Iranian influence on Language, literature and culture of Bangladesh is indeed very apparent in every sphere of life of the people in the country. The history of the civilization and culture of Iran and Bangladesh suggests that the people of both the lands have been maintaining a good relationship with each other since time immemorial. The relationship began to grow since the period of Achaemenid dynasty (550 BC) in Iran and gradually expanded through the periods of the Parthian (249-226 BC) and the Sassanid (226 BC – 652 AD) which got a new dimension and was consolidated further by the establishment of the Ghaznavid dynasty in Punjab, Ghurid Dynasty in Delhi, and finally Bakhtiyar Khalji in Bengal. Primarily it commenced through the traders who used to travel to the land from Persia and other middle-eastern regions following the sea route – Persian Gulf. Sonargaon, Bengalla (Dhaka), Satgaon, Hugli, Tamralipti were the important sea ports in the region since the seventh century BC. Many of the traders and merchants used to travel frequently and a good number of them got married to local girls and settled here which finally resulted in socio-cultural assimilation, especially in the influence of Persian language in local vernacular languages, especially the Bengali language. Beside traders, wandering saints and preachers had been visiting Bengal long before the Muslim conquest of the land in 1203 AD. Furthermore, the mystic movement in Bengal, by the end of the fourteenth century, had an enormous impact on indigenous culture and society – irrespective of both the Hindus and the Muslims. The presence of huge lexicographic elements, numerous Persian words in both original and distorted forms in Bengali language as well as the emergence of mystic and romantic dimensions in mediaeval Bengali literature and culture, comprising elements from Persian literature and Sufi tradition can be realized as the best examples to understand the range and intensity of Iranian influence on the field. After the fall of Bengal to the East India Company however, the splendor of Persian gradually begun to diminish. English, Urdu as well as Hindi languages became more influential not only in Bengal but in the whole sub-continent.

This study attempts to address the issues related to the topic using both primary and secondary elements and analyze the reasons behind the decline of Persian literary, cultural and Sufi traditions in the region.

[Keywords] Iran, Bangladesh, Socio-Cultural Assimilation, Lexicographic Elements, Romantic Literature

1. Introduction

Bengal was enthralled and mesmerized by its glorious contribution to the Persian language and literature during the Mughals and this trend continued until the first century of British Rule in the land. As a matter of fact, the history of the Development of Persian language and literature in Bengal dates back to the pre-historic period. Origin and development of Persian language actually took place in a land which is known as the Islamic Republic of Iran today. Geographically, Iran is thousands of miles away from Bengal or
Bangladesh today. The question is how did the Persian language find its way to Bengal? And how did the Persian literature develop in the land and influence the local vernacular languages? And how did the Persian literature lose its glory after the treacherous defeat of Nawab Siraj-ud-Dawla to the East India Company at the battle of Plessey in 1757AD? Answers of such questions are very essential to address the issues related to the topic of present discussion. Persian language and literature had an immense impact on the development of literary and cultural tradition, especially romantic and mystic as well as Sufi traditions, in Bengal. However, since the initiation of the rule of the East India Company in the land the glory of Persian language, literature and culture gradually began to lessen. The English, Urdu as well as Hindi languages became more persuasive in the whole sub-continent, including Bengal. The following sections of this paper attempts to shade lights on these issues and reach a conclusion by analyzing necessary elements from both primary as well as secondary sources.

2. Iranian Influence from Ancient to Medieval Period

History reveals that, by 500 BC, Persia became the centre of the huge Achaemanid Empire, extending to Southeastern Europe and North Africa in the west, from the Gulf of Oman in the South to the Southern Soviet Union in the north and to India in the east[1]. From the period of Achaemenid dynasty(550 BC) to the periods of the Parthians(249-226 BC) and the Sassanids(226 BC – 652 AD) in Iran, the relationships between Iran and the subcontinent began to grow. The cultural relations got a new dimension after the advent of Islam and the conquest of Iran by the Arabs(710 AD) as well as the conquest of Sind by the Umayyads(712 AD). The participation of Iranians in Arab army in the battles in the sub-continent resulted in an ample opportunity to extend the Iranian culture, especially Iranian language to the land. At the end of the Ghaznavid dynasty, Lahore acclaimed fame as a center for science, literature, arts and mysticism. There was now a constant flow of poets and scholars, mostly of Iranian origin, into the sub-continent. This also added to scientific development, such as mathematics, astronomy and astrology. Thus the great scientist al-Biruni came to the Punjab with the aim of getting first-hand knowledge of India’s contribution to these sciences and learnt the Sanskrit language for this purpose[2].

Sultan Muejuddin Mohammad Bin Sum Ghouri Sultan Shahabuddin Ghouri rushed to Delhi in 1192 AD and defeated the Rajput King Prithiraj at the battle of “Torayin.” After establishing Muslim domination on Delhi and its surroundings, the flow of Persian language and Islamic culture reached Delhi from Lahore and Muslim rule over India became more stable. After the assassination of Sultan Shahabuddin Ghouri his adopted son and slave Qutubuddin Aybek ascended the throne at Lahore in 1204AD. He made Lahore his capital. The commanders of this dynasty extended their victory upto Bengal[3].

3. Iranian Influence from Medieval Period to Modern Period

3.1. Bengal under the muslims

Ikhtiyer Uddin bin Mohammad Bakhtiyer Khalji, a leading army officer during the reign of Qutubuddin Aybek, the Emperor of Delhi, conquered Nadia in 1203 A.D[4]. Ikhtiyer Uddin further captured Gouda, the then Lakhnauti, and made his capital there. Later, he extended his domain over all the regions of Northern Bengal. He established a number of mosques and madrasas there[5][6]. He died in 1206, on his return from an abortive expedition towards Tibet[7]. Muslim rule, by the
end of the thirteenth century AD, extended over the whole of the Bengal region. These Muslim rulers, beside the Persian language, had also adapted the customs, conventions and mannerisms of the Iranians, and they demonstrated their court ceremonial and administration of justice based on the styles that were in practice in Persia. Racially, indeed, they were of Turko-Afghan origin, their cultural ambiances, however, were as of the Iranians. The Muslim rule in Bengal changed the entire course of history. Where, once the Hindu and Buddhist culture were most influential, gradually evolved the Islamic culture. The importance of the Brahmans, along with their Sanskrit language, gradually became obscured. Persian as the Muslim court language appeared to be the most influential language. Hence, a permanent Muslim community began to flourish here[8]. The absence of caste-based class-priority and the presence of strict devotion to the doctrine of equality by the Muslims gradually brought a new socio-cultural dimension. Most remarkably, the Muslim rulers offered the scope of education for mass people whereas before, it was reserved only for the Brahmins and the members of Royal families as well as upper classes only.

