CHAPTER - 1

CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

Bengal was one of the very prosperous states in medieval India. For such prosperity there were many foreign invasions and also immigrations had taken place. Among those invasions one was carried out by Iktiyar uddin Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji in 1203. It was the prelude of Muslim arrival in Bengal. Gaur, Panduwa, Tanda, Tanrha, Ekdala, Devicourt etc. were the capitals of Bengal over the centuries. After the invasion of Bakhtiyar Khalji Muslims from western India, Afghanistan, Iran, and Arab world constantly migrated to Bengal. Most of them took the professions of soldier and others involved in different businesses. But North Bengal was the first region exposed to Muslim conquest and rule as well as Islamic cultural influence. The following political chronicles of Bengal would clear the facts.

Khalji dynasty 1203 - 1227 C.E.

Delhi Sultanate 1227- 1341 C.E.

Iliyas Shahi dynasty 1st phase 1342- 1413 C.E.

Ganesh Jalaluddin 1414 - 1441 C.E.

Iliyas Shahi dynasty 2nd phase 1442 - 1487 C.E.

Habshi reign 1487- 1493 C.E.

Hussain Shahi dynasty 1493 - 1538 C.E.

Sher Shah and Sur dynasty 1538 - 1564 C.E.

Korrani Dynasty 1565 - 1576 C.E.

Mughals 1576 - 1757 C.E.

Sher Shah Suri, birth name Farid Khan, also known as Sher Khan (The Lion King), was the founder of the short-lived, Sur Empire in northern India, with its capital in Delhi. An Afghan (Pathan) by origin, he defeated the Mughals and took control of India in 1540 and ruled until an accidental death in 1545. He first served as a private soldier before rising to become a commander in the Mughal army under Babur and then as the Governor of Bihar. In 1537, when Babur's Son Emperor Humayun was elsewhere on an expedition, Sher Khan captured Bengal to establish the Sur Empire.

Sher Shah invaded Gaur, the then capital of Bengal for several times and then captured Bengal completely. Finally he also defeated Humayun and became the emperor of Delhi in 1540 C.E. Then Khizir Khan was appointed as the governor of Gaur. As he tried to make himself independent, Sher Shah defeated him and divided Bengal into several provinces. Separate lieutenants were appointed for each province. Every province was divided into several Parganas for the sake of fiscal divisions. Shershabad Pargana was one of such kinds of fiscal division, which comprised the areas of present Malda and Murshidabad districts of West Bengal and Chapai Nababganj district of present Bangladesh. The Shershabad Pargana was the formative place of the Sher Shah Abadi Community.

Sher Shah and Sur dynasty 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 after the advent of Mughals in North Bengal and were known as Sher Shah Abadi Community. The Sher Shah Abadis are

not a race but a community that evolved through the advent of Muslim immigrants in Malda and Murshidabad regions and their interracial marital contact with local Bengali populations. Then, when the Mughals captured 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 adopted cultivation as their profession and continued to live at Shershabad Pargana at the confluence of the Ganges and the Padma.

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 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. The people of this community suffered disastrously in Mughal as well as in the British periods. When the East India Company captured Bengal after the battle of Palasi in 1757 C.E., the Sher Shah Abadis as well as other farmers were the victims of unreasonable taxes. So the oppressed farming populations were more closely consolidated under the banner of Wahabi Movement and this movement continued up to freedom struggle against the colonial power that exploited all the existing resources of the Sher Shah Abadis in various forms. This movement gave the Sher Shah Abadi community a particular identity. During colonial period, the name Sher Shah Abadi was applied by the British, both officially and unofficially. And because of government policies they remained backward in the Mughal and British periods. And their fate did not change dramatically after the Independence of India.

Due to the erosion of the Ganges and the suppressive policies of the British government, groups of Sher Shah Abadis began to migrate from their formative areas (i.e Narayanpur and its adjacent areas that were under Shershahbad Pargana) to backward & far flung areas of the then Dumka, a district of undivided Bengal and presently the descendents of those Sher Shah Abadis are living at Sahebganj and Pakur districts under Jharkhand.

