



ROHINGYA REFUGEE CRISIS IN INDIA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS AHEAD.

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In the age of globalization, while there is widespread advocacy for open borders worldwide, there remains a critical issue where no nation-state is willing to make concessions—the matter of migration and refugees. This issue is regarded as highly sensitive, with states frequently associating it with their sovereignty, independence, and even their very existence.

Forced displacement frequently has profound consequences on a nation’s political, economic, and social aspects. In certain instances, it can even raise concerns about national security and subsequently influence a country’s foreign policy. India, like many other countries, has grappled with a significant refugee issue since gaining independence. Refugees have sought refuge in India from neighbouring countries marked by political instability. The Rohingya people represent one such example, as they are a minority of Muslim ethnicity from Myanmar who fled their homeland due to religious persecution. However, a new discussion is emerging, where there are concerns that Rohingyas could pose a significant security risk to India. There is apprehension that they might be susceptible to “Jihadist Radicalization” and could potentially join various insurgent groups in the northeastern region of India to express their grievances on an international stage. The question now is how this Rohingya refugee issue in India will impact the relationship between India and Myanmar. This comes at a time when India views Myanmar as a strategically important nation in its “Act East” policy, and both countries have agreed to tackle insurgency along their border through collaborative efforts. Myanmar plays a crucial role in India’s “Look East” strategy, serving as a gateway. It holds strategic importance for India as the sole ASEAN nation sharing a border, potentially acting as a link between India and ASEAN countries. Strengthening ties with Myanmar not only aligns with India’s objectives but also enhances commerce and connectivity with China and other Asian nations. This effort is particularly beneficial for India’s remote eastern and north-eastern regions, and India is actively working towards fortifying its relationship with Myanmar to fulfil these strategic goals. This paper would explore these dimensions by analysing India’s stance in resolving the largest humanitarian crisis in South Asia.

Key Words: Rohingya, refugee, crisis, Act East Policy, India, Myanmar



The term ‘refugees’ gained prominence on the international stage following World War II, as evidenced by the establishment of the International Refugee Organization (IRO) in 1947 to address the refugee crisis in Europe. To further address this issue, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Statutes of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on December 14, 1950, replacing the IRO (Feller, 2001). In 1951, the International Convention on the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees were introduced, offering a globally accepted definition of a ‘refugee’(Gunning, 1989).It’s noteworthy that the UNHCR Statutes and the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees didn't conceptualize a ‘refugee’ as a displaced person, but as articulated in Article 1.A. (2) of the 1951 Refugee Convention:

a refugee is a person who, [o]wing 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.

Stateless individuals are currently regarded as a significant threat to the long-term stability of the world and the peaceful progress of societies. The recent surge in statelessness on the global political stage can be attributed to violence targeting religious minorities or specific ethnic communities based on religion or race. These forcibly displaced people find themselves incapable of safeguarding their civil and political rights. Moreover, their national identity is often doubted, despite the international legal provision that grants everyone the right to claim nationality and receive state protection. This text delves into the security ramifications posed by the Rohingya refugees, recognized as one of the world’s most persecuted and vulnerable stateless groups, for both the host country and the broader region (Anupama, 2017).

Migration has been a longstanding occurrence in human history. “Throughout antiquity, individuals have been observed relocating from one place to another, driven by various factors such as the pursuit of improved opportunities or the desire to address unmet needs and preferences in their current surroundings. At times, people undertake migration to sustain their existing circumstances, especially when they perceive a decline in their present situation”(Barman, 2004). The challenges of hunger, poverty, and security threats are not constrained by borders. The issue of illegal migration presents a significant crisis on a global scale.



