



COMPARATIVE STUDY OF REFUGEE PROBLEM IN BENGAL AND SOUTH ASIA

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Abstract:

Those politics of partition started in 1905 in Bengal. However, the then British government could not divide Bengal. Finally, with the partition of India in 1947, Bengal was divided into two parts. Since then we have noticed two types of images in India and Pakistan. On the one hand, the joy of freedom, on the other hand, the tragic picture of the displaced. The origin of refugees in the world began at the end of World War II. Since then, the origin of refugees has been in the countries of South Asia. There are three reasons behind being a refugee. Firstly, the cause of conflict; secondly, developmental factors and thirdly, environmental factors. Besides, the process of nation-state formation in South Asia has displaced millions of people. The refugee problem in India or Bengal has been solved in different ways. Hiranmoy Bandopadhyay and Prafulla Kumar Chakraborty have mentioned three types of refugees in their books who have tried to solve this problem on their initiative. The refugee problem was also solved through the European exchange of population. Liisa. H. Malkki again asked him to consider the refugees as the 'Device of Power' instead of the 'Place of Refuge'. The refugees had to suffer in every way because of this partition.

Key Words: Radcliffe Commission, Independence, Refugee, World War II, South Asia, Model Democratic, Nation-State, Imagined Community, Partition, Displaced, Minority Problem.

Introduction:

The decision to divide Bengal in 1905 was announced by the then Governor Lord Curzon. But there was a strong movement against this decision all over Bengal (present-day West Bengal and Bangladesh). Eventually, the British rulers were forced to withdraw the division of Bengal. From then on, new politics, "politics of division" began in British India. The politics of this division led to horrific riots between Hindus and Muslims in the whole of India. Finally, in 1947, it was decided to divide India (Chatterjee, 1994, pp. 1-21). The new state 'Pakistan' was created after the breakup of India. The international border between India and Pakistan has been drawn through Bengal and Punjab. The boundaries were made according to the decision of the Sir Radcliffe Commission, whose main goal was to divide the provinces based on religion (Bandyopadhyaya, 2008, pp. 476-553). The united nationalist resistance that developed between the two communities in 1905 was not seen during the partition of Bengal in 1947. At that time communalism prevailed over nationalism in Bengal (Chatterjee, 1994, pp. 1-21).

With the partition of the country in 1947, Bengal was broken up and transformed into East Bengal and West Bengal. The decision of this division was made all of a sudden by the Radcliffe Commission. Based on which Police stations in Bengal were a Hindu majority and which Police stations were a Muslim majority. As a result of this partition, we have noticed two types of images in India and Pakistan. There was a tidal wave of the joyous celebration of independence by breaking the shackles of two hundred years of subjugation in contrary to it; on the other hand, there were countless homeless children, men and women screaming desperately with broken hearts. On 15th August, stream of countless people were observed on both sides of the Indo-Pakistan border. Almost an equal number of people crossed the border in search of their national identity. Just as millions of Hindus on the eastern border of India and Pakistan left East Pakistan and took refuge in West Bengal, Assam and Tripura; similarly millions of Muslims left West Bengal, Bihar, Assam and Tripura and took refuge in East Pakistan, with their new identity "refugee" (Chatterjee, 2007, pp. 105-107).

Since the end of World War II, global warfare has led to the emergence of refugees, and millions of people have been displaced due to the partition of contemporary South Asia. Sabyasachi Basu Roy, mentioned in his speech, "**South Asia's Refugee Problem**" that people become refugees for three main reasons. Firstly, because of the conflict; there may be religious conflicts, political conflicts, ethnic culture conflicts, genocide, etc. In the present world, Syria, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Afghanistan and other countries can be named as the example of the aforesaid. As a result of the civil war in Syria, millions of people are taking refuge in internal of Syria or neighbouring countries. In case of Sri Lanka too, many refugees took refuge in Tamilnadu in India due to the civil war. Sri Lanka was the Model Colony of the British. So, it was expected that Sri Lanka would emerge as a Model Democratic State. But that did not happen; on the contrary, many Sri Lankan refugees took refuge in India due to the civil war. What happened in Myanmar is just a planned genocide. As a result, millions of Myanmar people have become refugees and took refuge in Bangladesh, India and other South Asian countries. At present, the problem of Myanmar is more complex. They have been expelled from their lands and taken refuge in neighbouring countries. Their problems do not terminate here, but they are facing a bigger challenge. They were not even considered as 'refugees' where they took refuge. About one million Myanmar residents in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, but did not get approval to their refugee status and became people of no land. Neither can they return to their homeland, nor can they breathe a sigh of relief in their temporary shelter. The second is the developmental factor; any developmental cause can be road construction, barrage construction or any major construction etc. Third: environmental factors. Natural disasters hit many parts of the world, leaving many homeless and displaced. As we have seen in Bengal, people became homeless due to Aila, Amphan, Tsunami, Earthquake etc.

