Module A: Protection and Punishment: The Faultlines of Caste, Gender, Religion and Race

Migration, Gender and Race: The Word "Rohingya" as Bullying

The article examines the manner of nationalist othering that occurred against everyday life of Indigenous[1] People after the Rohingya influx in a sovereign state of Bangladesh. Indigenous People in Bangladesh are subject of othering, due to their differences in appearances and socio-cultural practices as well as their complex historicity in the state of Bangladesh. This othering is felt by indigenous persons in everyday life where they encounter bullying based on their appearances, food habits and ways of lives. However, after the Rohingya refugees fled the extreme violence committed in Myanmar and took shelter in Bangladesh in 2017, the nature of bullying faced by indigenous population in various parts of Bangladesh changed. During my seven months of fieldwork, interviews with and ethnographic observations of indigenous women of the Chittagong Hill Tracts living in Dhaka, all my interviewees mentioned multiple incidences of harassment happened to them by the majority Bengali community in reference to the Rohingya refugees. This article focuses on the concept of "othering" through words, and other forms of verbal and non-verbal bullying experienced by indigenous women before and after the Rohingya influx in 2017. I also aspire to explore how nationalism plays a role in it. In particular, how nationalism is experienced and perceived through these daily interactions. In order to do so, the first part of the article focuses on how 'othering' of the indigenous peoples has been done in the colonial time by creating an image of a static culture of the 'tribals' in Bangladesh, an image that did not move either in space or in time scale. The second part emphasizes how Bangladesh, as a postcolonial nation state, has carried out the colonial legacy of 'othering' the indigenous peoples in the wake of Bangali nationalism. The third part strives to find an explanation towards how this othering of indigenous peoples went extra mile during Rohingya crisis through focusing on the gradually changing face of the nationalism in Bangladesh from Bangali nation to a Bangali Muslim nation state.

Keywords: Nationalism, Othering, Indigenous people, Ethnicity, Migrant Refugee, and Rohingya.

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[1] Indigenous- In ILO (International Labour Organization) convention 107, 169, and UNDRIP (United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) Self-identification is seen as one of the criteria in deciding on when a group of people may be considered as 'indigenous'. Keeping that in mind whether they are classified as 'tribal', 'indigenous' or known by other country specific terms the self-identification meant to be promoted through the ILO convention and UNDRIP are the same for all groups of people. By keeping such considerations in mind I use the term 'indigenous' in this paper.

INTRODUCTION

Nue A : One day I was going to the city, Chittagong, to buy several items I needed. From My campus it takes more than an hour to travel by bus to the city. I took a local bus with one of my friends. The bus started its journey towards Chittagong city and after a while just behind my seat, a man started to scream what a Rohingya was doing on the bus. He did not stop there. He began to say something horrible, and I cannot repeat the terrible words he said. Besides, he noted that Rohingyas of the hills have no right to remain in Bangladesh. These words struck me, at first I had a doubt if he was talking about me or not but after that comment I knew he was talking about me, but I didn't react until he spat on my body. I stood up and protested, "why did you spit on my body? Who do you call 'Rohingya'?" The man replied that he had not deliberately spat, his spit fell on me by chance and continued that I was the 'Rohingya' on that Bus. We had a long argument, but he continued to offend me. It is surprising to note that, with the exception of my friend, no one else protested on the bus. The silence of the people nearby gave the impression that they also agreed with the man, and why would they remain silent if they disagreed with the arguments we had? I do not know what caused me to feel bad that day, peoples' silence and/or calling me Rohingya.

Priyanka: What do you think about why people on the bus remain silent?

Nue A: As we are second-class citizens of a country, turning a blind eye is easy for the majority.

Priyanka: Why do you think they called you Rohingya?

Unai : I think they are hostile towards us because we are indigenous people and another reason is religion. Rohingya people practice Islam but most of our people practice Buddhism. As the Rohingya people had to flee from a Buddhist country, they unleashed that grudge on me. Besides, our physical features are also similar to burmese people.

