Studies on Evolution of Bengali Language and Its Development in the Present Context of Cyber Age

Dr. Anirban Sahu

Assistant Professor, Department of Bengali, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee University, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

Email - anirban215sahu@gmail.com

Abstract: *Bengali language has evolved through centuries. Linguistics have recorded and analysed this evolution in great detail. In the context of this evolution present paper seeks to take an estimate of the dynamics of Bengali in the cyber age. Present time, often designated as the Cyber age acknowledging overwhelming presence of cyber reality as the most determining aspect of our existence, has witnessed an irreversible change in how we understand and channelize our individual self, social space and medium of expression. Bengali is also no exception. Bengali is also going through the experience of cyber-space which is quite different compared to the earlier phases of its evolution. In this paper we would try to offer an understanding of this change in the detail context of the larger evolutionary history of Bengali. After narrating the evolutionary context, we would try to mark out the ways Bengali is being used in the cyber-space. Particularly, taking note of the huge corpus of the language as used in the e-space, in individual correspondence through email and short messages, in social-media like Facebook and Twitter, we would try to underline the spaces that may be marked as emerging features in this phase of Bengali. Importance will be given to record the trend of Romanization of Bengali in personal communication and social-networking and how the users respond to the problems usually faced in this process. Examples of uses at both word and sentence level will be explored in detail.*

Key Words: *Linguistics, evolution, Cyber age, cyber-space, social-media, communication.*

INTRODUCTION:

It is a well-known fact that civilization is developed day by day. However human beings are exposed by the language with which he expresses his feelings. Emphasis should be given on the chronological development of present languages.

The great poet *Atul Prasad Sen* has boldly asserted:

> *"Moder Garab Moder Asha*
> *Amori Bangla Bhasha*
> *Mago Tomar Kole..Tomar Bole*
> *Kotoi Shanti Bhalobasha"*

[Oh Bengali language, you are our pride, our hope, In your lap we find peace and love.]

The evolution of Bengali Language has to be critically reviewed in the present context of the cyber age.

The movement of Bengali Language turned into a civil movement during early 1970s and Bangladesh emerged as an independent country adopting Bengali as her National Language. Among all the Languages in the world, Bengali Language has occupied the sixth place. According to the Language users, the place of Bengali Language is next to that of Chinese / Mandarin, Spanish, English, Hindi and Arabia. It is well known that U.N.O. has declared the Bengali Language 'The Sweetest Language of the World'.

Man is superior to other creatures in the use of language. Obviously, the question that arises involves the sense of language and Language consciousness. Oriental philologists define Language in the following manner. Sukumar Sen defines Language as the sum total of all the sounds that man uses to express his idea.

Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyaya defines language-sounds, originating from larynx and accepted by a community, that constitute a part of sentence is Language. Occidental / western philologists define language as follows:

a) 'Language is purely human and noninstinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols.' *-- Edward Sapir*

b) 'Human language is a system of vocal-auditory communication using conventional signs composed of arbitrary pattern sound units and assembled according to set rules, interacting with the experiences of its users.' *-- Dwight Bolinger*

To sum up it can be said that the sounds or the group of sounds used by man in particular linguistic atmosphere / circle to communicate with others can be defined as language.

People are born in a place but they settle in various places of the world and the language they use thus spreads worldwide. Language has undergone many changes with the progress of human civilization and it is still changing and will be changing.

It is a Herculian task to present the accurate number of languages used in human society across the world. The linguists have presented near about four thousand and five hundred major languages. These languages have been divided into 25 classes on the basis of their origin. These language units are Indo-European, Austric, Dravidian, Astralio, Andamani, Altaik, South American, Japanese and Korean, Semia-Hamo, Bhot-Chinese and Papui etc. In course of time many of these languages have been turned into dead languages. In the world today, the most widely read and the most developed literature is in an Indo-European language. That is why this Indo-European group of languages is the most important language group. According to a rough estimate, by the linguists, about 4500 years ago in Ural of Russia a ruse came to existence and their spoken language was the first Aryan language. About 2500 years BC this language started spreading over different parts of the world. Some linguistic suggested in their research works that these people who spoke this first Aryan language, lived in Doab an area between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers.