In the case of South Asia, we have seen that as a result of partition, people have become refugees due to nation-state formation. In the case of India, too, all the refugees who took refuge in the camps as a result of the state-building process were either Indian nationals or were considered as refugees. This refugee problem has become a major challenge to post-partition South Asian nation-state development. Millions of refugees have crossed the international border between India and Pakistan and have become a major issue in modern politics. Because in Europe, after the World War-II, almost all the states internationally wanted to establish themselves as a sovereign state or homeland. They were thinking of 'Imagined



community'. Attempts were being made to appear as a nation-state in front of the world by its own thinking. Hannah Arendt cites the example of India in the context of how the process of building a new nation-state based on ethnicity and religion and granting asylum to refugees failed in India. The post-partition refugee problem is an example of this. This nation-state structure has given birth to many refugees and also has been forced to give shelter to many more refugees, for what South Asia has to face a difficult situation like the refugee problem.

Partition, new nation-state formation and related refugee issues had become a trend in South Asia at that time. This pattern can be observed all over the world at that time which was not only limited to South Asia but also world history says. Historians tried to find a link between this South Asian partition and the European ideology. Because then the trend of displacement can be seen in European countries. For example, the immigration of Germans to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary was the result of the agreement of Big Three to the transfer decision in the 1945 Potsdam Conference. However, it is not clear what the British or South Asian mindset was about its future. However, it cannot be said that the idea of partition did not arise out of a constructive idea of what the world would be like in the future. Especially in a situation where the collapse of imperialism and the end of multicultural civilization in world history tends to lead to the formation of new nation-states and mass migration. Against such a backdrop, the example of other countries in the world influences and accelerates the thinking of South Asia and India, and political figures claim Pakistan by using this perspective(Khan, 2017, p. xxii).

The refugees from East Pakistan took refuge in the 24 Parganas of West Bengal, Nadia, Kolkata, Dinajpur, Birbhum, Burdwan, Kochbihar, Jalpaiguri, Howrah, Hooghly, Medinipur, Darjeeling, Bankura, Murshidabad, districts. However, the 1951 census states that the main refuge for two-thirds of the refugees was the 24 Parganas, Nadia and Calcutta. In Hiranmoy Bandyopadhyay's book 'Refugees' we get a detailed discussion of the refugees in Bengal. Refugees came like a stream with a city-centred attitude. Sealdah station became the main shelter for thousands of refugees and they had to rely on government help. Hiranmoy Bandyopadhyay and Prafulla Kumar Chakraborty spoke of three types of refugees. First of all, those who improved their condition in self-sufficiency and started the journey of life again. Second, they occupied land or houses in their own power and waited for government help. Thirdly, those who lost everything and came with the identity of a refugee only with their bare hands and feet. They were dependent on government help. The brutal image of these refugees has often appeared in various writings(Bandyopadhyaya, 1970).

Yasmin Khan in her book 'The Great Partition' has given a different description of the refugees in Punjab. She said that the process of partition and nation-building has not only affected the history of South Asia, but also the history of the world. From there it is further known that Punjabis have migrated to different countries of the world long before partition. Because many Punjabis in British India served in the army. For work, they were sent outside India to Singapore, Hong Kong and various parts of the African continent. As a result, a large part of the Sikhs was outside India(Tan Tai Yong and Kudaisya Gyanesh, 2000, pp. 225-231). So when the country was partitioned in 1947, their communication outside India was very useful. Internal fears began to spread among those who had been displaced within India. Then the people of the Sikh community were able to move out of South Asia and start a new life with success. Although many people in the Sikh community were victims of violence. But in the case of Bengal, I do not know of any such migration. Refugees in Bengal have either tried to improve their situation on their own or have received government assistance. Due to which they had to go to Andaman, Nicobar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh etc. as per the government plan.

