

Arabic Studies in Assam: Issues, Opportunities, and Future implications

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Abstract: Arabic language has historically played a vital role in religious, cultural, and academic spheres. Assam, a state in northeastern India known for its linguistic and cultural diversity, teaches Arabic primarily for getting placement in India and abroad. However, there is a lack of development in the study of Arabic language and literature in academic settings. This study looks at the various barriers to the growth of Arabic studies in Assam, including inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of qualified teachers, outdated programs, restricted access to resources, and social stereotypes that link Arabic to religious education alone. Additionally, sociopolitical stereotypes and a lack of professional orientation contribute to students' declining interest. There is a bright future for Arabic language instruction in Assam in spite of these challenges. Being one of the six official languages of the United Nations and being extensively spoken throughout the Middle East, Arabic is becoming more and more relevant on a worldwide scale, opening up a plethora of academic and professional options. Additionally, new opportunities to improve Arabic language learning are offered by digital tools, internet resources, and government programs centered on minority education.

This study assesses the current situation of Arabic studies in Assam using institutional data, curriculum analysis, and student and staff interviews. It offers case studies from important organizations and provides doable suggestions for curriculum modernization, teacher preparation, policy reform, and awareness campaigns. The results highlight the necessity of a comprehensive strategy that unites contemporary academic requirements with traditional religious instruction. In addition to protecting the language legacy, enhancing Arabic instruction in Assam equips students with useful skills for a globalized society.

Keywords: Arabic Studies, Obstacle, Prospect, Global Relevance, Advancement

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most ancient and important languages in human history, Arabic is widely used in academic, religious, and cultural contexts. Arabic is studied by academics, students, and religious practitioners worldwide as the liturgical language and the means of accessing extensive collections of classical and modern knowledge. Arabic has been taught in India for centuries, at schools, colleges, universities and mostly in Islamic educational establishments like Madrassas, especially in Assam, a state renowned for its ethnic variety and linguistic legacy. However, a number of obstacles prevent the study of Arabic language and literature in Assam from reaching its full academic and cultural potential, despite its historical significance and ongoing relevance.

In Assam, Arabic studies are frequently limited to religious instruction, which obscures the language's literary diversity and significance on a worldwide scale. Although Arabic is taught as an academic subject in several higher education institutions, enrollment and resource allocation are still restricted. Furthermore, the marginalization of Arabic studies in mainstream education is a result of both cultural preconceptions and inadequate infrastructure. However, there are new potential to revive Arabic education in Assam due to the growing geopolitical and economic significance of the Arab world, as well as the emergence of digital learning platforms and opportunities for cross-cultural interaction.

The purpose of this research paper is to examine the various problems that affect Arabic study in Assam and to look into the unexplored possibilities that could help it develop. This study aims to provide a fair assessment of the issues and the future by examining

past events, institutional structures, student experiences, and policy actions. By doing this, it seeks to provide an inclusive, globally relevant learning environment and offer a road map for advancing Arabic language and literature studies in the area.

Objectives of the Study:

- To study the opportunities for studying Arabic language and Literature.
- To portray the obstacles in studying Arabic Language and Literature.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study is built on analytical and descriptive approaches. It used primary and secondary sources of information to support the analysis and prepared with the assistance of research papers, critical essays, articles, field studies relating to this study.

Historical Background:

The early introduction of Islam to the area, which began as early as the 13th century, is responsible for the existence and growth of the Arabic language in Assam. The early dissemination of Arabic language and religious knowledge was made easier by the presence of Islamic scholars, Sufi saints, and traders from Arab countries. These early effects, which frequently revolved around education in mosques, were primarily informal and spiritual, depending on handwritten manuscripts and oral transmission.

Arabic continued to flourish during the middle Ages, mostly as a language used for academic and religious purposes. The preservation and dissemination of Arabic knowledge were greatly aided by the growth of Islamic establishments, especially Madrassas. Arabic was taught in these schools as a means of accessing Islamic theology, jurisprudence, and ancient works including the Qur'an, Hadith, Tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis), and Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) rather than as a spoken language for communication. Arabic studies became extremely specialized as a result of the demanding instruction these works demanded in classical Arabic grammar rhetoric (Balagha), and logic (Mantiq).

The educational environment in Assam and throughout India saw substantial changes with the arrival of British colonial power in the 19th century. Arabic's institutional backing declined as a result of

colonial policies that marginalized indigenous and religious languages and introduced English-medium schooling. Arab was not included in the official colonial educational system because the British colonial government saw it mainly as a religious language. Arabic was hence kept mostly out of the general curriculum and only taught in religious schools.

