

Linguistic Influence of Persian in Assamese Language and Literature

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Abstract:

The advent of Persian in Assam is the result of Muslim invasions, Mughal military campaigns, and diplomatic as well as administrative exchanges between the Ahom Kingdom and the Islamic rulers of India. Consequently, Ahom rulers of Assam were benefited a lot from their contact with the Mughals, particularly in advancing their military knowledge and their methods of administration to Indian standards. That is why Mughal administrative and military terminology became an integral part of the Assamese language. As such, a large number of Perso-Arabic words got mixed in with the Assamese language. Apart from this, some Sufi saints coming from Persian and Arabian countries settled in Assam. They built Khanqah and Dargah for providing Persian education and Islamic teaching. In the 13th century, Hem Saraswati, court poet of King Durlabh Narayan of the Kamata Kingdom, first used a Persian word like "Nafar" (meaning servant) in his poetic composition "Prahlada Charita", which appeared to have been the starting point of the flow of Persian and Arabic words to the Assamese language and literature. During the time of Ahom rule, especially in the time of Srimanta Sankar Deva (1449-1568 A.D.), Perso-Arabic words were frequently used in the Assamese language, viz. Farman (Persian), Haram Khor (Arabic + Persian), Baqi (Arabic). Even the people following the Vaishnavite faith also began to use Perso-Arabic words in their day-to-day conversations. These words penetrated into the Assamese language. In the middle of the 17th century, Ajan Fakir, the most renowned Muslim saint, entered the Ahom Kingdom. He composed a large number of devotional. Songs like Zikir and Zari in the Assamese language containing a lot of Perso-Arabic words like Musalman (Persian), Farman (Persian), Asman (Persian), Aji (Arabic), Kalima (Arabic), etc. Accordingly, the conquest of the Mughals resulted in a rapid development. Assam came into contact with the rest of the country. Then the cultural renaissance started in all spheres of life. Soon the influence of Persian became deeper and eventually Perso-Arabic words mixed with the Assamese thought, and a huge number of Perso-Arabic vocabularies entered into the Assamese language.

Keywords: Invasion, administration, development, conquest, influence.

Introduction:

The advent of Persian language to Assam was the outcome of the years-long contact of the Muslims with this country. It is noted that India came in contact with Muslims in the 8th century when the Arab merchants came to the Malabar coast for trade and commerce. Then the arrival of Muslims in Assam can be traced back to 1205 A.D. when Muhammad ibn Bakhtiyar, along with a large number of military

personnel, first entered Kamrupa to invade Assam in 1205-06 A.D. But he was defeated by the local kings. From this invasion, Muslim emperors of Delhi and their agents in Gaur made many invasions in Assam. As a result of this, a considerable number of Muslim armies were captured by the Ahom army.

As time passed, the captured Muslim armies were released and settled in the nook and corner of the then Kamrupa. Thereafter, these captured Muslim armies were engaged in different works where necessary. Soon they came in deep relation with the Assamese people and got married to local Assamese women. In this way they mingled with Assamese life and society.

Moreover Ahom Kings invited the Muslim artists, musicians, sculptors and engaged them according to their skill in their respective fields. Besides, some scribes who had knowledge in reading and writing Persian and Arabic were also appointed in the Ahom royal court for smooth running of the political and diplomatic functions. Thus all these Muslims played an important role in the activities of the national life. Even they were involved in some non-Islamic culture as well. It is notable that the Marias, a section of Muhammadans, used to worship the Goddess Manasa in Assam. According to S.K. Bhuyan, the Ahom monarch maintained in the court a large number of Muhammadan officials who deciphered Persian correspondence received from outside and drafted letters to foreign sovereigns. Besides, the Ahoms felt the necessity of improving the culture of Persian in their courts for maintaining the relation with Muslim rulers. At that time, Ahom ambassadors were to learn Persian for the appointment of diplomatic service. Towards the later part of Ahom rule, Persian was regularly learnt and studied by Assamese gentry who aspired for higher posts. This opened the door for a large number of Persian words to get currency in Assam. There were also many learned Hindus accomplished in Persian who obtained an easy passport to different high posts, specially in diplomatic service. It is important to say that the influence of Persian and Arabic words is found in the Buranji of Ahom in diplomatic aspects such as Jamadar (Persian), Khuda (Persian), Wakil (Arabic), Tamam (Arabic), Farman (Persian), Sanad (Persian), Darbar (Persian), Khat (Persian), Peshkash (Persian) etc. These words are found in historical chronicles like Kamrupar Buranji which contains numerous diplomatic exchanges between Ahom monarchs and Mughal generals.

