CHAPTER II

2.0: THE ARABIC LANGUAGE: IT'S STUDY IN INDIA SPECIALLY IN THE BRAHMAPUTRA VALLEY

2.1: The Arabic Language and its Importance:

Arabic is the youngest variety of the Semitic languages, which originated in the Arabian Peninsula on the eve of 6th century A D. In this language, the Holy *Qur'ān* was revealed during a period of 23 years from 610 to 632 A D. It is believed that Allah Himself has declared: — إنّا أنزلنه قرأنا عربيًا لعلكم تعقلون. (*Tran: Surely We have revealed it as an Arabic Qur'ān, in order that you may learn wisdom.*)[1]. It is further repeated in the same authority: "إنّا جعلنه قرأنا عربيًا لعلكم تعقلون"-[2] (*Tran: Surely We have made it a Qur'ān in Arabic, that you may be able to understand.*) In another chapter of the Holy Qur'ān Allah has declared again with the following Verses: " و إنهُ لَتنزيلُ ربِّ العالمينَ - نزَلَ بهِ الرُّوحُ الأمينُ - علىٰ قلبك لِتكونَ منَ المُنذِرينَ - بلِسانٍ عربيٍّ مُّبينٍ -"[3] (Tran: Verily this is a Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds: With it came down the Truthful spirit; To your heart that you may admonish; In the perspicuous Arabic tone.)

According to the Islamic faith, the *Qur'ān* is the saying of the Almighty Allah as well as the Hadith are that of the holy prophet Mohammad (SAS) who

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1 *The Holy Qur'an*, Ch-12:2,

2 *The Holy Qur'an*, Ch-43:3.

3 *The Holy Qur'an*, Ch-26:192—195.

was a native speaker of refined Arabic language. It is found from the narration of Hākim and Al-Baihaqi that the holy Prophet (SAS) said: —

أحِبُّوا العربَ لثلاثٍ فإنّي عربيٌّ و القرأن عربيٌّ و كلام أهل الجنّة عربيٌّ - [4]

(*Tran: 'You (the Muslims) love the Arabs for three reasons that I myself is an Arabian, the Qur'ān is Arabic and the language of the people of Paradise is Arabic.'*) It is a prophetic instruction to love not only the Arabs but the Arabic Language also. It is, therefore, important for the Muslims all over the world to love the Arabs in terms of learning the language of the *Qur'ān* and Hadiṯh.

As the popularity of Islam had been able to touch the limit of the global horizon, Arabic language also became the religious language of the Muslims throughout the world. They believe that Arabic is the only appropriate language of approach to Allah.[5] They practise their religious rites and rituals in the Arabic Language itself. They learn the speeches or the Commandments of Islamic faith in original Text in Arabic. Whatever nation they may belong to, they use the Arabic version from أذآن : *Aẓān* to the performance of five time prayers every day. They deliver the خطبة : *Khutba* (religious sermon) before the صلاة الجمعة : *Salāt al jum'a* (Friday Prayer) and صلاة العيدَين : *Salāt al 'Eidain* (Prayer of the two 'Eids) also in Arabic Language. In the similar way, many other deeds are done in the Arabic Language, which has become a part and parcel of every Muslim in the World, who is to learn the fundamentals of Islamic rituals in the Arabic Language.

Since the language of the *Qur'ān*, the Hadiṯh and the language of the Days here after, is Arabic, it is the main source of knowledge about Islam. Dr. Abdullah assumes that as more as 800 million of Muslims of the World recite

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[4] Julfiqar Ali, ed. *Al-Munjid*, Arabic-Urdu Dictionary, Deoband, 2001, p-10.

[5] P. K. Hitti, '*Arabic Language*', *Encyclopedia Americana*, vol.II, Canada, 1980, p-153.

the Holy *Qur'ān* in its original language regardless of whether they understand it or not and a good number of them also try to comprehend the *Qur'ān* without the help of translation.[6] Besides the religious and legal sciences of the Muslims, Arabic was the language of all branches of learning of Asia, Africa, Europe during the Middle Ages similar to English at the present time. 'Most standard critical studies include under medieval Arabic Literature virtually all serious writings in Arabic from the late 6th Century A D, until the early 1500's. These studies deal not only with poetry and bells letters but also with History, Geography, Classified biographies and Encyclopedia, Science and Medicine, Philosophy and Theology, Grammar and Textual exegesis, Law, Mystical speculation and many other disciplines.'[7]

A Cambridge scholar, R A Nicholson rightly asserts: 'During the early Middle Ages it (Arabic) was spoken and written by all cultivated Moslems of whatever nationality they might be, from the Indus to the Atlantic; it was the language of the court and the Church, of the Law and Commerce, of Diplomacy and Literature and Science'.[8] Prof. Fariq added: 'In Europe, it was the common language of Spain, up to the 15th Century and of the Balearic Islands, Malta, Sicily, and Pantellaria (between Sicily and Tunis) up to the 18th Century.[9] For many centuries in that period, it was the language of learning and culture and progressive thought throughout the civilized world.[10]

Even today, Arabic has occupied the position of an important language as spoken by millions of people in Asia and Africa and is studied as a language of great Civilization and religion all over the world. In addition to Arabia, Al-Yemen, Oman, and the Persian Gulf-Arab states i.e. al-Bahrain, al Kuwait, where Arabic language had held almost an undisputed supremacy since Pre

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6 Dr .A. A. Nadvi, *Learn the Language of the Holy Qur'an*, Jeddah, 1981, p-5.