Forced migration entails the relocation of individuals from their nation of origin to another country, with such individuals being labelled as refugees. If this displacement occurs within the borders of the country of origin, the individuals are referred to as Internally Displaced People. People often choose to leave their native country when they encounter dangers to their lives and possessions. Key factors contributing to forced migration encompass natural disasters, environmental issues, various forms of persecution (social, political, and religious), and instances of wartime conflict.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) established its office in December 1950, and the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees was finalized the following year. It is crucial to recognize that the treatment of refugees is a highly political matter, with international refugee law being influenced by perceived security concerns associated with large-scale movements of people across borders. Article 33(1) of the convention states that no participating party shall expel or send back a refugee to a territory where their life or freedom would be endangered based on factors such as race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Contracting parties are also prohibited from imposing penalties for illegal entry or presence on refugees arriving directly from a territory where their very existence was under threat (Scott, 2010: 220).

Understanding the international legal framework governing the rights of asylum seekers is crucial when evaluating the impact of immigration on a country. It is important to note that immigration, which involves the movement of people from one country to another, does not always entail an influx of refugees. It is essential to distinguish between immigration, a voluntary process often driven by factors such as better livelihood opportunities, and refugees, who have moved to a country due to a threat to their lives and cannot be returned to their country of origin.

While migration is typically a conscious choice, seeking refuge is often a compelled decision driven by threats and insecurity. Developed Western states attract a significant number of migrants contributing to economic and social development by providing cheap labour and capital. Migration for personal reasons, such as family, education, and medical purposes, is also common in these cases.

On the other hand, refugee movements carry a threat factor, as individuals seek security, including basic necessities like food and shelter. Illegal immigration can bring about challenges, potentially



involving connections with non-state actors. In the current global scenario, the mass movement of refugees, particularly from the Middle East, such as Syria, to Europe has raised concerns. This situation has been linked to instances of terrorism, with terrorists exploiting the asylum-seeking process to infiltrate territories securely.

Illegal immigration, especially by refugees, poses a significant threat to a country's social security, as some refugees may engage in illicit activities for their livelihood. Additionally, competition for local resources becomes a crucial factor. The refugee crisis and its associated problems are not strictly defined as external threats or domestic tensions but are often wielded as political instruments by leaders. The Copenhagen school of thought asserts that migration poses a threat to society rather than the state, impacting the self-identity of the population. In contrast, refugee movements represent not only a cultural threat but also exert overriding pressure on a country's economic and social parameters (Goswami, 2020: 125-126).

The challenge of cross-border immigration has long been a contentious issue in India, dating back to its establishment as a nation. This has been demonstrated in its not being a member to United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951. Nevertheless, it is crucial to highlight that despite not being a participant in the convention, India has extended asylum to a substantial number of immigrants, not only from South Asia but also from African nations. A significant aspect of this problem is the porous nature of India's land borders. Compounding the issue is the historical context, as the British delineated South Asian borders primarily based on political considerations, neglecting demographic similarities and ethnic ties.

This oversight has left South Asian borders vulnerable to cross-border movements. India has played host to a diverse range of refugees, including Buddhist Chakmas from Bangladesh, Muslim Rohingyas from Myanmar, small groups from Sudan and Somalia in Africa, Sri Lankan Tamils, and Tibetans. Despite being a politically and economically stable country in the South Asian region, India faces a constant threat from refugees, particularly those originating from neighbouring countries, resulting in significant economic pressures.

The porous borders contribute to rampant illegal immigration, leading to social tensions, local conflicts, and communal issues. Against this backdrop, this paper focuses on examining the Rohingya influx into India, unravelling the associated challenges and opportunities. Through this



analysis, the paper aims to provide insights into the future trajectory of India-Myanmar diplomatic relations amid this crisis (Goswami, 2020: 126-127).

