

Status of Bihari Communities in Bangladesh: A Study on Two Selective Bihari Camps

Author's name: Arifur Rahaman
Graduate Student, Department of Sociology, University of Dhaka
Email: arif067181@gmail.com
Cell: 01816067181
Address: 285/2, Dhanmondi 8/A, Dhaka-1209

Abstract

Biharis, Urdu speaking Muslim minority in Bangladesh, were the victim of the partition of India and Pakistan followed by a communal riot. They migrated in Bangladesh assuming it as a part of Pakistan, home of Muslims. But the independence of Bangladesh displaced them again, as they were Pakistani in a primordial sense. Lots of attempts were made by the national and international organizations to send them to Pakistan, their ideological home. But due to diplomatic failure and several other reasons, only a few people could repatriate, left majority behind. Their difference of language and culture, along with unlike communal sense, Biharis could never assimilate here. The government of Bangladesh, considering their despondent condition, declared them as a citizen of Bangladesh. But there is still a difficulty for achieving full functioning citizenship status since they have not fully integrated into the society as a whole. This study aims to reveal the current condition of the Bihari taking into account their current status and degree of assimilation to Bengali society and culture. For revealing the perceptible condition of Biharis, this research adopts a qualitative approach. It takes the stratified sampling method to collect data. Data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews. A total of 20 people were being interviewed inside of the Geneva camp and outside. The study suggests that citizenship status was given for the political purpose, not actually intended for their rehabilitation or wellbeing. The citizenship status doesn't help to eradicate their fear of being treated as "others" or a minority group. Their assimilation to Bangladeshi society and culture, however, deepened very recently. A sense of communal harmony prevails between Bengalese and Biharis, except for a few exemptions. This paper further argues that the issue of Bihari hasn't reaped enough attention from the government as well as international bodies than it's needed for altering their condition.

Key Words: Biharis, Identity, Citizenship, Home, Repatriation.

Introduction

Urdu speaking Bihari communities have a very peculiar status in Bangladesh. Their identity doesn't fit the condition as ethnic minority, refugee, diaspora etc. category. They were labeled as "stranded Pakistanis" considering they are the people of Pakistan (ideological home of Muslims after partition) who were left behind by their country. But Pakistan hardly recognize these people as Pakistanis which made Biharis stay in the land of Bangladesh with an uncertain future. On the other hand, the government of Bangladesh gave them opportunity to live here permanently while offering them citizenship. Due to reluctance of majority of Biharis, Government of Bangladesh (GOB) tried to repatriate these people to their 'home' with the help of some international organizations. Due to their economic and political crisis, Pakistan was not willing to bring those people to their land. They became the victim of two divergent streams of nationalism (Hashmi, 1998), reinforced by the war of independence in 1971.

In 1947, the British government decided to consign the independence of British India to the government of India and Pakistan, under the Indian independence act. This was announced soon after the victory of the Labor Party in the British general election of July 1945, amid the realization that the British state, devastated by war, could not afford to hold on to its over-extended empire. India and Pakistan won independence in August 1947, following a nationalist struggle lasting nearly three decades (Bates, 2011). Religion was the determining factor in separating two nations, two-nationⁱ theory promulgated this distinction. However, the two nations' theory was criticized by some intellectuals. Some argued that the two nations' theory was wrong and absurd and it was proved with the advent of Bangladesh in 1971. The partition displaced between 10–12 million people along religious lines, creating overwhelming refugee crises in the newly constituted dominions; there was large-scale violence, with estimates of the loss of life accompanying or preceding the partition disputed and varying between several hundred thousand and two million (Talbot & Singh, 2009; Cited in Nair, 2010).

Between August and November 1947, about 600,000 were killed and hundreds of thousands injured. Millions fled, literally to save their lives from the murderous mobs engaging in orgies of physical violence. During this period some 7,200,000 Muslims emigrated from India while 5,500,000 Hindus and Sikhs fled from Pakistan, according to the official records. (Khalidi, 1998). Most estimates of the numbers of people who crossed the boundaries between India and Pakistan in 1947 range between 10 and 12 million, which have led many commentators to describe the movement as the largest migration of its kind in world history to that point (Brass, 2003).

Today's Bihari people were the victim of this partition who migrated from some provinces of India. Afraid of being killed by the militant Indian Hindu nationalists group, Biharis made their way to East and West Pakistan. In both parts, they were welcomed and acclaimed as Muhajir. But soon they became unwelcomed and unwanted by the people of East Pakistan as a result of their movement for independence. Though they were given citizenship by GOB, the promise of citizenship have never been fulfilled. They were alleged of supporting West Pakistan in the war of independence which made them the enemy of Bangladeshi people. As they were favored and aided by the West Pakistani elites, they went against the division of Pakistan. After Bangladesh became independent, the Supreme Court in 1972 ruled that the Urdu-speaking

Community in the country were eligible for citizenship. The Government of Bangladesh (GOB) declared Presidential Order 149 in 1972, offering citizenship to the Urdu-speaking community for the first time (Haider, 2018:31). However, many of them preferred repatriation, and thus attempted to migrate to Pakistan with little success; the majority of them were unable to do this, as it was not met with positive support from Pakistan. As a consequence, the greater number of the Urdu-speakers could not go away from the country; rather they became stranded and were later relocated to settlements throughout Bangladesh. Until 2008, the legal status of the community was in question, but the Supreme Court of Bangladesh ultimately ruled that all the Urdu-speakers living in the country had the right to Bangladeshi citizenship (Muquim, 2017:2). But the fate of Biharis has never changed as they are still deprived of their basic rights and opportunities entitled to their citizenship.

This paper will briefly discuss the historical origin of Bihari people in Bangladesh and will reflect on their current condition.

Methodology

This study employs the qualitative method. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The semi structured interview method was adopted to get a detailed idea about the identity, cultural boundary and cultural practices of Bihari people. The qualitative method offers a broader view of any particular issue. Qualitative research seeks to tell the story of a particular group's experiences in their own words and is therefore focused on narrative, not on numbers like quantitative methods.

At the beginning, Mohammadpur Geneva camp, Dhaka was selected considering the access and convenience. But due to an incident happened in the Bihari camp, induced by the claims for free electricity, created an anarchic situation in the camp. The camp office (SPGRC) was closed and people were feared the incident. Talking to any stranger was measured as jeopardy to them. Bearing in mind, I opted to collect data from the Kalshi Bihari camp (Mirpur, Dhaka) instead of Mohammadpur. However, at the very last minute, after collecting some data from Kalshi camp, I had the chance to collect data from Mohammadpur camp too. Mohammadpur Geneva camp located in Dhaka north, Mohammadpur area of Dhaka city and Kalshi Bihari camp, located in Mirpur, Dhaka.

The stratified random sampling method was used in the study. Among the respondents, 10 people were from the young generation, age ranges between 15 to 30 years, and rest 10 people were older people. I have conducted all of the interviews in both camps. In-depth interviews included the current state of identity formation of Bihari people, factors influencing their identity formation, the role of different institutions etc. questions.

For this study, both primary and secondary data has been used. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews, as I already stated. Secondary data were collected from the academic journal, newspaper, video documentary, archives, etc. medium. All of the secondary data will be collected online from Google search and various journals and archives. I will be careful while selecting any content mainly its reliability.

During the data collection, I was able to record only a few interviews, due to not having permission. Other interviews were written shortly. After collecting the data, all the recorded data were transcribed and written in the Microsoft Word file. Other written interviews were re-written too. After writing all the interviews, I focused on coding. All data were coded into few categories like identity, identity ambiguity, relation with Bengali, education facility, citizenship status etc. code. Then, those codes were used for analysis.

I put importance on honesty and transparency to make my study more rigorous. I told the purposes of the study to the respondents before conducting my interview. The participation of the respondents was voluntary. No one was forced or offered anything in exchange. I recorded some interviews after getting permission from them. If they don't permit me to do so, I didn't do such. I never hide my identity, rather I explain all ins and outs to them.