7 P. K. Hitti, *Encyclopedia Americana, Op. cit*, p-153.

8 R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, New Delhi,1994, p-XXIV

9 K. A. Fariq, *History of Arabic Literature*, Delhi, 1972, p-28.

10 P. K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, London, 1979, p-4.

Islamic days. Hitti says; 'Originally the humble dialect of tribes in the modern part of Arabian peninsula, Arabic is today the prevailing speech of the whole peninsula, of Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, of the certain districts of Sudan, districts on the curve of the Niger, are in Senegal and Mauritania.'[11] Moreover, there are Syro-Lebanese Arab pockets, North and South Americas and France, West Africa, where also Arabic language is spoken.[12] On the other hand, Arabic is spoken in 24 countries by as much as 256 million of people[13] throughout the world and being used as the official language of not less than 21 member states of the Arab League,[14] in addition to that of oil producing Arab countries, where there are prospects for the job seekers of different countries, suffering from unemployment problems.

For this worldwide popularity, the Arabic language has been given a glorious position in United Nations where it is employed as the 5th of the 6 *(six)* working languages with effect from 1973.[15] Owing to this religious, commercial, economic and political importance, a large number of people of the modern world do cherish the desire of learning Arabic Language..

2.2: The Arabs in India and their settlement:

India had a good trade relation with the Arabs since a long before the advent of Islam. It is believed that the prophet Adam (A S) passed through the territory of India while he was traveling to Arabia after he had been sent down in Ceylon. In early Roman period, Arab traders imported cinnamon and pepper from India and exported to the western countries.[16] In the Pre-Islamic Ages, the Arabs linked India with Africa

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[11] P. K. Hitti, Op. cit., *Encyclopedia Americana*, v.2, 1980, p-153

[12] *Encyclopaedea Britan*nica, v.ii, 1957, pp-191-92

[13] www.tolearnarabic.com/learnarabic/the_importance_of_arabic.html,. date-19-07-2008, 21.45 hours.

[14] *Brief Guide, League of Arab States*, (Date not mentioned).

[15] www.foreigndocuments.com/a11.html, date-19-07-2008, 21.00 hrs.

[16] P. K. Hitti, History of the Arabs, Op. cit., p-59.

by trade route,[17] and the Arab traders frequented the costal regions of Sind and Hind i.e. India. They used to buy and export Indian resources to Yemen where from these were sent to Syria and to the markets of Egypt and Europe.[18] Arab traders bought spices like Cardamom, Cinnamon and Pepper; flora and fauna like Chandal, الساج : *Sāj* or teak-wood and bamboo, camphor, ginger, coconut, elephant, peacock, ape, musk and muslin cloth from Indian ports and carried to different markets of their own places as well as to some other countries from Egypt to the west, and from China to the East. There are many references, in Pre-Islamic Arabic poems, to these and other goods, imported from India, which was very popular among the Arabs. The application of pepper, musk and camphor in the poem of a celebrated Mu'allaqa poet Imrul Quis (500-540 A. D) may be brought forward in this regard:

ترىٰ بعر الآرام فى عرصاتها

و قيعانِها كأنّه حبُّ فلفل ۔[19]

Tran: You will see the droppings of white antelopes on her courtyards and enclosure, as if these are the seeds of black pepper.

إذا قامتا تضوع المسكُ منهما

نسيم الصبا جاءت بريّا القرنفل ۔[20]

Tran: When the two women (Ummu Huwairiṯh and Ummu Rubāb) stood up, a sweet fragrance spread out from them; which was a soft breeze blowing with the smell of clove.

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17 P. K. Hitti, The Arabs, 1962, p-18.

18 Dr. A T Nadvi, الصحافة العربيعة في الهند : نشأتها و تطورها, Jammu, 1998, pp-7.8f.

19 Imrul Qais, line-3 of معلقة إمرئ القيس ed. إبراهيم بن عبد الله القاسمى Tirurkad, Malappuram, 1990, p-13.

20 Imrul Qais, *Ibid,* line-8.

Moreover, Indian swords i.e. مهنّد (Muhannad) had a reputation of being very supple and sharp, which were very famous among the Arab warriors.[21] A renowned poet Medina, Ka'b bin Zuhair (R A) eulogized the holy Prophet and compared him with an Indian sword in his famous poem – 'بانت سعاد' in the following verse:

إنّ الرّسول لسيف يستضاء به

مهنّد من سيوف الله المسلول ـ[22]

Tran: Surely the Prophet (SAS) is a sword which is illuminated with an Indian sword, being the sword of Allah.

