Chapter 1 Introduction

Bengal was one of the very prosperous states in medieval India. For such prosperities there were many foreign invasions and also immigrations had taken place in Gaur, Panduwa, Tanda, Tanrha, Ekdala, Devicourt etc. that were the capitals of Bengal over the centuries. Muslims from western India, Afghanistan, Iran and Arab world constantly migrated to Bengal. Most of them took the professions of soldiers and others involved in different businesses. North Bengal was the first region that exposed to Muslim conquests and rule as well as the Islamic cultural influence.

Sher Shah and Sur dynasty (1538-1564 C.E.) lasted in Bengal for a quarter century. Within this period the soldiers of Sher Shah as well as the administrative officers and intelligentsia led to the formation of a new community, who were initially amalgamation of immigrants from Afghanistan and indigenous people. This mixed Muslim population slowly and gradually evolved into a distinct community especially towards the advent of Mughals in North Bengal and were known as Sher Shah Abadi Community. The Sher Shah Abadis are not a race but it is a community that evolved through the advent of Muslim immigrants and their interracial marital contact with local Bengali populations. Then, when the Mughals invaded Bengal, they moved the capital of Bengal from Gaur to Dhaka and the pre-Mughal soldiers and other administrative officials were removed from their jobs. And those jobless and deprived people gradually adapted cultivation as their profession and continued to live at Shershabad Pargana at the confluence of the Ganges and the Padma, presently it covers in the districts of Malda, Murshidabad of West Bengal and Chapai Nababganj of present

Bangladesh. They settled around the fertile lands of the rivers, cannels, *khals* etc. They were also kept out of Bengal politics. So no historical data about the Sher Shah Abadi Community of those eras are found. The documentary sources of data about this community are found in the British Period. The British surveyors invented this community as the descendents of Afghan soldiers of Sher Shah who were settled in Shershahbad Pargana in 1540s.

Although the language of the Sher Shah Abadi Community is one of the Bengali dialects, but the use of Arabic vocabularies are apparent in this dialect. There is not existed any book or any piece of writing relevant to this topic. So, Arabic influence on Sher Shah Abadi dialect and culture needed a study thoroughly that could have been important academic investigation. It has highlighted many important historical, sociological, linguistic, literary, and cultural aspects of Arabic in this remote region situated far away from the heart land of Islamic Arabian peninsula.

Chapter 2 Origin and History of Sher Shah Abadi Community

According to our collected data the British surveyors like M.O. Carter, G.E. Lambourn, W.W. Hunter, a particular Muslim group of people who had been living at Shershabad pargana of present Malda and Murshidabad region were called Shershabadis or Shershahbadiyas. They were the descendents of the army of Sher Shah and the name of Shershabad pargana was named after the emperor Sher Shah. The existence of this Pargana officially or unofficially is unknown at present.

The British surveyors were unable to trace the actual origin of Sher Shah Abadis. While tracing the origin of this Community, the

British surveyors laid emphasis on their physical appearance & traits, but completely ignored the culture and the language used by the community. Had their survey been based on linguistic and cultural aspects, they could have successfully traced the origin of the community. On the basis of secondary sources, it can be presumed Nuristan of Afghanistan as the exact place of their origin. The forefathers of the people of Nuristan migrated from Mecca, during the conquest of Mecca by the prophet Mohammad in about 631 C.E. At first they took shelter in Iraq and after that they reached Kunar and Lugman states of Afghanistan.

The Arabic vocabularies in huge number are used in Sher Shah Abadi dialect. This indicates that the origin of this community may be of the Arab regions. Through this research work we find a connection between the Sher Shah Abadi Community and the people of Nuristan. As, Abdur Rahman Kilani, who mentioned in his book, 'Sargujaste Nuristan', page- no 37-41, that the people of Nuristan claim themselves as Quraish-origin, of present Saudi Arabia and they are Ahle Hadeeth in Islamic faith. They have separate language that differs from other Afghani languages. The people of this state are much pious and orthodox. And the socio-cultural life is very simple.

Considering the origin of the Sher Shah Abadis Mr. M. O. Carter was compelled to say: "Whatever their origin may be, it is certainly not Bengali."[1] The Sher Shah Abadis believe in pure Islam. Their temperament is straight forward. They tell the truth without any hesitation and fearlessly. They have arrogant behaviour and the revenge taking temperament. They don't hesitate to assault on others for revenge.