Objectives

Each Sociological study must contain some precise objectives which will guide the research. In this study, my primary objective was to find out the status of Bihari people in Bangladesh. There are other objectives too, these are the following:

1. To draw out the origin and transformation of identity of Bihari community in Bangladesh.
2. To find out the political and legal status of Bihari people in Bangladesh
3. To see the present relationship between Bengalis and Biharis

Chronological History of Biharis in Bangladesh

The Indian subcontinent was divided based on two nations theory which fostered distinction between Hindus and Muslims. As a direct result of this, nearly one million Urdu speaking Muslims from Indian provinces made their way to East Pakistan. The majority of them came from Bihar state of India to save themselves from the communal riot broke out after partition. Stimulated by extreme nationalist sense, Hindu mutineers killed many Muslims caused their existence in those area very vulnerable and destitute (Muquim, 2017:17). The influx of the Biharis at the beginning was not envied by the Bengali people, as an expression of Muslim communal feelings.

After the partition, a large number of Hindu elites migrated to India which made Bengali Muslims and Biharis seize their lands. During that time, the emigrants from India was not considered as foreign or minority. Communal harmony was prevailing in the country. Above all, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman welcomed Biharis in East Pakistan (Chatterjee, 1973:82). Pakistan was created as an ideological homeland for Muslims and the secession of Bangladesh was based on nationalistic grounds as a homeland for Bengalese. Thus the ideological homeland for the Bihari Muslims was Pakistan and the Urdu language united them culturally with Pakistan. The Biharis looked upon the new state as a realization of their dreams as well as an opportunity to fulfill their hopes and aspirations. All these factors led Biharis to think this is their new homeland, this is Pakistan. Biharis belonged to the skilled working class primarily employed on the railways. On arrival in East Pakistan, Biharis found work as small traders,

clerks, civil service officials, skilled railway and mill workers, and doctors. Many were appointed by Pakistani officials to replace educated Hindus in administrative jobs and in the mills (Minority Rights Group, 2018).

But, by early 1948, the first Governor-General of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah proclaimed in Dhaka, the current capital of Bangladesh, that “Urdu would only be the state language of Pakistan, and anyone opposing this would be an enemy of Pakistan” (Wolpert, 1984:359). Bengali people opposed Jinnah which resulted in language movement in 1952.

Biharis used to consider them superior over the Bengalis because of the similarity between them and West Pakistanis, which sometimes transformed into ethnic conflict (Hashmi, 1998). The co-existence, however, failed to create communal harmony because of the development of Bengali traditions and culture.

Development of nationalism in West and East Pakistan had different origin. According to Sen, A. (1975) Pakistani Muslim nationalism was originated by educated middle class who were mainly from landed aristocracy. In contrary, Bengali nationalism was not limited to a particular class of people (though led by a petit bourgeois). Bengali nationalism was inspired and broadened by the exploitations of West Pakistani elites by economic and cultural means. This distinction led to a hostile relationship between West and East Pakistanis and created the base of Bengali’s claim for an independent nation.

Biharis felt isolated and alienated in East Pakistan. For their distinction, they felt an association with West Pakistanis, because of language and cultural similarities. West Pakistani elites in East Pakistan convinced them to support West Pakistan offered them with better opportunities and privileges. The influential West Pakistani elite viewed the Bengali Muslims as “semi-Hindus, pro-Indian and disloyal to Pakistan (Sen, 1999). They were misguided by the West Pakistani elites (who seized the power in East) and their conflict with local Bengali people became inevitable in upcoming movements of East Pakistanis for liberation (Hashmi, 1998).

Because of their natural relationship with West Pakistan, they supported united Pakistan. They supported quasi-military command in 1960, eventually supported united Pakistan in general election of 1970. Their open support for West Pakistan made them unwanted, hated and despicable in East Pakistan, which finally demanded freedom from West Pakistan. However, the dissatisfaction and conflict continuous between Bengalis and Biharis, where Biharis were strongly backed by the West Pakistani elites. Bengali political elites condemned the idea that Urdu speakers got opportunities and privileges in a Bengali majority territory.

When tensions between East and West Pakistan augmented to a maximum in 1971, the Muslim League, the religiously aligned political party of West Pakistan (Muquim, 2017:30), take advantage of the community’s emotional state about religion and language, in its own concern. The Urdu speakers, Biharis, then strongly supported the Pakistan militia, including armed paramilitary groups like the Razakars, which was widely condemned for mass killing in East Pakistan (Muquim, 2017: 30). East Pakistan finally gained its independence after 9 months of

the war, with some help from India. Not surprisingly, the Urdu-speaking population became susceptible and uncovered as it was confronted with the hatred of the Bengali people for them supporting West Pakistan for a long time. Bengali people were bursting out of a high spirit of nationalism, killed almost 100,000 Urdu speakers during the postwar period as reported by the Sunday Times of London (cited in Hashmi, 1998:21).

After Bangladesh's independence, the majority of the Urdu-speakers were left out of employment from their works and trades by numerous pretenses. Children were expelled from schools, and people's bank accounts, annuities, and savings were taken away and grabbed by the new regime. Their households and trades were proclaimed as abandoned or enemy properties and were consequently confiscated under the veil of the law (Muquim, 2017:26). Urdu speakers were hoping for repatriation to West Pakistan, but Pakistan's loss in the war and impoverished economic conditions made them not being cooperative in this respect. Biharis asked the Indian army for asylum, as they were feared by the Bengali militant, but they were rejected (Sen, 2000).

Initially, they were offered Bangladeshi citizenship, but their decision was polarized. Article 2 of the Bangladesh Citizenship (Temporary Provisions) Order (President Order 149 of 1972) provides them with citizenship like Bengali people. Some of them accepted citizenship and assimilated into Bangladeshi society (Haider, 2018:32). The rest of them rejected the citizenship and preferred repatriation to Pakistan. This rejection again brings up the issue of their identity. The question was again posed to them whether they should be considered as citizens of this country as some of them still did not show their allegiance to Bangladesh. Bangladesh Government does not want to consider those Biharis as citizens who are now residing in the camps. So whether they are citizens or not remains a debatable issue.

UNHCR involved in the process of repatriation by the request of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. ICRC further worked with UNHCR to enlist the name of the Biharis who wish to repatriate and rejected the citizenship (Haider, 2018:33). ICRC established some of 66 camps all over Bangladesh for their protection (RMRRU). In August 1973, the government of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh signed the New Delhi agreement (Sen, 1999). The agreement was signed to solve the problems of stateless people. As an outcome of the agreement, Pakistan agreed to 170,000 Urdu-speakers were initially repatriated to Pakistan with support from the ICRC (Samad, 2015). But the Bhutto government, from the very beginning, was reluctant to repatriate the Urdu-speaking Biharis due to domestic resistance and political consideration (Mantoo, 2013:125). Owing to economic and financial burdens, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman brought up the 'Bihari' issue in the Third World Committee of the United Nations General Assembly in December 1974, and in the Commonwealth Leader's conference in Jamaica in May 1975 (*Ibid*:126). After the regime of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the military government of General Ziaur Rahman restarted diplomatic efforts with his Pakistani counterpart to solve the issue of stranded Bihari people. Following his Pakistan visit in 1977, Pakistan's Foreign Secretary visited Dhaka and agreed to take 25,000 "hardship cases" through the international agencies, but only 4,790 Urdu-speakers were repatriated. In July 1978, Bangladesh Foreign Secretary visited Pakistan and urged the officials to reactivate the repatriation process. But this time, the

Pakistani government reduced the number of Biharis from 25,000 to 16,000 (Haider, 2003). With the help of UNHCR, another 2800 Biharis had been repatriated in September 1979 (Haider, 2003: 126). With the help of UNHCR, the entire year of 1979 saw 9,872 people being repatriated again to Pakistan before the fund running out (Sen, 2000:56). In 1980, a former British Member of Parliament, Lord David Ennals, met President Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh and President Zia-ul-Huq of Pakistan; this followed UNHCR helping repatriate another 7,000 people (Mantoo, 2003:126). In 1982, 750 families, including 4,800 people were able to return to Pakistan.