In addition, the Farsi parkhyas (Persian translators) were also probably engaged in the teaching of Persian to other officials for the smooth running of their duties. Thus the large admixture of Persian words in the Buranji or historical literature undoubtedly proves that knowledge of Persian formed an essential part of Assamese scholarship in those days.

Linguistic Influence of Persian in assamese language and literature:-

During the ahom rule numerous skillful Muslims occupied prominent position in the government. Some of these Muslims are descendants of defeated soldiers captured by Ahom army. They eventually got married native Assamese girls and adopted local Assamese language and culture. Although they learned Assamese yet they could not give up some Persian and Arabic words used by their ancestors of Turk, Afghan and Mughal. Hence such people while speaking to mass people in the society mixed Persian and Arabic words. Gradually mixture of such Perso-Arabic words started penetrating in Assamese language and literature. It is only because of age-old contact of Assam with the Muhammadan's. Consequently

Assamese people began to learn Persian and Arabic words and they used to speak Perso-Arabic Persian in their conversation.

In 13th century Hem Saraswati, a distinguished court poet of Kamata King, Durlova Narayan first used a Persian word "nafar" in his valuable poem Prahlada Charita, which appeared to have been starting point of the flow of Persian and Arabic words to Assamese language and literature.

Moreover influence of Persian words is found in the buranji of Ahom in diplomatic aspects, such as jamadar (Persian) Khuda (Persian) ukil (Arabic) taman (Arabic) ujir (Persian) etc. similarly Padshah Buranji compiled in 17th century was written in Assamese language, in which a lot of Persian words are visible. For instance jubah, paristan, (Persian) ajab (Arabic) afiyat (Arabic). On the other hand the most outstanding and sustaining contribution the Assamese Muslims of the popular literature of Assam in the Zikirs and Zari. In the middle of 17th century - Hazrat Sahmuran.

During the time of Ahom rule, especially in the time of Srimanta Sankar Deva (1449-1568 AD), Persian and Arabic words were frequently used in day-to-day Assamese language and writings. At that time, the words of Persian and Arabic like wasit, baqi, Farman (Persian), Haram Khor (Arabic + Persian), baqi (Arabic) etc were distinctly used in Assamese language and literature. Even the people who followed Vaishnavite faith began to use Persian and Arabic words in their day-to-day conversations. In course of time these words penetrated into Assamese language.

In the middle of the 17th century, Hazarat Shah Miran alias Ajan Fakir, the most renowned Muslim Saint, entered the Ahom Kingdom to preach, reform and stabilize Islam in the Brahmaputra Valley. Arriving from Baghdad around 1630 during the reign of King Pratap Singha, he focused on unifying local Muslims and integrating Islamic practices (like the call to prayer or Azan) into the region. Then he composed a considerable number of devotional songs like Zikir and Zari in Assamese language containing a lot of Persian and Arabic words, viz: Musalman (Persian), Farman (Persian), Asman (Persian), Pak (Persian), Paida (Persian), Gunahgar (Persian), Aju (Arabic), Kalima (Arabic), Amal-nama (Arabic + Persian), Magrib (Arabic), Momin (Arabic), Dariya (Persian), Kiyamat (Arabic), Badshah (Persian), Behist (Persian) etc.

During the later part of Ahom rule, cultural exchanges held in Assam. It is noted that the cultural exchanges deepened through Hindu-Vaishnavite synthesis, Perso-Arabic administrative assimilation with the neighbouring hill areas. At the same time, knowledge of Mughal administrative and military terminology became an integral part of the Assamese language. Accordingly, administrative, military, and revenue structures absorbed Perso-Arabic titles like Nawabs, Umraos which blended into everyday Assamese.

