INTRODUCTION

The present work **'Islamic Studies and Arabic Literature in the Post Independent India: Contribution of the *Ulama* in Barak Valley'** is a comprehensive study. It is basically projected on the evolution and development of Islamic and Arabic Literature in Post Independent India and specially the contribution of the *Ulama* in Barak Valley in this regard during the post Independent period.

1: The Arabic Language:

Arabic, the famous language of Semitic group of languages has a rich linguistic charms and uniqueness. It is the language of the Holy Qur'an and *Hadith* is one of the most important languages of the world. It is not only the national language of the Arabs but also the language which is spoken and studied in large number of African Countries, in terms of poetry and philosophy, trade and commerce, science and technology and international politics and diplomacy. During the Middle Ages, Arabic language was spoken and written by all cultivated 'Moslems' of whatever nationality they might be, from India to America, it was language of all branches. [1]

In this way, Arabic Language has been being spoken and studies in 24 countries by as much as 256 million of people[2] with a great importance and thus it has achieved the position of a leading language of the world. As a result of its religions, literary, commercial, economic, political and

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[1] R A. Nicolson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, New Delhi, 1994, p.xxiv

[2] Www. Tolearnarabic.com/the_importance_of_arabic.html,date-19-07-2011,21.45hrs.

Diplomatic importance, the Arabic Language has been being given a glorious position in the U.N.O. where it is employed as one of the six working languages.

This language of international importance is learnt by the students all over the world with various objectives. In order to understand the Qur'an, *Hadith* and many other kinds of Islamic literature, Muslims learn Arabic. People of western country generally learn Arabic in order to comprehend the poetry and politics of employment in the oil producing gulf countries which are still suffering from shortage of man power in the days when many countries face an unemployment problem. Owing to these needs of multipurpose aspects Indian people also do cherish the desire of learning Arabic Language and Literature.

The Arabic Language had come to a contact with the Indian people long before the advent of Islam, through the Indo-Arab trade relation.[3] After the conquest of Mohammad Bin Qasim in 712 A D, Sind remained under the direct administration of the Arabs for two hundred years up to the end of 9th century. Similarly, Muslim Sultan and Emperor ruled over India from the conquest of Mohammed Ghuri in 1192 A D to the fall of Bahadur shah Jaf'ar in 1857 A D. They made commendable efforts for public instruction in Persian and Arabic Language which had been the royal languages in that period. This language of international importance had its way to ancient Assam known as dived into Brahmaputra and Barak Valley by the dawn of 13th century A. D. with the entrance of the Muslims.

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[3] M. Ahmed, *Indo-Arab Relation*. p-85

2: The Barak Valley:

The present Barak Valley of the State of Assam is a location created by natural boundaries and has a unique geographical entity containing linguistic cultural attributes distinctly different from that of Brahmaputra Valley and its adjacent hilly areas. In details it was created by natural boundaries and apportionment caused by the Radcliff Award that divided the district of Sylhet of Surma Valley of the British period in 1947 following a referendum in Sylhet along with the partition of India. The Valley is bounded by the high mountains of North Cachar Hills district on the north, the Angami Naga Hills and Manipur state on the east and the hills of Mizoram and Tripura on the south.[4]

The river system of the valley has played a remarkable role in this region. The main river Barak originates from the Angami Naga Hills, a high range mountain making the northern boundary of Manipur state. Descending from the high mountains to the plain of Jiribam it takes zigzag course across the Cachar district and a small portion of Hailakandi district to reach Badarpur in Karimganj district flowing again west and near Bhanga it divides itself into two and the mainstream assumes the name 'Kushiara' which enters Bangladesh in downstream touching Karimganj town and flowing for some distance as the boundary between Karimganj district of India and Sylhet district of Bangladesh. The other branch of Barak that originates near Bhanga flows northwards and meets the original course of Surma in Jaintia Pargana by assuming the name of 'Surma'. The Surma taking the main streams of Barak in its downward

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4. Rahman Md. Matiur : *Teaching of Arabic Language in Barak Valley, A Historical Study.*

flow takes the name Dhaleshwari and flows to the old course of the Brahmaputra near Bhairab Bazar. During its long course of 800 KM, the River Barak with its different names and branches in downstream receives various tributaries from N.C. Hills, Mizoram and Tripura. [5]

But on the other hand the Surma receives a plenty number of small rivers from the Khasi, Jaintia and Barail Hills and ultimately meets the mainstream of Barak before merging with Meghna. The most noteworthy feature of the Barak Valley is that it is a small geographical unit of different social strata, economic classes and ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic entailers and identities.