During the time of the holy Prophet, also the Caravans of Arab traders continued their commercial trips from Arabian Peninsula to Malabar cost in the South–West India. Nicholson observed that Arab traders had carried out their business in India and imported bamboos also from this country for making: رُمح :*Rumh* i.e. lance or spear.[23] From the ancient time the Arabs were accustomed in using some sorts of Indian articles. Dr. Mohyideen quoted a narration of an Arab chronicler, *Baladuri* that As'ad bin Jarārah had sent to the holy Prophet a bed , made of ساج: *sāj* (teak wood) on which the Prophet used to sleep and that was, at last, transferred to the house of Abu Ayub al-Ansari. He also added that the door of the chamber of Ayesha (RAA) was also made of teak wood.[24] It is worth mentioning that this variety of wooden articles or the logs of teak wood were commonly imported by the Arab merchants from India as well as Assam also. The author, referring to the source of an eminent scholar

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[21] Moqbul Ahmed, Indo Arab Relations, New Delhi, 1969, p-82.

[22] Ka'b bin Zuhair, Line-52 of قصيدة بانت سعاد

[23] Nicholson, *Op. cit.*, p-173.

[24] Dr. K V. Mohyideen, الشعر العربي في كيرالا: مبداه و تطوره, Kozhikode, 2003, pp-30 f.

Athar Mobarakpuri, claims that *Sāj* or the teak wood was a big tree which grew no where except in India.[25] Dr. Mohyideen added from the same source that the Prophet (SAS) and his companions applied some herbal medicine like camphor, ginger etc. having bought from Arabian markets, which had been imported from India.[26] Even after the passing away of the Prophet (SAS), the Indo-Arab trade relation continued and after the foundation of Baghdad in 762 A.D., it seemed to have improved and lasted until the 16th century.[27]

Although, Arab trade was restricted mainly to the costal regions and to the southern peninsula of the Indian Territory, it was extended into Sind, the Punjab, Bengal and Assam also.[28] It is interesting to note that a large number of Arab merchants sailed their vessels straight for China and a few others sailed northwards to Bengal and Assam. The Arabs were very much fond of Chandal wood, Teak wood, Aloes wood, *Sanchipat* or *Bhoja patra* (bark of a tree used as paper), rhinoceros, peacock, jack fruits etc. which were found in large scale in the jungles of Assam.[29] It may be true that the Arab merchants might have purchased these things from Assam also and sold in their country. In this way, Assam had its contacts with the Arabs, long ago.

It is worth mentioning that some of Arab traders started to settle in different places in India since Pre-Islamic days. Arab merchants passed along the Coromandal coast on their way to China, where remains of Pre-Muslim Arabs are still found at Canton.[30] 'In the Gazetteer of the Bombay presidency, Khan Bahadur Fazl Ullah Lutfullah Faridi mentions the

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25 Dr. K V. Mohyideen *Ibid*, pp- 28 f.

26 Mohyideen, *Ibid*, p-29.f.

27 M. Ahmed, *Op. cit.*, p– 85.

28 M. Ahmed, *Ibid*, pp-83.f and 99.

29 M.Ahmed, *Ibid*, pp-99 and 102-105.

30 Tarachand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, Allahabad, 1976, pp-3.f.

settlement of Pre-Muslim Arabs at Chaul, Kalyan and Supara' and 'there were so many Arabs on the Malabar Coast that the people had adopted the Arab religion'.[31]

After the advent of Islam, the process of Arab settlement in India took a large shape. Since the 7th century onwards, Arab Muslims settled in such a large number at different ports on the western coast of India that they started to lead social lives, having married local girls.[32] 'In Gujarat too, Arab merchants converted Hindu wives and brought up their children as Muslims.[33]

2.3: Propagation of Islam:

Islamic propagation started in India, more or less, during the life time of the Prophet Mohammad (SAS) himself. Dr. Veeran Mohyideen referred that the holy Prophet had sent letters to some of his contemporary Kings of South Indian kingdoms with an invitation for embracing Islam. One of such letters reached to a Cheraman Perumal King in Kerala, named Jankal Perumal or Shanku Färmal. This letter is an evidence of possibility of Islamic propagation in that kingdom during the period of the Prophet (SAS). Referring to a History of Muslims in Kerala, written in Malayalam by Syed B. A. Mohammad, Dr. Mohyiddeen states that the ancient manuscripts of the Kings of Arakkal of Kerala indicated that a Cheraman Perumal King had travelled to Arabian Peninsula during the lifetime of the Prophet Mohammad (SAS). This King had heard some narration about the Prophet from some Arab merchants who came to his kingdom for a trade and commerce. The king was so much influenced with the narration that he went to Arabia and embraced Islam and then he

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31 Tarachand, *Ibid*, p-24.

32 Tarachand, *Ibid*, p-25.

33 S. M. Koya, *Mappilas of Malabar*, Calicut University, 1983, p-1.

stayed for seventeen days as an honourable guest of the Prophet (SAS).[34] It is undoubtedly believed that many other people of that kingdom, specially the subjects of Cheraman Perumal might have accepted Islam, following the foot prints of their King.