In late 2017, I was about to complete my master's degree from Dhaka University, one day I was being called a Rohingya on the way to my university. With the passage of time, it became more frequent. I remember vividly when I was called Rohingya for the first time, I was struck by their calling me

Rohingya. Why did they call me Rohingya? What could be the reasons? Am I the only one who is facing the incident? Those thoughts rushed into my mind. While conducting fieldwork for my PhD I have interviewed life stories of indigenous women. To my great surprise, all my interviewees mentioned that multiple incidents of harassment in public occurred to them with reference to the word 'Rohingya' during the prolonged Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh. The above mentioned part of my conversation with Nue A portrays one of those many incidents encountered by indigenous women during that time. Growing up with bullies and harassment based on facial features, languages, clothing and food habits in public spaces is a common experience of growing up as a indigenous person in Bangladesh. For instance, 'jongli', 'Chakma', 'Cheng-chung', 'chinese', 'chingku' etc are common name calling or 'do you eat snakes/frogs?' or 'you eat snakes and frogs, what else do you people eat?' are common types of questions and comments that are either intended to make fun or simply asked out of curiosity (Bal, E 2007. p.28). However, the mindset behind the mockery or curiosity comes from a position of cultural and ethnic hierarchy where Bengali is a superior cultural identity, which comprises the majority of Bangladesh, and all other ethnic identities are inferior and to be looked down upon. Like most other indigenous children, I have come to terms with these types of encounters gradually as I grew up. When suddenly the word 'Rohingya' became another standard word to bully me and other fellow indigenous persons, it shook me. I started wondering why the people used the word 'Rohingya' to mock the indigenous people and how they found the word relevant during the Rohingya refugee context. Hence, this article aims to dismantle underlying assumptions/logics behind why the Rohingya crisis stirred up the majority-minority sentiments and how this affects the people at the receiving end. I would like to argue that the rapid rise in the incidents of bullying and harassment indigenous persons in the wake of refugee crisis comes from the heart of Bengali and Muslim nationalist mindset, whereas prior to the Rohingya crisis the regular standard bullying and harrassment derived mainly from Bengali nationalist identity.

I would like to claim that the extreme 'othering' felt by Nue A and all my interviewees during the height of the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh can be traced back to its colonial legacy. The 'othering' through static portrayals of the 'tribals' in the colonial time were the main lenses of perceiving the indigenous peoples by both the postcolonial states of Pakistan and Bangladesh which with the progression of time and changing phases of nationalism led to further othering of these part of Bangladeshi population. Therefore, the first part of this article will focus on how 'othering' of the indigenous peoples has been done in the colonial time by creating an image of a static culture of the 'tribals' in Bangladesh, an image that did not move either in space or in time scale. The second part emphasizes how Bangladesh as a postcolonial nation state carried on the colonial legacy of 'othering' the indigenous peoples in the wake of Bangali nationalism. The third part strives to find an explanation towards how this othering of

indigenous peoples went extra mile during Rohingya crisis through focusing on the gradually changing face of the nationalism in Bangladesh from Bangali nation to a Bangali Muslim nation state.

Othering

Edward Said in his influential book *Orientalism*, (1995: 332) Said wrote:

> "The development and+ maintenance of every culture requires the existence of another different and competing alter ego. The construction of identity… whether Orient or Occident, France or Britain… involves establishing opposites and *otherness* whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and reinterpretation of their differences from *us*."

According to Said, identity is constructed in reference to differences to the 'other'. There has to be a 'them' to define 'us'. It is the 'otherness' of 'them' that demarcates who these 'us' are. This 'otherness' is founded on 'their' oppositional differences and the differences are continuously made and remade. I would like to understand Said's analysis of identity construction in the context of national identity construction in Bangladesh in opposition to one of the 'others', indigenous identity. By emphasizing everyday words and comments that indignous persons encounter, I would like to examine how this 'othering' has been done.

Cultural geographer Crang (1998: 61) describes othering as "a process...through which identities are set up in an unequal relationship". Crang also describes how the process works. It is a process where, in a given context, a group of people defines themselves around a common feature which are perceived as 'good' characteristics and "positively valued"; then demarcates other group(s) as "residual" and associates them with possessing "less desirable" characteristics and thus negatively valued. He also argues that this tendency is in fact a projection of the group's fears of its own less desirable characteristics that it imposes on 'others'. So Crang asserts "thus part of belonging to a group is the projection of fears and dislikes onto other people."

