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CHAPTER- 1

Arabic Language in the Barak Valley

This chapter is related with geographical backgrounds of Arabia, geographical backgrounds of Barak Valley, their origin, their climate, their languages and also the advent of Islam and Muslims in India as well as in the Barak Valley along with Arabic. So this chapter can be better represented through the following sub- chapters.

I) Geographical and Climatic Background of Arabia

II) The Arabs and their Origin

III) The Arabic Language and its Origin

IV) The Arabic Literature, its Growth and Development

V) Advent of Islam and the Muslims along with Arabic in India

VI) Advent of Muslims as well as Arabic in Bengal

VII) Spread of Islam along with Arabic in the Barak Valley

(I) Geographical and Climatic Background of Arabia

Arabia is the largest peninsula on the earth situated in the South- West of Asia. It has an area of 1027,000 square miles and a population of fourteen millions. Geologists are of the view that the land once was a natural continuation of the Sahara. But the rift of the Nile Valley and the chasm of the Red Sea separated it from the Sahara.[1]

In Arabic the Arabian Peninsula is called Biladul Arab or Jaziratul Arab. It is on the coast of the Red Sea and extended as far as the Persian Gulf.[2] It is a land of barren deserts, mountains, Valleys and Oasis.[3]

Arabia is a word derived from arabiun meaning Arabic.[4] At the advent

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1. *History of the Arabs, London 1970, p. 14 Hitti, P. K*
   Tarikhul Ulumul -Arabia; 1985, p.3 Rahman, Md. Tayibur
2. *A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guwahati 1996, p. 23*
   Ali, Dr. Chand Muhammad
3. *Dictionary of Islam, Delhi 1979 P.16 Hughes, T.P.*
4. *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic, New York 1976, p. 501*
   Cown, J.M.

of Islam in the first part of the seventh century and the emergence of the Arabian Muslims they began to use the name Arab to mean the whole peninsula and all the people of Arabian origin.[1]

Geographically it is a hot oasis lying between the 85° and 60°E longitude and 10° and 40° N latitude.[2] On its west is the Gulf of Aqaba and Red sea, on the South is the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea, on the east is the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf and on the north is the frontier land of Iraq and Transjordan and Jibal Anaza. [3]

It is also said to be a vast Peninsula of South-West Asia in the north of which is Syrio-Babylonian plain, Persian Gulf and the Red Sea of Oman by the north-east, Arabian Sea by the south-east and the Red Sea by the south and the Red Sea and Gulf of Suez by the south-west.

From north-west to southwest it is about 1800 miles long having a breadth of about 600 miles. (Its area is about 1,200,000 square miles and population is about 5000, 000). Many deserts and Oasis encircle it.[4]

Arabian geographers divide Arabia into some natural regions which are Tihama, al-Najd, al-Hijaz, al-Aruz and al-Yaman.[5] But Ptolemy divides it into three natural regions which are Arabia Petraca, Arabia Felix and Arabia Deserta to mean stony Arabia, flourishing Arabia and desert Arabia respectively.[6] Chamber's Encyclopedia and Jaziratul Arab divide it into three divisions which are: (1) a zone of some fertility including Hijaz, Asir, Yemen, the Hadramaut, Omam and Asha, (2) a sandy waste including North Nafud, the Dahna and the southern barrier of the Rub'al-Khali and (3) the sandy desert of it including Yemen, Qasim and Jabali Tai, Ahsa, Kuwait, and al-Bahrain.[7] It is very dry by the mountainsides of it and where the annual rainfall is less than 4 inches (loo mm) except some eastern part and western

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1. The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. I p. 506
2. History of Arabic Literature, p.9 Fariq, KA.
3. Chamber's Encyclopedia, p.502
4. World Encyclopedia, p. 212. The New Gresham
5. Dictionary of Islam, p. 16 Hughes, T.P.
6. The New Century Classical Handbook, p, 133.
7. Chamber's Encyclopedia, p. 502 Jaziratul Arab, p.27
Tarikhul Ulumul-Arabia, 1985, pp.4-5 Rahman, Md.Tayibur

coastal area.

The most fertile part of it, for human habitation is Yemen, in the south where the annual rainfall is 20 to 40 inches. It is almost a hot land with damp and unbearable climate particularly in the summer. It has little rainfall but no perennial river or rich forest. Al- Yaman, its southern part and Oman, its northeastern part have as much rain as to keep their valleys green and cultivable.

(II) The Arabs and their Origin

Arabs stand for urub the singular of which is Arab meaning Arabs of the deserts or Bedouins.[1] But in a wider sense, Arabs are the natives of the Arabic speaking countries whose language is Arabic and who accustomed themselves with the traditions and culture of the land. Most of them accept and practise the Islamic belief that may be enlisted from the people of Algeria, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mesopotamia, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirate and Yemen. More especially the Arabs are the Arabians by birth but the majority of the people who call themselves Arabs, have little or no Arabian ancestry. Of course, they live in areas of Asia and Africa that passed under Arab rule during the Muslim conquests in the 7th and 8th centuries. They share, in addition to language and religion, an important part of their history and a common culture.[2]

According to the reliable source, the Arabs belong to the family of the Semites that is the descendants of Sham, the eldest son of Nuh, the Prophet. The Semites comprise Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Chaldaeans, and the Amorites, including the Canaanites, the Phoenicians, the Arameans, the Hebrews, the Abyssinians and the Arabs.[3] They appeared first in the history as a branch of the family of Semites and it is not certain whether they were the inhabitants of some parts of Asia and whether their original homeland was Africa.[4]

In the Pre-Islamic era the Arabs were divided into the North Arabians

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1. *Dictionary of Modem Written Arabic, p.601 Cowan, J.M.*
2. *New Standard Encyclopedia, Vol-II, p.505*
3. *History of Arabic Literature, p.l 0 Fariq, KA.*
4. *A Literary History of the Arabs, p. 'xv Nicholson, R A*

and the South Arabians. Geneologists divided the surviving Arabs into Arabian Arabs and the Arabicised Arabs. The former is the Yemenites and the descendants of Qahtan and the latter is the naturalized Arabs living in Hijaz, Najd, Nabate, Palmyr and the descendants of Adnan and off springs of Ismail.[1]

Some other geneologists divided the Arabs in to three categories: They are (I) Arab Aribah which includes' Ad, Thamud, Umaym, Abil, Tasam, Jadis, Imliq, Jurham and Wabar and regarded descendants of Aram Ibn Sham Ibn Nuh and the original people of Arabia. But this category of people lost their existence and merged in some other tribes, (ii) Muta'arribah who are not purely Arab origin. They are the descendants of Banu Qahtan and the inhabitants of southern Arabia and (iii) Musta'ribah who are not Arab origin. They are the descendents of Ismail and Ma'd Ibn Adnan is their forefathers. The Quraish tribe belonged to this category.[2]

Most of the Arabs are of Mediterranean physical type of the Caucasoid geographic race but there are considerable regional variations with admixture of Negroid and Mongoloid peoples of Africa and Asia. The ancient Arabs were chiefly nomads who herded their sheep, goats and camels through the dry environment of deserts. The settled Arabs practised date and cereal cultivation in the oasis which also served as trade centre for the caravans transporting the spices, ivory and gold of Southern Arabia and the horn of Africa to the civilization farther north.[3]

(III). The Arabic Language and its Origin

Arabic Language: In common sense it is the language of the Arabs. But as a matter of fact, it is one of the Semitic groups of languages. Semitic language is again the language of the Semites or Banu Sham Ibn Nuh, the prophet & the second father of the mankind and his descendants.

The Semites: It is one of the ancient human races, according to the historical point of view. Different historians have classified human races of the ancient world from the different points of views. Some divided it into

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1. The Culture of Islam, p. 8 Iqbal, Afzal
2. Sankipta Islami Biswokosh Vol-ll pp.287-88
History of Arabic Literature, p.11 Fariq, KA.
3. Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. I, P. 504

three major classes which are (1) Aryans or Indo-Europeans, (2) Turanian or Mongolian and (3) Semites.

