CHAPTER - 1

THE RELEVANCE OF ARABIC LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE TO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF ASSAM

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CHAPTER- I

THE RELEVANCE OF ARABIC LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE TO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF ASSAM.

The Arabic language is a rich one for its linguistic charms and uniqueness. Before Islam, Arabic poetry was the only full blooming literary means through which the Arabs expressed their tribal, social and intellectual sentiments. [1] The literary masterpieces of pre-Islamic period are still admired, imitated and studied with full attention. With Islam, Arabic got a new field. The Qur'an and the Sunnah or the traditions of the prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him, are the main and only sources, on the basis of which the wide and the most expanded field of Islamic way of life and its principles are structured. In later periods, the Arabic literature opened many doors on the basis of Qur'an and Sunnah. Islam introduced the Arabic language to the non-Arabs that has become an integral part of the life of those non-Arab Muslims. So the impacts of other languages ad cultures are visible in the Arabic language and vice-versa. This way, Arabic got its modern shape in linguistic and literary fields.

As Assam has a sizable number of Muslims, Arabic has occupied a prominent place in its field of linguistic and literary activities. Hundreds of Madrasas and thousands of Maktabs are functioning in Assam where teaching and learning of Arabic language and literature

has a lion share in the curriculum. Arabic has also got its berth in the general education system right from primary to university level. So a clear picture of when and how Arabic teaching ad learning began in this region, is to be discussed.

The Arabic language produced a literature in pre-Islamic period and in subsequent periods, the gradual development of its teaching and learning continued and has been continuing in almost all the countries to which Islam and Muslims have direct and indirect relations.

Assam, as in modern period, has come into existence after so many historio-geographical changing that has many impacts on its educational institutions. As the institutions imparting Arabic teaching throughout the world originated and developed in various ways, so in Assam also we find, it has a gradual development. All the above mentioned aspects are discussed in different sub-chapters

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1.1 The Arabic Language and Literature — an Overview.

Arabic is fairly considered to be the head of the Semitic family of languages. With its philosophically digested and well-methodized grammar and highly cultivated and vastly developed literature, Arabic is indeed the typical Semitic language. What deserves popular attention is the copiousness of its vocabulary which is perhaps unrivalled amongst the languages of the world. The Arabic languages possesses multitudes of words to express the same thing; which point may be best illustrated by the fact that it offers a choice of a thousand words for 'camel', about the same number for 'horse' and about five hundred words each for 'sword' and 'tiger'. But the most valuable result of its copiousness is to be looked for in the fact that it possesses words expressive of the most slight differences of shades of meaning, in many cases where this distinctions do not admit of being indicated in any other language except by a long and obscure round about expression .There is an admirable work entitled "Fiqhul lughat" or the "Philosophy of the lexicon" by "**Tha'alabi**" which contains many illustrations of this assertion, and from which a few examples may be cut. The learned writer points out a curious series of nouns which indicate the beginning or the first part of various things. Thus:-

تباشير (tabasheer) means the beginning of morning. غَسَقْ (ghasaq) means the first part of the night. وَسمِى (wasmi) means the first dropping of a shower of a rain of spring. صُلافْ (sulaf) means the wine got from

the first squeeze of the grapes. باكورةٌ (bakurah) means the first fruit of a tree or a garden.بكرٌ (bikr) means the first child of a man. نَهْلٌ (nahl) means the first drink of water. نُعاسٌ (nu'as) means the first attack of sleep. إستِهلال (istihlal) means the first sound uttered by a new born child .طَلِيعةٌ (tali'ah) means the first portion of an army .

Again, there is to be found a class of nouns implying the same thing in its different conditions. For example ,when the saliva is in the mouth it is called رضاب (ridab); but when it is rejected , it is called بزاق (buzaq). when fuel is burning, it is وَقود (waqud) ; otherwise حُطبٌ (hutab). The Sun, when rising, is called غزَلَةٌ (ghuzala); at other times شَمسٌ (shams). Again there may be found a large number of pairs of words, one member of each pair being applied to an object when large, and the member to the same object when small. For instance: A large tree is called شجَر (shajar) a small one is فسِيلٌ (fasil) A large date tree is called نخل (Nakhl) a small one is أشاءٌ (ass^au). A large bird is called طَيْرٌ (tair) a small one is called دخَلٌ (dukhkhal). A large boat is called سفِينَةٌ (safeena) a small one is قاربٌ (qaarib).

Again, there are many words signifying various degrees of fatness in women, for example :when a women is moderately bulky with a fair proportion in he limbs or delicacy she is called ربَحلةٌ (ribahla); when she is increased in bulk but not to the degree of ugliness, she is called سِبَحلةٌ (sibahla) but if the bulkiness has rendered her ugly or awkward, she is مُفاضَةٌ (mufadah) and when she is astoundingly huge, she is then عِفضاج (Y'fdaj). so there are words indicating degrees of fatness in man also. A man is first لحيمٌ (lahim), then شَحيمٌ (shahim) then بَلَنْدَح (balandah) and then عكوكٌ ('Akkuk).

There are multitude of words showing the different degrees of bravery and timidity. For example; a timid man in the lowest degree is called جبان (jaban), then هيّابَةٌ (hayyabah), then مَفؤُودٌ (maf'ood), then وَرَعٌ (wara'), then هاعِلاعٌ (haa'ila'). So, a brave man is called شُجاعٌ (shuja'), then بَطَلٌ (batal), then صِمّةٌ (simmah), then ذَمِرٌ (dhamir), then حَلَبَسٌ (halbas), then أهيَسٌ ('ahyas), then نِكلٌ (nikl), then نَهيكٌ (nahik), then مِحرَبٌ (mihrab), and lastly غَشَمشَمٌ (ghashamsham).

There are distinct words implying a human being in his different stages of age. For example; a child when in the womb is called جَنينٌ (janeen); when he is born, he is وليد (waleed); when sucking, he is وَضيعٌ (wadee'), when weaned, he is فطيم (fateem); when he is able to walk, he is called دارجٌ (daarij), when he is in length of about five spans, he is called خُماسى (khumasiy). Again when his first teeth are shed, he is called مَثغورٌ (mathghoor), and when his new teeth appeared, he is مُثَغّر (muthaghghir), when he is above ten years, he is مُتَرَعْرِعٌ (mutara'ri') or ناشِئٌ (naashi'), and when he is approaching the age of sexual maturity, he is مُراهِقٌ (muraahiq) or يافِعٌ (yaafi`). But during all these conditions he is called by general denominattion or title غُلامٌ (ghulam). Again, when he is a perfectly developed youngman, he is called فتىً (fata) or شارِخٌ (sharikh), but when he reaches the highest degree of blooming youth, then he is called مُجتَمِعٌ (mujtami`), when his age between 30 and 40, he is شابٌ (shaabb). Then from that age upto 60 he is كُهلٌ (kuhl). Then he is شَيخٌ (shaikh), then كبير (kabeer), then هَريم (harim) and finally خَريف (kharif).

On the other hand, the female is first طِفلة (tiflah), when she is an infant, she is وليدَةٌ (waleedah), then كاعِبٌ (kaa'ib), then ناهِدٌ (naahid), then

عانسٌ (aanis), then خَودٌ (khaud); when she has reached the middle of her youth, she is مسلفٌ (muslif), when she is above forty,she is شَهْلَةٌ (shahlah) or كَهلَةٌ (kahlah), then شهبرةٌ (shahbarah); then حَيزَبون (haizaboon), and lastly قلعمُ (qal`am).

Then there are words indicating different degrees of beauty in woman. For example, a beautiful woman is called جَميلَةٌ (jameelah) or وضئة (wadee'ah); but when she is so beautiful that she is independent of ornament on account of her natural beauty, she is called غانِيةٌ (ghaaniah). Again, when she, being extremely handsome, is very indifferent about dress and other artificial decorations, she is مِعطالٌ (mi`taal); when her beauty is constant, she is وَسيمَةٌ (waseemah); and again when she is blessed with abundance of beauty, she is قسيمَةٌ (qaseemah); and lastly when her beauty is absolutely transcendent, she is called رَوعَةٌ (raw`aa'). Moreover, there are distinct or separate words for the beauties in different parts of the body.

A most striking or very attractive proof of the plantifulness of the Arabic language is to be found in the fact that most words of this most philosophical language are such that all words formed therefrom by permutation are significant. For example, the word قلبٌ (qalb), meaning 'heart', has three radical letters i.e., ق ل ب. By permutation there can be formed other five words, each of them being significant, viz., بَقلٌ - herb; بلَقٌ - of a black and white colour; لقبٌ - appellation; قبلٌ - before; لبَقٌ - talkativeness.

In clearness and simplicity of construction, the Arabic language compares favourably with most other languages; it clearly excels, it is

believed, most languages of the Aryan stock in these respects. One thing that conduces much to this end, is its possession of certain fixed models called بابٌ (baab), by which multitudes of verbs of various roots are moulded into the same general form.

The conjugation of the Arabic verb is highly inflectional; differing herein from the Persian, and forms the modern form of the English and most of the other Aryan tongues. Hence, the Arabic unlike those languages forms generally the verbs of different tenses, moods and voices simply by a modification of vowels. Pronouns too are often implied in the verbs; hence a sentence may be formed simply by a verb; thus قَتَلَ (qatala) is equivalent to هو قَتَلَ (huwa qatala) meaning 'he killed'. Besides, a complete sentence may often be formed simply with two nouns, one being the subject and the other the predicate without the intervention of the couple which, in fact, this language does not possess. These peculiarities of construction give the Arabic that clearness coupled with conciseness, which is observable in the classical language of the Arabic family.

Further, in this language peculiar forms are fixed for different classes of nouns and adjectives indicating peculiar meanings. For instance, the nouns of the forms مَفعَلٌ (maf'alun) signify place or time of action; those of the forms مِفعَلٌ (mif'alun), مِفعَلَةٌ (mif'alatun) مِفعالٌ (mif'aalun) and فِعالٌ (fi'aalun) indicate the instrument or medium of action. So the nouns of the form فُعالٌ (fu`aalun) generally imply diseases, sickness or ailment; while those of the form فعولٌ (fa`oolun) signify medicines. Again nouns of the form فاعل (fa'ilun) and فُعَلٌ (fu'alun) imply different sounds.

Another most striking peculiarity of the Arabic language is its possession of numerous forms of derivative verbs. When a primitive verb assumes one of these forms, it assumes also a different additional meaning. One of these formal peculiarities is that sometimes a verb is formed out of a sentence by way of abbreviation; as :

هلّل (hallala) = he uttered لآإلهإلاّالله

استرجع(istarja'a) = he uttered إنا ّلله و إناّإليه راجعون

حولق (hawlaqa) = he uttered لاحولو لآقوّة إلاّ بالله العلى العظيم

دَمعَزَ (dam'aza) = he uttered أدام الله عزّك

Through these formal peculiarities, long sentiments are expressed in very few words ; for instance, أخرفت الشاة = the sheep brought forth young once at the season of autumn. Besides these many other advantages can be drawn from the peculiar forms of verbs.

The Arabic, being a language which attained an early development and one which was long written in and spoken by races of an intellectual cultivation and an enterprising spirit far in advance of their age, has undoubtedly supplied multitudes of words of the languages of the west of the direct method of adoption and naturalization. It has done the same more obviously and openly, as everyone knows, for many oriental languages, such as the Persian, the Hindustani or Hindi / Urdu, the Turkish, the Malaya, and the technical terminology of some branches of science and some branches of commerce are mainly drawn from Arabic in most of the well known languages of Europe and Asia .Many of the analogies set forth in the following list may doubtlessly be proved to have originated in this way;

and many more are due to the fact that this borrowing from the copious and expressive vocabulary of the Arabic has been carried on for centuries in the languages of the west – in the Spanish especially, which partly grew up under the shadow of the Arab rule in Spain – and to a large extent in the Italian, French and other languages of the Mediterranean shores – perhaps even in the classical languages themselves of Greece and Rome.