Philologists named this linguistic group 'Bir'. This linguistic group is further divided into two subgroups Kentum and Shatam. One of the important linguistic groups that originated from shatam was the Indo-Iranian one. A section of people belonging to this Indo-Iranian-linguistic group, entered ancient India around 1500 BC. The language spoken by them was the ancient Indian Aryan Language. The original old branch of which was Vedic and the relatively modern one was Sanskrit. It was mainly due to the famous grammarian Panini that Sanskrit gradually became a language used by the priests and by the seekers of knowledge. Naturally it was no more the language of the common.

Around 600 BC from spoken Sanskrit two more spoken languages were derived pali and prakrit. This period, in linguistics, goes by the name of Mid Indian Aryan Period. This period extends up to 900AD. But this view is no more accepted now a day. Because the initial traits of Bengali one of the main Indian Aryan languages was found in 'Charjagiti' which was popular around 700 AD, precisely 650 AD as the ancient poet of charja Meennath lived in 650 AD. According to prof. Sylvain Levy (French collector Collection of Chinese photograph) who did extensive research on 'charjagiti', poet Meennath (also known as Matsyendranath) visited Nepal during the regime of Narendradev.

Shahidulla also endorsed the idea that ancient Bengali came into existence in 650 AD or it may also be that colloquial Bengali was born even before that! most likely from 400 AD when Bengali words were being used in the spoken language. Modern research suggests that in chinese dictiasasies, references of books like chaturabharan written by Bhusuku in copper inscription edict on a copper plate and Bidagdhamukhamandan by Dharmadas. In these books evidence of Bengali words is found along with Sanskrit words. So, we must think seriously and sincerely about the birth period of Bengali.

This middle Indo-Aryan phase can be divided into some sub phases that are manifested in Ashoka's sermons, Sutanuka, Kharbel Lipi etc.

'Pali' has its origin in Middle Indo-Aryan sub phase. Pal reigned from 6th B.C. to 5th B.C. For example, we can cite the following example from 'Dhammapad'.

<div align="center">
'Na Paresam Bilomani

Na Paresam Katakatam

Attano Ba Abekshaya Katani Akatani Cha'
</div>

Though there is controversy over the origin of 'Pali' as a word, Olden Burg and Muller opined that 'Pali' was originated from local Odishi dialect. Others (to look after) or 'Palli' (Village) as the origin of 'Pali' as it descended from people's local dialect. It should be kept in mind that lord Buddha used 'Pali' side by side 'Magadhi' to preach Buddhism easily and successfully among the mass.

Sukumar Sen observes that 'Prakrita' is from 'Prakriti' or dialect of mass. Ancient Aryans dispersed from their natural settlements and came into contact with non-Aryans and their dialects, this served as a catalyst for evolution and transformation of main dialect. Middle Indo-Aryan third sub-phase is manifested in Kalidas' 'Bikramobashi', Sarahapad's 'Dohakosh', Bidyapati's 'Kirtilata'. Bengali language came into appearance in the Neo Indo-Aryan phase.

Philologists traced the origin of 'Bengali' in this way.

Indo-European - Indo - Iranian - Old Indo - Aryan - Middle Indo - Aryan - Neo Indo - Aryan.

From this it can be achieved that 'Bengali' has its origin from Sanskrit, a phase of Ancient (old) Indo - Aryan Language. Panini refined it, so it was called Sanskrita meaning 'refined'. Accordingly, popular opinion Bengali has its closest relation with Sanskrit, called the mother of Bengali. But philologists namely Rameswar Shaw and others do not accept it. According to Sukumar Sen, the old Indo - Aryan language is the Language of the Vedic Literature and its modern edition was the language of the people with defined taste and that of the tolktale. This language is Sanskrit. But the phonetics, sounds, conjugation etc began to change to suit easy pronunciation. From this base he observed that it was from Sanskrit in its 'Prakrita' stage that have given birth to Neo-Indo-Aryan languages.