They also classified the world languages accordingly, into three groups. The 1st one includes Persian, English, French etc, the 2nd one includes Chinese, Japanese, Mongolian etc. and the 3rd and last one comprises Arabic, Aramaic, Hebrew, Assyrian, Chaldaean, Phoenician etc.

Some others have divided the human races in to three classes according to their Colours. They are (I) White, (2) Black or Red and (3) Yellow. The 1st of these three includes the Semites and the Europeans and the 2nd one includes the Africans and the 3rd one comprises the Chinese, Japanese and the Mongolians.

Besides, according to the Old Testament Nuh had three sons after the Great Deluge, who are Japheth, Ham and Sham each of whom is the creator and originator of a class or group of languages like the Semitic language and the Hemetic language.

But this Biblical human race is not physiological and geological to the historians rather geographical and political. It has an intention to reconcile in between reasons and traditions and to make a compromise in between the Biblical statements and the consequences of modem researches and also to assert the names of the Old Testament corresponding to the old historical names.[1]

Whatever be the divisions of the human races and the ground of these divisions, the people inhabited in Arabia, Syria and Iraq and other Arab countries are grouped and included in the same race known as the Semites. Of course, Banu Sham is the descendents of Sham whose language may or may not be Arabic. But the Semites include all the people who spoke or speak the Semitic language. The descendents of Elam residing on the borders of the Persian Gulf and those of Lud living in Ludia are not Semitic races as they never spoke Semitic whereas the Phoenicians, the Babylonians, the Abyssinians and the Amorites are Semites as they always spoke in the

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1. A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, pp. 1-2
Ali, Dr. Chand Md. Encyclopedia Britannica, Article on Semitic Language.

Semitic language.[1]

Semitic language was one and the same in origin which differed when their number enhanced and they due to economic and climatic conditions migrated and settled in different regions of the globe due to the reasons like the creation of new words, lapse of time, amalgamation of them with the strangers and so on and thus it is divided into many languages like Arabic, Hebrew and Aramaic.

Semitic languages have some features of their own which are clear and vivid indications of their same originality and which suffice to say that these languages in fact are the outcome of one and the same language. Some of these common features of the Semitic group of languages are summed up as below:

Divisions of letters into two groups: Almost all the Semitic languages have two groups of letters, which are vowels and consonants. The latter of the two is more important as almost all the roots consist of these consonants and the former is used in case of consonantal changes to express modifications of the fundamental roots and ideas. Thus, vowels are also no doubt, important but subordinate to the consonants. In almost all the Semitic languages except only a few like Assyro-Babylonian and Ethiopic only consonants are put in black and white while the vowels are only some marks added either above or below the consonants. Again, these vowel- points are used comparatively in late times and this is why inscriptions of some of the Semitic group of languages like those of Phoenicia, Senjirli, the Moabite Stone and the Silcam inscriptions had no vowel. In the Assyro-Babylonian language vowels are expressed in a borrowed manner. In the Ethiopic language vowels are given but with a slight change of the consonant forms.

Trilateral roots: Almost all the Semitic languages have three and only three letters generally consisting of three consonants as its original root. The roots occasionally found consisting of more than three letters are merely exceptional. Of course, some of the trilateral roots of the weak nature are

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1. A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, p. 2 Ali, Dr. Chand Md. History of Babylon and Assuria, V01-1 pp. 306-7 Rogers, R. W. Hoeran Historical Researches of Ancient Commerce and Politics, Vol-I,p.292 Tarikhu- Ulumul-Arabia, 1985, pp.ll-13 Rahman Md Tayibur,

originally bilateral. But in most of the cases the roots of these languages are trilateral.

Close Affinity and Relation in Between the Nouns and Verbs: There are some kinds of inflections in both the nouns and the verbs.

A prominent characteristic of it is verbal inflection with many similarities in the nouns as well as in the development of different stems or conjugations from the same root. These are formed partly by internal change in consonants and vowels and internal additions and partly by external additions. The one stem has an intensive meaning, another causative, one more a reflexive and so on.

In the original Semitic languages, there must have been many stems. Some of the stems have been lost in each language. The Ethiopic has preserved the largest number next to the Arabic and then the Assyrian. These stems afford a very concise way of expressing many different shades of meanings connected with a single root- idea of which, in most languages would require either a compound verb or the addition of separate words for its expression.

The Semitic languages used pronominal suffixes attached to nouns, verbs and prepositions. There are really shortened forms of the pronouns. With nouns they have the force of a genitive, with prepositions of a dative and with verbs ordinarily of an objective accusative. The personal stand point of the speaker or writer counts for little.

In the verb, the third person is in the simple uninflected form, the starting point of the inflection is the first person in the Aryan languages. The present tense, the tense of the speaker is of little importance, in connection with the past and future. The use of the tenses is often based upon an assumed standpoint. So also many phases imply the assumption of the standpoint other than that of the speaker.[1]

Certain phenomena may be classed together under the general statement that they show a lack of development in the languages. This is not however, due to lack of time or of favoring circumstances because these

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1. A History of Arabic Literature, pp.22-23
Fariq, K.A.

features are ordinarily found to characterize in a similar way in all the languages at all times and under all circumstances. These phenomena indicate rather psychological characteristics of the people, their natures are not complex and they show limitation in some directions. Certain developments, which are common in Aryan languages, the Semites did not feel to be necessary. Among these characteristics, may be mentioned the following:

Most of the Semitic languages have only two tenses, usually called the perfect and the imperfect whether these differed in their fundamental meaning from some of the tenses of the Aryan languages, is a question on which there is difference of opinions. The later forms of several of the languages developed a present tense horn, a participle that is only suggested in the earlier usage.

In general, the Semitic tense- usage is thus much less fully developed than theAryan. Moods also are relatively undeveloped. They are found only in connection with the imperfect tense; even the imperative being derived from it, and in most of the languages they are not widely used.

The nouns have only two genders, masculine and feminine. There is an almost entire absence of compound words, both nouns and verbs, except in proper names.

The syntax is in many particles of a simple and undeveloped kind. There is a strong tendency to have much in the relation of clauses and sentences to inference. This leads to the very frequent use of parataxis. There is but a small number of particles of every kind. In most of the languages, the original case- endings have been lost but there has been no great development of prepositions to take their place. There is also a scarcity of adjectives in most of the languages so that nouns are often used in their stead.[1]

Muhammad (s) was sent to-the desert nomadic people of Arabia to be nursed. While yet an infant he spoke in pure desert dialect. His speech, through out his life was marked by the extreme purity in form, dialect and in wonderful appeal. Thus, the Quran, the work and words of Allah came to us through the Prophet were accepted as standard and finest example of the classical Arabic. The great divine book revealed to him tended more than any thing else to preserve the essential features of Semitic dialects. [2]

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1. Encyclopedia Americana, Vol-24, pp.551-52

2. Elements of the Science of the Language, Calcutta University, p.412

(IV) The Arabic Literature-Its Growth and Development

The Arabic term used for literature is 'adab' and the root of which is also 'adab' meaning perseverance, persistence and tirelessness.[1] In Arabic, Lughatul Arabiyah means Arabic language.[2] So, Adabu Lughatil Arabia means Arabic literature. Meaning of literature better understood from the quotation which runs thus, "Nallino suggested that the term adab for literature implies the sense of adab study- work and continual striving. But the word connotes what Goldziher earlier had designated as the noble and human tendency of the character and its manifestation in the conduct of life and intercourse. Equally arresting are those definitions that make artistic expression equal to two-third religions or that eastern knowledge of literature as a process leading to an intellectual culture of a higher realm of philology, poetry, exegesis and ancient history."[3]

Urbanization of the Arabs during 632-750AD and the gradual secular composition of the Arabs under the Persian influence the term, literature is used in a more specified sense. When the Quran, Hadith and Jurisprudence began to treat as sciences and belles-letters, different kinds of skills in sports and games were considered or recognized as literary art curriculum of Arabic study. It includes course on literary criticism and history besides the traditional subjects, like Grammar, Calligraphy, Lexicography, Rhetory and Prosody in Arabic literature.