List of words common to Arabic and English, having absolutely or very nearly the same meaning in both languages:

Arabic	English	Arabic	English
أيد	Aid	الزرنيخ/الزرنيق	Arsenic
أمير البحر	Admiral	القائد/القاضى	Alcaid
شرب	Absorb	شراب	Syrup
أمين	Amen	الكمياء	Alchemy
القبة	Alcove	عالم	Alumni
الإنبيق	Alembic	عنبر	Amber
الكحل	Alcohol	أطاس	Atlas
الجبر	Algebra	ياقوت	Agate
الدراية	Adroit	عليل	Ail
عاجل	Agile	عمليات	Amulet
بيع	Buy	بق	Bug
أسقف	Bishop	ميمون	Baboon
بنيس	Base	بريق	Bright
بورق	Borax	بياض	Baize

قابل	Capable	كافور	Camphor
قنديل	Candle	كفن	Coffin
كيس	Case	قال	Call

In modern Arabic, many words of foreign origin, especially of the Persian, have been imported; most of them having undergone certain changes called تعريب (ta'rib) Arabicism, which is often necessary for assimilating them to the aboriginal elements of the language. Such words are called مولدة (muwalladah) "coined".

It is however a great credit to the Arabian translator of the sciences from the Greek, that they have tried their best to render all the scientific terms into genuine Arabic; even in many cases, they have been obliged to coin new terminology instead of using the original Greek terms .Hence, very few technical terms of Greek origin are to be found in the Arabic philosophical treatises.

Some Latin words have also been imported into Arabic either through commercial intercourse or by the scientific interpreters. Although Arabic bears some external affinity with Sanskrit ,for instance ,in having duel number and final nunation which corresponds with 'anusar' of the Sanskrit word ;yet the intrinsic construction of the Arabic language evidently differs from that of Sanskrit .We do not find any words of Sanskrit origin in the Arabic vocabulary except the following which have been imported into Arabic through Hindu physicians and mathematicians who were invited to the courts of the Abbasid caliphs of Baghdad .To understand and grasp the merits of the

whole discourse of the development of Arabic literature clearly and vividly, scholars have divided it into several periods,[2] viz-

1. Pre-Islamic / Jahiliyya Period.
2. Islamic Period.
3. Umayyad Period.
4. Abbasid Period.
5. Modern Period.

1. Pre-Islamic Period :

The Arabic literature of Pre-Islamic period which has come down to us belongs to a period of about a century and a half before Islam.[3] It has been so because we do not possess any literature of an earlier age nor do we have any historical evidence to establish its earlier existence. It is, perhaps, because of the fact that the Arab people, as they were unlettered and nomads could not realize the importance of preserving the literary pieces of the hour. The Pre-Islamic Arabic literature can be divided into prose and poetry.

Prose literature of Pre-Islamic period consists of two natures, i.e. (1) Proverbs, (2) Traditions and legends.[4] "Apart from these, no scientific literature existed beyond a few magical, meteorological and medical formulas," as observed by Hitti. [5] He further depicts, "Proverbs constitute a fair index of folk mentality and experience". R.A. Nicholson writes about the nature and merits of the proverbs of the age. He says, "These are of less value, as they seldom explain themselves, while the commentary attached to them is the work of scholars bent on

explaining them at all costs, though in many cases their true meaning could only be conjectured and the circumstances of their origin had been entirely forgotten." [6]

Traditions and legends, which were composed in Islamic days, comprise of stories that deal mostly with the genealogies (ansab) and the inter-tribal combats of the Jahiliyya days. In the traditions and legends we find elements of history and romance in the prose narratives used by the rhapsodists to introduce and set forth plainly the matters of their songs which recounted the glorious deeds of tribes and individuals.[7] A vast number of such stories – some unmistakably genuine, others bearing the stamp of fiction – are preserved in various literary, historical and geographical works composed under the Abbasid caliphate, especially in the ***"Kitab al-Aghani"*** by ***Abu 'l Faraj 'l Isfahani.***[8] Besides, there were evening tales (samar) told under the nomads' tents, stories which were already being carried from town to town by the professional story tellers such as Nadr ibn Harith of Makkah who had learnt the fine legends of the ancient Persian kings at Hira.[9]

Poetry of the Pre-Islamic period is the mirror that reflects the social, political and spiritual activities of the pagan Arabs. Typical Semites, the Arabians created or developed no great art of their own. Their artistic nature found expression through one medium, i.e. speech. [10] 'The beauty of man', declares an Arabic adage, 'lies in the eloquence of his tongue.' "Wisdom", in a later saying, "has alighted on three things: the brain of the Franks, the hands of the Chinese and the tongue of the Arabs."[11] "Arabic literature, like most other literatures, sprang

into existence", as observed by P. K. Hitti, "with an outburst of poetry." The oldest pieces of poetry extant seem to have been composed some one hundred and thirty years before the Hijrah in connection with the War of al-Basus. Among the ancient odes, the so called Seven Suspended Odes hold first place. They are still honoured throughout the Arabic speaking world as masterpieces of poetical compositions.[12] All the poets of the mu'allaqat are all-time celebrated. Among them ***Imr 'l Qais*** is the most famous. The Arab grammarians frequently used the poetic terms of mu'allaqat in exemplifying their grammatical as well as rhetorical theories.

2. Islamic Period:

The Islamic period in Arabic literature begins with the prophet hood of Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and ends with the end of the pious caliphate. Islam, the way of life chosen by Allah for the mankind, gave a new shape and direction to the Arabic literature. The Islamic Arabic literature comprises absolutely the Qur'an, the Hadith, poetry, Tafsir, Fiqh, history and prose.

The Qur'an: The Qur'an is the collection of Divine Messages conveyed to the prophet through the angel Gabriel. The holy Qur'an, undoubtedly, stands as a great land mark in Arabic literature. "The Qur'an is the model of ancient Arabic literature" [13] as observed by Nikil Sen, and ever since remains as the model prose work. It opened various fields for literary activities in subsequent periods. It is the holy Qur'an that united the Arabs and non-Arabs into a single and unique identity –

that is Islam, Islamic culture. It is the factor that expanded the field of studying Arabic all over the world.

The Hadith: The next literary masterpiece of the Arabic literature is the traditions of the prophet Muhammad. By Hadith we mean all that what the prophet said, did and approved.[14] "It comprehends the whole range of the prophet's private and public life, such as his behests, religious practices, his dealings with men and women, his wars, agreements and correspondence."[15] The study of Hadith has influenced the methods of history writing. The scholars of the traditions devised various methods to ensure accuracy in their works and these methods were followed by the historians.

Poetry: Poetry literature in Islamic period developed very steadily. Because of the less spiritual character, the poetry was first prohibited by the prophet. Later on he admired the poets to compose good poetry. Side by side, the Quraish criticised the prophet, his mission and his companions through poetry. To reply their arrogancy and ignorance, the prophet asked his companions to compose poetry and reply the opponents. A number of prominent poets came forward, among them ***Hassan bin Thabit al-Ansari***, ***Ka'b bin Zuhair***, ***Ka'b bin Malik***, ***al-Hutai'a***, ***Abdullah bin Rawa***, ***Ata bin al-Hadrami***, ***al-Khansa*** and '***Ali bin Abi Talib*** were the famous poets of this period.[16]

Tafsir: The Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is the direct as well as the most accurate elaboration or explanation or commentary of the holy Qur'an. Tafsir includes all the aspects of the commentary of the Qur'an as the demonstration of the events giving rise to the

revelation of the several verses, i.e. the historical connections and references of the text, its grammatical comments, rhetorical appreciations, dogmatic and juridical importance, etc. This branch of Arabic literature was nurtured by Abdullah ibn Abbas, the famous companion of the prophet.

Fiqh: The holy Qur'an was revealed over a period of twenty three years, but it legislated only in that part which was revealed to the prophet during the last decade of his life. The entire volume comprises over six hundred verses. Its legislative part does not exceed one thirtieth of it or about two hundred verses. Apart from the religious prescriptions, such as the 'salat' and the 'sawm', the Qur'an enunciated a number of civil, military and criminal laws which were grounded in the prevailing social conditions and the particular situations that developed during the ten years of the prophet's life at Madinah. A series of principles began to come into existence to formulate legal codes on the basis of those Qur'anic verses and the prophetic traditions supporting them. The literatures which deal with those legal or judicial codes are known as Fiqh.

History and Prose: To study the holy Qur'an and the tradition of the prophet Muhammad in a right way, some historical or genealogical evidences became necessary. A lot of prophetic traditions and many texts of the holy Qur'an had definite historical contexts and the studies of the contexts were essential for understanding both the Qur'an and Hadith in a right way. The study of history went hand in hand with the study of the Hadith and the Qur'an.[17] The foundation of history was

firmly laid down during the time of Rightly Guided Caliphs (Khulafa-e-Rashideen) in the following forms.

1. History of prophet of Islam.
2. History of the companions of the prophet.
3. History of the pagan Arabs or Pre-Islamic Arabs.

During the Islamic period, prose made its progress in a great extent. With the progress of Islam, new fields of activities were explored. The propagation of Islam necessitated the correspondence with the rulers, governors and princes of the adjacent kingdoms. Many treaties were edited between the Muslims and others. So, these statements were written in prose forms. The traditions of the prophet comprise speeches, actions and recommendations of the prophet together with his letters addressed to his officials or representatives or great men in and outside Arabia. The speeches made by the caliphs, their representatives, generals, tribal chiefs, political rivals and partisans are the components of prose literature of the period.[18]

3. Umayyad Period:

The Umayyad period began with the accession of Mu'awiya into caliphate in 661 A.D. and ended with the great Battle of the Zab in 750, where Marwan II, the last of his line, was defeated by the Abbasids, who claimed the caliphate as next of kin to the prophet. The opening century of Islam was a steady period of Arabic literature. It was not promoting in a rapid way because the nation's energy was absorbed in conquest, expansion and organization, the civil strife,

though there new branches of literature flourished in early Islamic period. With the Umayyads, the old pagan spirit asserted itself once more. Hija, Ritha, eulogy, all these things, old in Arabic literature, developed in new shape. The Arabic literature of this period consists almost exclusive of poetry which bears a few mark of Islamic influence. The conquests made by the successors of the prophet brought enormous wealth into Makkah and Madinah, and when the Umayyad aristocracy gained the upper hand in Uthman's caliphate, these towns developed a voluptuous and dissolute life which broke through every restriction that Islam had imposed. "The increase in luxury produced a corresponding refinement of the poetic art. Although music was unknown to the pagan Arabs, it had hitherto been cultivated chiefly by foreigners, especially Greek and Persian singing girls."[19]

The most striking feature of this period is the development of Ghazal. It was a very popular form of poetry relished by all classes of the Arabs. The best representative of Ghazal is 'Umar bin Abi Rabi'a (b. 719 A.D.). This prince of erotic poetry, "the Ovid of Arabia", was an impious Quraishite of independent means, who made it his business to make love to the beautiful damsels pilgrimaging in Makkah and al-Madinah as well as to such charming residents as the famous Sukaynah.[20]

