

Anti-Bihari sentiment in Bangladesh

Introduction

This detailed critical analysis of the processes of racialisation in Bangladesh will focus on the ethnic minority group: the Biharis, an Urdu-speaking community living on the fringes of Bangladesh society. While extensive work has taken place in Bangladesh to tackle racism, this group highlights failures by National and International actors. Racial discrimination, the degrading conduct to an individual based on their ethnic origins, lingual, immigrant status or skin colour, is bound by global hierarchies. Biharis are an example of a deprived group based on their ethnic heritage, they symbolise failures within Bangladesh politics and society, representing other Bangladeshi racialised groups such as the Dalits, Hindus and Buddhists (UN, 2015). The Biharis obtain a vast history of racial discrimination; yet unlike the Dalits, Hindus and Buddhists remain excluded from UN recognition or proactive government inclusion. This leaves a gap in knowledge that has instead been replaced using academic reviews, first person accounts and small organisation reports. The introduction of comparative case studies and theorists will portray processes of racialisation for this minority group. The history of the Biharis and fundamentally Bangladesh itself began with the Liberation War in 1971. After Bengali nationalism had prevailed, the original West and East Pakistan coalition was challenged from the bottom-up. The Urdu-speaking community, unlike the Bengalis, occupied skilled professions defining their class rank. Subsequently the Biharis sided with West Pakistan to sustain this social hierarchy; “the conflict between West Pakistanis, Bengalis and ‘Biharis’ for elite positions seems to have contributed to the solidifying of ethnic identities” (Gerlach, 2010:175). The strength of the Bengali nationals proved too strong and after tyranny and bloodshed Bangladesh was born independent of Pakistan. The Bihari people were sentenced to ethnic cleansing in the form of genocide and a lifetime of institutional racism and severe social exclusion. Contemporary political instability monopolises International attention and has led to social and economic turmoil (Kabir, 2015). 160,000 Biharis remain subject to various forms of racialisation in society that will be explored throughout this paper. History is the defining factor for the anti-Bihari sentiment, explored through four subsections. Starting with *The Politics of Racism*, a chapter exploring the Bangladeshi Government as a fundamental driver. The next section focusing on *Citizenship Rights of Biharis*, explores perceived reductions to Bihari exclusion. Then *Discrimination from Mainstream Society* analysing racialisation from the bottom-up. And finally *Gender and Generational Differences* an important analysis for obtaining evidence of deep-rooted contemporary social issues. Exploring the anti-Bihari sentiment in Bangladesh through these four areas will provide an account of issues that define racism in South Asia and the wider world. Cultural supremacy is defined by historical events seen in top-down and bottom-up processes.

The Politics of Racism

The process of racialisation in Bangladesh has been defined by its history. This history has led to a vast degree of institutional racism resulting in prejudice and racial discrimination of the Biharis. What is important to establish is the context of ‘history’ in a country that gained independence 45 years ago, hence its capability to define contemporary politics. Law’s (2010) understanding of Weber’s theory of racism highlights the connection with politics; the politically dominant race is likely to discriminate against a minority group. The strong sense of Bangladesh Nationalism after the Liberation war led to the racialisation of the Biharis. The

territorial-political explanation for the racial hatred was fuelled by perceptions to “defend space from potential invaders” (Law, 2010:141). Clarifying the connection between history and politics in the case of the anti-Bihari sentiment. Al Falah (2015) states Biharis are the “worst victims of political and historical developments in 1971 that downgraded their social, cultural and economic status from top to bottom level”. The complex history has defined racial attitudes.