Placing Said and Crang's analysis on identity construction and process of 'othering' in the development of Bengali nationalism in opposition to indigenous peoples of Bangladesh, the next sections of this write up aspires to find what the word 'Rohingya' means when it is used for name calling and how this came into being.

'The noble savages'- the 'tribals'/'hillman' of CHT in colonial time

In British India, the term 'hill men' referred to all the 'tribal' people living in the hill tracts bordering Assam and Bengal. The oldest printed and written accounts of the people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and as well as the plains can be found in the photographs and texts produced mainly by the colonial administrators, and Western travelers and ethnologists. These portrayals eventually found their way into the official literature on the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Dewan, Aditya Kumar. Schendel, Willem and Mey, Wolfgang. 2000. P.83).

In the British eye, the 'tribals' of South Asia including the people of CHT seemed to share a number of "essentially tribal characteristics" that are fundamentally different from, even opposite to, "civilized" society (Schendel, Willem van. 1992. p.103). In these portrayals of the people in the CHT, two binary oppositional characteristics can be commonly found. On one hand, these people are often portrayed as children living happily and playfully in a benevolent jungle environment since they are not corrupted by the civilized life. On the other hand, they are shown to live a life of savageness with no higher purpose of life. For instance Captain T. H. Lewin, the first Deputy Commissioner of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and also one of the first ethnographers of the area, "There is much that is loveable about them. They are very simple, and honest, and merry; but they have no sympathy with anything above the level of their bodily wants…if these people could be taught to live according to Nature in its higher sense,…this would be the wisest and the grandest ideal" (Lewin, Thomas H. 1869. p.115).

Another such binary would be how simple and charming these tribals/hillmen are yet they lack moral and ethical boundaries that are only associated with civilized lives and cultures. In describing the simplicity and charm of these so-called hillmen Captain T. H. Lewin (1869. p.116) writes "Among a simple people like our hill men there is no…desire [for excessive wealth]; their nomadic life precludes any great accumulation of wealth, and they enjoy perfect social equality". Prashanta Tripura, a well known anthropologist and researcher on indgienous peoples issues in Bangladesh, argues that no such people that match these portrayals existed (Tripura, Prashanta 2010: 237). As opposed to the imagined simplicity and charm of these hillmen, the lack of ethical and moral boundaries are exemplified by the British people with the myths of 'headhunter' tribes and as well with sexual promiscuousity, having no shame associated with premarital sexual intercourses. Especially, on behalf of the 'tribal girls'. Hutchinson Robert Henry Sneyd, another famous colonial administrator and historian makes claims about Marma girls "…A chaste maiden life is a very rare exception, and no sense of shame or wrong is attached to the lives that these young girls live' (in Dewan, Aditya Kumar. Schendel, Willem and Mey, Wolfgang. 2000. P.95). This, in fact, is a projection of the colonial administrators 19th century European mindset of ethics on women's

sexuality (ibid). However, these images and stereotypes about indigneous peoples and indigenous women still prevail and continue to be produced and reproduced.

The 'hill tribes' were noble as opposed to the corrupted civilized population, mainly the British, but clearly 'primitives' too as in the lower stage of cultural evolution. While the British administrators and travelers established this static picture of 'noble savage', gradually the Bengali administrators too took upon the idea and continued to reproduce.

To the British eye, these 'others' were unlike the British or their a little more civilized neighbor Bengalis. their way of life (pastoral idyll- a place of peace, beauty, simplicity and freedom) required protection whereas the Bengali officials of both in Pakistan era and independent Bangladesh saw themselves as 'self-appointed handmaidens' of progress and modernity in the Chittagong Hills to bring this 'others' out of superstition and darkness and into a enlightenment. This is reflected in one of the writings by Abdus Sattar (1975:6), a Bengali administrator and writer, "once educated they stay clear of the dark alleys of tribal cults and enter the fold of civilized religions with overall improvement in their society and way of life".

