

ABDUL KARIM SAHITYAVISHARAD

(b. 1869 - d. 1953)

After the Muslim conquest of Bengal in around 1204 under the leadership of Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji, the Muslim rulers gradually extended and consolidated their political and military authority across most of Bengal. So much so that by the end of the thirteenth century the Muslim rulers not only assumed full control of Bengal but they also became renowned patrons of education, culture, arts and literature. The introduction of Persian language, customs and tradition into Bengal under the patronage of the Muslim rulers led to the emergence of new Muslim culture based primarily on Persian literature, Islamic values and ethos, and aspects of local Hindu tradition and practices. Once Persian – as opposed to Sanskrit – became the official language of Muslim Bengal, generations of Muslim writers and poets emerged who dominated Bengali culture and literature during the medieval period.

Though it is true that the early medieval Muslim writers and poets produced their works mainly in Persian and Arabic, their contributions were original and diverse, covering religious, social, cultural and mystical themes. These early writers were, in turn, followed by scores of other Muslim writers and poets (like Shah Muhammad Saghir, Amir Zain al-Din and Syed Sultan, among others) who produced their works in Bengali. In so doing the Muslims dominated the intellectual and literary scene in Bengal. The contribution, achievements and legacy of the medieval Muslim writers and poets of Bengal remained in the doldrums for centuries until Abdul Karim Sahityavisharad, a pioneering writer and researcher of medieval Bengali literature, emerged during the latter part of the nineteenth century and revived the rich tradition that was Bengal's medieval Muslim literature.

Despite being a celebrated writer and researcher, Abdul Karim's date of birth is hotly contested by his biographers. According to Ahmad Sharif, who was Abdul Karim's nephew and a renowned scholar of Bengali literature, the latter was born in 1871.....



To read this full BIOGRAPHICAL ENTRY by **Muhammad Mojlum Khan**, please see his long-awaited book,

THE MUSLIM HERITAGE OF BENGAL:
*The Lives, Thoughts and Achievements of Forty Great Muslim Scholars, Writers
and Reformers of Bangladesh and West Bengal*

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