Over-view of the Crisis:

The Rohingyas meet all the criteria outlined in the aforementioned definitions: they have been deprived of citizenship by the Myanmar government, subjected to persecution as a minority group based on religion and ethnicity, faced repression, killings, and torture at the hands of state security agencies, and ultimately, they were collectively expelled from their residences, compelling them to seek refuge in Bangladesh and other nearby locations (Naushin et al., 2013). In light of these circumstances, the United Nations recognizes the Rohingyas as the most persecuted Muslim ethnic community and a ‘humanitarian catastrophe’ on a global scale. The United Nations (UN) has labelled the violence against the Rohingya community as a clear instance of ethnic cleansing. The situation has taken on a security aspect due to worries about the potential infiltration of Islamic extremism among the Rohingya population, which has become more desperate in the face of their dire circumstances. The extensive exodus of refugees has led to a severe humanitarian crisis, impacting regional stability and security.

Authorities state that they are establishing mechanisms to welcome back the returnees and are actively taking steps to enforce the recommendations made by the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. In May 2018, Myanmar entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the United Nations, allowing hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas to return voluntarily and safely. While the international community has pressed Myanmar to expedite the repatriation process, lingering concerns persist regarding long-term political matters, such as “community reconciliation” and “citizenship status” (Yhome, 2018).

The Rohingyas constitute a Muslim community, representing 33% of the Rakhine state's population in Myanmar. Rakhine state stands as the least developed area in Myanmar, with 78% of its residents living in poverty, a stark contrast to the national average of 37.58%. The northern region of Rakhine State in Myanmar, formerly known as Arakan, is home to a group of people facing severe mistreatment and neglect, making them among the most marginalized in the world. These individuals are struggling to survive and uphold their basic rights to live in the land where their ancestors have resided for centuries. Referred to as “Rohingyas,” they belong to an ethnic,



linguistic, and religious community. Despite being officially stateless, the Myanmar Government disowns them, contending that they are not legitimate citizens but originally migrated from Bangladesh. The majority of Rohingyas practice Islam and lack access to modern education, rendering many of them illiterate (Hossain et. al. 2020: 25).

Indeed, the Rohingyas possess a rich and deeply ingrained history. Some historians suggest that the name “Rohingya” has its origins in terms like “Rohan,” “Roham,” or “Rosham,” evolving over time into “Roshangee” and eventually settling on Rohingya. Primarily, they became residents of the ancient “Arakan Kingdom,” which is now recognized as “Rakhine State.” However, there is insufficient linguistic or historical evidence supporting this claim. It's worth noting that the designation of Rohingya is a relatively recent development. It was only in the early 1950s that the community began adopting this name for themselves.

Nevertheless, the Rohingyas assert a lengthy history dating back over a thousand years, highlighting their substantial contributions in political, economic, social, and cultural aspects in Arakan. Conversely, the Buddhist Arakanese people assert a comparatively limited and shallow understanding of the Muslim identity in the history of Arakan. Present-day Rohingyas acknowledge that the Muslims residing in the pre-colonial period were indeed their ancestors. However, the Buddhist Arakanese draw a clear distinction between these Muslims and those who migrated to Arakan from the Chittagong area in Bangladesh during the British colonial rule. It is noteworthy that the Buddhist Arakanese, like the current Myanmar government influenced by the military, adhere to the same criterion, recognizing individuals who entered Burma after 1823 (a year prior to the commencement of the first Anglo-Burmese war) as non-indigenous people.

The Rui hang Ja, commonly known as Rohingyas, form an ethnic group residing in Myanmar's Rakhine (Arakan) state. Historically, the inhabitants of Arakan were predominantly Hindus and Muslims referred to as Kula or dark-skinned people. The roots of discrimination can be traced back to the Foreigners' Act of 1864, persisting until the enactment of the Myanmar Citizenship Act in 1982. During British rule, Rohingyas were denied political identity, preventing their participation in negotiations for Myanmar's independence in 1948. They were excluded from the Union Treaty, resulting in a lack of basic political and economic rights.



Post-independence, Rohingyas faced discrimination and were unable to sign the Union Treaty. In response, some Rohingya Muslims initiated separatist movements, resorting to armed struggles for their rights. In 1950, after recognition by U Nu and U Ba Swe, Rohingyas temporarily abandoned their weapons but continued to face suppression under General Ne Win's military regime.

