

16 DECEMBER

FALL OF DHAKA AND TWO-NATION THEORY

The day Dhaka fell, a new Muslim nation arose from its rubble namely Bangladesh, land of the Bengalis. On that same eventful day another Muslim nation lost 1/3 of its real estate and over half of its population, leaving in its rift a devastated people, a dismembered nation, and a disheartened lower and middle class angry at what the despotic establishment had done to their hard-earned country. Why are we revisiting this foregone conflict more than 33 years later? Why can't we put this darkened past of ours behind us once and for all? The reason quite straight-forward put are our brothers, the Biharis (Term used in Bangladesh for the people who migrated from India after 1947). These Mohajirs who once fled their ancestral lands in India in search of their destiny to live in a Muslim nation are ironically today a stranded expatriate community of urban dwellers who reside in some 66 refugee camps throughout Bangladesh, a nation predominantly of Muslims itself. The government of Pakistan for reasons beyond comprehension has illegally abrogated their UN-protected right of resettlement to Pakistan? Is this what the **two-nation theory** called for; the denial of arriving Muslim refugees into Pakistan? During the Afghanistan crises, an excess of a million Afghani refugees were allowed into the country and were permitted to roam and work freely. Indeed this was a noble undertaking to provide Muslim refugees with protection in times of need, to which Karachi in particular played the dominant economic host for these migrants. However, this double standard between the Afghani and Bihari communities is deplorable given the relative lower population of the latter. Such a deferential policy arrangement was developed towards furthering US interests in the region and under the pressure of established powerful Pakistani power hawks? The champions of the **two-nation theory** who benefited the most from the partition of 1947 may rest assured that the controversy upon its outcome is very much alive even today.

At the time of partition, around one million Biharis migrated from India to East Pakistan. Back then, they were a skilled workforce who could speak the official language of Pakistan, Urdu, and thus were able to contribute positively in the bureaucratic and private sectors of the nation. The Bengalis of East Pakistan who resented West Pakistani domination and turned their hostility towards the Bihari community resented this from the onset. Scapegoated as a people, the Biharis in frustration and self-defense opted to side with West Pakistani tendencies and because of this they paid severely following the creation of Bangladesh. The Biharis were forced to forfeit their property, several thousand were imprisoned, and the majority were placed in refugee camps located within urban centers. By 1981, Pakistan only permitted some 163,000 of these displaced victims of the war to resettle in West Pakistan, leaving the rest to their own fate. During the 1980s and 1990s, the government of Pakistan, fearing an increase in communal Sindhi-Muhajir violence, and the strengthening of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, decided to disallow any resettlement of the remaining refugees. The establishment once and for all openly demonstrated that those who side with them in times of need should expect to end up humiliated and dishonored beyond belief. The people of Sindh have been victims of this nefarious design as has the man who delivered Pakistan into the atomic age, Dr. AQ Khan, who is today humiliated and under house arrest for giving his nation all that he had.

More than three decades have passed since the creation of these refugee camps and today we continue to witness a severe demographic stress profile building at these population centers. Public health facilities including clean water and sanitation are dismal and very limited, and food

shortages exist due to government-imposed restrictions on employment opportunities. The Bangladeshi government has in addition policies in place to restrict the free movement of these Biharis within Bangladesh. These refugees are today considered stateless and therefore do not have any fundamental political rights such as the right to vote, or work in civil and governmental positions. There is rampant violence and criminal activity in these camps and up to 20,000 girls have been illegally trafficked for prostitution. As for a number of families facing starvation, this is the only form of income, and therefore a number of young girls have taken this route to support their loved ones. Is this why Pakistan was formed so that girls from respectable families are forced into this derogatory profession? Why are the religious fundamentalists and so-called patriots silent on this issue? Doesn't Islam teach us that Muslims who flee from persecution deserve adequate shelter and accommodation? These so-called religious politicians pled the case of the Palestine refugee crisis, the Afghan situation, the war in Iraq, and the separatist movement in Kashmir, but when it comes to the Biharis, they behave as if the Biharis are not Muslims. This goes to demonstrate that these so-called religious leaders pump up the religious trumpets only when a clear political benefit is in sight, else they would be akin to "idhar hum, udhar tum" as was the late ZA Bhutto. These religious bigots were the ones who had initially rejected the two-nation theory prior to independence, however following independence they cunningly and strategically altered their position to play to whoever was in power. Their behavior is known in colloquial language as acting as a "chamcha". Are we going to

Till today, the vast majority of the Biharis are still seeking resettlement to Pakistan. We often hear vehement opposition from Pakistani politicians and members of the establishment whenever the suggestion arises that perhaps the **two-nation theory**, though conceived in good-will, is but a failed one. Qauid-e-Tehreek, Altaf Hussain made this claim based on the prevailing situation and openly challenged the establishment of Pakistan to resolve this outstanding stain that it has remaining on its 'daman'. These Bihari refugees are living proof of the **failure of the two-nation theory**, and till such day that these refugees are repatriated, they will remain a thorn in the side of those who resist their UN-mandated migration. If the government of Pakistan continues to uphold its position then it would only serve to strengthen its position should these Bihari refugees are given the opportunity to resettle in Pakistan today.

Will he grownup in the camp like his parents? Living in room size of 10'x 12', that has been allotted to his grandparents in 1971. Presently there are three generation (almost 8-10 people) living in the same space without any privacy and severe conditions
This is the lunch for the whole family. A piece of bread, tomato and water. On average one adult get only 3 kg (6.5 lb) of wheat on monthly basis from European Union. Unfortunately they have not received any aid since last 5 months.

Shabber Abbas And Asad Siddiqui

MQM NJ Unit --- mqmnjusa@email.com

Ref: <http://www.obathelpers.org/gpage.html>

<http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/cultural/oldworld/asia/biharis.html>

<http://www.discoverybangladesh.com/history.html>

<http://www.interaction.org/newswire/detail.php?id=2352>

<http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/assessment.asp?groupId=77103>

http://www.safhr.org/refugee_watch18_4.htm

<http://www.refugeesinternational.org/content/article/detail/916/?mission=4373>

<http://www.tamibooks.com/MARSAD/nov03/voicenov03/editorial.htm>