Paresh Chandra Mazumdar opines- "Sanskrit is the mother of Bengali Language". Generally, such an easy and simple inference is in vogue but the most essential information on behalf of the linguist is: This existing flow of the colloquial Sanskrit has, in course of time, created the confluence of modern languages by flowing through the deep gorge of Prakrit / Apabhrangsha''. As a matter of fact, the use of about 90% Sanskrit words and those born from Sanskrit in the Bengali Vocabulary help to keep up argument in favour of this conclusion. Moreover, the Pratyayas (Suffixes) used in vedic Sanskrit crossed the stratum of the Prakrita and have been converted into Bengali Case-ending suffixes. As for example Sam Shrinoti > Sunai > Shone (Beng).

Side by side components of Sanskrit are also available in Anusarga, prefixes, numbers and word formation etc. So, it cannot be denied fully that majority of the modern Indo-Aryan languages have evolved from vedic Sanskrit.

These opinions of Dr. Sen and Dr. Mazumdar cannot be accepted because colloquial language be denied although these lies a difference between language of literature and the spoken language. Dr. Sukumar Sen also admits elsewhere that the existing Indian languages have come into being through a process of various evolutions of the colloquial form of Sanskrit. Genuine literature is also formed of daily spoken language. In fact, it is the slackness or negligence of men which gives birth to language in course of time. So, for evolution of language only vedic language should not be accepted. Suniti Babu has not distinctly said that Bengali was born from vedic Sanskrit. He has said in his 'Bangla Bhasha Tattwer Bhumika" the preface of Bengali Philology – Bengali language was evolved from a change of the ancient Aryan language of India.

Sanskrit cannot be called the mother of Bengali language because,

a)   It is thought that Sanskrit was created in approximately 1500 B.C. while Md. Saheedullah opines that Bengali language was born in approximately seventh century. The modern researchers said that this happened even much earlier.

b)   Ancient Indo-Aryan language was divided into five sub divisions. Among them the mid-land colloquial language was much more eniched or prosperous. Panini who belonged to the North (North India) reformed language, giving up the spoken language. As a result, Sanskrit began to lose her longevity or her life as she maintained a distance from the verbal language of the Common folk. So, it may be inferred that Bengali language was not   evolved from Sanskrit language.

c)   Plenty of Tat sama (equal to Sanskrit) words are found in Bengali. On this basis, Sanskrit cannot be called mother of Bengali language, because   Bengali also contains Austrik, Drabirdah and Bhote Chinese words though in smaller quantity. It is thought that in the sphere of the culture of Sanskrit in literature this language gained immense popularity and for this reason Sanskrit words were found in Bengali Vocabulary.

d)   A difference in the generation of Sanskrit and Bengali words relating to Geographical location is noticed. Sanskrit was created from the mid-land sub linguistic regions, and Bengali was born from the eastern region or the oriented sublingual stratum.

The language which we call Indo-Aryan language in sixth century B.C. is indeed the prakrita language, which is so called as it is the rural language or the real man's language. This type of language was divided into sub lingual strato like Shouraseni, Magadhi and Paisachi etc. It is said Bengali was evolved from 'Magadhi Prakrit'. But this is unacceptable, because:

1)   Magadhi Prakrit language was evolved between 2nd and 6th century A.D. while Bengali was created two hundred years later.

2)   The main feature of Magadhi Prakrit is Ra > La and 'Ra' and 'La' were both used in Rajasthani 'Lachehha' means 'Priyadarshini'. On the other hand, somewhere in Bengali though Ra > La, Ra and La both diphthongs are in use.

3)   In Magadhi Prakrit only talabya 'sha' has its use. But in Bengali there are three 'Sha's i.e., Murdhanya, Dantasa.

4)   In Magadhi Prakrit 'aa' was 'e' case ending in the plural number of nominative case but in Bengali it belongs to third case ending or instrumental case. The next stage of Magadhi Prakrita was Magadhi Apabhranghsha. According to the opinions of the researchers like George Abraham Grearson, Suniti Kumar Chattopadhya ancient Bengali language had its origin from purbi Magadhi Apabhrangsa sometimes about 900 B.C. But no written example of local Magadhi Apabhraugsha which is the origin of Bengali has been found anywhere.

Dr. Sahidullaha thinks that Bengali was originated from Gaudiya Prakrita. Poet Dandi has said about this gaudiya system as related to Magadhi and Panchali in his 'Kavyadasha' Bengali seems to originate from this gauda Apabhrangsha which was deviated from gaudiya prakrita, Reasons behind this could be, -

1)   Gauda was the earlier name of Bengal so it is said that Bengali originated from gauda Apabhrangsha as they belonged to the same name and same Geographical regions.