After a series of different diplomatic initiatives, a very important development took place in 1983 when President Zia-ul-Haq publicly announced in Karachi that Pakistan would not have any reservations about the repatriation of stranded Bihari people from Bangladesh if the necessary fund were provided by donors (Mantoo, 2013:126). Then Foreign Minister of Pakistan paid an official visit to Dhaka and said after the conference that Pakistan was thinking about taking 50,000 more Biharis according to the second Delhi Agreement. In the meantime, with the financial support of Lord Ennals Resettlement Trust 6,000 Biharis were repatriated and resettled in Lahore in 1984.

In December 1985, President of Pakistan, Ziaul-Haq during his visit to Dhaka told a delegation of the stranded Biharis that Pakistan had already “fulfilled its legal obligation under the agreement signed in 1973 and further repatriation would only depend on the availability of huge resources required” (Haider, 2003). However, an agreement was signed between Pakistan and Rabita Ai-Alam Al-Islami (Mecca based humanitarian organization). However, for internal conflict, the Pakistan government did not respond to its orderly departure program (Sen, 2000: 58). The agreement led to the establishment of a trust, named *Rabita Trust Deed*, and appointed President Zia-ul-Haq as Chairman to mobilize funds for the repatriation of the remaining 250,000 stranded Pakistanis from Bangladesh. They collected funds for the repatriation and started processing. Unfortunately, the whole process became stuck again with the sudden death of President Zia-ul-Haq in 1988. In 1989, during her visit to Dhaka Bhutto subtly navigated clear of the Urdu-speaking Community issue by identifying it as “a very complex problem”, and further disregarded them during her stay (Muquim, 2017:25). The Benazir government was under heavy pressure from various Sindhi nationalist organizations such as the Sindh National Alliance, the Awami National Party, the Sindh Student Federation and the Democratic Students’ Federation to oppose the process of repatriation of Biharis (Mantoo, 2013:127).

By the mid-1990s the repatriation levels acutely declined, and only about 325 people were again repatriated to Pakistan in January 1993 (Sen, 2000:61). This happened because of Nawaz Sharif, who assumed office as Prime Minister of Pakistan initially in 1990 and had usually supported the Urdu-speaking Community. Sharif reconstituted the Trust, and the Punjab province was prepared to accommodate everyone from Bangladesh (Muquim, 2017:25). After Nawaz Sharif, Benazir Bhutto again came in power in 1993. Though they uphold the promise of repatriation initially, the whole program suffered from various barriers. Apparently, the repatriation program stopped in 1993, after 28 years, left majority behind. A total of 178,069 Biharis could migrate to Pakistan (See Figure: 1).

Estimated Figures of Repatriation, 1972-1999

Year	Number of Biharis Repatriated
1973-74	163,072
1979	9,872
1982	4,800
10 January 1993	325
Total	178,069

Figure 1: Estimated repatriation of Biharis to Pakistan

Source: The News, 8 September 1992; The Guardian, 11 January 1993; MRG, op.cit., 30; Proceeding Report, International Conference, op.cit., Annexure IV Was Originally taken from Sen (1999:542).

As 178,069 could be made their way to Pakistan with the help of various international organizations like UNHCR and ICRC, they left behind a large number of people, approximately 300,000, settled in various camps around Bangladesh. They were settled in a different part of Bangladesh (see figure 2). Figure 3 shows a glimpse of Mohammapdpur camp. Figure 4 illustrates all the settlements of Biharis in Bangladesh. Figure 2 illustrates all the Biharis settlements in Bangladesh.

Area	No. of Families	No. of Persons	Area	No. of Families	No. of Persons
Dhaka	12,918	69,767	Thakugaon	NA	NA
Narayanganj	1,452	7,289	Niphamari	NA	NA
Sayedpur	9,017	69,234	Parbotipur	271	1,632
Rangpur	2,538	15,879	Dhaka	1,207	7,763
Chittagong	2,652	17,302	(outside camp)		
Dinajpur	1,542	9,906	Dewanganj	109	578
Khalishpur	2,382	12,394	Rajshahi	1,185	6,829
Jessore	985	5,539	Khulna	1,029	5,864
Mymensingh	435	2,583	Bogra	898	5,319
Faridpur	104	557	Gaibandha	129	788
Rajbari	53	287			
Total	No. of families: 40,357		No. of Persons 238,093		

Figure 2 Settlement of Biharis around Bangladesh

Source: Brief on "Stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh," Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. URL: www.mofa.gov.bd The Neglected Stateless Bihari Community in Bangladesh: Victims of Political and Diplomatic Onslaught.



Figure 3 Geographical distribution of the Bihari Camps

Source: Farzana, K. (2008). The Neglected Stateless Bihari Community in Bangladesh: Victims of Political and Diplomatic Onslaught. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. Volume: 2, Issue: 1.

Political and Legal Status of Biharis in Bangladesh

There are arguments and counter-arguments over the status of the Bihari community in Bangladesh regarding whether these people are refugees, migrants, stateless people or minorities (Farzana, 2009). As Haider (2016) described, Biharis do not fall under the category of refugee. According to Article 1 A (2) of the 1951 Refugee Convention,

a refugee needs to meet the following criteria: ... owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (Refugee convention, 1951: cited in Haider, 2016; p-430).

Under the above definition, the Biharis are not refugees, because they have not fled the country of their residence. Rather, the territory of their residence has seceded from the mother country and became a separate, sovereign, and independent state (Haider, 2016).

Contrasting with some major theories of migration, Farzana (2009) stated that, Biharis are not migrants as a whole. Only some of them fall under the category especially the railway workers from the provinces of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (UP). These people were encouraged to migrate to East Pakistan by the offer from the first Pakistan President, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, to give them the designation as Central Government employees (Farzana, 2009:224).

Here, another question could be raised about whether Biharis were stateless people. Though it's still a matter of debate the attitude of Pakistan was always positive. As Farzana (2009) said:

“It is certain that the government of Pakistan never treated them as stateless people. Rather they were considered as linguistic minority people among the Bengali-speaking majority in East Pakistan. And the government of Pakistan provided them with different kinds of facilities to encourage Muslims of India to migrate to Pakistan and asked the Pakistani people to accept them cordially.” (p. 225)

Ghosal (2018) called the Bihari community “Invisible refugees”. She said that, much has been written about the Hindu refugees to India, very less is known about the Muslim refugees to Pakistan (Ghosal, 2018:59). She showed struggle of Muslim ‘returnees’ there settlement in East Pakistan, the hazards and discriminations they faced and policy of the new state of Pakistan in accepting them. It shows how the dream of “homecoming” turned into disillusionment for them. Despite belonging to the same religion, the returnee refugees had confronted issues of differences on the basis of language, culture and region in a country, which was established on the basis of one Islamic identity.

As we know, Bihari people have been displaced two times in history. Firstly, during the India–Pakistan partition in 1947. Within the new environment in Pakistan, after leaving their country of origin, these people tried hard to adjust themselves through participating in economic and political activities. In addition, when the Pakistan government formally accepted them by the Pakistan Citizenship Act, in 1951, all confusion relating to them had ended. However, less than two and a half decades later they were uprooted again for a second time, following the

emergence of Bangladesh, as East Pakistan had separated from united Pakistan to form a new state. This development marked the starting of an identity crisis for the Biharis in Bangladesh, as neither Pakistan nor Bangladesh accepted them as citizens of their country. Even after all these years of independence, Bangladesh appears to be taking revenge on those people who did not support its independence movement (Farzana, 2009:225). However, the 1959 United Nations Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, states that every “Bihari is entitled to Bangladeshi citizenship and Bangladesh cannot deny it.”ⁱⁱ

My interview with Biharis in Mohammadpur Geneva camp gave me a more comprehensive view of the status of Biharis. While some Biharis take pride in calling themselves ‘Bangladeshi’ (not because they gained citizenship in between 2005-2008, rather the reason was more socio-cultural and political in other sense). A camp dweller (44) responded this way while being asked about what they think about their legal status in Bangladesh:

“I am Bangladeshi, this is my identity and it matters most to me. I never think of myself as Pakistani or Indian. I was born here so this is my home.”