Arabic literature like most of the world literature may be classified in to two distinct branches, which are prose and poetry. Arabic literature begins with the poems and proverbs of the northern Arabs of the 5th and 6th centuries AD. Before the revelation of the Quran nothing is known of the written Arabic literature. But it is an extent work since the early sixth century and continued still today. It has made its appearance as a developed modem language. The era of Arabic literature like that of many others is divided into some epochs. The ancient philologists divide it into Al-Asrul Jahili or Pre-Islamic age or the age of ignorance, Al-Asrul Mukhadramin or the age contemporary to the Prophet and Al-Asrul Islami or the Islamic age, which is the age after the Prophet and the promulgamation of Islam.

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1. Al-Qamus al-Jadid, p.17 Kiranar, M WZ

2. The Dictionary English Arabic, p.15 E.A.E.

3. Encyclopedia of Literature, Vol-I, p.20

Of course, the modern philologists classified it into five classes which are AI-Asrul Jahili, Al-Asrul Islami, AI-Asrul Abbasi or the Abbasid period, AI Asru Qablan Nahda or Pre-Renaissance period and Asrun Nahda or the Renaissance period. Some again classified it into Pre-Islamic age, Early Islamic age, Umayyad age, Abbasid age and Modern age.[1]

It is something fact that literature is an out come of poetry and accordingly Arabic literature is an out come of Arabic poetry and thus Pre- Islamic Arabic poetry is the main source of Arabic literature and accordingly it is said, Arabic literature sprang into existence with an outburst of poetry.[2]

Pre- Islamic age is a period of about a century and a half before Islam as it is universally accepted without any question though there are only a few who regarded it as a period from Adam down to Muhammad (s), the Prophet of Islam and the poetry of this period is called Pre-Islamic poetry which is the main fountain of Arabic literature.[3]

Some other philologists classified Arabic Literature into:

i) Pre-Islamic age,
ii) Early Islamic age,
iii) Umayyad age,
iv) Abbasid age and
v) Modem age.[4]

(V). Advent of Islam and the Muslims along with Arabic in India

We know from the ancient history of India that the advent of Islam and the Muslims here is a miraculous one. In 622 AD Prophet Muhammad (S) was expelled from his native land, Mecca by his arch enemies from among his kiths and kins, nears and dears and he had to take shelter escaping from his own town in Yathrib about 200 km north of Mecca which thenceforth became famous as the city of the Prophet or Medina. After about a century his followers and descendants began to rule an empire, which spread from the Atlantic to Sind and from the Caspian to the Nile. It comprises Spain,

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1. A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guwahati, p.32
Ali, Dr.Chand Md Ibid, pp. 20-21
2. A Literary History of the Arabs, p.xx Nicholson R A.
3. History of the Arabic Literature, p.29 Fariq, K.A.
4. A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, pp.32-33 Ali, Dr. Chand Md.

Portugal, some regions of Africa, Upper and Lower Egypt and their native land, Arabia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Persia, Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Trance Cocassia.[1]

At the beginning of the year, 712 AD Muslim raider, Muhammad bin Qasim for the first time established the Muslim reign in Sind after defeating Dahir. It is Sind through which, advent of Islam in this Himalayan sub- continent by route happened for the first time. In fact Sind expedition by the Muslims started first in the middle of the 15 AH 637 AD during the caliphate of the 2nd caliph, Hazrat Umar by Abul 'As Mughira and at last Mohd. Bin Qasim conquered it in 93 AH 712 AD. Balazuri, a contemporary historian described it in his book, Futuhul Buldan in detail.[2] Usman Ibn Abul Abi Saqafi, his brother, Mughirah Saqafi, Haris Ibn Murri Abdi and many more generals repeatedly made their Sind expeditions and even occupied some parts of it. In 44 AH, 663 AD for instance, during the reign of Amir Mu'awiya, the Muslim general, Muhallab Ibn Abu Sufri surpassed Sind and reached Multan, in 977 AD Banna and Ahwaj of Kabul.[3]

After Muhallab, Abdullah Ibn Sawpar, Rashid Ibn Amar Jadidi, Sinan Ibn Salanah, Abbas Ibn Ziyad and Munsir Ibn Jarud Abdi repeatedly fell on Hindustan. They some times succeeded in their expeditions and some times not. But their dream of victory over Hindustan never faded from their mind. As the victory of Hindustan was predicted by our Prophet, Hazrat Muhammad peace be on him during his life time, Hazrat Shaiban, for instance, narrated from our Prophet who said, "Two groups of my people will be forgiven from hellfire one is the attackers of Hind and other is the helpers of Jesus son of Merry."

In one another tradition narrated by Abu Hurairah, our Prophet assured the Hind expedition of the Muslims and the forgiveness of its participants. So, Abu Hurairah assures if he will be alive he will not hesitate to spend his

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1. Cambridge History of Medieval India.
Islam and Indian Culture, p. 2 Pande, Dr. B.N.Islam
2. Futuhul Buldan, Cairo, 1932, p20. Al-Balazuri
Chach Nama, English Translation by K.Fredunberg, PP.57-58
3. Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment, Delhi-1963, pp.3-4 Ahmed, Aziz

life and wealth in this expedition and if he dies in it he will be the best martyr and if he lives after it he will be free from hell fire.[1]

The Prophet, during his lifetime predicted the victory of Hind. This inspired the Muslims who continued to attack it again and again in spite of their nominal success and repeated failure. At last in 93 AH 712 AD Hajjaj bin Yusuf, the then Governor of Iraq sent a boy of mere 17 years age named Mohd. Bin Qasim as a general for Sind expedition who ultimately conquered whole Sind and proceeded up to Multan of Punjab and finally conquered it. 4000(four thousand) Indian Jhat soldiers co-operated Mohd Bin Qasim in his Sind expedition. On his arrival all the Muslim people of Shawanda shook their hands with him.

The first da'i (missionary) of the Ismails had arrived in Sind in 883 AD.[2] In the early eleventh century; Mohd of Ghazna invaded and incorporated north- west India in to his kingdom.[3]

From early 16th century to the end of the 18th century the three great empires, the Ottoman, the Safavid and the Mughal absorbed almost the entire territory of India except only the outlying marches. This gives the history of Islamic India during these centuries, a recognizable political and cultural pattern. These empires shared a common Turk-Mughal heritage, noticeable in their system of administration but they were reoccupied essentially with their individual problems, the Ottoman primarily with Europe, the Safavids with the consolidation of Shi'ism in Persia and the Mughal with the process of incorporation of the whole of the Indian continent in their empire and the evolution of a modus vivendi with the Hindus. There was therefore no integral unity of historical behaviour, which one may seek in these three Empires, but a process of interaction, secondary to their individual problems and yet giving the Darul Islam of this period a unity in the midst of diversity.[4]

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1. Nisayee, Kitabul Jihad al- Musnad P.60 Ahmed Shaiban

2. Tarikh-e-Sindh, Azamgarh, p.200 Nadvi,Abu Zafar

3. Kitab Zayn al Akhbar, Berlin-1928, p.71 M Nazim

The Life and Times of Sultan Mahmood of Ghazna, Cambridge, 1931 pp.164-65

4. Tarikh Rashidi, London, 1895 p.239 N Elias and E.Dension Ross,

In this way, Islam came in the inner most India by the first year of the Hijri calendar. Mohd.Bin Qasim conquered a city and appointed a Muslim ruler. He conquered Debal (Karachi) and built a mosque there. He also managed to settle there 4000(four thousand) Muslims. Thus the Muslims started to arrive in India by land much before the expedition of Mohd. Bin Qasim. But the arrival of Muslims in India, in fact accelerated after the expedition of Mohd. Bin Qasim and only within the 8th century many Muslim colonies were set up in many areas of Punjab and Sind. Many lower caste oppressed Hindus and Buddhists embraced Islam for its extraordinary and simple way of life.

