



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## The Arabic language in West Bengal: Problems and Solutions

Taslim Ahmad

Research scholar, University of Gour Banga

&

Assistant Professor, Malda College

**Abstract:** Arabic language is international language. It has occupied the fourth position in the recognized languages of the United Nations. It is the ancient and living language served as the vehicle of literature language from pre- Islamic period up to modern period. It is the language of the Quran and Sunnah. It is the main source of communication about Islam. It is not a sacred language as some believe as some believe. Though, with the rise of Islam, Arabic shifted from a little-known tribal language to the lingua franca for the Muslim world.

Although Arabic language is used as a medium of delivering speech or communication. So, the teachers and students are very much expert in Arabic reading skill. But they are poor in the rest three skills i.e. listening, speaking and writing. The paper hints to the current challenges of Arabic teaching-learning processes and, finally, proposes some suggestions to solve those obstacles. This article is analytical and mostly follows the qualities research method.

**Keywords:** Arabic language, problem, West Bengal, Curriculum, syllabus

It is known that the Arabic language is one of the oldest and most widely spoken and understood languages. Today it is an official language of twenty-two countries, spoken by more than 422 million people in the Arab world, and used more than one and a half billion Muslims in the world<sup>1</sup>. India, which is the cradle of many languages and cultures, but this it is counted as a language of religion and culture by about 172 million Indian Muslims<sup>2</sup>. Among the most important of its states is West Bengal, where 30 million Muslims live as per 2021 estimate<sup>3</sup>. Their percentage is twenty-five percent. All of them study this language because of its relevance to their religion and culture, but they suffer from various problems and different difficulties in obtaining it, because their mother tongue is Bengali and for other reasons.

<sup>1</sup> - Al Bath al Islami, Eighth Edison, March, 2014, p-3

<sup>2</sup> - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam\\_in\\_India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_India)

<sup>3</sup> - Muslim in West Bengal: trend of population growth and educational status by Nazmul Hussain, page no.41

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bengali\\_Muslims](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bengali_Muslims)

This brief paper will review the problems, faced by students of the Arabic language, and then present the solutions, after a cursory look at the study of the Arabic language in West Bengal.

Musalman in West Bengal:

Islam came to India through Sindh and Multan, and spread throughout India by the Muslim believers and faithful merchants and preachers who were imbued with the spirit of Islam. They made efforts to spread the true religion through exhortation, guidance and good example. It increased after Muhammad bin al Qasim when he conquered this area in 711AD<sup>4</sup>. And that West Bengal, which is located in northern India, had a commercial and advocacy link with Muslim traders from the Arabs since an early age. Some historians define its relationship with Islam and Muslims in the eighth century AD, as Abdul Karim says: "Islam arrived in Bengal in the eighth century AD, and the merchants arrived Before that"<sup>5</sup>. While Jagdish Sarkar Narayan writes that Islam flourished in Bengal after it was conquered by Ikhtiar Al-Din Muhammad Bakhtiar Khilji, who established an Islamic state in Bengal at the beginning of the thirteenth century AD in 1203 AD<sup>6</sup>. Then non-Muslims began to convert to Islam individually and collectively, and West Bengal became the third largest state of India in terms of Muslim population.

There are two types of schools in which Arabic is taught: one is private religious schools, and the other is government schools.

Private religious schools: These schools are conducted with the help of people and their donations. Their establishment was essential for the study and understanding of the Qur'an and Hadith, and for preserving the Islamic identity of Muslims, at a time when Islam and Muslims faced various challenges and objections. as Zubair Ahmed Al-Farouqi writes, "These conditions were considered challenges to Islam and Muslims. So the scholars objected to it, and established religious schools, on top of which was Dar al-Ulum in Deoband<sup>7</sup>.