[1] M.O. Carter. M.C., I.C.S., Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Malda, 1928-1935, Bengal Government Press, Alipur, Bengal, p. 45, 1938

This kind of attitude is somewhat similar to *Ahle- Badiya* of Arabia. They are not cunning by character and that is why they had been unwelcome in administrative works. There are many similarities between the Sher Shah Abadi Community and the people of Nuristan in this respect. It can be presumed that the Sher Shah Abadis are the descendents of the Arabs who came to India through Nuristan.

The Sher Shah Abadis were deprived and tortured during Mughal and British rules. The people of this community participated in different movements against the British rule. Due to the erosions of the Ganges and the suppression policies of the British government, the Sher Shah Abadis began to migrate in different groups from their formative areas (Narayanpur and its adjacent areas that were under Shershahbad Pargana) to backward & far flung areas. As a large groups of Sher Shah Abadis migrated to Dumka, a district of then undivided Bengal. Presently, the descendents of those Sher Shah Abadis are living at Sahebganj and Pakur districts under Jharkhand. Another groups of Sher Shah Abadis of south Malda and Murshidabad migrated to north-western Malda that was almost full of jungles. They chose the *Tal* and *Diara* regions of north-western Malda so that administration could not reach comfortably. Then groups of Sher Shah Abadis of Murshidabad and Malda moved towards Dinajpur and Kishanganj even they reached to Jhapa, a district of Nepal. In these areas the Sher Shah Abadis are also called as *Bhatia* due to their movements were *Bhati* (downward) to *Ujan* (upward).

For the erosion of the Ganges that destroyed their abodes and agricultural lands as well as the suppression policy of the British government chased a large number of Sher Shah Abadis towards greater Purnia. They also adventured into ‘Tapu’, a far-flung area under the

districts of Supaul and Araria. They frequently used to change their residents for safety from administration. Later they were changing their abodes for seeking lands in the districts of Katihar, Purnia, Araria, Supaul etc. Their migrations were not straight forward, rather they had many intervals. Even they reached at Shunsary, a district of Koshi Zone in Nepal.

Almost all the Sher Shah Abadis of west Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar and Nepal are cultivators and till now they remain backward. Although they have got the reservation of O.B.C. category by the approved of the government but due to the official complexities of getting O.B.C. certificates and the lack of proper implementations of reservation policies, the Sher Shah Abadis are depriving to take the reservation facilities. Moreover, the people of this community have begun to realize the importance of getting establishment in various fields like education, economy and politics etc.

Chapter-3 Influence of Arabic on Sher Shah Abadi Dialect

Arabic, being a Semitic language, is one of the most prominent languages of world whereas Bengali is one of the major Indian languages. Because of geographic, cultural, civilization and linguistic differences, these two completely different languages had no early connection in the past until the advent of Muslims in Bengal. While Arabic with a history of two thousand years, is one of the oldest living languages of the world, Bengali is relatively a very new language. Being the language of the holy Quran and the Prophet Muhammad, Arabic is used all over the world including India. So far as the Sher Shah Abadi

community is concerned, it is believed that the forefathers of this community were originally from some Arab regions.

Modern Bengali is originated from different spoken Bengali dialects. Sher Shah Abadi Dialect is one of such distinctive spoken Bengali that is used by the Sher Shah Abadi Community. This dialect comprises a lot of Arabic words and phrases. The ancestral abode of this community was Shershahbad Pargana that covered the areas of Gaur, the capital city of Bengal. Bengali language was developed with Arabic and Persian vocabularies, by the independent Muslim rulers in Bengal. Sher Shah Abadi dialect was the communicative and administrative Bengali during Sher Shah and Sur dynasty in Bengal. During the Muslim rules in Bengal, the Bengali language was highly patronized. In those eras (1203- 1757 C.E.), Arabic vocabularies intermingled with indigenous vocabularies. Bengali flourished and was enriched with Arabic and Persian vocabularies.

It was the ‘divide and rule’ policy of the British government which paved the way for discrimination against the Arabic and Persian Vocabularies. The British government instigated the Brahmins to incorporate Sanskrit words into Bengali language and literature. During the British rule, Bengali language was deformed with Sanskrit originated words in written form and fixed by anew linguistic pattern.

There are many communicative and verbal dialects under the domain of Bengali language. The Sher Shah Abadi dialect is one of such dialects. Arabic vocabularies have been conserved in this dialect even today. As the Sher Shah Abadis were victimized by the British, they did not take formal education commonly offered by the government. Cultivation was their main profession. So they preferred to live far in

rural areas of undivided Bengal and Bihar. As a result, they could have preserved the pre-British characteristics of Bengali having Arabic-originated vocabularies on their dialect.