(VI). Advent of Muslims as well as Arabic in Bengal :

Hazrat Muhammad (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), the Prophet of Allah and the preacher of Islam, the true religion based on the monotheistic principle, established a civilization and a culture based on the faith of one God within a short spell of only 23 years of his prophetic life. He, with the endeavour of only 13 years of his Madani life established an Islamic state and also a political, social and religious life of the people of this world and for the salvation and prosperity of the here and the hereafter of the mankind. His only duty was to guide the people and lead them on the way of Allah and he performed this duty perfectly and there by after his death his companions, tabi'is (followers), Tab' tab'is (sub followers) and the Muslims in general took the whole responsibility to spread Islam to every nook and corner of this world going to its remote corners.

Preaching of Islam by the Merchants: - The Arabs are merchants by profession, since the Pre-Islamic era which helped the last prophet Mohammed Peace be upon him to spread Islam throughout the world within a short period of time. It is a fact substantiated by the history of Islam that each of the merchants served as a preacher of Islam. It is because Islam based on such a principle, which imposed the burden of preaching Islam to each of its believers who was also conscious about his duties and responsibilities. So Islam within a short spell of time spread far Morocco, Spain and Portugal of the west to China in the east. The conquests of the Muslim conquerors may be mentioned here but there are many such countries of the world where no Muslim conqueror ever had gone yet there are Muslims there and this is due to the tireless and extreme endeavor of the general Muslim preachers specially the

merchants of those days. The islands of east and west of the Indian Ocean like Java, Sumatra, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and Maldives may be referred to in this context.

The Arab is a land of deserts and Sands. They, under natural compulsion are merchants from the Pre-historic period. The promulgation of Islam developed their trade and commerce more. Their caravans used to go to the different countries of the South and South-East Asia. With the help of Muslim navigators Islam was spread first in the West coast of India i.e., Malabar in present Kerala at the beginning of the 7th century AD. The Hindu king of there called Cherumal Perumal willingly left the throne and went to Mecca to embrace Islam.[1]

Sheikh Mu'inuddin in his book Tuhfatul Mujahidin Fi Baije Awwalil 'Bartakalin described the story of embracement of Islam by the king of Malabar Coast going to the last prophet personally and willingly.

The Arabian navigators used to go to China through the west coast of India and passing the Bay of Bengal and thus they had to come to the coast of Bengal. In the 7th and the 8th century AD Bay of Bengal was the centre of sea and ship business. The coast of Bengal, Tamralipi (present Tamluk) and Shatgonga (present Chattogram) were the chief harbors then.[2]

At that time Islam entered in to Bengal through the southern coast of it. Up to the conquest of Nadia by Ikhtiyar Uddin Md. Bakhtiyar Khilji in 1204 AD, various preachers of Islam entered Bengal through the eastern route of the land and spread Islam here from door to door. But the spread of Islam in Bengal started in full swing since the expedition of Bakhtiyar Khilji to Bengal.

As the Arabian Peninsula centred in between the Asia and Europe the key of then commerce and trade was centred in their hands. They had whole monopoly in the business of coastal India. They used to import Garam Mashla and precious jewels from the Indian markets and export them to the European countries. Garam Mashla was produced then in Sarandib (Sri Lanka) and its neighboring regions of South India but Bengal (Bangladesh)

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1. Encyclopedia, 14-23 Muslim Banglar Samajik Itihas

2. Tarikh-e-Hind Qadim, p. 67 KM Panikkar

thenceforth was famous for tusks. During the attack of Emperor Alexander, we heard about the four well-adorned elephant army of the king of Bengal. In the history of Arabs we find that Deb Paul, the king of Bengal had 50,000 well-trained elephants (810-845 AD). [1]

Thus the advent of Islam and the Muslims in Bengal took place first through Chittagong harbor that is through the water ways and not land route from western India to the East. A Sufi named Sultan Bayazid Bostani came first. He belonged to the eighth-ninth century. Bakhtiyar Khilji conquered Bengal in 1199 AD. Hence there is no hesitation to assert that infiltration had taken place although not in a wide scale. The Hindu kingdom in Sylhet fell to the Muslims in 1303 AD/703AH. [2]

In the travel description of Ibn Batutah during the 14th century we find the abundance of elephants in Arakan (Barhankar) and Chattogram regions of Bengal.[1]

The 16th century historian, Abul Fazal in his book 'Ain - e- Akbari' said that there was a country named Arkhang (Arakan) in the east south of Bengal and Chatgoan (Chattogram) was its sea port where there were abundance of elephants. So, it can be said without doubt that the Arab merchants used to come to buy the tusks of the elephants from there and then they used to send it to the European countries.

The Portuguese sailor, Vasco de Gamma discovered the new route of travel to India by the South Coast of Africa in 1498 AD and the discovery of America by the Portuguese sailor called Columbus up to which the Arab had the full monopoly in the land and water business in Asia, Europe and Africa. From Cordova to China they used to go to each of the ports for trade and commerce. From the study of Arab and Iran history names of many famous Muslim geographers and travellers of 1st to 8th century of Hijrah are found. In the description of Arab geographers a port named Samandar is found in the south -eastern coast of Bengal. As Ibn Khuradah who died in 300 AH

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1. Bangladasher Itihas, Ancient Period, p. 52 Mazumder, Ramesh Chandra

2. Travels of Ibn Batutah (An Extract) "Coins and Chronology of the Early Independent Sultans of Bengal" pp. 143-144 NK.Bhattasali

3. Aja'ib al-Asfar, Second Edition 1913, Delhi, vol-II, p.389 Ibn Batuta

said in his book, 'Masalik al-Mamalik' "Sandal wood could be brought from Kamrup to Samandar by water within 15 to 20 days.' Al-Idrisi who died in 549 AH said in his book 'Nujhatul Mushtak' that Samandar was a great town, a centre of business and a developed place. Dr. Abdul Karim in his book 'Chattograme Islam' proved that this Samandar means Chattogram.[1]

Ibn Batuta, in his travel accounts mentioned the cotton cloth of Bengal. He and his companions were offered this cotton dress along with other foreign kings and rulers. This cotton dress and sandal wood of Bengal was well acquainted to the Arabs. This dress was made in Dacca and exported through Chattogram.

Dr. A. Rahim in his book 'Social and Cultural History of Bengal' said regarding the advent of the Arab merchants to the Bay of Bengal that the Arabs were in close touch with Chattogram from the ancient time and even the very name is a gift of them. As it is situated at the end of the Ganges they used to call it Shati al-Gang meaning the last end of the Ganges from which it is called then Chatgaon and then Chitagang.[2]

In the 8th and 9th centuries Arab merchants through this path used to come and do their business in China, which proves that those merchants were the Arab Muslims. In Paharpur of Rajshahi district a golden coin of the period of Abbasid Caliph, Harun al-Rashid was found during the digging of soil. The year 172 AH (788 AD) was engraved on this coin. At that time the king of Bengal was Buddha king, Dharma Paul who ruled it since 770 AD to 810 AD.