It is often said that, though often considered as a rumor, some of the Bihari people are not satisfied with their life in the camp and they expect them to be repatriated to Pakistan. But the reality, as I have experienced, is quite different. From one of my respondents, I have known that Biharis no longer aspire to repatriate to Pakistan rather they are well off here than they would be in Pakistan if they could ever go.

“You would hardly find anyone who wishes to move to Pakistan. What we will do in Pakistan? We are not acquainted with Pakistani culture. We only speak Urdu, that doesn’t necessarily mean we are Pakistani.” (30)

Trajectory of Citizenship

After independence, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman invoked general apology for all and according to Presidential order, all of the Biharis were given citizenship. The ordinance of 1972 invoked that: Article 2 of the Bangladesh Citizenship (Temporary Provisions) Order (President Order 149 of 1972)ⁱⁱⁱ provides:

“Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law, on the commencement of this Order, every person shall be deemed to be a citizen of Bangladesh,

I. Who or whose father or grandfather was born in the territories now comprised in Bangladesh and who was a permanent resident of such territories on the 25th day of March, 1971, and continues to be so resident; or,

II. Who was a permanent resident of the territories now comprised in Bangladesh on the 25 days of March, 1971, and continues to be so resident and is not otherwise disqualified for being a citizen by or under any law for the time being in force”. A plain reading of these two sub-sections would confirm the entitlement of the Biharis to citizenship of Bangladesh” (Rahman, 2015).

However, Article 2B(1) of the Bangladesh Citizenship (Temporary Provisions) Amendment Ordinance 1978 (Ordinance number 7 of 1978) added that a person shall not qualify to be a citizen of Bangladesh if he owes, affirms or acknowledges, expressly or by conduct, allegiance

to a foreign state. That Biharis opted to move to Pakistan some of them remain reluctant to stay in Bangladesh and entitled to citizenship.

Malik (2000: 19–20) shows that Article 2B(1) of the Bangladesh Citizenship (Temporary Provisions) Amendment Ordinance 1978 included a disqualification clause which stated that a person shall not be qualified to be a citizen of Bangladesh if he or she ‘owes, affirms, or acknowledges, expressly or by conduct, allegiance to a foreign state’. Apparently, those who earlier opted for Pakistan, but were unable to relocate, are treated here as disqualified for Bangladeshi citizenship.

After that On April 17, 1973, India and Bangladesh took a major step forward to break the deadlock on the humanitarian issues by setting aside the political problem of recognition (Bangladesh-India-Pakistan: Agreement On The Repatriation Of Prisoners Of War And Civilian Internees, 1974)^{iv}. UNHCR was involved in the Bihari issue at the request of the then Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The UNHCR’s effort was referred to as a “repatriation program”. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) also worked side by side with the UNHCR, registered the Biharis for their possible repatriation to Pakistan and kept them in camps for their safety. Subsequently, the two governments of Pakistan and India, with the concurrence of the government of Bangladesh, signed the New Delhi Agreement on 28 August 1973 and its accompanying memorandum. This agreement has clearly stated that:

1. [The Government of Pakistan] agrees initially to receive a substantial number of non-Bengalis (who are stated to have opted for repatriation to Pakistan) from Bangladesh.
2. [Pakistan and Bangladesh will] meet to decide what additional number of persons who may wish to migrate to Pakistan may be permitted to do so.

According to the accompanying Memorandum, Pakistan agreed to include provisions for the simultaneous repatriation of three primary groups, which were:

1. Persons who are domiciled in what was West Pakistan;
2. Employees of the Central Government (of Pakistan) and their families; and
3. Members of the divided families irrespective of their original domicile and thereafter 25,000 others who constitute hardship cases.

So, these conditions meet, all individuals who had a permanent residence in West Pakistan or temporary migrants, government employees and their families, and small portion of people in hardship cases. This ‘hardship cases’ include people with disability, orphans, widow and others who had no relative in East Pakistan.

It is observable that the question of Bihari repatriation was treated as hardship cases as they don’t fall into other categories. Government of Bangladesh failed diplomatically to come to a clear agreement for the repatriation of Biharis as a legal obligation, rather Pakistan treated Biharis as hardship cases (Gosh, 2008). Due to not having any legal obligation for taking Biharis back, Pakistan remain silent on this issue as they had many internal issues to handle after war. In 1974 Zulfikar Ali Bhutto visited Bangladesh on the invitation by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He did not much talk about the Bihari issue, so that issue remains

unresolved. Pakistan was willing to take no more than 1, 15,000 out of 4, 00,000 who, according to Bangladesh, were eligible for Pakistani citizenship. The reason was economic and political. But as there were several attempts that took place regarding the repatriation of Biharis they created hope for return. Instead of accepting the citizenship of Bangladesh they now start calling themselves “stranded Pakistanis”, with the establishment of Stranded Pakistani Repatriation Camp in 1977, stuck in Bangladesh and will go to Pakistan one day (Mantoo, 2013:125). These constant expectations made them preserve their identity as a loyal Pakistani and didn't lose their citizenship of Pakistan. Though several attempts took place to repatriate them in the 1980s and late 1990s, only a small number of Biharis could repatriate to Pakistan and the rest of them still living in Bangladesh.

In her time, Benazir Bhutto, she visited Bangladesh. She refused to discuss Biharis and once she left Bangladesh, she made it clear that the Biharis were not Pakistani citizens. It was a frontal assault on the deal her father had agreed with Bangladesh in 1972. (Ahsan, 2012). As a result of continuous rejection from Pakistan, some Biharis wished to assimilate within Bengali culture mainly second-generation wished to receive citizenship.

Abid Khan VS Government of Bangladesh

In 2003 some 10 of Biharis applied for their citizenship in the High court of Bangladesh. Those petitioners of Bihari descent moved the court to declare in favor of their right to vote after they were not registered by the Election Commission on the ground that they were residents of the Bihari settlement known as Geneva Camp in Dhaka (Paulsen, 2006: 61). The court applied for the Citizenship Order on the petitioners who were born before independence (first group) and held that “having been born in the territories now comprised in Bangladesh, they can very well claim citizenship under Article 2 clause (i) if they are not disqualified, under Article 2B. The High Court judgment conveniently divided the ten petitioners, all of whom were born in Bangladesh (or East Pakistan as the case may be) into those who were born before and after the country's independence.

After the evaluation from legal experts, the High court granted their citizenship (U.S. Committee for Refugees World Refugee Survey, 2004). This was a landmark for Biharis becoming the citizen of Bangladesh. Subsequently, Biharis were given citizenship and voting rights in 2008 approved by High court. According to the rule of High court “those who are living in Bangladesh since 1971 and born after 1971 will be considered a citizen of Bangladesh (Reuters, 2008).

Life after Citizenship

Even though Biharis were offered citizenship in 1972 by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, by President's Order 149 of 1972, roughly half a million Biharis actually opted to stay in Bangladesh and were immediately given citizenship in Bangladesh (Haider, 2018: 30). But some of them denied that offer as they expected repatriation to Pakistan which consequently made them stateless. Pakistan later took a limited number of people to Pakistan and left most of them behind. Since then, the trouble with their national identity began. Though they were never stateless, as a result of continuous negotiation and dialogue with Pakistan & Bangladeshi government, they became marginalized and deprived of many human rights. They

concentrated on limited land, their families continue to grow larger but the amount of land never increased because of their marginalized condition. As a Bihari, which is sometimes a perceived marginal status, they neither buy land nor could they afford a piece of land. This is because most of the Biharis lost their land, houses, jobs, and savings during the war of liberation and never got them back. This made them economically vulnerable, as they find it difficult to find a job with their identity as Bihari, living in Bihari camp.

