

A case study of rohingya crisis in Myanmar and India's concern

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Abstract

In this paper I have tried to focus on the “world’s most persecuted minority Rohingya”. Oppression and persecution of Rohingya frequently occurs in Rakhine province of Myanmar. In August 2017 once again terrible violence commenced by Myanmar’s military forces against Rohingya Muslim. They are deprived from their own citizenship, rights, education, home and even food. They have fled Myanmar to Bangladesh and looking asylum in some other neighbouring countries. As far as India’s concern, it came suddenly in limelight because government is planning to deport 40, 000 Rohingyas settled in Jammu and Kashmir to Myanmar, because of potential security threat and considering some additional things such as Economic burden, demographic misbalance and over populated country like India has not directly offered shelter and asylum to these persecuted ethnic people. This callous steps have taken by India has raised some questions regarding ethics and values of Indian foreign policy. But it is comprehensible that if India would take any strong position in favor of Rohingya can escort stain relations between two sides. Myanmar is a gateway of North East Asian region which location is strategically very crucial. For the development of India’s North East region Myanmar is very important. India has signed several agreements with Myanmar to boost the various aspects such as trade and investments, commerce, natural resources, education, culture, tourism and some other areas. Hence in the consideration of all these things India has thought of to take very pragmatic decisions. In my view India has been taking its steps very carefully. India is offering huge financial assistance and stuffs of basic necessities to Bangladesh on the Humanitarian ground. It has also appealed to Myanmar to take certain steps to finish the crisis.

Keywords: Ethnic, India, Myanmar, Rohingya, MGC

Introduction

India and Myanmar have got the robust and rugged relationship in their own legacy. They have shared long historical, cultural, ethnic and religious background together. Concerning as the soil of Buddha, India has been receiving the pilgrims from Myanmar. The expansion of Buddhism directly from India to Myanmar has vehemently impacted the people of this country. Cultural contacts among various races and ethnic groups more than 2,000 years have concluded in the advancement of diverse ethnic settled down in the lowland plains and the mountainous frontier zones. The latest report of United Nations has revealed that the expected population of Myanmar is 54,935,098 as of September 17, 2017 ^[1]. <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/myanmar-population/>

Myanmar is a multi- religious country. Majority of Myanmar’s population around 88 percent follows the Theravada Buddhism especially by the Bamar, Rakhine, Shan, Mon, Karen people and Chinese ethnic group. Minority Ethnic groups Such as the Chin, Kachin and Kren people exercise the Christianity represents the population of 6.2 %. Other ethnic groups such as the Rohingya but also Indians, Malays and other minorities constitute the population of 4.3 % and the representation of Hinduism is approximately 0.5 % particularly by Burmese Indians ^[2].

According to the Singhvi Committee revealed in 2004 has anticipated that there are about 2.9 million PIO’s in Myanmar, of which 2.5 million people belong to Indian Origin (PIO),

Before the annexation of Burma, recently this is known as Myanmar as an integral part of the British Indian Empire in 1886, this country was not a part of combined states. But the British separated Burma from the British Indian Empire in 1937. Furthermore British allowed many aboriginal groups living in the border line territory to establish their own administrative set up. The government of Myanmar endeavored to integrate various ethnic groups into one nation. The formation of nation building was based on the Burmans majority’s culture, religion and language. Minority ethnic groups started protest against these policies. After the independence still Myanmar is suffering from huge ethnic crisis. The Minority class is fighting for their own rights and fair treatment ^[3]. among all these ethnic groups “Rohingya” is one, their existence have become vulnerable in Myanmar. They are forced to flee from the country looking outside for the shelter food and cloths.

At the Indian part, the territorial propinquity of the two sides has facilitated advanced and maintains pleasant relations and developed people to people contact. Both sides share 1600 Km long land boundary and a maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal ^[4]. The geographical proximity of these two states offered significant strategic relationship between two sides. Myanmar’s territory touches the south territory of the Indian states namely, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. Myanmar has considered as a gateway of Southeast Asian countries. In 1951 both sides signed the treaty of friendship after which the foundation of relationship between

two countries became strong. More meaningful relationship was established during the visit of the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1987. In 90s India took the initiative steps to nurture far-reaching economic and strategic relations with countries of Southeast Asian nations in respect of prove itself as a regional power. Secondly, India noticed the supremacy of the People's Republic of China. In 1991 during the tenure of Prime Minister P.V Narsimha Rao, India developed the concept of "Look East" Policy and vigorously followed by the successive government in order to forming sturdy economic and commercial links and expanding strategic and security cooperation [5].