The most fascinating feature of this particular valley populated by about 3 million human beings who posses different religious identities. Muslims are about 45% of the total population, but they come of Bengali, Manipuri and Hindi speaking linguistic groups overwhelming majority of the Muslims are linguistically Bengalis.[6]

3: Statement of Problem:

The settlement of the Muslims in the Valley was started with the process of rehabilitation of the detained soldiers of Mohammed bin Bakhtiyar who had entered Kamrup or Assam in 1205 A D, with a view to conquering Tibet.[7] It is found in the relevant literature that the teaching and learning process of Arabic Language took place only after a Masjid had been erected near Guwahati in 1257 A D by Malik Yuzbak Tughril

5. Ibid

6. Census Report 2010.

7. Moulana Minhaj-ud-Din, Op. cit, v-I Pp.560-61.

Khan, which was treated to be the first Masjid founded in the Valley as well as in Assam. The erection of some other Masjids has developed the process of Arabic studies in different places of the Valley. In course time, Masjid was followed by *Maktabs* to impart education on Islamic rites and rituals in Arabic language.

Along with the growth of Muslim population in the Valley so many *Masjids* and *Maktabs* were set up in different parts of the area, which were the basic institutions for 'Arabic studies'. These institutions had been originated mainly during the period of Ahom-Muislim Conflicts (1228-16820) and developed in the British administration (1826-1947) by the establishment of many other Primary, Secondary and Islamic institutions in the Valley. The present study is the discussion, analysis and solution of the problems stated as follows:

3.1: The role of *sufi* scholars comprising of *Pirs, Faqirs* and *Ulama* are very much remarkable. They made their abodes by setting up *Dargahs* and *Khanqahs* where different sects of people used to assemble to visit the pious men and take their religious teachings in different *Sufi* orders. However, the teachings of these *Sufi* scholars given in Arabic text were also the basic lessons on Arabic Studies in the initial stage. Hence, the role of these 'scholars' may be considered to be a matter of discussion.

3.2: In the beginning of Twentieth Century, some intellectual Muslim leaders of the valley felt need of educational institutions of different kinds and categories, especially for the instruction of their children. They made a commendable effort to establish a large number of

such institutions where Arabic was also included in the courses of study, throughout the valley. The role played by these socio-religious Muslim leader or activists of the area is important to be evaluated and highlighted.

3.3: A good number of writes and authors made commendable efforts in writing Arabic books of various kinds and qualities, which may roughly be divided into – (a) Creative writings in Arabic, (b) Text Books including Arabic Grammars, (c) Lexicon, (d) Translations and Commentaries, and (e) Research Works. All the writers, authors and research scholars related to the Arabic Studies need special care and attention for the assessment and evaluation of the works.

3.4: It has been stated that the Muslim settlement started from 13th century and the number of their population increased in high speed during the later part of Ahom administration. They spoke a language which had been a mixture of *Perso-Arabic* elements. In course of time, they forgot their language and gradually adopted to speak the Assamese and Bengali languages having been mixed up with the local co-habitants. Nevertheless, they naturally used to apply some Arabic terms and words in their conversation with the indigenous Assamese and Bengali people. It is well known that the role of Assam came under the British administration in 1826 A D and a large number of Arabic words of Administrative, Military and Judiciary terminology were also used by the British officials. Accordingly, from the top of the administrative officials to the ordinary subjects of Assam used to speak many words of Arabic origin so commonly that these became essential elements of the Bengali language.

The problems stated above are very much significant with valuable objectives; because the Barak Valley has made a remarkable contribution to the Arabic Studies, especially in Twentieth Century.