Finally, the Islamic system of education was introduced in many places in the regions and the proliferation of the traditional centers of instruction and learning, i.e., mosques, madrasa and maktabs created a congenial atmosphere for the development of literary writings in both Arabic and Persian. Among the reputed centers of learning Gaur, Pandua, Darasbari, Rangpur, Sonargaon, Dhaka, Sylhet, Bogra and Chittagong were famous. Even the number of madrasas in Bengal when the British rule commenced stood nearly at 80,000[9][10].

For more than 600 years(from 1203-1837AD) Persian was the state language in Bengal. During this vast period, thousands of books had been written in Persian and hundreds of Poets had composed their poems in Persian. Excellent copies of these unique contributions have been preserved in different libraries of Bengal as well as in the sub-continent either in books or in manuscript forms. In addition, from the middle of the eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth century, including a number of Persian dailies such as Sultanul Akhbar and Durbinwere being published regularly from Kolkata. It proved that Persian still existed as a language of the educated classes, in this locality[4].

This process of the development, however, took many centuries with the obvious result that life in this part of the sub-continent in particular and in India in general was profoundly influenced by Iranian culture. In this regard Dr. Tara Chand observes:

Thus after the first shock of conquest was over, the Hindus and Muslims prepared to find a via-media whereby to live as neighbours. The effort to seek a new life led to the development of a new culture which was neither exclusively Hindu nor purely Muslim, it was indeed a Muslim-Hindu culture. Not only did Hindu religion, Hindu art, Hindu literature and Hindu science absorb Muslim elements, but the very spirit of Hindu culture and the very stuff of Hindu mind were also altered[11].

Thus, in the present paper an attempt has been made to examine the influence of Iranian culture in various walks of Bangladeshi life.

3.2. Natural adoptation of Persian language, literature and culture in Bengal

Following the above discussion it can be presumed that Bengal, since time immemorial, had been the ultimate destination for people of the most varied interest. It has attracted people from many parts of the world. Thus from the very dawn of history, Bengal and Iran had come into contact with each other.
3.2.1. Traders

The geographical position of the two countries in respect of each other explains this frequent fragment of the lively traffic in commerce and culture. Sea-trade[12]. no doubt came from ports of India viz. Daybul, Nirun, Suparaka, Barygaza, Tagara, Muziris, Nelkynda, Ariake, Tamralipti, Gange, Saptagrama, Sarandip, etc. and passed to the Persian Gulf at Ubulla, Omana, Eudaimon, Siraf, Qais, Hormuz, Socotra, coastal along Gedrosia. The ancient city ports of Bengal viz. Tamralipti, Gange and Saptagrama[13], i.e. Satgaon, were great centers of maritime trade and commerce in ancient days, attracting sailors and merchants from both the eastern and western seas. Archaeological and historical evidences prove that marines of the ancient Mediterranean world, Middle East and of the pacific shores used to visit these great commercial emporiums regularly, while the bold sailors of ancient Bengal also made distant voyages to western areas from these ports[14]. From Ceylonese chronicles Mahavamsa, Dipavamsa and Culavamsa, it appears that the city of Tamralipti was established in some pre-Mauryan age. During the reign of the Imperial Mauryas, Tamralipti probably became one of the greatest sea-ports of India and the chief exports of Bengal and Magadha were sent abroad from this city. The importance of Tamralipti increased at the beginning of the 1st century AD due to the establishment of a brisk trade between Bengal, Middle East and Greco-Roman world and references may be found in the writings of Greek and Roman historians[10].

Consequently, Bengal came into contact with the Middle East and Iran, not only in commerce but also in culture. This relation continued until the arrival of the Portuguese in Bengal. In fact, Bengalla viz, an ancient name of Dhaka[15], Satgaon[16] and in later times Hughli became Iranian colonies and centres of Shia theology and Iranian culture before the rise of Jahangirnagar and Makhsusabad. And even afterwards these cosmopolitan ports were preferred to the political capital as a residence by those Iranian emigrants who had no employment or family ties to keep them at the capital. Not only Shia teachers, but many Iranian physicians, perfumers settled in these city-ports, were attracted by the large number of rich patrons in these ports and their neighbouring districts. The stream of migration from Iran to Bengal continued up to the 18th century during the Afghan domination over the Safavi Kings and Nadir Shahs reign[10]. Nevertheless, with Iranian merchants and commodities came soldiers and generals, engineers and craftsmen, as well as men of artistry. This contact was felt in far deeper aspects of life, in trade and commerce, court and society as well as in the domain of arts and letters through which influences of Indian words were brought to bear upon the Persian language long before the Muslim conquest of the land[10].

Iranian emigrants were of course mostly highly educated and well-cultured people. It is notwithstanding that Iranian settlement has had substantial impact in developing education and culture in Bengal as well as in India. Philosophers, physicians, scholars, poets, astronomers, mathematicians, theologians, teachers were among them. They had a great impact on Art and Architecture, Language and literature, religion and politics, culture and many other walks of life of the people of Bengal.

3.2.2. Sufis

At the early period of Islam most of the Priests were Sufis. Sufis and darvishes accompanied the caravan of Traders, Princes and Soldiers to preach Islam in the concerned localities. In this way, thousands of people embraced Islam. No doubt, our forefathers had also accepted Islam and got acquainted with the knowledge of the Quran and Sunnah in Arabic and Persian upon their spiritual
propagation. On the other hand, the commencement of the Sufis in this region and compilation of numerous books on theology and mysticism by them influenced the process of development of the Persian language here. Whole activities had been organized completely, centering the Khankah and Dar-gah[17]. The eminent sufis of this era(872-1575 A.D.) are: Hazrat Bayezid Bostami(872 A.D.), Shaikh Baba Adam Shaheed(1119 A.D.), Shaikh Nimatillah Badakhshani, Shaikh Ahmad Taki(1169 A.D.), Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrissi of Pandua(d. 1225 A.D.), Shaikh Jalal Muirad-i-Yemani of Sylhet(d. 1347 A.D.), Shaikh Anki Sirajuddin(1236-1325 A.D.), Maulana Ata of Dinajpur(alive between 1300 and 1380 A.D.), Shaikh Ala-ul-Haq(d. 1398 A.D.), Shaikh Sharaf Uddin Abu Tawama, and so on[18].

A famous Sufi Sayyed Ashraf Jahangir Simnani, who came to Bengal(d. 1405 AD), makes the following observation on Sufi movement: “There was no village in Bengal where a saint had not reached and settled down”[19]. These mystic’s contributions and their natural adaptation in local villages brought a significant impact on indigenous culture and society.

4. Dynastic Features

4.1. Khalji and sultanate period(1203-1576 A.D.)

Bengal has always been regarded as a country of enormous wealth and the courts of the Sultans and Princes have always been centres of attraction for a large number of scholars moved by a desire for fame or wealth. Many great foreign scholars were attracted to Bengal by the hope of receiving monetary aid in serving the cause of Persian language and literature. Traders and Mystics have contributed a lot in spreading Persian language in Bengal as well as in the Sub-continent, no doubt. But, after having the Muslim domination here and formation of reigning dynasties by them, Persian attained the status of court language and spread rapidly through out the Sub-continent and Bengal as well.