The relationship of two sides more enhanced and augmented after the signing of the trade agreement in 1994. After coming into the power Prime Minister Narendra Modi focused on some important policies like "Neighbourhood First" and "Act East" policy. But in this paper I have tried to critically examine that critical situation of Rohingya and the India's stand. Recently in September, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited to Myanmar for two days which was followed by his earlier ASEAN-related visit in November 2014. This visit took place amidst some of the violence has been going on between the Rohingya militants and the Myanmar security forces. Rohingya militants are fighting under the aegis of the lately formed Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army now identified as a "terrorist group" against government and security outpost in northern Rakhine state. These attacks and persecutions have laid down hundreds of deaths, incendiarism, and burning of villages displacement of thousands of people from Rakhine to Bangladesh and awful break down in food and humanitarian supplies [6]. The clear stand of India on Rohingya crisis was not expressed unequivocally during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

There are many questions have raised by the Indian think tanks, policy makers and the researchers that India which is known for its generosity and benevolent nature is disappearing from its inherent values and ethics. Is India kicking off its dream of compassion, care and civility. Many of thinkers expressed their views that nitpicking bureaucracy, security and strategic think tanks must have taken such an arduous decision. This is against the humanity. These intellectuals have convinced to the leadership of India on the basis of that a futuristic India does not need of overthrown and defeated people like Rohingya. It has been really disappointing and opposition to the values inclusiveness that India stands for [7].

Nehingpao Kipgen argues in his article "Can India ignore the Rohingya crisis" that over 379,000 Rohingya have run off from Myanmar to Bangladesh. Further he said India should take initiative steps and come forward to help the refugees. Not only as a regional power but also as the largest democracy in the world, there is some expectancy that India should help Rohingya at least on humanitarian grounds. India is historically known for its generosity and magnanimity [8].

In the mid of this crisis, the government of India decided to deport Rohingya Muslim approximately 40000, back to Myanmar together with those who are registered with the UN refugee agency. Union home minister Kiren Rijiju gave surly sound and alarming sound regarding the deportation of the Rohingya Muslims. He responded in a question that Rohingya are illegal migrant in India. They have no basis to live here [9].

Further he said we can't prevent the registration of Rohingya as a refugee but we are not a signatory to the 1951 refugee Convention or its 1967 protocol and does not have a national refugee protection frame work. Nevertheless India has been providing asylum to a large number of refugees from neighboring states such as Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Myanmar and respects the UNHCR [10]. But after criticizing by the UNHCR central government's decision regarding the deportation of Rohingya Muslim to Myanmar has diluted.

In this research paper I have deliberately tried to focus on the some delicate issues why is India warding off its steps in favour of Rohingya while did a lot for refugees in the past. Such kind of strenuous decisions, never made in Indian history whether a Nehruvian regime or an era of Indira Gandhi. Both endorsed the ethics of hospitality, principle of "Atithi Devo Bhava". They followed the idea of India as a home of refugees and hospitality. Nehru supported audaciously support Dalai Lama to make to make a home here. Indira Gandhi played a historical role on the issue East Pakistan refugees fled to India in 1971. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, it had provided shelter thousands of refugees from Myanmar and not provided only basic necessities but also provide the significant platform to sustain the democratic movement. But India is very scrupulous about "security threat". India's leadership is contemplating that Rohingya comprises a threat to India's safety. Some other important things we should underline in the backdrop of India's grave decision.

Firstly, who are the Rohingya?