During that time and after the demise of the Prophet Mohammad (SAS), Arab Muslims found a fertile environment in the Malawar coast to preach the message of Islam. They built Masjids for regular prayers and taught the fundamentals of Islam to the new converts. Some of the ancient Masjids are believed to have been founded by Malik bin Dinār during the caliphate of Umar bin Khattab (R A A), on the Malabar Coast located at Pazhayangadi, Srikantapuram, Dharmadom and Kasaragoḍ, in the modern state of Kerala.[35]

It is interesting to note that one of such Masjids founded in 643 A D at Kasaragoḍ is still bearing a doorplate in Arabic. We find in that plate of 77 c. m. x 14 c. m. that this Masjid is an accomplishment of Malik bin Dinār who hailed from Arabian Peninsula with his son— Saraf, nephew– Malik bin Habib, maternal uncle and many others for an Islamic mission. The team arrived at Kasaragoḍ on the 13th Rajab of 22 A H and built that Jām'i Masjid on the 7th June, 643 A D. It is also found from this plate that Ahmed bin Malik and his son was the *Qāzi* of Kasaragoḍ town where they lived generations together.

It is, further, found that Malik bin Habib, the nephew of Malik bin Dinār built another Masjid at Cranganore, and Ismail, a grand son of Malik bin Dinār built at Koulam in the 7th century. Their descendants living around Kuilon in Kerala are still bearing the signs of the achievement of Malik bin Dinār.[36]

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34 Dr. K V. Mohyideen, *Op. cit.*, pp-38.f.

35 *Kerala District Gazeteer*, Cannanore, 1972, p-67

36 Sarat Phukan, and Supriti Phukan, *Dainik Agradoot*, dt.18-07-1999.

In this way the warm welcome that the Muslim Arabs received in the coastal towns of India, where they had anchored, went a long way in strengthening their inter course with the country which passed the way for conversion of the indigenous population and multiplication of Muslims.

2.4: Education under the Muslim rule in India:

During this long period of Indo-Arab relation, there was a direct lingo-cultural exchange between the Arabs and the Indians in that places where the latter tried to speak and understand Arabic language for their commercial interest, while the Arab also followed the same method of learning Indian languages. Those Indians specially, who had accepted Islam by marriage or otherwise, might have learnt Arabic language to know the Islamic rites and rituals or as a medium of communication in their families.

This process of learning Arabic Language by the Indians spread far and wide, after the conquest of Sindh by Mohammad bin Qasim in 712 A D.,[37] in the new political circumstances. According to the accounts of Maqbul Ahmed, Sind remained under the direct administration of the Arab Muslims for two hundred years up to the end of 9th century.[38] Tarachand also says 'the advance of the Muslims was checked, and for the next three centuries they remained confined to this corner of India. Their sphere of influence thus extended during this period over the principalities of Sindh and Multan, over which they ruled, and the coastal towns of Sindh, Kathiwar, Gujarat and Konkan where they settled as traders, and till the eleventh century they had no opportunity to reach beyond... In any case, Dabul, Somnath, Broach, Cam-bay, Sindan and Chawl became seats of Small Muslim communities and nearly each one had its Mosque'[39] and Maktabs for primary education in Arabic.

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37 W. Haig, ed. *The Cambridge History of India*, v. III, New Delhi, 1965, p-3.

38 M. Ahmed, *Op. cit.*, p-27.

39 Tarachand, *Op. cit.*, p-35.

The foundation stone of the Muslim rule in India, laid by Ibne Qasim was confirmed by Mohammad Ghori with the victory in the second battle of Tarain in 1192 A.D.[40] and established the Sultanate of Delhi. Tarachand observed – 'The thirteenth century had hardly began when the conquest of Northern India was completed. Within a quarter of century, the Muslim armies had overrun the country from the Punjab to Assam and from Kashmir to Vindhyas'.[41] It is needless to mention that, after the conquest of Mohammad Ghori, Muslim Sultans and Emperors of a series of dynasties, such as – Slave dynasty (1206-1290 A.D), Khalji dynasty (1290-1320 A.D), Tughlag dynasty (1320-1414 A.D), Sayyid dynasty (1414--1451 A.D), Lody dynasty (1451-1526 A.D) and Mughal dynasty (1526--1857 A.D) ruled over India up to the fall of Bahadur Shah Jafar.

It is found in the historical works of different authors that the Muslim rulers paid a special attention for the spreading of knowledge. They founded a large number of educational institutions where Arabic was also studied. During the rule of Slave dynasty (1206-1290 A.D), different institutions were established for imparting education. Kutub-ud-Din (1206-1210 A.D), the founder of this dynasty established a number of Masjids and Maktabs. Sultana Razia (1236-1242) was an educated lady and able administrator as well. She was the founder of Muijji Madrasa in Delhi.[42] Sultan Nasiruddin (1246—1265) was a great lover of education, who used to copy down the Holy Qur'ān. He established the Madrasa-e-Nasiria in Delhi under the Principalship of Maulana Minhaj-ud-Din Siraj,[43] which was later, developed to a college after the name of the Sultan. Many good books were written during the rule of Nasiruddin. 'Tabaqati Nasiri', a famous historical document was written by Minhaj-ud-Din Siraj,[44] the Principal of

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[40] V. D. Mahajan, *Sultanate of Delhi*, New Delhi, 1982, p-61; and Haig, *Op. cit.*, p-40.

[41] Tarachand, *Op. cit.*, p-109.

[42] Dr. S p. Chaube, *History of Indian Education*, Agra, 1991, p-47.

