

NOT JUST A REFUGEE

A PEEK INTO THE ROHINGYA TRADITIONS



Dedicated
to the
memories
that never
fade.



CONTENTS

SPORTS

Chinlone.....	3
Pach Gutti Khela (five-stone Game)	4
Boli Khela (Wrestling).....	5

RECIPES

Beef Curry.....	6
Spinach, Chilli Paste, Pulses	7

ORAL HISTORIES

A visit to a ‘once upon a time’ story.....	8
Weddings – customs and traditions.....	9
“I miss you and I constantly think of you” - song	10

SPORTS

CHINLONE (CHELLONG/ KALUNG)

Chinlone is the national sport of Myanmar, and is also played in Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia. It's played with a hand-made cane ball, which is the literal translation of Chinlone. I used to play this game often when I was in Myanmar. It doesn't take much to organize a quick game of Chinlone in the Rohingya camps as well.

There is such spontaneity to this game that it can be played anywhere. In a formal game of Chinlone, the playground looks very similar to a volleyball court. But instead of using hands, Chinlone is played with your feet, knees, and head. An informal version of Chinlone is when it is played without a net with 4 - 5 players, like we do now in the camps.

A formal game will have 3 players on each team. The game is played in three rounds, and the team that wins two out of three wins the game. To win each round, the teams compete to score 15 points. Around Christmas, back home, Chinlone tournaments organised by the villages were graced by village chiefs and other dignitaries.

Nowadays, we buy plastic rattan balls from the market to play the sport. Shorts and basic t-shirts are best outfits for the sport. Shoes are not mandatory.

Even though we play impromptu games of Chinlone in the Rohingya camps in Bangladesh, the thrill, excitement and competitiveness is not the same as of a proper Chinlone game.

STORY BY

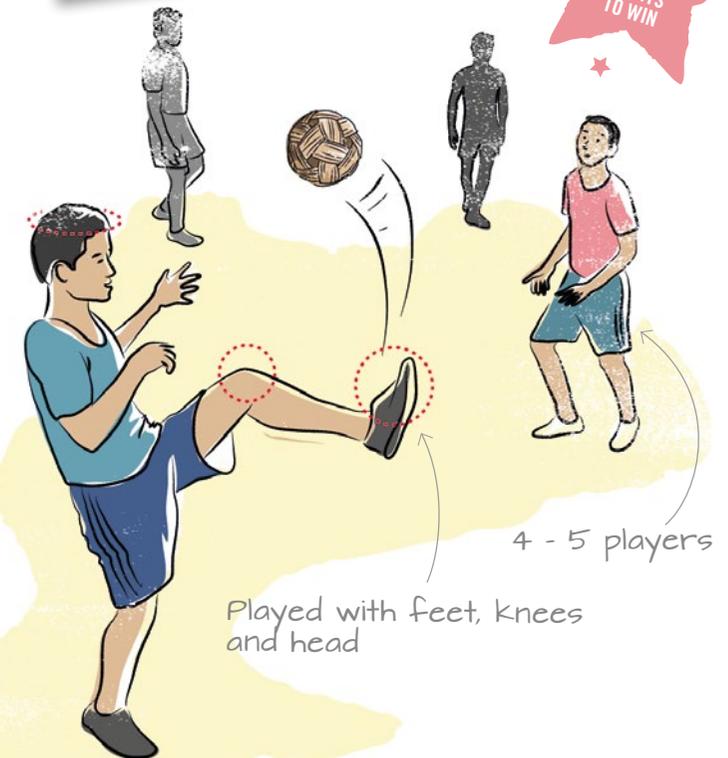
Name: Mansur Alam Age: 33

Present Address: Camp 26, Block-H2, Leda, Teknaf

Permanent Address: Bura Sikdar Para, Maungdaw, Akiyab, Myanmar



A skillful player in action



SPORTS

PACH GUTI KHELA (FIVE-STONE GAME)

In the Rohingya community, most of the outdoor games are played by men. But that doesn't mean girls don't get to enjoy games of their own. There are several indoor games that are popular among women and Paach Gutti is one of them.