Qadi Ruknuddin Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad al’-Amidi of Samarqand is the first Muslim scholar of Bengal. He was a famous Hanafi jurist, theologian, Sufi and the author of the Kitabul Irshad and founder of the science of al-Khilal wal-jadl(dialectics)[10]. He came to Bengal during the rule of Ali Mardan Khalji(1210-1213 AD)[20]. It is said that he had converted to Islam a learned Yogi, Bhojar Brahmin, after a long discussion. He was also Qadi of Lakhnauti during this period for some time before his return to Bokhara. He subsequently died there on the 9th Jumada II, 1218 A.D. He translated a Yogic work ‘Amratakunda’, i.e. the ‘cistern of Nectar’, a book on ‘Yogaic’ philosophy, with its practical application to human being, from Sanskrit into Persian, which was presented him by the Yogi[21][22].

Nasiruddin Mahmud Bogra Khan(1283-91 A.D.), eldest son of Sultan Ghiyathuddin Balban, the Emperor Delhi(1281-1291 A.D), was a generous patron of art and litterateurs. Many poets and literatures like Shamsuddin Dabir and Qadi Athir came to Bengal from Delhi and under his patronization. They played a significant role in flourishing Persian literature in Bengal[10]. He had also been very kind to the famous poet Amir Khasraw of Delhi. Khasraw acknowledged his gratitude to him on several occasions during the course of his writing[23]. He composed qasidah in his praise. Amir Khasraw came to Bengal three times and he made his third and last journey to Lakhnauti and Oudh in 1323 AD[10]. He wrote a historical Mathnavi entitled Qiran-us Sadain at the request of Sultan Mu’izzuddin Kaibad(1287-1290 AD). The theme of the work is a quarrel between Sultan Nasiruddin Bogra Khan and Kaikobad and their meeting and reconciliation on the bank of the river.
Saru i.e. Saraju. This was completed in 1289 AD. It is indeed a collection of brilliant historical pen-pictures.

Shaikh Sharafuddin Abu Tawwamah, the teacher and father-in-law of the famous saint of Bihar Shaikh Sharafuddin Yahya Munyari, came to Sonargaon in between 1282-1287 A.D[10]. He devoted himself to maintain a ‘madrasah’ for his students and ‘Khanqah’ for his disciples, which were leading center of learning in that age[7]. His book in Persian on mysticism, called ‘Maqamat’ enjoyed enormous popularity even in the author’s own lifetime[7]. Shaikh Sharafuddin Yahya Munyari, the son-in-law of Abu Tawwamah, had left behind a dozen of his works. For instance: Fawaidi Rukni, Irshad al Talibin, Ma’dani Ma’ani, Risalat al-Makkiyah Aqa’id-i-Ashrafi, dealing with Sufism and related subjects. Besides, more than three hundred of his letters written to dignitaries like Sultans, Shaikhs and Qadis have also been discovered and published.

During the reign of Roknuddin Kaukaus(1291-1298 A.D.), the son of Sultan Nathiruddin Bogra Khan, ‘Nam-i-Haq’ a book on ‘Fiqh’ was written in elegant Persian, in poetical form on Islamic Law, at Sonargan. This book has also been ascribed to Shaikh Sharafuddin Abu Tawwamah but actually it was written by one of his disciples on the basis of his teachings. The author’s introduction will bear testimony to it. For instance: (4)I tried up to my ability; I put forward the Fiqh in the garb of verse. (9)This is a reminiscence of Sharaf for you; whose name is spread all over the world. (10)His ancestry and birth-place is Bukhara; he got education and other achievements in Khurasan[7][24]. So, the Sharaf of verses 9 may be identified with(Sharafuddin) Abu Tawwamah; but it also suggests that he was not the author himself; rather from his teachings, someone else, probably his disciple, compiled the book. Nevertheless, in preceding verses the writer always used the first person as quoted above in the verse No. 4.

During this period one madrasa was built at Tribeni in Hughly in the year 1298 AD. The Persian inscription[10]. of Sultan Kaukaus proved that Persian was highly developed and popular at this time. During the reign of Sultan Shamuddin Firuj Shah(1301-1322 AD) another Madrasa was built at Tribeni in 1313 AD by one Jafar Khan, which was known as Darul Khairat[25].

During the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah(1390-1409 A.D.), Sonargaon flourished as a centre for famous writers, Literatures and Faqihs i.e. Islamic Law Attorneys. Persian prose and poems as well as Muslim culture were developed immensely during this age. As S. M. Iqram observes: “Perhaps it was the golden age of Persian literature in Bengal.”[26][27]. It can be felt by a love-poem of the great mystic poet Khawaza Hafiz of Shiraz. He composed it in response to the extempore hemistich “Sāqī hadīthe sarv o gūl o īāleh mīravad” (O Cupbearer! The tale of the Cypress, the Rose and the Tulip is going on) of Sultan Ghiyathuddin and his invitation to the poet to visit Bengal[28]. We may quote here translation of some odes for instance:

O Cupbearer! The tale of the Cypress, the Rose and the Tulip is going on
And with the three washers, this dispute is going on.
All the parrots(poets) of Hindustan have become sugar shattering,
That this Persian candy(odes), to Bengal is going on.

During this period Great Sufi Shaikh Nur Qutb Alam wrote Akhbar-ul Akhyar. It is said that he and Sultan Ghiyasuddin were class-mate and both of them were educated by a famous scholar, Shaikh Hamiduddin Kunj Nashin of Nagaur of Birbhum district[29].

The court of Roknuddin Barbak Shah(1459-1474 A.D.), was graced by the presence of numerous scholars like Amir Zain
Harawi, Poet laureate; Amir Shihabuddin Hakim Kirmani, the pride of physician and compiler of a Persian lexicon entitled ‘Farhangi Amir Shihabuddin Kirmani. And poets like Mansur Shiraji; Malik Yusuf bin Hamid; Sayyid Jalal; Sayyid Muhammad Rukun etc. ‘Farhangi-Ibrahimii’ the most important and earliest Persian lexicon in the sub-continent, was composed by Maulana Ibrahim Qawwam Faruqi during this period. The work is better known as ‘Sharafnamah’, for it was dedicated to the memory of Makhdum Sharafuddin Yahya munyari. This remarkable compilation marks a significant progress in the development of Persian studies in Bengal[7][8].

ShamsYusuf Shah(1474-1481 A.D.), was a vastly learned, virtuous and good administrator. A port of land famed as ‘Darasbari’ i.e. ‘site of reading room or academy’ in Gouda, where a large dilapidated brick-built structure exists known as ‘Darasbari masjid’. On the basis of an inscription found under the heap of that place and of other information, it can be assumed that a masjid and madrasah complex was build there by the Sultan in 1479 A.D[10].

