Lexicographic affinities between Persian and Bengali

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1   Introduction

Both Persian and Bengali are from the same language group, called Indo-Iranian, which is a well-known branch of its mother group, Indo-European. Bengali developed in the eastern part of the Indian sub-continent, which includes mostly today's Bangladesh, but Persian developed in Iran, which is sometimes known in the west as Persia. Despite the thousands of miles distance between the two lands these two languages have come in contact in many ways. Sanskrit is the mother language of almost all the languages of the sub-continent but most of the influential languages, like Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi, Sindhi, and Bengali etc, flourished under the influence of Persian. Persian was the court language of the Muslim rulers of the region for about 800 years. Moreover, by 1350 AD Bengali had also become the common language of immigrants and settlers in Bengal because of their acceptance of this country as their homeland, and because of inter-marriage and social intercourse. At the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries, we find that the Muslim kings of Bengal were active patrons of Bengali literature. Contact with Muslims certainly brought a number of Persian words into Bengali during the early period of Muslim rule; this is why we find various affinities between these two languages.

2   What is language

Language is human 'speech', either spoken or written. It allows people to talk to each other and to express their thoughts and ideas. The word *language* may be used loosely to mean any system of communication, such as traffic lights or Indian smoke signals. However the origin of the word shows its basic use. It comes from Latin word *lingua*, meaning *tongue*. A language still is often called a *tongue*[1].

Most forms of human activity depend on the cooperation of two or more persons. A common language enables human beings to work together in an infinite variety of ways. Language has made possible the development of advanced, technological civilization. Scholars have observed that there are about 3000 languages spoken in the world today.[2] This number does not include *dialects* [3] (a local form of a language).

Each and every language has certain things in common. The makeup of a language includes (1) a sound-pattern, (2) words, and (3) grammatical structure. The makeup of a language does not remain the same over long period of time. Grammar and vocabulary as well as sound–patterns all change with usage over the period. Most scholars believe that language developed very slowly from sounds, such as grunts, barks, and hoots, made by pre-human creatures. According to this view, a simple system of vocal communication became complex as the human brain and speech organs evolved, but no one knows when or how this process took place. The first real evidence of language is writing, though scholars believe that writing did not appear

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[1] *The World Book Encyclopaedia*, World Book Inc., USA. (1990) Vol.12:64.
[2] ibid.
[3] ibid.

until thousands of years after the origin of spoken language. The earliest known written records are Sumerian word–pictures made about 3500 B.C. and Egyptian hieroglyphics[4] that date from about 3000BC. Written Chinese dates from perhaps 1500BC, Greek from about 1400BC and Latin from about 500BC[5]. Persian dates from about 660-1500 BC[6] and Bengali from about 975-1026 AD[7].

2.1   Evolution of Language

It is an established fact that every language is in a process of constant change, and consequently its various aspects are affected. Words change their form partially or completely over the ages. Again, the order of words in a sentence and their pattern of combination are affected. By this process of evolution new phonemes and words come into being. Sentence construction assumes new styles. Old words and compounds lose their popularity progressively and some of them become totally obsolete. There is no doubt that philologists cannot define all the reasons why languages change, but languages continue to do so as long as people use them in writing or speaking. In a few cases, the changes can be explained. For instance, words are added to a vocabulary to refer to new ideas or objects. Furthermore, contacts between people of different tongues may cause words from one language to enter another. By contrast, a language that is no longer spoken is called a dead language, examples of which include Sumerian, ancient Egyptian, Akkadian, Hittite, Etruscan and Gothic[8].

Two important points should be noted here in order to find out the causes of linguistic evolution and its different types. Firstly, language is a tool that is used to fulfil our socio-cultural and literary needs, which is to develop mutual relations with the members of the society and to describe or express common social matters. Any change that takes place in the society naturally affects the needs of the society and consequently the tool which is related to these needs is also affected. For this reason words can disappear from a language in the course of time and their place is taken by new words, which indicate independent meanings and ideas. For example, the Bengali word *saudagar* or *bonik* meant a businessman who used to travel between different places by a special type of boat either by sea or river for business purposes. This word has now become obsolete because the idea indicated by the word is no longer perceptible in modern life. On the contrary, words like *rel-gari* (railway), *boma* (bomb), telephone, and *upagroho* (satellite) did not exist in Bengali a century ago because the ideas indicated by them could not be comprehended at that time.

Secondly, speech and language based social contact requires effort on our part and the exercise of muscular energy. Speaking is an act performed by our mind, muscles and the vocal organs, and like any other mental or physical act, it also makes us tired. Man has the inherent tendency to make less effort and become less tired, as far as possible, in achieving his goal. However avoidance of speech must not disturb the object of his communication. For instance, in current Bengali conversation shortened forms are used, dropping some of the phonemes or syllables. Instead of *ami prodan karibo* (I shall give) we say *dibo/ami dibo*; likewise, for *ami ahar karibo* (I shall eat) we say *khabo/ami khabo* etc. I can offer an example from my own family life: I had a servant in my house whose name was *Ibrahim*. We adults called him

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[4] For more information, see, *The World Book Encyclopaedi,* Vol. 9: 227.