Following independence as part of larger initiatives to support language variety and minority education, Arabic saw a gradual comeback in popularity in India. Although on a small scale, Arabic started to be taught in select Assamese public and private schools. Arabic has been added to language departments at universities like Gauhati University, Cotton University and Assam University, which now offer undergraduate and Post graduate degrees in the Arabic language and Literature. However, rather than emphasizing modern or communicative language proficiency, the emphasis mostly remained on classical and theological Arabic.

Furthermore, several Alia (state-recognized) and Qawmi (community-funded) Madrassas throughout Assam have persisted in offering Arabic instruction, guaranteeing its continuation at the local level. These schools usually use curricula that have been influenced by historic Islamic educational institutions in India, such as Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow and Darul Uloom Deoband. Despite this, many Madrassas still use instructional approaches that have not changed much, frequently depending more on memorization than on critical analysis of texts.

Learning Arabic has been more popular in recent decades due to globalization and the Middle East and North Africa's (MENA) growing need for Arabic speakers. Work-related migration, particularly to Gulf nations, has promoted hands-on language use. Arabic's growing significance in global trade, academics, and diplomacy has also created new opportunities for its study. The complete fulfillment of Arabic studies in Assam is still hampered by structural issues like out-of-date curricula, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of academic resources. Thus, spiritual origins, colonial neglect, and a gradual but tenacious institutional rebirth characterize the historical trajectory of Arabic language instruction in Assam. Understanding the current issues and developing practical plans for the future of Arabic language and literature studies in the area require an appreciation of this history.

Problems in Studying Arabic Language and Literature: Despite having strong religious and cultural roots, the study of Arabic language and literature in Assam has many obstacles that impede its advancement both academically and professionally. These difficulties cover a wide range of topics, including instructional concerns, institutional flaws, social attitudes, and larger sociopolitical processes. To create workable solutions and policies that can advance Arabic studies in the area, a thorough grasp of these issues is necessary.

i) Lack of Qualified and Trained Faculty:

The lack of academically qualified and professionally prepared Arabic teachers is one of the biggest challenges. Many teachers at Madrassas, as well as in colleges and universities, frequently use conventional teaching methods since they have not received official training in contemporary pedagogical approaches or linguistics. This problem is made worse by the lack of Arabic-speaking postgraduate and doctoral experts. Schools frequently have trouble finding suitable staff, which lowers academic production, lowers student involvement, and compromises teaching quality.

ii) Inadequate Infrastructure and Learning Resources:

Well-equipped libraries with Arabic texts, reference materials, literary works, and journals from the past and present are frequently lacking. Digital resources such as e-books, online databases, audio-visual aids, and Arabic language software are either completely absent or insufficient. In addition, language laboratories critical for phonetic training and comprehension are rarely available, thereby limiting students' linguistic proficiency.

iii) Outdated Curriculum and Rigid Syllabi:

In many schools, the Arabic curriculum is still mainly out of date. With little exposure to contemporary topics, Arabic literature, or applied linguistics, the curricula frequently place an excessive amount of emphasis on classical grammar and religious texts. Because of this, students are not taught how to utilize the language practically, particularly in contemporary settings like commerce, international relations, media, and translation. The course's applicability in the current academic and professional environment is significantly limited by the absence of curriculum revision and interdisciplinary studies integration.

iv) Limited Career Opportunities and Employment Scope:

The apparent lack of promising employment prospects is one of the main obstacles preventing students from choosing Arabic as their subject of study. Arabic is frequently perceived as exclusively leading to religious vocations or teaching jobs in Madrassas, in contrast to mainstream studies that offer distinct career pathways in education, administration, or the business sector. Opportunities in translation, diplomacy, tourism, media, and academia are available, but few people are aware of them. This difficulty is exacerbated by the lack of job-oriented skill development and career advice.

v) Language Acquisition Challenges:

The Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman languages spoken in Assam are very different from the Semitic language of Arabic. For learners, especially those who have never studied Arabic before, the language's intricate morphology, root-based vocabulary system and syntactical norms provide a substantial obstacle. Without basic support, students from government schools backgrounds could struggle to understand the subtleties of the language. Additionally, learners are made more challenging by the diglossic structure of Arabic, where Modern Standard Arabic is different from spoken dialects.

vi) Lack of Government and Institutional Support:

Despite Arabic being part of India's cultural heritage and spoken by millions worldwide, governmental initiatives to promote Arabic language education in Assam remain limited. Unlike other modern languages, Arabic has not been prioritized in policy frameworks or academic funding programs. Scholarships, fellowships, research grants, and language promotion schemes often neglect Arabic studies, leaving departments underfunded and understaffed. Moreover, the absence of institutional collaboration with Arabic-speaking countries limits opportunities for academic exchange and cultural engagement.

vii) Low Research Output and Academic Contribution:

Research production in Arabic literature and language from the institutions of Assam is still at a low level.