Besides love poetry, political poetry made its appearance under the Umayyads giving a new birth to old Hija (satire). In this field al-Akhtal, al-Farazdaq and Jarir became celebrated. As observed by Nicholson, "The names of al-Akhtal, al-Farzdaq and Jarir stand out pre-eminent in the list of Umayyad poets. They were men of very different

stamp from the languishing Minnesingers and carpet-knights who, like Jamil, refused to battle except on the field of love." Next to the three great poets of this epoch comes Dhul Rumma (Ghaylan bin 'Uqba), after a long interval, who imitated the odes of the desert Arabs with tiresome and monotonous fidelity.[21]

As we observe, we find that in prose literature, the same secular and non-Muhammadan spirit prevailed in the Umayyad period which had been described as the characteristics of the Umayyad poetry. Historical studies were encouraged and promoted by the court of Damascus. Mention may be made of Abid bin Sharya, a native of Yemen, whose business was to dress up the old legends and purvey them in a readable form to the public. There seems to have been an eager demand for narratives of the Early Wars of Islam (Maghazi). So, the historical works got their way to come into existence.[22] The most prominent writers of such works are Musa bin Uqba (d. 758 A.D.) for Maghazi and Ibn Ishaq for Biography of the Prophet upon religious tradition. The writers and collectors of Hadiths include Asad bin Musa (d. 749 A.D.) who wrote ***Kitab al-Zuhd*** and Muhammad bin Muslim bin Shihab al-Zuhri (d. 742 A.D.) who distinguished himself accepting the Judicial office under the tyrant Umayyads.[23]

Apart from this a method of scientific study of the Arabic language and grammar began with a view to supply linguistic needs to the new converts to Islam from the non-Arabs who wanted to study the Qur'an. On the basis of the principle that ***'Ali*** had laid down, ***Abul Aswad al-Du'ali*** (d. 688 A.D.), the legendary founder of Arabic grammar preserved the principles, which being influenced by Greek

logic, developed into a full fledged branch of Arabic literature. ***Al-Du'ali*** was followed by another Basrite scholar ***Khalil b. Ahmad*** (d. 786 A.D.) who was the first to complete an Arabic dictionary, the "***Kitab al-'Ayn***". His pupil the Persian ***Sibwayh*** (d. 793) composed the first systematic book of Arabic grammar known by the honorific title '***al-Kitab***' (the Book) which has ever since been the basis of all native studies of the subject.[24]

Like grammar, Fiqh and Hadith also got refinement in Umayyad period. The most important jurist of Islam produced by the Umayyad period was undoubtedly Abu Hanifa al-Nu'man b.Thabit who was born in al-Iraq in 699 A.D. during the reign of Abdul Malik b. Marwan. Abu Hanifa founded a school of law which is the highest and loftiest achievement of which Islam is capable. The school of theology and jurisprudence, founded by ***Abu Hanifa***, became dominant in the court of the Abbasid caliphs and shortly after his death, this school was officially recognized by ***Harun al-Rashid*** in the entire Abbasid empire.[25] The doctrines taught by him are in vogue among the majority of Muslims of Indian sub-continent, the Afghans, the Turks, almost all Central Asian Muslims and Egyptians.

4. Abbasid Period:

With the advent of the Abbasids in power, the Islamic empire opened a new era in the dominion of literature. Abbasid caliph al-Mansur opened a translation department for the preservation of scientific works of outside countries and their culture. Harun al-Rashid completed the work of his predecessor, particularly in the field of

literature – in all its branches. The Arabic literature of the Abbasids can broadly be classified as follows:

a. Prose Literature.
b. Poetry Literature.
c. Hadith Literature.
d. Tafsir Literature.

a. Prose Literature:

The Arabic prose greatly flourished during the Abbasid period. The prose literature of this period can be divided into the following four heads:

i) ***Rhymed prose or Maqamah*:** About the middle of the ninth century A.D., the rhymed prose began to appear in the public sermons of the caliphs and the viceroys and it was further developed by professional preachers like Ibn Nubata and official secretaries Ibrahim bin Hilal al-Sabi. Thus, rhyme became a distinctive feature of rhetorical prose. Badiuzzaman al-Hamadhani invented a new and remarkable form of composition in the field of rhymed prose. His works are known as 'Maqamat' plural of 'Maqamah' (Assembly) and in every Maqamah we find some approach to the dramatic style which has never been cultivated by the Semites.[26] After Badiuzzaman, Abu Muhammad al-Qasim al-Hariri of Basra (1054 – 1122), took over this form and produced a masterpiece which for long nine centuries has been esteemed as

literary masterpiece, next to the Qur'an, the chief treasure of the Arabic tongue.[27]

ii) ***Munazarah***: Next to Maqamat comes Munazarat, (plural of Munazarah) or controversies.[28] This is a sort of writing in the form of dialogue in which two persons are imagined disputing with each other on the merits and demerits of two different things to give preference to his own chosen objects.

iii) ***Artistic Prose including Translation Work***: The cultivation of artistic prose in Arabic literature was due to the circumstances as early as the beginning of the Abbasid caliphate. The rulers ordered a great many narrative works to be translated from Persian into Arabic. At the same time scientific and philosophical works were caused to be translated from Greek and Syriac into Arabic. The most celebrated translation work has been '***Kalila wa Dimna***', the Arabic translation of Indian original work '***Panchatantra***' made from the Middle Persian or Pahlavi recention by Iranian ***Ruzbih***, after embracing Islam and taking the name '***Abdullah ibn. al-Muqaffa***'.[29] Such works, appearing in Arabic, gave the impulse to creating the original Arabic artistic prose. The first genuine representative of the Arabic artistic prose was '***Amr b. Bahr al-Jahiz***. He was a many sided and sharp witted writer, who contributed largely to the philological views of his age. His chief works include "***Kitab al-Hayawan***" (The Book of Animals), "***Kitab 'l-Bayan wa 'l-Tabyin***" (The Book of Eloquence and Exposition) and "***Kitab 'l-Bukhala***" (The Book of Misers).[30] Another writer of this kind was Ibn. Qutayba. His chief works are: '***Adab al-Katib***','***Kitab al-Ma'arif***

and '***Uyun 'l-Akhbar***'. Another writer was ***al-Bayhaqi***. His work is "***Kitabul Mahasin wal Addad***".

iv ***Fiction***: Abbasid period cultivated a new subject in Arabic literature. It is fiction that provided ideas to give birth of so many things in later periods. Among the works of fiction, "***Alf Layla wa Layla***" is the most famous. It is composed in a very homely style and its language is colloquial and flowing. The first draft of "*Alf Layla wa Layla*" was made in al-Iraq. The basis of this draft was prepared by al-Jahshiyari (d. 942 A.D.) was an Old Persian work, "***Hazar Afsana***" (Thousand Tales) containing several stories of Indian origin. He added other tales from local story tellers. As time went on, additions were made from numerous sources; Indian, Greek, Hebrew, Egyptian, and the like. Oriental folk tales of every description were added with passing of times. A large number of humorous anecdotes and love romances from Harun's court were collected and added to it. The final shape of '*Alf Layla wa Layla*' took place during the late Mamluk period in Egypt.[31]

b. <u>Poetry Literature:</u>

The poetry of the Abbasid period had been particularly flourished under the patronage of the court. The poets were generally depended for their livelihood on the generosity of the caliphs whom they praised.[32] They competed each other in extravagant description of the caliphs and huge sums were paid for such a successful panegyrics. It is not easy to count the Abbasid poets in a limit but the following five may be taken as the main representative poets of this period.[33]

i) ***Muti' b. Iyas*:** He only deserves notice here as the earliest poet of the new school. He began his career under the Umayyads and with the Abbasids came in power, he attached himself to the caliph al-Mansur. His poems are marked with elegant expression and deep feeling. His songs of love and wine are distinguished by their lightness and elegance.[34]

ii) ***Abu Nuwas (d. 810 A.D.):*** Hasan b. Hani, popularly known as Abu Nuwas who is remembered as the boon companion and court jester of the caliph Harun al-Rashid and as the hero of the countless droll adventures and facetious anecdotes. He received his education at Basra, of which city he calls himself a native, and at Kufa he studied poetry and philology under the learned Khalaf al-Ahmar. His Diwan contains panegyrics, satires, songs, elegies and religious poems; but love and wine were the two motives by which his genius was brilliantly inspired. His wine songs are incomparable.[35]

iii) ***Abul 'Atahiyya (748 – 825 A.D.):*** Unlike his great rival, Abul 'Atahiyya came of Arab stock. He was bred in Kufa, and gained his livelihood as a youngman by selling earthenware.[36] Abul "Atahiyya expresses his pessimistic meditations on mortality which the common men of religious mentality entertained.[37]

iv) ***Al- Mutanabbi (915 – 965 A.D.)****: Abu 'l-Tayyib Ahmad b. Husayn*, popularly known as al-Mutanabbi for his pretending to prophecy,

was born and bred at Kufa. He was the favorite court poet of Amir ***Sayf 'l-Daulah*** at Aleppo. He described the virtues of *Sayf 'l-Daulah* in many splendid eulogies. The chief merits of his poetry are the elegant expression, fanciful imagery, and striking use of rhetoric figures. The popularity of al-Mutanabbi is shown by the numerous and critical treatises on his Diwan.

v) ***Abul 'Ala al-Ma'arri (973 – 1057 A.D.):*** The greatest philosopher poet of Abbasid period, ***Abul 'Ala al-Ma'arri*** was born at Ma'arratun Nu'man, a Syrian town situated about twenty miles south of Aleppo on the caravan road to Damascus. His poems are sober and even pessimistic. His poems known as the ***Luzumiyyat*** are characterized by boldness, originality and philosophical tendencies.[38]

In spite of the above, there are two other celebrated poets who collected and compiled the poems of pre-Islamic period and added their own compositions to it. The first is ***Abu Tammam Habib b. Aws*** (d. 850 A.D.) whose fame rests on the anthology which he compiled under the title of '***al-Hamasa***'. The second is *Abu Tammam*'s junior contemporary ***al-Buhturi*** (820 – 897 A.D.) who compiled another ***Hamasa***.[39]

c) Hadith Literature:

As in other branches of literature, Hadith literature also developed rapidly during the Abbasid period. As the Hadiths determine the religious duties, they have always been studied very diligently. As

the Hadith Materials increased to a vast extent within a short time, it was necessary to identify some less authentic Hadiths on the basis of some principles. Every Hadith consists of two parts, i.e. 'Isnad' or the chain of traditionists and 'Matan' or the body of Hadith. The criticism of Hadith was based on whether any relevancy occurs in the Isnad. Such researches were done by Muslim theologians as early as in 8th century A.D. But they could not attain their highest development until the 9th century A.D. The first collection of Hadith work is Muwatta of Imam Malik b. Anas of Madinah which is the first great corpus of Islamic law. The systematic collections of the traditions which were compiled by the illustrious representatives of the science of hadiths are: (i) "***Jami' al-Sahih***" by ***Muhammad b. Isma'il b. Ibrahim al-Bukhari*** (810 – 870 A.D.). The work is revered in Islam and ranks second to the Qur'an in sacredness. (ii) "***Sahih Muslim***" by ***Muslim b. Hajjaj al-Qushairi*** (d. 875 A.D.) of *Nyshapur*.[40] In the same age there originated other collections. Four of these collections have attained high rank in Islam as sources of religion, namely the collections of (a) "***Sunan Nasa'i***" of ***Abu Abdir Rahman al-Nasa'i*** (d. 915 A.D.) of ***al-Basrah***, (b) "***Sunan Abi Daud***" of ***Abu Da'ud*** (d. 889 A.D.) ***al-Sijistani***, (c) "***Jami' al-Tirmidi***" of ***Abu 'Isa Muhammad al-Tirmidi*** and (d) "***Sunan ibn.Maja***' of ***Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn.Maja al-Qazwini*** (d. 896 A.D.). All the above six books are termed together as "***Sihah al-Sittah***" or the Six Canonical Books. Mention may be made of another work among the innumerable ones, "***Masabihu 'l-Sunnah***" by ***al-Baghawi*** (d. 1120 A.D.). A later collection work is '***Mishkat 'l-Masabih***" by ***Waliuddin al-Khatib al-Tibrizi*** (d. 1317 A.D.) which is still extremely popular.[41]

d. Tafsir Literature:

The beginning of Tafsir in the form of Hadith is connected with tradition. The chief authority on the traditional commentaries had been Ibn Abbas the ancestor of the Abbasids. The larger 'musannaf' (collections) regularly contain a chapter under the title 'Kitab al-Tafsir'. From these chapters as early as the 8th century A.D. there arose systematic commentaries, running verse for verse through the Qur'an. It was one of the most celebrated scholars of Islam Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari who summarized the preparatory work of his predecessors and completed it with his own studies.[42] In western science, he is mostly estimated as a historian where as in the world of Islam his authority was established by his many theological works, the most remarkable of which is his great work on Tafsir, printed edition of which consists of thirty volumes. This work can be styled the richest repository of Tafsir, from which the later generations could copiously draw.