[5] op.cit. pp. 65-66

[6] Dehkhoda, Ali,Akbar. *Lugatnameh-e-Dehkhoda.* Tehran, Iran. (1956-1979) Vol. I:27-28.

[7] *Bangla Sahityer Etihas,* (ed.) Anissuzzaman, Bangla Academy, Dhaka, (1987) p 393.

[8] The World Book Encyclopedia, p. 66

Ibrahim but Shafaq, my four-and-a-half-year-old son used to call him *Ibru* whilst Nisa, my three-year-old daughter used to call him *Halim.* It is interesting to note that no other family members called him by these names introduced by my children. Both the children themselves produced the name in a softer way, changing it into a voiced phoneme, which is nearer to the voiceless in articulation. The first child chose the two syllables from the beginning, *Ibra,* and changed them to *Ibru;* the second one chose the last syllable *him,* and changed it into *Halim.* I think this could be a good example for researchers in order to clarify how different words and forms have evolved even within the same socio-cultural environment.

2.2   Language Family

Scholars classify languages into families. Language families are groups of languages that are related because they all developed slowly from a single earlier language called a parent language. As Mr. Joel Waiz Lal in his book *An Introductory History of Persian Literature* points out:

> "A family of languages means a large group exhibiting an unmistakable likeness in grammatical forms and words as well as in general structures of sentences. This similarity furnishes an indubitable proof of the original union of all members of the family who, at some remote age, had a common ancestry, a common home, and a common language. In course of time when the members of the family who lived together multiplied and grew in numbers, separation from one another and migration to other parts of the surrounding regions became not only necessary but also inevitable. This separation naturally tended to divergences of language emphasized by the climatic and physical conditions of the new homes. Thus began that differentiating process which finally resulted in different dialects. A casual observer, perhaps, will not note anything in common between them. But a philologist, who studies them closely and critically, will recognize in them a body of cognate words and certain forms of inflection[9] which he is able to trace to a common source".[10]

2.3 Indo-European Language Family

Indo–European is the most important language family. Some 2,400,000,000 or about half of the world's population, speak languages in this family[11]. Speakers of these languages originally lived in an area extending from northern India to Western Europe. They now live in other parts of the world as well. Indo-European languages have become the most important languages in most European countries, in Australia, Central and South America. It has eight living branches which are as follows: (1) *Germanic, or Teutonic,* which includes English, *German,* Dutch, and the Scandinavian – Danish, Iceland, Norwegian, and Swedish; (2) *Romance, or Latin-Romance,* including French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and Romanian; (3) *Balto-Slavic,* including Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Czech, Slovak, Serbo-Croatian,

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[9] Inflection is a set of word forms that show different functions or meanings in a sentence. For example, actors, is an inflected form of actor. The s added to actor expresses the meaning more than one. But, not an inflected form of actor. It is a different word. In English, nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs are inflected.

[10] Lal, Waiz, Joel, *An Introductory History of Persian Language,* Second edition, Delhi, P.1-2

[11] Op.cit, Vol. 12, P. 66

Slovenian, Bulgarian, Lithuanian, and Latvian; (4) *Indo – Iranian,* which includes Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Farsi, and Pashto; (5) *Greek;* (6) *Celtic,* including Irish (Gaelic), Scots Gaelic, Welsh, and Breton; (7) *Albanian;* and (8) *Armenian.* [12]

All languages in the Indo-European family have the same original structure, based on inflections. They all have clearly define parts of speech, which take certain endings to show gender, number, case, person, tense, mood, or voice. Many simple, basic words are similar in Indo-European languages. For example, the English word mother is *mata* in Sanskrit, *meter* in Greek, *mater* in Latin, *madre* in Spanish, *Mutter* in German, and *mat* in Russian[13]. Likewise *mama* in Persian, *mata* in Sanskrit and *ma* in Bengali.

Speakers of the parent Indo-European language probably lived in the area north of the Black Sea. From there, they likely migrated in every direction, changing the language along the way. The earliest Indo-European language of which we have a record is Hittite, followed by Greek and Vedic-Sanskrit.[14]

2.4   Indo-Iranian Language Family

Both the selected languages in our present paper, Bengali and Persian, belong to the Indo-Iranian family of languages, which is an important member of the Indo-European family of languages. It is essential to delve deep into the national entity of a particular race or community for the purpose of proper evaluation of its social structure especially of language. Thus it is imperative to have some awareness of Indo-Iranian national entity, and the origin and evolution of Persian and Bengali languages, consist with our original discussion.