The foundation of governing in Bangladesh was built on mass genocide during and after the Liberation War. Processes of racialisation are seen strongest through acts of violence, after all racism is not just about “the development of a set of ideas, it is also about the operation of systems of domination and governance and in many cases mass killings” (Law, 2010:11). Genocide a topic eerily discussed and categorically suppressed. Ethnic minority groups are vulnerable to such acts of violence, to which the Bihari people are an example. “One-sided mass killing of vulnerable social minorities primarily by states, or other official actors, characterises the phenomenon of genocide” (Law, 2010:12). Genocide thrived off cultural supremacy; the Biharis were viewed as traitors and the shift in political power contextualised Bangladesh. The war saw atrocities committed against Bengalis as well as Biharis, in the form of torture and genocide. It is thought both were involved in violence, however following Bangladesh’s independence “punitive measures were undertaken against the Biharis” which formed into “official acts of violence, genocide, and ethnic cleansing” (Skutsch, 2005:219). A violent history has shaped procedures to govern the Biharis to date. Such acts instigated by the Bangladesh Government constitute severe forms of racialisation. The capability to ignore such horrors has been largely due to prevailing narratives of Bengali genocide. Ahmed (2011) reiterates it is those who win the war, that write the history. Violence towards Biharis and “shooting squads in action”, depict severe racialisation of the Urdu-speaking community (Gerlach, 2010:152). What is missing from literature, are accurate figures such as death tolls from either side, instead scholars have taken events committed by non-Bengalis to justify racial violence and marginalisation that is still occurring to date (Gerlach, 2010). Further evidence suggesting racial ideologies of the police portrays the unsubtly of racism. In a press statement, the Superintendent of Police for Jhenida openly stated; “these bastard Biharis – we’ve got a lot to kill” (Gerlach, 2010:150). Although this statement was recorded nearer the time to the war and violence may have reduced, low intensity persecution has prevailed. *Minority Rights Group International* (2016) states how the camps still face severe discrimination and Bengalis still attempt to persecute Biharis on war crimes. It is clear that historical events have contributed to racial attitudes.

Alongside direct physical violence there has been a tendency from the Bangladesh Government to ignore the Bihari situation. Similar to the Dalits in India, a technique used by governments to avoid procedures to reduce social injustice; “acknowledging discrimination but not racism”, means ethnic minority groups whom do not “fit the established concept of race” are left to experience severe racial discrimination (Law, 2010:10). The Bangladesh Government has not taken substantial responsibility of the Biharis and similarly uses this technique. In a United Nations and Rahman (2013) meeting on the elimination of racism and racial discrimination in Bangladesh, it reviewed the new landmark programme to combat racism led by the government. Also at the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance the Bangladesh Government declared responsibility to target these racial processes (Chowdhury, 2009; Sobhan, 2012; UN, 2015). This advocates progress by International bodies alongside the Government, but most significantly defines the failure to address racialisation of the Biharis. Avoidance techniques are highlighted by “the [Bangladesh] constitution... [that] does not recognize any minority and therefore allows no special protection or promotion for them” (Hofmann and Caruso, 2011:98). Resemblances with the Rohingya people of Bangladesh reported by *Al Jazeera* (2012) to be the world’s most forgotten group; suffering from ethnic attacks and ostracisation by the government. Bengalis resent Rohingya’s; a race suffering disease and famine, the lack of humanity is alarming but common for such a corrupt country (Firasat, 2015). Although

technically legal, the inability to address the racialisation of this minority group emphasises indirect racism through the failure to act.

The deliberate act of avoidance has led to detrimental camp conditions that are inhumane. The Bangladesh Government are in a position of power to manage the Bihari camps; yet they remain as “slum-like conditions” (Abrah, and Redclift, 2007:1). The ever-growing population alongside land evictions and withdrawals to a limited power supply are examples of the racial discrimination the government initiates (Abrah and Redclift, 2007:2). Discriminatory policies work hand-in-hand with failure to implement inclusive policies (Khan and Rahman, 2009). Inaction through failures to provide sufficient “clean water, waste disposals and sewage systems” has led to “chronic hygiene problems” and a substandard way of life for thousands of Biharis (Abrah and Redclift, 2007:2). The politicised history depicts their mistreatment. Deliberate political procrastination because of the origins of the Urdu-speaking community has worsened with cuts in government relief funding in already financially insecure conditions. The government have gone from spending “US\$250,000 a month to provide basic needs for them which is very inadequate” but recently has reduced or stopped (Farzana, 2008:11). Although the government supposedly supplies communities with free electricity, water and a food ration, the rapid population increase has affected the quality of life (*Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada*, 2003). Failures to mirror population growth, and instead cutting supplies for basic human needs define processes of racialisation in Bangladesh. The handling of Biharis by the government is intolerable and portrays a complete lack of humanity constituting severe racial discrimination.