The people of this community have accepted words of other languages as well during all this period. Nevertheless, they preserve Arabic original words in their daily conversations, proverbs and even in women's songs. The Arabic word *aruʃ* (عروس- bride) is used more frequently in all marriage ceremonial songs of the Sher Shah Abadi women. Some applications of Arabic words that are used on Sher Shah Abadi dialect are mentioned below.

- অদা খেলাপ করিশ ন্যা, মুশকিলে পোড়্যা যাবো।

(ɔda k^{h}elap kɔriʃ næ, muʃkile poɽæ Jabo)

Arabic words: ɔda (وعد – promise), k^{h}elap (خلاف – oppose), muʃkil (مشكل – difficulty)

Meaning: Do not break your promise or else I will land in trouble.

- শয়তানের অসঅসাতে পইড়্যা গুন্হার কাম কইর‍্যাছো । অখন তোবা করো আর বেশি কইর‍্যা সোয়াবের কাম কত্তে থাকো তেবেই নাজাত প্যাইব্যার আশা আছে।

(ʃɔjtaner ɔʃɔʃate pɔiɽæ gunhar kam kɔiræc^{h}o. ɔk^{h}ɔn toba kɔro ar beʃi kɔiræ ʃojaber kam kɔtte t^{h}ako tebei naJat pæibær aʃa ac^{h}e)

Arabic words: ʃɔjtan (شيطان - Satan), ɔʃɔʃa (وسوسة – evil influence), toba (توبة – repentance), ʃojab (ثواب – virtue), naJat (نجاة – release), aʃa (عسى – hope).

Meaning: You have done sinful deeds under the evil influence of Satan. Now be repentant and continue to do voluntary good deeds. Then, you can hope to attain forgiveness from Allah.

- আসোরে ঘশর মশর মগরোবে ঢিল এশারে খাওয়ান দাওয়ান ফজোরে নিন।

(aʃore g^{h}ɔʃɔr mɔʃɔr mɔgrobe ɖ^{h}il eʃare k^{h}aojan daojan p^{h}ɔJore nin).

Arabic words: aʃor (عصر – afternoon Salat), mɔgrob (مغرب – time of sunset Salat), eʃar (عشاء – time of night Salat) and p^{h}ɔJɔr (فجر – Salat time of dawn)

Meaning: Someone who passes the time of the *Salat* (praying *Namaz*) of afternoon out of laziness, leaves the *Salat* after the Sun set by passing

the time intentionally, passes the time of the night *Salat* for taking dinner and leaves the *Salat* of dawn for a deep sleep.

- ওরে বাবা অকে কি শুধ্র্যাব্যার আশা আছে? উ তো আজোলের মারা।

(ore baba ɔke ki ʃud^{h}ræbær aʃa ac^{h}e ? u to aɬoler mara)

Arabic words: baba (بابا – father, used as address), aʃa (عسى – hope), aɬɔl (اجل – destiny)

Meaning: oh! Is there any hope to rectify his behavior? Actually he is cursed by the destiny.

- কয়ল্যার ইল্লোত যায়ন্যা ধুইলে,আর লোকের খাস্লোত যায়ন্যা মইলে।

(kɔjlær illot ɬajnæ d^{h}uile, ar loker k^{h}aʃlot ɬajnæ mɔile)

Arabic words: illot (علة- dirtiness), k^{h}aʃlot (خصلة – habit)

Meaning: As the dirt of coal can never be removed by washing, human habit never changes even till death.

- খুব্বিই মজবুত কইর‍্যা ঘর বানিয়্যাছো জি ভ্যাই।

(k^{h}ubbi mɔɬbut kɔiræ g^{h}ɔr banijæc^{h}o ɬi b^{h}æi)

Arabic words: mɔɬbut (مضبوط- strong), banijæ (بنئ - build)

Meaning: O brother, you have built a very strong house.

The influence of Arabic words and phrases on Sher Shah Abadi dialect is apparent. In most of the cases, these words maintain their original forms and articulations along with original meanings though sometimes are used in distorted manners. But in many cases, it is found that there are specific articulations of Arabic words on this dialect and these articulations are unique in comparisons with others. Arabic influence on their dialect indicates their relation with the Arabs. Had the British not trespassed to corrupt Bengali language, the history of Bengali language would have been written with the glory of Arabic influence and the Sher Shah Abadi dialect could have attained the majesty of standard Bengali dialect.

Chapter 4 Characteristics of Sher Shah Abadi Bengali Dialect

Any standard language is derived from its colloquial or dialects. So, the modern philologists care much about different dialects to find the origins and sprits of any standard language. Sher Shah Abadi dialect is one of the dialects of standard Bengali. So, this dialect also had had participation to form such standard Bengali. Although, this dialect preserves distinct characteristics of having Arabic influence in it, yet it has unique relations with standard Bengali on regard of phonological and morphological aspects. According to conventional Bengali grammar the relations can be shown through the difference of the characteristics of standard Bengali or its other dialects with Sher Shah Abadi dialect in the following ways.