During the Hussein Shahi Bangle, specially, in the reign of Alauddin Hussein Shah(1493-1519 A.D.) the usage of Persian and Arabic was wide spread in this locality. During this time Muhammad Budai, better known as Sayyid Mir Alawi, wrote a book on archery entitled, ‘Hidayatu-ur-Rumi’[30] containing twenty-seven chapters. Thus the Sultanate period of Bengal from 1201-1576 A.D., when the benevolent and cultured Sultans ruled Bengal, paved the ground for further development of Persian studies and culture as well.

4.2. Mughal period(1576-1757 A.D.)

With the establishment of Mughal authority in Bengal, Persian language and culture paved the way to a steady development of art and literature. During the Mughal period, Persian language and literature had reached the highest stages of development and inserted huge influence on the local language and literature. The pace of cultural growth continued with the same enthusiasm that was evident in the earlier era. As Dr. Enamul Hoque points out:

During the Mughal period the study of Persian got special consideration. Despite the fact that Persian was a court language in the pre-Mughal period, the study of Arabic as a religious language was very popular among the Muslims......In the Mughal period not only in the court but in every sphere of life a lot of attention was given to Persian language[31].

Contemporary and later chronicles and biographers have referred to the dignitaries of learning at the courts of the Mughal governors like: Munim khan, Islam khan, Qasim khan, Shah Shuja, Shayesta Khan and Mirjumla, who encouraged Persian poetry and offered asylum to many poets, who migrated to Bengal. Mirza Jafar Beg Qazvini another immigrant poet in Bengal during Akbar’s rule, compiled a Masnavi called Shirin-o-Khusrau following the style of Nizzami Ganjawi. Mirza Nathan, a petty military officer, also wrote the famous historical work ‘Baharistan-i-Ghaibi that contains references to numerous soldier poets such as Luqman Mir Qasim and Malik Mubarak, who accompanied the army in the field of battle. They also composed poems commemorating the victories and achievements of soldiers in the battle-field in this book. Mirza Nathan who served in Bengal for about twenty years and gives an explicit account of events that took place during Emperor Jahangir’s reign in Bengal and Assam. Mir Jumla from Isfahan was himself an accomplished scholar and poet as well as the author of a kulliyat containing twenty thousand verses[9].

Muhammad Sadiq, the author of the famous historical and biographical work ‘Subhi-Sadiq’[32] who came to Bengal in the company of Qasim Khan, governor of Bengal was
sent by Shahjahan in 1628 AD. He attached himself to the court of Shah Shuja when the latter became the governor of Bengal in 1639. The ‘Subh-i-Sadiq’ mentions the names of a number of Persian litterateurs residing in Jahangirnagar and contains extracts from the compositions of the poets several of whom were soldiers by profession. Another renowned contribution of him is Shahid-i Sadiq. Abdul Hamid Lahuri the author of the ‘Padshahnama’ describes him as an embodiment of the sciences and traditions, excelling above others in theology, medicine and mathematics. Among the remaining renowned historians of the age, Mir Muhammad Masum compiled the ‘Tariikh-i-Shah Shuja’(completed in 1660 AD.) under the patronage of Shah Shuja himself[9].

Shahabuddin Talish, a chronicler of Mir Jumla who accompanied his master on his military campaigns in Coochbihar and Assam, compiled an authentic account of Assam entitled ‘fath i lbriyya’ in 1663[9].

In the early 18th century Murshid Quli Khan established an independent subadari in Bengal. It led to another influx of poets and writers from strife-torn Iran and northern India to the capital city of Murshidabad, which attracted quite a number of intellectuals and versifiers from the eastern parts of Bengal particularly from Dhaka. Nawab Nasratjang, Nawab Nazim of Dhaka from 1796 to 1823 wrote a Persian history book named ‘Tariikh-i-Nasratjangi’. The edition was prepared by the eminent linguist Harinath De(1877-1911)[33]. It was published by the Asiatic society at Kolkata in 1908.

Ahwal-i-Mahabat Jang(1748 AD), Hadiqat al-Safa(a biographical works on Persian poets), Maj-us-i Yusufi of Yusuf Ali and Waqi’at-i-Fath-i-Bangala(1748 AD) were among the most specific literary works during the reign of Nawab Ali Vardi[34].

Thus it is apparent that the Muslim rulers of Sultani and Mughal periods of Bengal, besides the expansion of their power, encouraged the scholars, Sufis, saints, dervishes, to build mosques, madrasahs, khankahs and facilitated pious Muslims visiting the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Scholars in their turn wrote books on Islamic sciences and literature, paid special attention to the development of the study of Hadith, Tasawwuf, Persian literature, Lexicon, Grammar, Philosophy etc and maintained academic and imparted instructions to the people. This atmosphere helped to mingle the knowledge and experiences of the local inhabitants, which resulted in a socio-cultural revolution in the region.

4.3. British period

In 1757 A.D. Siraj Uddoula, Nawab of Bengal Bihar and Urissah, was defeated by the East India Company at the historical battle of Palassey. It was due to the treachery of his Commander in Chief, Mir Zafar Ali Khan. Consequently, the British rule started in this region and continued for about two hundred years. In fact, Persian dominated unto the first century of the British rule in Bengal. “Tariikh-e Bangala”(1863 A.D.) of Munshi Salim Ullah, Muzaffarnama(1772 AD) of Karam Ali, “Siyarul Motaakkherin”(1783 A.D.) of Golam Hossein Tabatabai, “Siraj Ussalatin”(1787 A.D.) of Golam Hossein Selim etc., are the best momento of Persian masterpieces, compiled during this period. Considering the high position of Persian in the society, the British Government was obliged to continue the use of Persian as an official language for about eighty years(1757 to 1837 A.D.) after the establishment of her rule over the region.

In 1882 A.D. Nawab Abdul Latif, highlighting the social importance of the study of Arabic and Persian, expressed his comments to the ‘Hanter – Education – Commission,’ as followings:
Unless a Mohamedan is a Persian and Arabic scholar, he cannot attain a respectable position in Mohamedan society, i.e. he will not be regarded as a scholar. And unless he has such a position, he can have no influence in the Mohamedan community.

The most outstanding figure worth mentioning in this context is that of Agha Ahmad Ali. A scholar, grammarian and author, whose ancestors accompanied Nadir Shah to India. Agha Ahmad Ali was born in Dhaka around 1783 and earned considerable fame by writing ‘Muayyid-i-Burhan’ and ‘Shamshir-Tiztar’ the two Persian dictionaries in the Sub-continent which are famous even today. Among his other scholarly works are ‘Risala-i-Tarana’, ‘Haft-Asman’.