Bangladesh does not share the same political discourse as Western countries that have tackled racialisation. Establishing democracy is essential before significant progress can be achieved for isolated ethnic minority groups. A country so ample with political antagonism, violent riots and widespread intergovernmental corruption, that its democratic values are sincerely questioned. Since the follow up to the Awami League election in 2008, the Liberation War has fuelled political hostility (BBC, 2016). Divides in society shadow enmity from the top-down. Attacks on ethnic minority groups are abnormally abundant for this ‘democratic’ country. Political parties on a daily basis execute opposition arrests, riots and exiles; a dysfunctional country driven by hate condemns the plight of ethnic groups. Political avoidance is not a strategy to bypass the most needy, for inclusion and basic human needs are an obligation to all individuals no matter what their origin. Bangladesh politics has degenerated into chaos because of the two-party system where leaders “wage a personal vendetta at the country’s expense” (Banyan, 2015). Fully rigged elections means a permanent state of corruption that replaces democracy with dictatorships (Banyan, 2015). Evidently the political state leaves little hope for Bihari integration. “Political instability has always affected the security of religious and ethnic minorities” exemplified through attacks on the Hindu community, procedures to target attacks are unlikely (Riaz, 2013:9). Minorities become targets of hate attacks while the opposition party preoccupies the government; there is a complete lack of empathy for the victims. Riaz (2013) states the international community need to aid the Bangladeshi Government to achieve democracy. Once democracy has been established the need to sustain peace is paramount, the Government will have longer to focus on violence towards ethnic minority groups.

Arguably the anti-Bihari sentiment has been fuelled by global failures. Mahmoud (2009) claims global Islamophobia has worsened their situation, had the Biharis been Jewish or Christian than media and world powers would immediately broadcast their plight. First person reports from Mascarenhas (1971) of senior military and civil officers pursuing ethnic cleansing, was an example of the few media broadcasts of Bihari genocide. The anti-Bihari sentiment is a unique form of racialisation that has been sidelined by International actors and forcefully persecuted by institutional factions. A UCA news video (2013) coined the term *the Forgotten People* referring to the Bihari who have minor International recognition or sympathy from the Bangladesh government. There are similarities with the plight of the Jews;

Bihari camps are justified the same way concentration camps were justified by the Nazis (Mirza, 1998). Bangladesh – translated to Bengali nation in English – mirroring Hitler’s nationalism and business of racial purity (Mirza, 1998). Although technically, Biharis are not confined to the camps, discrimination and violence leads them to “live in camps for fear of their own safety and security” (Skutsch, 2005:220). Undeniable global failures must not take responsibility away from the government’s role. The Bangladesh/India/Pakistan 1974 Agreement outlined those who did not qualify to return to Pakistan would be under the responsibility of the Bangladesh Government and require rehabilitation into Bangladesh society (Sassoli *et al*, 2011). Again the International unwillingness to aid political deadlock is detrimental to democracy in Bangladesh, the Biharis and other ethnic minority groups are left to fend for themselves (Banyan, 2015). More steps need to be taken at a National and International level to reduce the anti-Bihari sentiment.

Citizenship Rights of Biharis

Acknowledging ones citizenship rights is crucial for political and social integration within any society. Citizenship rights are imperative to Biharis because in the Bangladesh constitution, it states all citizens should have equal rights before the law, equal access to opportunities and fundamentally safeguarded against discrimination (Khan and Rahman, 2009). Accordingly citizenship rights need to be established to overcome racial discrimination. Abrah and Redclift’s (2007) study flagged up popular support from 87% of Biharis interviewed, that Bangladeshi citizenship was necessary to reduce racial discrimination. Sholder (2011) explains whilst in the constitution it states the birthright of younger generation Biharis to become Bangladesh citizens, they are denied these rights through discrimination as a consequence of being born into the camps. The profound issues resting with the citizenship rights of Biharis define their relentless struggle to change the nature of racialisation in Bangladesh.

Demonstrated by their complex history, Biharis suffer from an “identity crisis of being Bangladeshi and Pakistanis or being refugees and minorities that are deprived of fundamental rights” (Farzana, 2008). It is common for Biharis to be named ‘Stranded Pakistanis’ implying their lack of Bangladesh citizenship. Sholder (2011) agrees this term is not politically correct and the Biharis need to be recognised as a Bangladesh linguistic minority. ‘Stranded Pakistanis’ is a reminder of the violent history and prevents Biharis from progressing to become recognised Bangladesh citizens. Hussain (no-date), a Bihari individual himself, deliberated at the Durban Review Conference in Geneva, how as the most disadvantaged group in Bangladesh, they are not even recognised as citizens in the country they call home. Treated with a complete lack of respect, discriminatory behaviour over their identity has led to the Urdu language, books and magazines banned from Bangladesh (Mirza, 1998). Removing Bihari culture outlines processes of racialisation in Bangladesh, the association of Urdu with exclusion signifies a need for Bihari individuals to adopt Bengali tradition over their own to obtain acceptance. Cultural supremacy preserves the displacement of the Bihari community from becoming Bangladesh citizens.