Standard Bengali or its other dialects > Sher Shah Abadi Dialect

Some phonological characteristics are mentioned below

The vowel sound ই (i) is varied with এ (e), অ্যা (æ) and উ (u) vowel sounds. For examples

ই / i / > এ / e /

জিকির (ɟikir) > জেকের (ɟeker), remembering
জিদ (ɟid) > জেদ (ɟed), ego
জিল্লত (ɟillɔt) > জেল্লত (ɟellɔt), disastrous conditions
ফিতনা (p^hitna) > ফেতনা (p^hetna), controversy
ফিতরা ((p^hitra) > ফেতরা (p^hetra), tax alms of *Roza*
ইমাম (imam) > এমাম (emam), leader of *Namaj*

ই / i/ > অ্যা / æ /

তৈরি (toiri) > তৈয়্যার (toijær), prepared
ঢিল ($ɖ^h$il) > ঢ্যাল ($ɖ^h$æl), clod
খয়েরি (k^hjeri) > খয়র‍্যা (k^hɔjræ), deep brown

ই / i/ > উ / u /
ঘরামি (g^{h}ɔrami) > ঘরামু (g^{h}ɔramu), maker and repairer of hut
কলমি (kɔlmi) > কলমু (kɔlmu), bindweed

In many cases the vowel sound আ (a) is varied with অ্যা (æ) vowel sound. As

আ / a / > অ্যা / æ /
অসিলা (ɔʃila) > অসিল্যা (ɔʃilæ), medium
আকিদা (akida) > আকিদ্যা (akidæ), faith
খলিফা (k^{h}ɔlifa) > খলিফ্যা (k^{h}ɔlifæ), leader of the Muslim
দুনিয়া (dunija) > দুনিয়্যা (dunijæ), world
ফিরকা (p^{h}irka) > ফিরক্যা (p^{h}irkæ), group
বায়না (bajna) > বায়ন্যা (bajnæ), agreement of sell or marriage

The vowel sound এ (e) is varied with vowel sounds ই (i), অ্যা (æ), আ (a), অ (ɔ). Examples
এ / e / > ই / i /
ঢেঁকি ($ɖ^{h}$ŋeki) > ঢিঁকি ($ɖ^{h}$ŋiki), husking pedal
নেশা (neʃa) > নিশ্যা (niʃæ), intoxication

এ / e / > অ্যা / æ /
তেল (tel) > ত্যাল (tæl), oil
পেট (peʈ) > প্যাট (pæʈ), belly
বেল (bel) > ব্যাল (bæl), wood-apple

এ / e / > আ / a /
বেগুন (begun) > বাগুন (bagun), brinjal
খেজুর (k^{h}eɟur) > খাজুর (k^{h}aɟur), dates

Some Morphological Characteristics are mentioned below

Like other standard colloquial (মান্য চলিত), there are used infinite verb (অসমাপিকা ক্রিয়া) with the help of অ্যা (æ), য়্যা (jæ), তে (te), লে (le) affixes (প্রত্যয়) on Sher Shah Abadi dialect. For example

বাড়ি যাইয়্যা খাইয়্যা আসি (baɽi ɟaijæ k^{h}aijæ aʃi)

Meaning- I am coming from home after eating.

তুই কাম্খান কইর‍্যা খাইয়্যা লিশ্ (tui kamk^{h}an koiræ K^{h}aijæ liʃ)
Meaning- Have your meal after finishing the work.

In this dialect verbal adjective (ক্রিয়া বিশেষণ) টপ্ (ʈɔp), শট্ (ʃɔʈ) and ভক্ (b^{h}ɔk) are used to express quickly. As

টপ্ কইর‍্যা আয় (ʈɔp kɔiræ ai)
Meaning- Come very quickly.

শট্ কইর‍্যা কহা (ʃɔʈ kɔiræ kɔha)
Meaning- Speak very fast.

ভক কইর‍্যা খ্যাইয়্যালে (b^{h}ɔk kɔiræ k^{h}æjæle)
Meaning- Eat hastily

Chapter 5 Arabic glossary of Sher Shah Abadi Dialect

This chapter deals with the Arabic glossary of Sher Shah Abadi dialect. The articulations of Arabic words are obviously unique. In most of the cases, the meanings are almost equivalent to original Arabic lexicons but in sometimes the meanings are different from that of original meaning. The people of other Muslim communities also use many such Arabic words but their pronunciations are quite different. Thousands of Arabic originated words has been collected and arranged as the Sher Shah Abadi Arabic vocabularies. The arrangement of such Arabic words is followed according to Bengali alphabetical order. There are five following columns.