After ***al-Tabari*** there began to develop an uncommonly profuse literature, the most prominent representatives of which are as follows: (1) ***Fakhruddin al-Razi***, one of the most profound and many sided scholars of Islam whose 32 works comprise the different branches of science. His commentary on the Qur'an "***Mafatih al-Ghayb***" is a voluminous work in eight thick volumes which comments on the Qur'an more intrinsically and completely than any other work preceding or later. (2) ***Abul Qasim Muhammad al-Zamakhshari***, who for his long stay at Makkah bore the distinguish name of Jarullah. Besides philological works he wrote a commentary of the Qur'an "***Al-***

Kashshaf 'an Haqa'iq al-Tanzil". It was chiefly on his work that Abdulah ibn. '***Umar al-Baidawi*** relied. He was for a long time a Qadi at Shiraz. He wrote a widely used and much valued Tafsir under the title "***Anwar al-Tanzil wa Asrar al-Ta'wil***", briefly '***Tafsir al-Qadi***' or '***Tafsir al-Baidawi***', which is frequently used among others, by the western students of the Qur'an.

5. Modern Period:

Arabic literature from pre-Islamic times to this day has its high and low periods. It reached its highest zenith during the Abbasid period (750 – 1258 A.D.), while the period when the Arab lands were took over by the Turks, is regarded as its low period. The period from 1570 – 1800 is known as the bleakest period in Arab history, particularly in the history of Arabic literature. It is because during this period, Arabic literature ceased to be creative. And though it was so, yet the foundation of the Arabic language remained firm and unshaken. It was due to the holy Qur'an that the Arabic language and literature outlasted during the bleak period extending over three to four hundred years. The Qur'an occupies a central position both in the Islamic religion and Arabic literature. The Arab intellectuals could grasp the importance of preserving the Qur'an's original form without any single change in the syllable or ascent. By an elaborate system they emphasized on correct reading of the holy text, that also assisted in keeping the base of classical Arabic alive.[43] After the bleak period, a renaissance took place the way of which was paved by two developments. One is the missionary activities of Maronite school and the subsequent establishment of Madrasa 'Ain Waraqa in 1789 as a reaction to the

Christian missions. The other was the French occupation of Egypt from 1798 that marks the important phase of Arab revival.[44] The Arab renaissance opened a new and the most gorgeous era in the history of Arabic literature. It opened the door of which we know as 'modern Arabic literature' which consists of many a branches including some new ones that virally transformed into Arab culture. The modern Arabic literature, may, somehow, be divided into the following branches:

a. Poetry
b. Short story.
c. Novels.
d. Drama
e. Journalism.

a. Poetry: Arabic poetry in modern period received a new and refined definition. It has become the most important means to express the human thinking and the civil and social demands. Poetry is the means of spreading the public opinion. It exhibits the social condition and the human imagination. As in earlier, modern Arabic poetry got its wide field creating various schools. These are:

i) ***Neo-classicism***: Neo-classicism was the outcome of the revival of ancient learning through technological advancement. Poetry got its place in news papers and periodicals, and as such it got released from the narrow confines and reached out to a larger section of the people.[45] Thus the socio-political issues occupied a prominent place in the subject matter of poetry. The most celebrated mastermind of Neo-classicism is Mahmud Sami al-Barudi (1838 – 1901) to whom the next is Isma'il Sabri (1853 – 1923), then come Ahmad Shawqi

(1868 – 1932), Hafiz Ibrahim (1870 – 1932) and 'Aysha al-Tymuria (1840 – 1906) of Egypt. The other exponents are Ibrahim al-Yaziji (1847 – 1906), Khalil al-Khuri (1836 – 1907) and Sulyman al-Busatni (1856 – 1925) of the Levant, Ma'ruf al-Rusafi (1876 – 1925) and Jamil Sidqi al-Zahawi (1863 – 1936) of Iraq.[46]

ii) ***Pre-romanticism***: It is a school driving Arabic poetry that emerged as a consequence of the impact of European literature, especially the French romanticists and the English lyrical poets. It grew also as a reaction to Neo-classicism which was really an extension of classical poetry. The main exponents of pre-romanticism were: Khalil Mutran (1872 – 1948) of Lebanon; Abdur Rahman Shukri (1886 – 1958), Ibrahim Abdul Qadir al-Mazini (1889 – 1948) and Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad (1889-1964) all from Egypt.[47]

iii) ***Romanticism:*** Romanticism is a school that was above all revolt against the rigid rules of classicism and against Greek and Latin domination. Romanticism is an expression of one's feelings than a literary school with rules as observed by Ismat Mahdi while defining the same. The pioneers of romanticism are 'Umar Abu Risha (b. 1910), Ahmad Zaki Abu Shadi (1892 – 1955), Ali Mahmud Taha (1902 – 1949) of Egypt; Iliyas Abu Shabaka of Lebanon and Abul Qasim al-Shabbi (1909 – 1946).[48]

iv) ***Symbolism***: Symbolism was introduced by the French poets Paul Verlaine (1844 – 1896) Arthur Rimband (1854 – 1891) and Stephan Mallarme (1842 – 1898). The Arab poets adopted symbolism as a reaction against the poetry of the preceding generation represented

by the Neo-classicists Shawqi, Hafiz and the Apollo movement.[49] The pioneers of this school are Bishr Faris, Said 'Aql and others.

v) ***Mahjar Poetry***: In the last half of the 19th century Lebanon got a population explosion. It economy deteriorated as a result of maladministration and breakdown in law and order. The Syrio-Lebanese migrated to Egypt. But later on they could not make it convenient migrate to Egypt and routed towards Americas *i.e.* North and South Americas. Among these emigrants there were a number of Youngman who inspired themselves to devote and contribute to the Arabic Literature, especially to Arabic poetry. In the USA they were under the shadow of the Pen Association or '***al-Rabita al-Qalamiyya***' founded in New York in 1920. In Brazil, it was al-***Usbah al-Andalusiyya***. The main pillars of the Pen Association were Jibran Khalil Jibran (1883-19310), Mikhail Nu'aima (b. 1889), Abdul Masih Haddad (1890-1963), Nasib Arida (1887-1964), Ilya Abu Madi (b. 1889) and other Mahjar poets and contributors are Amin Raihani and others. The components of al-Usbah in Rio-da-Generio are Mishal Ma'luf, Fauzi Ma'luf, Ilyas Farhat and others.

vi) ***Social Realism***: It was introduced in Arabic after World War I but became important only after World War II. It called for the involvement of poetry in the problems of society. The main exponents of this school are Salah Abdus Sabur of Egypt, Abdul Wahhab al-Bayati of Iraq, Jili Abdur Rahman of Sudan; the later ones are Nizar Qabbani and Kamal Nas'at.

vii) ***Free verse***: This is a school the exponents of which wish to find an independent medium which is less awesome and more practical (1892-1955). The main exponents are Ahmad Zaki Abu Shadi (1892 – 1955), Nazik al-Malaika (b. 1923) and Abdul Wahhab al-Bayati (b.1926).

viii) ***Post modern or contemporary Poetry***: The exponents of this school are Nizar Qabbani, Salah Abdus Sabur and many others.

b. **Short Story**: The short story appeared in Arabic as the result of influence of European literature. The short story of manners began with al-Muwailihi (d.1930), an Egyptian writer. His best known work is the story of "***Isa ibn Hisham***". '***Aysha Tymur*** (1842 – 1902), a leading poetess, also initiated the classic style of '***Maqamat***'. The poet Hafiz Ibrahim also wrote short stories but they were not equal to his poems. Mustafa Lutfi al Manfaluti (1876-1924) was the best of Masters in Arabic short story writing. His principal books are "***Contemporary Literature***", "***Al- Abarat*** ", and "***Al-Nazarat***". Muhammad Tymur (1892-1921) was the first great short story writer in Arabic comparable to Guy de Maupassant. Mahmud Tymur, Muhammad Tymur's brother was also a celebrated short story writer. Other contributors of short story were 'Isa Abid, Shahata Abid, Tahir Lashim Mahmud Ahmad, Anwar Shiaul, Abdul Masih Haddad, Jibran Khalil Jibran and Mikhail Nu'aima.

c. **Novels**: The influence of European Literature is the main element that gave birth of a new subject in Arabic Literature, the Novels. It was in 19th century Syria that the historical and social novels began with

Salim al-Bustani (1848-84). His novels include ***"Wandering in Damascus' Garden" "Moons" "The daughter of the country" "The Ravishing girl" 'Salma' 'Samiya'*** and ***'Zenobia'***.

Next is Jamil al-Madawar. Then Jurji Zaidan, Sa'id al-Bustani and Yaqub Sarruf, Farah Antun. The next novelists are Hussain Haykal, Taha Hussain, and Tawfiq al- Hakim. The most celebrated ***Najib Mahfuz*** (b.1912) wrote a large number of Novels which fall under three broad categories (1) Historical Novels (2) Social Realistic Novels (3) Post Realistic Novels[50] Under the second category he wrote the Trilogy: Baynal Qasrayn 1956, Qasr al-Shawq 1957 and Al- Sukriyya which raised his position to the highest level and he was conferred the prestigious, the world's highest honours, Nobel Prize. Arabic obtained its due position in the Worlds Literature with the hands of Najib Mahfuz in 1988.

d. **Drama.** The Drama in Arab world was begun by amateurs performing during the festivities of modern western styled schools and collages. This performance began with Biblical episodes and western classical works and developed to include subjects related to Islamic history. The Syrian Ibrahim al-Ahdab was the first Arab historical dramatist. His 20 plays include "Alexander the Macedonian" "Ibn. Zaydun" "Yazid bin Abdul Malik", then comes the name of Marun Naqqash (1817- 55) also a Syrian. In 1875 Adib Ishaq and Salim Naqqash organized the first group of actors in Alexandria. The best dramatist of the late 20th century is Khalil al-Yaziji. Other dramatists include Mikhail Nua'ima, Antun Yazbak and last celebrated is Tawfiq al-Hakim.[51]

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1.2. Need for Teaching of Arabic.