There may be relation in between the above-mentioned coins and the ruin and destruction of the ship of the Arab Muslim merchants in Arakan as because the coins were taken in 788 AD and the accident of the ship occurred in between 788 AD to 810 AD. It may be that the Arab merchants through the biggest river of Bengal, the Ganges came in this country for their business purpose and these coins came to Buddha Bihar of Soampur through them. Besides, they spread Islam within the country during the course of their journey for business purpose as because it was a religious duty to each

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1.Chattograme Islam, p.p. 4-15 Karim, Dr.Abdul

2. Social and Cultural History of Bengal Rahim, Dr. Abdul

of the Muslims then. So, it may happen that some of the Arab merchants might come to the biggest Buddha Bihar of Soampur to preach Islam through whom these coins came here and ultimately reached to the Buddha Bhikku.[1]

Besides, many Arabic words were used in the language of Chattogram. The Arabic words used in the language of Chattogram were more than double in comparison to the Bengali words. In the verbs of the language of Chattogram, the negative sign, Na is used as La as used in Arabic. The tone and pronounciation of the words of the people of Chattogram is almost like those of the Arabians. Many of the people of Chattogram claimed themselves as the Arab descendants. Some of the regions of Chattogram bear the Arab names even today as Al-Karan, Sulak, and Bahar Bakalin etc. All these prove ancient relation of Chattogram with the Arabs. Arabic language Arab-culture and Arab blood helped much in spreading Islam here.[2]

ISLAM IN BENGAL

Darma Paul (770-810 AD), the Bengali king and Buddhist by religion of the 8th century AD conquered from the river Sind, north Punjab up to the Himalaya. The copper plate of Darma Paul found in Khalispur near Maldah proves that the kings of Bhuj, Matsa, Madra, Kur, Jadu, Jaban, Obanti, Gandar and kir used to come and attend in his palace.[3] Jaban is assumed a Muslim occupied state on the bank of the river Sind.[4]

Thus it proves that a relation in between the Muslim state of Sind and the king of Bengal was established in the last part of the 8th century and in the beginning of the 9th century AD. There was exchange of messages in between the two. The reign of Harun Rashid extended up to Sind through Makram. The Muslim general of Sind who came to Darma Paul of Bengal was certainly appointed by Harun al-Rashid. So there are all probabilities of communications in between Darma Paul of Bengal and Harun al-Rashid and also possibility of good and amicable relation in between them and even

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1. Purba Pakistane Islam, Hoque, Dr. Amanul

2. Aja'ib al-Asfar, Vol-II, Second Edition, Delhi-1913, pp.58-59 Ibn Batuta

3. Goar Lekh Mela, pp.21-22 Akkoy Kumar

4. Bangladesher Itihas, Ancient Period, pp.43-44 Mazumder, Ramesh Chandra

there was exchange of scholars of these two lands, which ultimately brought cultural exchanges. The coins of Puharpur and Moinamoni may be due to this relation. Bishop John A. Subhan in his book, Sufism its Saints and Shrine mentions about this exchange of scholars.

This proves that Islam began to spread in Bengal since the last part of the 8th and the beginning of the 9th centuries. Of course, there is no black and white record to say who, when and how Islam came and influenced there. The response of the then people to Islam can not also be ascertained. But some of the accounts of the 11th century reached us which indicates that Islam came in Bengal long before at least in some of its regions.

In the Vedas and Sanskrit literature mention is made about the developed naval trade among the Aryan culture. Rik, Sam and Aurtha Vedas refer many stories of sea-merchants. 48 and 116 verses of the 10th vol. of the Rick Veda and 5th verse of the 3rd vol. of Aurth Veda represent many references of naval business. Story of the merchant, Dhanamitra in the drama of Kalidas called Shakuntala, in the Ratnabli drama mention is made of the merchants of Koaushambi city and the story of the merchant called Ratnadaj in the Dhas Kumar Charit and the likes indicate on the rich naval business in the ancient India. From North-west India, Aryan culture came to the East India first within 5th century AD and it will spread through out Bengal or Bangladesh. Before the 5th century AD the people of Bengal were in close touch with the merchants. Tamralipti of India was an ancient harbour from before the birth of Jesus Christ. As regard the importance of Tamralipi Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mazumder remarks, "Its existence in the second century AD is proud by reference in Ptolemy's Geography.[1]

As a result of this naval business, many colonies were set up in South East Asia where people of various countries settled besides the local people. Again the free dealings and good conducts of them attracted the other people to visit and settle there. As remarked, 'The adventure migrants and merchants both used to settle down in colonies which offered them better chances of prosperity and enhanced their social status. Women of the colonies were ever eager to marry an Indian fresh and this too, becomes one cause of the

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1. History of Ancient Bengal, Calcutta 1971, p.345

Mazumder, Ramesh Chandra

people not returning home. Once a Shudra, disembarked in the colony, enjoyed as much respect and regard as any Brahmana or Khatriya. Such people never thought of going back to India to throw themselves in to the hell of caste hierarchy and untouchability.[1]

The cultural exchanges in between them, took place for the first time through the naval traders.

The subsequent Muslim attacks of Kamrup were those of Ali Mardan (1210-1213 AD), Ghyas Uddin Bakhtiyar in 1198 AD and also the arrival of Sufi Saints as well as preachers of Islam, Sheikh Jalal Uddin Tibrizi (d 1224 AD) and then Nasir Uddin, the eldest son of Iltutmis.[2]

Barbak Shah, the Sultan of Bengal attacked Kamata kingdom in 1459 AD. Subsequently in 1498 AD Nawab Hussain Shah (1502-1519 AD) extended his kingdom up to Hajo.

Tarbak, one general of Hussain Shah invaded the Ahom kingdom but was overcome by the Ahoms in 1522-1523 AD. In this battle many Muslim soldiers were captured and facilitated to inhabit in Assam.

The number of Muslim inhabitants in Assam increased with every successive attack on Assam during the reign of the Mughal from 1613 to 1682 AD. Mirzumla continued to attack Assam from 1662 to 1663 AD. In 1672 AD, Ram Singha, the general of Aurangzeb invaded Assam but was overcome by the Ahoms. Then in 1842 AD, the British came in Assam.[3]

The Muslim Rulers of Bengal since 939-961 AH (1532-1553 AD)

Farid Uddin Sher Shah	938-45 AH	1532-38 AD
Khijr kha	945-48 AH	1538-41 AD
Kaji Fajilot	948-52 AH	1541-45 AD
Mohd. Kha Seer	952-60 AH	1545-53 AD
Shamsuddin Mohd. Shah	960-962 AH	552-1554 AD

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1. *Hindu Kingdom of South-East Asia, Delhi-1990, p.128*
   R.K. Kanchan.
2. *Sargadeva Jajeswar Singha, Guwahati - 1955, pp.17 4-75*
   Bhuyan, S. K.
3. *Banglar Itihas, Calcutta-1324 Bangla, p.201*
   Bandopadhya, Rakhal Das

Gias Uddin Bahadur Shah	962-968 AH	554-1560 AD
Gias Uddin Jalal Shah	968-971 AH	560-1563 AD
Son of Jalal Shah	971 AH	1563 AD
Gias Uddin	971 AH	1563 AD
Sulaiman Karrani	972-981 AH	1564-1572 AD
Bayazid Shah	981 AH	1572 AD
Daud Shah	981-984 AH	1572-1576 AD.

(VII). Spread of Islam along with Arabic in the Barak Valley :

Present Barak Valley comprising three districts Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi and Surma Valley comprising Sylhet district of present Bangladesh over and above the Barak Valley of India has been the cradle of the Muslims as coming down from the 12th century AD. After having the study and knowledge of the history of Barak Valley or Surma Valley one can easily understand that the region was a fertile land for the religious men like Gargobinda, Shah Jalal Mubarrad and Azan Faqir. It was the dwelling place of the Hindus and the Kacharis first and the Christians and Muslims thereafter. Since the Muslim saints like Shah Jalal arrived here and showed their miracles to the people beyond the new comer immigrant Muslims, they began to convert and embrace Islam by the simple and easy as well as logical teachings of Islam and also effected by the miracles of the immigrant Muslim saints. This is the reason why this holy land did not only give birth of a large number of Shannashys, Sufis and saints but also drew the attention of a galaxy of religious personalities, devotees, Sufis and preachers of different religions in every period of the history. Each of these religious personalities had a distinct influence on its languages, cultures, manners, customs and rites. But it is a matter of great regret that no due attention has been paid so far to measure and distinguish it by the historians. Similar is the case of the Muslims who have great influence on its languages and on the life of its people but not recorded yet though such works have been done on other parts of the country to evaluate their influence on their migrated region.