In modern period the use of Perso-Arabic words in the popular literature is obvious. It is noteworthy to say that some Assamese novels are distinctly influenced by the use of Persian words. In this regard Surujmukhir Swapna by Syed Abdul Malik, Jibanor batat by Bina Baruah, Anuradhar Desh by Fanindra Kumar Dev choudhari etc. are notable. In the novel Surujmukhir Swapna, the novelist has successfully conveys powerful message of optimism, resilience, and the enduring human spirit of hope. Besides the novel highlights the simple lives of rural villager in Dalim gaon along the Dhansiri river.

Besides the writer beautifully used a lot of Perso-Arabic words like Khajna, Kamij, Banduk, polish, namaj, Kharas, suriya, badnam, darkhast (Persian) masjid, id, Tarikh, khabar nur, (Arabic) monajat, Kamij, sinni (Persian) molla (Persian) manjur (Persian), on the contrary Bina Baruah is a distinguished novelist, who wrote his first novel Jibanor batot reflecting the picture of day-today experiences of joy and sorrow of the common people in a rural society. The writer used some Perso-Arabic words to make the novel perfect. For instance maujadar, mahakuma, dastur, rumal, Sadar, Kamij, talika, piyada (Persian) qalam, dukan, hakim, dakhil (Arabic) darkhast, abkari, sanduk (Persian) mahat-dar (Arabic + Persian) Suriya, Sakari, Kasari, Khajna, Khalas, (Persian) dalil (Arabic) Kitab (Arabic) jaib (Arabic) Kitab (Arabic) Kagaj (Persian) nakal-nabis (Arabic + Persian) mukardama (Persian) etc. Besides Anuradhar Desh is another distinguished novel in which the writer Fanindra Kumar Deva Chaudhari conveys the message that life's true value lies in the sincerity of human feelings rather than material gains and losses. In this novel, the writer also impacted by Perso-Arabic words which are used in a beautiful manner, such as musalman, bajar, darwan, sakari, ain (Persian) madi malik (Arabic) Khali (Arabic) shahid (Arabic) pusak, banda, Kalendar Kana talash, pari, Kambal, Sipahi (Persian) be-hisab (Perso-Arabic) barud (Persian) piyan (Persian) Saban (Persian) mana (Arabic) etc.

After novel some modern dramatists have been influenced by Perso-Arabic elements while writing their plays. In this regard Nirmila Anka by Lakshya-dhar Choudhary is notable. The prominent Assamese play writer and author distinctly used some Perso-Arabic words in this social drama. The Perso-Arabic words used here are viz: mahal dar (Arabic + Persian) Kamij (Persian) dawat (Persian) Tabij (Persian) Kalam (Arabic) Kamina (Persian) nalis (Persian). Besides another social drama is Lovita, in which the play writer and legendary poet Jyoti Prasad Agarwala expresses the deep disruption and emotional turmoil caused by the 1942 Quit India Movement. The play writer used some Perso-Arabic words in the drama in a beautiful way. The Perso-Arabic words used are ain-qanun (Perso-Arabic) kharij (Persian) be-ijjat (Perso-Arabic) Alla (Arabic) hukum (Arabic) khabar (Arabic) baki (Arabic) duniya (Arabic) etc. Apart from this Magribar Ajan by Sharada Bardoloi is another social drama based on the nobility of a Muslim youth. The dramatist is influenced by a lot of Persian and Arabic words which are visible here such as Sahab, Kitab, ma (Arabic) manjur (Persian) Kabar (Arabic) qasam (Arabic) meherban (Persian) Khalas (Persian) adab (Arabic) namaj (Persian) maulobi (Persian) Kazia (Persian) be-ijjat, be- (Persian), ijjat (Arabic) beiman, be- (Persian) iman (Arabic) haj (Arabic) dukan (Arabic) mohar (Arabic) hisab (Arabic) be faida, be- Persian, faida (Arabic)