Arabic is an international language. It is the fifth most widely spoken language of the world. Moreover, it is the religious language of the Muslims who have to compulsorily use it in rituals including their daily prayers. Hence the Arabic language is of paramount importance to innumerable people for various reasons. The Arabic language, with so much usefulness, is naturally required to be learnt properly by its speakers as well as users. And here lies the importance of teaching of the language. The purpose behind the need for teaching of the language can be discussed under the following heads:

(a) Religious purpose.
(b) Linguistic and literary purpose.
(c) Commercial purpose.
(d) Social exchange.

(a) Religious Purpose: Every Muslim has to acquire a minimum amount of knowledge of the Arabic language for the performance of his obligatory prayers. Moreover, the fundamental maxims on which lies the foundation of Islamic faith are in Arabic. Hence, Muslims must know their meanings at the time of entering into the fold of Islam by pronouncing them. Thus, every Muslim has to be taught these fundamental concepts at the very early age. This is one of the two religious necessities for the teaching of the Arabic language. Secondly, the holy Qur`an and the prophet's traditions (Ahadith / Sunnah) are the basic sources on which all Islamic activities are carried on. Since the original texts of these two are in Arabic, this

language is required to be adequately studied so that the Qur`an and Sunnah`s teachings can be brought home to the Muslims. This demands for the systematic study of the language through well-structured institutions, because without a well organised curriculum the process of education is fruitless. A lesson unfit for the curriculum is a lesson in the air[52]. Thus the religious need for teaching of the Arabic language is of two-fold:

i) Providing essential Islamic knowledge to the Muslim children pertaining to Islamic faith and worship and that is done in the Maktabs, mosques etc.

ii) Conveyance of the message of the Qur`an and Sunnah with regard to different aspects of life and that is done in higher institutions called Madrasas.

(b) <u>Linguistic and Literary Purpose :</u> Apart from being the religious language of the Muslims ,Arabic also a living language widely spoken as the first language in a large part of the globe. It is the world's fifth most widely spoken language and of the official languages of the UNO[53] It has much literary richness some of which are unsurpassed by any other language of the world. It also has its international acceptability and adaptability which is why literary activities in this language are practised in many countries even outside the Arab world. Here lies the reason as to why the Arabic language and literature are to be taught as a secular subject rather than as a religious one. Arabic is also capable of providing enough materials for the study of its language and literature as an important

component of world language and literature, especially in so far as their comparative study is concerned.

(c) **Commercial Purpose :** By virtue of its being the native language in the countries of the Arabian Gulf and the Middle East, Arabic occupies a predominant place in the everyday life of the people of those regions. Naturally, for those carrying on trade, business and commerce in those regions of the world have to be well versed in the use of the language at least for the sake of their profession[54] With this end in view Arabic is taught with a commercial purpose to those in the non-Arab countries who aspire to make their way to the Arab land for their livelihood. In addition to this, skilled labourers, professionals in the field of medicine, engineering, teaching etc. who wish to work in the Arabic speaking world must acquire adequate competence in using the language in speeches, writing and other communicative ways.

(d) **Social Exchange :** The teaching of the Arabic language can also pave the way for exchange of views among different communities of people in the society and thereby lead to universal brotherhood and fellow feeling among different people living in different parts of the world. In the Mughal period, a large number of Hindu students learnt in Madrasas. The bias of education in the time of Akbar was more secular than religious.[55] The syllabi of the Madrasa then reflect that they were studying Arabic with other subjects.

Literature has a unifying force whereby it can bind people of different times and places into one single entity. Study of other people's

literature enables man to become what Mortimer Adler says: the friend of the human spirit disregarding political boundaries and geographical differences. Literary masterpieces of different languages are always translated into other languages, thus, paving the way for better give and take. For example, Indian classical writing , Panchatantra was translated into Arabic with the name `Kitab Kalila wa Dimna` (Book of Kalila and Dimna).[56]

The story of One Thousand and One Night (Alf Laylah wa Laylah) was made in Iraq. The basis of this draft, prepared by al-Jahshiari, was an Old Persian work `Hazar Afsana` containing several stories of Indian origin.[57] Besides, religious scriptures are abundantly translated into other languages for their wide understanding and appreciation.

In modern times, many English literary works have been translated by Arab poets and writers. Khalil Mutran, the pioneer of romanticism in Arabic poetry translated Shakespeare's ***Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Merchant of Venice***[58] into Arabic.

Thus we find that the Arabic language and literature need to taught and practised in different parts of the world including among non-native speakers for the sake of better social exchange. The holy Qur`an and the Traditions (Ahadith) of the prophet, may peace and blessings be upon him, also lay stress on the learning of the language. The Qur`an says:[59] إنّا أنزلناه قرآنا عربيا لعلّكم تعقلون [i] The prophet Muhammad , peace and blessings be upon him, is also reported to have said : لسانى العربية و لسان القرآن العربيّة و لسان أهل الجنة العربيّة ....

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1.3. Geographical Extent of Assam.

Assam is situated in the extreme east of India. It is the most populous of the seven states that comprise the north east region of the Union of India. The state is surrounded on three sides, except the west, by hills and mountains. The rivers Brahmaputra and Barak in the north and south respectively curve out deep valleys that represent the major part of the state. Between the two valleys, there lies a strip of high land made up hills and plateaus. Thus the state of Assam comprises three geographical divisions—(i) the Brahmaputra valley, (ii) the Barak valley and (iii) the Hilly Area.

Situated as such, Assam is a transitional territory between South Asia and South east Asia.[60] The transition is reflected in the region's flora and fauna as well as the human types, languages and cultures. The state shares its border with seven Indian states and two foreign countries. There are only a few Indian states having such a strategic location.

The state of Assam consists of 27 administrative districts out of which 22 falls in the Brahmaputra valley, the largest geographical division. The Barak valley comprises three southern districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakand while the two hill districts of North Cachar hills and Karbi Anglong belong to the hilly range.

Scholars are divided over the origin of the name 'Assam'. Mirza Nathan in his book Baharistan-i-Ghayabi has referred to the region as the 'Country of Assam'[61], i.e. the territory ruled by the Ahoms who

reigned over the land for long six centuries beginning from 1228 AD. Although many other scholars hold the above view, there are others who opine that the word 'Assam' is derived from the word 'Asama' (meaning 'uneven') which is connected with the geographical description of the region. However, the name 'Assam' is of recent origin. It came into use after the conquest of the land by the Ahoms in the 13th century AD.[62] In ancient times, the region was named as Pragjyotishpura and Kamrupa, the capital having been Pragjyotishpur. The boundary of ancient Kamrupa used to fluctuate in different periods. Between the 4th and 12th centuries AD., Kamrupa was ruled by the Barman, Salastamba and Pala dynasties. At the beginning of the 13th century, Muslim invasions started from the west while the Ahoms entered from the east in 1228 AD. These two events brought about a series of political changes over the territory. The western part of Kamrupa became an independent kingdom called Kamata, the middle part of the Brahmaputra valley came under the sway of the Bhuyan feudal lords while the Kacharis and Chutyas carved out their kingdoms in the southern and north-eastern parts of the valley respectively. The Ahoms meanwhile established their kingdom over the area between the Buri-Dihing and Disang and Dikhu rivers. In the 15th century, the Koches created a kingdom of their own in the western part, based on the erstwhile Kamata territory. Later, with the fall of Koch power, the western part of the Brahmaputra valley also came under Ahom administration. In 1826, the British annexed the territory and constituted it into an administrative division under a commander. [63] They further added to the territory the southern hills, plateaus and plains which they subsequently annexed .The whole territory was

constituted a province on Feb 6, 1874, as the province of Assam under a Chief Commissioner.[64]

The formation of Assam as an administrative province under British India is a story of annexation of small native kingdoms and principalities in North East India and their merger into one unit .The undivided Goalpara district (comprising the present districts of Dhubri, Bongaigaon, Goalpara and the southern part of Kokrajhar) and (Karaibari, western part of Garo Hills) came to be controlled by the East India Company following the transfer of Diwani from the Mughal emperor to the former on August 12 ,1765. In fact, a district named Goalpara was constituted by the British comprising the above mentioned areas under the commission of Coochbihar in 1821. The Brahmaputra valley between the Manas river in the west and Kumatia river (on the north bank) and the Burhi Dihing river (on the south bank) in the east was annexed by the Company following the treaty of Yandaboo with the invading Burmese army on Feb 24, 1826. [65]

The East India Company then assumed in power over the territory, which they termed a 'British Province'. David Scott, the agent of the Governor General, was entrusted with the heavy responsibility of the administration while all purely military powers were left to the Colonel Richards as the commanding officer. For administrative convenience, Assam was divided into two parts --- Upper Assam and Lower Assam. Rongpur and Gauhati were the capitals of Upper and Lower Assam respectively.

In the early period of the colonial rule, Assam was placed under direct administration of the Government of Bengal by a commissioner till 1874. On Feb. 6, 1874, the British government constituted a separate province under a Chief Commissioner and named it 'Assam'. The province initially included ten districts viz. Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Naga Hills, Garo Hills and Cachar. However, on September 12, 1874, the Sylhet district of the then Bengal was added to it.[66]

With the turn of the century, efforts for attaining the independence of India began to be made and the British govt. started taking counter measures to check the tide. As a part of such a design, they divided the then Bengal in 1905. As a result, 12 districts of Assam were joined with 16 districts of Bengal and they together came to be known as a new province named 'Eastern Bengal and Assam' under a Lieutenant Governor.[67]However, this arrangement of administration had to be abandoned in 1912 under tremendous public opposition and Assam once again became a separate province under a Chief Commissioner. Meanwhile minor administrative adjustments were made within Assam. In 1913-14, the Dimapur area of Sibsagar district was transferred to Naga Hills district. Further, under the Montago-Chelmsford Reform, Assam was made a full-fledged province under a governor in 1921. There was no geo-political change thereafter till 1937 when the four plain areas of the then North East Frontier Tracts were merged with Assam.[68]The area of the province remained so till 1947. In 1947 when India was partitioned, Sylhet district was separated and tagged to the then East Pakistan except the three and a half Thaana

areas of Karimganj, Badarpur Ratabari and Patharkandi which were merged with the undivided Cachar district.

After independence, there was a long period of administrative reorganization of the areas of North East India that naturally had its effect on the boundaries of Assam. In 1963, Naga Hills district was separated from Assam for creating a state out of it.[69] In 1970, the Garo Hills, the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills and Lusai Hills were seceded from Assam. The years that followed saw the emergence of smaller districts out of the existing ones. The latest effect of this practice took place in 2006 when three new districts viz. Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri came into being and the last practice in last year with the creation of Kamrup Metro, the total number of districts rose to 22 in the Brahmaputra valley.

The present Barak Valley of Assam state is a geographical entity containing linguistic cultural attributes distinctly different from that of Brahmaputra Valley and the hilly areas. It comprises three districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. It was created by natural boundaries and apportionment caused by the Redcliffe Award that divided the district of Sylhet of Surma Valley of the British period in 1947 following a referendum in Sylhet along with the partition of India. The valley is bounded by the lofty mountains of North Cachar Hills district on the north, the Angami Naga Hills and Manipur state on the east and the hills of Mizoram and Tripura on the south.

