

EDUCATIONAL SURVIVAL IN NO MAN'S LAND: A STATELESS GIRL'S JOURNEY TO EDUCATION THROUGH PSEUDO PARENTS IN INDIA - BANGLADESH ENCLAVE

*SOBREVIVÊNCIA EDUCACIONAL NA TERRA DE NINGUÉM: A JORNADA DE UMA
MENINA APÁTRIDA PARA A EDUCAÇÃO ATRAVÉS DE PAIS PSEUDO NA ÍNDIA -
ENCLAVE DE BANGLADESH*

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Abstract. The present study employs a narrative inquiry approach to explore the lived experiences of an enclave student who, due to the lack of an education system in the enclaves, had to arrange pseudo parents to pursue her education within Indian territory illegally. Through this personal narrative, the study highlights the identity crisis, emotional struggles, and socio-educational challenges faced by the student as she navigated her academic journey, ultimately obtaining Indian citizenship. The investigators collected the student's stories chronologically, retelling them to reconstruct significant life situations that reflect the inner thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that shaped her experiences. By delving into her encounters with the Indian education system and the complexities of her social identity, this study aims to provide an individualized perspective on the broader issue of statelessness and its impact on education and highlights how these experiences of illegality, identity crisis, and marginalization impacted the student's educational journey, social identity and personal development, ultimately leading to their transformation after acquiring Indian citizenship. The audience gains a profound understanding of how the stateless student's identity crisis and the socio-political circumstances of the enclaves shaped her personal and educational trajectory, offering insight into the resilience and agency required to overcome such adversities. Her story offers critical insights into the complex intersection of identity, legality, and education, shedding light on the hidden struggles of stateless people for education worldwide.

Keywords: Enclave Students, Pseudo Parents, Narrative enquiry method, Personal Narrative

Resumo. O presente estudo emprega uma abordagem de investigação narrativa para explorar as experiências vividas por uma estudante de enclave que, devido à falta de um sistema educacional nos enclaves, teve que arranjar pais falsos para prosseguir sua educação dentro do território indiano ilegalmente. Por meio dessa narrativa pessoal, o estudo destaca a crise de identidade, as lutas emocionais e os desafios socioeducacionais enfrentados pela estudante enquanto ela navegava em sua jornada acadêmica, finalmente obtendo a cidadania indiana. Os pesquisadores coletaram as histórias da estudante cronologicamente, recontando-as para reconstruir situações de vida significativas que refletem os pensamentos, sentimentos e comportamentos internos que moldaram suas experiências. Ao mergulhar em seus encontros com o sistema educacional indiano e as complexidades de sua identidade social, este estudo visa fornecer uma perspectiva individualizada sobre a questão mais ampla da apatridia e seu impacto na educação e destaca como essas experiências de ilegalidade, crise de identidade e marginalização impactaram a jornada educacional da estudante, identidade social e desenvolvimento pessoal, levando finalmente à sua transformação após adquirir a cidadania indiana. O



público ganha uma compreensão profunda de como a crise de identidade da aluna apátrida e as circunstâncias sociopolíticas dos enclaves moldaram sua trajetória pessoal e educacional, oferecendo insights sobre a resiliência e a agência necessárias para superar tais adversidades. Sua história oferece insights críticos sobre a complexa intersecção de identidade, legalidade e educação, lançando luz sobre as lutas ocultas de pessoas apátridas pela educação em todo o mundo.

Palavras-chave: Alunos do Enclave, Pseudopais, Método de investigação narrativa, Narrativa pessoal

1. INTRODUCTION

Enclaves are areas under the control of one government that are entirely encircled by the territory of another. Enclaves in India and Bangladesh are also locally known as “Chhitmohol” in Bengali. These enclaves get their names from the Bengali terms “Chhit” meaning “fragmented” and “mohol” meaning “land from which revenue is collected”.

Government statistics show that there are 162 enclaves on the Indo-Bangladesh border, including 111 Indian enclaves in Bangladesh and 51 Bangladeshi enclaves in India (as per the Land Boundary Agreement of 1974). The Land Boundary Agreement agreed by the two countries on May 7, 2015, aimed at exchanging these enclaves, making the boundary more continuous and permitting clear demarcation.