According to historians the aborigines of Iran were the descendants of the Aryans. They proceeded from Pamir towards Iran and India in search of inhabitable land about 4000 to 5000 years before the birth of Christ.[15] At first they settled in Samarkhand and Bukhara, now part of the newly independent state Tajikistan, but later due to various hindrances one group of them invaded towards Iran in about 1500 BC and another group proceeded towards India between 1500 and 1200 B.C. The Iranian group divided into two parts. One of them settled in Media, in the northern region of Iran, a fertile area adjacent to Caspian Sea, and another group in Fars, a coastal area in Southern Iran. Consequently two separate dynasties were established – 'Almad' (the Medes) in Media and 'Hakhamanshi' (the Achaemenid) in Fars. Later, the Hakhamanshi dynasty developed more strongly than the other and at one stage conquered Media and brought it under their rule. Since that time the whole land appeared with a new name that is called Persia.[16]

In this connection The World Book of Encyclopedia points out that: "in the 1500s B.C., Aryans began migrating to Iran from central Asia. Eventually, two major groups of Aryans settled in Iran. One group settled in the northwest and founded the kingdom of Media. The other group lived in southern Iran, in an area that the Greeks later called *persis.* The name Persia comes from *Persis.* Both the Medes and the Persians called their homelands Iran, meaning *land of the Aryans*... about 550 B.C. the Persian (Achaemenid), led by Cyrus the Great, overthrew the Medes.[17] Finally in

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[12] ibid. pl. see, An Introductory History of Persian Literature, op.cit, P. 2-4

[13] *The World Book Encyclopaedia,* op.cit,

[14] ibid.

[15] Beg, Maqbul, Badakhshani, *Tarikhe Iran,* 1967, p.18; see *The World Book Encyclopaedia,* op.cit, Vol. 10:403

[16] Ibid. P. 19, 77; pl. see *The World Book Encyclopaedia,* Op.cit, Vol. 10, P. 407

[17] The World Book Encyclopaedia, Ibid

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the 500 B.C. Persia became the center of the vast Achaemanid Empire, which included most of the known world. It extended from North Africa and Southeastern Europe in the west to India in the east, and from the Gulf of Oman in the South to the Southern Soviet Union in the north. Alexander the Great conquered the empire in 331 B.C. Later, Perthians and Sasanids controlled Persia before it was conquered by Arabs in A.D. 641"[18].

3   The development of the Persian language

The first major civilization in what is now Iran was that of the Elamites, who might have settled in southeastern Iran as early as 3000 B.C.[19] At present about two-thirds of Iranian people are descendants of an Asian people called Aryans.[20] These Aryan people began migrating to Iran from the plains of central Asia during the 1500's B.C., which we have discussed earlier. There was an affirmative change in culture and language on the basis of co-existence of these new settlers and the local people. Consequently a new language and new culture took shape in Iran. Philologists observe that two languages were famous in ancient Iran:

Avesta language: Avesta received the status of the religious language since *Zoroaster,* the ancient religious Master and founder of the doctrine of *Zoroastrianism*[21] composed his book *"Kitab-e-Avesta"* in this very language.[22] This language originated in the Media region of North Iran. According to historians the monarchs of the *Mad* community who ruled in the Media region during the *Pishdadi* and *kiani*[23] eras used this language.[24] The advent of Zoroaster took place in 1100 B.C.[25] His book *Avesta* contains various religious issues such as hymns dedicated to the imaginary God *"Ahura Mazda"*, worship of the creator, appreciation for good deeds, condemnation of bad deeds and so on.[26] It is interesting to note that the most significant and ancient portion of the book is known as *"Gatha"*. This portion contains hymns to *Ahura Mazda* and various ethical statements presented by means of *ghazals* and poems. Interestingly, and in fact surprisingly, special care and attention was given to the metrical system in these poems and *ghazals*.[27] It provides clear hints that the main tone and formation of ancient Iranian poetry was an evolutionary trend of *Avesta* itself

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[18] Ibid. Vol. 15, P. 297

[19] Op.cit, P. 407

[20] Ibid. P. 403

[21] Zoroastrianism is a religion founded between 1400 – 1000 B.C. by a Persian Prophet named Zoroaster. Zoroaster is the Greek form of the Persian name Zarathustra, which means He of the Golden Light. Zoroastrianism teaches a belief in one God, Ahura Mazda, who created all things. Devout people must seek and obey Ahura Mazda, who will judge everyone at the end of worldly time after their bodies have been resurrected. (*The World Book Encyclopaedia,* op. cit, Vol. 21, P. P. 619-621)

[22] *Tarikhe Adabiate* , Edn. Ministry of Iran, 1349 solar year (1970A.D.) P. P. 13 – 16

[23] Pishdadi era-Monarchs worth mentioning were: Kiumars, Zamshed and Zohak; on the other hand Kiani era-Monarchs worth mentioning were: Kaikaus, Kaikobad, Kaikhasraw and great valiant hero Rostam.It is mentionable that the appropriate time period of the above mentioned two eras and correct details of events could not be determined properly and, as such, historians provided only some serialized narrations. Basically, historical evaluations are available from *Hakhamanshi* (Akhaemanian) era (from 550 B.C.)