Some of the respondents claimed that citizenship was given for a political purpose. Bihari voters, who obtained the ID card, claimed that candidates came to the only after they got the right to vote. They were used as a vote bank, again, they were politicized by the political elites. Some candidates never visit the camp again after being elected. Political elites manipulated them, as they alleged:

“They came to us, we're asking for votes. Once they got elected, they never came back to the camp. The ID cards were given for voting purposes. If the government approved our citizenship then why they termed us as Urdubashi in the ID card? We voted during the election of 2008, but the elected representatives never came to us again. They did nothing for us.”

After all these arduous years, they finally got their citizenship when Abid Khan and associates appealed for their citizenship rights in 2003, as I mentioned earlier. Since then they got their long-expected “identity card”, as described by a respondent from Kalshi Bihari camp:

“We got our ID card in 2005 that we had been expecting for a long time. We hoped for a better future when we got ID card” – (50)

But their hope deemed very soon. Haider (2018) stated that, despite legal assertion as a citizen of Bangladesh, Biharis has been facing discrimination in many sectors. Some of the major discrimination, as 15 respondents stated, they are not qualified for admitting in a public school, making passport, government job and purchasing land. Education is a major problem in the Bihari camp, in both Mohammadpur and Kalshi. Haider (2018; 34-35) writes “In 2011, I found that Bihari children were still often refused access to public schools, as admission requirements include nationality documents, home addresses and details of parental occupations, which many Biharis do not have”. The situation hasn't much changed in 2019. One of the respondents from Kalshi camp, 32 years old, stated:

“We have been facing many problems, some of them are apparent like our limited land and overcrowding. But the thing, I feel most necessary for us, is education. Most of the people here are illiterate not because they didn't want to study rather they didn't get the chance. We don't have access to any govt. school. There was a free school in the camp where our children could study with no fees. As you see, most of us can't afford the cost education, we sent our children there. But it was closed a few days back.”

The problem behind mass illiteracy is extreme poverty and lack of availability of schools. One free school (primary) was the Bihari camp for a long time. But recently this was closed for an unknown reason. This triggers the problem of illiteracy of the children again.

A major problem, which most of the Biharis stated, they can't make a passport. This prevents them from pursuing work abroad and refrain them from many facilities. The reason behind not

entitled to a passport was described by a respondent, 22 years old, from Mohammadpur Geneva camp:

“If we want to make a passport, we will need an electricity bill, gas bill, and a valid ID card. We don’t use formal electricity in the camp, we don’t have an electricity bill to show. Again, there is no gas connection in the camp. Further, we have our ID card but do you know it’s not valid everywhere? They categorized us as *Urdubashi* (Urdu speaker) and our address is this camp. So if you go for a job or making a passport, you would fail to do so. This ID card is not effective like Bengalis rather we are deprived despite having a valid ID card saying that we are a citizen of Bangladesh”.

Life after citizenship hasn’t much changed for Biharis, as Haider (2018:34) stated, they are not entitled to basic human rights even after they have been officially declared citizens of Bangladesh by the courts. A respondent from Mohammadpur Geneva camp said that while being asked about their life after citizenship:

“There is no difference between life before and after citizenship regarding rights and facilities. We can’t even make a passport. They rather excluded us with an ID card.”

The condition of the Geneva camp hasn’t changed since the study of Haider (2018:34), Muquim (2014), Farzana (2008: 4) & Siddiqi (2013). A visible condition, Haider contends, “In the Geneva camp, 30,000 people used 272 toilets, many of which were defunct, and only 36 bathrooms existed in this camp”. Due to their crisis of identity, the Bihari people are deprived of both citizenship privileges as well as refugee benefits from the international community. The consequence is that they have to shoulder the impact of this unwanted and unresolved identity in their social, political and economic life (Farzana, 2008: 4)

Current Condition of Relationship between Bengalis and Biharis

When they first arrived in East Bengal, Urdu-speaking migrants were respected as ‘Muhajirs’, religious refugees who had migrated in the search of an Islamic ‘homeland.’ On the surface, religion was the very thing ‘Urdu speakers’ shared with their Bengali hosts (Redclift, 2000; Hashmi, 1998). They were even considered as superior to Bengali people. Pakistani government recognized them as Pakistani in accordance with Ordinance of 1952 (temporary provision), offered them jobs settlement. They were happy here at first started to settle here by purchasing lands, building houses and marrying Bengalis. But their happy times end soon after the riot began in East Pakistan. Siddiqi (2013) stated that some upper class could cope up with the situation at first but for the middle and lower class, it was challenging because of them being radical. The association with the locals, however, was constrained by their linguistic differences (Siddiqi, 2013). The cultural differences between Biharis and Bengalis prevented Bihari peoples from being assimilated here. However, the differences were triggered by the factor that Biharis used to categories them as better Muslims than Bengali Muslims. Biharis openly supported West Pakistani elites. Pakistani elites guided them with providing job opportunities in local industries which made Biharis feel racially superior over Bengali people. The problem began when Bengali people opposed Jinnah after he openly dictated “Urdu and Urdu alone shall be the state language of Pakistan”.^v This was eye-opening for Bengali people, they realized non-Bengalis were empowered with few favors over them (Hashmi, 1998).

During the time of war of liberation, some Biharis openly supported West Pakistani rule and joined the forces of an anti-Bengali campaign like Al Badr and Al-Shams.^{vi} As I discussed earlier, Biharis migrated to East Pakistan, assumed it is a province of Pakistan. Later when the riot began between East and West Pakistan, as an expression of patriotism, they supported the West Pakistani army. Some Biharis were alleged to join the killing mission of the West Pakistani army and killed many people. After the war of liberation ended on December 16, 1971, by the surrender of the Pakistani army^{vii}, the anger of East Bengali people broke out. Biharis were brutalized by the Bengali militant after December. The action was bolstered by the young movement which was led by University students. Biharis were robbed, attacked, and killed by Bengali militant as an expression of communal frenzy which was supported by petty bourgeoisie and lumpen proletariats (Hashmi, 1998). Sunday Times of London reported that some of 100,000 were killed during post-war anarchy.

However, those events facilitated the detestable identity of Bihari people in Bangladesh. This detestable identity further made the way to the social exclusion of Biharis in Bangladesh which has been lasting for around 50 years. As an attempt to secure their lives in Bangladesh, ICRC established several camps in Dhaka and other districts. After so many years, the condition of Bihari people in this land and their relationship with Bengali people are needed to explore.

Despite living here for more than 50 years, a distinct cultural identity still persists in the camp. Some of the Biharis have protected their cultural identity for a long time in the face of continuous Bengali cultural intervention in the camp. I have talked with some younger and older people for understanding the difference in the thought process. Some young people talked about their loose connection with the family and preference of Bengali culture instead. A 28 years old inhabitant of Mohammadpur Geneva camp said that:

“My family is conservative. They used to maintain their ancestors' culture but I don't. I am Bangladeshi, I don't want to follow other culture.”

The situation is somewhat different among the older generation. They tend to preserve their ancestor's culture here. It was found that Biharis tried to protect their identity until the third generation. After that, they started losing their uniqueness and assimilation occurs. The reason behind losing the uniqueness of the culture and assimilation is continuous interaction, association and contiguity. Inter-marriage between two distinct cultural groups, however, influence the assimilation. We have seen cultural integration among many cultures due to inter-marriage. One of the most vibrant examples of this is the case of the United States of America where inter-marriage is common among various ethnic, racial, linguistic, and nationalist groups. This inter-marriage contributed to cultural intermixing- the new cultural order in society. Returning to the case of Biharis, inter-marriage between Bengali and Biharis is common and apparent. Zilani Sarder, president of BBRA stated that:

“My two daughters are married to two Bengali men and my son married a Bengali girl. Besides that, there are many people who got their boy married to Bengali girl and their daughter married Bengali boy. It is common in the camp and we don't assume it as strange in any sense.”