The Land Boundary Agreement also included a population swap, allowing people of the enclaves to choose between Indian and Bangladeshi citizenship (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, “India and Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement”, Public Diplomacy Division).

In accordance with popular belief, during a game of chess, an intriguing incident occurred between the king (Maharaja) of Cooch Behar and the Phaujadar of Rangpur, leading to the formation of enclaves. In an unforeseen turn of events, they mistakenly wagered on each other’s villages, resulting in a peculiar exchange.

This unusual occurrence gave rise to the establishment of enclaves, where certain territories found themselves situated within the boundaries of the other ruler’s domain. The origins of these enclaves can be traced back to this extraordinary chess match, creating a unique and intricate geopolitical landscape in the India-Bangladesh border region (Banerjee, et.al, 2017).

The time of division of India and Pakistan in 1947 aggravated the predicament for residents of these scattered tracts of land, since they were forced to pay taxes to one state while being entirely encircled by the territory of another. The fate of millions of people was determined by the boundary line that Sir Radcliffe drew using inaccurate maps, resulting in unknowing enclave dwellers (Butalia, 2002).

Consequently, enclaves belonging to Cooch Behar became Indian territory despite being surrounded by erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, while enclaves belonging to Rangpur zamindars became Pakistani territory despite being enclosed by Indian territory. For decades after Independence, the inhabitants of enclaves were denied access to fundamental and basic public amenities.

They lacked access to schools, markets, medical facilities, electricity, and even police stations. The roads remained unrepaired, and clean drinking water was scarce. As a result, the enclaves gradually became havens for criminal activities due to the absence of law and order systems (Banerjee, et.al, 2017)

The long-standing predicament of enclave residents was the recurring issue of identity crisis. This, in turn, led to instances of illegal migration, further complicated by the lack of reliable data. Due to the absence of any previous census conducted in these regions, a significant number of people resorted to obtaining counterfeit voter ID cards in India and

Bangladesh in order to secure employment and “prevent being labeled as illegal migrants” (Whyte, 2002).

There are historical, political, and cultural factors that contribute to the formation of enclaves and exclaves. It emphasizes that these areas often emerge from complex border negotiations and territorial disputes, posing significant challenges for governance, security, and resource allocation, and resulting in stateless or marginalized populations. Enclave residents, including students, often face identity challenges associated with their specific country of origin.

Students went to the extent of enrolling in schools or colleges using forged documents and pseudo names to obtain educational qualifications. Some residents had even purchased identity proofs from relatives or neighbors to legitimize their travel, whether for work in other states or for admission to educational institution as well as schools and colleges.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON ENCLAVES

The literature are sparse and varied. Datta (2002) published an article titled “Indo-Bangladesh Relations: An Overview of Limitations and Constraints.” With an emphasis on six main areas—migration, insurgency, border disputes, anti-Hindu violence, Ganges sharing, and trade conflicts—this study aims to investigate the reasons that hinder and restrict the improvement of Indo-Bangladesh relations. It also explores India and Bangladesh's multifaceted relationship, highlighting the historical links, economic interactions, and geostrategic interests that bind the two countries together.

As Bangladesh's immediate neighbor, India plays an important role in its foreign policy. Tight and cooperative relationships are possible as a result of geographic proximity, economic interdependence, energy supply, trade connections, cultural affinities, and historical ties. Nonetheless, despite the potential benefits, several structural obstacles prevent them from reaching their full economic potential. Jones' (2009) piece explores the complex realm of the political outposts located along Bangladesh and India's shared northern border.

These enclaves, relics of the 1947 partition of British India, exist as quasi-stateless regions due to their small size and remote location within their host countries, hindering any meaningful administrative connection with their home nations. The study explores the roots of these enclaves historically and analyzes the ongoing conflicts that hampered their normalization for the past 60 years through interviews with current enclave members. It underscores the significance of these enclaves as a focal point for examining the interplay between bordering practices and claims of sovereignty.

Furthermore, it highlights the dual impact of the sovereign state system: on one hand, it has established law and order, bringing social benefits, while on the other hand, it has territorialized essential social protections, leading to detrimental consequences. Ultimately, the article's conclusion notes that the inability to address the enclave issue highlights the strong hold that nationalist homeland narratives have in solidifying ideas of integrity of territory and sovereignty, frequently at the price of fundamental human rights.