They are the world's most tormented minority, belong to the Sunni Muslim sect. they cover the one third population of Rakhine state Myanmar. They have been harassing and persecuting by the Myanmar Army. They have also been afflicted by the majority of the Buddhist. They are forced to live their life as a slave poorly oppressed by the government. They are completely ignored deprived from the basic necessities and treated by the numerous discriminatory laws. [11] Ethnic minority Rohingya issue is so fragile, crack down on them was done by Burmese military junta in 1982. They are denied citizenship. They had claimed that Rohingya were not the part of the original ancestors of Burmese society. They lost all those rights which they could have got as a citizen of Myanmar. Their all basic facilities such as access to health, education ect taken away. Government have justified the decisions have been taken, that Rohingya are illegal migrants came from Bangladesh they were not enlisted under the 135 official ethnic groups [12]. Unfair rules and laws of Myanmar government have been compelling to hundreds of thousands of Rohingya to run away from the country since the late 1970s. Recent violent attacks by the Military forces on them have created very critical issue. They are fired their home. Stateless and homeless Rohingya Muslim is compelled leave the place. Causes behind the violent attacks of military forces are the response to a series of armed attacks by Arakan Rohingya Salvation army (ARSA) on police and army posts in which more than hundred people died. Battling between the insurgent and military forces stipulated to flee thousands of Rohingya to Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and they are also looking for some other countries for asylum [13].

Complexities for Bangladesh to cope with Rohingya Refugees

Rohingya has been flushing out to Bangladesh after the violent attack of military forces. Rohingya Muslims are killed, women are raped and distorted her body and children are murdered. Military forces have moved towards the silted, capital of Rakhine, forcing to hundreds of thousands of people cross the 271 Km boundary to Bangladesh. People have ignored the fear of drowning and commenced the journey through the bay Bengal to reach the Bangladesh shore. But not everyone is lucky to accomplish their journey. Police has recovered hundred of bodies from the sea. Bangladesh has been receiving new arrivals from 25 August 2017 onwards every day. Among the total refugee around 60 percent of the children, a prediction by the UNICEF on September 14^[14].

The UN Migration Agency, International Organisation for migration has appealed for an immediate fund of \$18 million for humanitarian assistance. Bangladesh is facing severe problem of space shortage and limited resources. With the help of International committee of the Red Cross, Bangladesh has proposed that Myanmar should maintain security in Rakhine under the supervision of International relief agency. It has also appealed the international community to put pressure on Myanmar to discontinuation of violent them. Since 2012 thousands of Rohingya fled their homes, became asylum seeker and looking for shelter and home in some other countries such as Bangladesh, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia. This time the Myanmar military forces have said, it aimed only to cleansing "Terrorist", the asylum seekers have said insolent objectives to push the Rohingya out of Myanmar. But no matter why such kind of persecution and oppression is conducting and who are conducting but ultimately but is "genocide".

India's concern over Rohingya crisis

Lately, a worrisome crisis erupted in Myanmar has drawn the attention of most of the international thinkers, policy makers, strategists, and the international organisations. In fact neighbouring countries of Myanmar will not be separated from the impact of this crisis. As far as the matter of India, it is axiom that it can't be drift away from the outcome of this ghastly situation. But the central government of India has not yet taken any kind of initiative steps on the issue of Rohingya Muslims. After this, some debates and discussions have started among the writers, thinkers, security analysts and even policy makers about the government role at the international platform. More concerning thing is that despite taking the courageous steps regarding Rohingya, Indian government has tried to raise the issue of deportation of Rohingya refugees from the country. The utterance started by deliberately deportation of unfortunate Rohingya refugees would undermine the image on International scenario. Many questions have been arising on the Indian foreign policy in the Modi regime. Has India forgotten the idea of India, which is known for the home of refugees. It is a country which offered the home for to the Parsis, the Tibetan, and the Jews cannot deport the minority people back where this group of already being persecuting, oppressing and tormenting. Such kind of callous steps have been executing by India is against the idea "Atithi Devo Bhava". If India is doing such thing the idea of

India is being threatened today.

Although all discussions are still going on but recently main concerning point of India is "Potential Security Threat". In other words I can say India is adopting more pragmatic approach today than earlier. No doubt Rohingya Muslims have been tormenting, persecuting and oppressing in their own home. They are being force to abandon their own home, people, village and even country looking outside for shelter. But India has to take some steps wisely by considering some domestic and foreign issues.