Khwaja Haidar Jan Shaiq called Bulbul-i-Bangala i.e parrot of Bengal by Ghalib. He left behind a Diwan in Persian verses as well as a book of epistles. Other celebrated Persian composers are:

a) Khwaja Abdur Rahim Saba, whose magnum opus in Persian prose was called ‘Tarih-i-kashmiriyan-i-Dhaka’.

b) Khwaja Ahasanullah Shaheen, a great patron of Persian poets and writers, inspired Mirza Mahmud Shirazi Makhmur to write in elegant Persian a history of the Husaini Dalan, the historic Imambara of Dhaka.

c) Maulvi Abdul Ghafur Nassakh[36][37] was also a skilled creative writer in both Persian poetry and prose. His major work in Persian is ‘Tazkiratul Ma’asirin’ a literary biography.

d) Syed Muhammad Baqir Tabataba’i migrated from Iran to Bengal and settled in Dhaka where he died in 1910 and lies buried in the Husaini Dalan. His anthology of exquisite odes and panegyrics proved highly popular among the literary critics.

The other notable Persian poets of Dhaka were Abdul Munim Zauqi, Munshi Waris Ali Zia, Agha Mahmud Ali, Masihuddin Shurish, Kazimuddin Siddiqi, Maulana Fazlul Karim, Shah Burhanullah, Munshi Jalauddin and Maulvi Muazzamuddin ‘Sa’id’[9].

But no account of Dhaka’s contributions to Persian studies can possibly be complete without mentioning the services of Maulana Ubaidullah-al-Ubaidi Sohrawardi(1834-1885 A.D). As superintendent of the Dhaka Alia Madrasa, he was an institution himself, while he lived in the city. The quality of his Persian verses reflects the style of classical masters like Sa’di, Hafiz, Jami, Sa’ib, Naziri and Ghalib. His enormous work is Divan-i-Obaidi, and another excellent one is ‘Dastan-i-Parsi Amuz’ in five volumes, a standard work on Persian grammar[9].

Hakim Habibur Rahman[d.1947A.D.] another dignitary of Dhaka is invariably connected with the cultivation of Persian learning, as he was very much attached with Arabic and Urdu studies. His bibliographical work, ‘Salasa-i-Ghassala’ gives an account of 173 Persian works written in Bengal[9].

Aside from Dhaka, the Chittagong area of Bangladesh has also been conspicuous in fostering the cause of Persian[9]. The most prominent of them are: Hakim Mohammad Husain Alawi who wrote ‘Makhzanul Adwiya’, Khan Bahadur Hamidullah who published his ‘Ahadisul Khawanin’ in 1871 A.D. Among Chittagong’s little known Persian poets were Maulana Abdul Awwal of Sandwip, Muhammad Abdul Ali, Maulvi Fazul Kabir Shauq, Maulvi Faizullah Islamabadi, Muhammad Sulaiman Arman and Abdul Ali Durri[37].

Sylhet region, which flourished during the medieval period as a leading center of Persian-speaking Muslim missionaries, played a remarkable role in disseminating Persian learning in the region. Syed Shah Israil, the author of ‘Ma’danu’l Fawa’id,’ and Muhammad Arshad of Baniachong, who wrote ‘Zaraul Musannif’. Syed Raihanuddin of Pail
was a noted Persian poet who wrote ‘Khwabnama’ and masnavi ‘Gul Bakaoli’[38].

The Faridpur district of Bangladesh is on a level important in connection with the promotion of Persian language and literature. The Qadi family of Rajapur holds a pre-eminent position and the most distinguished literary figure of the family is none other than Abdul Ghafur Nassakh whose contribution has been mentioned earlier. His father Qazi Faqur Muhammad, the author of several works chief among which is the ‘Jamiut Tarwarikh,’ a universal history, published in Calcutta in 1836. Faqir Muhammad’s two other Sons, Abdul Hamid ‘Hameed’ and Abdul Bari Sayd were also accomplished poets[9].

Abu Muin Azudddin ‘Azud’, Shah Syed Reyzatullah, Nasiruddin Ahmad, Samsamuddin ‘Samsam’ and Ashrafulluddin Shraf were among the leading Persian poets of Comilla.

Barisal produced poets like Muhammad Fazil, Ilaichiram Taleb, while versifiers such as Syed Najmuuddin Ahmad ‘Nadir’ and Muhammad Abdul Hai ‘Akhtar’ hailed from Mymensingh.

Syed Abdur Rashid Shahzadpuri from Pabna was a learned man with a sagacious mind but displayed his mastery in Persian verse by composing excellent ‘Qasidas’ on the model of Iranian poets like Khaqani and Urfi[9].

It is mentionable that, due to the introduction of the printing presses and the establishment of modern libraries in the nineteenth century, the study of Persian rapidly spread throughout Bengal. Hindu kings and Rajas also participated in studying Persian like before. Even Raja Rammohon Ray, founder of the Brammo Society and reformer of Hindu religion, used Persian as a vehicle to preach his religious and reformatory ideas.

He wrote his famous book ‘Tohfatul Mowwahhadin’ on Tawhid in Persian and also brought out a Persian newspaper namely Mirat-ul Akhbar which was the first Persian newspaper in India and Iran as well. Prince Dwarkanath Tagore, with some other persons, also published the newspapers ‘Bengal Herald’ and ‘Bangadoot’ which contained a Persian section. The then Government has granted a licence on 5th May, 1829 AD for publishing a weekly newspaper namely ‘Bengal Harald’ in English, Bengali, Persian and Nagree[39].

It would not be excessive to state that apprehending the spiritual and cultural value of Persian, the British Government took the initiative to efface the importance of Persian. In 1837 A.D. the East India Company prohibited the use of Persian as an official language by enacted the following Act:

a) It is hereby enacted that, from the first Day of December 1837, it shall be lawful for the Governor—General of India in Council, by an Order in Council, to dispense, either generally, or within local limits as may to him meet, with any provision of any Regulation of the Bengal Code which enjoins the use of the Persian language in any Judicial proceeding, or in any proceeding relating to the Revenue and to prescribe the language and character to be used in such proceedings.

b) And it is hereby enacted that, from the said day it will be lawful for the said Governor—General for India in Council, by an order in Council, to delegate all or any of the powers given to the said governor-general of India in Council seem meet (Act no. XXIX of 1837 passed by the Honorable president of the Council of India in Council, on the 20th November 1837).

However, a memorandum, signed by eight hundred dignitaries from Kolkata, was submitted to the British Government, demanding the cancellation of the aforesaid declaration. In 1839 A.D[40], another memorandum, signed by four hundred and eighty-one digni-
taries from Dhaka, was submitted to the Government of Bengal through Justice J.F.G. Cook. It would be convenient to quote here some of the important sections of the memorandum:

a) The benefits from the use of Persian are – that it is used over a very large extent of country and is the same in all parts – the letters are clear and the subject written easily understood. To reject this for Bengalee cannot be considered any good.

b) The cleanness of expressions in Persian cannot be reached in the Bengalee language. The first may also be written in various styles, viz., with care and clearly or in a careless and off hand manner.

c) Many gentlemen understand Persian well, and people can be understand it, when read, as it is of much general use and sufficient for common purpose may be learnt in a short time.

d) All persons whether Hindus or Mussalmans wish the language to be still continued, and are sorry to hear that it is to be abolished, from this no benefit can be arise to the Government and it is likely that detriment will ensue from the use of Bengalee.