[24] Nisary, Salim, *Tarikhe Adabiate Iran,* Tehran, 1328 Solar year, (1948 A.D.) P. 1

[25] Ibid. P. 2

[26] *Tarikhe Adabiate,* op.cit, P. P. 16-17

[27] Op.cit, P. 6

In this connection, it may be mentioned that considerable similarity is observed between *Avesta* and the aboriginal religious language of this sub-continent, *Sanskrit*. Further, Iranian contemporaries of Zoroaster, as well as the Indians, spoke the same language.[28] Professor Joel Waiz Lal in his book *An Introductory History of Persian Language and Literature* points out: "we shall now consider the general character of the language found in the Gathas and the Avesta. These scanty remains of the original Zoroastrian scriptures give us a complete insight into its structural peculiarities. Not only among Iranian dialects, but also among all the languages of the Indo-European family, the language of the Gathas and the Avesta takes a very special place of importance. It is most remarkably rich in inflections, and almost completely agrees with the language of the oldest Vedic hymns. In style and expression it is extremely rough and clumsy, and contrasts unfavorably with the elegance and symmetry of Vedic Sanskrit. On the other hand, it can show forms, which are unquestionably more primitive than those found in Vedas. The resemblance between the Gatha language and the language of the Vedas is so close that they seem hardly more than two dialects of one tongue. Whole sentences and strophes of the Gathas can be turned into good old Sanskrit by only changing a few letters according to laws of phonetic variation."[29]

We may quote here some similar words from Avesta and Vedic Sanskrit languages, as examples:

Avesta	Vedic Sanskrit
zaotar	*hotr*
athravan	*aharvan*
yasna	*yajna*
azuiti	*ahuti*
airyaman	*aryaman*
atar	*azr*
gandarewa	*gandharava*
ahura	*asura*[30]

Old Persian: This language used to be written by means of particular symbols similar to that of a nail, called the cuneiform system of writing. This language was in use during the period of the Achaemanid kings around 550 B.C. It was only used for royal inscriptions, because only a few people could read it. Happily, there is something still existing, which the mad rage of Alexander and the ravage of time could not efface or destroy. These are contained in the cuneiform inscriptions engraved on the rocks of *Bi-setun* and *Naqsh-i-Rustam*, and on the walls and massive columns of Persipolis. Some of these inscriptions are found in the ruins of Hamadan and Van also. The contents in particular make reference to the identity of various kings; their policy or rule, ordinance, character, achievements etc have been available from the stone inscriptions that have so far been discovered.[31]

The language of these inscriptions is very closely allied to that of Avesta. It is highly inflectional, and possesses most of the grammatical peculiarities of Avesta, Vadic Sanskrit, and other ancient languages of the Indo-European family.[32]

[28] Ibid. P. 2
[29] An Introductory History of Persian Literature, P.P. 25-26
[30] Naini,Jalali, Reza, Mohammad, Dr., *Rig-Veda*, Tehran, 1994, P.P. 25-30
[31] Op.cit, P.P. 26-27; pl.see *The World Book Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 15, P. 298
[32] Ibid. P. 28

Two other important languages of Iran are as follows:

Pahlavi Language: History reveals that another new language, called *Pahlavi* originated in Iran during the Parthian (Ashkanid) era (249-226 B.C.). Basically it was the simplified form of Avesta and Old Persian. Later, during the reign of Sassanides (226 B.C.- 652A.D.) changes took place in the pronunciation and form of the language. This Pahlavi language had been used in Iran for about one thousand years, during the reigns of the Ashkanid and Sassanid kings. A number of historians point out that several books were written in the Pahlavi language during the Ashkanid era; however, these are no longer available except only a few.[33] It is worth mentioning that the reign of the Sassanids is considered the golden era of ancient Iran. Iranian art, literature and culture developed immensely during this period. For the first time they began to translate valuable Greek and Indian books into the Pahlavi language. The famous Sassanid emperor *Anushirwan* obtained the noted *Panchatantra*, an Indian book, and translated it into Pahlavi.[34] Later, Rudaki, an eminent blind poet of the Samanid era, rendered it into Persian in poetical composition.[35] Ibnul Mokaffa, a famous Arabian historian, translated it into Arabic under the titled of *Kalila O Demna*.[36]

On the other hand, innumerable lyrical compositions, diaries, short stories, poems, songs and so on were available in Pahlavi. Some eminent copies were later rendered into poetical composition in Persian by a group of Persian poets. Pieces worth mentioning in particular are *Khoshrow O Shirin, Iskandernama, Bahramnama, Rostomnama*, and so on. In spite of this the *Hagar Dustan*, of the Sassanid era was rendered into Persian and later from Persian into Arabic under the title of *Alfa layla wa layla* (one thousand and one nights).[37]

It appears from the above discussion that the Iranians, particularly of the Sassanid era, did not at all lag behind in the arena of literature and culture; rather, the worldwide excitation created by literature during the Samanid (874-998 A.D.) and Ghaznavid (998-1040 A.D.) eras had their origin and inspiration in the huge Pahlavi literature of the Sassanid era.