Saha (2011) also highlighted a similar issue involving a Bangladeshi enclave situated in India, known as Moshaldanga. In this enclave, residents faced the challenge of fake voter identity cards in order to enroll their children in Indian schools.

Ferdoush (2014) conducted a study on “Rethinking Border Crossing Narratives: A Comparison between Bangladesh-India Enclaves”. His study focuses on the unique situation of Bangladesh and India which share a complex situation involving the enclaves and are home to approximately 52,000 people. These enclave residents are faced with the extraordinary challenge of crossing international borders, separating two distinct sovereign states, on a daily basis simply to sustain their livelihoods.

What is particularly intriguing is that, despite conventional norms, these border crossings are not considered ‘illegal,’ and, conversely, what should typically be deemed ‘legal’ is, in this context, treated as ‘illegal.’ In this study, the investigator aims to shed light on the unique nature of these border crossings by comparing it to other enclaves and exclaves in Bangladesh and India. The analysis relies on a combination of empirical and secondary data. Ultimately, the study argues that the prevailing border crossing narratives must be reevaluated to comprehensively understand the complexities surrounding the enclave population’s daily movements.

Chakraborty (2016) has completed his doctoral work on “Geopolitics of Chitmahal and Social Exclusion of Inhabitants of Indo-Bangladesh Enclaves.” The doctoral work has chalked out the historical origin and evolution of Indo-Bangladesh enclaves mainly through the Pre-Colonial, Colonial and Post-Colonial Period. The researcher has elaborately described the social exclusion and hazardous social space among the enclave dwellers and finally an overview of the enclaves after enclave exchange has been highlighted in his thesis.

Bhattacharya (2018) conducted a study to examine the effect of the Land Boundary Agreement in 2015 on the inhabitants of India and Bangladesh's former enclaves. His field survey revealed that those living in these enclaves had been liberated from 67 years of exile with this agreement, but were still facing major issues and not receiving proper support for rehabilitation.

Despite notable advancements, several complex problems persist in the former enclaves, especially in the Bangladeshi territories within India, and concerning the individuals who have migrated from Indian enclaves into Bangladesh, these issues remain unresolved by the respective governments. These individuals from the former enclaves continue to harbor concerns and anxieties about their future resettlement and reintegration, even after achieving the recognition of their statehood. The battle for their rights and stability is an ongoing struggle.

Chowdhury (2018) explored the core societal values of security and dignity, alongside aspects such as economic stability, access to food, communication, and various other concerns in his dissertation. In this research, the primary objective was to analyze the social and economic conditions of individuals who resided in former enclaves and to explore the socioeconomic changes that occurred following the exchange of these enclaves.

The analysis of data from the research revealed a wide array of challenges faced by enclave residents across different sectors, encompassing their professions, education, and daily lives. In conclusion, this study offers valuable insights and recommendations that can serve as fundamental guiding principles for the integration of former enclave societies into the broader social fabric of Bangladesh.

Sen (2022) has completed his doctoral work on “A Geographical Study on the Emotion of Erstwhile Enclave Dwellers of Cooch Behar District India and Rangpur Division Bangladesh”. The doctoral work has found that physical and socio-cultural environments control the human emotion which is reflected through behavior, attitude and expression and in the case of the decision-making process. In this study area, place attachment, social relationship, and religious causes have determined human emotion and subsequent migration and non-migration which have been explicitly realized while interacting with the enclave dwellers, both migrants and non-migrant of both the countries i.e. India and Bangladesh.

Rahman et.al (2023) conducted a study on “Poverty and livelihood analysis of Former Enclave (Chitmahal) people in a selected area of Bangladesh”. The study mainly focused on the living style of the former enclave (Chitmahal) which is related to all aspects of the life of enclave people.

The economy of the former enclave displays pronounced vulnerability, evidenced by extensive poverty, low literacy rates, meager per capita income, elevated dependency ratios, involvement in low-income occupations, inadequate household assets, ineffective social

institutions, elevated unemployment rates, underdeveloped infrastructure, and various health-related challenges, among other pressing issues.