[43] A. C. Roy, *History of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1968, p-79.

[44] Dr. S p. Choube, *Op. cit.*, p-48.

Nasiria College. Sultan Giyasuddin Balvan (1266-1286) was an ardent lover of education and literature. He encouraged education and patronized a number of scholars in his court. Amir Khusro, a disciple of Hazrat Nizamuddin was the most prominent and influential scholar among them. In Khalji dynasty, Jalaluddin (1290-1296AD) was the best lover of education, who encouraged and honored the learned men. He founded a big library at Kiluguri near Delhi and Amir Khusro, the famous scholar of the time of Giyasuddin Balban was the head of this library.[45] Similarly, Alauddin Khilji established a number of Madrasas in Delhi where he appointed a host of 40 renowned teachers.[46]

After the fall of Khilji Dynasty, Giyasuddin Tughlaq founded the Tughlaq Dynasty, who ruled over India from 1320 to 1414 A D. Among the sultans of his Tughlaq dynasty, three were found the best lover of education. They were Ghyasuddin Tughlaq, Muhammad Bin Tughlaq and Firoj Tughlaq. Muhammad Bin Tughlaq (1325-1351) was a great scholar who unprecedentedly assembled learned parsons and appointed them in his court. He built a number of Maktabs and Madrasas.[47] Maulana Moinuddin Imrani, a great theologist of Delhi flourished in his time.[48] Similarly, Firoj Tuglaq (1359-89 A D) was also an erudite lover of education, who established a large number of educational institutions of which there were 30 Madrasas, in edition to repairing the old ones.[49] The Royal College, established in Firojabad was very famous. Sayyid Yusuf, son of Sayyid Jamaluddin Husayni, a great scholar of Multan, was attached to this college.[50]

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45 Dr. S P. Chaube, *Ibid,* p-48.

46 A. C. Roy *Op. cit.*, p-79.

47 Dr. S p. Chaube, *Op. cit.*, p-49.

48 Dr. M. Ishaque, '*Indian Contribution to Arabic Literature*', ed., R. C. Mazumdar, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 1960, p-532.

49 Dr. P. L. Rawat, *History of Indian Education*, Agra, 1991, p-107.

50 Dr. M. Ishaque, *Op. cit.*, p-532.

After the Tughlaqs, some Sultans of the Sayyad dynasty ruled over the countries, from (1414 to 1451 A D), who were succeeded by the Lodi dynasty (1451-1526 A D). 'Among the Lodi sultans Bahlol Lodi (1451--1481) was interested in education and opened several Madrasas. Sikandar Lodi (1481-1517) himself was a great writer. He composed poems, which were compiled into a *Diwān* (Anthology of poems). He respected scholars, rewarded and encouraged them for new writings.[51] Rawat added that Sikandar Lodi had founded the city of Agra, around which he instituted hundreds of Madrasas[52] where the Arabic and Persian languages were the main subjects.

It is needless to mention that Babar established the historic dynasty of Mughal (1526-1857 A D), having defeated Ibrahim Lodi in the battle of Panipath in 1526 A D. 'Most of the days of his (Babar's) short tenure (1526-1530 A D.) he had to spend on the horse back, despite, he opened some new Maktabs and Madrasas and wrote his own biography'.[53] Humayun, son and successor of Babar was to pass his tenure through wars and battles but his love for education did not diminish. He opened many Maktabs, Madrasas and Libraries in and around Delhi and Sheikh Husain was appointed Principal in one of them.[54]

Humayun was succeeded by his son Akbar who ruled over the greater India from 1556 to 1605 A.D. He himself was illiterate but was interested in education. Rawat states that he was a secular ruler who established a number of Madrasas for the Muslims and secular institutions for the non Muslim students in Agra and Fatepur, in

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51 Dr. S p. Chaube, *Op. cit.*, p-49.

52 Dr. P. L. Rawat, *Op. cit.*, p-106.

53 Dr. S. p. Chaube, *Op. cit.*, p-51.

54 Dr. P. L. Rawat, *Op. cit.*, p-85.

addition to the existing ones. But 'the Hindus had begun to study Arabic and Persian in order to avail the state service'.[55] He adds that Akbar brought many a colleges into being at Delhi.[56] After the death of Akbar, the rein of administration was hold by his son Jahangir in 1605 A. D., who followed the educational policy of his father and opened many Maktabs and Madrasas in Agra, in addition to sanctioning grants to the existing ones.[57] Moreover, he got repaired some old and 'deserted Madrasas' of Delhi.[58] Similarly Sahjahan (1627-53 A.D.) had a great interest for education. He established some Madrasas in Agra, a college in Delhi, near Jam'a Masjid and got دار الباقي : *Dārul Bāqi* repaired.[59] Likewise, his son Aurangzeb (1657--1707) was an erudite scholar in Arabic, Persian and Turkish, having 'knowledge of the Qur'ān and Hadiṯh on the tip of his tongue'.[60] He established many Maktabs and Madrasas in the expanded area of his empire.