The Dragon operation in 1978 compelled many Rohingyas to flee to Bangladesh. Upon their return in 1981, they were dismayed to find exclusion from the 1982 Burmese Citizenship Act, which left them out of the 135 national races. From 1989 onwards, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) seized their lands for military camps without compensation, rendering them homeless. Presently, the Burmese mindset views Rohingyas as Muslims, categorizing them as Bengali and not part of Myanmar, resulting in their non-acceptance.

In 2012, Myanmar's Rakhine state experienced a violent clash between Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims, resulting in a state of emergency. The Rohingya Muslims faced targeted violence during the riots, leading to an identification crisis as they were forced to label themselves as Bengali heretics outside of Burma. A significant factor in the conflict was the perception among Rakhine Buddhists that Islam posed a major threat to Buddhism in Myanmar.

The aftermath of the riots saw approximately 140,000 Rohingyas fleeing on boats to countries like Malaysia, Thailand, and other Southeast Asian as well as South Asian nations, including India, sparking a regional Rohingya refugee crisis. In 2012, when these Rohingyas sought asylum in Bangladesh, they were not accepted, pushing them further to seek refuge in India.

With a change in Myanmar's government in 2015 and the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi, questions arose about the resolution of the Rohingya issue in Rakhine. The uncertainty surrounded whether Rohingyas would be recognized as an integral part of Myanmar or perceived as a significant security threat due to alleged affiliations with groups like the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The prevailing perception among Myanmar's Buddhist majority was that Rohingyas might act as a jihadist insurgent group.

However, the military crackdown in 2016 and Aung San Suu Kyi's response to subsequent criticisms were noteworthy. She categorically denied ongoing human rights violations and genocide in Myanmar, presenting a stance that drew significant attention and debate. Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi (2016) informed the UN special rapporteur on human rights that the government will



refrain from using the term “Rohingya” to refer to a persecuted Muslim minority in the north-western part of the country.

As per UNHCR databases, approximately 5,500 Rohingya refugees of Muslim descent are estimated to be in India. Despite India not being a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the country has, on humanitarian grounds, welcomed these stateless Rohingya individuals at a time when other Islamic nations had closed their doors to them. In West Bengal, these refugees faced legal action under the Foreigner’s Act of 1946 and were subsequently sent to correctional facilities.

Since 2014, there has been a consistent inflow of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh through West Bengal’s borders. Bangladesh’s decision to deny Rohingyas, considered the world’s largest persecuted minority, further compelled them to enter India through the North East, given the lack of alternative options. However, India’s stance on the Rohingya issue has remained ambiguous. While the country faces challenges in deporting them back to Myanmar, it is also reluctant to officially accept them. India has adopted a firm position, insisting that Rohingyas must furnish a valid visa and Refugee card when seeking social benefits from the Indian government. This underscores India’s explicit message that, while it has permitted Rohingyas to enter its territory, unlike Bangladesh, it is not prepared to formally accept them. Consequently, Rohingyas find themselves subjected to constant condemnation and arbitrary detention due to this uncertain situation (Goswami, 2020: 127-129).

Mapping India – Myanmar relationship:

India and Myanmar share a resilient and enduring relationship deeply rooted in their historical, cultural, ethnic, and religious connections. With a shared legacy, India has been a destination for pilgrims from Myanmar, particularly as the birthplace of Buddha. The spread of Buddhism from India to Myanmar has significantly influenced the local population. Over a span of more than 2,000 years, cultural interactions among different races and ethnic groups have contributed to the development of diverse communities residing in both lowland plains and mountainous frontier zones.