There is no English name for this game, which can be translated to Five Stones. It takes at least two to play this game and you need five small, round shaped stones or marbles.

There are a few ways this can be played. One is to place four stones on the ground, throw the fifth one up, collect the four stones quickly and catch the fifth one before it touches the floor. The player can throw the stone up twice and collect all the four stones - two at a time. One can also collect three stones the first time and one the second time. Or, the player can throw a stone, collect three of the remaining four, and throw all four up, collect the one on the floor and catch the four stones before they drop. There are 10 such versions for this game.

In an environment where girls do not have the freedom to participate in outdoor sports, games like Paach Gutti provide them the space to enjoy their free time.

Outdoor games have become even more of a rarity for the girls in refugee camps in Bangladesh. We want more opportunities for girls to play sports so that they can develop their talents and lead a better life.

STORY BY

Name: Pervin Akter Age: 21

Present Address: Camp 26, Block-E1, Chalban, Jadimura, Teknaf

Permanent Address: Bura Shikdar para, Maungdaw, Akiyab, Myanmar



Paach Gutti can be played indoors



5 stones to play

Many different ways to play

Also known as Oggaya, Duassha and Tinassha

SPORTS

BOLI KHELA (WRESTLING)

Boli Khela – wrestling – is a much-favoured sport among the Rohingya and is also popular in Bangladesh, especially in the Chittagong area that connects to Myanmar.

Back in Myanmar, the Rohingya used to hold an annual event of Boli Khela, as a winter fair, in the months of December to March. Like any fair, it was set up with temporary shopping stalls and visitors from neighbouring villages were invited. This would go on for a week, and sometimes, two.

The village chiefs organise the festival, with the permission of the local government. Mostly Rohingya men participate in these festivities. The games usually start in the afternoon but men from surrounding villages start pouring in from the morning to enjoy the fair.

There are three tiers in the tournament: Group One for professional players, Group Two for mid-level wrestlers, and Group Three for the beginners. Each of these Groups have around ten to fifteen players competing, and each player is welcomed to the arena with drums and *Tabla* (or hand drums) playing in the background. After the games, the players go around the field and their fans give them money. The players wear half pants and *lungi* (a long piece of cloth wrapped around the waist and worn by men) over them.

These tournaments and festivities are becoming a thing of the past as no such games can be organised in the refugee camps.

STORY BY

Name: Khala Mia **Age:** 37

Present Address: Camp 24, Block A, Leda, Teknaf, Cox's Bazar

Permanent Address: Nashapuro, Mangdaw, Akiyab, Myanmar



Tabla and drums are played to welcome each player

Group 1:
Professional players

Group 2:
Mid-level wrestlers

Group 3:
Beginners



Winter fair atmosphere, with temporary shopping stalls set up for the spectators

RECIPES

BEEF CURRY

Back home, people kept livestock. Only those who lived comfortably in Myanmar ate meat every week. For others, meat is prepared only for special occasions. A meal without meat would not be a feast, especially if guests are invited. Of all the dishes, beef is the most popular among Rohingya. Everyone in my family loves my cooking. Here is our recipe for the beef curry.

INGREDIENTS:

Meat, chili, turmeric, garlic, onion, bay leaves, dry chili, cardamom, oil, salt, water, coriander leaves, salt to taste, vegetables, water, ginger.

