. With climate change negatively affecting rural livelihoods, migration from rural to urban areas is increasingly likely to become the favored adaptation strategy of the mobile, rural poor. This will further exacerbate the problem of people living in urban fringe hazardous environments with potential risks of social unrest.

Governments' Position on Rohingya Issue

Bangladesh government's position regarding the question of the Rohingyas is quite controversial in many terms. First flow of the Rohingyas as refugees started in 1978 following the riot in Rakhine state of Myanmar. However, unofficial and irregular flows from both ends have been a regular practice for many years. Regular flow of large Bengali population including both Hindus and Muslims who started to migrate and settle down in different parts of Burma began since the late nineteenth century. As part of the British empire, Myanmar was considered to be a place of prosperity. Almost every family in Chittagong used to have a connection in Burma since British Period. Such ties could be marital, social or business or professional. Therefore, Bengali inhabitation in Myanmar should not be a smaller one. It is interesting to note that the educated or semi-educated Bengali population in Myanmar is not suffering the controversy of identity. On the other hand, the uneducated and poor Rohingyas are victims of all sorts of repression. In Chittagong, Cox's Bazaar and adjacent areas, both Rohingya men and women are appointed as laborers in agriculture, petty business, household works and so on. For long, people of Chittagong came across many communities and therefore, they are accustomed with the juxtaposition. At local level, Rohingyas are treated as different or 'other', but not as outsiders or unexpected. Many of these Rohingyas already had had connections in Bangladesh. They strengthened their ties by marriage and joining professions.

Officially, the government of Bangladesh was not that antagonistic against the Rohingyas in the beginning. In fact, the refugee Rohingyas of 1978 and 1991 were treated with much empathy although bilateral negotiation continued. The Country office of UNHCR along with a number of refugee camps was established in Cox's bazaar. The government's attitude began to change keeping the pace with the change in national politics. First of all, both in 1979 and in 1991, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was in power. The BNP has a strong ally with the Islamist parties, especially with the anti-liberation force Jamaat E Islami (hereafter JI), who was the part of their coalition in 1991. Many of the Rohingyas were used as their vote banks and political cadres. The Rohingya Muslims are the main arms cadres of JI which had a strong base in Cox's Bazaar and Chittagong district. Later on, while the country faced series of attacks and threats from the Islamist extremist groups, many forms of Rohingya involvements with these connections were revealed. Remote areas of Cox's bazaar, adjacent remote places of Bandarban district are found to be the dens of Islamic militants where a number of Rohingya

people were trained. Over the years, many Rohingyas involved in crimes, drug-dealing, smuggling and anti-social activities which is common among refugee population anywhere in the world.

The pro-liberation party Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) came into power in 1996. Later they formed government in 2009 when they had had a land-slide victory. One of their major agenda was to evict militancy. The BAL always maintains a good relationship and correspondence with India which is their strongest base of international support. In recent years, India developed a major concern regarding the insurgency in 'Seven Sisters' of the north east. Ethnic peoples of CHT has many ethnic and cultural connections which poses a threat to India. A common propaganda says that these Seven sisters, CHT and Arakan might form a new state with the support of China as both China and India are trying to take control of the region. To eliminate such a possibility, the foreign minister of Bangladesh declared that there were no Indigenous (adivasis) in Bangladesh, and now they are constitutionally known as 'Minority Ethnic groups' (Khhudro Nri Goshthee). In this geo-political game, the Rohingyas are the most vulnerable community in despair. In mass media, after the attack on Buddhist Temples in Ramu in 2012, the anti-militancy campaign mobilized the national sentiment against Rohingyas.

Locating Rohingya Refugee Camps

The Rohingya camps in Bangladesh are located in Kutupalong- Balukhali expansion site, Hakimpara, Jamtoli, Baggohona, Chakmarkul, Unchiprang, Shamlapur under Ukhia upazila and other camps are located in the Leda, Alikhali, Jadimura, Nayapara under Teknaf upazila in Cox's bazar district. In kutupalong area, there are 23 camps. Under the supervision of each camp, there is a camp in-charge committee which is managed by the Bangladesh government officials and Bangladesh army. Camp in-charge committee work under RRRC (Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner) and the members of CIC are in obligation to supervise, monitor and co-ordinate different NGOs activities inside the camps like what kind of works have to do. Moreover, Usually, CIC organize meetings with the NGOs for their activities in every week. Bangladesh Army mainly operates as a part of the CIC. Bangladesh Army handles the distribution of reliefs, maintenance of discipline and security of the camps. Among Rohingyas selected camp representatives' work under this camp in-charge committee.