After drama some modern poets are impacted by Perso-Arabic words in their poems. In this connection Atul Ch. Hazarika is a modern poet of Assamese literature who composed one of his famous poem Lal Killa containing some Perso-Arabic words like Karagar (Persian) bandi (Persian) Farman (Persian) Taj Abajan Aba (Arabic) maidan (Arabic) tufan (Persian) ustad (Arabic) Salam (Arabic) Kaban (Arabic) Asman (Persian) duniya (Arabic) daulat (Arabic) umrah (Arabic) Sah (Persian) fakir (Arabic). Moreover Raghunath Choudhary is obviously a distinguished poet of modern Assamese literature, one of his best known poems is "Golap". The poet successfully used some Perso-Arabic words here, viz badshah (Persian) darya (Persian) pari (Persian) masgul (Arabic). Accordingly Maheswar Neog, The prose writer, also wrote a great deal of poem stating some lucid expression. Moreover one of his valuable poem is Musafir Khana". In This poem he has displayed his poetic skill using Perso-Arabic words. The title of the poem is mixed with Perso-Arabic words viz Musafir (Arabic) Khana (Persian).

Apart from this linguistic impact of Persian and Arabic is found in some short stories of modern Assamese writers. In this regard "gahbar" (A collection of Assamese short stories) written by Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia is notable. He wrote one of his short stories like "Gahbar" using a lot of Persian and Arabic words viz banduk (Persian) parda (Persian) be sarkari (Persian) Sarkar (Persian) Sakari (Persian) Khabar (Arabic) dukan (Arabic) bidai (Arabic). Besides he wrote another story named Jautuk using some Perso Arabic words like Suriya (Persian) Kagaz (Persian) Siyahi (Persian) piyan (Persian) hukum (Arabic) Kalam (Arabic) badmas (Persian) malik (Arabic) Kharas (Persian) etc. On the other hand Homen Bargohain is another well-known writer of modern Assamese literature. One of his short stories is "parda". In this story he used some Persian and Arabic words in a beautiful manner. The title of the story is found parda which is a Persian word. parda (Persian) Sarkari (Persian) aina (Persian) dukan (Arabic) malik (Arabic).

The main factors which played the vital role in promoting the growth of Perso-Arabic elements into Assamese language are as follows.

- i. The gradual rise of the Muslim population in Assam.
- ii. The visit of Assamese pilgrims to northern India.
- iii. The conflicts and the diplomatic relations of the Assamese Kings and the Muslim powers.
- iv. Composition of the religious songs like Zikirs and Zaris by the Assamese Muslims.
- v. Cultural exchanges held during the later part of Ahom rule.

Besides Sanskrit, it has borrowed a lot of Persian and Arabic words. In this regard, Sankar Deva and Madhab Deva, the Gurus of Neo-Vaishnavite cult of Assam used Persian and Arabic words like Farman, Duniya, (Persian) wachil- Baki (Arabic), Haram-Khor (Arabic + Persian), Sahib (Arabic) etc. Besides, some suffixes and prefixes used in Assamese language are seen with Persian influence in a beautiful manner.

In respect of suffixes:

Persian words are being used in Assamese as Sutkhor, Ghoskhor, Haramkhor, Dagabaj, Zamidar, Pattadar and so on.

In respect of prefixes:

Some words of Persian used in Assamese are Komzor, Darkar, Dardam, Badnam, Garmil etc.

Use of Persian and Arabic in respect of Religious performance:

Persian and Arabic words used in Assamese language are like Dargah (Persian), Roza (Persian), Namaz (Persian), Masjid (Arabic), Azan (Arabic), Imam (Arabic) etc.

Use of Persian for the purpose of Judicial:

Some Persian words used in Assamese are viz. Adalat, Dalil, Dewani, Faujdari, Jamin, Izhar (Persian), Hakim (Arabic).

In respect of Administrative:

Some Persian words used in Assamese are like Barud, Havildar, Sipahi, Ain, Graftar, Sarkari, Mazuni, Parwana etc.

Besides, some Perso-Arabic words are used in Assamese in regard to executive, like Dalil, Hisab (Arabic), Rasid (Persian) & Nazarbandi (Persian).