In these schools, the focus is on understanding the Qur'an and Hadith than studying Arabic literature and other subjects such as science, arithmetic and others. The regular lesson is conducted from the first grade to the eighth grade, which is also called the course. For more study they go to Uttar Pradesh and other states of India and study there for several years. Among the most famous private religious schools in West Bengal are Jamia Madinatul Uloom (Memari, Bardawan), Jamia Islahul Muslimeen (Bhado, Malda), Jamia Mazharul Uloom (Batna, Malda), Jamia Darul Hadeeth ( Lohapur, Birbhum).

Governmental schools: These schools are conducted with the help of the government under the supervision of the Education Board of Schools in West Bengal, which was established in the year 1950 AD. It is noteworthy that West Bengal was the first state in India to make the school board an independent body. The first Madrasa that was established in India was Alia Madrasa which was founded by the East India Company in 1781AD by the Christian Missionary Warren Hausting<sup>8</sup>. Abu al-Hasan Ali al-Nadawi writes about it, "Among the official Arabic schools are the Alia Madrasa in Rampur, and Alia Madrasa in Calcutta, and Shams al-Huda in Patna. In the previous years Madrasa Alia in kolkata and Madrasa Alia in Rampur were considered among the largest schools. They recorded immortal effects by the excellence of their professors and the characteristics of their students<sup>9</sup>. Besides Arabic studies in these schools, other subjects

<sup>4</sup> - Nadwi, Khurshid Ashraf Iqbal, Arabic language in India, p-11

<sup>5</sup> - Karim, Abdul, social history of the Muslim in West Bengal, p- 25

<sup>6</sup> -Jagdish Sarkar Narayan, Islam in Bengal, page no. 20

<sup>7</sup> -Faruqui, Dr. Zubair Ahmad, Musahamatu darul Uloom Deoband fil Adab al Arabi, p-9

<sup>8</sup> - Al Bathul Islami, Dul Qada, 1397 H, p-61

<sup>9</sup> - Nadwi, Abul Hasan Ali Al Muslemoon fil Hind, p-132

such as science, arithmetic, Bengali, English, etc. are studied. Moreover, there are public government schools in which Arabic is also taught as an elective in several classes. After completing their studies, the students go to colleges and universities located inside and outside Bengal. Among the most famous universities in Bengal that carry out Arabic studies to the level of bachelor's, master's, pre-doctoral and doctoral degrees, it is Alia University, the University of Kolkata, Jadavpur University, Guor Banga University, University of North Bengal and others.

Problems for Arabic language learners in West Bengal:

In fact, the Arabic language is one of the most difficult languages in terms of grammar, syntax, derivation, pronunciation, and others. Its study and learning is more difficult for non-native speakers. Among the most important problems that students face are the following:

**Difference in the Nature of Arabic and Bengali Language:** The Arabic language is completely different from the Bengali language in terms of alphabets, pronunciation, sounds, style, manner of writing etc. Arabic is written on the right, while Bengali is written on the left. The people of Bengal in their mother tongue do not care about the pronunciations, such the pronunciation of س (seen), ش (sheen), ص (swad), ث (thaa), ح (haa), ه (haa), ع (ain), ء (hamza), ذ (zaal), ض (dwad). They read (أرب) Arab instead of (عرب) Arab, and (سريف) sareef instead of (شريف) shareef (Noble person), and (همد) hamd instead of (حمد) hamd (Praise). They also don't take any account of the long letters, sometimes they extend the word that is free of the long pronunciation, and sometime they do not extend the word despite the fact that it is in the long pronunciation. For example, they pronounce (أكبار) Akbar instead of (أكبر) Akbar (great), and (مطار) Matar instead of (مطر) Matar (rain). We know very well that the Arabic language is characterized by Pronunciation, Sounds, Syntax, Derivation among the other languages<sup>10</sup>. It's a great problem for the learners whose mother tongue is Bengali, to acquire the Arabic language or speak it with correct sound and pronunciation. Even there are huge number of senior scholars in West Bengal who can't recite the Holy Quran with the correct pronunciation.