Recently there have been major advances in the citizenship rights of Biharis. The organisation Al Falah (2015) aided the Biharis where the Bangladesh government failed, leading to a petition for citizenship rights that passed in 2003; a landmark achievement. The significance of this aimed to help eliminate social exclusion and reduce racial discrimination through the eyes of the law. However, Al Falah (2011) also described the 1981-2011 efforts to integrate Biharis into Bangladesh society were faced with strong opposition from local leadership and the government whom discredited the camp dwellers as full-fledged citizens. Although some discriminatory issues remain, the Bihari community have “come a long way from filthy tents to voting rights, but continue to battle social stigma” (Das and Hassan, 2014). The violence that was explored in section one appears to have been replaced by a less severe form of racial discrimination. *Minority Rights Group International* (2016) claims again while this may be a landmark achievement, the right to vote was only granted to a limited number of Biharis.

Efforts by small NGOs have aided the Bihari cause; efforts from government to solidify efforts are still necessary. Currently the opportunity for 18-33 year old Biharis to vote provides this minority group with a political voice for democratic reform.

The recent court ruling nevertheless excludes a large proportion of the Bihari community demonstrating further racial discrimination. Abrah and Redclift (2007) argue through their findings of the Bihari community, after the sheer time spent living in Bangladesh they are fully deserving of citizenship rights. Their study found 90% of Biharis desire Bangladesh citizenship in Dhaka and Saidpur, and among the 18-25 year olds this percentage was even higher at 100% (Abrah and Redclift, 2007). The results question arguments based on Bihari loyalty to Pakistan that triggered Bengali resentment. Whilst citizenship rights are being contested for the younger generation “citizenship should not be a requirement for basic human rights” that the communities require (Farzana, 2008:4). The older generation are still targets of racial hatred signifying failures by the government. Governmental deficiencies have forced smaller organisations to step in (Murshid, 2014). Slowly changes in legislation has resulted in 60,000 Biharis added to the electoral list, although down to the work of individuals in the camps and small organisations, the right to vote goes hand-in-hand with entitlements for an official status (Abrah and Redclift, 2007), changes in *de jure* aid political inclusion of Biharis. Although the Supreme Court ruling may have granted the younger generation citizenship rights, it is believed this is nothing more than a token label. Equal access to opportunities promised in the Bangladesh constitution has not materialised for young Biharis (Abrah and Redclift, 2007). Similarities between the Biharis and Bengali Hindus through the lack of political voice, portrays the ethnic minority plight in Bangladesh, groups ostracised by a culture based on nationalism and religious purity (Chatterjee, 2014). Seemingly an important feature to tackle racialisation in Bangladesh is undermined by prejudices over historical events. The reduction of *de jure* means of racial discrimination has failed to be illustrated in *de facto*.

There are concerns as to how increases in citizenship rights will be taken advantage of by a governing system still clearly consumed by racial prejudices. Confusion generated by the constant threat of eviction corresponding with “the overwhelming desire for Bangladeshi citizenship” (Abrah and Redclift, 2007:3). Governmental policies to tackle illegal settlements have been ever increasing; if citizenship is granted to all the Biharis than there is a high possibility they will be the main targets of discriminatory policies. This endless concern reduces hope for rehabilitation into society. Not to mention that despite Supreme Court ruling of Bangladeshi citizenship, the highest court in Bangladesh, Biharis “are facing social exclusion and severe discrimination in everyday aspect of life” from employment to access of justice highlighting “their living conditions in the camps is not only sub-standard but also inhuman” (Khan and Rahman, 2009:77). Whether this method has been effective in tackling the process of racialisation in Bangladesh is questionable, government policy needs to match the efforts from Supreme Court and the Bihari community to reduce social exclusion.

