

Abstract:

Constructing the stateless in Myanmar

Citizenship denotes the fundamental relationship of an individual with the state. The compliance of the citizen to the sovereign authority and legitimacy of the state is reciprocated by the provision of rights and privileges associated with the status of citizenship. The citizens are tethered to the state through their membership, which in the case of countries like Myanmar is highly exclusive in nature. By demarcating the ethno-religious identity of the individual as the ideal criteria of membership, the post-colonial Myanmar institutionalised the exclusion of Rohingyas through various constitutional provisions and amendments

since independence. Through espousing a homogenous nationhood in which being 'indigenously Burmese' was hyphenated with majoritarian Buddhism, the post-colonial nation-building in Myanmar reinforced the notion of 'territorial belonging' and expelled Rohingyas from the state's construct of Taing-yin-tha or national races. The declaration of 1982 citizenship law in Myanmar and its ramification has outlawed Rohingyas from Rakhine state. Thus, the state of Myanmar through sustained policies and statutory practices of discrimination has systematically deprived them of citizenship and rendered them stateless in their homeland. The paper attempts to introspect the patterns of discrimination, exclusion and denaturalisation of ethno-religious minorities like Rohingyas. How has the homogeneous nation-building in post-colonial Myanmar vehemently untethered Rohingyas from the nation-state, rendering them stateless?