As per the Singhvi Committee's findings in 2004, it was projected that Myanmar has approximately 2.9 million People of Indian Origin (PIO), with 2.5 million individuals having Indian roots. Before the annexation of Burma, which is now known as Myanmar, it was an integral component of the



British Indian Empire in 1886. Notably, it wasn't initially part of the unified states, but the British separated Burma from the British Indian Empire in 1937. Moreover, the British permitted numerous indigenous groups residing in the border regions to form their own administrative structures. Myanmar's government aimed to unify diverse ethnic groups into a single nation, with the foundation of nation-building rooted in the culture, religion, and language of the Burman majority. However, this approach faced opposition from minority ethnic groups, leading to protests against these policies. Even after gaining independence, Myanmar continues to grapple with a significant ethnic crisis.

Myanmar is regarded as the gateway to Southeast Asian countries. The foundation of the relationship between the two nations strengthened with the signing of the Treaty of Friendship in 1951. A significant milestone occurred during Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit in 1987, further enhancing the relationship. In the 1990s, India took proactive measures to cultivate extensive economic and strategic ties with Southeast Asian nations, aiming to establish itself as a regional power. This initiative was driven by India's recognition of the growing influence of the People's Republic of China. In 1991, under Prime Minister P.V Narsimha Rao, India introduced the "Look East" Policy, a concept vigorously pursued by successive governments. The objective was to build robust economic and commercial connections while expanding strategic and security cooperation in the region. The ties between both parties were further strengthened and intensified following the endorsement of the trade agreement in 1994. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed office, he prioritized significant policies such as the "Neighbourhood First" and "Act East" policies (Anupama, 2017: 477-478).

Myanmar has played a substantial role in collaborating with India to contain and eliminate insurgency in India's Northeast region. Past joint operations against Naga separatists on the Indian side have proven successful in this regard. Both nations have consistently addressed non-traditional security concerns, including drug trafficking, arms smuggling, extremism, and terrorism. Vital measures at the national and local levels involve regular meetings between the two sides to cooperate and coordinate efforts in resolving such issues.

Ensuring stability in Myanmar is crucial for various reasons. In the economy of North East India, agriculture is the primary driver, while small-scale industries such as plywood factories, sawmills,



and fruit preservation play a limited role. Myanmar can effectively serve as a source for consumer goods, meeting the basic necessities of the people in India's Northeastern states. Fulfilling the region's needs through Myanmar is a faster and more cost-effective route than other options in India. Another factor is the abundant natural resources in India's North East, including forests and minerals. India is considering the establishment of Special Economic Zones in this region and inviting foreign investors from ASEAN countries. Additionally, Myanmar possesses substantial energy deposits, particularly in offshore areas with significant reserves like the Shwe gas field in Rakhine province. While China is planning to extract natural gas from this area, India could also benefit from it. Despite the Indian government's restriction on Rohingya Muslims entering Indian territory as refugees, it is noteworthy that the government is implementing plans to aid Rohingya Muslims in Bangladesh. The "Operation Insaniyat" has been launched to assist Rohingya refugees who have sought refuge in Bangladesh (Anupama, 2017: 479-480).

India's approach toward Myanmar has been strategically devised to counterbalance Chinese influence in the region. The burgeoning alliance between China and Myanmar poses a significant threat to India. Beyond offering developmental assistance, China has extended financial support to several insurgent groups operating within Myanmar's borders, engaging in activities that are detrimental to India's interests. Therefore, the trilateral friendship between China, Pakistan, and Myanmar has frequently raised concerns about India's territorial security.

Given the background, this is not only a threat to India's internal security, but permitting such terrorist activities will also fuel anti-Indian movements in the North Eastern region, escalating the insurgency problem. It is evident that the presence of Rohingya refugees in India may lead to tensions similar to those experienced with the Buddhist Chakmas from Bangladesh (Goswami, 2020: 131-132).

Considering these factors, India's approach toward Myanmar was primarily focused on mitigating these challenges. India formed a friendly alliance with Myanmar's military junta, intending to collaborate in addressing the insurgency problem. In the course of developing this amicable relationship, Naypyidaw and New Delhi, in 2010, committed to concerted efforts to quell insurgency. Consequently, accommodating Rohingyas at this juncture could adversely affect the diplomatic ties between India and Myanmar.