For the same causes the Sher Shah Abadi of south Malda and Murshidabad migrated to north-western Malda that was full of jungle, bushy, marshy and uncultivated lands. They chose such kind of places where administration could not reach comfortably. They occupied the *Tal* and *Diara* regions of north-western Malda. The *Tal* area is defined by geographical sketch, as approximately bordered by three rivers--the Fulhar is on the western side, the Mahanada is on the eastern side and the Kalindri is on the southern side. Manikchak, Ratua and Harishchandrapur police stations almost cover the *Tal* and *Diara* areas. These areas are almost dominated by the Sher Shah Abadis. Before the advent of the Sher Shah Abadis, these areas were uncultivated and almost full of jungle. They took shelter there and formed new centre of Wahabi outpost.

The large numbers of the 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 from *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’. It covers about 400 square miles areas. This

vast area was full of jungles, situated near the Koshi river of Nepal. 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 straightforward, rather they had many intervals. Even they reached at Shunsary, a district in Koshi Zone of Nepal, through Araria, a district of Bihar.

There are many Arabic words and phrases that are used in Sher Shah Abadi dialect. It is one of the Bengali dialects and has no separate written form. But it may not be too much exaggeration to imagine that this special regional dialect started evolving in the oldest Muslim capital of Bengal such as Devicourt, Gaur, Pandua, Tanda (Tarha) and Ekdala. This special regional dialect presumably comprised lot of vocabularies from Arabic, Persian, Turkish and probably other Afghan dialect use in mixture with the regional Bengali language of local origin (namely the areas currently known as Malda, Murshidabad and Chapai-Nababganj).This dialect was used mainly by the Muslim inhabitants of Afghan origin, many of whom came to this land as fortune seekers and joined the royal army of Bengal sultanates. As the Muslim population increased, even the local non-Muslim population started adopting this dialect for their daily uses as it became the mode of communication between Muslim descendants of foreign origin who represent the ruling class and the local Bengali inhabitants. Such was the beginning of the evolution of Sher Shah Abadi dialect in the metropolitans regions namely Gaur, Ekdala, Tanda etc. This high-breed language that mainly used Bengali form of verbal construction but at the same time incorporated a lot of Arabic and Persian vocabularies.

It was during the rules of independent rulers in Bengal, Bengali language was highly patronized. In those eras Arabic vocabularies intermingled with indigenous languages. Bengali language was also flourished and enriched by Arabic and Persian vocabularies. During that period the poetry in Bengali literature got greater attention and that kind of poetry is now called as *put*^{h}*i*. But those poetries i.e. *put*^{h}*is* were hardly protected or published. In those eras the Bengali Hindus and Muslims had no communal feelings regarding the usage of Arabic and Persian vocabularies either in verbal or written Bengali. But the Bengali literature however became corrupted after the advent of Europeans in Bengal and establishment of East-India company rules in the region. The British government instigated the Brahmins to incorporate Sanskrit words into Bengali language and literature. They tried to give a fixed linguistic pattern to Bengali language. Introduction of printing technology for printing Bengali books, further promoted rapid growth of a new literary Bengali language and literature. As the literary Bengali language used a printing Bengali books was more or less written by educated Bengalese Brahmin priest-class that ignored Arabic and Persian words commonly used in rural Bengal and promoted Sanskrit words instead. Sanskrit words were incorporated in place of Arabic and Persian vocabularies so extent in literary Bengali that till now such kind of literary writings is difficult to understand even for the common Bengalis. Moreover numerous Arabic and Persian vocabularies till now survive in literary Bengali and its dialects of which few of them has been defined its origin and many of them has not been defined its Arabic origin yet.

There are numerous Arabic vocabularies which are used in Sher Shah Abadi dialect. This fact is not mentioned by any other writer or researcher. So my research topic is absolutely new. To find Arabic influence on this dialect, we have collected more than a thousand of Arabic words which are used in this dialect. We have also made effort to find the clue that how these Arabic words entered into this dialect. While tracing the origin of Sher Shah Abadi Community, the British surveyors laid emphasis on their physical appearance & traits, and completely ignored the culture and language of the community. Had their survey been based on linguistic aspects, they could have successfully traced the origin of the community.

The profuse use of Arabic words in their language is indicative of their Arab origin. Although the British surveyors almost confirmed that the forefathers of Sher Shah Abadis came to Gaur, the capital of Bengal, from Afghanistan but the exact part of Afghanistan could not be ascertained. On the basis of secondary sources, our research work makes us presume 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.