While it is true that over time, the enclave-related problems were resolved, and its residents finally obtained their rightful identity as Bangladeshi citizens, they expressed concerns about the government's limited support in addressing their long-standing challenges. Social protection programs, targeting poverty alleviation, bolstering food security, generating employment opportunities, and aiding individuals impacted by natural disasters, persist at levels comparable to those observed in other economically disadvantaged regions of the country.

Residents feel that they require more substantial government assistance to improve their living conditions and put an end to their enduring hardships. Although they recognize several government initiatives, such as infrastructure development projects like schools and hospitals in the enclave area, they perceive a deficiency in sufficient oversight to efficiently achieve their primary objectives.

Despite the significant body of literature on the broader challenges faced by stateless populations and marginalized communities in borderlands, there is a notable gap in research addressing the personal, individualized experiences of students in the erstwhile India-Bangladesh enclaves. Existing studies predominantly focus on the socio-political aspects of statelessness, the legal challenges of citizenship acquisition, and the broader educational deprivation in such regions.

However, none have specifically explored the lived realities of enclave students who, due to the absence of an educational system within the enclaves, The No Man's Land, resorted to adopting pseudo parents to pursue education illegally in Indian Territory. This study fills this gap by focusing on the unique experience of a female enclave student who arranged pseudo parents to continue her education, highlighting the emotional, psychological, and social predicaments she faced, as well as the identity crisis and eventual transformation after securing Indian citizenship.

By bringing to light this personal narrative, the research addresses the need for a deeper understanding of how statelessness and marginalization impact individuals on a psychological and socio-educational level, an area largely overlooked in existing scholarship.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In the present study the researchers are interested in exploring the individualized thought of a female student who lived an enclave between India and Bangladesh and had to arrange pseudo parents for her education in Indian Territory illegally, along with the pangs and predicaments she has gone through subsequently.

The researchers aimed to bring out the individualized thoughts and experiences of the participant female student in educational and social contexts and meaningfulness of that thought and experiences which demonstrate the identity crisis and statelessness of the student. Further such the study aims to provide an individualized perspective on the broader issue of statelessness and its impact on education.

4. METHODOLOGY

Theoretical frameworks: Intersecting Theories of Identity, Statelessness, and Educational Marginalization

The theoretical framework of the present study will be anchored in multiple intersecting theoretical perspectives, including identity theory, statelessness theory, and educational deprivation in marginalized communities. Through the lens of these frameworks, the study aims to understand the unique educational experiences and identity formation of a student who



arranged pseudo parents to pursue education, navigating the challenges of statelessness and the absence of formal educational structures in the enclaves.

This narrative inquiry seeks to highlight how marginalized individuals like enclave students' experience their identity, education, and statelessness, while also offering insights into how they cope with and adapt to these challenges. Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory of identity formation provides a foundational basis for exploring the student's identity crisis. According to Erikson (1968), identity formation is a key developmental task, particularly during adolescence, when individuals seek coherence and continuity in their sense of self. The enclave student's experience of statelessness adds an additional layer of complexity to this process.

Without formal recognition by any state, enclave residents were denied access to basic rights and services, such as education, healthcare, and legal protection, leading to a fragmented and unstable identity (Manby, 2010). The lack of citizenship not only restricted the student's mobility but also caused psychological distress and confusion about belonging, as she was neither fully recognized as an Indian nor a Bangladeshi citizen.

Furthermore, Bhabha's (1994) concept of hybridity can be applied to the student's identity formation. Bhabha posits that individuals at the intersection of multiple cultures, nations, or identities often exist in a liminal space, negotiating between various identities. The enclave student, living between two nations, experienced a form of hybrid identity, negotiating the cultural, legal, and social expectations of both Indian and Bangladeshi contexts.

This duality, compounded by her illegal use of pseudo parents to access education in India, placed her in a constant state of identity negotiation, where her statelessness rendered her belonging ambiguous. Bhabha's concept is useful in understanding how the student's identity was not fixed but fluid and context-dependent. The theoretical insights of Arendt (1951) and Agamben (1998) on statelessness and "bare life" offer a critical lens through which to understand the student's experiences.

Arendt, in her seminal work *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, describes statelessness as the condition of being outside the protection of the law, where individuals are deprived of their basic human rights. This was the reality for enclave residents, who lacked the legal status to access education, healthcare, or even freedom of movement. The student's reliance on pseudo parents highlights her struggle to attain the rights and privileges available to legal citizens.

