Introduction

The proposed research work "Arabic Studies in Educational Institutions of Assam since 1947" faces a very widened scope beginning from the Semitic family and includes its subsequent growth and development in various Arabian and non-Arabian countries of the world. The gradual growth and development of Arabic language and literature in Arabic Institutions of Assam as coming down from the 12th century A.D. is comprises with West Bengal, East Bengal (present Bangladesh) and Modern Assam. This region has been the cradle of some Arabian traders, Ulamas (Arabic learned person), Sufi-Saints, Awliyas, Fakirs and Pirs Darbeshes from time immemorial. On having a bird's eye view of the history of Kamrup (Assam) one can easily perceive that the land of this part of India had always been a fertile soil for the Arabian traders, preachers and missionaries of Islam, Ulamas and the Sufi-Saints who could not only practice and preach their religious dogmas but also impart the learning in collaboration with other branches of Islamic knowledge among the local communities through the media of various types of Maktabs, Madrasahs, Khanqahs and other Arabic institutions. The Muslim populace of Assam comprising the outsiders and the local converts realized the needs of learning Arabic and Islamic education for
achieving spiritual and material progress which insists the quality of goodness what is sought after.¹

Education in the real sense of the term is what the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) meant by ‘adab’ which means culture, good breeding, good manner etc. when he said, (My Lord educated me and made my education most excellent).² The Prophet being divinely educated took every step for educating his followers with Arabic and other Islamic knowledges. So the learning Arabic language and literature are nevertheless, essential duty for the Muslim all over the world became these ensure them to make out the contents of the Holy Quran and the Holy Tradition (Sayings of the Prophet).

The learning of Arabic is also been given importance with the strength of another Hadith which runs “Preach whatever you heard from me even if it is only average”.³ Practically the learning of Arabic language and literature in different kinds of educational institutions like ‘Baitul Midras’ originated from the Arabians soil particularly Yemen and some parts of Mecca. The magnificent ruins of the Pre-Islamic architecture in Yemen speak of the high level cultural development and so it would be unjust to say that Arabia in the Dark Age was devoid of culture and civilization. Moreover, the evolution of Arabic language and the poetic

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¹. Al-Attas S.N. –Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education, Jeddah, 1979, P-1
². Al- Hadith (Sayings of the Holy Prophet of Islam).
³. Tamizi Md. Yahya, -Sufi Movement in Eastern India, Delhi, 1992, P-xiv
accomplishments of Pre-Islamic Arab also bear the testimony to the fact that a certain level of cultural refinement had already been achieved.¹

Arabic, belonging to the Semitic group of languages, had come into existence since the early part of the 6th Century A.D. The whole Muslim World considered this as the most sacred language because of the language of the Holy Quran. It goes without saying that wherever the Muslim goes the Arabic language follows.² The relation of Arabs with the Indians was very close from the dawn of the 7th Century A.D. For commercial purpose the merchants of the coastal places of the Arabian Sea used to learn Arabic. On the other hand Mohammad bin Qasim laid down the foundation of the Muslim Empire in India by conquering Sind in 712 A.D. Since then, Arabic being the religious language became very popular among the Muslim rulers and their subjects. Arabic continued to be studies in the British and post British period all over India including Assam.

The Holy Quran, the book of Islam, occupied such an eminent place in Arabic language that never been attained by any other books on the Earth. It was with the Holy Quran that Arabic literature originated and it was through the Quran that Arabic became a powerful language to be spoken in many countries.³ A modern critic while speaking highly of the literary and linguistic contributions of the Holy Quran, remarks, “Without

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³. Hanifi M.A. -A survey of Muslim Institutions and Culture, New Delhi, 1992, P-12
Quran, the Arabic language would have been now where in the world. It transformed a dialect, spoken in a very limited area of a forgotten corner of the world, into a worldwide language which became the mother tongue of vast countries and mighty empires and produced a literature which is the basis of the culture of powerful nations from one end of the world to the other”.¹

Being inspired greatly by the all round direction of the Holy Quran, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) established the first Arabic institution the Sufa-Madrasah in one part of the Masjid-e-Nababi at Medina with special view to impart religious knowledge as well as Arabic education to the local Muslims and no fee was charged from the students² with spread of Islam far and wide in different corners of the world. The Sufa-Madrasah imparted education free of cost among the local people, not only the Prophet but also his followers left no stone unturned for the spreading of Arabic reading and writing with the aim of achieving religious knowledge. As a result of such untired efforts, various Arabic Institutions (Madrasahs) sprang up to illumines the knowledge of Arabic language and literature side by side with religious sciences in Baghdad, Basra, Cairo, Cordova, Tunisia, Syria, Granada, Kufa, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India etc. Subsequently the same categories of Madrasah or Arabic institutions, promoting the learning of Arabic language and literature with the collaboration of various branches of Islamic education,

¹ Pottar Charles Francis, -The Faiths Men Live, P-81
² Hameedullah, -Educational System in the time of the Prophet, P- 57
have been set up in the eastern region of India comprising Bangladesh, West Bengal and Assam.