Modern Persian: The Iranian people embraced Islam in huge numbers when Muslims conquered Iran, after several bloody wars, during the reign of the last Sassanid emperor Yazdgard III (634-652 A.D.) and the reign of the 2nd Caliph of Islam, Hazrat Umar (R). Consequently due to the Islamic state and for religious reasons the Sassanid-introduced Pahlavi language, under the influence of Arabic, began to transform gradually into Persian. People's fascination for the Pahlavi language declined since it lacked Islamic spirit and ideas. Even at that time many books of Pahlavi literature were abolished and importance of Pahlavi language obscured.[38]

The Arab philologists replaced the Pahlavi letters with the Arabic alphabet. Due to lack of some alphabetical substitute for the Pahlavi language, they made the later "Pe" (پ) by adding two points to "Be"(ب), the letter "Che" (چ) by adding two points to "Zim"(ج), and the letter "Jhe"(ژ) by adding two points to "Je" (ز). Likewise, the letter "Gaf" (گ) by using an extra straight line on "kaf"(ک). In this way the Pahlavi

[33] *Tarikhe Adabiate Iran*, P. 4
[34] Ibid. P. 7; pl. see preface, *Kalila o Demna*
[35] , Nasratullah, *Karnameh –e-Bozorgane Iran*,Tehran, 1961, P. 309
[36] Sarton, George, History of World Science, Translated by Golam Hussein, Tehran, 1974, P. 405
[37] Tarikhe Adabiate Iran, P.8
[38] Shafaq, Rezazadeh, Dr., *Tarikhe Adabiate Iran*, Tehran, 1974, P.P. 14, 105

alphabet was abolished and the Persian alphabet as well as the Modern Persian language came into being.

4   The development of the Bengali language

Vedic & Sanskrit: We mentioned earlier that, sometime after 1500 B.C., the Aryans, a people who spoke an early Indo-European tongue, invaded India from the northwest. In the course of time, their language developed into the *Vedic[39]languages,* which become the language of the upper classes. About the 500 B.C. *Vedic Sanskrit* declined as a spoken language and was gradually replaced by regional dialects. Following this decline, the Indian Grammarian *Panini* (in about 4th-7th century BC) created a standard form of the language, which became classical Sanskrit. Writing had been introduced by that time, and written *Sanskrit* had developed.[40]

However, from 1250 B.C. unto 500 B.C. is called the era of the *Ancient Indian Aryan language.* Later, the Sanskrit language spread in many parts of the Sub-continent as well as in Bengal. Numerous books of epics, drama, prose, poetry, novel, grammar, rhetoric, prosody etc were written in this language.[41]

Pali and *Prakrit:* The Aryans were spreading gradually in all over the Sub-continent. Consequently, the *Sanskrit* language had an effective contact with the non-Aryan local vernaculars over the ages. As a result a new language originated called *Pali,* and later, by the same process of evolution *Prakrit,* another new language. That is why *Pali* is called ancient *Prakrit.* At the final stage of this process, Prakrit itself took various forms such as: Moharashtri, Shawroshani, Magadhi, Goudi, Lati etc.[42] On the basis of an excavated inscription written in Goudi or Purbi Prakrit, related to the period of the reign of the Mourya Emperor Aoshoka at Mohastan Garh in Bogra, historians assume that *Goudi Prakrit* had also been used in this locality, the North-western part of present Bangladesh.[43]

Apabhramsa: Later, this *Prakrit* language at the edge of its final development evolved into *Apabhramsa.* Philologists called the phase of origin and development of *Pali,* *Prakrit* and *Apabharmsa* the phase of *Middle Indian Aryan language.* Samples of these languages can be found in the ordinances of the Emperor Aoshoka and in many other inscriptions appearing frequently in many parts of the sub-continent. The period of this phase was from 600 B.C. to 500 A.D.[44]

It is true that, in the course of time, Apabhramsa was accepted by the local peoples as a medium of poetical expression and dramatic works.[45] Meanwhile, Hindi, Gujrati, Marathi, Sindhi, Oriya , Moithila, Bangla etc originated and spread among the masses in the sub-continent and gradually classical Bengali developed. By this process of evolution classical Bengali passed the Middle phase and reached the modern stage, which is extends from 650 A.D. unto the present day.[46]