Location	Female	Male	Total Individuals	Total Families
Camps 01 - 10	228726	210203	438929	102973
Camps 11 - 20	143764	132878	276642	63614
Camps 21 - 27	76046	67717	143763	32711
Kutupalong RC*	9353	8647	18000	3548
Nayapara RC*	14435	12487	26922	5702
No camp**	2869	2649	5518	1299
Total	475193	434581	909774	209847
*Kutupalong RC includes 14,277 registered refugees (2,617 families) while Nayarapara RC includes 19,895 registered refugees (3,704 families)				
**This represents refugees residing outside formal camp / site boundaries				

Table – 01: Distribution of Rohingya Migrants in Bangladesh (as of March 2019).

Source: (UNOCHA 2019)
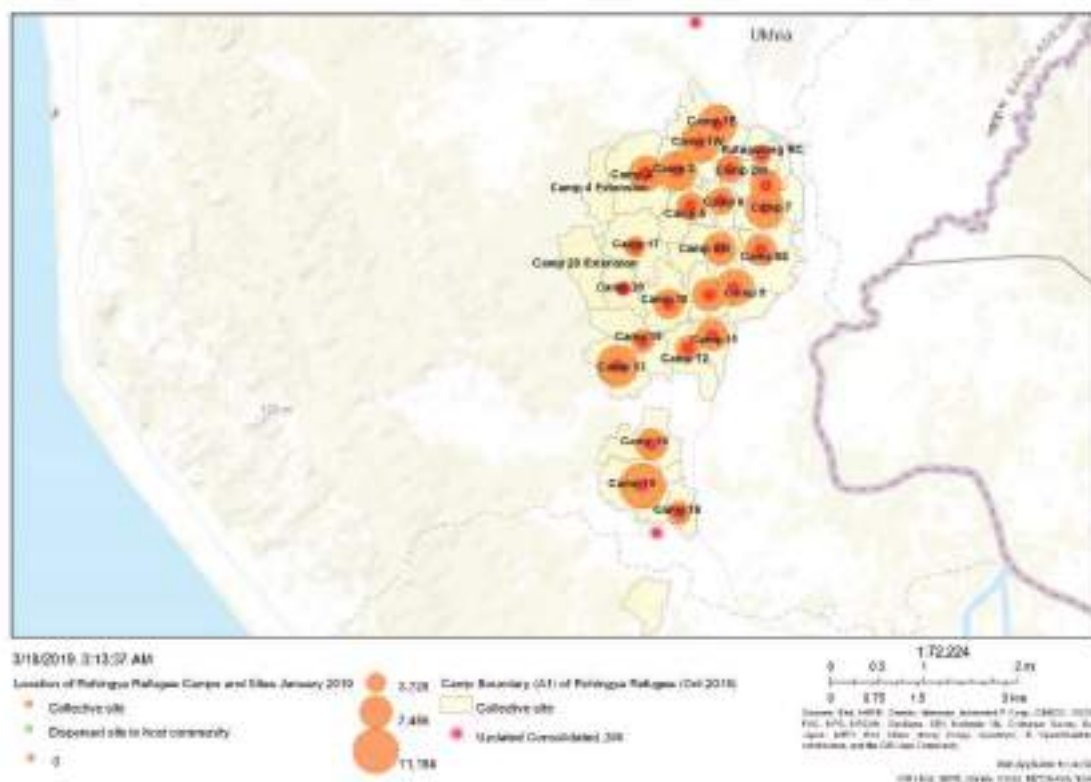
Map – 02: Locating Rohingya Camps in Southeast Bangladesh.