The Arabic elements entered in the Bengali language of Barak Valley after the advent of Islam in Assam especially in this Valley has not thus been collected in a book form so far. It is only the first attempt in India and to do it, a modem scholar has to go through a vast mass of published and unpublished works including court language, colloquial language, customs, rites and manners of the people of this region specially the Muslims.

Muslims in the Barak Valley:

The first Muslim general who brought Islam in Bengal to which the Barak Valley is an inseparable part and conquered it and established Muslim reign here is Ikhtiyar Uddin Md. Bakhtiyar Khilji and popular as Bakhtiyar Khilji. In 1205 AD, he along with 17 cavalry attacked and then conquered Bengal expelling the then unpopular and oppressive ruler of it named king Lakkan Sen. This event, even in the world history is recorded in red letters as a victory acquired as easily as this is scarcely found in the history. A foreign general along with only 17 cavalry rushed in to the fortified palace of Raja Lakkan Sen, the then ruler of Bengal and captured it as freely and as unobstructed as there was not even any hindrance behind his entrance and victory over the land. No force of the king dared to face and confront him and the few wanted to face were killed on their way. Even the king fled from behind the palace of the fort allowing him to enter and occupy it and surrendering to him along with his forces. The masses on the other hand welcome Bakhtiyar for his conquest instead of creating any dissatisfaction against him. He also ruled the land taking into confidence all the Jhats, Moats and Sawtals. He, like other Muslim conquerors adjusted himself with the Bangalese's culture, heritage and with their social and cultural traditions. He gave them equal status in the society and equal rights and privileges in the economic and other spheres of life removing with an iron hand, all the inequalities like untouchability and injustices prevalent in the Hindu and Brahmin reign of the land. The Awlias, the Sufis, the traders and the Arab navigators came in India much before the Muslim conquerors who talked by the by all about the equality, peace and justice of Islam here and there which helped the Indians to have an idea of the ideal of Islam, Islamic philosophy and Islamic reign and ultimately helped the Muslim conquerors to get moral support of the Indians who were economically, culturally and socially oppressed and also to conquer the land, Bengal easily and as the Islamic truth enjoyed their heart they, soon after the establishment of Muslim rule came group by group and embraced Islam as their religion of salvation.

The cruel rule of the high class Hindus and the Sen Rulers of Karnataka oppressed the masses and specially the low class Hindus by snatching all their legitimate rights like the right to freedom of property and freedom of religion. Recitation of the Vedas was strongly prohibited to the lower class Hindus and the non-Brahmins and even for the crime of listening it they were

punished by throwing melted metals in their ears. Nobody other than the Brahmins was allowed to construct house and stay in the capital city. People, in the Brahmin rule were punished for trampling the shadow of a Brahmin. The common people, time by time were given financial punishment. They also destroyed the places of worship of the Buddhist and the Jains and constructed temples in their place. They also deprived the people especially of the lower caste, of their right to education as none of them was allowed to study the Deb language, Sanskrit other than the Brahmins, the high class Hindus. A religious decree was passed to eradicate Bengali, the language of Bengal from its soil. All the religious conversation and consultation in Bengali was strictly prohibited saying, "Whoever will compose or conversate the Austadash Puran and Ram Charcha he will be placed in the hell named Pourab." They regarded Sanskrit as the Deb language and tried to establish its superiority to others. The main reason of their ante -Bengali trend and the antagonism with the Bengali language is its relation with the Islamism and the Muslims since its birth in the long past. The Bangalese had a strong relation with monotheism and oneness of God, as the Bangalese is from the descendants of Noah (AS), the Prophet and the second father of the mankind. Noah (AS) had a grandson named Bong and the Bengal is from Bong + ahl. So, the Brahmins used to say, "Don't learn the language of the Melechch" which is the language of the monotheists and believers of One God. So, Bengali to them is the language of Melechch and Islam among the Bangalese, worsened it and thereby Bengali could never be learnt.

The oppression and injustices of the Brahmins took place in the composition of the poets and description of the historians. Sir Ramesh Mazumder in his history of Bangladesh has written, "The influence of the Brahmins in the society reached so high that whatever they declared was assumed as the declaration of God."

When the Brahmin rule of Bengal reached to its zenith and the oppression and subjugation of the Buddhists became acute, their anarchy to the people and confusion and disorder as well as dissatisfaction prevailed everywhere. Then Bakhtiyar Khilji arrived here as a saviour of the people and it is acknowledged by Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen who, in his famous book named Bengal wrote, "The Buddhists and the lower caste Hindus welcome the Muslim conquest to get rid of the oppression, injustice and lordship of the Hindu Brahmins."

The Sen Rulers of Bengal collected money from the masses in the name of Devs' and Devis' worship. They were also characterless. They by habit enjoyed with the young girls of the lower caste Hindus. Dr. Nihar Ranjan Roy in his book says, "The over burdened and oppressed Buddhists welcome the Muslim conquest in Bengal and helped Bakhtiyar to conquer it." Likewise Swami Vivekananda said, "Islam came in India as a savior of its down trodden society."

Dr. M.A Rahim has written in his book, "Banglar Samajik o Sanskritic Itihas" Muslim conquest was a virtue to the people of Bengal, which brought the Bangalese on a common platform of political and social equality. Had not the Muslims conquered Bengal and had the Hindu Brahmins rule continued for century after century then the Bengali language would become abolished.

Dr. Nihar Ranjan Roy in his Book, "Banglar Itihas" has also written, "That the Bengal was neglected in the Aryan civilization and culture which was of little pride during the Paul and the Sen Rulers while during the Muslim reign all the people become united. So, Bakhtiyar's Bengal conquest opened the door of freedom and salvation to the non- Brahmins and the people became free from worship of the different deities like statues.

Bakhtiyar was from the descendants of a Turk and of the Khilji community. He was an inhabitant of Garamser present Dashte Marg of Afghanistan. Nothing special is known about his boyhood days. He left his country for his poverty and in search of his livelihood. He came in India and approached Sultan Mohd. Ghuri of Ghazni first to serve in his army but he failed. Then he came to Qutub Uddin Aibek, the ruler of Delhi where he failed to attract him and enjoy the sympathy of his general. Then he proceeded eastward and reached Badaun the ruler of which named Malik Hijbak Uddin appointed under him. But Bakhtiyar was not pleased in his service under him. So, he resigned his post and approached the ruler of Ayodhya named Malik Hussain Uddin Bakhtiyar and enjoyed his sympathy who latter on made him the chief of his two administrative areas called Viewly and Vagat and also entrusted upon him the charge of border security where from he found the path of his bright future. He began to raid, conquer and possess the neighboring Brahmin-ruled provinces. Once again he approached Qutub Uddin Aibek. There he, fighting with and defeating a mad elephant was rewarded. He, there from collected an army and marched toward the east. There were many fighters

with him but only 17 cavalry could accompany with his speedy course of journey leaving all the others far behind. He along with these seventeen cavalry reached the capital of Bengal and entered in to the fort-palace. Raja Lakkan Sen was predicted of this attack by some fortune tellers and so he was nervous from before hand and so he escaped from behind of his fort as soon as Bakhtiyar Khilji entered the city. His army surrendered to Bakhtiyar and the only few who dared to stand on his way, were killed. The merriment of the masses at this Muslim conquest and specially the flight and escape of Raja Lakkan Sen was expressed in a poem composed by Dijendralal Roy,

খোল ইতিহাস : সতর তুরস্ক
প্রবেশিল যবে গৌড়তে
লক্ষণ সেন দিলেন চম্পট
কচুবনে এক দৌড়েতে।
সে অপূর্ব সুমধুর, আধ্যাত্মিক
দীর্ঘপলায়ণ কাহিনী
যোগ্য ছন্দ বন্ধে বোধ হয় আজো
ভালো করে কেহ গাহিনি।