STORY BY

Name: Rasheda Begum Age: 24

Present Address: Camp 9, Block: 13c, Balukhali, Ukhiya

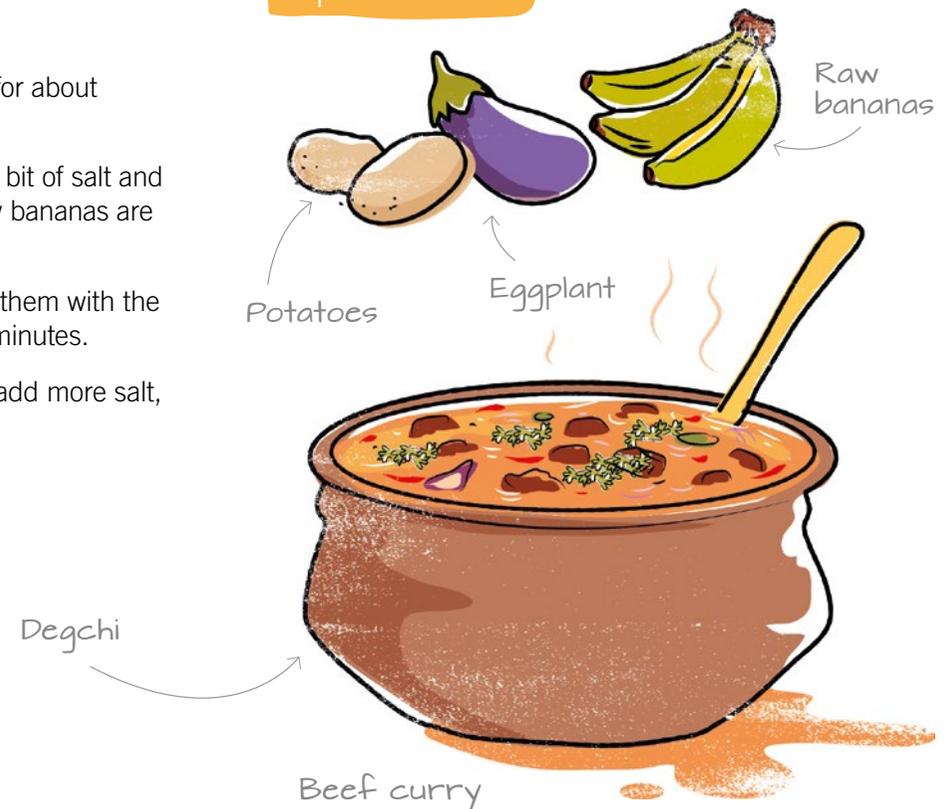
Permanent Address: Maknama, Mangdaw, Myanmar

HOW TO COOK:

1. Cut the meat into small pieces.
2. Dry the *degchi* (cooking pot) and pour some oil.
3. Grind chili, turmeric, garlic, onions, bay leaves, pepper, red pepper, ginger, cardamom, salt and add them in the pot. In winter we cook this dish with green chilies and in other seasons, with dry chilies.
4. Sauté the ingredients for 5 minutes.
5. Add the meat into the pot and cook for about twenty minutes.
6. Take a new *degchi*, and add water, a bit of salt and vegetables – potatoes, eggplant, raw bananas are popular choices.
7. After the vegetables are cooked, mix them with the beef. Simmer for about another 20 minutes.
8. Sprinkle some coriander leaves and add more salt, if needed.

Meat has become a rarity after arriving in Bangladesh as it is very expensive here. We still try to cook meat for religious festivals such as Eid. The World Food Programme (WFP) arranges food for us in the camps and that's what we eat on most days. Meat isn't in the ration. There is little to no opportunity to arrange food by ourselves.

Popular choice



RECIPES

SPINACH, CHILLI PASTE, PULSES

A regular feature in every Rohingya household cuisine is spinach with chili paste and pulses. Sometimes we add fish to this mix too, but these three items are always prepared as a package.

There is a variety of spinach for each season

**CHILI PASTE:**

It is always served with spinach and pulses. It can be prepared in two ways – using green chillies, or dry chillies. Green chili paste is mainly made in winter and dry chili paste is a favourite in all seasons.

1. Wash the chillies well and cut them into small pieces.
2. Add a little water to the pan, add green chillies and cook for 2-3 minutes. If it's red chillies, add some oil instead of water.
3. Add salt to taste, coriander leaves, onion paste and mix it.

SPINACH:

Spinach cultivation is also seasonal, but there is a variety of spinach for each season.