2)   There are uses of talabya sha, Murdhanya's and Dantasa in Gaudiya Apabhrangsha like Bengali.

3)   Murdhanya has its pronounciation like Dantana in Bengali as in Goudiya Apabhrangsha.

In this context it can be said that Bengali had its origin from Gaudiy Apabhrangsha but many linguists do not accept the sub lingual stage Gaudiya Prakrita. Still, it is to be agreed that comparison to other Mid Indian languages oriental sub lingual stratum has undergone many evolutions. In conclusion it may be asserted that Bengali originated in a stage from Gauda in Neo Indo Aryan stage via Mid Indo-Aryan stage evolving from Ancient Indo-Aryan language.

The Philologists or linguists have shown the picture of language evolution from Indo Iranian Branch of Indo-European language branch to Old Indo-Aryan, Middle Indo-Aryan and New Indo-Aryan language evolution. From the thought of this evolution, it was being told that the Bengali language has been born from ancient level of Sanskrit language. It is known to all that as a result of Sanskar (modification) of 'Kathya riti' uttering method, performed by Panini, the language has been named 'Sanskrita'. So Bengali language is closely related to vastly prevailed vaidic Sanskriti or written image of vastly prevailed idea. So Sanskrit language is regarded as mother of Bengali language. But this opinion is not admitted easily because there are numerous differences of opinion among the eminent linguists.

Since the ancient 'Prastar age', men have been using signs or symbols as a media of expressing idea of mind and these are called 'Lipi' (Graphemics- a script or script). In many countries of the world varieties of lipigraphy (Lipimala) like 'Quipu" i.e., 'Granthalikhan', 'Chitralipi' (Pictogram), 'Bhablipi' (Ideogram), 'Sabda Lipi' (Logogram), 'Akshar Lipi' (Syllabic Script), 'Dhawni Lipi' (Phonogram) etc. have been composed. David Diringer has published the history of script (Lipi) of every language and discovery of script (Lipi) in his famous book 'The Alphabet'. But it may be thought that language reading and corresponding realization would be more or less easy if we can express every language under the banner of a single script or Lipi. An eye specialist (L. L. Zamenhof) of Poland felt the justification of this fact. As a result of the endless effort, the artificial international language like 'Bhola Puck' 'Esperanto' etc have been created. As for example according to the pronunciation of Roman script, the Roman script of Rabindranath Thakur could not be transformed. This is the reason of origin of International Phonetic Script. In IPA it would be / robindronath thakur/.

Roman Alphabet was created from Atruscan Alphabet. Modern Romiya letters had developed from the Roman or Latin Alphabet. In this alphabet separate letters were used for separate vowel and consonant letters. Long before the origin of Bengali letters the Portuguese priest Mona Al published his book 'Kripar Shastrer Arthaveda', printed from Lisbon in 1743 A.D.

There continues a gap between uttered language and letters. Consequently, persons speaking in one particular language cannot utter like those persons speaking in another language just as when a Hindi singer tries to sing in Bengali he fails to speak in existing spoken language. To give an example "Akhon Amar Bela nahi Ar" when uttered in existing Colloquial becomes "Aakhone Amar Bala Nahi Ar." Similarly, by the letters of one language alphabet of another language cannot be properly expressed. As for example when Bengali 'TA' and 'THA' are pronounciated by (ta) and 'th', then in place of 'Danta' sound Murdhanya sound is uttered. Following this rule, Satyajit Roy in Bengali is uttered 'Sattojit Ray' to the Bengalees and Rabindranath Thakur becomes Rabindranath Tagore.

Most of the languages in the world have their own scripts. It is impossible to a man to follow all the languages together. But a man bears a strong desire to learn varieties of languages which is not so easy. This is why a universal script/epistle (Lipi) is needed. As a result of this, an international language named 'Esperanta' has been developed. As a result of this effort Roman script has been created. As the Roman script is spelling dependent, the pronunciation problem remained same. According to language, its pronunciated difference is noticed. As for example // (Sha) is uttered 'C' in English, but when it is uttered in French style, it will be 'X'. To solve this problem International Phonetic Alphabet or I.P.A. has been created.