Giorgio Agamben's concept of "bare life", as presented in his work *Homo Sacer*, deepens this understanding by highlighting the reduction of stateless individuals to a state of mere existence, where they are stripped of political and social recognition.

The enclave student, in her efforts to pursue education, was reduced to "bare life" in the sense that she was forced to operate outside legal frameworks, existing in a legal and social grey area where her humanity was subordinated to her lack of citizenship. Her arrangement of pseudo parents can be viewed as an act of resistance, an attempt to reclaim her dignity and agency in a system that rendered her invisible.

The enclave student's experience of educational deprivation can be understood within the broader context of marginalized communities lacking access to formal education. Bourdieu's (1986) theory of cultural capital provides a valuable lens for examining the student's challenges. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital refers to non-financial assets such as education, social skills, and cultural knowledge that individuals can use to improve their social mobility.

Enclave residents, including the student, were systematically deprived of cultural capital due to the lack of schools and other educational resources in their communities. The absence of an education system in the enclaves further marginalized the student, limiting her ability to participate in society and enhance her social standing. The concept of social reproduction, also put forward by Bourdieu, is key here.

Bourdieu argues that educational systems in most societies tend to reproduce the existing social order, reinforcing social inequalities rather than providing a path to upward mobility. For the enclave student, accessing education was not just a matter of personal ambition but a means of escaping the entrenched social and economic disadvantages of her stateless existence. Her efforts to arrange pseudo parents reflect an acute awareness of the importance of education as a pathway to empowerment and inclusion.

The use of narrative inquiry as a methodology is guided by the theoretical work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000), who argue that narratives are a way of making sense of lived experience. Through the retelling of the enclave student's personal story, this research seeks to uncover the deeper meanings behind her educational struggles, identity crisis, and resilience.

Narrative inquiry allows the researcher to focus on the student's unique thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as she navigated her statelessness, revealing how her experiences shaped her understanding of herself and her place in the world. Bruner's (1991) theory of narrative construction further informs this approach, emphasizing that people make sense of their lives by organizing their experiences into stories.

The student's narrative, when reconstructed through this study, offers a window into her process of meaning-making. It demonstrates how the student's sense of identity and agency evolved over time, shaped by her interactions with the social and political structures surrounding her. In the present study, the data undergoes either narrative analysis or configuration.

This process entails structuring data elements into a cohesive developmental narrative, extracting emerging themes from the lived experiences conveyed in the data, and transforming disparate research data components into a unified narrative that can captivate the reader's imagination and enhance comprehension (Kerby, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1995).

The act of telling and retelling her story also allows for reflexivity, wherein the student and the researchers alike can reflect on the broader implications of her experience. In summary, the theoretical framework for this study is constructed from identity theory, the concept of statelessness, educational deprivation, and narrative inquiry.

Together, these perspectives provide a multidimensional understanding of the enclave student's experiences, revealing how her identity crisis, statelessness, and educational barriers intersected to shape her life. The study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on statelessness, borderland communities, and impact of statelessness on education marginalized societies.

Data collection and Participants

In this study to collect information on hiring pseudo parents for education, the fieldwork was done by the researchers and interacted with the student, Nargis Khatun, who did hide her real identity in the school to get the chance of admission and researchers talked to her to know the schooling and life experiences.

Basically the conversation was based on school experiences and interaction with friends, neighbors, and teachers and on her societal acceptance. We primarily contacted Nargis Khatun, the protagonist of the present study over telephone and after that the investigators went to meet the protagonist. We talked to the parents in her presence, and explained to them the purpose of the interview.

When the protagonist and her parents consented for the interview, we interviewed her to understand her lived experiences. The approach of the interview was Inductive Approach as the interview was exploratory to her experience, rather than confirmatory. During the interview, parents and family members were requested to leave her alone with the interviewer.

The in depth interview was semi-structured and open-ended in nature, so that the protagonist of the present study can explain her experience freely without being delimited by

the design of the interview. Further, after the interview, the investigators verified all her educational documents which she procured by providing pseudo-parents' identity as well as the corrected documents incorporating actual parents' detail after getting Indian citizenship in 2015 when India and Bangladesh agreed to swap their territories, specially the enclaves to solve the enclave issue permanently.