The 'upajatis' in the nation state of Bangladesh

The idea of the 'primitive other' about the indigenous peoples remained embedded in the Bangladesh nation state's treatments towards them. This concept of the 'primitive other' prevailed in the textbooks, photographs taken by Bengali photographers, and as well as in media representations (Partha, Pavel. 2010: 209). It can be argued that the indigenous peoples have never been included in the imagination of a secular nation of Bangladesh.

The origin of Bangladeshi nationalism traces back to the growth of national consciousness in Bengal in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries particularly among the Bengali Muslims which led to the creation of Pakistan in 1947 and subsequently its break-up and the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971. According to, Dr Ahmed (1994), a leading historian of Bangladesh, Bengali Muslims in their search for cultural identity had been pulled by forces from two opposite directions: the pull of the past calling for upholding the Islamic traditional identity; and the pressure for establishing Bengali identity cutting across religious and sectarian barriers. Particularly through the language movement of 1948-52 a new secular national consciousness was developed which first led to the demand for regional autonomy and then for independence.

Bangladesh as a nation started its journey by organizing its national identity around Bengaliness, rooting

back to the 1952 language movement for Bangla as an official language of East Pakistan. This was a key organizing principle for the 9 month long independence war against Pakistan in 1971. Therefore, with the country's independence in 1971, nation-building attempts based on Bengali nationalism institutionalized the hierarchical relationship between the Bengali population and others (Gerharz 2015: 122). The nation-building project of the Bangladeshi state relates to ideal images of citizenship, which continue to rest upon the utmost homogeneity in cultural terms.

Bengali nationalism rests on the assumption that nation-building is a matter of defining the "core-nation" in ethno-cultural terms Brubaker terms as "nationalising nationalism" (1998: 277). Hence, since independence, Bengali language and culture constituted the markers that define belonging to the nation. As a consequence, the non-Bengali-speaking and culturally diverse populations were subordinated to the national population and turned into 'Upajati'. Upojati has connotations similar to the English word "tribe". It refers to uncivilized, less developed, and innocent peoples who live more or less isolated from the "mainstream" of "civilized" Bengali society. This connotation is supported by the famous utterance of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leader of the independence movement and Bangladesh's first prime minister, in response to the PCJSS leadership's assertion of its worries over the threat of extinction: "From this day onward the tribals are being promoted into Bengalis" (Mohsin 1996: 44). The so called uapajatis and their leadership perceived this invitation of assimilation as complete denial and ignorance of their demands for recognition of their distinctiveness, and its ignorance reaffirmed the assumed hierarchical relationship. The term is increasingly being rejected by the peoples concerned. They argue that upojati is a derogatory concept which suggests that they are of a lower order than the Bengalis, who form a jati or nation, whereas an upojati is a mere sub-nation.

Name calling as an expression of nationalist othering: from 'Jongly' to 'Rohingya'

Concepts and ideas have every day social manifestations and real life consequences for the people concerned. In the case of Bangladeshi nationalism, the imagination of a homogeneous nation state categorizes other ethnicities rather than Bengali as the 'other' and inferior. The everyday manifestations of these ideas turn into name callings and bullies that are faced by members of the indigenous peoples every now and then. In this section, I would like to scrutinize the regular words used and comments passed towards indigenous persons by many members of the Bengali community and the underlying assumptions and stereotypes they reveal. Following that I would continue to examine the sudden addition of the word 'Rohingya' to harass indigenous persons and the comments made along with this particular

word, by using traumatic incidents my participants have described in regards to this.