1. Add some oil to the *degchi* (cooking pot) and once it reaches the heating point, add chopped garlic.
2. Add spinach and sauté it with the garlic. Add a bit of water, and salt to the mixture.
3. Cook for five minutes.

Green chillies are mainly used in winter

**PULSES:**

We eat pulses daily. In addition to this combination, we add them in soup, or cook them in a curry.

1. Soak the pulses in water for about an hour.
2. Add pulses with water (in which it was soaked) into a *degchi* and add salt and turmeric. Boil for 15-20 minutes. Stir the mixture.
3. In a separate *degchi*, add oil.
4. Once the oil is heated, add chopped garlic, onions, bay leaves, ginger, spices, and chillies – chillies is optional.
5. Once they are sauteed, add the pulses and cook for 5-10 minutes.
6. Sprinkle coriander leaves.

STORY BY

Name: Asma Ul Husna **Age:** 27

Present Address: Camp 27, Block-D2, Jadimura, Teknaf

Permanent Address: Labadawk, Buthidaung, Akiyab, Myanmar

Rohingya culture is very much reflected in these dishes. Families with strong agricultural backgrounds eat this fairly often in Myanmar. Who doesn't want to taste this?

ORAL HISTORIES

A VISIT TO A 'ONCE UPON A TIME' STORY

Back home in the village, in the moonlight, children used to gather in the garden and listen to stories and songs recited by their grandparents in Puti – a language that is now spoken only by a few. The stories my grandparents used to tell me were called “Kichchha” in Rohingya language. These stories are a part of my heritage.

Now, we try to tell these stories to our grandchildren when we have time in the camps. This is one of them:

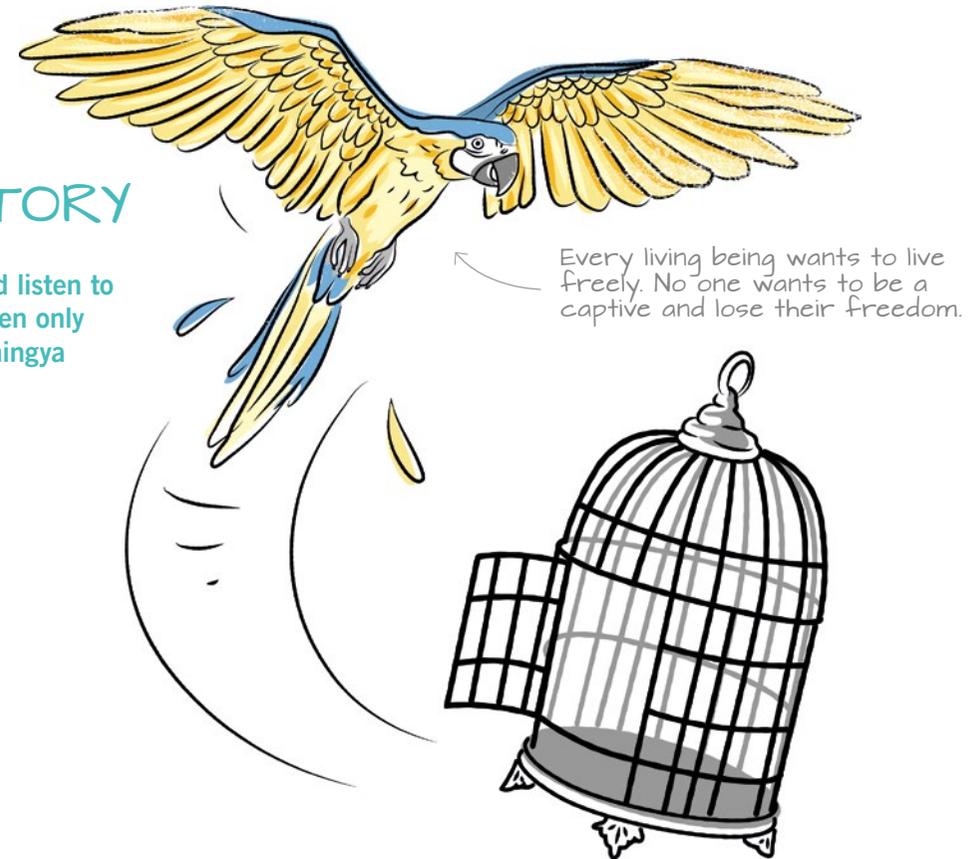
“Once upon a time, there lived a young boy with his mother. One day his uncle asked him to take care of the cows as he had to go to the market.

