

BENGALI

COUNTRY: Bangladesh

POST: Dhaka

Approximately 98% of the population belong to the Bengali ethnic group and speak Bangla (anglicized Bengali). Urdu speaking non-Bengali Muslim immigrants from India and various tribal groups make up the rest of the population. As in many newly independent countries, use of the mother tongue symbolizes nationalism therefore the use of English is declining.

The roots of written and spoken Bengali are derived from the ancient speech of Bengal and assimilated with Sanskrit. The Muslims, during their rule, sponsored and encouraged translation of many words from Sanskrit into the Bengali vernacular. Arabic, Persian and Urdu words were acquired as a result. Contact with Portuguese, French and English traders further expanded the Bengali vocabulary. Today the language is being standardized to suit the needs of modern life and to stress the Islamic aspects of the language.