Intermarriage becomes so common that people don't bother about that anymore. Religion plays an important role here. Another respondent, 50 years old Kalshi camp dweller said in this regard:

“I saw many Bihari people marrying Bengali people and many Bengali marrying our girls. The situation was different at the beginning, but it has completely changed now. Some Bengali may assume we are bad people out of misconception, still, intermarriage is happening.”

This two example shows that the case of intermarriage is common among the Bengalis and Biharis. In regard to cultural intermixing, most of the respondents stated that the mixing is happening and they are happy because it will further contribute to gain legitimacy in this land. A respondent (44) in this regard stated:

“We are here for almost 50 years. Lots of things happened in all these years. So we can't say we haven't influenced by the Bengali culture. Yes, lots of our activities like food habits, dress up, and lifestyle too influenced by Bengali culture. I feel myself as Bengali people so I'm open to it.”

But a respondent (30) raised a point about being accepted by Bangladeshi people. He thinks that there is a superior-inferior relationship between them and Bangladeshis for them being poor. The level of acceptance depends on the economic wellbeing and social status; as he said:

“We accepted that we are living inside the camp for our fate and we also accepted the citizenship of Bangladesh. But we are poor, who cares about our opinion. The real question is: did Bangladeshi people accept us? As they are the upper class, their opinion matters most in this regard.”

Some of the Bihari people still afraid about the fact that how Bengalese see them. Intermarriage helped them to eradicate their fear of interacting with Bengalese. The relation establishes through marriage is not like an ordinary relation. It inaugurate a strong bonding for life, which reflects in the case of Bihari people.

The above discussion might indicate a positive relationship between Bengalis and Biharis. But in some cases that relationship is different and some conflicting matters played a dominant role to break the harmony and bring about conflict between them here some conflicting matters will be discussed

Land Encroachment Issue

As Hashmi (1998) said, militant Bengali started possessing the land of Biharis as they ran away during the post-war period in the face of continuous life threats. Most of the Biharis lost their belongings, houses and lands. Their lands and houses couldn't be recaptured after the war as those were dictated as “property of the enemy”^{viii}. Zilani Sarder stated that:

“We had our houses in Mirpur. We lost our property during the war which made us landless. In the camp, we have limited access to land, allotted for a family to a very limited extent.”

Issue of land neither solved nor could they claim that back. All the lands were possessed by the people as the land of the enemy. Another respondent (50) said that:

“We had two houses in old Dhaka (now). We ran away under the threat of the Bengali militant group and ended up in this camp. We never get them back.”

Most of the Biharis migrated in 1947 partition were non-agricultural people, settled in the urban area. Some lower class of people settled in the rural areas. Some of the urban dwellers Biharis were professional and well-off economically. They bought land and build houses with the help of West Pakistani elites. But the war of liberation made their lives miserable and in the postwar period, they were very vulnerable to lose their lives by the Bengali militant.

However, the possession still continues in some portion of the camp in Kalshi. Some Bengali powerful people still trying to possess the allotted land of the Biharis. One of the respondents (50) alleged Bengalis for taking over their land and made buildings:

“Here, you can see the building, used to be our land back then. But we poor people couldn't protect our lands. Our lands were taken over by over by the Bengali people by force.”

Some of the Biharis even alleged the government officials for taking over their lands.

Electricity Issue

Very recently in October 2019, a clash between police and Bihari people happened for electricity issues, reported by Dhaka tribune. The incident occurred due to their protest against continuous power cuts. The mob then was taken under controlled by the police. The authority alleged that Biharis are now a citizen of Bangladesh so they have to pay the bills like everyone else. Earlier the bills were paid by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (Dhaka Tribune, October 15, 2019). This is one of the cases that indicates the cold relationship between Bengalis and Biharis which can break out at any time. In regard to this, Kalshi camp dweller (30) stated that:

“We are still living like refugees. We are deprived of many opportunities. There is no way we can afford the electricity bills. We know that the electricity bills are paid by the Bihari funds that were created by IFRC but recently governments want us to pay the bills. But we don't have the condition to pay the bills as you see.”

Besides electricity, Biharis don't have access to Gas. They have limited access to water from WASA which they think not sufficient for them. Several water tapes are situated inside the camps both in Mohammadpur and Kalshi which maybe not sufficient for this huge amount of people. They have a good relationship with some lower-class Bengali families. Through them, they could access Gas and other facilities. The unequal distribution of facilities, however, affects the relationship between Bengalis and Biharis.

Drug Dealings and Conflict

Khan and Samaddar (2007) stated the Bihari camps as the center of insecurity, crime, violence and conflict. This is true in some cases. The over-concentration of people in a very limited area made it vulnerable to many crimes and violence. The Daily Star, the popular daily newspaper of Bangladesh, reported that 27 peoples were arrested due to having a connection with drug dealings (The daily star, 2 June 2018). Another report by Dhaka tribune on 27 March 2018 asserted that Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) recovered a massive amount of Yabba and

Marijuana from the Geneva camp, Mohammadpur. Over 100 peoples from the camps were detained. For this reason, some Bengali people assume Bihari camp as a center of drugs and crimes. As one Bengali from Mohammadpur said:

“Camp is the center of crime and drugs. You can find several types of drugs in the camp very easily. I don’t hate Bihari people but these drug dealings obviously make me hate some of them.” (25)

The reason behind some of the Biharis involvement in the drug dealings is their destitute condition. Some of them may not prefer to do drug dealings but the situation made them do that. They are not entitled to citizenship rights and rehabilitation, this in result triggers the crime in the camp, as respondents indicated.

The Attitude of Bengali People toward Biharis

As I pointed out earlier that the negative discernment about Bihari and Bihari camp prevailed among the Bangladeshis (At least among a number of Bangladeshis). Negative discernment toward the Biharis came from the conception that they are sort of war criminals and collaborated with the Pakistani occupation army (Hashmi, 1998:1). The difference between two cultures, nonetheless, triggered the perception of Bengalis toward Urdu speaking Biharis at the beginning, marked them as “other” at some points. Sen (1999:626) stated that: “The culture of the Bihari refugees contributed to the definition of the ethnic boundary between them and the majority Bengali residents”.

These conceptions might change after all these years, but the adverse attitude hasn’t had gone. Bengalis, generally, assume that Biharis do not belong here^{ix}, they just stuck here. Some even find some differences between Bengalese and Biharis:

“They are a bit more aggressive than us. They speak a language that blurs their identity as Pakistani or Bengali. We fought for language right and to wipe out Urdu from our land. In such a situation, speaking Urdu might represent something else to us.” (24).

Bangladeshi people are also aware of the fact that GOB accepted the citizenship of the Urdu speaking community and their living in slum-like camp should be coming to an end. But Bangladeshis still question their loyalty to this country, as they can’t get over the fact that they supported Pakistan during the war of liberation. As one of the respondents (30) said:

“I know the kind of situation they are in right now. They should be received rehabilitation from the government. But I am not sure whether they deserve it or not, as per I assume they still cherish for Pakistan. I saw some of the Biharis still keeping^{ix} the photos of Jinnah as their father of the nation. Can it be considered as loyalty? No. They should be more loyal to Bangladesh if they want privileges.”

