

Visiting Research Fellowship, Global Protection of Migrants and Refugees
Report for the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (MCRG)
14 December 2021

I have arrived in Kolkata on 06 December 2021 to begin the fellowship stay with the MCRG to finish writing the paper on “*Rethinking Home from the Experience of Home[state]lessness: The Discursive Exposé of Rohingya Narratives from Cox’s Bazar Camps*”. In this study, I intend to examine the meaning of ‘home’ for the Rohingyas. The central question sought in this study is—has Myanmar ever turned into a ‘home’ for them? Furthermore, what do they think of their ‘home’ from where they were forcefully evicted, tortured and forced to flee to their make-shift ‘homes’ in Bangladesh. My study intends to argue that the legality of stateless is insufficient to understand the plight of the victims, and their narratives would offer a discursive portrayal of the process of homelessness vis-à-vis statelessness over the decades.

The residential stay for the fellowship in Kolkata has been an elevating experience in various capacities. I was primarily based at the resourceful library of MCRG to get access to the hardcopy secondary resource materials and their online database of primary and secondary research documents on forced migration and refugee studies. These books, reports and articles offer solid foundations for the conceptual perspectives of the paper.

I have had the opportunity to meet in person and discuss my research with MCRG scholars, including Professor Ranabir Samaddar, Professor Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, Professor Paula Banerjee, and Dr. Nasreen Chowdhury. Their suggestions have been beneficial to reflect on the conceptual construction of the study and to locate or reposition the thick empirical data within the more significant intellectual works done on this subject so far as of now. For example, Prof. Basu Ray Chaudhury proposed further probe the sense of belongingness to understand the ideas of homelessness and how it is different from ‘rooflessness’ or ‘rootlessness’. In a zoom meeting with Dr. Nasreen Chowdhury (New Delhi), she inferred from her previous work on Chakmas and Tamils and offered a very dynamic picture of home for the displaced persons. These conversations with scholars have significantly influenced my study and helped me develop the paper further.

I have also had an opportunity to present my work in two guest lectures. First, I offered a talk on media and the representation of refugees on 8 December at the Heritage Academy of Media Sciences. Second, I was invited to speak online on Bangladesh’s nationalism and refugee situation at a class of the post-graduate students of the Department of Political Science of the University of Calcutta. Professor Paula Banerjee moderated the session. In both the lectures, I had an opportunity to speak with the undergraduate and post-graduate students of two institutes and exchange views within broad spectrums of refugee, movements and politics of Bangladesh and neighbourhood.

Finally, on 13 December, I presented my paper in an in-house session and shared my findings with the researchers of MCRG to get their valuable feedback. In the presentation, I highlighted the conceptual constructions, presented the empirical findings, and argued the significance of the study. The scholars of MCRG had offered their feedback on the ideas of home, understanding of belongingness, relational home, cultural perspective and the concept of ownership, and the like. These ideas will significantly help to revise the paper. Professor Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury presided over the meeting with his valuable feedback. I will submit a final version of the article, accommodating all inputs on or before the end of this year. I am grateful to the MCRG and The Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna, for their generosity to host me in Kolkata to complete this study and write the paper.

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