**Presence of unused grammatical or morphological rules:** One of the most important problems that hinder the people of Bengal in teaching the Arabic language is the large number of grammatical and morphological rules for it. The Arabic sentence begins with the verb, then subject, then the object. While the Bengali sentence begins with the subject, then the object, then the verb. The number system in the Arabic language is more difficult than other languages. In addition to the rules of masculine, feminine, definite, indefinite, singular, dual, plural and the morphological and derivational system. These grammatically rules and conditions are not available in the Bengali language. So, the students of Bengal who are not acquainted with these rules and conditions in his mother tongue will face difficulties and challenges.

Today, many sub-grammars are taught which are no longer used in modern Arabic. So the students of this language don't show any interest in learning and there is reluctance towards it. When the students are promoted to the next class, there also they face a lot of grammar. They are forced to memorize those grammars. Finally, it dawned in their mind that Arabic language is not possible without grammar.

**Curriculum and Syllabus:** Curriculum and Syllabus are causing the biggest challenges and most serious problems in teaching Arabic. Because most of the religious schools have the traditional curriculum known as "Nezami", which was renewed by Nizam al- Din al- Sahalwi al- Laknawi (1161 AH/ 1747AD)<sup>11</sup>. In these Madrasas the complex textbooks written in the Persian language are studied, such as Mizan Munshab, Nahumeer, Panj ganj, Shazal Arf, Hedayatun Nahu, Kafiya and some others books. On the other hand, in government Schools, Colleges and Universities taught those books written in the Bengali language, and there is no single system of curriculum and courses to be followed in all schools for Arabic studies. In this situation Schools must take some necessary steps to taking educational curriculum and courses of learners

<sup>10</sup> - Faruqui, Muhammad and Mujaddedi, Muhammad Ismail, The History of Arabic language and literature, p-29

<sup>11</sup>- Teaching of Arabic language in India: Problems and aspirations, Dr. Nasim Akhtar Nadwi, p-16

according to their ages, intelligence, desire and other characteristics. It is also necessary that the curriculum be from the easiest to the easy, and from the easy to difficult, and from the difficult, and from the difficult to the most difficult, so that students love to study and take full advantage of it. It is also necessary that the curriculum would be according to the Modern period, so that the students can learn about the inventions, advances and other that happen. It also necessary that the textbooks be should be with exercises, so that the students solve the exercises and understand themselves and consolidate the lessons in their minds.

Conflict between the Arabic language and other languages: the teachers of this language should teach through Arabic in the classroom. The teachers will encourage students to speak and discuss in this language. Most of the teachers do not conduct their lectures and teaching in Arabic. Moreover, they do not provide any explanation of that text book in Arabic. They do not hold their students for distortions and errors in their methods and compositions. Some of the teachers started teaching through Arabic language but very quickly started teaching again in their mother tongue Bengali.

Many teachers noticing the importance of English language, encourage the students to teach this language. As much as they present the importance of the English language to students, they do not explain the students the importance of the Arabic language. Some teachers teach Arabic text through English. Thus, we give very little importance of Arabic language in the crowd of Bengali and English languages.

Lack of Good Schools and Qualified Teachers: The lack of good schools and skilled teachers are the most important problems. It is a pity that West Bengal does not have good private religious school that has been attached to government or personal universities inside or outside the country. After the compilation of the course some students go to other state, especially Uttar Pradesh. They admit in the class already had studied in the previous class and Madrasas. They have not able to ahead for further higher education in universities.

Governmental schools are in worse condition than religious schools, where most of teachers have no ability to understand, read or write Arabic. So how do they teach this language to non-native speakers that they themselves do not know? Professor Mohammad Arafa said in his book “ the Arabic language, and how to learn in”: If a scholar of Arabic took his student on the path of practice and repetition and memorized the eloquent methods of Arabic and its wonderful examples, and asked them to weave according to their patterns in speaking, writing an rhetoric, he would have succeeded in teaching him”<sup>12</sup>.