Most of the Bengali respondents revealed that they often visit the Geneva camp for eating purposes. There are several reputed *chaps*^x and Biriyani shops inside the camp which encourage them to come here. This is also found that Bengalis go there only for visiting Biriyani and Kebab shops. One of the respondents, who lives very close to Bihari camp, exposed that he visited the camp only for 4 or 5 times despite living here for 20 years:

“I have been living here for more than 20 years, but I rarely go inside the camp. The camp is very nasty (apparently) place and congested too. I used to go there for buying meat and vegetable earlier, but I hardly go now.” (24)

Some Bengalis also hold a view that third-generation Biharis could accept Bangladesh as their homeland. They are now going to Universities, doing jobs and business and participating in the sports. One of the respondents (23) revealed that:

“I have many Bihari friends, with whom, I play cricket regularly. They are just like us. Their parents might not behave in the way they do, but they are Bangladeshi now.”

During my visit to Kalshi camp, I went to the BBRA office to ask permission for interviewing people considering the risk associated there. I talked to one of the Bengali camps whom I found inside the BBRA office to deliver his opinion about the Bihari camp and his relationship with people in the camp. He revealed that Bengalis here don't differentiate between Biharis and Biharis in general. Bengali neighbors, mostly lower class, usually help them in various ways. They provide them with a copy of electricity bills, gas bills and help them to fake their identity when they need it, for instance.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to reveal the current status of Bihari communities after more than 70 years of their settlement in Bangladesh. At first, I selected the Mohammadpur Geneva camp as the site of my study. But the conflict between police and Urdu speaking people regarding the electricity issue made it hard for me to take interviews of the people in such a distressing situation. Then I decided to alter the location of the study. Considering accessibility and budget, I decided to go to Kalshi Bihari camp, Mirpur. The local organization in the camp BBRA helped me a lot to collect my data. Later, I was able to collect some data from Mohammadpur camp too but only to a limited extent.

Nevertheless, the condition of the Bihari community remains destitute and indigent. Abject poverty, illiteracy, living in a congested place, social exclusion and deprivation of basic rights made their condition miserable. The ostensible lack of fundamental rights, poverty, and the deficiency in education and other indicators have become serious problems (Muquim, 2014:189). Though they were ratified as the citizen of Bangladesh since 2008, after a case filed by Abid Khan, the promise of citizenship never see the light. Since 1971, the Bihari community passes through many ups and downs. They have become a politicized population throughout much of the history of Bangladesh, and currently occupy a space that makes many motivated to live in the country, while a few want to opt-out of their situation by moving elsewhere (Muquim, 2014:189).

However, most of the people from the Bihari community don't want to go elsewhere than the camp, rather want rehabilitation from the government. Bangladeshis have a good relationship with the Bihari community as I discussed, except a few issues, which made them separated. Biharis now prefer to call them as Bangladeshi Muslim. Their yearning for “home” has been fading away. Most of the Biharis don't consider any differences between Bengali and Biharis without language. Biharis speaks both Bengali and Urdu simultaneously which in consequence

leads them to integrate into society. Some of them claimed that they don't expose their identity in public, considering public shame, tries to assimilate in Bangladeshi society. Many claimed, they hide their identity as Bihari when they went for making a passport or taking rent. Those who could afford to live outside the camp usually don't identify them as Biharis, as a revealing identity means deprivation from several rights.

The solution for the Bihari community to exterminate their problem of identity could be assimilating to Bangladeshi society. Like the Saidpur Bihari community revealed by Muquim (2014:190). Saidpur Bihari community has mostly integrated into Bangladeshi society. Among the Community, they have become self-reliant by coming out of poverty, and now have a collective identity as a majority, and some members have even been engaged in local politics.

But the situation is complicated, more than it seems, as Haider (2016:437) said: the majority of the Biharis consider the integration of the Biharis as a challenging task, but not impossible for the GOB. They assume that socially how the Bengalis accept the Biharis against their questionable track records is an important issue. Economically, it is a great challenge for the GOB to rehabilitate them, where millions of Bengalis are living in poverty. Culturally, the Biharis' separation from the mainstream Bengalis is seen by many Bengalis as an element of alienation rather than assimilation. Biharis' attitude towards repatriation has changed radically. Now, most of them want to live in Bangladesh and don't even consider Pakistan as idealized home.

In conclusion, Biharis' integration in Bangladesh is possible only through securing basic human rights and rights entitled to citizenship. Chowdhury (2002:140) suggested an understanding of ethnonationalism through the state's administrative practices and policies which lead to creating a favorable condition for various social groups to organize themselves, in regard to the Jhumma nationalist identity in CHT which is relevant to the case of Biharis too. Government benevolence toward this scattered population can be a turning point. Now, they don't want to go back to Pakistan as they once asked for. They want a wider acceptance and rehabilitation program. If GOB can provide them with such privileges, I assume it would be easier for them to be assimilated into Bangladeshi society.

Limitations

This study was conducted as a student research project. Therefore, researcher got limited time to finish the study. The amount of time bestowed for field was very limited. Besides, hostile condition inside the camps, triggered by electricity issue mentioned in the methodology section, prevented the researcher from spending more time in the field.

Competing Interest

The author declares no competing interest.

Funding

The author received no funding for the completion of this research project. It was fully funded by the author.

References

- Ahsan, S. B. (2012, November 14). Our Pakistan question. *The Daily Star* Retrieved 28 October, from <https://www.thedailystar.net>: <https://www.thedailystar.net/news-detail-257354>
- Bangladesh-India-Pakistan: Agreement on the Repatriation of Prisoners Of War and Civilian Internees. (1974, April 9). Delhi, India. Retrieved 26 December 2019, from <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/bangladeshindiapakistan-1974-agreement>.
- Bates, C. (2011). “The Hidden Story of Partition and its Legacies”. *BBC*. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/partition1947_01.shtml
- Brass, P. (2003). “The partition of India and retributive genocide in the Punjab, 1946–47: means, methods, and purposes”. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 5(1), 71–101. DOI: 10.1080/14623520305657
- British raj | Imperialism, Impact, History, & Facts. Retrieved 19 December 2019, from <https://www.britannica.com/event/British-raj>
- Biharis-Minority Rights Group. (2019). Retrieved 18 December 2019, from <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/biharis/>
- Chatterjee, B. (1973). *Inside Bangladesh Today: An Eyewitness Account*. New Delhi: S. Chand and Co. Limited, India.
- Chowdhury, K. (2002). Articulation and Dynamics of “Jumma Nationalism”: The Case of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh. (Masters) *Dalhousie University*, Canada. Retrieved from: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324889490>
- Dalrymple, W. (2015). “The Mutual Genocide of Indian Partition”. *The New Yorker* Retrieved 5 December 2019, from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/29/the-great-divide-books-dalrymple>
- Das, B. (2011). *Bihari migrants wish for better life in Bangladesh* | DW | 22.06.2011. Retrieved 18 December 2019, from <https://www.dw.com/en/bihari-migrants-wish-for-better-life-in-bangladesh/a-6554559>
- Farzana, K. F. (2008). “The Neglected Stateless Bihari Community in Bangladesh: Victims of Political and Diplomatic Onslaught”. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*.
- Farzana, K. F. (2009). “An Artificial Minority: The Stateless Biharis”. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*: Rutledge. doi: 10.1080/13602000902943682
- Faruqui, A. (2005, March 19). Jinnah's unfulfilled vision: The Idea of Pakistan by Stephen Cohen. *Asia Times*. Pakistan.
- Ghoshal, A. (2018). The Invisible Refugees: Muslim ‘Returnees’ In East Pakistan (1947-71. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh* (Hum.), Vol. 63(1), 2018, pp. 59-89
- Gilmartin, David. (1998). “Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative”. *The Journal of Asian Studies*. Vol. 57, No. 4, pp. 1068-1095.
- Gosh, P., (2008). “Who went where and how are they doing? Pakistanis and Indians outside South Asia”. In: *The Fleeing People of South Asia: Selections from Refugee Watch*. London, New York, Delhi: Anthem Press, pp. 207-220.