Arabic vocabularies on Sher Shah Abadi Dialect are found in the following fields: religious practices, daily conversation, social affairs, economic transactions, administrative activities, medical, health, food, drink, utensils, proverbs, women’s songs etc. There is no existing book or any piece of writing relevant to this topic. So, Arabic influence on Sher Shah Abadi dialect and culture needed a thorough study that could have been an 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.

Actually, when I got admission into the department of Arabic, Assam University in 2008, I was acquainted with the book *Al Arabiat al Hayat*, volume- III that was in the syllabus of P.G. first semester. At that time, Prof. Abdur Rasak T. provided me 1st & 2nd volume of that book for the convenience of learning Arabic. Enthusiastically I studied these three volumes for the sake of learning Arabic language under the guidance of Prof. Abdur Rasak T. and Prof. Ashfaq Ahmad. Gradually I became familiar with lots of Arabic vocabularies. I was always attracted to Arabic words and frequently consulted J.M. Cawan's dictionary. But the Arabic word *p^{h}urʃatun* (فرصة - opportunity) was the turning point in my thinking. I frequently practiced the use of this word in *Al Arabiat al Hayat* volume-I and it inspired me to compare more Arabic words with the Arabic vocabularies that are used on Sher Shah Abadi dialect. Consequently words like lokma(لقمة – a mouthful), ɟap^{h}ot(ضيافة - invitation), ɟap^{h}ri(جعفرى – fence of bamboo), moɟbut(مضبوط - hard), aʃol(أصل - original), nɔkɔl(نقل - duplicate), maɟal(مجال – ability < field), ɖol(دلو - bucket) etc. also attracted me. The fact that research work could be done regarding Arabic influence on Sher Shah Abadi Dialect was beyond my realization and imagination. After passing out P.G., I got admission into I.P.P and was much anxious about topic selection of my research work. So I consulted Md Samsuddoha, one of my well wishers, regarding research topic. He encouraged me to work about Sher Shah Abadi Community. Then I proposed to my Supervisor to work in this field. He helped me whole heartedly to finalize such title of the research work.

Thesis outline

The title of the research topic is "***Influence of Arabic on the Bengali Dialect of Sher Shah Abadi Community***". This topic is a new area of research in Arabic literature and it would also create many new research areas. This unique and valuable work is comprised of six chapters. Thesis outline from the methodological point of view are as follows.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter presents an introduction which occupies the leading position of the research work. Considering the entitled topic this chapter comprises the consequent contents as the purpose of the research work, ground of choosing this topic, statement of the problem, historical backgrounds of Sher Shah Abadi Community, geographical situation of Shershabad Pargana that was formative place of Sher Shah Abadi Community, the present abodes of this community, brief sketch of the formation of literary Bengali as well as Sher Shah Abadi Bengali Dialect under the influence of Arabic language and the summary of all the chapters of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Origin and history of Sher Shah Abadi Community

To complete this chapter primary and secondary data is adopted with the help of historical research. Descriptive and analytical methods are applied. Field work, field studies, interview has been done. Articles, gazetteers and surveys of the settlement reports of the British period of India and few published books have taken as references to perform this chapter.

Chapter 3: Influence of Arabic on Sher Shah Abadi dialect

Descriptive methodology is applied to perform this chapter. Practical applications of Arabic words are shown on sentences, phrases, proverbs etc. of Sher Shah Abadi Dialect. Thus the uses of Arabic vocabularies are

categorized in terms of religious point of views, daily conversation based, socio cultural affairs, administrative relevant activities, economical transactions, concerning physic and medicine, regarding house hold items, proverb and women songs.

Chapter 4: Characteristics of Sher Shah Abadi Bengali dialect

It has been arranged with the help of Bengali grammar and phonetics. Both the descriptive and analytical methodology is applicable to accomplish this chapter. It has been subdivided as phonological and morphological characteristics. To highlight these characteristics both the Arabic words and the as usual Bengali words that are used in this dialect has been applied in a systematic manners.

Chapter 5: Arabic glossary of Sher Shah Abadi dialect

This chapter is the collection of Arabic vocabularies that are commonly used in Sher Shah Abadi Dialect. Descriptive methodology has been applied here. Interviews, field work, comparative study of collected Arabic words among different Sher Shah Abadi areas have been done.

Chapter 6: conclusion

It reveals the findings of the research and conveys the probable new research areas.