Bakhtiyar, from the impartial point of view, did not impose Islam to any body. There was no instance of coercive conversion in his rule rather everyone enjoyed the freedom of religion irrespective of Hindu or Buddha. The victory of Bakhtiyar and reign of Bengal by him brought about a radical and fundamental change in religious, political and cultural life of the people of Bengal and there was a tremendous development in all the fields. Casteism, untouchability— all these were removed from the society. New architectural development took place and the people irrespective of caste; community and creed began to be appointed under the ruler according to their skill and qualification. Only skill and qualification of the people could attract the sympathy of the king and nothing else. All the vices of the Sen Rule like recruitment of the Brahmin virgins in the temples for the services of the Devs and Devis and unrestricted sexual intercourse were removed. Some of the so-called scholars regarded Bakhtiyar as foreigner. But they should know that Lakkan Sen, his devoted Indra and even the first king of India, Kaniska were foreigners. Kaniska like Bakhtiyar was a descendant of a Turkish and the difference is that those non-Muslims arrived here for the purpose of oppression of the people and lordship and for their personal gain while the Muslim

conquerors came here as a savior of the oppressed people and establishment of justice. At present some creative and vindictive historians are trying to have an alteration and adulteration of the Indian history making it partial and one sided. So, the real and impartial scholars should be cautious against such an attempt to curtail some facts, which may destroy the history of India made out of the joint contribution of the Hindus and Muslims culture and customs. It may also cause the loss of half of the Indian history.[1]

Hazrat Shah Jalal arrived in Sylhet in 1303 AD along with 360 disciples with a view to preach Islam, show the light of it and lead the people to the right path of heaven. He was 32 years old and an energetic young who roamed here and there in Assam and Bangladesh giving the light of Tawhid to its people.

Of course, he faced many obstacles to lead the people to a new path of Islam and prevent them from the path of their forefathers. In order to fulfill his mission he sent some of his 360 disciples here and there to preach Islam. A few of them came to Karimganj of this Barak Valley. They are Hazrat Shah Adam Khaki, Abdul Malik, Shah Wali, Shah Syed Badruddin, Shah Zia Uddin, Syed Abu Bakr, Hazrat Taj Uddin Siddiqi and Hazrat Pyar Maulavi.

It is beyond any suspicion that Shah Jalal played the most dominant role in the Islamisation of the people of Barak Valley. He conquered Sylhet in 1348 AD though the history of Bangalese up to 1612 AD was not clear.

Islamic education started in the Barak Valley almost along the spread of Islam here by Hazrat Shah Jalal. This education system was Islam-based Madrasas and Maktabs set up in different places of the Barak Valley. The position of education is very high in Islam. Of course, Shah Jahan regarded Quranic education compulsory and ordered his disciples accordingly to teach the people the Quran and the Islamic rules and regulations so that a Muslim can perform all the Islamic obligations properly.

Along with the spread of Islam in the Barak Valley many mosques were set up here and there in the Barak Valley. These were not only shrines for prayers but also centers of educations. All the primary Islamic educations

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1. Saptahic Kalam, Calcutta 22-2-99

like the teaching of the Quran, Namaz and ablution were taught there along with the knowledge of letter writing and arithmetics. Teaching- Grammar, Logic, Rhyme, the Science of Jurisprudence, the science of Islamic Law along with the pure Quranic education started soon in the Madrasas. These and the likes are due to the fact that a Muslim is to learn Arabic language for the cause of Islam and for being a proper Muslim.

The arrival of Hazrat Shah Jalal, his spread of Islam and Islamisation of the people of Surma Valley to which the Barak Valley is a major part not only developed Arabic and Islamic language in this region but also many Perso-Arabic engraved- plates which are found even today in many graveyards and which played as a source of past history of this region. His arrival enriched the land with many saints and Sufis who attracted the outsiders.

The spread of Islam in this region also gave birth of a new type of scripts known as Sylheti Nagri Scripts by the sign of Sanskrit and Bengali language which is everlasting in the history of this region. It has 32 letters and 5 vowel- points. The famous books in this language are Halatun Nabi, Raded Kufr, Hakikate Sitara, Tarikunnabi, Mashuq Nama, Ashiq Nama, Bayanul Iman and Sifatun Nabi.

He not only brought a change in the faith of people of this region but also in their behaviour and manners. He on the one hand converted the people and on the other hand he brought a mental change among them. Many people even from the rich were attracted by his simple and easy life. They accepted his simple dress and soft nature. The Muslims in general began to put on white caps on their heads and emphasized the need of cleanliness.

His arrival and spread of Islam caused no communal disturbance in the region rather improved communal harmony and people in general praised him as a man of sprit. Both the Muslims and the Hindus wrote emphasizing on his humanity and liberality.

Shah Jalal conquered Sylhet but did not deprive the Hindu officials of their rights rather honored those giving suitable titles like Khaadded with the name of the Hindu officials.

In the Surma-Barak Valley many rural villages were named with Islamic names. Some new villages were created and named after the names of Faqirs, Awlias and Darbeshs. On the other hand there are many such villages which are named just like the names of the Hindu civilization where there is

no Hindu now like Krishna Nagar, Durga Nagar, Krishnapur and Radha Nagar.

In this region there are so many cultural festivals which are equally participated and enjoyed by both the Hindus and Muslims like the festival of Rakhal Pir celebrated in every Kartic month of Bengali Calendar and Gazir Ghan.

Arabic Language in the Barak Valley

Arabic Language is the language of the Arabs through which they express their minds, learn and teach as it is said earlier.

But here we may mention that it is an Islamic language in the sense that it is an inseparable language of a Muslim of whatever nationality or place he may be. As soon as one is converted or embraces Islam one is to learn Arabic for the performance of religious duties and prayers of Islam. This is the reason why the Muslims learn and teach Arabic wherever there be in the world.

Barak Valley is not an exception of this. Arabic is being taught and learned here in the Barak Valley either formally or non-formally since the day Islam opened its door here.

The Muslims first of all learn Kalima, few Arabic words admitting and acknowledging the oneness of Allah and accepting Hazrat Muhammad S.M. as His messenger.

Therefore, they learn Quranic chapters in Arabic to perform the five time prayers. Then they learn the prophetic traditions, Quranic verses and so on through out their lives.

This process of learning Arabic in the Barak Valley can easily be assumed as because the Islamization of one means the Arabicization of him.

Of course, it can be said from the study of history that Islam came to Brahmaputra Valley and Sylhet much earlier than the Barak Valley. Besides, the Arab merchants came in Chattogram port much earlier than the Islamization of those places. As such it is possible that some Arabic words came to those areas of present Bangladesh through those Arab-merchants. Barak Valley being a close neighbour of Bangladesh some new Arab words came here by the by through the businessmen.

Arabic Islamic Education in the Barak Valley like elsewhere in India

can be classified as follows:

I. Adult Arabic Islamic Education:

This is the first and foremost media of Arabic Islamic education. As soon as one embraces Islam he is taught Kalima in Arabic with translation in his mother tongue expressing the unity of Allah and prophecy of the prophet Mohd S.M. Then he is taught the Quranic verses in Arabic and other Islamic principles in his mother tongue. So, where there is conversion from non-Muslim to Muslim and embracement of Islam Adult Arabic Islamic education is imparted either by a Sufi or a Maulavi or the likes.

II. Non-formal Arabic Islamic Education:

As soon as the number of Muslims increased they as well as their children are taught Arabic required for prayers and Islamic principles essential for the performance of the cannons of Islam by the religious teachers and Sufi saints as and when they meet them or get chance to do so. This is the most powerful force to impart Islamic education to the masses even today. The formal education, which is imparted today, is not by any way sufficient and thereby many means of non-formal Arabic Islamic education is prevalent every where in the Barak Valley like the other parts of the country.

For the purpose Jalsas, Waj Mahfils, Siratun Nabi, Miladun Nabi, Tabligh and Khanqas are being held in different educational institutions, offices, villages, mosques and Madrassas in every nook and comer of the Barak Valley having Muslim population. It was, is and will be prevalent in imparting Arabic Islamic education and is the best way of imparting Islamic knowledge to the masses.