Inadequate condition for teaching of Arabic language: The Public Madrasah of West Bengal targeting to teach religion, not to teach to the language of the religion. So, the teachers focus on educating their students the Islamic science according to their needs. While the teaching of the Arabic language depends on the proper environment in which four linguistic skills would be practice, they are: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Poverty and deficiency: It is known that Muslims in West Bengal are more backward and suffer from poverty and destitution. Some of them die in the twentieth century also because of hunger and thirst<sup>13</sup>, and more than ninety percent of Muslims live in rural areas, and there is no way for them to earn and income<sup>14</sup>.

Suggestions for solutions to the problems regarding to Arabic studies:

There are some suggestions for solutions to problems in the following points:

The continuous effort and determination of students, teachers and authority must be carried out to overcome the problems regarding to study of Arabic language.

---

<sup>12</sup> - Arfa, Mohammad, Al logah al Arabic

<sup>13</sup> - Khan,Zafrul Islam, Muslims of West Bengal are starving to death, Jaridah Al Riyadh, April, 2005,

<sup>14</sup> - Karim, Abdul, Social History of the Muslims in Bengal, p-239

Would be take academic courses according to the requirements of modern period, and according to the age and taste of the students.

We should prepare textbooks for the students, where we can choose the vocabulary and easy words that we need to express our feelings and thoughts in our daily life.

Elect skilled teachers to teach Arabic language in various schools, colleges and universities. There would be justice in their appointment, so that they can carry out the teaching and learning process in an attractive and sound manner.

The use of modern audio-visual technologies in Arabic studies, such as language laboratories, listening devices, video tapes, video slides, computer disks, telephones, and others. In order to facilitate their learners to obtain them easily as soon as possible.

The government in general, and Muslims in particular, should establish modern schools and make them attached to colleges and universities inside and outside the country, and facilitate the students to obtain more education. Recently Jamia Islahul Muslemeen Bahado was also attached to Jamia Millia Islamia. Jamia Madinatul Uloom, Memari, Bardwan also attached to Jamia Millia and Aligarh Muslim University. Jamia Faizia Haqqania, Malda attached to Aligarh Muslim University.

Finally, I would like to indicate that the governmental schools, colleges and universities of West Bengal provide an independent atmosphere to teach the languages and learning. We find there all audio-visual instruments and modern educational technology to its learners, to develop language skill and to develop research and studies in the best possible way. The teachers of others languages such as English, French, German and Russian use it on a large scale. They are keen to pay great attention to their language and do their best to facilitate their languages and overcome their difficulties. The Governmental schools, colleges and universities of India also provide on demand all sections of Arabic books such as dictionaries, lexicons, magazines, newspapers, periodicals, etc.. to provide students with the Arabic language and to overcome language difficulties and problems. There are also other facilities in Government Institutes to develop the capabilities of the Arabic language. Unfortunately, very few teachers use these instruments and facilities.

## Bibliography

Al Bath al Islami, Eighth Edison, March,2014

Muslim in West Bengal: trend of population growth and educational status by Nazmul Hussain,

Nadwi, Khurshid Ashraf Iqbal,Arabic language in India,

Karim,Abdul, social history of the Muslim in West Bengal

Jagdish Sarkar Narayan, Islam in Bengal

Faruqui, Dr. Zubair Ahmad, Musahamatu darul Ulum Deoband fil Adab al Arabi

Al Bathul Islami, Dul Qada, 1397 H

Nadwi, Abul Hasan Ali Al Muslemoon fil Hind,

Faruqui, Muhammad and Mujaddedi, Muhammad Ismail, The History of Arabic language and literature, p-29

Teaching of Arabic language in India: Problems and aspirations, Dr. Nasim Akhtar Nadwi

Arfa, Mohammad, Al logah al Arabiah, wa kaifa nuallemoha, quoted from “ Buhuth Nadwah Zaheratuz Zufil Logawi, 3rd Edition, 1997, p-109

Khan,Zafrul Islam, Muslims of West Bengal are starving to death, Jaridah Al Riyadh, April

Karim, Abdul, Social History of the Muslims in Bengal,