Undoubtedly, India has unique history to provide asylum many people came from different countries offered every kind of securities and necessities. But today's scenario has been changed. India has become overpopulated country, struggling for offering basic necessities food, cloth, shelter, education and jobs to the citizen of its own country. Historically India has followed the idea of "Atithi Devo Bhava". But there is limit to Atithi. India cannot accommodate the hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers without triggering any kind of socio economic tensions^[15].

Secondly, earlier 40000 Rohingya Muslim came to India, settled in Jammu Kashmir are really considered as potential security threat to India. This is questionable that each of 40000 Rohingya Muslim accounts for threat to India's safety or each of them is guilty of committing crimes against peace. But there are some reasons have been formed in this region compelling to believe in such things. Most of Rohingya have even made Aadhar card and Pan Card and settled there but nobody is raising voice against them, which is a big threat to our safety. Article 370 of the India Constitution grants more autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir in relation to the Centre than other states are offered. Allowing any one -Indian to take up residence in the state is a "total violation of the constitution" because the document of accession does not grant foreigners. In October 2016, major attack done by a group of Rohingya Muslims to Myanmar border guards have adequate proof to link with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan and also have links with Hafeez Saeed. There are enough evidences related to Pakistan ISI supporting Rohingya terror groups^[16].

India's stand on Rohingya Muslim from Economic perspective

India has revealed the opinion on Rohingya immigration that if it will offer asylum them or accommodate them as a refugees, would become the reason of heavy economic burden. Some of the leaders have said country is not in a position to admit the burden of Rohingya Muslim. But the stability in Myanmar is much needed because of various reasons.

The mainstay of the economy of North East India is agriculture. Small scale of industries such as plywood factory, sawmills, fruit preservation, etc. exist but their tiny role in the economy does not bear much significance. Myanmar can safely serve of the consumer goods and can accomplish the need of basic necessities for the peoples of India's Northeastern states. It will take less time and less cost to fulfill the need of this region than any other route of Indian region. Second factor is that India's North East region is abundant in natural resources in terms of forests and minerals, India is

contemplating to forming Special Economic Zones in its northeast region and think of to invite foreign investors from ASEAN countries. Thirdly, from the energy point of view Myanmar is bestowed with abundant energy deposits of natural resources gas in offshore areas. One of the most significant offshore area is located in Rakhine province namely the Shwe gas field. China has been making plan to extract the natural gas from this area. India can also get the advantage from this field ^[17]. It is true that Government of India is forbidding Rohingya Muslim to influx in Indian Territory as refugees. But we can't deny that the central government is projecting several plans to assist Rohingya Muslim in Bangladesh. Indian government has launched "Operation Insaniyat" to assist Rohingya refugees who have influxed in Bangladesh.

Physical Connectivity

A present connectivity between India- Myanmar and other ASEAN region is not fully developed. A lot of project is in pipeline. Trilateral Highway Project is one of the significant project under three countries involved namely India-Myanmar-Thailand. This project was initially launched under the auspice of MGC but later unify under the transport sector of the BIMSTEC. Basically Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) is group of six countries in which India and Myanmar both sides are the member of including with four other countries of ASEAN countries. ^[18] On the land connectivity, Myanmar railways network enables to access railway transportation from Kalyan to Thanbyuzayat. India and Myanmar have big projects for increasing physical connectivity between two countries. Another significant connectivity project is Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit facility visualizes connectivity between Indian port on the eastern sea board and Sittw port in Myanmar. The main concerning point is that Sittwe is located Rakhine province of Myanmar. Unless there is stability in this region, not any kind of project will move ahead especially developmental work will interrupted in North East India. For hydro-electric power India has shown strong interest in the construction of a major hydro electric power station at Tamanthi an estuary of the Chindwin River in Sagain region, Myanmar.

Share common interest via multi-lateral forum

In order to establishing strong penetration in the South East Asian region India is surmounting relations with Myanmar and other South East Asian countries step by step. Two countries are sharing multilateral forum and multi lateral projects together such as ASEAN, MGC, BIMSTEC and BCIM. With the help of these organizations and projects India wants to take political, economic, security edge in this region. India wants to augment the process of economic integration with increasing the trade and investment in this region. For increasing the people to people contact India and Myanmar have focused in the sector of tourism, culture, education as well as transports and communication ^[19].

