

# Bengali In Afghanistan - The Untold Story

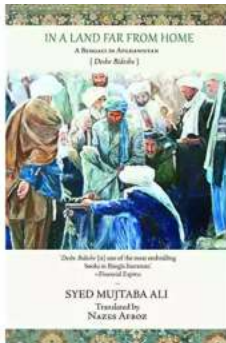


Afghanistan, the land of rugged mountains, ancient history, and cultural diversity, is often associated with its major ethnic groups like the Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, or Uzbeks. However, there is a hidden gem within its borders that few are aware of - the Bengali community in Afghanistan. The story of Bengalis in this vibrant country is an interesting tapestry of cultural exchange, resilience, and shared heritage.

## **A Historical Connection**

The connection between Bengal (present-day Bangladesh and West Bengal, India) and Afghanistan goes back centuries. With the ancient Silk Road connecting the two regions, trade, migration, and cultural interactions were a

common occurrence. Bengalis merchants, scholars, and explorers often traversed this route, leaving a lasting impact on both sides.



## In a Land Far from Home: A Bengali in Afghanistan

by Syed Ali Mujtaba (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 1433 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 262 pages



During the Mughal Empire, when it extended into present-day Afghanistan, Bengali influences seeped into Afghan society. Bengali architecture, cuisine, music, and literature left an indelible mark on the cultural fabric of the region. Even today, vestiges of this historical connection can be witnessed in various parts of Afghanistan.



## **The Modern Bengali Community**

While the historical connection laid the foundation, it was in recent decades that the Bengali community in Afghanistan gained prominence. From the late 19th century, Bengali intellectuals, professionals, and traders started arriving in Afghanistan, seeking new opportunities and contributing to the country's growth.

Over time, the Bengali community established itself across major Afghan cities, forming residential pockets and cultural enclaves. Today, their contributions span various sectors, including education, business, healthcare, and the arts. Despite being a minority, their influence can be felt in the diverse tapestry of Afghan society.

## **Cultural Exchange and Heritage**

The Bengali community in Afghanistan has played a vital role in cultural exchange, fostering a deep appreciation for the shared heritage of both regions. Festivals like Durga Puja and Eid ul-Fitr are celebrated with equal enthusiasm, showcasing the harmonious coexistence and mutual respect among different ethnic communities in Afghanistan.

Bengali scholars, artists, and musicians have also played a significant role in preserving and promoting their cultural heritage. Traditional Bengali dance forms like the "Baul" and "Rabindra Nritya" have found a home in Afghanistan, captivating local audiences and inspiring a new generation of performers.



## **Challenges and Resilience**

While the Bengali community in Afghanistan has made remarkable strides, they have faced their fair share of challenges. Language barriers, cultural differences,



and occasional instances of discrimination have tested their resilience. However, their determination to preserve their identity and contribute to Afghan society has remained steadfast.

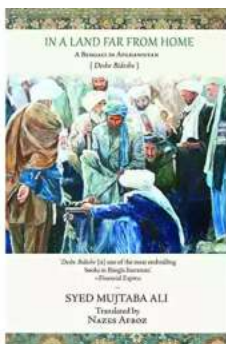
Organizations and community initiatives have emerged to support the Bengali community, offering language classes, counseling services, and cultural events. These efforts have strengthened their bonds and provided a sense of belonging, creating an empowering environment for future generations.

## Celebrating Diversity

The story of the Bengali community in Afghanistan is a testament to the power of cultural diversity and mutual respect. It showcases the beauty of cross-cultural interactions and the potential for harmonious coexistence, even in complex social landscapes.

As we celebrate the tale of Bengalis in Afghanistan, let it serve as a reminder of the untapped stories and hidden histories within our diverse world. It is through uncovering these stories that we truly appreciate the richness and interconnectedness of our global community.

**Keywords for alt attributes: Bengali in Afghanistan, Bengali community, cultural exchange, Afghanistan, Bengali culture, hidden history**



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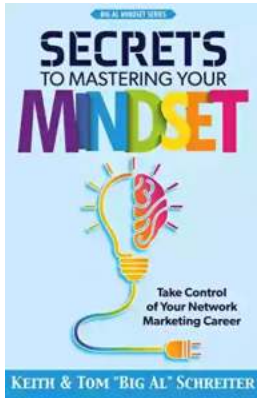
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An intrepid traveller and a true cosmopolitan, the legendary Bengali writer Syed Mujtaba Ali from Sylhet (in erstwhile East Bengal, now Bangladesh) spent a year and a half teaching in Kabul from 1927 to 1929. Drawing on this experience, he later wrote *Deshe Bideshe* which was published in 1948.

Ali's young mind was curious to explore the Afghan society of the time and, with his impressive language skills, he had access to a cross-section of Kabul's population, whose ideas and experiences he chronicles with a keen eye and a wicked sense of humour.

His account provides a fascinating first-hand insight into events at a critical point in Afghanistan's history, when the reformist King Amanullah tried to steer his country towards modernity by encouraging education for girls and giving them the choice of removing the burqa. Branded a 'kafir', Amanullah was overthrown by the bandit leader Bacha-e-Saqao. '*Deshe Bideshe*' is the only published eyewitness account of that tumultuous period by a non-Afghan, brought to life by the contact that Ali enjoyed with a colourful cast of characters at all levels of society—from the garrulous Pathan Dost Muhammed and the gentle Russian giant Bolshov, to his servant, Abdur Rahman and his partner in tennis, the Crown Prince Enayatullah.



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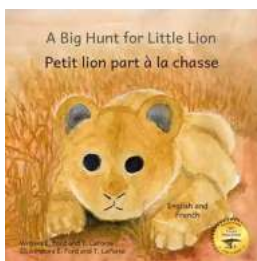
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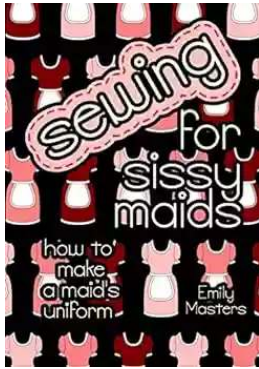
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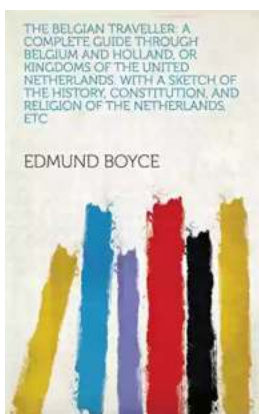
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