The river system of the valley shows that the main river Barak originates from the Angami Naga Hills, a lofty range forming the

northern boundary of Manipur state. Descending from the high mountains to the plain of Jiribam it takes a zigzag course across the Cachar district and a small portion of Hailakandi district to reach Badarpur in Karimganj district. Flowing further west it divides itself into two near Bhanga and the main stream assumes the name Kushiara which enters Bangladesh in downstream touching Karimganj town and flowing for some distance as the boundary between Karimganj district of India and Sylhet district of Bangladesh. The other branch of Barak that originates near Bhanga flows northwards and meets the original course of Surma in Jaintia Pargana by assuming the name of Surma. The Surma taking the main streams of Barak in its downward flow takes the name Dhaleswari and flows to the old course of the Brahmaputra near Bhairab Bazar. During its long course of 800 KM, the Barak with its different names and branches in downstream receives innumerable tributaries from North Cachar Hills, Mizoram and Tripara. The Surma on the other hand receives a god number of tributaries from the Khasi, Jaintia and Barail Hills and ultimately meets the mainstream of Barak before merging with Meghna. The most noteworthy feature of the Barak Valley is that it is a small geographical unit with a population of 29, 88,797 (2001 Census) of different social strata, economic classes and ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identities. About 45% of the total population is Muslims who belong to Bengali, Manipuri and Hindi speaking linguistic communities.[70]

The epigraphic evidences indicating history proper of the Barak Valley or some part thereof are available for the 6th century AD. The ancient most epigraphic evidences about the political formation of Barak Valley are the Nidhanpur Copper Plates of Kumar Bhaskar

Barman,[71]the king of Kamrupa.Discovered in 1912 in the village Nidhanpur of Panchakhanda Pargona in Beani Bazar Thaana of undivided Karimganj sub-division of pre- partitioned Sylhet district, these inscriptions indicate that a vast region of modern Barak Valley was under Kamrupa kingdom during the 6th century AD.[72] Hiuen Tsang's account 'Si-yu-ki' is an important document about the political entity of Barak Valley of the 7th century AD. According to it, Hiuen Tsang, starting from Samatata enroute to Kamrupa, reached 'Shi-li-cha-ta-la' or Shrihatta. The way he referred to 'Shi-li-cha-ta-la' along with 'Samatata' and Kamrupa impressed upon some scholars that Shrihatta in the 7th century AD was an independent kingdom.[73] However, the Paschimghat Copper Plate of Maharaja Sri Chandra issued in the 10th century AD [74] indicates that the major parts of modern Karimganj and Cachar districts were under the sway of the Chandra rulers of east Bengal. The Bhatera plate inscriptions issued in the 11th century AD. Prove beyond doubt that the Shrihatta Mandala of the Chandra rulers became an independent state named Shrihatta Rajya that flourished up to 12th century. Its decline in the same century marked the beginning of the disintegration of Barak Valley. On the eastern region of the Barail Valley, i.e. in the modern Cachar and Hailakandi plains, the rule of Tripura Rajya was revived after the decline of Shrihatta Rajya.

With the arrival of Shahjalal in the early 14th century, Sylhet including the major portion of modern Karimganj went under the sway of the Delhi Sultanate forming a unit of the administration of Bengal Sultan. This was followed by the Mughal rule when Sylhet including Karimganj formed a Sarkar of the Bangla Subah of the Mughal Empire. With the assumption of the Dewani of Bengal, the British

administration made Sylhet a district under the Bengal Presidency. In 1874, both the districts of Sylhet and Cachar were wrested from Bengal and included in the newly organized province of Assam under a Chief Commissioner. But these two districts constituted a separate entity named Surma Valley and were placed under the Commissioner of Surma Valley and Hills of Assam. For administrative convenience, Sylhet district was divided into some sub-divisions and in 1878, Karimganj sub-division was created with its headquarters at Karimganj with an area of which modern Karimganj district formed a part.

The Surma Valley entity of Sylhet and Cachar districts continued up to 1947. With the partition of India in 1947, the position of Cachar remained unaltered, but the major portion of Sylhet went to Pakistan following a referendum. Only three and a half Thaana areas of the then Karimganj sub-division remained with India. The said areas were included with the Cachar district as its fourth sub-division, the other three being Silchar, Hailakandi and North Cachar.

In 1983, Karimganj sub-division was transformed into a separate district. Again in 1990, Hailakandi was separated, from Cachar and a district of the same name was organized. Thus, the three districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi came into being and assumed a common name 'Barak Valley'.

The above discussion brings home the fact that the historical changes that the Barak Valley has undergone over the centuries witnessed three distinct phases. The early phase continued up to the 13th century and was marked by the rises and falls of different local and

regional states. From the 13th century to the early 19th century an all India process as well as local or regional processes continued simultaneously. But since the early 19th century, a common historical process of all India character once again came into operation.

Hilly areas: The hill districts of Assam--- North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong—posses a distinct entity sharply different from the two other geographical divisions[75] The North Cachar Hills belonging to the Barail Hills are the westward continuation of the Barail range stretching fromTuensang across Nagaland. The Barail range divides the N.C.Hills into two parts, the northern part falling under the Brahmaputra basin and the southern part falling under the Barak basin. The Karbi Plateau genetically belongs to the Meghalaya Plateau and consists of two hilly lobes of unequal size, separated by the Kopili Valley[76] The eastern lobe covered by the Rengma hills spans over the entire Diphu and Bokajan sub-divisions of the Karbi Anglong district. It is approximately double the size of its western counterpart and is dome shaped with altitudes.[77].

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1.4. Beginning of Arabic Teaching in Assam.

First of all, one thing is very clear that the Arabic language teaching in non-native land is very closely and primarily related with the spread of Islam and its theological studies.

So, the advent of Islam naturally marked the beginning of Arabic teaching in Assam. It is found that Islam made its arrival formally in the 13th and 14th centuries in the Brahmaputra valley and the Barak valley respectively.

At the time when Islam made its appearance in Brahmaputra valley, it was known as Kamrupa, a separate kingdom from the rest of present Assam. Islam appeared in the valley trough two ways:

a) By military expedition initiated by the commander of the Sultan of Delhi.
b) Preaching activities of the Sufi saints.

The first Muhammadan invasion was led by Ikhtiaruddin Muhammad bin Bakhtiar Khilji, a general of Muhammad Ghuri, sultan of Delhi, in the year 1205-6 A D, into the kingdom of Kamrupa in the reign of Prithu. This invasion was not succeeded and Ikhtiaruddin returned to Gaurh (Gauda) in 1206 after facing defeat and troubles. Several hundred soldiers were killed and others were captured.[78]

In 1227 A D Hisamuddin Iwaz who is also known as Ghyasuddin Bakhtiar, the then governor of Bengal invaded Kamrupa while King Prithu was still on the throne. Iwaz was, too, defeated in a battle and

was forced back by the King Prithu.[79] Thus, the first two Muslim expeditions to the Kamrupa Kingdom were unsuccessful, but paved the path for future Muslim conquests.

After the third Muhammadan invasion led by Malik Yuzbeg in 1257 A .D. the city of Kamrupnagar (present North Guwahati) was captured. As Raja of Kamrupa (probably Sandhya) fled away to the adjacent hills after having failed to oppose the Muslim soldiers. Malik Yuzbeg declared himself the ruler. He built a mosque in Kamrupnagar[80]. It is a tradition throughout the Islamic world that where there is a mosque there is a Maktab attached to it for teaching the Muslim children the holy Qur'an and imparting teaching of other subjects related to the holy Qur'an and Sunnah .So it is natural that there might have been a Maktab attached to the Mosque in Kamrupnagar for the same purpose, and this Mosque would have been the first Mosque in the Brahmaputra valley and it would have been the first educational institution in the valley.

Another mosque was reportedly established in late 13th or early 14th century in Assam. It is the well known 'Bura Masjid' in Guwahati city at Ambari near A.G.P. office.[81] A certain Muslim army officer named Burhanuddin who was captured along with others by the Raja of Kamrupa, was made settled here. He along with others established the above mentioned mosque with a kuchcha house. It is asserted by the present secretary of the Masjid committee that the mosque was attached with a Maktab as Burhanuddin was a promoter of learning among the Muslim children. He also narrated that Burhanuddin was an Iraqi origin, and he was called by the shortened name 'Bura' derived from

Burhanuddin. It is also observed that Burhanuddin's burial place has been annexed within the wall of the latest structure of the mosque.[82]

Islam appeared with its actual mission throughout the activities of Sufi saints. In the last part of the 15th century A.D. when Hussain shah, the Muslim ruler of Bengal occupied Kamatapur by defeating Nilambar, a new era of Muslim settlement opened in this region. Though Hussain Shah's conquest did not last long,[83] it opened the door for the Muslim settlement by virtue of which the Sufi saints got their ground for preaching Islam and teaching the lessons of Islam. Muslims, in large numbers, were found to have settled in Hajo and other adjacent regions of Kamatapur after the conquest.[84] Where there is a group of Muslims live for some days or otherwise permanently they establish a Mosque for performing prayer in regular congregation (jam'at/ assembly). The establishment of a Mosque, as it is an important and hard some task, is generally carried out by heavenly enlightened or in other words a pious person. So, we find a Muslim divine, Ghyasuddin (the helper of the religion) Awlia built a Mosque on a hill at Hajo[85] in this period of the last part of 15th century A.D. This Mosque is known as Pua Makkah (one fourth of the Ka'ba at Makkah) as believed by the emotional local people though this popular opinion has no legal support. During my visit to Pua Makka mosque at Hajo, the renowned local people who are pious in activities were interacted. Mr. Sukkur Ali Saikia [86], a teacher who serves in a high school in Karimganj district, asserted that it had been orally narrated by early scholarly people that they had known through same process that Ghyathuddin Awlia established the mosque and invited the people irrespective of caste and religion to assemble in front of the mosque on the top of the hill. He

narrated many events of the earlier saints. All people used to listen to him eagerly. During those assemblies the Awlia taught some contents to the Muslims which were essential for performing prayers. The other people also learnt them with a view to use them in their difficult moments as those were uttered by a Sufi saint. Ghyathuddin Awlia also took pain in teaching the holy Qur'an in the mosque.

Another mosque has been traced out in Nagaon district that was established in 16th century A.D. The historical reference goes back to the year 1532 when general Turbak of the Mughal army was defeated by the Ahom king Swargadeu Suhungmung at the great battle of Hatbor and Duimunisila at Kaliabor. Around 900 Muslim soldiers were made prisoners by the Ahom king. These soldiers were later on known as Moria. A section of them made their settlement at Jayantipur, Kaliabor. This Moria Muslim community established a mosque made of bamboo and thatch. In the year 1570 A.D. a concrete structure was erected at its place. Another structure was erected in 1575 A.D. at a distance from original mosque[87] The architectural decoration inside the mosque using glass pieces is unique in Assam. Interestingly, in the same village there is another mosque constructed in 1575. Between the two structures of the mosques, a functioning 'Namghar' exists without any controversy which is a bright example of communal integration of Hindus and Muslims in Assam. The Maktab teaching in the morning at the mosque has been traditionally continuing from the beginning of the Muslim settlement at this locality that has been asserted by some educated persons who were interacted on this matter.[88]

In 17th century A. D. A celebrated Sufi Muhammad Muhyddin Baghdadi flourished to Brahmaputra valley. Muhyddin Baghdadi came to India through the Khaibar pass and settled for some time in the holy shrine of Hazrat Mu'yeenuddin Chisti at Ajmir Then he came to the holy shrine of Hazrat Nizamuddin at Delhi and learnt about the Chisti scholastic mysticism. Later he arrived at Bengal and stayed there for some days in the khanqah of sheikh Ashraf.Finally he came towards Kamrup and stayed in the famous Pua Makkah at Hajo.[89] According to Dr. Painuruddin Ahmad, the Sufi Muhammad Muhyiddin Baghdadi then approached to Garhgaon the capital of Ahom Kingdom. There he engaged himself in preaching Islam and teaching Islamic principles. He established a Mosque there in Gargaon where he himself used to call the people towards prayer. The calling to prayer is called 'Azan' in Arabic .So he was popularly called Azan Pir or Azan Faqir. Sufi Muhyiddin Baghdadi, known as Azan Faqir taught Muslims at his Khanqah the lessons. He taught them lessons from the holy Qur'an by establishing informal Maktabs in the locality.