The Rohingyas living in a particular block elect the Majhi5 of that block. The standard of the Majhi election is mainly decided on the basis of a person's previous record, such as their educational status,

behavior and more priority is given if that person was a local member of the Myanmar. During the election, the inhabitants of the particular block get together where they give the vote to the person of their choice. In this case, the participators of the election need to raise their hand when the name of their favorite nominated candidate is called and in this way Majhi of the block gets elected. The Majhi of the blocks are always accountable to the head Majhis. It is the responsibility of the head Majhis to monitor the duties of the elected Majhis and if needed the heads will provide assistance in order to solve any problems and issues. These head Majhis are elected directly from the votes of the block Majhis. Priority on educational status and fluency in Bengali language are given preference when electing a head Majhi because it is the head Majhis who maintain the communication with the army, camp in charge committee and NGOs.

Almost every camp has shops and markets. For instance, at the entrance of the camps, small shops like pharmacy, tea stalls, saloon, cloth markets etc. can be seen. Majority of the market share, 70%, are run by the Rohingyas and the other 30% of the market are run by the locals. Basically, the word 'Majhi' refers to 'Boatman'. Every camp is divided into some blocks and every block has a block leader who is called the 'Majhi'. Besides, the Majhis of every block is under the supervision of one head Majhi.

They are funding in opening up the shops. These funding are mainly coming from their belongings, such as cash money and gold, which they managed to bring with them when fleeing from Myanmar. Besides, financial assistance from the relatives, who live abroad, is also contributing to these funding. The Rohingyas are utilizing this money in starting their businesses. Moreover, the Rohingyas are using the identity of the locals to issue business licenses in opening up Pharmacies inside the camp and in exchange the Rohingyas are paying a sum of money to those locals. In addition, according to the information given by a Rohingya, in order to start business and open up shops inside the camp, taking permission from the army is not necessary. The armies only help them to find a suitable area inside the camp where the shops can be built. If the shop is built on a private land, then the owner of the land has to be paid particular amount of money every month or if the land is a government owned land, then the payment should be done to the local chairman. Besides, if any NGOs want to build houses inside the camp, then they need to contact the 'Majhi' beforehand. The Majhi then employs an experienced person to assist the NGOs. In this case, the person who is appointed as the day laborer must pay a certain amount of money to the Majhi from his daily remuneration. For example, if the daily pay is 300 Tk. then he must pay an amount of 50 Tk. to the Majhi. Apart from that, in case of constructing roads and other establishments, the army usually employs workers from the Rohingyas.