The Real Academy in Islam which became the model for later Arabic Institutions of various countries of the world was the Nizamiyah College, established by Nizamul Muluk, the Wazir of Seljuq Sultan, Malik Shah (1072-1092 A.D.). The most prolific as well as widely influential Arabic institution is the Al-Azhar University which is reckoned to be a unique higher institution for modern Arabic and almost all branches of education in the present world. Syed Ameer Ali, referring to Cairo had become a new intellectual and scientific centre.

To scientific record described various Arabic institutions in different part of the world in a nut-shell, we have to work through a vast mass of published, unpublished and various field works. It has been a matter of great regrets that no systematic and appropriate works on the study of Arabic language and literature in Madrasahs as well as Arabic institution of Assam has yet been done in black and white. Hence the paucity of these types of materials and records very often has left us on the pool of trouble and difficulties.

However, in spite of difficulties and paucity of sources, some important works on the studies of Arabic language and literature in different categories of Arabic institutions (Madrasahs or Universities) have been written by some genuine scholars. Among these scholars or

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1. Hanifi M.A. -A survey of Muslim Institutions and Culture, New Delhi, 1992, P-179

Among the later works, supplying valuable information about the contribution of Arabic language and literature to Assamese societies in various aspects of their lives mention must be made of Dr. Mohini Kumar Saikia’s authentic book entitled “Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance”. The “Sangmisronot Asomiya Sanskriti” by Abdus on the Zikir aru Zari of Syed Abdul Malik, “Islam Dharma aru Sanskriti” by Professor Mostia Ahmed, Dr. Samir Uddin Ahmed’s “Muslim in Assam (1200-2000) and “Asomar Musalman Sokal” by Abdur Rahman also deserves special mention in this respect.

In order to find out the full justice to the research work, we have to make a historical survey of different kinds of Arabic institutions through various pre-partition Assam but we actually fail to depend upon any
published sources enabling us to investigate the Arabic institution of Assam. For this reason the field works or the indirect collections of the data from various Arabic Institutions of Assam and other Indian universities were the only materials for the preparation of this research work.

In this connection this thesis has been divided into six chapters which contain some sub-chapters too for the convenience of going through.

The first chapter discusses the origin and development of Arabic language and literature dealing with the Arabian country, Arab people, its language and literature. This chapter discusses not only the geographical boundaries of Arabia and its people but also the division of human races, their languages and the Arabic literature among the ages such as Pre-Islamic period's Arabic literature, Islamic period's Arabic literature, Umayyad period's Arabic literature, Abbasid period's Arabic literature and the modern period's Arabic literature. The literary works achieved by the various poets, thinkers, writers and scholars in Arabic language have been described in a nut-shell.

The second chapter discusses the influx of Arabian people in India with their linguistic and cultural relations to local people. Gradual progress of Arabic language and literature with the propagation of Islam by the Saints, Missionaries, Ulamas as well as construction of Mosques and Suba-Madrasahs or Arabic institutions has been seen. It further contains the narratives of medieval and modern Arabic institutions.
The third chapter defines the definition of various types of education (both general and Arabic) and also the definition of various types of Arabic institutions and proceeds on the spread and propagation of the learning of Arabic language and literature in the Madrasahs or Arabic educational institutions of Pre-Islamic Age, Islamic Age, prior to the influx of Muslims in India. Attempts have been made to trace the functions of educational institutions in spreading the knowledge of Arabic language and literature along with Islamic Studies.

The fourth chapter stresses the significance of Assam, its ancient inhabitants and geographical boundaries with the infiltration of Muslim population in various decades from twelfth to twentieth Century. The Muslim New Comers and their constant efforts for spreading Islam among the local people and setting up of various types of Maktabs, Madrasahs or Arabic institutions, specially Calcutta Aliya Madrasah with the objects of spreading Arabic language and literature along with Islamic education have been discussed in this chapter.

The fifth chapter points out acquisition of knowledge according to Islam for which the background history of some Maktabs, Kharijia Madrasah, Pre Senior, Senior and Title Madrasahs or Arabic Colleges and Middle English Schools, High Schools, High Madrasahs, Higher Secondary Schools, Colleges and Universities already established in various parts of Assam have been briefly narrated in this chapter. We have also discussed the course of studies and syllabus of these different categories of Arabic institutions as well.
The sixth chapter highlights the contribution of Arabic language to the Assamese society as well as linguistic impact on the people of Assam including literary and cultural contributions of Arabic education. In numerable Arabic words which are being directly and indirectly used in Assamese language have been recorded in this chapter. Besides linguistic contributions, the literary and cultural influences of Arabic language and literature, cultivated in Madrasahs and Arabic institutions of Assam have been briefly furnished with a view to make a mutual understanding and co-operation among diversified population of Assam.

Finally, the conclusion gives an assessment of the origin and development of Arabic language and literature in the role of Arabic institutions in spreading Arabic language and literature along with other Islamic and secular subjects in various countries of the world. This chapter also discussed some major Maktabs, Madrasahs and other Arabic institutions and their functions in spreading of Arabic education among the Assamese Muslim children, comments on the various courses of Arabic studies and syllabi in different categories of Arabic institutions of Assam are embodied in carefully.