These are the beginning of Arabic teaching in the pre-colonial period in Brahmaputra valley. It is summed up that in Brahmaputra valley Arabic teaching remained confined within the boundary of mosque attached Maktabs during the pre-colonial period. In this period no schools or colleges were dreamt in the valley.

Apart from the Brahmaputra valley, there has been a vast land being the part of Assam known as Barak valley comprising three districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. Cachar and Hailakandi had been a part of Cachari kingdom and Karimganj district partially

was a part of greater Sylhet which had been a part of Bengal during the pre-colonial period as mentioned earlier.

To investigate the existence of institutions for imparting Arabic education during the pre-colonial period in the Barak valley, we have to draw our attention to the political extent of the valley at that time.

It is found that the present Karimganj district was divided into a number of small kingdoms[90] Its western part was under Gaurh, a small independent kingdom. Its northern part was under Jayntia kingdom and the southern part was under the Tripura kingdom.

When Gaurh was conquered by the successful military cum spiritual expedition led by the all time celebrated Sufi saint Hazrat Shahjalal (Shah Jalaluddin) Mujarrad al-Yemeni in association with the army chief Sikandar Ghazi in 1303 AD[91] against the king Govinda of Gaurh, the flag of Islam was hoisted in this region.

After the conquest of Gaurh, Shahjalal settled down at Sylhet which became the main centre of preaching Islam and disseminating its teaching in the eastern part of Bengal as a whole and in the Surma - Barak valley in particular.

So we find, Islam made its formal arrival in this valley gradually proceeding from the western borders, i.e. Karimganj district as it was a part of greater Sylhet, in other words, a part of the erstwhile Gaurh.

Again, the southern part, which was a part of Tripura kingdom, came under Muslim rule when Malik Muhammad Turaghi conquered Pratapgarh[92]

The 360 Awlia or the disciples of Hazrat Shahjalal Mujarrad were engaged in preaching Islam and spreading its relevant teaching in every nook and corner of the region[93] A number of disciples of Hazrat Shahjalal were deputed to various parts of present Barak valley whose presence are supported by the shrines till today. The prominent among them are:

Hazrat Shah Badr: (alive in 1346 AD)[94] the most celebrated Sufi saint who entered the present boundary of Karimganj district of Barak valley is Hazrat shah Badr or Shah Badruddin who first halted at Bundashil village near Badarpur .On his stress Hazrat Shah Jalal once came to Bundashil village .Shah Badr finally stayed at his Dargah in the present day Fort of Badarpur ghat near the present Duk Bungalow and circle office[95]

Shah Adam Khaki: Among the contemporaries of Hazrat Shah Badr and disciples of Hazrat Shah Jalal Mujarrad ,whose names were available, mention may be made of Hazrat Adam Khaki or Ka'ki whose Dargah is situated at the western part of Badarpur, adjacent to the National Highway 44. Hindus and Muslims alike visit and offer homage to this celebrated Sufi saint. It seems that he was a living symbol and embodiment of Hindu Muslim unity.

Shah Diyauddin : Shah Diyauddin, another companion of Shah Badr, whom Hazrat Shahjalal Mujarrad had specially sent to this place to impart education and training of religious rituals among the people, was a Sufi of high rank and position. He acted upon the order of his Shaikh and propagated Islam among the people till his last days. He founded a mosque near the Khadiman village and a Maktab therewith which were swept away along with his tomb by the waters of the Barak river[96]

In fine we have observed that the abodes of the Sufi saints, i.e. the Khanqahs or Dargahs flourished in various places. These Khanqahs or Dargahs are the centres of religious learning as well as spiritual training which came into existence in those initial stages. The Sufis used to teach their disciples or followers on the basis of the fundamental teachings of Islam. What the Qur'an imposes on a Muslim and the traditions of the prophet Muhammad directs, to perform for continuing the life as a Muslim, were the contents of elementary lessons in Khanqahs. The people, who embraced Islam within this boundary of Assam, like the neo-Muslims of other parts of the world, needed to learn the lessons of the holy Qur'an, the contents which are quite essential for performing daily prayers. He has to maintain the routine work directed by the saint on whose call he embraced Islam. People often went to him to get lessons. He prescribed some extolments of Allah or some contents in Arabic praising Allah. He asked to recite some special Surahs or chapters in some particular moments daily. Kalimas, Tassahhud, Dua-e-Qunut etc. were to be taught in those Khanqahs. Otherwise the Muslims did not have any way of learning these. Without these Islam was useless to the new comers in Islam

itself. Some disciples were in sound mind and could learn the elementary lessons very quickly and the saint or the Pir Sahib directed them to organize a teaching course including the Arabic alphabet, Arabic words spelling, reading Surahs (Qur'anic chapters) with syllables. This way, teaching and learning of primary knowledge of Arabic in the Khanqahs came into existence.

In course of time as the number of Muslims increased the mosques began to be established in various places. In those days mosques were used not only for performing Namaz (salah) but for imparting primary Arabic teaching to the neo-Muslims as well as to their children in this region as happened in other parts of the world.

In 1692, a mosque was established at the village Bakharshal in the district of Karimganj by two saintly brothers Badruddin Muhammad and Kamal Muhammad, who came from Parchak Pargona of Sylhet and settled here to preach Islam. This mosque had a Maktab attached to it that has been functioning till today. The two saintly brothers were the promoters of learning among the Muslim children. Later on their descendents took interest to establish a Madrasa in the 19th century that will be discussed in appropriate section. [97]

The process of building mosques was initiated by the spiritual leaders or Sufis or local people or even by the ruler himself. Some of the most ancient mosques are still surviving while some others are lost leaving some valuable evidences of their past existence.

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1.5 Different Types of Institutions Imparting Arabic Teaching.

Arabic is being taught in a number of institutions of varied nature in every nook and corner of the world. This is mainly the result of the spread of Islam all over the world over the centuries, in addition to literary, commercial factors etc. if we analyze in historical perspective, we find that this was not the case in ancient times. Arabic did have its present universal popularity in the long past although its richness as a language is not something new. Although the teaching of Arabic as a language can easily and rightly be associated with the spread of Islam, it has reached its zenith with regard to the literary excellence even in the pre –Islamic period .Hence the teaching of the language in the pre- Islamic period needs to be discussed as it serves as a background to the teaching of the same in the present- day world. Therefore a discussion is going to be made in the following heads so as to bring to light the facts as to how Arabic has been taught in different institutions from pre-Islamic period up to the contemporary period.

a) Institutions in pre-Islamic period:-

Arabic is well-known for the excellent literary exercise its people had done in the pre-Islamic period. It was customary with the war-hungry Arabs to lay down arms in certain specific time of the year and engage themselves in poetic activities on the occasion of the great fair at 'Ukaz that was a grand annual event for them. The best poetic compositions were chosen and it was hung on the wall of the ***Ka'ba***. The best seven such poems were known as '***Sab'u Mu'allaqah***' (Seven

Suspended Poems) that are still considered as great literary masterpieces of the Arabic language and literature. Such was the way ancient literary activities in Arabic, and for that matter the teaching of Arabic, was carried on. Apart from this, no established institutions imparting the teaching of the Arabic language in its modern sense can be traced during the pre-Islamic period. Thus, the teaching of Arabic in pre-Islamic period was informal although its output was excellent.[98]

b) Institutions in Islamic period:-

The Islamic period began with the attainment of prophet hood by Muhammad (Peace and blessings upon him). This period witnessed the beginning of the institutionalization of Arabic teaching in its true sense. Yet those institutions were not widely organized. This was possibly because the prophet himself was greater than an institution to his disciples who followed every word he uttered and every action he performed. Therefore, non-institutionalization of Arabic teaching was still of greater importance as it served the purpose to the fullest extent. In spite of what is said above, under the prophet's guidance, some small centres were run where his companions used to impart teachings to those who needed or sought it. The most famous and significant centre was "***Daru Arqam b. Abil Arqam***", where, after emigration to Abyssinia, the remaining Muslims along with the prophet Muhammad himself took shelter and continued preaching activities. In the 6th Hijira year, the teaching of the holy Qur'an began here. Along with the Mosque of Abu Bakr, the House of Fatima bint. Khattab, the House of Arqam is regarded as one of the first institutions of Islamic teaching.[99]Besides, the prophet used to liberate the captives of war on

condition that they would engage themselves in teaching. But the most significant development in Arabic teaching in the prophet's life time took place centring round the ***Prophet's Mosque*** (Masjid al-Nabavi). Masjid al-Nabavi was indeed the headquarters of all Islamic activities performed after the Hijra. A place named Suffa was reserved for the purpose of teaching. The prophet himself was the teacher. It is also narrated that a special teacher was also appointed. Abu Hurayra, the well known companion, got his education here. About four hundred students passed out of this first Madrasa under the direct guidance of the prophet. This is known as Madrasa "***Ashabi Suffa***". The Prophet's Mosque served as the centre for academic, diplomatic, social and political activities .The Qur'ān and its teaching and the other important matters related to Islamic faith were discussed under the prophetic leadership. Thus Masjid al-Nabavi continued to be the largest centre of teaching during the prophet's life time.[100] Unlike the pre-Islamic period, the period during which the prophet lived, witnessed the expansion of Islamic (Arabic) teaching outside the Arab land. The prophet's companions were sent to different lands (Like Salman Farsi (R) to Abyssinia, now Ethiopia) who carried out propagational work that included the teaching of the Arabic language.[101]

c) Institutions in the Reign of the Caliphs:-

The rule of the most prominent companions of the prophet, i.e. Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman and 'Ali, known as Khulafa-e-Rashidin is remarkable for it marked the flourishing of different aspects of Islam. Under their patronage, the arrangements made by the prophet for religious teaching were continued with mere elaboration and extensive

application. During this period only a few branches of learning namely, the Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh and the study of pre-Islamic poetry came to be recognized.[102] These teachings mainly remained limited within Arabia.

d) Institutions in the Umayyad period:-

The Umayyad period saw the springing up of more branches of learning in addition to those already in existence. Grammar, history, geography, science etc. came to be taught in this period. During the earlier part of the Umayyad reign, no system of education was developed. Badira, near Madinah, was then the only seat of Arabian culture where students from different parts of the empire gathered for the purpose of learning Arabic pronunciation and recitation of poems. Most of the schools were attached to mosques and endowed with property.[103] The Umayyad period witnessed the expansion of Arabic learning to non-Arab lands like Rome, Africa, Spain and other countries that Muslims invaded under the command of Abdul Malik b. Marwan I. Cordova in Spain was a famous seat of learning and its university was one of the most renowned educational institutions of the world during the Umayyad rule.

e) Institutions in the Abbasid period:-

Remarkable progress was made in Arabic learning during the Abbasid period. Caliph Mansur's reign was the revival of learning in both East and West. Besides, being an age of the philologists and grammarians, his age was also the age of collection of traditions. Nizamul Mulk was the most distinguished patron of learning during the

reign of Saljuq Sultan Malik Shah (1072 – 1092), a late Abbasid caliph. He founded the world renowned Nizamiya Madrasa, the greatest theological institution under the Abbasids, at Baghdad in 1065-67 A.D.[104] The establishment of this premier institution was a milestone in the history of Arabic teaching in the world. During the Abbasid period, elementary schools were an adjunct of the mosque[105]. Sometimes schools were held in private houses, shops and mosques. According to Yaqubi, only the city of Baghdad had thirty thousand mosques.[106] Besides mosques, there were Maktabs which served as elementary schools. However, education under the Abbasids was not confined to primary schools alone, but al-Mamun founded Bayt al-Hikma for the persuasion of higher learning.[107]

f) Institutions in the Fatimid period:-

The Fatimid ruler Abu Tamim Ma'd al-Mu'izz, after conquering Egypt, founded the city of Cairo where he built a great mosque, al-Azhar, in 972 A.D. The next caliph al-Aziz made this mosque an academy out of which rose the famouus al-Azhar University (Jami' al-Azhar) in course of time.[108] The caliphs of the Fatimid dynasty established schools and colleges, libraries and scientific institutions. The Dar al-Hikmah was one of the most remarkable foundations of the Fatimids which was established by al-Hakim in 1005 A.D., Thus we find that the teaching-learning of Arabic that was initiated with mosques as centres, got expanded to independent institutions throughout the centuries although the mosque-based system of education was never abolished, but was contributing to a large extent to the case of the spread of Arabic learning.