Looming of Environmental Crisis

To collect wood fuel, households traveled an average distance of 8.75 km and did this 3 days per week, collecting 28.65 kg per trip. During wood collection trips, households experienced a variety of threats. In particular, three women were attacked by elephants and 25% of women reported being threatened by mainly the host community. The average household consumption rate for cooking fuel was 4.285 kg/HH/day. For the displaced population this amounted to 54,452 tons biomass per year. Key findings from the fuel wood supply assessment: Observations from field plots revealed highly degraded forests, specifically low plant diversity and low regeneration rates, likely due to persistent wood fuel collection by both host and displaced communities. - Satellite imagery analysis showed that since 1994 wood biomass decreased by 40%. (Source IOM-FAO Assessment Study Nov,2017.)
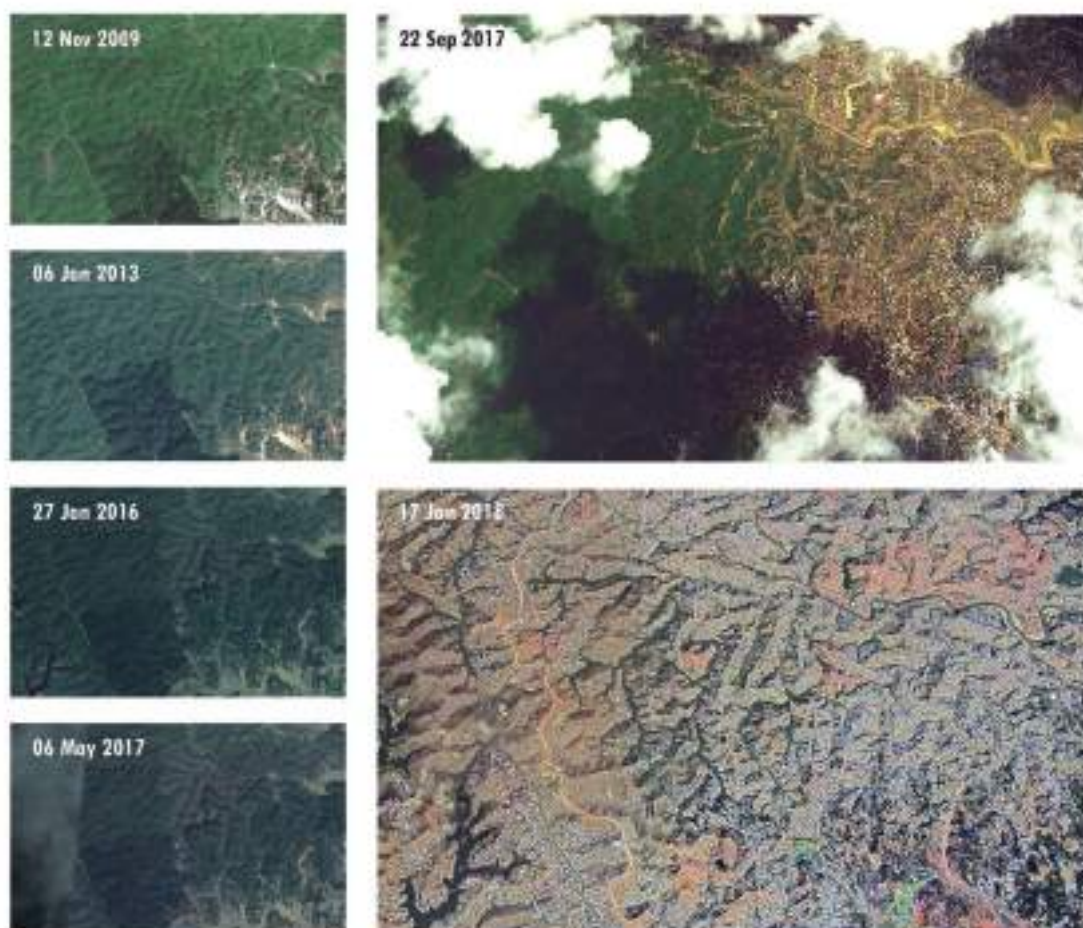
Map – 03: Satellite Image of the same Geographic Coordinates in different Times Showing Rapid Change and Destruction of Local Environment.

Conclusion and Ways Forward

Our attitudes toward the subject of human rights law are likely to be shaped by our philosophical underpinnings and hence need some clarifications. Therefore, understanding the philosophic foundations would help us devise a translation framework that will allow us to explain human rights principles in the context of Bangladesh. Human rights are a set of moral principles, and include some recognition of the value of freedom or autonomy. However, Immanuel Kant's compelling discussion on ethic underlies most of the theories of rights. Rights then flow from the autonomy of the individual, as a free and rational agent, in choosing his or her ends. According to Kantian thesis, a person must always be treated as an end, and the highest purpose of the state is to promote conditions favoring the free and harmonious unfolding of individuality (Shestack, 2017; Suchinmayee, 2008: 98). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights also reflects the moral universalist influence revealed in the following statements:

> "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world [Declaration's opening statement].... All human beings are born free and equal in dignity [Article 01]. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status [Article 02]" (United Nations, 1948: Pp 1-4).

Recommendations

o   Bangladesh needs more than careful planning, meaningful regional collaboration, and a need-based, forward-looking foreign diplomacy in the coming days.

o   Bangladesh needs to assess its relations with other members of SAARC countries and alliances. Also follow-up the repatriation pact signed with the authorities in Myanmar.

o   Myanmar has to create a decent conditions in Rakhine state for the safe and voluntary return or dignified return of the refugees who have fled to Bangladesh. Need to create diplomatic pressure on Myanmar.

o   Bangladesh needs to have medium and long-term policies to address Rohingya crisis.

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