India's multi-pronged approach towards Rohingya refugee crisis resolution:

The issue of refugees has been a persistent challenge in India since gaining independence, and it appears to be escalating with each passing year. India has witnessed significant waves of refugees at various points in its history after Independence. Some of the major events include the Rohingya Refugees: An ethnic conflict in Myanmar resulted in a large influx of Rohingya refugees into India.

India has experienced significant waves of refugee influx over its history but lacks a specific domestic law regulating the treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers. Despite not signing the refugee convention, India is bound by international law to safeguard asylum-seekers, a responsibility it has consistently upheld in the past.

The key consideration is how India can enhance the efficiency of its approach to prevent renewed conflicts in Rakhine, support the safe repatriation of refugees to Myanmar, and alleviate any potential terrorist activities involving the Rohingya refugees. Taking an active and effective role in these domains could assist in positioning Delhi at the forefront of efforts to find a lasting resolution to the crisis.

Similar to any sovereign nation, India has the prerogative to prioritize its national security. However, the security considerations should encompass a thoughtful evaluation of the broader and enduring consequences. According to an analyst's perspective, the challenge with India's approach toward the Rohingya issue "is not that it is placing security over humanitarian... [But] that it is doing so in a way that is imprudent and likely to be self-defeating." Furthermore, considering India's historical inclination towards safeguarding refugees, the country should step up to illustrate that its actions are not solely motivated by narrow domestic political interests (Yhome, 2018: 7).

On the diplomatic front, while maintaining a positive and cooperative relationship with Myanmar, Delhi has effectively communicated to the Myanmar authorities that the sole resolution to the Rohingya crisis lies in ensuring the safe repatriation of refugees to Myanmar. In pursuit of this objective, India has put into action the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Rakhine State Development Programme, which was signed in December 2017. Concurrently, Delhi is extending support to Dhaka by providing relief aid for refugee camps in Bangladesh. India is actively engaged in collaborative efforts with both Myanmar and Bangladesh in the realm of security. A pivotal



aspect of this security cooperation involves the sharing of information to thwart attempts by terrorist groups to radicalize Rohingyas within refugee camps.

Apart from considerations involving geopolitics, humanitarian issues, and the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, two additional factors have influenced India's approach. These factors include heightened security concerns and the imperative to maintain diplomatic equilibrium between Bangladesh and Myanmar. Officially, Delhi characterizes Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh as "displaced persons," whereas those in India are viewed as "illegal immigrants." The second factor revolves around Delhi's evaluation of the situation, emphasizing that sustained socio-economic development in Rakhine State constitutes the sole lasting solution. Consequently, there is a focus on securing and mobilizing resources for independent development initiatives while also encouraging international support for developmental efforts in Rakhine.

India has opted for multilateral regional organisations for bringing about a solution. As India and ASEAN formulate their individual strategies, there exist numerous opportunities for collaboration. Key domains for cooperation include coordinating policies in international forums like the UN and its affiliated agencies. Additionally, there is potential for enhancing collaboration in the socio-economic development of Rakhine state. While India addresses the Rohingya crisis through interactions with both ASEAN and BIMSTEC, a blend of bilateral and regional engagements, along with coordinated efforts, may yield more effective and concrete results.

The most practical approach involves engaging both Naypyitaw and Dhaka. The recent visit by the UNSC delegation to Bangladesh and Myanmar is seen as a positive development. Despite some setbacks, there is still an opportunity for India to actively participate in resolving the crisis and potentially assume a leadership role. While India may have taken some time to establish its influence in shaping the discourse, its actions on the ground in India, Myanmar, and Bangladesh could play a crucial role in defining its stance within the broader refugee discourse (Yhome, 2018: 4, 9-10).