In the study the real name of the students is replaced by Nargis Khatun to maintain confidentiality of the identity of the protagonist student. After completion of writing the paper, the same was shared, discussed and negotiated with Nargis Khatun before finalization of the draft.

How did the researchers come to know Nargis Khatun

Nargis Khatun, a student who lived in one of the then India- Bangladesh enclaves, 'Poyathurkuthi', (also locally known as 'Goyarbarir Seat') studied in Dinhata College, in the District of Coochbehar, India, for her Under Graduate course from 2017 to 2020.

After completion of the said course in 2020, Nargis Khatun applied for correction of the names of both parents in her certificate and other related documents. One of the investigators of the present study being the principal of the college, noticed that she applied not for correction of any spelling error in the names of her father or mother, but to replace both parents' names by new names including the surnames.

The principal of the college, an author of the present study, verified her documents that she submitted at the time of her admission to the college and found the documents to be correct. Interestingly, it was also noticed that in her documents submitted during admission three years back, the word 'Late' was written before the father's name, implying that her father already passed away, but in the to be corrected documents the absence of the word 'Late' before the father's name meant that her father is still alive.

The principal called for Nargis Khatun to his office for clarification on the facts and came to know about the story of Nargis Khatun.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The personal narrative of Nargis Khatun, a stateless girl who lived in the No Man's Land between India and Bangladesh in erstwhile Poyaturkhuthi enclave, reflects the intersection of identity, statelessness and education.

Using the method of narrative inquiry, this research explores the personal and social struggles that Nargis Khatun faced while attempting to obtain education through the unconventional act of hiring pseudo parents to navigate bureaucratic hurdles in Indian schools and colleges illegally. Her experiences offer critical insights into the broader socio-political complexities of enclave dwellers before and after the LBA.

Nargis Khatun's story begins in the Poyaturkhuthi enclave, a No Man's Land between International Borders India and Bangladesh from the governance of both India and Bangladesh until the historic 2015 LBA, which resolved the status of these isolated regions. Enclave dwellers, including Nargis and her family, were stateless, with no access to governmental services, civic amenities, or legal documentation.

Their inability to produce identity documents such as birth certificates or proof of address restricted their access to education, healthcare, and other essential services. This statelessness created a marginalized existence for thousands, including children like Nargis, who had to resort to extraordinary measures to pursue a basic education.

Primary School Struggles: The Pseudo Parent Strategy

Nargis's first experience with the Indian education system was marked by exclusion. Despite living near the Uttar Khatamri Primary School, her family's statelessness and lack of



proper documentation led to her initial rejection by the school. The enclave's lack of governmental recognition meant there were no authorities to issue birth certificates or other necessary papers, effectively locking children like Nargis out of the formal educational system.

Faced with this obstacle, Nargis's family turned to a local Indian family who, out of humanitarian concern, provided their own documents to act as her pseudo parents. While this allowed Nargis to gain admission under the guise of being an Indian citizen, it placed an enormous psychological burden on her. She had to remember her pseudo father's name and constantly hide her true identity as an enclave dweller, living in fear of exposure. As Nargis recounts:

“...I had to remember my pseudo father’s name, and it was very difficult in the initial days. Moreover, I had to be conscious not to reveal my real father’s name. The whole matter gave me anxiety, and I was aloof from all other students... Some of the students in the school used to insult and bully me regularly, calling me by my pseudo father’s name and labeling me as an enclave dweller, for which I never liked going to school...”

Her social isolation, compounded by the constant threat of discovery, reveals the emotional toll that statelessness takes on children. The narrative inquiry method allows us to understand this anxiety and alienation from Nargis's perspective, highlighting the human cost of being forced to live a dual identity at such a young age.

High School: Continued Struggles and Identity Marking

After completing primary school, Nargis faced similar challenges at Choudhurihat Vivekananda Vidyamandir High School. Once again, the lack of a birth certificate proved a major barrier, as the school’s policy required it for admission.

To avoid being officially marked as an enclave dweller, which could limit her educational opportunities, Nargis returned to her pseudo parents for help. This time, they managed to obtain a birth certificate through unethical means. Despite her admission, Nargis’s troubles persisted. Her classmates from primary school, who were aware of her true identity, continued to mock and humiliate her.