Both a lack of enthusiasm and inadequate training in research procedures are to blame for this. Original research, comparative studies, and translation are frequently not supported or led for students. This lack of research development impedes Arabic's development as an internationally relevant and intellectually stimulating academic discipline.

Opportunities for Studying Arabic Language and Literature in Assam:

Although it is now hampered by a number of obstacles, the study of Arabic language and literature in Assam offers a wealth of chances for advancement. Arabic studies have a great deal of room to grow given the region's rich cultural legacy, diversified cultures, and growing global interconnectedness. The main chances and prospects listed below have the potential to influence how Arabic language and literature are taught in Assam in the future.

Global Relevance and Employment Opportunities:

Arabic is one of the six official languages of the United Nations and is spoken by over 420 million people across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Because of its worldwide relevance, studying Arabic is extremely important, particularly in this age of growing internationalization. Arabic education gives students the chance to interact with international markets, including trade, diplomacy, and academics, in Assam, where a large number of people have historical and familial ties to the MENA area.

Professionals who speak Arabic are in greater demand across a range of industries, including journalism, international business, tourism, and translation and interpretation. Furthermore, there are a lot of job options for Arabic speakers due to the expanding energy markets of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations and the rising interest in Middle Eastern geopolitics and economics. Assam is well-positioned to profit from these worldwide trends due to its advantageous location and strong connections to the Middle East, providing a competitive edge for individuals who speak Arabic.

Educational Exchange and Collaboration:

Opportunities for the students of Assam to take part in exchange programs with Arab colleges are expanding as a result of the growth of international academic partnership. Arabic-speaking students can apply for

scholarships and research collaborations from institutions in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates. Students can enhance their language skills, get more familiar with modern Arabic literature and linguistics, and immerse themselves in Arabic-speaking societies through these exchange programs. Furthermore, Arab universities are becoming more and more interested in collaborating with Indian establishments, particularly when it comes to academic exchanges and cultural diplomacy. This creates opportunities for joint research in disciplines that significantly rely on Arabic sources, including political science, history, Islamic studies, and comparative literature.

Technological Advancements and Digital Learning:

The advent of digital platforms for education offers a significant opportunity for the study of Arabic in Assam. Online courses, mobile apps, and virtual classrooms have made Arabic language learning more accessible and flexible than ever before. These sources give students access to a multitude of resources, such as interactive grammar exercises, video lectures, and digital versions of Arabic literature. Arabic education is now more accessible to students who might not otherwise have access to traditional brick-and-mortar schools thanks to the internet revolution. Arabic language schools in Assam can draw more students including those from far off places by utilizing these internet resources.

Research and Academic Development:

There are many research prospects in Arabic literature because of its rich poetic, philosophical, and scientific traditions. Assamese academics can help with translations of classical works, comparative discussion of Arabic literature, and investigations into the impact of Arabic on other languages and civilizations. Furthermore, there is room for creative study in the fields of historical linguistics, sociolinguistics, and literary criticism because there is a dearth of substantial scholarly work on the Arabic language and literature in Assam.

Opportunities for faculty development programs and specialized research projects in fields like Arabic dialectology, contemporary Arabic fiction, and translation studies are also made possible by the increased interest in studying Arabic. In addition to raising the academic prominence of Arabic studies in

Assam, research collaboration with Arab scholars can result in the development of new scholarly publications, conferences, and intellectual networks.

Increased Community Engagement and Awareness:

Lastly, a more encouraging learning atmosphere can be created by raising parents, teachers, and students' understanding of the value of studying Arabic. By holding awareness campaigns, community outreach initiatives, and cultural festivals honoring the Arabic language and literature, local communities, religious organizations, and educational institutions can work together to advance the study of Arabic. Studying Arabic would not only enhance the intellectual landscape of the Assamese region but also give students useful tools for comprehending the intricacies of international relations, culture, and history as the region grows more integrated with the rest of the world.

In conclusion, there are many obstacles to overcome before Arabic language and literature education in Assam can flourish. The study of Arabic can flourish in Assam and enhance the region's educational landscape and cultural fabric by capitalizing on the demand for Arabic around the world, utilizing technological advancements, and encouraging scholarly cooperation.