(True Translation from Persian)[41]

Considering the above points it can be assumed that Persian had a very strong position among both Hindus and Muslims, but the memorandum failed to bring any change in the British policy and finally the declaration was enacted. Nevertheless, the study of Persian still continued. Educated people cultivated Persian.

Girish Chandra Sen, a great exponent of Brahmo Samaj, wrote a number of books some of which were translations of Persian works like Gulistan and Bustan of Sadi, Gulstan-i-Raz of Mahmud Shubistary, Tadhkirat-ul-Auliya of Fariduddin Attar, letters of Shaikh Sharfuddin Yahya Maneri, etc.

Rabindranath Tagore’s father Maharishi Devendranath Tagore, an ardent preacher of Brahmo Samaj, was a devotee of Hafiz of Shiraz. Maharishi used to quote the couplets of Hafiz so frequently in his conversations, letters and writings that it seemed as if he was hafiz(a person who keeps the holy Quran by heart) of Diwan-i-Hafiz[42]. Whenever any incident or any change took place in his life he expressed his inner feelings through the poems of Hafiz[42].

Besides Upanishad, Diwan-i-Hafiz played a vital role in moulding Maharishis religious thoughts. He used to recite Brahmo Sangit and poems of Hafiz till midnight for getting all the worldly affairs[42]. Ajit Kumar Chakraborty is of the opinion that Maharishi was so impressed by Hafiz that, perhaps, he did not accept the impact of Vaishnav poets of Bengal[43].

The Asiatic Society of Bengal was founded by Sir William Jones, a critic, a philosopher, a linguist, an author, with the view that in order to understand the civilization, culture and religion of a country, one must study its language and socialize with its people. It is a landmark in the history of Persian studies in Bengal. Asiatic Society has rendered a laudable service in this field during the last two hundred years. Thousands of Persian manuscripts, most of which were written in Bengal, are being preserved here. Dr. Md. Ishaque, a renowned scholar, established the Iran society in Kolkata in 1944 AD with the objective of promoting Persian studies. The Society since its initiation is actively engaged in achieving its goal. The Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, by introducing “The Munshi Aftab Ud din Trust Fund lecture,” has made some sincere efforts to promote Persian studies here.

Despite all these initiatives Persian is losing its glory day by day. Nevertheless, Persian is still taught at madrasas, schools, colleges and universities. The Department of Persian at the University of Dhaka is one of the original
departments that exists since the foundation of the University in 1921 AD. Furthermore, almost all the important libraries in Bengal as well as in the sub-continent contain Persian manuscripts and competent scholars are editing as well as publishing some of them every year.

5. Influence of Persian on Bengali Language

As we have discussed earlier, after the arrival of the Aryans in Iran and in the sub-continent, a mingled culture as well as language and literature evolved in both the lands. In Iran first of all Old Persian, then Avesta, and later Pahlavi, and after the advent of Islam in Iran, modern Persian was evolved. In the sub-continent, on the other hand, first of all Vedic language, and later, under the suggestions of Panini, Sanskrit was developed. Prakrit was evolved from Sanskrit and from Prakrit derived Apavramsha. According to Suniti Kumar Chatarjee and some other scholars, the Bengali Language developed from Magadhi-Prakrit-Apavramsha. However, Dr. Shahidullah and Grierson considered that Bengali developed from Goudi-Prakrit-Apavramsha[4].

In fact, Bengali language as well as literature developed under the patronization of Muslim rulers. At the earlier stage, during the Palas(eighth –eleventh century AD) a group of Buddhist priests, famed as Sahajiya, used to compose their religious songs, called Charyyagitika in Apavramsha language. This was the first initiative to develop Bengali language and literature[4]. The Pala kings offered them all sorts of assistance, but in the middle of the twelfth century the Senas became the ruler of Bengal by overthrowing the Palas. The Senas were Hindus and as Sanskrit was their religious language, they offered their full support to flourish the language. As a result, the flow of the evolution of Bengali language, which had evolved during the Pal dynasty, was interrupted[4]. After establishment of Muslim rule in Bengal, Bengali language and literature paved the way for further development under the direct patronization of the Muslim rulers and intelligentsia. Thus, within a century, Bengali language and literature got its own style and shape[4]. In this regard, the Encyclopedia of Islam observes:

Bengali sprang up as a distinct branch of the Indo-Aryan language about three hundred years before Muslim rule in Bengal and flourished as a regional literature a century and a half after the Muslim conquest. But it did not exist either as a language or as a literature before Bengal came in contact with Islam and the Muslims[44].

It can be said that if the Muslims in Bengal had not overthrown the Sena dynasty, the development of Bengali language would have been delayed for some centuries. In this connection Dr. Denesh Chandra Sen points out:

This elevation of Bengali to a literary status was brought about by several influences, of which the Mohammedan conquest was undoubtedly one of the foremost. If the Hindu kings had continued to enjoy independence, Bengali would scarcely have got an opportunity to find its way to the courts of kings[45].

Moreover, by 1350 Bengali had also become the common language of the immigrants and settlers because of their acceptance of this country as their homeland and because of inter-marriage and social intercourse. By the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries, the Muslim kings of Bengal appeared to be active patrons of Bengali literature. But contact with the Muslims certainly brought in a number of Persian words into Bengali during the early period of Muslim rule[46].

The Mughal rule in Bengal, which began with Akber’s conquest of the province,
caused the Bengali language to be exposed to a greater degree than before to the influence of Persian. By the death of Akbar in 1605 AD, a synthesis had been effected, out of which arose an Indo-Muslim culture, and the Urdu(Hindustani) speech became its vehicle. Urdu made itself the inheritor and propagator of the Persian and Muslim Spirit in India, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; when it came to Bengal. As a result, Persian words, which formerly were brought into Bengali mostly directly, now began to be admitted in larger numbers through Urdu into Bengali as well as the various other vernaculars of the land. The result of it all was that towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Bengali speech of the upper classes, even among the Hindus, was highly Persianised. Urdu, Bihari, and Bangali Munshis taught Persian to sons of rich people, and there were maktabs and madrasas frequented both by Hindus and Muslims[46]. In this connection Dr. Mohammad Shahidullah points out:

Persian being the court language was as much cultivated by the people in general, Hindus and Mohammadans alike, during the Mohammadan rule, as English is now. Knowledge of Persian was the only passport to the Government service at that time[47].