For the use of Clothes and Dress:

Some Persian words are also distinctly used in Assamese in respect of clothes and Dress like Parda (Persian), Burka (Persian), Salwar (Persian), Lungi (Persian), Chador (Persian), Kamiz (Persian), Pajama (Persian), Rumal (Persian), Tosak (Persian).

Regarding Revenue and Treasury:

A lot of Perso-Arabic words found in Assamese are viz. Dakhal, Jarif (Persian), Bedakhal (Perso-Arabic) etc.

Lingustic influence of Proverbs in some person used in Assamese:

A large number of such proverbs have been found in Assamese such as

Jur jar muluk tar (Might is right)

Here jur and muluk are Persian.

Sabure mewa phale (Patience brings result)

Here „sabur“ and mewa are Persian.

Adab kaida (elegance and manner)

Here „adab“ and kaida „are Persian.

Lai laskar (Soldiers)

Here „laskar“ is Persian.

Khana talach kara (house search)

Here „khanah“ & „talach“ are Persian.

Kaid kara (to make captive)

The word „kaid“ is Persian.

Ruji rujgar (livelihood)

Here „ruji“) and „ruzgar“ are Persian.

Khatam kara (to finish)

The word „khatam“ is Persian.

Barbad hua (spoiled)

Here „barbad“ is Persian.

Ga khalach kara (to make free)

Here „khalach“ is Persian.

Nam kharij kara (omission)

Here „nam“ and „kharij“ are Persian.

Hukum jari kara (to proclaim order)

Here the word „hukum“ is Persian

Najar diya (to take care)

Here „najar“ is Persian.s

Kabul kara (to accept)

Here the word „kabul“ is Persian.

Jur julum (oppression)

Here „jur“ and „julum“ are Persian.

Hak halal (lawful)

Here „haq“ and „halal“ are Persian.

Tajjup hua (to become strange)

Here „tajjup“ (is Persian.

Kham kheyali (absent minded)

Here the word „kheyali“ is Persian.

Badnami hua (to attain illfame)

The word „badnami“ is Persian.

Machgul kara (deeply engaged)

The word „ machgul“ is Persian.

Dastur mat (according to rules) ⁷

Here the word „dastur“ is Persian.

Similarly impact of Persian on Assamese formatives has been found. Some Persian Suffixes, Prefixes have been used in Assamese language in order to form new words.

For example :

gola + andaz golandaj meaning „a gunner“.

Here suffix „andaz“ is from Persian „andakhtan“ meaning „to throw“

Zulum +baz julumbaj meaning „oppressor“

Here suffix „ baz“ is from Persian „bakhtan“ meaning „play“.

In the context of Prefixes :

Haramkhur meaning „ ungrateful“.

Here prefix „khur“ is from Persian „khurdan“

Daftarkhana meaning „ an office“

Here prefix „khana“ is from Persian „khanah“ meaning „ a house“.

Chokidar meaning „gate keeper“

Jordar meaning „ powerful“.

In both places prefix „dar“ is from Persian „dastan“ meaning „to keep“. ⁸

In the field of adjective We have found influence of Persian in Assamese language. For example:

Badnam (notorious), bekar(useless), hoshiyar (clever), bahadur (brave) etc.

The use of Persian and Arabic language words in Assamese language is the result of the years-long contact of the Muslims with this country. During the 11th and 12th century there was a gap between Assam with the rest of the Indian culture. But the conquest of Mughals resulted in a rapid development, Assam's contact with the rest of the country. With the advent of the Mughals the cultural renaissance started in all spheres of life. At that time the influence of Persian became so pronounced that Persian ideals and terms mixed with the Assamese thought and tradition. And a huge number of Perso-Arabic vocabularies entered into the popular language of Assam now the Perso-Arabic loan words used in Assamese language is a remarkable one. It is mentionable that such Perso-Arabic words have occupied

their own places in Assamese language so strongly that no words of Assamese can fulfill these places. In this regard, such Perso-Arabic words widely enriched the Assamese language to a great extent.

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