From this accounts it is found that commendable efforts for the spreading of knowledge and imparting education, were made in the country during this long period of Muslim rule, right from the time of Mohammad Ghori to that of Bahadur Shah Jafar (1192 to 1857 A D). They built Masjids, Maktabs, Madrasas and Colleges in every nook and corner of their empire where the students were taught the *Qur'ān*, the Hadiṯh and other Islamic subjects and the children were given their Primary education in these Maktabs. According to Dr. Chaube, 'Hindu children also went to these Maktabs for their education and they too,

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55 Rawat, *Ibid*, p-86.

56 Rawat, *Ibid*, p-107.

57 Dr. S. P. Choube, *Op.cit.*, p-52.

58 Dr. P. L. Rawat, *Op.cit.*, pp. 86,107.

59 Rawat, *Ibid*, p-86,107.

60 Rawat, *Ibid*, pp.87-88.

had to read Arabic and Persian'.[61] In this Maktabs the students were taught the reading and writing of Arabic and Persian scripts which was followed by reading, reciting and memorization of complete 30 chapters of the Qur'ān, while much attention was paid to the correctness of its pronunciation. After the completion of Maktab education, one could go to a Madrasa for higher education, which can be put under two categories: Secular and Religious.

The secular education included some subjects in its set of courses—like Arabic Grammar, Prose, Literature, Philosophy, History, Arithmetic, Geography, Medicine etc. However, the medium of instruction was mainly Arabic, although Aurangzeb emphasized the use of mother tongue in place of Arabic as medium of education.[62] On the other hand, the religious education included a profound study of the Holy Qur'ān and its commentary, the tradition of the Prophet Mohammad (SAS), Islamic law etc., which were not compulsory for the Non Muslims. However, the knowledge of Arabic and Persian was essential for the Government jobs and high position in the administration. A good number of Hindu youths, desirous of Government job, used to join these Madrasas and study Arabic and Persian, in spite of having separate institution for them.

It is worth mentioning that the facility for woman education was also provided during these times. Sultana Razia (1236-42 A.D) and Empress Noor Jahān were very learned women and well carried to administration, as Zebun Nissā, the daughter of Aurangzeb, who was also an erudite scholar and poetess in Arabic and Persian literatures.[63]

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61 Dr.S. P. Chaube, *Op.cit.*, p-42.

62 Dr. P. L. Rawat, *Op.cit.* p-91.

63 Chaube, *Op.cit.* p- 61.

Although, the studies of Arabic have been introduced in India from the conquest of Sindh, developed by the victory of Mohammad Ghori who established a number of Madrasas during his short rule and the development reached its Zenith from the time of Babar who, himself, was a profound scholar of Arabic, Persian and Turkish languages and poetry.[64] During the rule of Muslim Sultans and emperors, some Muslim colonies were established at different places all over the country, which eventually developed into big towns. In course of time, these towns became the important centers of Arabic and Islamic studies.[65] It may be noted that Delhi, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Jounpur, Lahore, Ajmer, Bedar, Lucknow, Jalandhar, Multan, Bejapur, Golconda, Siālkot, Bengal etc. were the most remarkable centers of Islamic and Arabic studies in different times of Muslim rule.[66]

2.5: The Arabic Language in the Brahmaputra Valley:

We have already discussed that, the Muslim population remarkably increased in all directions of India during the Muslim rule. Arabic, being their religious and educational language, had been very popular among the Muslim subjects and rulers up to the time of Bahadur Shah Jafar (1837-57 A.D.), the last emperor of the Mughal dynasty; and thus the study of Arabic language and literature was continued almost all over the country till date.

In the same process, Arabic studies had its way to Assam and its different regions by the beginning of the 13th century, with the entrance of the Muslims. It is remarkable to note that Muslim invaders and spiritual scholars including *Pirs*, *Faqirs*, *Awliyas* etc. had an important

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[64] Rawat, *Op.cit.* pp-83, 98.

[65] Rawat, *Ibid*, p-105.

[66] Rawat, *Ibid*, pp-106-109.

contribution for the introduction of Arabic by erecting Masjids, Khanqahs and Dargahs. In those days, Masjids were playing a vital role in spreading education among the Muslims[67] through the Arabic language.

It is noted earlier that Yuzbak Tugril Khan erected a Masjid in his conquered capital of Kamrup in 655 A H, corresponding to 1257 A D,[68] for regular prayers. It is considered that this was the first Masjid to have been built on the soil of Assam.[69] Regular *'Aẓān'* was proclaimed for inviting the Muslims, verses of the Holy Qur'ān were recited and *Khutbah* (Religious Sermon) was read or delivered during the Friday Prayers, in Arabic voice in some large gathering was listened for the first time in that year of 1257 A D itself.

Around that time Ghiyas-ud-Din Awliya visited the Brahmaputra valley and made his *Khanqah* on the top of Garuḍachal hills, at Hajo. He, too, built a Masjid there and after the death, his body was also buried within the enclosure of that Masjid.[70] This may be considered as the second Masjid of Assam.[71] This was, most probably, the same Masjid of Ghiyasud-Din Awliya rebuilt by Mughal Faujdar Mir Lutfulla Siraji by the order of Prince Suja, during 1653—1658 A D, as recorded by B C Allen.[72] It is needless to mention that this Masjid and the tomb of Ghiyas-ud-Din Awliya held the place in great esteem,

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67 Dr. L Das, *Education in Assam*, Gauhati, 1978, p-4.