The derogatory label of "orphan" was thrown at her because her pseudo father was listed as deceased in the school records, despite her real father being alive. This cruel taunting further deepened Nargis’s emotional and social isolation:

“...The same classmates came to high school who already knew about me. My situation was worse than in primary school. I was always a subject of mockery and ridicule... They derided me by calling me ‘Orphan’ as there was ‘Late’ in front of my pseudo father’s name. I was devastated socially, emotionally, and morally...”

Her narrative underscores the long-lasting effects of exclusion and marginalization that transcend formal barriers and seep into the everyday social fabric of enclave dwellers' lives. The narrative inquiry method enables us to understand how these social dynamics, reinforced by institutional practices, further alienated Nargis from her peers and hindered her sense of belonging.

College Life: A Temporary Respite

By the time Nargis reached college, the formalities of obtaining admission were smoother. Having forged documents in hand, she successfully enrolled in Dinhata College for her



Bachelor of Arts degree. With fewer classmates from her past, her college life offered a brief respite from the constant bullying she had endured in primary and high school.

The distance from her enclave and the absence of students who knew her history allowed her to blend in more easily, although a few old classmates still mocked her. Nargis recalls:

“...College time was much better than the schools. Not many people knew me, neither the students nor the teachers... However, I was careful not to show my documents to anyone unless it was essential...”

This sense of anonymity, however temporary, was a relief for Nargis, who had spent much of her educational journey concealing her true identity. Despite the relative calm during her college years, the underlying identity crisis persisted. Even though the enclave issue had been resolved in 2015, and she and her family were now Indian citizens, Nargis was still studying under the guise of a false identity.

Social Life: The Enclave Dwellers' Reality

Beyond her educational struggles, Nargis's social life was marked by the constraints of enclave life. Enclaves were cut off from the mainland, and residents lacked basic amenities such as hospitals, schools, and infrastructure.

To access any services, Nargis's family and other enclave dwellers had to rely on Indian citizens to vouch for them or forge documents to prove their identity. This restricted mobility and forced dependence on others further marginalized them within broader society. The stigma associated with being an enclave dweller was palpable, as Nargis recounts being routinely humiliated and insulted by those in neighboring Indian territories.

The narrative inquiry method, in this case, allows us to delve deeper into the lived realities of enclave dwellers like Nargis, offering a textured understanding of how statelessness affects not just individual identity but also the larger community's social fabric and education.

The 2015 Land Boundary Agreement: A Life-Changing Event

The 2015 India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement was a turning point for enclave dwellers. For Nargis and her family, this agreement provided a pathway to Indian citizenship, finally granting them access to civic amenities such as roads, electricity, and identity documents like the AADHAR card and voter card.

This newfound status enabled Nargis to address the discrepancies in her educational documents. After completing her Bachelor of Arts degree in 2020, she petitioned the West Bengal government to correct her records and replace the names of her pseudo parents with her real parents. After verifying her claims, the government allowed the necessary corrections.

Reflecting on this transformative period, Nargis states

“...The best thing was that we could go to Indian Territory freely and without hesitation. We got citizenship documents like AADHAR card and Voter Card. Electricity and road connectivity started to connect the enclaves to the mainland of the country. All the children of the enclaves started going to schools. Our social life totally changed...”

The narrative inquiry captures the profound shift in Nargis's life following the LBA, demonstrating how a single political event can dramatically alter the socio-economic landscape for a marginalized community.

Epilogue: The Learning from Nargis Khatun's Story



Nargis Khatun's story is not just a tale of individual resilience but also a reflection of the broader experiences of stateless people who lived in enclaves. The narrative inquiry method employed in this research brings out the complexities of her lived experiences—the struggle to access education, the emotional toll of hiding her true identity, and the eventual liberation that came with Indian citizenship.

The interactions between Nargis and her teachers, classmates, and the social structures around her highlight the intricate ways in which identity, legality, and social stigma intersected in her life. Her narrative provides a microcosmic view of the challenges faced by enclave dwellers, especially children, who had to navigate an education system that was not designed for them.

In conclusion, Nargis Khatun's story offers critical insights into how statelessness, identity crisis, and bureaucratic hurdles shape the educational and social landscape of enclave dwellers. Despite the resolution of the enclave issue through the 2015 LBA, Nargis's experience shows that the scars of statelessness and social marginalization do not disappear overnight.