The concept of Madrasa education in India came with the Muslims. It was Mahmud Ghaznavi who introduced the system of Madrasa education.[109] Its structure and curriculum was laid down in Baghdad by Nizamul Mulk for Nizamiya Madrasa as mentioned above. Subsequently the Madrasa education was updated from time to time. New elements were introduced during the time of Mughal emperors. But the pace of revision, however, slackened after the death of Aurangzeb. However, it was Mullah Nizamuddin Sihalvi who framed the syllabus called "Dars-e-Nizami".[110]

g) Institutions in the Modern period:-

In the modern period, i.e. the period after the Industrial Revolution in Europe and its subsequent political impact on the world in general and the greater Islamic world in particular have been witnessing revolutionary changes in every field in every decade. All course of action received a systematized process. So, the institutions imparting Arabic teaching came to be systematized and well-ordered. The same trend was visible in Arabia, Egypt and many non-Arab countries. This may be classified as under:

(I) **In the 18th century:-** 18th century was a much grown up period so far as teaching of Arabic is concerned. Arabia, Egypt, Spain and Africa had already had some century old renowned institutions. Expansion of teaching of Arabic was carried on in innovative ways by establishing new institutions in various places. In India also, mosque-based teaching started to see further advancement as Maktabs and organized household

teachings were initiated under the Mughal rulers and Nawabs. The British rulers also took pain in spreading the Arabic teaching in India. The establishment of Calcutta Alia Madrasa (1780) was a landmark event in the spread of Arabic learning in India.

(II) **In the 19th century:-** The 19th century saw more liberalization in terms of spread of Arabic teaching and learning as the language was introduced in different schools colleges and universities all over the world. New Madrasas were established in India and the Arab world also. In India, we find Darul Uloom Deoband (1866), Madrasa-e-Mazahirul Uloom Saharanpur (1866), Jamia Nizamiya, Lucknow, (1890), Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow, (1892), Madrasa-e-Aminia, Delhi,(1897), and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College (1875)[111] which became ,later on, Aligarh Muslim University, are the prominent seats of Islamic higher learning. in India of 19th century.

(III) **In the 20th century:-** In the 20th century, we find modern institutions like colleges and universities established by central as well as state governments in India and abroad where Arabic teaching is provided. Simultaneously Madrasas were established all over the world where teaching and learning of Arabic got its due place. In Assam the period witnessed a series of changes in both structure and curriculum of learning especially in Madrasas. Besides the language was introduced as an additional / elective subject in High Schools and as a compulsory subject in ME and High Madrasas.

(IV) In the 21st century:- Some, not so remarkable, changes have been made in the curriculum of Arabic in Madrasas and Universities of Assam in the new century.

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End Notes:

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2. Zayyat, A.H.; **Tarikhul Adab al-Arabi (Arabic).** P-8.
3. Fariq, K.A.; **History of Arabic Literature.** P-29.
4. Hitti, P.K.; **History of the Arabs.** P-91.
5. **Ibid.**
6. Nicholson, R.A.; **A Literary History of the Arabs.** P-31.
7. **Ibid.**
8. **Ibid.** p-32.
9. Hurt, Clement; **History of Arabic Literature.** P-32.
10. Hitti, P.K.; **History of the Arabs.** P-90.
11. **Ibid.** pp-90-1.
12. **Ibid.** pp-92-3.
13. Sen, Nikhil; **Asiar Sahitya** (Beng.), Calcutta.1971. P-285.
14. Fariq, K.A.; **History of Arabic Literature.** P-135.
15. Zayyat, A.H.; **Tarikhul Adab al-Arabi** (Arabic). P-73.
16. Ali, Dr. Chand Md.; **A Study of Literary History of the Arabs.** Pp-75-83.
17. **Ibid.** p-88.
18. Zayyat, A.H.; **Tarikhul Adab al-Arabi** (Arabic), pp-128-32.
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20. Hitti, P.K.; **History of the Arabs.** Pp-250-1.
21. Nicholson, R.A.; **A Literary History of the Arabs.** P-238.
22. **Ibid.** p-247.
23. **Ibid.**
24. Hitti, P.K.; **History of the Arabs.** Pp-241-2.
25. Ali, Dr. Chand Md.; **A Study of the Literary History of the Arabs.** Pp. 104-5.
26. Nicholson, R.A.; **A Literary History of the Arabs.** P-328.
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28. Zayyat, A.H.; **Tarikhul Adab al-Arabi** (Arabic). P-156.
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30. **Ibid.** P.346-47.
31. Hitti, P.K.; **History of the Arabs.** P-404.
32. Nicholson, R.A.; **A Literary History of the Arabs.** Pp. 289-33.
33. **Ibid.** p-291.
34. **Ibid.**
35. **Ibid.** Pp. 292-4.
36. **Ibid.** P-296.
37. Hitti, P.K. **History of the Arabs.** P-406.

38. Zayyat, A.H.; **Tarikhul Adab al-Arabi** (Arabic).pp. 224-6.

39. Hitti, P.K.; **History of the Arabs**. P-407. Also see: Zayyat, A.H.; **TarikhulAdab al-Arabi**. (Arabic).p. 212-16.

40. Nicholson, R.A.; **A Literary History of the Arabs**. P-337.

41. Ibid.

42. **Ibid**. p-350.

43. Mahdi, Ismat; **Modern Arabic Literature**-1900—1967.p-5.

44. **Ibid.** P-6.

45. Zayyat, A.H.; **Tarikhul Adab al-Arabi** (Arabic). P-308.

46. **Ibid.** pp322-75.

47. Mahdi, Ismat; **Modern Arabic Literature- 1900-1967**. pp. 87-

48. **Ibid**. pp.169-98.

49. **Ibid**. p-172.

50. **Ibid**. pp-245-6.

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61. **Ibid**. p-2.

62. Acharyya, N.N; **A brief History of Assam**. P-1.

63. Bhagawati, A.K.; **Geography of Assam**. 3rd edition-2007, P-7.

64. **Ibid**. p-4.

65. **Ibid**. p-4.

66. **Ibid.** p-7.

67. **Ibid.** p-8.

68. **Ibid.**

69. **Ibid**. p-9.

70. Census Report, 2001.

71. Sharma, M.M.; **Inscription of Ancient Assam**, Guwahati 1978. P-38.

72. Choudhury, Achyut Charan; **Srihatter Itibritta**. (Beng.) P-43.

73. **Ibid**. p-56.

74. Gupta, Kamalakanta; **Copper Plates of Sylhet**, Sylhet, 1967. Pp. 101-10.
75. Bhagawati, A.K.; **Geography of Assam**. P-25.
76. **Ibid**. p-26.
77. **Ibid.**
78. Acharyya, N.N.; **A Brief History of Assam**. Pp.52-3.
79. **Ibid**. pp-53-4.
80. **Ibid**. p-54.
81. **Field Survey**: I visited ***Bura Masjid*** once on 24th June, 2006 and again on 1st June, 2007. I met the Secretary of the Masjid committee Mr. Iaz Ahmad, a public servant. He made me introduced with several elderly persons of the locality including the present President of the committee and previous secretaries. I collected the facts from them about the popular name of the mosque, traditionally preserved by them through oral transmission. .
82. **Field Survey**: At Friday congregation I observed the people to pay homage to a certain place. Curiously I asked them about the fact behind their action. They asserted what was the same as that of Secretary of the Bura Masjid Committee.
83. Acharyya, N.N.; **A brief History of Assam**. P-66.
84. **Ibid**.
85. **Ibid**.
86. **Field Survey**: I visited Poa-Makkakh Shrine at Hajo. I was guided by one Sukkur Ali Saikia, a local renowned person who is also working as a teacher in a High School In Karimganj district. He narrated that the local tradition goes bearing this fact.
87. Bezbarua, Chiranjib and Das, N.C.; **A Heritage Site**. (Article) Published in the Assam Tribune, June 14, 2008.
88. **Field Survey**: I visited the two mosques 17th June, 2008. I interacted with the local people as well as the Imam of the earlier one. The elderly people narrated about the origin of themselves. An Assames Brahmin Ajit Goswami by name supported the fact.
89. Ahmad, Dr. Painuruddin; **Azan Faqir**.(An article in Assames) Published in "Cottonian Shabnam" a yearly magazine published in 2008, by the Arabic and Persian Study Circle, Cotton College, Guwahati.
90. Dey, Haran; **Karimganj 1976 Totha 20 Dofa Kormoshuchi**. Ed. (Beng.). P-2.
91. Azraf, Dewan Muhammad; **Sylhete Islam** (Beng.). P-47.
92. Dey, Haran (ed); **Karimganj 1976 Totha 20 Dofa Kormoshuchi**. (Beng.).p-2.
93. Quddus, Abdul; **Hazrat Shahjalal (R)** (Beng.), Furkania Kutubkhana, Badarpur. P-60.
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97. **Field Survey**: I met Moulana Abu Muhammad Abdun Noor, a Madrasa graduate from Sylhet Government Alia Madrasa and a post-graduate in Arabic from Gauhati

University, a retired Superintendent of Karimganj High Madrasa (Retd. In 1989.) . He narrated the statement referring some historical events that are locally important and that have evidence.

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100. Ali, K ; **A Study of History of Islam**. P-79. Also see Mubarakpuri, Moulana Qadi Athar; **Khairul Qurun ki Darasgahein**. (Urdu) Pp.44-8.
101. **Ibid.**
102. **Ibid.** p-2221.
103. **Ibid.** pp.221-2.
104. **Ibid**. p-270.
105. **Ibid**. p-299.
106. **Ibid**. p-345. Also see: Zayyat, A.H.; Tarikhul Adab al-Arabi (Arabic). P-312.
107. **Ibid**. p-299.
108. **Ibid**. p-345.
109. Ahmad, Soroor; **Madrasas, Big Contributions, Small Recognitions** (Article), Published in Radiance Views Weekly, Vol. XL No.24. 30 October-5 November, 2005. New Delhi.
110. **Ibid**. Also see Desai, Z.A.; **Centres of Islamic Learning in India**.pp. 11-14.
111. Siddiqi, Iqtidar Hussain; **Islam and Muslims in South Asia**. Pp.164-5.

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