Security Cooperation

Myanmar has significantly cooperated with India in the containment and eradication of the insurgency in the Northeast region of the republic of India. Successful joint

operations have been effectively done in the past against the Naga separatists on the Indian side between India and Myanmar. Both sides have been faithfully dealing with non-traditional security issues such as drug trafficking, arms smuggling, extremism, and terrorism. At the national and local level, some of the important steps have been linked with regular meetings of both sides in the cooperation and coordination of the resolving such kind of problems as mentioned earlier. In May 2014 India and Myanmar signed a MoU on border cooperation which provides a framework for security cooperation and exchange of information between Indian and Myanmar security agencies. One of the most significant provision is that of conduct of coordinated patrols on their respective sides of the international border and the maritime boundary by the armed forces of the two sides. ^[20] In September 2017, Indian Prime Minister Modi went to Myanmar, both sides signed 11 agreement in various sectors, under which was one was connected with the maritime security cooperation ^[21]. So it can be said both nations have developed a certain level of maturity to cope with the security and Non- security threats.

International Denouncement of Rohingya Crisis

The ongoing Rohingya crisis has been condemning worldwide except China. It is the only country who has come forward in to the action taken by Myanmar military forces against Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). During the recent visit of Myanmar Prime Minister Narendra Modi was quite silent to addressing on this humanitarian catastrophe. But Ministry of External Affairs firmly said New Delhi has expressed "deeply concern" about this tormented Rohingya has been escaping from their own home and looking outside asylum. We would appeal that the situation has risen in Rakhine province of Myanmar should be tackled with restraint and maturity. Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressed the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on 22nd September 2017 said we are helping Rohingya will a "Heavy Heart". She address from the Podium that I have appeared here just after meeting the persecuted, tormented, distressed, hungry and hopeless Rohingya. Recently we are providing food and shelters over lakhs Rohinya who were to escape from Myanmar. Further Hasina appealed to UN general assembly that safe Zone that could be created inside Myanmar under the supervision United Nations ^[22]. Even US president Trump wants that United Nation Security Council should take strong and swift action to end the Rohingya Crisis continuing in Myanmar said the Vice President Mike Pence, also affirm that the crisis a threat to the world ^[23].

After paying no attention for a long time, in 72nd General Assembly meeting UN secretary General Antonio Guterres, first time stimulate the issue of Rohingya Muslim. He said grave violence continued in Rakhine can be described as "Ethnic Cleansing". Special meeting held the fifteen members of Security Council at the request of Sweden and Britain to discuss the Rohingya Crisis and were agreed to condemn publically. A number of Muslim majority countries such as Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia, not only denouncing persecution going on in Myanmar but also joint hands together to "Rohingya Muslims" ^[24].

Conclusion

From the above discussions, I have tried to focus the every aspect of India Myanmar Relations. Both sides are very significant for each other. Basically, for India, Myanmar is strategically very important. Both countries have maintained healthy relations. Both countries have been sharing between similar kind of interests associated with political, social, economical, trade and commerce, cultural, educational. A lot of projects have signed between two sides which could be fruitful for the development of North east Region. So it is the first priority of both sides to build welcoming environment for each other so that all plans could be turn into action. Some debates and discussions are going on inside the country upon India's Stand.

But there is no strong reason behind that. India is completely following the "idea of India", the Principle of "Atithi Devo Bhava". India has been providing economic assistance to Rohingya Muslim fled Myanmar to Bagladesh by their perilous journey on the humanitarian ground. Obviously India has bounded with some concerning points. Like India can't compromise with country's security with any cost. Economically, it is true India is overpopulated country already it has provided asylum to 40000 Rohingya Muslim. Thirdly India's some major developmental projects with Myanmar have signed. So it is very difficult to India to take any kind of straight forward decision against Myanmar Military force and government, which can laid down the hiccups between both countries. India doesn't want to create any kind of unwelcoming environment between both sides which would interrupt the developmental work of both countries. So India has to take very restraint steps and balanced approach regarding Rohingya issues, followed pragmatic position then only it can maintain its leadership position in this region.

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