While in the shed, the boy noticed a snake, who didn't want to get caught by a snake-charmer, coming towards him. The boy gave shelter to the snake and sent the snake-charmer away saying that he didn't see the snake. The snake thanked the boy for rescuing him.

Some days later, at the market, the boy saw parrots being sold and he bought one home in a cage. One day while leaving home, the boy asked the parrot what it wants from outside. The parrot replied 'nothing' but asked him to tell the other parrots that the boy would meet on the road that it was being kept in a cage.

Hearing what the parrot had said, the parrots outside were left heartbroken and pretended to fall dead from the trees for the boy to see. Upon his return, the boy told his parrot about other parrots dying. Knowing what it meant, his parrot too pretended to be dead. Thinking his parrot died after hearing the news, the boy opened the cage, and the parrot flew away to his freedom.”

Moral of the story - Every living being wants to live freely. No one wants to be a captive and lose their freedom. We Rohingyas are captives just like the parrot in the story. It is difficult to survive while feeling so helpless. We want to be free too, like normal people.



STORY BY

Name: Abdul Haque Age: 47

Present Address: Camp 27, Block- A, Ali Khali, Teknaf

Permanent Address: Shikhali, Maungdaw, Akiyab, Myanmar

ORAL HISTORIES

WEDDINGS - CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

Rohingya wedding rituals are mostly governed by the Islamic Sharia law. Since choosing one's own partner (love marriages) is frowned upon among the Rohingya community, if a young man is looking for a bride, the union is arranged by a Ghatak – a marriage broker.

Engagement in Rohingya language is called "hochcha diya". After the engagement, the wedding day is fixed on an auspicious day as per the Arabic calendar. Most weddings are set for Fridays.

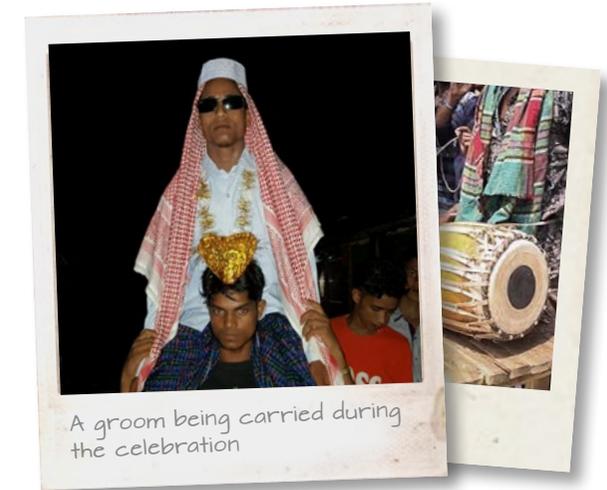
The whole village starts wedding preparations about 10-15 days prior to the wedding. Usually, the ceremonies are held in front of the bride's house, in an open space. Food is an important part of the festivities and different varieties of meat are given in any wedding ceremony.

On the wedding day, the groom's party comes after the noon prayers though people start celebrations at the bride's place since morning.

The arrival of the groom is announced by the sound of drums, and music of his parade. After the Esha (Night) prayers, the Imam of the village is invited to the house to perform the Nikah (wedding ceremony). After that, the bride leaves for her husband's home in a palanquin.

Earlier, people got married at a very young age. But now, both the bride and the groom have to be over 18 years to get married.

For each wedding, the camp in-charge, a government official designated for each camp needs to give permission. But now the festivities have dimmed, since we can't afford the clothes, gold, or even the music.