From the end of World War II, the number of refugees in the world began to decline. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration have described refugees in the country as 'Displaced Persons'. The 1951 Geneva Convention defined 'refugees', which was based entirely on 'European Displaced Persons'. But even then 'Indian Displaced' was not included. By that definition, Indian refugees have been considered(Sen, 2018, p. 9). The post-partition refugee problem that arose in India or across South Asia could not be resolved.

Liisa H. Malkki said there has been enough writing about refugees. But she said the refugee camps should be considered differently. She suggested that refugee camps should not only be considered as a 'Place of Refuge', they should be considered as a 'Device of Power'(Malkki, 1995, pp. 495-523). If we look at the Bengali refugees, we can see that in the refugee camps at Sealdah station, the coexistence of living people and dead bodies had become a common picture of day to day life. Many incidents of desperation have come to light(Chakraborti, 1997). Gyanendra Pandey mentions in his book that the condition of the Muslim refugees in the Purana Qila camp was worse than that of the Hindu camp. He cited inadequate relief distribution as the reason(Pandey, 1997, pp. 2261-72). When riots broke out in Delhi on a large scale, the Muslims of Delhi left their homes and took refuge in Purana Qila, Jama Masjid etc. Their condition reached such a stage that they had to fight against cholera, starvation, etc. to sustain their lives(Zamindar, 2010, pp. 34-39). Liisa H. Malkki, citing Post-war Europe as an example in support of her argument, noted that refugee operators in the European world viewed the issue of refugees not only from a humanitarian point of view but also as a military problem. All the political, military camps in Germany were converted into refugee camps. She further said that by making the refugee camps supervisable, arrangements were made for the classification, segregation and control of the prisoners in the camps with administrative and bureaucratic skills(Malkki, 1995, pp. 495-523).

The partition of 1947 had the greatest impact on Bengal and Punjab. Millions of people became refugees in these two states. The Central Government adopted two different types of policies to solve the refugee problem in Punjab and Bengal. Due to the fact that the refugee problem in Punjab was limited to a certain period (1947-1950), there was a planned attempt to solve this problem. The Punjab effort was an 'Exchange of Population' which largely raised hopes of a solution. But in the case of Bengal, it was not possible to apply this 'Exchange of Population'. The 'Exchange of Population' in world history emerged in Treaty of Lausanne (1923). Its application can be seen in the post-world war-I exchange of Muslims from Greece and Orthodox Christians from Anatolia. This Exchange of Population created a bigger problem for the minorities. Later it was seen that South Asia was trying to solve the problem by using such practices as weapons. But this practice created more problems than a solution to this problem(Khan, 2017, p. xxii).

This problem created by the partition in contemporary South Asia still leaves a question mark on minority rights. The partition of the country in 1947 as a solution to the differences in religion or culture led to the formation of a large population exchange in both countries. This Population Exchange



or Demographic Movement has not been able to find a lasting solution to that Minority problem. Even today, the minority citizens of these two countries are facing many question marks and uncertainties. That is why the problem of minorities still exists in many cases in both countries (Tan Tai Yong and Kudaisya Gyanesh, 2000, pp. 22-26). In the current discussion of the rights of these religious, cultural or linguistic minorities, the minority community in South Asia sees the partition of 1947 as the cause of their misery. Besides, many of the problems and uncomfortable questions about Karachi and Kashmir that are currently being raised have their roots in the 1947 partition.