The narrative inquiry method has been instrumental in bringing out these subtle but significant aspects of her journey, offering valuable lessons for understanding the plight of stateless people worldwide and its impact of education of the enclave dwellers

6. CONCLUSION

The narrative of Nargis Khatun provides a poignant window into the struggles faced by stateless individuals from the erstwhile India-Bangladesh enclaves in their quest for basic human rights, particularly education. Her lived experience, as explored through this study, reveals the profound and multi-layered challenges that arise from statelessness, identity crisis, and bureaucratic hurdles.

The practice of hiring pseudo parents, as Nargis did, reflects the desperate measures families had to resort to in order to navigate the formal education system, a system built on documentation and legitimacy—both of which were denied to enclave dwellers. This study highlights the emotional, social, and psychological burdens borne by Nargis as she navigated her educational journey under the guise of a false identity.

Her narrative reveals not only the individual impact of these experiences—social isolation, mockery, and internalized anxiety—but also the broader societal exclusion of stateless individuals within the enclave context. The dual identity she had to maintain, combined with the stigmatization from classmates and neighbours, paints a picture of a childhood fraught with fear and alienation.

The significance of the 2015 Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) cannot be understated. It was a transformative moment for Nargis and other enclave dwellers, granting them citizenship and access to essential services like healthcare, education, and infrastructure. However, this research underscores the fact that even with formal recognition and inclusion, the emotional and social scars of statelessness remain deeply ingrained.

Nargis's journey illustrates how, despite the resolution of the enclave issue, the legacies of exclusion and marginalization continue to affect individuals and communities. The impact of Nargis's statelessness and social conditions on education is profound and multifaceted. Being stateless often limits access to essential services, including education, as families face bureaucratic barriers and economic instability.

In Nargis's case, her marginalized status may lead to a lack of resources, inadequate school facilities, and insufficient teacher training. These factors create a cycle of disadvantage, hindering not only her personal academic development but also the broader community's educational aspirations. To break this cycle, targeted interventions are necessary, focusing on inclusivity, resource allocation, and support systems that empower stateless individuals to pursue their right to education.



Through the narrative inquiry method, this study has been able to unravel the subtle yet significant aspects of Nargis's experiences. Her story offers critical insights into the complex intersection of identity, legality, and education, shedding light on the hidden struggles of stateless people worldwide.

It serves as a reminder that while political solutions may address legal status, the social and emotional consequences of statelessness can persist long after the borders have been redrawn. In this sense, Nargis's story is not just about her resilience, but also a broader reflection on the need for social inclusion and empathy for those who continue to live on the margins of society.

The enclave crisis in India and Bangladesh was a tragedy that resulted from conflicts among empires, causing immense suffering for ordinary citizens like problems of identity, education, and social recognition etc. Nargis Khatun's personal experience story can be seen as an illustrative instance of a life-based literary narrative, adding to the collective body of student lore within the enclaves situated between India and Bangladesh.

Attention to the narratives of Nargis Khatun is a reminder not to lose sight of the plight of the enclave students around the world and highlight the need for attention to the issues of social justice and equity of access to education for all. Exploring the multitude of the influences contributing to the identity crisis of enclave students using the Narrative Inquiry Method is also a means of acknowledging the complexities of statelessness, identity crisis and citizenship issues of students belonging to India Bangladesh Enclaves and the impact of statelessness of the enclave dwellers on their educational landscape.

The finding of this paper is expected to help the local government and education authority to understand the condition of the students during pre- merger period of enclaves into India and formulate policies for such students empathetically so that they can familiarize themselves with new citizenship and new state faster.

Though the enclave issues have been solved politically, there is enough scope for further research on the issues like how the changed scenarios have impacted the life of students, whether there are changes in accessibility to the education system. The present study was undertaken in one of the hundreds enclaves between India and Bangladesh. Problems of Education in different enclave may be different.

Therefore, further research may be conducted in other enclaves as well. Further, researches may also be conducted on the other side of the international boundary as similar enclaves existed there too till 2015. Researches may be conducted on the students who have got citizenship both in India and Bangladesh as well on their socio economic and educational upheaval.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study is supported via funding from Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University project number (PSAU/2024/R/1445).

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