Discrimination from Mainstream Society

The process of racialisation in Bangladesh can be seen largely as a ‘bottom-up’ issue, progress in some forms of legislation are counteracted by racial discrimination initiated by mainstream society. Again the historical context is crucial when considering the levels of racial severity treatment. Law (2010) outlined the different levels of racialisation. Biharis are prone to the most severe forms of racialisation such as violence, aggression and exclusion; through to lower levels such as lack of employment and education, as well as least severe forms being derogatory language (Law, 2010). These three categories of racialisation are daily forms of discrimination from mainstream society.

Biharis have been faced with racial hatred in the most severe form of direct violence. Originated from the Liberation War, ethnic cleansing was advocated with mobs and organised gangs publicly murdering Bihari men and women (Gerlach, 2010). Mirza (1998) proclaims

the violence is not just restricted to the warzone, but locals, police and military regularly set deliberate fires in Bihari camps. It is believed an arson attack is set on the *Ashura* each year, to mark how many years the Biharis have inhabited Bangladesh lands (Mirza, 1998). Arguably many of these issues are prehistoric, however a recent Daily Star (2014) article depicts recent brutality when eight Biharis were purposely trapped in a house that was then set alight. The victims of this horrific crime were mostly children and women, depicting their vulnerability. Al Falah (2011) found that not all society were hostile towards Biharis, these people are coined the 'conscious community' whom aid the rehabilitation process. Violence has reduced since the war, yet it remains a key issue due to the severity of these one off attacks. The *United States Committee for Refugees* (2002) stated that although the Biharis are not imprisoned inside the camps, they feel safer living in the camps, portraying the extent of the danger. Racial hatred and violence is still abundant suggesting essential steps to improve security.

Education is an essential process for integration into mainstream society. Extreme discrimination in the education system denies Biharis from accessing state education. As Hussain (no-date) points out, the denial of state school alongside insufficient funds for private education makes education impossible for many Bihari children. In the rare case that a Bihari could afford a private education, treatment in schools from Bengali children echoes racial discrimination in mainstream society (Hussain, (no-date)). Bengali teacher's and schoolchildren implement severe bullying on Bihari children due to their heritage, which prevents them from attending (Abrah and Redclift, 2007). Accordingly the *Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit* found the Biharis to be 94% illiterate, compared to the National average of 46% (Das and Hasan, 2014). The inconsistency suggests profound discrimination in the education system. Abrah and Redclift (2007) suggest it is not down to a formal restriction, but camp addresses alongside attitudes in school administrations that categorically prevent their educational needs. Attempts to run schools in the camps have been immobilised by lack of funding and insufficient resources (Mirza, 1998). Al Falah (2015) speaks of the remarkable progress in Bangladesh education over the past few years, however the Biharis have been left out of this process. Being poverty struck has deprived Biharis of basic human needs that the most average Bangladesh citizens can access. The need for education is crucial to stop the poverty cycle and prevent Biharis from continuing to be ostracised from mainstream society. Al Falah (2015) has been significant to helping with educating Biharis to replace system failures. Over the years there have been several types of programmes run in the camps. Foundation schools and sponsorship programmes to continue their education from pre-primary to Master Degree level are examples of this achievement (Al Falah, 2015). This is a step forward for many Biharis, however it does not mask societal discrimination. Whilst government funding is necessary, the attitudes of individuals also need to be altered to reduce current racial discrimination.

A crucial step in the rehabilitation process of the Biharis is access to employment. Firstly looking back at the origins of racialisation, social class structures were defined by employment basis; Biharis prior to Bangladesh independence dominated the skilled workforce. The "conflict between social groups... was exacerbated with the parties increasingly viewed in ethnic terms" also "interwoven with class issues... Bengali and Bihari elites competed for leadership" social structures later reversed for the ethnic groups (Gerlach, 2010:153). Class struggles led to the Biharis being exiled to the fringes of society. Biharis went from skilled workers to unemployed or exploited labourers (Das and Hasan, 2014; Mirza, 1998). Commonality with other marginalised groups highlights the importance of occupation when establishing ones position in society. Dalits are largely identified with traditional occupations such as fisherman; low salary and daily discrimination are examples of injustice to ostracised communities (Chowdhury, 2009). Prejudice over past history has led to the conjuring of racial hatred against the Urdu-speaking community. Consequently camp addresses lead to immediate discrimination, with the lack of documents to secure employment, Biharis cannot integrate with Bengali society (Abrah and Redclift, 2007). When

opportunities do arise, Biharis “face wage discrimination and inequality of treatment” (Abrah and Redclift, 2007:2). These problems accentuate the innate racial discrimination that individuals in society maintain. Employment is a vital step for the Biharis to be included within society. Concerns endured with individual acts are made worse by the institutional racism that prevails. The deliberate act of withholding Bihari passports by Bangladesh authorities, crushing aspirations to migrate to the Middle East seeking employment maintains a state of ostracisation (Das and Hasan, 2014). Bottom-up and top-down racism are duly interlinked.