Suggestion for Further Improvement:

Despite a number of obstacles, the study of Arabic literature and language in Assam has a lot of potential for advancement in academia, culture, and society. Several important suggestions can aid in removing obstacles to Arabic education and advancing its growth in the area, according to the paper's results. These suggestions are meant to improve the chances for the development of Arabic studies while simultaneously addressing institutional, infrastructural, and societal problems.

Teacher Training and Capacity Building:

One of the primary challenges identified in this study is the shortage of qualified Arabic language instructors. To address this, it is essential to implement comprehensive teacher training programs that focus on both language proficiency and pedagogical skills. These courses ought to provide certification in advanced Arabic literature, grammar, syntax, and

teaching techniques so that instructors are prepared to tackle the challenges of teaching the language.

Reputable Arabic language academies or other foreign Arabic-speaking institutions should partner with Assamese universities and educational institutions to arrange both short-term and long-term teacher training programs. To improve the teaching and learning process, these workshops should also promote the use of contemporary teaching tools such as multimedia materials, digital learning platforms, and language lab technologies.

Curriculum Reform and Innovation:

In Assam, the current Arabic studies curricula at different educational levels are frequently out of date and do not adequately capture the fluid and changing nature of Arabic literature and language. A thorough curriculum overhaul is required to address this, incorporating courses on media, translation theory, linguistic studies, and contemporary Arabic literature. The scope of Arabic studies can be expanded and brought into line with contemporary trends by introducing interdisciplinary subjects like Arabic for business, politics, and international relations.

To make Arabic literature more current and appealing to the younger generation, emphasis should be placed on including Arabic poetry, prose, contemporary Arabic fiction, and film. Additionally, in order to give pupils a well-rounded understanding of the rich history of Arabic and its current usage, curriculum frameworks should integrate both classical and modern approaches to the language.

Fostering Interdisciplinary Research:

The breadth and influence of Arabic studies in Assam can be greatly increased by promoting interdisciplinary study. Rich, undiscovered facets of the Arabic language and culture could be revealed by research projects that connect Arabic with other academic disciplines, including history, sociology, anthropology, comparative literature, and Islamic studies. This method can foster a more profound comprehension of Arabic as a language with both religious and global significance. Translation studies research should be promoted, with a special emphasis on the translation of Arabic literary masterpieces into Assamese and other regional languages. Translation can facilitate cultural interchange between the Arabic-

speaking world and the Assamese-speaking society by bringing Arabic literature to a larger audience.

Encouraging Government and Institutional Support:
The promotion of Arabic studies is greatly aided by government programs and policies. Numerous Language education programs are already offered by the Indian government through the Ministry of Minority Affairs. By offering research grants, fellowships, and scholarships to students and intellectuals, these programs ought to be used to promote Arabic language and literature study in Assam. Universities and colleges can also look for institutional support for Arabic programs. This support can take the form of alliances with foreign Arabic institutions, money for research, and student exchange programs. The viability and expansion of Arabic language instruction can be guaranteed by the active participation of both governmental and non-governmental groups.

Creating Awareness about Career Opportunities:
The dearth of apparent employment options is a major obstacle for those studying Arabic. Institutions should address this by providing career counseling services and information on the various fields such as journalism, international relations, translation, diplomacy, education, tourism, and business where skill in the Arabic language can be advantageous. Internships, employment fairs, and collaborations with Arabic-speaking nations can also offer students worthwhile practical experiences and professional paths. It is feasible to establish a more robust academic pipeline that inspires students to confidently pursue Arabic studies by emphasizing the language's importance in international job markets.

III. CONCLUSION

In Assam, the study of Arabic literature and language is extremely important from an academic, cultural, and socio-religious standpoint. The subject nevertheless faces a number of difficulties in the region, despite its long history of trade, religion, and education with the Arabic world. Its growth is hampered by a lack of current teaching resources, a lack of trained teachers, a lack of institutional support, and a lack of job possibilities. Furthermore, the scope of advanced

studies is further diminished by the lack of sufficient research facilities and digital resources.

Arabic has become more important in journalism, translation, diplomacy, tourism, and international commerce as a result of globalization and the growing demand for intercultural understanding. Youth enthusiasm can be rekindled through academic partnerships, government efforts, and the incorporation of Arabic in contemporary curricula. Assam has the potential to become a center for Arabic studies in Northeast India because it is a culturally varied state with a sizable number of people who have studied Arabic.

Thus, Arabic language and literature may thrive in Assam and make a significant contribution to the intellectual growth of the region and the country with careful planning, better infrastructure, and earnest academic endeavor.

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