4: Hypothesis:

We have carefully formulated the hypothesis of the present problem, which will properly be tested in order to obtain suitable findings and appropriate solution of the stated problem. It was our tentative proposition that the study of the Arabic Language commenced in India with the Indo-Arab Relations and developed during the period of Muslim Rule in the country for centuries together up to the first half of 19th Century. Arabic study originated in the Barak Valley with the entrance of the Muslims who had established *Masjids, Dargahs, Khanqahs* in different places of the Valley, which were developed up to the end of 19th Century, through the different institutions, established under the Colonial administration. It was.our presumption that a large number of educational institutions dealing with the teaching and learning of the Arabic language and literature had been established by some socio-religious activists of the Valley.

The evaluation of the role played by these activists and the categorical enumeration, observation and assessment are our consideration. Our primary investigations leads us to presume that a good number of writers had contributed a lot with their writings in Arabic of different types and tastes, evaluation of which would also our probable result of this study. The Hypothesis included that a large number of Arabic words used in the Bengali language and literature are the effect of

long cohabitation of the Muslims in the Valley and the influence of the Arabic institutions, Arabic books and their translations.

5: Methodology:

We have collected relevant data and authentic literature related to the problem and reviewed them by testing their reliability to get a final result. We relied upon the historical literature of both primary and secondary nature regarding the Muslims' settlement in India, Introduction of Arabic Studies under the Muslims rule, Muslims' settlement in the Barak Valley and the setting up of *Masjid* and *Maktabs* as the basic institution of Arabic Studies (Chapter-I & II). We have discussed this literature in Historical Method and took decision avoiding confusion and contradiction.

We have surveyed the area of study through field works visiting different places and institutions. Ample information about some religious institutions like *Masjids, Darghahs, and Khanqahs* of historical importance has been gathered from different places.

In the same way, we have surveyed the Arabic institutions of different kinds and categories right from traditional Qur'anic *Madrasas* to *Title Madrasas* of the Valley in the same way. (Chapter-II.)

Through the field study we have surveyed the area and obtained information about writers, and authors who contributed a lot by their Arabic writings of different kinds and qualities (Chapter-III.) Besides, their works have been collected from different sources and classified,

discussed and assessed in the light of descriptive and analytical methods. (Chapter-IV).

In this way, we have surveyed the study area, collected data and materials which have been methodically treated and analyzed and the related literature have also been reviewed, more or less, in the light of Historical, Descriptive and Analytical methods.

6: Design of the Study:

The present work is a humble approach in assessing, highlighting and evaluating the different phenomena of Arabic Studies in the Post Independent India and more particularly of Barak Valley during the Twentieth Century. This investigation has been organized, manifested and designed in four Chapters besides the **'Introduction'** and **'Conclusion'** as shown below:

Chapter	**I**	:	**Evolution of Islamic Studies and Arabic Literature in India**
Chapter	**II**	:	**Barak Valley: Islamic Institution.**
Chapter	**III**	:	**Islamic Studies in Barak Valley: Contribution of *Ulama***
Chapter	**IV**	:	**Arabic Studies in Barak Valley: Contribution of *Ulama***

Chapter I: This Chapter basically deals with the evolution of Islamic and Arabic studies in India biasing on the following main points, such as 1.1: Arabic Language and its importance, 1.2: The Arabs in India and their

settlement 1.3: Propagation of Islamic 1.4: Education under Muslim rule in India. 1.5: Arabic Studies in India.1.6: Development of Arabic Literature during 20th century.

Chapter II: Chapter II has been divided into five main points, such as: 2.1: Concept of Islamic Institution or Madrasa 2.2: Importance of Madrasa Education 2.3: Different types of Institutions Imparting Arabic Teaching. 2.4: The advent of Islam and the establishment of Islamic institutions in Barak Valley. 2.5: Different types of Islamic Institutions imparting Arabic Education in Barak Valley.

Chapter III is designed as to deals with the prominent Islamic scholars and their important contribution toward the development of Islamic education in Barak Valley giving a brief note on lives and works of these scholars.

Chapter IV has dealt with the important scholars and writers of the Valley who have contributed a lot by their writings to develop the Arabic Studies in the Valley. In this Chapter it is also assessed, evaluated the works of the prominent writers of the Valley in a systematic way.

We are confident that no comprehensive works on this topic have been published so far; nor are aware of any published research works done there on. It is also expected that this humble effort will reveal a glorious part of the History of Arabic studies in the Valley, which might be proved to be a stepping stone for the further advancement in the development of Arabic studies, not only in the valley but also in Assam as a whole.

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