Although a low level of severity, the derogatory use of the word Bihari has fuelled their social exclusion. Actions taken by Bengali individuals mirror the derogatory implications of having a Bihari title. Mirza’s (1998) first hand experience highlights the malevolent behaviour towards Urdu-speakers in Bangladesh. A Bihari individual who had obtained employment as a rickshaw driver but still carried his linguistic heritage was continuously discriminated by individuals at a petrol station when his title became clear (Mirza 1998). Once identities are exposed, mainstream society is a perilous place. Comparing to Western context, ‘Bihari’ resembled the word ‘nigger’ and all the repercussions that triggers (Mirza, 1998). Biharis would try to assimilate into Bengali society to hide their previous label. Prone to individual bias, first person accounts have to be interpreted carefully, as well as changes in society since this was recorded. Alexander *et al* (2016) illustrates the 2003 Supreme Court ruling has increased sympathy from members in society who have begun actively challenging racial discrimination and attempts to supersede traditional prejudices of the derogatory meaning of Bihari. However, Farzana (2008) argues there is still a demeaning connotation with the word. Considering points evaluated throughout this essay; it seems there is an unwritten rule that when Biharis attempt to integrate within society in sectors such as education and employment, they are immediately discriminated when their ethnicity is uncovered. Abrah and Redclift (2007) empathise the individual basis of discrimination requiring the influence of the media to reconstruct least severe forms of prejudice. Previous associations with Bihari action in the Liberation War have maintained derogatory meanings. The “rights offered by the state are meaningless if discrimination is to continue at present levels” (Abrah and Redclift, 2007:3). The World Values Survey originally depicted Bangladeshis to be significantly intolerant (Henderson, 2013). Though it was found later that a methodological error had switched the results meaning Bangladeshis are perhaps more tolerant than once believed (Fisher, 2013). Growing tolerance of racialised groups is only possible when Biharis abandon their ethnic heritage traits; their willingness to drop Urdu language and culture depicts this struggle. The process of racialisation is therefore inherent to societal values and would require efforts from the ‘conscious community’ alongside media and government to tackle animosity.

Gender and Generational Differences

Gender and generation are unrelated in ordinary context but connected through the process of racialisation in Bangladesh. Their formation as a delinquent topic occurred in contemporary society. As time has prevailed and perhaps some aspects of discrimination have depleted, there have been growing divides within the Bihari community. This paper has established that to be a Bihari in Bangladesh is difficult, however to be a female Bihari is explicably arduous. Another issue ensuing in contemporary Bihari communities is the division of generations, the younger generation – born after the Liberation War – and the older generation – born prior to the war – have differences in loyalties and political views. These differences are indisputably reflected in their treatment from Bangladesh society.

Du Bois (1924) wrote about the struggle of women in a racist society being fundamentally significant alongside sexism leading to greater oppression. Although an opinion formed many years ago, the case of Bihari women clearly demonstrates it. An extreme kind of victimisation began during the Liberation War that saw the “looting and abducting of women” (Gerlach, 2010:152). The vulnerability of women in a racial climate is a recipe for disaster. Violent acts against Bihari women have decreased since this time period, but contemporary problems

remain internally. Institutional racism and exclusion from mainstream society has isolated the communities and consequently made them more conservative especially in their handling of women (Al Falah, 2015). After a series of photographs were commissioned to depict the Biharis current situation, Donan (2014) found that women were unlikely to ever leave the camps. They face serious obstacles from sexism beside racism. Al Falah (2015) again working alongside the Bihari community has witnessed sexism; reiterating how extra effort is needed to get women out the camp and into education to fundamentally break this cycle. The treatment of women in the community is worrying, and further difficulties have been revealed. The *United States Committee for Refugees* (2002) listed problems with women voluntarily leaving the camps for the sex trade. Sex traffickers target Bihari women because of their invisibility in the eyes of the law. Bangladesh is one of the few Muslim nations where prostitution is legal and unregulated with brothels such as Daulatdia confining 2000 women (Vice News, 2015). Although perhaps not illegal, the degrading treatment of vulnerable women is an issue that needs to be addressed by the Bangladesh Government. Farzana (2008) agrees that the lack of help from authorities due to their ethnicity has resulted in human trafficking and forced prostitution of around 20,000 unmarried girls. The quality of life for Bihari women is unacceptable. Society may be including more male Biharis however there is still significant changes that need to evolve to reduce the isolation of women.