It is mentionable that some Persian, as well as Arabic and Turkish, words not only began to increase in numbers, but also in some cases drove out some genuine Bengali words. For instance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bengali</th>
<th>Persian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>melâni</td>
<td>vidâi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buhit</td>
<td>jâhâj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dash sha</td>
<td>hâjâr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tutt</td>
<td>kam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bangla Vocabulary is greatly affected by Persian, Turkish and Arabic through Persian in almost all aspects of our life.

a) Names of Muslims – Arabic, such as: Ali, Mustafa etc.; Persian, such as: Rustam, Aftab, Shirin etc.;
b) Names of Hindus and Shikhs such as: Lal Bahadur, Jawhar Lal, Jashwant Sing etc.;
c) Some titles conferred by the British such as: Khan Bahadur, Rai Bahadur etc.;
d) Administration, warfare, revenue and law: phouj/soldiers, takht/throne, jarimana/compensation, nalish/complain etc.;
e) Kingly state, chase: toshhildar/Collector, badsha/King, jomidar/landlord etc.;
f) Religions, races and professions: Ihudi/Jew, Hindo/Hindu, Phiringi/English or European, dardji/tailor, khoda/God;
g) Education: kagadj/paper, kalam/pen, pir/clergyman etc.;
h) Luxury, trades, arts and crafts: atar/perfume, ayna/mirror, golab/rose, dalan/building etc.;
i) Body-organisms: baju/arm, Sina/chest etc.;

j) Garments: rumal/handkerchief, pirating/night shirt, etc.;
k) Foods: korma/preserved meat, kofta/meatball, halwa/sweet etc.;
l) Business: karigar/worker, dokandar/shopkeeper etc.;
m) Family and relatives: baba/father, ma/mother, dada/grandfather, damad/son-in-law etc.;

n) Places: asman/sky, jamin/earth, bajar/market, hamamkhana/bathroom, etc.;
o) Birds: bulbul/nightingale, tota/parrot, janoar/animal etc.;
p) Places, cities and provinces: Nobabpur, Gulestan, Rajsahi, rangpur etc.

Furthermore, Persian suffixes like i, dan, dani, badj, giri are used to form Bengali adjective, abstract noun etc., e.g. desh + i = deshi(country-made), phul + dani = phulde(rose), dokan + dar = dokandar(shopkeeper), mamlabadj(litigant) babu + giri = babugiri(interested in fashion). Persian words nar(male) and madi(male) denote gender in Bengali, e.g., nar+ paira(piheon) = narpaira(male pigeon), madi
+ paira = madi paira (female pigeon). Likewise marda and madi before a Bengali word of common gender denote the male and female like marda kukur (dog), madi kukur (bitch) [47].

Generally speaking around 80000 Persian words can be found in the Bengali language. The development of Bengali literature, especially, mediaeval Bengali Literature had greatly been influenced by Persian language and Literature. I personally believe that, actually, the number of Persian words in Bengali language may range up to 15000 if the proper investigation is made.

6. Influence of Persian on Bengali Literature

After the establishment of Muslim rule in the region, a large number of local people converted to Islam. The newly converted people were in need of some knowledge about their new religion, like, the lives of Prophets, principles of Islam, history of Islam, new culture, literature, especially, romantic traditions and so on. Accordingly, the Muslim writer and intelligentsia got initiated to translate some Persian texts into Bengali under the patronisation of Muslim rulers. They also wrote books based on Persian literary themes. Muslim efforts towards original Bengali composition or rendering Islamic texts into Bengali resulted in the introduction of numerous Persian words and theme into the Bengali literature. Shek Subhodaya, a Sanskrit hagiology on Shaykh Jalaluddin Tabrizi (d. 1225 AD), and Niran-janer Rushma, a Bengali ballad by Ramai Pandit, contain sufficient materials indicative of the growing Islamic atmosphere in Bengal [44]. Muslim Sultans, especially, Sultans of Hussain Shahi Bengal, had given more impetus to develop Bengali literature frequented by both Hindus and Muslims. As Encyclopedia of Islam points out:

The Sultans of Pandua and Gaud identified themselves with the people and extended their patronage liberally to Bengali literature irrespective of caste and creed. The Bhagvata, Ramayana and Mahabharata were translated into Bengali under their direct patronage; the great poets Vidyapati and Candidas flourished; and Muslims, participating with their Hindu neighbours, opened up new avenues of literary themes primarily derived from Perso-Arabic culture [44].

The first attempt at popularising Bengali among Muslim scholars was conceivably made by the saint-poet Nur Kutb-i Alam (d. 1416 AD) of Pandua, who introduced the Rikhta Style in Bengali, in which half the hemistich was composed in pure Persian and the other half in simple Bengali. The saint was a class-mate of Ghiasudding Azam Shah and a life-long friend of the Sultan, under whose patronage Vidyapati of Mithila and Muhammad Saghir of Bengal, the author of the first Bengali romance Yusuf-Zulaykha, demonstrated their literary talents. Other writers of romances, like Bahram Khan with his Layla-Madjnun, Sabirid khan with his Hanifa-Kayrapari, Donaghazi with his Sayf al-Mulk and Muhammad kabir with his Madhumalati (1583-1588), followed Saghir in quick succession [44].

6.1. Dobhasi Puthi tradition

In lexicographic view of Dobhasi literature, it can be mentioned that, even today the practice of using Arabic and Persian words in order to describe typically Muslim context, is a very common phenomena. Muslim writers were being habituated with this practice from the very early days in order to develop Bengali nomenclatures. Shah Muhammad Saghir, the great Bengali poet of the court of Sultan Ghiasuddin Azam Shah (1589-1409 AD) [4], referred to holy books as ‘Kitab’, knowledgeable men as ‘alim’, Zainuddin, (fifteenth century AD) used a bulk of these typical phrases in his Rasul Vijay. For instance, ‘mukut’ was replaced by ‘Taj’, ‘arohi’ was by ‘sawar’ and ‘pitamahi’ was by ‘dada’. This
trend became more obvious in the works of the later poets, like Sayyid Sultan (1550-1648 AD). At the very outset of his work of art, Shab-i-Miraj, he used a large number of pronouns: ‘Allah’, ‘Rasule Khuda’, ‘Noore Muhammad’, ‘peer paigambar’ ‘Kitab’, ‘aliman’ ‘alim’. On the basis of the above findings, it can be stated that Bengali literature is profoundly indebted to Persian literature, especially, romantic tradition. Shah Muhammad Saghir, the author of Yusuf-Zulaikha, was the most profound composer of this genre who transfigured the story into Bengali following the Iranian origins like Yusuf Zulaikha of Abul Qasem Firdausi, Tafsir of surah Yusuf by Ahmad Al-Ghazzali, Hadith as well as other perso-Arabic sources[4]; Daulat Uzir Bahram Khan, the writer of Laily-Majnu; Daulat Qazi of Arakan (1600-1638 A.D.), author of Ior Chandrani or Satl Maina; Alaol(1607-1680 AD), the most famous writer of Padmavati, Saiful Mulk Badiuzzamal, Haft Paikar and Sikander Name; Abdul Hakim(1620-1680 AD), author of Yusuf –Zulaikah; Querishi Magan, author of Mrigavati[4]. Among the persianised Dobhasi Puthis, the most celebrated literary specimens of successive period are as follows: Yusuf-Zulaikha and Amir Hamza(1st part) and Hatem Tai by Ghribullah, ‘Madhumalati’, ‘Amir Hamza’; ‘Jaiguner Puthi’ and ‘Hatem Tai’ by Syed Hamza; ‘Mrigavati’ and ‘Shahnama’ by Arif; ‘Shaheede Karbala’ by Janab Ali; ‘Keccha Alif-Laila’ by Mafizuddin Ahmad; ‘Alif Laila’by Raushan Ali etc.