One of the major works that captures how often an indigenous person with mongoloid features is verbally and nonverbally harassed outside their own communities in the context of Bangladesh is Ellen Bal's book *They Ask If We Eat Frogs: Garo Ethnicity in Bangladesh*. Although her focus was on Garo indigenous community, yet her respondents' experiences of ethnic prejudices by Bengalis and analysis of the experiences are equally applicable to all the mongoloid looking indigenous community members. For example, one of her Garo respondents Rosie who is a student of Dhaka University (known as the best university in Bangladesh) narrated her experience in an ethnology class about the different stages of human civilization. She was the only indigenous student in the classroom. While the lecturer was discussing the dietary changes that took place from the time of the so-called ancient people and mentioned that they ate frogs and snakes, Rosie noticed all the other students started staring at her, associating her with those primitive people. Rosie also expressed her annoyance and frustration with the common questions she heard about the clothing of Garo women whether they covered their upper part of the body or not. It is to be noted that this is also a common question that most indigenous persons faced outside their communities. In reference to Rosie's experience, Ellen Bal looks for an explanation as to why Rosie who made it to Dhaka University and who neither behaved differently nor wore different clothing to her fellow female students could be so easily identified in the category of primitives. And she writes "The answer is shockingly simple: they knew Rosie to be a Garo, and Garos are one of Bangladesh's many 'tribes', upojatis, adivasis, or Indigenous Peoples. To this very day, many Bangladeshis imagine these communities as inherently unsophisticated, simple, primitive people without a history". (Bal, Ellen 2000: 28)

The two understandings from this explanation derive are: one, the imagination of the indigenous peoples in the minds of the majority Bengali population remains closely attached to the British portrayal of the 'tribals' as timeless and historyless primitives; second, the 'primitiveness' is judged from the lens of a more culturally evolved civilized nation which is 'Bengali' in this context. In practice, indigenous communities in Bangladesh are diverse in terms of language, food habits, clothing and even religions and overall ways of lives. Regardless of how each indigenous community's cultures have changed over the time due to colonization and all other historical major impacts associated with the political turnovers that took place in the regions where these communities have been living, the portrayals of indigenous people nonetheless stays the same - primitive, backward and thus inferior. This is evident in the labeling of and treatment of these people even in the Constitution of Bangladesh. Article 23A of the constitution states "The State shall take steps to protect and develop the unique local culture and tradition of the tribes,

minor races, ethnic sects and communities"[2].

The day to day derogatory words and comments also signify othering from the similar perceptions that indigenous cultures are primitive and inferior to Bengali culture. Some of the most common terms indigenous people commonly hear are: 'Jongly', 'Chakma', 'Chinese', 'Chinky', 'Cheng-chung', upajati etc. 'Jongly' is a word which means the people from the jungles and primitive, 'upajati' has a direct connotation of inferior race or ethnicity as opposed to the main 'jati' or nation the Bengalis. The other words/terms 'Chinese', 'Chinky', 'Chakma' are mainly aimed at the differences in facial features compared to the majority of Bengalis. Although Bengals originate from diverse backgrounds and thus it is hard to limit them in few physical and facial features, they can be easily differentiated from most of the indigenous persons' facial features. Such differentiable features are usually wider eyes as opposed to smaller eyes, and/or sharper nose and facial structures as opposed to flat and rounded nose and facial structures of many members of the indigenous communities. In Bangladesh, generally, sharper facial features with wide eyes and sharp noses are perceived as desirable and therefore, flat nose/face and small or narrowed eyes are usually made fun of. This desirability goes so far that even Bengalis who inherit facial similarities to the indigenous peoples of CHT also often hear people/friends mock them by calling 'Chakma', name of the numerically largest indigenous community in the CHT. And 'Cheng-chung' is intended to ridicule the languages spoken by indigenous communities. Most indigenous languages are completely different from Bangla and foreign to Bengalis. However, not all languages frown upon only because those are different and foreign. For instance, someone with proficiency in English or French would be admired although they are foreign and completely different from Bangla. The colonial legacy of hierarchies among cultures along the line of race and ethnicity thus prevail and manifests in day to day lives of indigenous people when they step outside their communities. On a similar note, it should be mentioned here that this legacy can be found even amongst the indigenous communities in a different form which is not in the scope of this article.