Another contemporary issue devised from racial discrimination in Bangladesh is the division of the younger and older generation of Biharis. Both face different experiences with racial discrimination in Bangladesh society. History is an influential factor, with many of the older generation still holding loyalties to Pakistan. A late 1990s *Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit* study found 59% of participants interviewed in the Geneva camp saw themselves as Bangladeshis compared to 35% Pakistanis (Gosh, 2007). Although caution needs to be taken when using second hand surveys as methodological issues can effect their accuracy, an in depth look at the study reveals the generational divisions. The survey emphasised how the younger generation had no loyalties towards Pakistan, they are instead actively fighting for education and citizenship rights, unlike the older generation still awaiting repatriation (Gosh, 2007). Tensions grow from the older generation fearing alienation from the Pakistan Government after organisation such as *Stranded Pakistani Youth Rehabilitation Movement* argue the case of Bangladesh citizenship and integration within Bangladesh society (Gosh, 2007). Steps have been taken by Bangladesh to include the younger generation, reducing racial discrimination, however the older generation are left out of the healing process. In 2008, the granting of citizenship rights to 150,000 younger generation Biharis endorsed political inclusion and exemplified developments in the treatment of the younger generation (Das and Hasan, 2014). History has defined the two separate ideologies and has shaped racial processes and experiences. A divide in strategies and motives is exemplified by the opposition group; *The Stranded Pakistani General Repatriation Committee of Bangladesh* who have led demonstrations, hunger strikes and political meetings to aid the return to Pakistan (Farzana, 2008). In 2015, the Pakistan Supreme Court rejected repatriation claiming the “large number of Biharis in Bangladesh” resent repatriation and claim Bangladeshi citizenship, confirming fears of alienation (Malik, 2015). Their unsuccessfulness has only widened the divide amongst Bihari community and further estranged themselves from Bangladesh society. Al Falah (2011) explains the racial hatred and violence that the older generation have experienced solidifies mistrust and division. Perhaps the younger community are the only hope for rehabilitation, backing from Supreme Court rulings and a strong desire to be Bangladeshi requires the abandoning of older generation leadership. Further abandoning of culture and traditions, adopting Bengalis while disregarding Urdu lingual is superficially a method of reducing racialisation (Donan, 2014). This in itself is a contemporary form of racialisation; the stigma of exhibiting a ‘Bihari’ title is detrimental to inclusion. The older generation’s loyalty to their heritage and exclusion from basic human needs portrays contemporary racism in Bangladesh.

Conclusion

The progression of racialisation in Bangladesh has changed in its severity but is still abundant in contemporary society. The violence that dominated the first section of this paper outlined the barbarity of governance following the Liberation War. The strength of attitudes towards Biharis based on historical events highlights the interlinked nature of politics and racism. Moreover the detrimental political situation of Bangladesh exhausts Biharis of any possible government backing; conclusively inaction is a form of racial discrimination. The lack of global interest for the plight of the Biharis works together with a system of avoidance, characterising Bangladeshi governance. Violence from the community counteracts potential progress. Sharing the same religious views as the majority of Islamic Bangladesh gives young Bihari males a chance at integration, the abandoning of culture and links with the community is the only chance of acceptance. Divisions within communities outline contemporary issues and notable prejudices in society that without the help of small organisation would go untreated. Contemporary issues portray the necessary aid needed by International actors alongside media and the 'conscious community' to reduce discrimination and help the most vulnerable members of society. The anti-Bihari sentiment is ingrained in Bangladesh culture, a country that's recent history defines treatment of marginalised groups. The Biharis story characterises wider racial processes, the treatment of this particular ethnic minority group would be seen through the Dalits, Hindus and Rohingyas, although not discussed in detail, government and society procedures would be mirrored for these racialised groups.

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