1st column- Conveys Arabic originated words that are spoken by the Sher Shah Abadi, are written in Bengali script.

2nd column- Conveys the transliterations of 1st column. It is followed the IPA format, provided by Dr Rameswar Shaw, a comparative philologist.

3rd column- Conveys the English meaning of the 1st column according to Sher Shah Abadi concerns.

4th column- conveys the regions of use of the words that are referred in the 1st column. In this regard, alphabetical symbols, B for Bihar, J for Jharkhand, N for Nepal, W for West Bengal and C for common are adopted for the convenience of the arrangement of the column.

5th column- conveys the Arabic origin words of the 1st column that are written in Arabic script.

1st column	2nd column	3rd column	4th column	5th column
অসিল্যা	ɔʃìlæ	Medium	C	وسيلة
অজেব	ɔɟeb	Essential duty	C	واجب
অকাফ	ɔkap^{h}	Religious endowment	C	وقف
অকত	ɔkɔt	Time	C	وقت
অকেভাল	ɔkeb^{h}al	Experience	B, J	واقف حال
অকিবহাল	ɔkibɔhal	Experienced	W	واقف حال
অরেশ	ɔreʃ	Inheritor	C	وارث
অসঅসা	ɔʃɔʃa	Evil influence	C	وسوسة
অকেয়া	ɔkeja	Happenings	B, J	واقعة
অদা	ɔda	Promise	C	وعد
অকাত	ɔkat	Ability	C	وقت
অধোম	ɔd^{h}om	Ignorant	C	عدم

অসিয়ত	ɔʃijɔt	Dying bequest	C	وصية
অজুহাত	ɔɬuhat	Causes	C	وجهات
অদল বদল	ɔdɔl bɔdɔl	Exchange	C	عدول بدل
অদলা বদলা	ɔdla bɔdla	Interchange	C	عدول بدل
আদোব	adob	Character	C	ادب
আদোবকায়দা	adobkajda	Courtesy	C	ادب قاعدة
আদিম	adim	Ancient	C	اديم
আসল	aʃɔl	Truth	C	أصل
আহামুক	ahamuk	Shameful	C	أحمق

Chapter 6 Conclusion

The major findings of the research are highlighted below

1. Through this study the origin and history of the Sher Shah Abadi community has been traced and highlighted. The Arabic influence on the dialect of this community indicates the relationship between this community and the Arabs.

2. The forefathers of Sher Shah Abadi Community might have come from a particular state of Afghanistan i.e. Nuristan. The sources of data indicate that the people of Nuristan migrated to Afghanistan from Quraish linage people of Mecca in 630s C.E.

3. Due to their continuous opposition and revolts against the foreign rule, the British government always discriminated against them and punished out of proportion. They were blamed for having links with the Saudi Wahabi movement. For opposing the British rule, many of them were killed and many others were sent to Andaman jails.

4. The people of this community are settled in the countryside of West Bengal, Jharkhand and Bihar. They are also found in Bangladesh and Nepal. The ruthless Mughal and British policies compelled them to change their profession. The fighting community became the cultivators forever.

5. The dialect of this Community is named unofficially as Sher Shah Abadi dialect. It has no written form but it is a Bengali dialect.

6. The forefathers of this community mixed the Persian and Arabic words and phrases with the Bengali vocabularies. The Arabic influence on this dialect can be seen clearly even today.

7. The distinct use of Arabic and Bengali vocabularies in their speech in respect to the phonology and morphology which differentiates this community from other Bengalis.

8. Through this research work we have found thousand of Arabic words and phrases in Sher Shah Abadi dialect. Most of these Arabic words retain the original meanings.

9. This research work proves that the Sher Shah Abadi Community are either the descendents of the Arabs or of the Afghans.

10. There are numerous Arabic originated words and terminologies which are also used in standard Bengali. But this fact of Arabic loan words has been mentioned hardly in Bengali lexicons.

Suggestions

Finally, I would like to mention here that I have tried my level best to make my research work authentic and up to the mark. And because of emphasis on my specific area, I could not deal with all aspects of life of Sher Shah Abadi Community. The following areas can be investigated further by the future researchers:

1. Sher Shah Abadi Community from Sociological Perspective.
2. Linguistic Study of Sher Shah Abadi Dialect.
3. Pre-British and Post-British Bengali Language: A comparative Study in the Light of Arabic Influence.