A group of English and French teachers established The Phonetic Teachers' Association with the guidance of Pal Pasi, a French linguist in 1886. Later L' Association Phonetique Internationale or The International Phonetic Association was coming up from the same society and finally formation of International Phonetic Alphabet is formed in 1888. At the time of first publication of this International Phonetic Alphabet the society put the following guidelines:

a)   International Phonetic Alphabet is setup in Roman Script.

b)   Alphabet is formed to fulfil the necessity of applicable Philology.

c)   In language learning, the pronunciation mode of unfamiliar language can be controlled easily.

d)   The language which has no written document, clarifying the phonetic of that language, written shape can be given.

e)   With the help of numerous symbol and sign, various sides of the sound are directed subtly.

f)   Basically, Phonetical Alphabet is applied with object to write added lesson.

g)   To construct the alphabetical structure, psychological and educational side should be formed except phonetical side of alphabet.

Some instructions of the International phonological Alphabet are given below:

a)   When two basic sounds of a language differ from those of the other sounds, then the two sounds are formed without any characteristic. With this purpose though the Roman alphabet is used, the same remains absent there. Here and there sounded etymology has been formed in a different manner.

b)   When two phonetic sounds are very close together, they lack in making any creative one between the basic forms. There these two sounds are directed by the same alphabet. In a narrow translation these two sounds are directed by two separate alphabets or characteristic notations.

c)   Non-Roman alphabet is included in it without any conformity. The Council has recognized the alphabet of that category which has a semblance or nearness with another alphabet.

d)   The Council has observed that it is not possible to direct the use of sounds with all sorts of characteristic notations. So, they have laid stress on only length of sound, accent of vowel and basic sounds.

e)   It is desirable to notice the two basic phonetic ideal for the use of the phonology of any language Among these two the first one is related to basic phonology while the other one is related to vowel phonology.

The Council has published in the leaflet that the alphabet would be used for vowels and consonants and regarding this they have pointed out the various phonological aspects with concrete examples. Along with various sounds, characteristic sounds, length of sounds and accent on vowels are also directed for the use with notations.

The total number of vowel and consonant in the directed international scripts are 107. The people of the whole world do not admit I.P.A. as international alphabet. The alphabet which has been used by American / Phonetic experts, differed from London School. The fact is that the Americans have more emphasized on applied advantage than International rules of phonetic transcription. As a result of emphasizing on phonemic transcription than phonetic transcription, their used transcription is not being similar with international phonetic transcription. The change of international transcription may be changed. Because of the clarification of varieties of language, new phonetic is obtained as well as the number of inscriptions are being increased.

Transcription is of two types:

1.   Phonetic Transcription:

In this case the real form of sound is shown here. As for example the English word 'cat' sounds as khyat; so, its transcription is 'Khaet'.

2.   Phonemic transcription:

In this case only one form of the sound is used. Transcription is performed like wise. As for example, the phonemic Transcription of the English word 'cat' is 'Kaet' this kind of division of transcription is called simple and complete in different manners. Moreover, there are monophonetic and polyphonetic transcription divisions. In the case of more phonetic sound no other sound is to be added. Such as "aa" =a; on the other hand, in polyphonetic transcription one symbol is to be added to the other symbol. Such as (d3) (In the case of Inclusive and exclusive diversions). Barring all phonetic differences when transcription is done with its own sound features, it is called exclusive transcription and when transcription is performed on the basis of general colloquial sound characteristics, it is called inclusive transcription.

Owing to practical complication everywhere on earth phonetic script is generally used. In this context, Dr. Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay, the ex-president of International Phonetic Association of London and distinguished linguist has written in his book entitled 'A Bengali Phonetic Readers'. "but it is not necessary in phonetic writing to have separate symbols for each sound, since many of these sounds occur only in special positions in corrected speech and group themselves together with other sounds not occurring in those positions as their variants…. It is generally necessary to have phonetic symbols for the phoneme only".