6.2. Heroic tradition

The tradition of “Vijay Kavyas” or heroic verses was evolved during the early eighteenth century, incorporating the ‘vijay’ or the victories of the Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad(SAWS) over the infidels. ‘Rasul Vijay’ of Zainuddin is the earliest well-known work in this tradition. ‘Rasul Vijay’ and ‘Hanifer Digvijay’ of Shah Barid(or Sabirid) Khan followed the Zainuddin’s style. This pattern was also followed in Sayyid Sultan’s Rasul Vijay, Muhammad Khan’s Hanifar Ladai, Ghribullah’s Jangnama, Heyat Mohammad’s Jangnama and Syed Hamza’s Amir Hamza[18].

6.3. Marsiya-elegiac tradition

The Marsiya, elegiac literature, was developed on the basis of the tragic incident of Karbala. Navivangsha of Sayyid Sultan(1555-1648 A.D), Maktul Hussain(1645 AD) of Mohammad Khan, Jangnama(1723 AD) of Abdul Hakim, and Maltul Hussain(1694 AD) of Mohammad Yaqub were among the most notable contributions of this genre. ‘Muharram Shareef’ of Kaikobad is another important book of this tradition.

6.4. Religious tradition

Furthermore, Sayyid Sultan’s Navibangsha, Shab-i-Miraj, Ofat-i-Rasul and Muhammad Khan’s Maqtul Hussain and Kiyamatnama are among the most celebrated books on religious faith regarding Islamic concept of the origin, evolution, and annihilation of the World and of the final judgement of good and wicked souls. Neeti-Shahstravasta of Muzamil(1430 AD), Neseehatnama of Afzal Ali, Shariatnama of Nasrullah Khan(1560-1625AD), Kifayat-ul-Musalleen of Shaikh Mutallib, Shariatnama of Nasrullah and Kifayatul Musalleen of Shaikh Mutallib, Shahabuddinnama of Abdul Hakim are among the well-known books of the religious themes.

7. Murshidi and Baool Padavalis

In the origination of mystic literary tradition Sufis had a remarkable role no doubt. Their literary traditions fall into two types such as, the tradition of philosophical elucidations of the concept and practices of Spiritual dimentions, and the custom of songs, mainly ‘padavalis’. These include the folk tradition, which relates chiefly ‘Murshidi’ and the ‘baool’ songs. It describes the stages like illumination and self-i-annihilation. These songs are greatly influenced by the mystical
dimension of Persian poets like Hafiz, Rumi, Attar etc. Jnan Pradeep of Sayyid Sultan is one of the most remarkable books of this literary trend. It comprises description about ‘Shariat’ signifying various aspects of the philosophical explanations of different concepts about ‘wahdatul wuzud,’ i.e. Unity of Being, incorporating the theories of Ibnul Arabi and Mujaddid-i Alf-i Sani on the topic. Additionally, it may not be excessive to state that most of the ‘murshidi’ songs, found in Bengal, originated following the thematic expressions of the Mathnavi of Maulana Jalal Uddin Rumi and of the Mantiq-ut-Tair of Shaikh Fariduddin Attar.

8. Epigraphic and Numismatic Evidences

The content of the epigraphs found in Bengal generally contains excerpts from the Holy Quran, the sayings of the Prophet(SAWA), the name of the Sultans, viceroy s, donors, dates of various occasions and other relevant information. Mural writings and numismatic purposes in Persian, related to the early Muslim period, are narrow in number. Arabic continued to maintain the leading position in the mural records of Bengal, during the reign of Royal Governors and Turko-Afghan Sultans. However, the conquest of Bengal by the Mughals in the sixteenth century A.D. marks a turning point in the field of epigraphy. They broke the traditional sanctity of Arabic which was replaced rapidly in the field of epigraphy and Numismatics by Persian. The initial Persian inscriptions were generally composed in prose style, later on, metrical versification became common. There is an analysis below of inscriptions in Persian and in Arabic mixed Persian in order to grasp the development:

Sultani period-Persian-15; Arabic mixed Persian-18.

Mughal period-Persian-24; Arabic mixed Persian-7.

The inscriptions on coins of the sultans of Bengal are in Arabic and of the Mughal rulers are in Persian. The Mughals issued coins from different parts of Bengal. The East India Company also at the beginning issued coins in the name of the Mughal rulers in Persian, the last issue being in 1803 AD, during the 45th year of the Emperor Shah Alam’s reign. It was only in 1834 when the rule of company had extended all over India and the last Mughal ruler, Bahadur Shah, was confined within the Red Fort, the necessity of a uniform coinage appeared for consideration before the Calcutta Mint Committee, which resulted in the introduction of the coins of William the forth in 1835 AD[49].

9. Calligraphy

It is worthwhile mentioning that since the pictorial representation of animate objects is forbidden in Islam, the creative genius directed their artistic talents towards Arabic as well as Persian scripts. Consequently, a variety of calligraphic styles of writing developed. For instance: Kufi, Naskh, Suls, Khat-Bihari, Nastaliq etc. Nastaliq was adopted for writing in Persian in Iran and was introduced in India by Emperor Babur at the first half of the sixteenth century AD. Later, it reached the high water mark of perfection and beauty[49]. The inscriptions of Sultan Sikandar Shah found in the Dargah of Hazrat Shah Ata, a Sufi of Devikut, Dinajpur, dated 765 AH/1363 AD[49], and of Emperor Akber from a mosque in Sherpur, Bogra, dated 989 AH/1582 AD are specimens of good Calligraphy, developed in Bengal. Inscriptions of Chatmohar Mosque, Pabna, built by Masum Khan in 999 AH; Ander Qila mosque of Shaista Khan, Chittagong, built in 1078 AH etc. are among the excellent Persian epigraphs written in Nastaliq style[49].

10. Conclusion

As a matter of fact Iran and Indo-Pak-Bangladesh sub-continent from the remotest past
have had a common ground of cultural activities. This allowed them to maintain a fairly regular interchange of cultural values, linguistic and literary pursuits. These interchanges moulded the lives of the people of these regions in their social, religious, intellectual and artistic spheres. Thus Iran and Bangladesh have had a great experience of multicultural, socio-linguistic and literary amalgamation and assimilation through the ages in order to develop their own cultural, social, literary traditions. Thousands of Bengali words and phrases constituted either taking suffixes or prefixes from Persian or introducing pure Persian words. Persian literature, especially, romantic and Sufi traditions helped Bengali literature develop as the medieval Bengali literature was enlightened by spiritual dimension, shifting from devotionalism to romanticism and humanism. In regards to education it can be stated that the liberal approaches by Muslim rulers widened the scope of education and learning for the common people of the land.

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