68 Moulana Minhaj-ud-Din, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Tr. Raverty, 1970, vol.II, pp-764-65 and E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Gauhati, 1962, pp-36-40.

69 Dr. M Sasikia, *Assam-Muslim Relation and Its Cultural Significance*, Golaghat, 1986, p-216.

70 Dr. M. Y. Tamizi, *Sufi Movements in India*, New Delhi,1992, pp-91-92

71 Dr. M. Saikia, *Op. cit* p-217.

72 B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteer, Kamrup*, 1905, p-103.

which is popularly considered by the people of Assam to be a sacred place and called '*Powā Makka*' i.e. one fourth of Macca.

Fig.7: An interior view of the '*Powā Makka*' Masjid at Hajo.

The next historical Masjid is found at Panbari, Rangamati, around 10 kilo meters towards the north-east direction from Gouripur and 20 kilo meters towards the south-west from Bilasipara towns in the modern district of Dhubri. This famous Masjid is popularly believed to have been built by Sultan Hussain Shah of Gauḍa[73] during his occupation of Kamrup-Kamata, and authority up to Hajo from 1498 to 1505 A D.[74] This sophisticated Masjid with vast compound has still been open for public prayers and well preserved by the Archeological Survey of India (ASI), Guwahati Branch. In addition to the ASI, the

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[73] M. Neog, *Pavitra Assam*, Jorhat, 1960, p-297.

[74] Dr. M Saikia, *Op. cit.*, pp-86, 217 and N N Acharyya, The History of Mdieval Assam, Gauhati, 1990, p-177

Masjid of a historical importance has been well maintained by a strong Committee, constituted by and with local Muslims. It is found that Muslims of different places of that area take part in the congregational prayers every day in masses, especially on Friday with high esteem and great devotion.

Fig. 8: The '*Hussain Shahi Masjid*' at Panbari Rangamati (Dhubri).

There is another well decorated Masjid on a hillock popularly called as 'Mir Jumula Tila' i.e. the hillock of Mir Jumula at Mankachar in Dhubri district, on the South bank of the River Brahmaputra. It is so called; because, Mir Jumula, the general of Aurangzeb encamped on this hillock for some days during his Assam invasions in 1662 A.D, when he is said to have built the Masjid. This saying has been confirmed by two renowned scholars, viz. Dr. M. Neog and Dr. M K Saikia.[75] It is worth mentioning that the entire

[75] M. Neog, *Op. cit* p-279 and M Saikia, p–217.

design and model of this beautiful Masjid look exactly like that one of Hussain Shah's at Panbari, Rangamati, noted above.

Fig. 9: The 'Mir Jumla Masjid' at Mankachar, (Dhubri).

In addition to these historical Masjids, there were several ancient ones to be found in the villages of Mirtola, Dhakpara and Karara under Kamalpur circle of Kamrup district, which enjoyed Pirpal land endowed by the Ahom King Lakshmi Singha (1769-80 A.D).[76] This old Masjids are not found as their places have been occupied by new constructions which are enjoying the land grants in the same order.[77] Similarly, three other ancient Masjids are also believed to be historical ones. One of them, popularly known as

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[76] M. Neog, *Ibid,* p-260.

[77] Dr. M. Saikia, *Op. cit.*, p-217.

'Burha Masjid' of Ambari, at the G N B Road, Guwahati is believed to have been built during 14th Century itself.[78]

Fig. 10: The '*Burha Masjid*' of Ambari, Guwahati.

The other two Masjids are found around Kaliabor in the modern district of Nagaon, which are also popularly believed to have been founded in between 1570—1575 AD.

Apart from these Masjids, discussed above, we are not aware of any other historical Masjids so far. It is however, believed that some other Masjids might have been built by Hazrat Shah Miran also in the Sibsagar region and he had proclaimed Aẓan for the first time in that area,[79] for which, most probably, he was popularly known as 'Azan Faqir'.

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78 We visited the Masjid and interviewed the elderly persons who informed about their customary belief regarding the establishment of this Masjid, on 12-06-2007.

79 Dr. M. Saikia, *Op. cit.*, p-202.

2.6: The Early Institutions of Arabic Studies:

As we have noted earlier that the Masjids had a vital role in spreading Islamic education. They were the initial institutions for the Arabic studies. Because the ترتيب : *tarteeb* (system) of صلاة: *Ṣalāt* (prayer) was taught and the lessons on the Islamic fundamentals were given in Arabic language itself, as it is done even to day. The مصلّى : *Musallis*, who attended the prayers in those Masjids had to orally learn by heart some essential verses of the Qur'ān along with نيّة : *Niyat,* ثناء : *Thanā,* تشهّد : *Tashahud,* درود : *Darood* etc., by heart for prayers from the *Imām* of a Masjid or a teacher specially appointed for this works. In course of time, some new Masjids were built up in different places and the system of teaching and learning of Arabic was improved when some Maktabs were also set up for teaching the Arabic language with religious objectives.