In today's world, the lack of citizenship for Myanmar refugees is a big problem. The same mark is found in the history of South Asia after the partition. During partition, the people irrespective of Common people and Government employee have to decide whether they will stay in India or move to Pakistan. It may be mentioned that a man named Ghulam Ali was an officer of the British Indian Army in the whole of India. Towards the end of World War-II, the government sent Ghulam Ali to London for technical training. He was an artificial limb fitter by profession. On his return from London, he joined the work at Chakla near Rawalpindi. His ancestral home was in Lucknow, India. After partition, he decided to serve in the Indian Army. So he prepared for returning to India. But the government of that country retained Ghulam Ali there. Later he was allowed to come to India again. Ghulam Ali was caught at an Indian check post on his way to India. He was considered a Pakistani as he did not have a permit. He was later forcibly imprisoned. In 1951 he had to go to Pakistan again. When he came to Pakistan and applied for citizenship, he was declared an Indian. However, he was allowed to return to his family in Lucknow. Returning to his family, Ghulam Ali again applied for Indian citizenship. But he was sent to Pakistan in 1956. On his way to Pakistan, he was arrested again at the Wagah border as an Indian. He applied to the Indian High Commission in 1959 for citizenship. There he was allowed to come to India from 16th June 1970 to 6th July 1970 (only 22 days). But the police administration continued to monitor him. He later applied for permanent residency in India, but was denied. At the end, neither the Pakistani government nor the Indian government gave him citizenship. Ghulam Ali became a citizen of no land and was accompanied by unbearable heartache (Zamindar, 2010, pp. 1-4, 230-234). A similar picture is seen in the case of the Chakma tribes of East Bengal. They left East Bengal and came to India with the hope of gaining citizenship. But all their efforts failed. They did not become residents of the state.

In the case of refugee arrivals, the people of the two countries were the first to welcome and sympathize with the refugees. But Jaya Chatterjee, in her **'The Spoils of Partition'**, noted that the government's relief and rehabilitation project was opposed by several political leaders at that time, including Ajay Mukherjee (Chatterjee, 2007, pp. 220-238). Similarly, Yaqub Ali Khan mentioned in his book that when many Muslims fled from this country to Pakistan, the government there refused to give them asylum (Zamindar, 2010, pp. 79-102). So even though the country was divided based on religion, the refugees did not get a place with the identity of religion. The question remains as to where they will find a place, their identity or what will happen.

At present, historians are focusing on a particular aspect of research on a subject. They are focusing on in-depth research on a particular aspect of a historical event. As a result, history is enriching with excellent research outcomes. Similarly, in the study of the history of the partition of India, feminist researchers now view the issue with deep sympathy from the perspective of gender-based research and highlight the plight of refugee women as a special aspect of the post-partition refugee problem. Andrew Major, for example, called women "chief sufferers" and sexual violence "a conscious process of maximizing intimidation." He also said that 40,000 to 45,000 women were abducted in Punjab alone. Kidnapping, rape and sexual abuse of women became well-known incidents. D. A. Low is also mentioned this. Women's bodies acted as messengers between the two countries. By engraving the national patriotic slogans 'Joy Hind', 'Pakistan Zindabad' or tattooing religious symbols on their private parts. Their bodies bore witness to the post-partition situation and the extreme oppression of women. In this context, Kamala Bhasin, Ritu Menon, Urvashi Butalia spoke about patriarchy and oppression of women at that time. Although Indian states pay special attention to the special needs of unmarried and widowed women (Tan Tai Yong and Kudaisya Gyanesh, 2000, pp. 18-22). The experiences of Kamala Bhasin, Ritu Menon, Urvashi Butalia, related to Punjab-centric sexual violence are supported by the experiences of women in East Bengal who were placed in Permanently liability or PL Camp (Butalia, 1998, pp. 1-26). In the case of women, the issue of granting citizenship was as neglected as it was fulfilled for men with patriarchal attitudes and bureaucratic violence (Sen, 2018, pp. 19-20).

Conclusion:

As a result of partition, millions of people are displaced unexpectedly at a massive rate. Countless homeless people were flowing along the border of the two countries like water currents. The currents were two-way, although the number of Hindus who came to West Bengal from East Bengal was greater than the number of Muslims left West Bengal. The people of the two Bengals left their familiar environment, neighbours and crossed the borders of the country. The result is that Hindu and Muslim families once who lived like cheek by jowl; a decision or event called 'Partition' raised a wall between them (Chatterjee, 2007, pp. 103-208). They became isolated. The decision was made at the beckoning of the political leaders of that time, who had not presumed about its outcomes, but it was the common people who have to taste the apple of discord.

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