The systematic political marginalization of Rohingya Muslims in post-colonial Burma, coupled with orchestrated acts of violence is widely recognized as ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This group of stateless people is viewed as a significant risk to peace and security in the South Asian region. This has led to a mass exodus of around a million Rohingya refugees, primarily



seeking shelter in Bangladesh. Despite Bangladesh grappling with the overwhelming crisis, India, a significant South Asian nation, has been restrictive in granting entry to those seeking refuge. Additionally, India is contemplating the forced repatriation of Rohingya individuals already within the country and has been criticized for inadequate relief efforts to support them (Amin, 2018).

Conclusion:

The refugee crisis imposes strains on local resources, presents security risks to the host nation, and places significant demands on the international community and development allies to address the humanitarian emergency. Without a clear timeframe or sustainable resolution for the repatriation process, these challenges in the region may escalate. The situation of the forcibly displaced Rohingyas has deteriorated over the period of time and is yet to be solved (Momem, 2021: 615). Political commitment and strong goodwill are a must to improve the situation.

India, with a rich historical tradition, has consistently embraced refugees from around the globe, extending a warm welcome and providing them with a place of honour and dignity in our society throughout our known five-thousand-year history. Unfortunately, the refugee issue is on the rise due to genocidal and inhumane activities, and there seems to be no imminent resolution in sight. Despite hosting various refugee groups, India lacks a unified legal framework or a comprehensive policy for refugees. Recognizing the international dimensions of the refugee problem, it underscores the need for global cooperation (Nayak, 2013: 95).

The primary and most crucial resolution to this refugee crisis involves facilitating the secure repatriation of the Rohingyas to their homeland. However, their voluntary return is contingent upon ensuring that the security conditions are safe and habitable. To address this, Myanmar could establish a secure zone for the Rohingyas within its borders, overseen by UN peacekeepers. Myanmar should also provide unrestricted access to northern Rakhine State for the United Nations, international non-governmental organizations, and the media. This access is essential for delivering crucial humanitarian assistance and conducting impartial assessments of the situation on the ground.

Additionally, there should be sustained pressure on the Myanmar government in the realms of politics, economics, and international relations to compel them to repatriate the Rohingyas and guarantee their safety. Steps can be implemented to urge the Myanmar government to address issues of impunity and discrimination. These measures include implementing a worldwide arms



embargo, applying bilateral pressure on nations supporting Myanmar's military, and considering referral to the International Criminal Court, though the latter should be considered as a last resort (Hossain et. al. 2020: 30).

As highlighted, there exists a deficiency in refugee protection in India due to the absence of specific legislation. Establishing a systematic and uniform approach to refugee policies is possible if India either becomes a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention or formulates its own national legislation for refugee protection. However, it is worth noting that the 1951 Convention may not entirely align with the South Asian context, characterized by the arrival of a large number of refugees. Therefore, opting for a national refugee law seems to be a more robust option for India. In conclusion, India requires a comprehensive legal framework rather than the existing makeshift solutions for addressing the refugee situation. The law should ensure equal treatment for all refugees, irrespective of their assigned identities. While India has made notable efforts in assisting refugees, there is a pressing need for further action to effectively tackle the ongoing refugee crisis (Linto & Bose, 2022: 6841-6842).

India, a nation characterized by diverse religions and cultures, has long embraced the principle of "Vasudeva Kutumbakam" or the world as one family. However, in the current era of Industry 4.0, artificial intelligence, and intense competition, India must not lag in the race. It is crucial to strike a balance between progress and preserving the secular nature of Indian culture. Legislators need to establish a permanent resolution, prioritizing citizenship provisions and refugee protection. As India aims for a 5 trillion-dollar economy, there's a significant population below the poverty line, making it imperative to formulate policies that prioritize the needs of its citizens without compromising on refugee rehabilitation (Kumar, 2021: 146).

Until now, India's response to the Rohingya crisis has been perceived as divergent from its conventional stance on refugees. As an ascending power with global ambitions and a history of dealing with refugees, India has a moral obligation. Ultimately, India might be better positioned to influence discussions at both regional and global levels on emerging matters that impact global governance, including the refugee crisis.



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