1. Formal Arabic Islamic Education: It may be classified in to two types: - a) Private and b) Public

a) Private Formal Arabic Islamic Education may be again of the following kinds.

Mosques: When the Muslim population comparatively increased Arabic Islamic education is imparted to the people irrespective of age considering its gravity, which is prevalent even today in most of the mosques.

Maktabs: It is generally built adjacent to the mosques to impart Arabic education and Islamic Knowledge to the Muslim children so that they acquire Islamic knowledge and perform prayers in due course of time. This

Maktab is also named some where as Dini Maktab and some else where as Sabani Maktab and so on. Of course, their ultimate goal is the same.

Madrasas: Madrasas are established for comparatively higher Perso-Arabic education first during the Muslim reign and continued by the British too.[1] Here the students of at least secondary and Junior College level are being taught on Arabic both literature and Grammar, Islamic theology, Islamic Usual and Tajwij, Taqrir and Faraij.

Darul Ulum: It is the institution of the highest level established for the students who succeeded Madrasa final Examination to impart them Degree and mastered degree level Arabic Islamic education and set up at least one in a region having a good number of Madrasas. Besides Arabic, Quran, Commentary of the Quran or Tafsir, Hadith of highest standard like Bukhari Sharif and Muslim Sharif, Islamic theology and Islamic Usul or Jurisprudence are being taught here with comparatively more sincerity and devotion. Besides, there are scopes of specialization in Islamic theology, divorce and the law of inheritance or Faraiz.

Over and above all these there are public or state sponsored Arabic Islamic institutions. They are of the following patterns:

1) Junior: It is an institution for basic Arabic Islamic education along with Bengali and English. It is state-paid Madrasa for the students of ME and MV level. Basic Arabic Islamic education is imparted here along with basic Bengali and English knowledge. In most of the Muslim populated regions such a school is established.

2) Senior: It is set up for the students of secondary and college level. Here the students having the Junior-pass Certificates are admitted and imparted Arabic Islamic knowledge of comparatively high standard along with many subjects like Arabic, Islamic History, Hadith and the Quran almost partly, Social Studies, Science, Mathematics Urdu, Mantiq.

3) Title: It is the highest standard Arabic Islamic education centre under Govt. finance established for the students of Graduate and post Graduate level on Tafsir or the Quranic commentary, Hadith like Bukhari and Muslim,

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1. Bangla Sahitter Itibritta, p.824
Bandopadhay, Ausith Kumar

Islamic Philosophy, Theology, divorce, Faraiz and so on. It is established only where there are a good number of Senior Madrasas so that the successful Madrasa students can be imparted further knowledge here.

Of course, the main medium of these Madrasas and titles or Darul Ulums both public and private is Urdu. This is for the fact that Islam spread first in Urdu dominated Sind and North India where the Muslim- rulers ruled first as well as Islam spread there first. There by large number of Islamic books are translated from Arabic and Persian in to Urdu. Many Islamic sources are found in Urdu first. So wherever Islam spread then Urdu is taught and learned for learning about Islam along with Arabic and Persian. Even today Persian along with Urdu is taught first in Private Madrasas of the Barak Valley to teach Arabic and Islamic cannons and principles. Thus the students of Madrasa are to labour hard, know many languages and many subjects in order to become an Arab-Islamic scholar.

Muslim inhabitants nipped in the bud first in Assam as well as Barak Valley solely under three factors such as Muslim conquests, trades and commerce and preaching of Islam or missionary.

So, it is clear from the historical point of view that Assam was attacked by Muslim- conquerors several times from 1198 to 1682 AD and during this period many Muslim soldiers including Turkish, Pathan and Mughal under normal circumstances or being captured and taken to stay here and after marrying the daughters of the local converted Muslims, they constituted Muslim population of Assam.[1]

Thus the soil of Assam did not lag behind in welcoming the Muslims. It proved fertile for the seeds of Islam. The arrival of Islam and the Muslims here and their activities are a historical fact.

Arabic is over and above all these, a famous international language having mother tongue of most of the Arab nations who have some controls over most of the world nations economically and linguistically. The abundance of minerals especially the petroleum indebted many nations economically on the one hand and their language, Arabic being the language of the

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1. A Study of Arabic Language and Literature in Madrassas of Assam, 1994 P. 237, Ali Dr. Chand Md.

Quran helped them to create world brotherhood linguistically on the other hand.

The Arab navigators, travellers and specially the Sufis and their spreading of Islam to the different non-Muslim world-nations helped them to come in contact of many. It is so that the religion, Islam came to India and to the Bangalese of the Bengal and converted Muslims and for the religious purpose they had to learn Arabic. Gradually this Arabic language and the Arab influenced the Bangalese and their language. This influence may be classified in to religious, Quranic, Linguistic, Cultural etc.

It is obvious that the Muslim-World like those of this region follow all the Islamic rules and regulations, which came to the Muslim-World like us through the Arab and the Arabic Prophet, Hazrat Mohd (SM).

The Quran being the fountain of Islam has as much influence on the Muslims of this region as it is on the rest of the Muslim world. The Quranic language being the language of the Islamic prayers, laws etc. has also influenced Muslims of every nook and corner of this world and their language like that of ours. Islamic or Muslim administration of many decades in India has also influenced the colloquial languages of India like ours.

Arabic literature, Islamic philosophy, Islamic laws, Science of Arabic Grammar, Science of Inheritance, Science of Rhetory and prosody, the Science of Jurisprudence etc. are being taught in different formal and non-formal educational institutions of Assam. Every Muslim either Arab or non-Arab must have to learn Arabic from the very beginning of education so that he may perform his prayer in due course of time. Reading and recitation of the Holy Quran is compulsory for each of the Muslims and hence the Quran has influence in whole life of a Muslim of whatever nationality or period he might be and Assam and its Muslims is never an exception of this.

Now I may mention some words, which are purely Arabic, but these are being used in our colloquial language. They are:

قلم ، كتاب ، دواة ، نظر ، اعلان ، حساب

محنة ، اشارة ، موت ، انتقال ، نقل

Thus the advent of the Muslims brought Arabic in the Barak Valley and the conversion of the people and the large scale Islamisation of them lead to develop it by developing formal and non-formal Arabic educational institutions.

Muslims of Bengal as well as Barak Valley may be classified in to three groups, which are:

I) Immigrant Muslims

II) Converted Muslims and

III) The admixture Muslims of the above two.

The first group comprises of the Muslim ruling class and Pathan- Sultans and their descendants.

The 2nd group comprises the people converted from other than Muslim religions to it either willingly or forcibly and their descendants.

The 3rd group comprises those people who are out come from the off springs of the above two.

Of course, the 2nd group was the largest in number at least in the primary stage though the 3rd and the last group became the largest in number subsequently.

Muslim as a society was established in Bengal first when Bengal was conquered by the Muslims and ruled by them. Bakhtiyar Khilji conquered Bengal first in 1203 AD and the Muslims ruled Bengal since then up to 1765 AD - a period of long 550 years. They flourished and established themselves in these 550 years. In 1765 AD British occupied Bengal and thereafter too Muslim enhanced in number through conversion and polygamy but these are a few in number.[1]

The number of immigrant Muslims in Bengal is a few only. No history proves the arrival of a large number of foreign Muslims here. They mostly came from Delhi to Bengal for expansion of their regime and extension of their territory and then returned to Delhi. The Muslims driven from Delhi due to mutual conflicts took shelter in Orissa. Only in Chottogram some immigrant Muslims are found to settle there coming from the Arab countries as traders and businessmen.[2]

Besides, some Sufis like Shah Jalal and his companions there are a few immigrant Muslims who settled permanently, here in Bengal.

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1 Bangla Tumi Kar, Calcutta-1997, pp.103-104 Choudhury, Shashato
2. Ibid, p. 105