There were no institution for secular education in Assam except these Maktabs for the Muslims and *'Pathsalas'* and *'Tola's* for the Hindus up to the end of the Ahom rule. It is well known that the Ahom Kings were very much benevolent of Islam. They had a great respect to the Muslim *Pirs* and *Faqirs* who were assisted to build Masjids, Maktabs, *Khanqahs* and *Dargahs* by them.[80] They granted land to set up these Islamic institutions. The settlement of *Azan Faqir* and his disciples in Sibsagar district by Godadhar Singha (1681-1696) and the allotment of '*Pirpal*' land to the Masjids in Kamalpur area of Kamrup district by Lakshmi Singha (1769-1780) are the suitable examples of the Ahoms' charitable services to the Islamic institutions and respect to those spiritual persons. It may be noted, for instance, that there were ten to twelve Maktabs for Arabic and Islamic studies around Guwahati and more than twenty around Rangpur[81]

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[80] B K. Barua, *Asamiya Bhasa Aru Sanskriti*, Gauhati, 1957, p-156.

[81] S K. Bhuya, *Studies in the History of Assam*, Gauhati, 1985. pp–141.f.

during that period, in the Brahmaputra Valley. Arabic Studies had also been so much encouraged by these kings that students of high caste Hindu families also used to learn Arabic and Persian language.[82] Similarly the *Khanqahs* and *Dargahs* of some spiritual scholars had also played the same role before the Maktabs were introduced in the valley. Even after the starting of the Maktabs also, these institutions of different saints and *Awliya* continued to teach their disciples in respective طريقة: *tariqa* and order.

In this way, Arabic Studies had been introduced in the Brahmaputra Valley up to the commencement of the British rule in Assam from 1826 A D with the conclusion of the Treaty of *Yandabo.*[83] During the British administration, some institutions of secular education were being established, where Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian was also introduced up to the Secondary level. It may be noted that this process of founding High schools, began in 1835 A.D, when the first Secondary School of Assam was established in Guwahati, which is presently known as Cotton Collegiate H.S. School. The second school of this category was founded at Sibsagar in 1841 A D, which is still functioning as Sibsagar Government Higher Secondary School.[84] It is interesting to note that both of these schools were started with Arabic as a religious subject for the Muslims students and this process had been continued till the closure of Twentieth Century. This type of schools were followed by eight other Secondary Schools, founded by the British rulers at Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Nalbari, Mangaldoi, North Lakimpur, Nowgong (i.e. Nagaon) and Jorhat in the Brahmaputra Valley, with Arabic up to the Secondary level.

However, the total number of Secondary Schools was only fifteen, out of which, ten were Government and five were Government Aided High Schools in Assam at the end of the 19th century. These institutions had

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[82] Dr. H K. Sarma, '*Asamiya Sahitya-Sanskritiloi Musalmanor Avadan*', *Asom Sahitya Sabha Patrika*, Jorhat,1979, p-37

[83] R. M. Lahiri, *The Annexation of Assam*, Calcutta, 1975, p-15.

[84] J. Barua, *Bharatar Siksha Itihasar Adhyayan*, Guwahati, 1998, p-472.

encouraged and inspired the people of the valley so much that, they established a large number of institutions of different kinds and categories from the Elementary level onwards having Arabic as one of the subjects, during the period of Twentieth Century.

3: Conclusion:

In this Chapter we have given a brief introduction to the importance of Arabic Language. It is found that Arabic language, being the language of the Qur'ān and Hadith and that of the Days here after; it is the religious language of the Muslims throughout the world. They perform their religious duties and services through Arabic language with a great importance and interest. The findings include that 256 millions of people of twenty four countries in the world speak this language as their own. As a medium of all branches of knowledge in Asia, Africa and Europe during the Middle Ages, it is still considered to be the language of trade and commerce and international diplomacy having been taken as one of the official langùages of the United Nations also. Accordingly, Arabic language is learnt and studied all over the world even in the Brahmaputra Valley also.

Here we have provided a bird eyed view of the Indo-Arab trade relation and the propagation of Islam and it is found that the Arab merchants sailed towards China, Bengal and Assam and used to collect the rare varieties of different flora and fauna from the jungles of Assam. We have come with the findings that the foundation stone of the Muslin rule in India, laid down by Mohammad Ibnu Qasim in 712 A D was confirmed by Mohammad Ghory in 1192 A D and established a stronghold of the Muslim Monarchy which ruled over the country up to 1857 A D. It is also found that the Muslim rulers paid a special interest and attention for imparting knowledge and that a large number of

Madrasas were established during the long period from 1192 to 1857 A D, all over their dominion.

On the other hand, the base of Arabic Studies was initiated with the setting up the Masjids and Maktabs since the 13th Century. It is found that a good number of Maktabs had been founded in the Valley by the Ahom rulers, when Arabic Studies got a good incentive. In this context we have reached with the fact that the British occupied the Valley with effect from 1826 A D since when their colonial rulers have established some institutions of Secondary education out of which Arabic was also introduced in the Syllabus of ten schools founded at: Gauhati, Sbsagar, Jorhat, Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Nalbari, Mangaldoi, Nowgong and North Lakhimpur, up to the closure of the 19th Century. In fact, these premier institutions highly encouraged the Muslims of the Valley to set up new institutions of different kinds and categories with Arabic curricula during the Twentieth Century.

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