Introduction

'Culture' an English word as in COD means 'tillage of the soil', production of bees, fish, silk etc. and hence words like agriculture, horticulture, sericulture etc. are prevalent in English usage for the meaning related to this sense. The second meaning of the word as given in COD and as denoted by and understood through it, is 'improvement by mental and physical training, intellectual development, type of intellectual development or civilization. In the present studies the word 'Culture' has been used to denote both the meaning as mentioned above and hence denotation by the word 'Culture' does not confine to a particular idea or outlook.

Culture is related to every society and social phenomena and is usually used with other identical field of the society such as religion, language, literature and politics etc. and is expressed with the word culture, for example 'Culture of religion', 'culture of language' and so on.

'Persian culture in Assam' is an expression in the present studies as used to mean 'exercise of Persian' as a language, and literature and its influence in the society of Assamese people especially of the Barak valley and the matters related with the language. The influence of Persian culture is by and large seen everywhere in the society in its custom, manner, attire, religious practices and above all in dialectal expressions. As Persian is exercised and cultured

2. Ibid.
here in Assam and especially in the Barak valley in day to day life by using its words in the dialect or in the educational institutions like schools, colleges, and Madrassas through learning and teaching, so the existence of its culture in the society cannot be underestimated. Hence it is necessary to bring into light the present situation of Persian and its deep-rooted existence in this valley.

It is a matter of no little wonder particularly to those people who are residing within the circle of Persian influence in central Asia as how Persian has come to such a place which is situated in far eastern area of Indian sub-continent having a distance of more than thousands miles. It is the credit of Muslim rule in India which was established in twelve century A.D. and which covers around seven hundred years of its history and for which Persian has entered in Assam.

Persian as language came in India with these Muslim rulers who used to cultivate it as means of communication among themselves and to contract with the local people. This language has been exercised largely in India and its society. Gradually it got its root firmed in this land during the Sultanide rule and became well established at last during the Mughal rule. When the Muslim rule in India got its expansion towards the east this language has entered Assam with the invading Muslim army and in some cases with Muslim Sufi personality who entered Assam as a part of their mission to spread Islam. During the stay of Muslim invading army in Assam, though for a short while, Persian was the only means of communication and the language of official works.

As a result, Persian has left a tremendous influence on the Assamese society and its people and Persian, the language of central Asia, Iran and Afghanistan has got a respectable place in this region. As Persian is a language particularly belonged to culture of Muslim people, so its
influence can be seen in the Muslim society of Assam. Once there was Persian on the face of coins, Persian was on the walls of a mosque, and Persian was in land documents, in the permission of house building order, in criminal and civil court, in the revenue and educational institutions which resulted a large scale impact of this language on the mind of people and their society.

But entrance of Persian in the Barak valley is not exactly alike of the process through which it has come in other parts of Assam. In fact, Persian has come in this valley with Muslim people who have migrated and settled permanently in this valley coming from other parts of Bengal particularly during the 18th and 19th century A.D. Barak valley, the extreme southern part of the state of Assam formed basing the river ‘the Barak’ and comprising the three administrative districts of the state viz. Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. It is geographically situated in the area surrounded by hills in every direction except the west. This range of plain land is the extension of the Gangetic valley which was not always a part of Assam. Historically it was sometimes a part of Bengal and sometimes a part of Assam and at last it remained with Assam as decided by the last British Govt. in India. This region was ruled by tribal peoples at the early stage of history like Tripuras, Cochs, Manipuris and Cachari tribes. Later on, people from Bengal specially from the adjacent Sylhet, Mymenshing and Comilla districts of Bengal came here after a large migration. At last at the time of annexation of this area by the British Govt. under their territory in the year 1832 A.D., the population of this region were Bengalis in majority.

The majority people of this valley are at present Bengali by race of whom more than 40% are Muslims. Though there are some Muslims in other communities like Manipuris and Hindi speaking tea-garden laborer living in this valley, but the Bengali speaking formed their major part. The Sylheti dialectal language is the mother tongue of almost 90% people of this valley
which is largely influenced by Persian and its impact. It has served as a vehicle of importing Persian culture in the Barak Valley through the people who have settled here permanently since the time of Muslim settlement.

The root cause behind the rise of Muslim population here is arrival of the great Sufi saint Hazrat Shah Jalal Mujarrad-e-Emani in the district of Sylhet in the year 1384 A.D. with a group of followers as a part of political invasion. He settled here permanently to run his mission of preaching Islam in this region. His disciples scattered in this region including the Barak valley and the people of the Barak valley are highly influenced by these Sufi saints and their ideologies.

Culture of Persian as a language and literature in the Barak valley is an old convention and is still in vogue. The Muslim people of this valley are still eager to learn and exercise Persian in their educational institutions.

To write something about culture of Persian in Assam and particularly in the Barak valley is not but a bit tough task. Sources are wanting in respect of writing anything on topics relating to Persian culture and its impact in the society. No work worth mentioning has been published in this regards excepting a very few or works available in this field are not directly related with this subjects. In spite of difficulties and paucity of sources some books that written on subject related to this works have been consulted. So facts and information in most cases inserted in this work are based on personal investigations and empirical ideas gathered from experiences. Facts regarding Persian impact on local dialectal language have been keenly collected from people living in most remote areas and rustic people because the pure dialectal language is found with them.
This work has been written basing on chapters divided as per sequence of its title. The first chapter is on the background of the facts reviewed as what is Persian and Assam and how a contact between Assam and Persian grown up. The second chapter is on the Barak valley and how and when Muslims planted their settlement this valley. The third chapter is on the impact and influences of Persian on the local dialectal language spoken in the valley. The fourth chapter is on the Sufi activities which is a result of Persian culture in the valley. The fifth chapter is purely on culture and cultivate of Persian as a language in the Barak valley.
The Barak Valley Region with its River Systems

- Meghalaya
- North Cachar Hills
- Karimganj
- Silchar
- Hailakandi
- Tripura
- Mizoram

Scale: K.M.

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- Principal river Barak and its tributaries