'Rohingya': A new name for the 'other' of the nation

As mentioned in the beginning of this write up, in 2019, I had been conducting field work on indigenous women's experiences on migration and collecting their lived experiences. Without even prompting, almost every single interviewee talked about how they were getting referred to as 'Rohingya' along with some common comments at bazaars, public transports, classrooms, on the roads and so on. The most common bully they heard in reference to this is: 'hey Rohingya, leave our country'. Bullies similar to this

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[2] http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/act-367/section-41506.html

started right after the Rohingyas had to flee widespread military violence in the Rakhain State of Myanmar to Bangladesh in 2017. In August 2017, Myanmar's military perpetrated mass murder and rape, and mass destruction to the extent that over 900,000 Rohingyas (Bangladesh government put the figure around 1.1 million, although the local population claims the actual figure is much higher than the official estimation (Hossain 2020) were forced to flee across the border to neighbouring Bangladesh according to UNICEF. This later on led to Aung San Suu Kyi, the then State Counsellor of Myanmar, having to attend a three-day hearing into allegations of genocide at the international court of justice (ICJ).

In the early stages of the Rohingya influx in Bangladesh, different research and mass media reports illustrated the role of Buddhist nationalist groups in the massacre of Rohingyas which sparked tension between Muslims and Buddhists in Bangladesh (Ansar, Anas and Md. Khaled, Abu Faisal. 2021). Muslim minority being a major identity marker of the Ronhigya population from the majority Buddhists in Myanmar, a shared Muslim identity was appealed as call for soliderity and support among Bengali-Muslims for the Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh. As a consequence, Buddhist population including the Bangla-speaking Buddhists and indigenous communities were equally feared of attrocities from their Muslim neighbours. This fear was worse among the Buddhist population living near the borders of Myanmar such as Naikhyongchari, Lama and Alikadam sub districts of Bandarban Hill Districts and Ukhiya, Teknaf and Moheshkhali sub-districts of Cox's Bazar. 4 of my interviewees whose families live in villages of these borderlands described the atmosphere of fear that prevailed from August 2017 to mid-2018. The most common characteristics were: able bodied men and young males having to patrol the villages from dusk to dawn in rotation out of fear of attacks; the families that didn't have able bodied men to take part in the patrol having to financially contribute for food for the patrol teams; villagers facing harsh words and comments acompainged with the name calling 'Rohingya'; and continuous rumours about possible attacks by neighbouring Muslims. It is important to keep in mind that Buddhist and some Hindu population of these are had experiences of a chain attacks a series of attacks on Buddhist monasteries, shrines, and houses of Buddhist inhabitants in Ramu Upazila by local mobs in September 2012 which is known as the 2012 Ramu Violence. This occurred in reaction to a tagging of an image depicting the desecration of Quran on the timeline of a fake Facebook account in the name of a Buddhist male.

One of the participants during fy MPhil fieldwork described the horror she felt during the early stages of Rohingya influx in Bangladesh. She was visiting her parents in a Chak village of Naikhyongcharri. The day she arrived her mother held her in her arms all night, cried and said 'this time we might die or have to flee somewhere forever'. She said that although she knew that the local administration had declared a curfew so as to prevent large scale violece she still feared for her and her parents' lives because the entire

atmosphere full of terror and distress. All the villagers were traumatized and restless as every now and then news about plans of attack kept coming from different sources. She said "the fact that I am called Rohingya every time I go out and the serious fear we faced during that time made me realize for the first time in my life that I am not a full citizen of this country. I am only adivasi".

Gradually, majority populations' mindset towards Rohingya refugees changed and sense of solidarity waned due to three key contributing factors: growing economic instability in the local area as a result of the wage fall and price hike, unequal access to humanitarian aid and uneven distribution of resource opportunities created through substantial humanitarian operations and finally, political uncertainty about the future of the Rohingya crisis (Ansar, Anas and Md. Khaled, Abu Faisal. 2021:6). Later on other major issues such as depleting natural resources in the local areas and trafficking Yaba drags from Myanmar added to the growing concerns related to the Rohingya refugee crisis (Hossain Ahmed Taufiq 2019:106). With all these developments, the fear of atrocities on Buddhist community by organized Muslim mobs slowly faded, if not entirely. However, indigenous persons living in the cities that are faraway from these borderlands still faced with the name-calling 'Rohingya'.