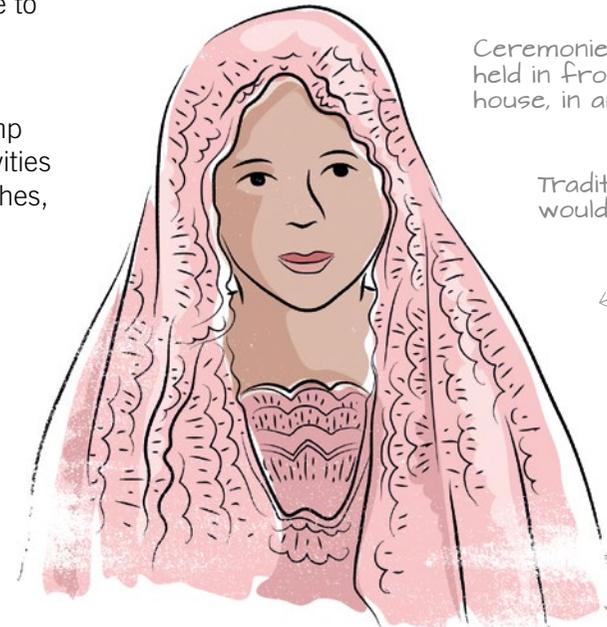


A groom being carried during the celebration

Most weddings are set for Fridays

Ceremonies are usually held in front of the bride's house, in an open space.

Traditionally, brides would wear pink.



STORY BY

Name: Younus Miah Age: 43

Present Address: Camp II, Block-D, Balukhali, Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar

Permanent Address: Rabailla, Maungdaw, Akiyab, Myanmar

ORAL HISTORIES

"I MISS YOU AND I CONSTANTLY THINK OF YOU" - SONG

Any celebration in the village meant people gathering outside at night, singing songs in the moonlight. Our local artists would sing while playing instruments such as mandolin, *Tabla* and Drum.

The songs would get the people emotional and bring them to tears. As a child, I didn't understand why, but now I do. Since 1978, Rohingyas have been fleeing genocide, and many left their parents, friends and relatives behind. This song is about lost friends who had to leave the country due to the oppressive government.

STORY BY

Name: Zawmil Hossain

Age: 43

Present Address:

Camp 26, Block- II,
Leda, Teknaf, Cox's Bazar

Permanent Address: Tawng Bazar,
Buthidaung, Akiyab, Myanmar



Drums



Mandolin



Tabla

Name of Song: Aar fuajja (My friend)

Song in Rohingya Language

Thanda Thanda boiyar anner kushbo tuar,
Dile dhakerle tuare oh Fuaijja. (2 times)
Dilar ferecani zargoi baari baari,
Behush oi faikkai aai zaigoi hait oi pori. (2 times)
Oh Hoillar tukra ekka aare chai za,
Dile dhakerle tuare oh fuaijja.
Thanda Thanda boiyar anner kushbo tuar,
Dile dhakerle tuare oh fuaijja.
No zaiyo dure dure taikko haase haase,
Tui baade attun aar honna ase. (2 times)
Tui chara attun aar din nan no zar,
Aar dile o tuarla ki dor porar,
Oh dile o tuarla ki dor porar.
Thanda Thanda boiyar anner kushbo tuar,
Dile dhakerle tuare oh fuaijja.



English Translation

The cold wind is bringing your smell,
I miss you so much, oh friends! (2 times)
The turmoil of mind is growing,
I am becoming unconscious with pain (2 times)
Oh 'heart-piece' (affectionate address) come to
see me,
I miss you so much, oh my friends! (2 times)
The cold wind is bringing your smell,
I miss you so much, Oh my friends!
Don't go far, stay on the porch,
Who do I have, without You! (2 times)
I can't spend my day without you,
I miss you too,
Alas! how much the mind thinks of you.
The cold wind is bringing your smell,
I miss you so much, oh friends.



AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL