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[39] The term *Vedic* refers to the Vedas, the oldest sacred scriptures of Hinduism.
[40] *The World Book Encyclopaedia,* Vol. 17, P.P. 110-111
[41] Zana, Sremonta Kumar, Dr., *Bangla Sahityer Etihas,* Oriental Book Company Pvt. Ltd., Cacutta, P. 10
[42] Ibid. P. 11
[43] *Bangla Sahityer Etihas,* Ed. Anissuzzaman, P. 305
[44] Shahidullah, Dr. *Bangala Vashar Etibryetto,* Dhaka, 1965, P. 22
[45] *Op.cit,* P. 350
[46] Bangala, Vashatotter Vumica, 9th Edition, Calcutta, 1974, P. 2

Thus, the classical Bengali language is derived from *Apabhramsa.* But from which type of Prakrit and which type of *Apabhramsa* the Bengali language developed, on this particular point, scholars have different opinions. According to Sir George Grierson, the Bengali language has developed from *Magadhi Prakrit Apabhramsa.* Dr. Sunity Kumar Chatterji also supports this idea. On the other hand Dr. Mohammad Shahidullah argued that the Bengali language developed from Goudi Prakrit-Apabhramsha[47].

Charyyagitika: The most ancient specimen of Bengali language and literature is the verses of *Charyyagitika,* written in *Apabhrams–Bengali* language, which was further development of *Apabhramsa* language in Bengal. Prior to this, people were used to writing their literary contribution or other necessary activities in Sanskrit, Prakrit and *Apabhramsa* languages. Actually, they prepared the evolutionary path for the development of Bengali language and literature.

In fact, the verses of *Charyyagitika* are religion-based compilations, composed by a liberal group of the Buddhist priests, called *Sahazia,* under the patronage of the Pala Court in Bengal from about 10th Century BC. At the beginning of the second half of the eleventh century the Senas invaded Bengal and they established the Sena dynasty in Bengal by overthrowing the Palas.[47] The Senas were believers in *Brahman* – Culture as well as Hinduism. *Sanskrit* was a sacred language to them, they contravened the mass usage of local languages. They even pronounced a judgment against the mass usage of native Bengali language that " if anybody studies the eighteenth Purana in native language he or she should be thrown in the Hell, called *Rawrab.*[48]

Finally, due to the downfall of the Pal Dynasty and rise of the Sen Dynasty, the Newly developed Bengali lost its path. On the other hand numerous Buddhist monuments had been destroyed and a lot of Buddhist priests slaughtered. Only some of them were able to save themselves by taking shelter in neighboring countries. It is said that, at that time the *Charyyagitika* was brought to Nepal[49]. That is why a copy of *Charyyagitika* was discovered in the Royal library of Nepal.

5   The influence of Persian on Bengali

After the establishment of Muslim rule in Bengal, in 1203 Bengali language and literature made the way to further development under the direct patronage of the Muslim rulers and intelligentsia. Thus within 13th-14th century, Bengali language and literature got its own style and shape. 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"[50].

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[47] Ibid. P. 53
[48] Wakil Ahmad, Dr. *Bangla Sahittyer Purabrytto,* Vol. II, Dhaka, 1990, P. 7
[49] Ibid., P. 48
[50] Encyclopedia of Islam, Leiden, E.J. BRILL, 1979, Vol. I, P. 1168

History further reveals that, under the Turk and Afghan rulers, administration of Bengal was left in the hands of Hindu feudatories, who were mostly *Kayasthas* by caste, and ordinarily very little influence could be exerted on the life and language of the people from the Muslim court at Gaur or Sonargaon. At the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries, we find that the Muslim kings of Bengal were active patrons of Bengali literature. Contact with the Muslims certainly brought a number of Persian words into Bengali during the early period of Muslim rule.[51]

The Mughal rule in Bengal, which began with Akbar'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 at 1605, a synthesis had been effected, out of which arose an Indo-Muslim culture, and the *Hindustani* (Urdu) speech became its vehicle. *Hindustani* 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, Persian words, which formerly were brought into Bengali mostly directly, now began to be admitted in larger numbers through *Hindustani* into Bengali and the various other vernaculars of the land. The result of this was that towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Bengali speech of the upper classes, even among Hindus, was highly Persianised. And the Persian language was most dominant, when the importance of it in the country was like that of English at the present day. *Hindustani, Bihari,* and *Bengali Munshis* (clerics) taught Persian to sons of rich people, and there were *maktabs* and *madrasas* frequented both by Hindus and Muslims.[52]

We may cite here an example from *Raymongal* of Krishnaram Das, written in 1686 A.D.:

"Abilambe uttorilo rajaro nagore
Baloke farsi pore akono huzure
Kanete soner kalam duato sammukhe
Kitabat sunipon kayasthagon lekhe"[53]

[Suddenly derived at the city of the King
Boys are reading Persian under the guidance of a mystic teacher
Keeping the golden pen at the ear and the ink-pot at the front
The Kayasthas are engaged in writing a quality book]

In this connection Dr. Mohammad Shahidullah in his article "A Brief History of the Bengali language" observed that: "Persian, being the court language, was as much cultivated by the people in general, Hindus and Mohammedans alike, during the Mohammadan rule, as English is now. A knowledge of Persian was the only passport to the Government service at that time."[54]

Despite the political influences, a group of *Sufis* and *Mystics* had a small role in introducing a number of Arabic and Persian words in this locality. Hazrat Bayezid Bostami (872 A.D.), Shaikh Baba Adam Shaheed (1119A.D.), Shaikh Nimatillah Badakhshani, Shaikh Ahmad Taki (1169 A.D.), Shaikh Sharaf Uddin Abu Tawama,

[51] Chatterji, Suniti Kumar,*TheOrigin and Development of the BengaliLiterature*, Calcutta,1993,P.P. 201-3
[52] ibid. P.P. 205-6
[53] *Shahidullah Rachanabali*, ed. Abul Kalam Manzor Morshed, Vol. III, Bangla Akademi, 1995:504
[54] ibid. P. 575

etc. had propagated the rules and regulations of Islam among the Muslims in Bengal, so in this way some Arabic and Persian words were introduced here.[55]

It is therefore a reality that, today, we observe thousands of Persian words in Bengali. Mrs. Raisy Begam, daughter of late Mr. A.K. Fazlul Hoque, in this context, asserts as follows: "even before the English domination peoples from Muslim and other communities who were living in Bangladesh. At that time Persian was the court language and people from Muslim, Hindu and from other religious communities had been spoken in Bengali, mixed with Persian, Urdu and Arabic.[56]

Likewise Dr. Enamul Hoque says: "during the Mughal period almost all Bengali literature, specially Muslim Bengali literature had overflowed by the direct or indirect influence of Persian.[57]

It is notable that some Persian words as well as Arabic and Turkish through Persian not only began to be used in local vernacular, but also in some cases these words drove out some genuine Bengali words. For instance:

Bengali	Persian	
shosharu	*khorgosh*	rabbit
sanchan/saichan	*baj*	falcon
akhet	*shikar*	game
gohari	*nalish*	complain
melani	*vidai*	goodbye
buhit	*zahaj*	ship
dash sha	*hazar*	thousand
tutt	*kam*	less[58]

Bangla vocabulary is greatly affected by Persian, and Arabic through Persian in almost all aspects of our life. I would like to list some Persian words under the heads below:

- names of Muslims: Arabic - Muhammad, Ahmad, Ali, Mujtaba, Mustafa, Hussain, Hasan etc.; Persian - Jamshed, Rustam, Suhrab, Kaikubad, Aftab, Parvz, Farzana, Zarina, Yasmin etc.
- names of Hindus and Shikhs often on the same pattern: Lal Bahadur, Jawahir Lal, Jashwat Sing, Namwar Sing , Iqbal Sing etc.
- some titles conferred during the British rule, borrowed from Persian: Khan Bahadur, Rai Bahadur, Asafjah, Salarjang etc.
- administration, warfare, revenue and law: *phouj*/solders, *takht*/throne, *jarimana*/compesation, *nalish*/complain etc.
- kingly state, chase: *tohshildar*/Collector, *badsha*/King, *jomidar*/landlord etc.
- religions, races and prefessions: *Ihudi*/Jew, *Hindu*/Hindu, *Phiringi*/English or European, *dardji*/tailor, *khoda*/God.
- education: *kagadj*/paper, *kalam*/pen, *pir*/clergymanetc.
- luxury, trades, arts and crafts: *atar*/perfume, *ayna*/mirror, *golab*/rose, *dalan*/building etc.
- body-organs: *baju*/arm, *Sina*/chest etc.
- garments: *rumal*/handkerchief, *pirahan*/night *shirt*/gown etc.

[55] Billah, Abu Musa, Mohammad, Bangla vhasay Arbi farsi sabda o auvidhan, Sahitty Patrika, Dhaka University, Vol. 38, No. 3, P.165
[56] Mostaba Ali, Syed, *Engregun ki Lisani Policy*, Karachi, 1970, P. 142
[57] Enamul Hoque, Mohammad, *Muslim Bangla Shahittya*, Dhaka, 1965, P. 132
[58] *Shahidullah Rachanabali*, Vol. III, P. 576

- foods: *korma*/preserved meat, *kofta*/meat ball, *halwa*/sweet etc
- business: *karigar*/worker, *dokandar*/shopkeeper etc.
- family and relatives: *baba*/father, *ma*/mother, *dada*/grandfather, *damad*/son-in-law etc.
- places: *asman*/sky, *jamin*/earth, *bajar*/market, *hammamkhana*/bathroom, etc.
- birds: *bulbul*/nightingale, *tota*/parrot, *janoar*/animal etc.
- places, cities and provinces: Nobabpur, Gulestan, Rajsahi, Rangpur etc.

Furthermore, Persian suffixes like *i, dan, dani, badj, giri* are used to form Bengali adjectives or abstract nouns, for example: *desh + i = deshi* (country-made), *phul + dani* = *phuldani* (flower-vase), *dokan + dar = dokandar* (shopkeeper), *mamla + badj = mamlabadj* (litigant), *babu + giri = babugiri* (interested in fashion).

Persian words *nar* (male) and *mada/madi* (female) 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) [59].

In fact, more than 10000 Persian words can be found in the Bengali language and development of Bengali literature, especially, mediaeval Bengali Literature had been greatly influenced by Persian Literature.

About the aforesaid process of word-formation the following matters are noteworthy. Firstly, numerous Persian words are used in Bengali but in most of the cases the Persian *Aa* (a) has been elided, as in: *kamar > komor; garm > gorom; narm > norom*.

Secondly, Persian prefixes are mixed up with Bengali words and developing into Bengali words, like: *dar-patton, be-gotik*. In both cases the first portions are Persian.

Thirdly, in many cases both portions of such compound words are Persian or Arabic + Persian or Persian + Arabic. For instance:

Persian	Arabic + Persian	Persian + Arabic
na-khosh unhappy	*aam-darbar* common meeting	*be-aqqel/a'ql* fool
kam-jor weak	*khas-mahal* special palace	*be-malum* unconscious
nimak-dani salt-pot	*alam-gir* conqueror of the world	*na-layek* unfit

Persian influence can also be observed in Bengali sentence-construction, for instance:

Persian	Bengali	
man yin sib khurdebuda	*ami ye sif kheyechilam*	I had eaten this apple
man yek tikke gosht Khordam	*ami yek tukra gosht khelam*	I have eaten a piece of meat
to az kuja amadi	*toi kotha theke eli*	where are you from

We can observe here a phonetic similarity in both Persian and Bengali sentences. In both the cases sentences end with verbs and these verb-endings in some places are also almost identical in the two languages, for example [-aam] and [-i] above.

[59] For more information pl.see, *Shahidullah Rachanabali*, Vol. III, P.P.481-482, 504-507 and Chatterji, Suniti Kumar, *TheOrigin and Development of the BengaliLiterature*, Calcutta, 1993, P.P. 203-208, Helali, Golam Maqsud, Perso-Arabic Elements in Bengali Language and Literature, Bangla Academy, 1967, Dakha, Pal, Horendro, Chandro, Bangla Shahitte Arbi-Farsi Shabda, and pl. see, Billah, Abu Musa, Mohammad, Bangla vhasay Arbi farsi sabda o auvidhan P.P. 157- 180

Such affinities also exist in verbal transformations, such as:

Persian	Bengali	
khordam	*khelam*	I ate
kardam	*korlam*	I did
amadam	*elam*	I have come
kardi	*korli*	you did

We may cite many verbs having such phonetic and structural similarities. As in Persian, in Bengali also there is no verbal change in case of gender. For example:

Persian	Bengali	
baba aomad	*baba elen*	father has come
mama aomad	*mata elen*	mother has come
berader aomad	*bhai elen*	brother has come
khahar aomad	*bon elen*	sister has come

Here we can see that both Bengali and Persian verbs end with a stop-sound – [n] called *hash* in Bengali and [d] called *saken* in Persian.

As in Persian, in Bengali the adjectives of singular and plural, and of masculine and feminine gender are alike. For example:

Persian	Bengali	
barge sabj	*sabuj pata*	green leaf
barghae sabj	*sabuj patagulo*	green leaves

Following Persian idioms, some Bengali idioms have been formed. Like:

Persian	Bengali	
namak khodan	*nimak khawa*	to eat salt
gorbe koshtan roje avval	*prothom ratyei biral maro*	kill the cat at the first night
divar ham gush darad	*deyalero kan ase*	wall has ear too

Similarities in comparative forms in Bengali and Persian are also found:

Persian	Bengali	
behtar	*sresthotor*	best
bojorgtar	*brehottor*	bigger
kamtar	*solpotor*	fewer
saritar	*drototor*	faster

Here, the comparative sign in Persian words is [تر] /tar/ and in Bengali words /tor/, a distorted form of the Persian /tar/.

6   Conclusion

Bengali and Persian both are from the same language group. Besides, Bengali language flourished within the domain of Persian influenced Islamic culture. We find in the above-cited examples that Persian and Bengali are very close to each other and

their affinities are very apparent in both formation of words and making sentences. Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, when we have reached post-modern civilization, yet we can observe the usage of thousands of Persian words in Bengali language and literature. A proper survey of colloquial and literary languages of all over the Bengal is required to reveal the full extent of Persian influence.

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Language acquisition