'Rohingya' took over the previous word used for name-calling used towards indigenous persons. One of my respondents stated, "I am a citizen of Bangladesh and Rohingyas are from Myanmar. I am also sympathetic towards Rohingya people. They have their own rights to claim their citizenship and other rights, but why this comparison? Is this because we are second class citizens of Bangladesh? Or is this a reminder that I am a citizen of Bangladesh but I do not have full rights to exercise it because I am from a indigenous community. The truth is that I felt insecure". One of the other interviewees had an argument with her colleague who said that Buddhism is claimed to be a religion of peace, but the Buddhists in Myanmar proved otherwise. Referring to previous communal attacks in the Chittagong Hill Tracts the colleague said, "that's why violence occurs in your place because your people are violent". Similarly, another respondent have had a serious argument with a senior in her university hostel.

All my interviewees mentioned that when some random people called them Rohingya on the roads or other public places they could ignore it. However, places where the incidents of bullying and confrontations happened significantly impacted their mental wellbeing. The most common and unsettling incidents experienced by my respondents were among the circle of friends. Mockingly they would call out "oi Rohingya, why don't you leave the country? It will give us space for Rohingya brothers" leading to arguments and depression. To them, when such comments are made by those they call 'friend' it is more unsettling because circles of friends are supposed to be the 'safe space' for anyone. The other type of unsettling experiences described by my respondents is when such bullies and comments came from

people in authority. One of my respondents was traveling on a rickshaw next to Kalabagan Bus stand in Dhaka, the capital city, a traffic police called her Rohingya. She said, "It was so unexpected, the rickshaw was running fast. I was totally baffled. Till now, every now and then, I find myself preparing for such an incident so that I can respond adequately if something similar happens next time". Another respondent shared her experience, "one day in the classroom while mentioning about the rohingya crisis one of her teachers asked her, our people are in crisis because of people like you. Why don't you people leave the country?" She continued, "I felt so angry and disappointed, a teacher is asking me a question like that! what am I supposed to reply when I am the only indigenous person in that classroom". Most of my interviewees ended their description of these incidents with a similar question: 'why do the majority Bengalis think they have the right to tell us to leave the country?'

Answer to this question lies in the core of nationalist imagination of Bangladesh. Akeel Bilgrami, influential philosopher of socio-political matters, argues that a 'standard ploy' for nationalism is "...to find an external enemy within and hate it, despise it, subjugate it and say the nation is ours, not theirs" (in Willis, Olivia 2015). The key 'ploy' of the 'modern' nation-state is organizing itself around a hierarchical identity where it has to create an 'other' without which the idea of 'nation' falls apart. This reflects Edward Said and Crang's concepts of 'othering' put forward in the beginning of this article. Forming an identity-based group, which is the Bangali nation in this context, requires 'other(s)' to compare and contrast with so as to assert recognition and superiority which is a colonial product itself. In the context of nationalism in Bangladesh, indigenous peoples have been always an 'other' in ethnic terms. The terms and name-callings used to identify and mock indigenous peoples before Rohingya influx were found upon Bengali cultural identity whereas the addition of the term 'Rohingya' as name-calling with the increasing Rohingya crisis indicates the 'othering' of indifenous peoples is no more limited to the other of the Bengali nation but of a Bengali-Muslim nation. These groups of people who were once 'tribes' to the British colonials, 'upajatis' or sub-nation to the Bengali nation became the 'other' to both the Bangali nationalist and Muslim nationalist lenses. In the context of Rohingya refugee having to flee the violence and dacades of oppression by Buddhist Majority in Myanmar; the indigenous peoples of the CHT who look similar to the average Burmese population and a majority of whom follow Buddhism, got into the crossfire of both Bangali nationalism and Muslim nationalism.

In conclusion, the questions: who are the 'other(s)' of Bangladesh nation-state and what processes made this 'othering' happend requires in-depth discussions and self-reflections as a nation to be able to imagine who we want to be. One way to go forward from here is to "…. begin to decolonize our received notions of who we are, our sociologies, and our histories" (Tripura, Prashanta. 2010:244).

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