Till now, it has been corrected and modified in different times as per rules of the London school of grammarians. Greater modifications were done in 1900 AD and 1932 AD. Then after no change was done till 1989 and after that a little modification is made in 1993 A.D. The latest revision was performed in the year 2005. According to this modification the Bengali Letters have been converted into International letters. But many letters of the alphabet, written by Vidyasagar were not accepted, on the basis of the pronunciations by the Bengalees who speak in colloquial language because all the letters of Vidyasagar's alphabet are not uttered by the Bengalees.. According to pronunciation at present, the number of Bengali fundamental vowels is only seven and that of the compound vowels is seventeen. As a matter of fact, we utter many more compound vowels. The number of consonants has also decreased in an attempt to give importance to pronunciation.

The I.P.A. scripts which the linguists have used in their books sometimes differ. As for example Rameswar Shaw, a noted linguist, has used 'c' transcription for 'ch'. But many linguists think that 'ch' is a 'Talabya Sprista Banjon'. So International Phonetic Transcription will be ''. The forms of those letters which pose problems in terms of phonetic transcription are   ''- a again 'a'- ch etc. It should be kept in mind that the lyric forms of Bengali songs are delivered to non-Bengali artists in the transcription of international language so that the pronunciation may be like that of the Bengalees.

Those who use S.M.S. (Satellite Messese Sending) / e-mail also face a similar kind of problem. They cannot differentiate between 'a' / / and '' /a/. They cannot find out 'e'/æ/.

Certain jump in the communication system has been emerged due to the introduction of computers and Internet. Accordingly, people frequently use Facebook, Twitter etc. as a communicating media. Hence to adopt the conventional

Bengali language it has to be modified, so that it could be easily handled by the common computers. The language we use in social networking including Facebook, Twitter etc. is to be further considered for the fact that Bengali language has undergone considerable changes over the years. The currently used system is summarized below:

A. LANGUAGE USAGE:

☐

From Bengali	From English
Ache = a6e	Any one = any 1 day = dy
Achen = a6en	because = bcoz
	chatting = ch8ing
Atke = 8k	evening = eve9
Ar = r / ar	examination = exm
Ektu = ek2	
Eman = emn	Facebook = fb
	forward = 4wd
Esechi = ese6i	feel for you = fil 4 u
Korecho = kore6o	fine = f 9
	forget = 4 get
Kichu = ki6u	good = Gd/gd
Ke= k	
	good night = gdn8 / g.n.
Geche = gese	how = hw
	love = luv, lv
	message = msg
Chumu = muuuu	nice = nic
Chabi = 6obi	picture = pic
Chilo = 6ilo	please = plz, pls
Tui = 2i	
Tumi = 2mi	right = ri8
Bala = bl	
Fatafati = fatafati	same to you = sam2u
	some body = sumbdy
	someone = sm1
	see you letter = c u latr
	the = da
Moto = mto	welcome = wlcm
	you = u
Likchi = lk6i	you are = u r
Hochhe = ho66e	you are right = ur8
Han = hmm	thank you = thanq
Sathe = 7e	wife = wyf

B. SENTENCE USAGE:
   i) Ajker sakale jabi =   aj kscl e jabi.
   ii) Ekta phone kara =   1 ta ph karo.
   iii) Keman acho =   kmn a6o
   iv) Laik dichho na kena =   lik di66o na kno

C. CHARACTERISTIC:
   1.   Phonetic base. Theko = theko, it is equal to IPA from application side.
   2.   Coming directly like international language or coming in short form, though the entire portion is not phonetic based.
   3.   More emphasis on phonetic Laughing = hasiiii, Asadhauan - asadhar oonnnnn.
   4.   At the beginning, it is in capital letter- Such as good night = Gdn8/gdn8
   5.   The usage of letter like 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9 etc. Example: chilo = 6ilo
   6.   It is being used as code language so that these can be written within short time.
   7.   In sentence construction mode
   8.   It is gradually transforming in to public communicating language.
   9.   Correct spelling is not essential.

10.   No difference between capital letter and small letter. Example- Gdn8/gdn8

Language is nothing but the expression of human thoughts and reflects the social culture. Modern man has become busy. His routine has become a hectic one. He is no longer interested in using the standard Bengali language and this is reflected in the language that he uses Bengali language has thus turned into the cyber language in his land.

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