- Haque, M. S. (2013). "Victim Diaspora – Ethnic Minority groups in South Asia: The Case of 'Biharis' and Rohingya". *Journal of Politics & Administration*. Vol.1, No.1, ISSN 2307-1036, pp. 68-78.
- Haider, M. (2003). The Bihari Community from a Human Rights Perspective. In Rahman M. (ed.) *A Community in Transition: The Biharis in Bangladesh* (p. 133-207). Dhaka: Empowerment through Law of the Common People.
- Haider, Z. (2016). "Rejected people in Bangladesh: If the Biharis were counted". *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*. Volume: 36 (3), pp. 427-443.
- Haider, Z. (2018). Biharis in Bangladesh and Their Restricted Access to Citizenship Rights. *South Asia Research*. DOI: 38. 10.1177/0262728018791695.
- Hashmi, T. (1998). "The Bihari minorities in Bangladesh: Victims of nationalism". In M. Hasan, (ed.) *Islam, communities, and nations: Muslim identities in South Asia and beyond*. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers.
- Hossain, A. (2012). "Islamic Resurgence in Bangladesh's Culture and Politics: Origins, Dynamics and Implications". *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Volume 23(2), pp. 165–198.
- Ilias, Ahmed (2004). "The Indian Émigrés in Bangladesh". *Shamsul Huq Foundation*, Rangpur.
- Khan, A., & Samadder, M. (2008). Living Like Prisoner: Documenting the Experiences of Crime and Insecurity of. *Research and Evaluation Division, BRAC*.
- Khalidi, O. (1998). "From Torrent to Trickle: Indian Muslim Migration to Pakistan, 1947-97". *Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad*, Vol. 37(No. 3), pp. 339-352.
- Malik, H. (2015). "Stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh not Pakistan's responsibility, FO tells SC", *The Express Tribune, Pakistan*. Retrieved from <https://tribune.com.pk/story/861364/stranded-pakistanis-in-bangladesh-not-pakistansh-responsibility-fo-tells-sc/>
- Mantoo, S. (2013). "Bihari Refugees Stranded in Bangladesh since 1971". *Journal of South Asian Studies*. Volume 1 (No. 2).
- Mehrotra, S. (2005). *Towards India's freedom and partition* (2nd Ed.). New Delhi: Rupa & Co.
- Muquim, N. (2017). "Strangers to citizenship: an analysis of the deplorable conditions of the Urdu-speaking community in Bangladesh", (Masters). *The University Of British Columbia*. Canada
- Noor, S. (2005). "Outstanding Issues between Pakistan and Bangladesh". *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 58, No. 1, 47-60.
- N. Sattar: (2007). "The rejected Biharis". *Hydra* 1(2) pp.13-24 <http://journals.ed.ac.uk/hydra>
- Nair, Niti (2010). "The Partition of India By Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Volume 21, Issue 3, pp. 464–467, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etq049>
- NLJ Primary School - OBAT Helpers. (2019). Retrieved 18 December 2019, from <https://obathelpers.org/nlj-primary-school/>

- Paracha, N. (2014). "The evolution of Mohajir politics and identity". *DAWN*. Accessed 20 October, 2019 from: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1100948>
- Paulsen, Eric. (2006). The Citizenship Status of the Urdu-speakers/Biharis in Bangladesh, *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Volume 25, Issue 3, pp. 54–69, <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdi0146>
- Refugees, U. (2019). *Refworld* | "Bangladesh: Bringing education to the Bihari minority". Retrieved 18 December 2019, from <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4c7cbb2dc.html>
- Rahman, S. (2015). The Bangladesh Citizenship (Temporary Provisions) Order, 1972 (President's Order No. 149 of 1972).-*Chancery Law Chronicles*. Retrieved 28 December 2019, from <http://www.clcbd.org/document/891.html>
- Redclift, V. (2010). "Conceiving collectivity: The Urdu-speaking Bihari minority and the absence of home. Diasporas: Revisiting and Discovering". *Critical Issues series 'Diasporas'*. *Inter-disciplinary Press*, ISBN 978-1-84888-019-1.
- Redclift, V. (2010) "Subjectivity and Citizenship: intersections of Space, Ethnicity and Identity Among the Urdu-Speaking Minority in Bangladesh", *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 25(12), pp. 25-42.
- RMRRU. (2007). "Accessing Rights as Citizen: The Camp Based Urdu Speaking Community in Bangladesh". *RMRRU Policy Brief 2*. Retrieved 18 December 2019, from <http://www.rmmru.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/2-Biharis.pdf>
- Saikia, Y. (2004). "Beyond the Archive of Silence: Narratives of Violence of the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh". *History Workshop Journal*, (58), 275-287. Retrieved from www.jstor.org/stable/25472765
- Shahid, E. (2017). "Stranded Pakistanis' in Bangladesh: The forgotten victims of India's partition". Retrieved from <http://english.alarabiya.net>:
- Siddiqi, D. M. (2013). "Left Behind By the Nation": Sites: *A Journal of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies*. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11157/sites-vol10iss2id253>
- Sen, S. (1999) "Stateless Refugees and the Right to Return: The Bihari Refugees of South Asia"- Part 1, *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 11(4), pp. 626-645.
- Sen, S. (2000) "Stateless Refugees and the Right to Return: The Bihari Refugees of South Asia"- Part 2', *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 12(1), pp. 41-70.
- Sen, A. (1975). "The Social Background and Social Character of Bangladesh Nationalism". (Masters) *McMaster University* Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.
- Singh, H. (2011). *Indian administration* (1st Ed.). New Delhi: Pearson Education India.
- U.S. Committee for Refugees World Refugee Survey 2004 - Bangladesh. *United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants*. Retrieved September 7, 2019, from <https://www.refworld.org/docid/40b459330.html>
- Wolpert, S. (1984). *Jinnah of Pakistan*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Notes

ⁱ Two-Nations Theory is a political doctrine rationalizing the division of India politically into two independent nations' India and Pakistan. The concept was propounded by Muhammad Ali Jinnah in the 1940s on the eve of the winding up of the British rule in India. The doctrine has an electoral background. The separate electorate system was introduced in phases for the Muslims and Hindus under the constitutional reforms of 1909, 1919 and 1935.

ⁱⁱ Asian Indigenous & Tribal Peoples Network (AITPN), "The Status of Indigenous & Minority Children in Bangladesh", a submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, AITPN Report, 2003, p. 51, available online at: <http://www.aitpn.org/reports/bangladesh2.pdf> (accessed 23 January 2006).

ⁱⁱⁱ Rahman, S. (2015). The Bangladesh Citizenship (Temporary Provisions) Order, 1972 (President's Order No. 149 of 1972). - Chancery Law Chronicles. Retrieved 28 December 2019, from <http://www.clcbd.org/document/891.html>

^{iv} Bangladesh/India/Pakistan, 1974 Agreement | How does law protect in war? - Online casebook. (1974). Also available on: International Legal Materials, vol. 13, 1974, pp. 501-505 Retrieved 28 December 2019, from <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/bangladeshindiapakistan-1974-agreement>.

^v Addressing a public meeting at Dhaka, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), on March 21, 1948, the founder of Pakistan said `whether Bengali shall be official language of this province is a matter for the elected representatives of the people of this province to decide.

^{vi} Al Badr and Al Shams are known as Razakars, Bengalis who opposed the independence of Bangladesh and took the side of West Pakistan.

^{vii} On December 16 1971, after 9th months of war, chief Pakistani army General A.A.K. Niazi surrendered to General Jagjit Singh, the chief of Indian Eastern Command. After this event, war was finally ended and Bangladesh became independent.

^{viii} After the independence of Bangladesh all the lands occupied by West Pakistani citizen and their supporters were announced as the property of enemy. All those lands were taken over by the freedom fighters and general Bengali who were motivated by strong nationalist sense.

^{ix} My interview with 5 Bengali people who reside in Mohammadpur near the Bihari camp revealed this. Four of the five respondents said this.

^x A type of Kebab