
Human Love, Humanism, and the Philosophical Thoughts of Kazi Nazrul Islam

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ABSTRACT

Kazi Nazrul Islam, a seminal figure in Bengali philosophy and literature, epitomized humanism, individual freedom, and rational contemplation. His works, imbued with themes of rebellion against injustice, sectarianism, and oppression, reflect a deep love for humanity and a commitment to truth. Nazrul's poetry and prose transcend religious and social divides, advocating for Hindu-Muslim unity and condemning religious fanaticism and hypocrisy. His literature, rooted in personal hardship and diverse life experiences, serves as a beacon for justice and equality. Even today, Nazrul's legacy inspires resistance against oppression and promotes the ideals of human love and harmony.

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1 Introduction

In the intellectual realm of the Bengalis, one unforgettable figure of profound philosophical thought was Kazi Nazrul Islam. In terms of philosophy, all the distinctive features that we include in humanism are clearly reflected in Nazrul Islam's writings. His belief in the power of self-expression and potential is vividly expressed in his words from "Dhumketur Patra": "Now I understand that whatever good I comprehend, whatever truth I perceive, I will express only that, proclaim that, no matter how much people criticize. I will not diminish myself in my own eyes, nor will I indulge in self-deprecation."

In Bengali philosophy, humanism holds a significant place. Humanism is divided into two forms: (1) Religious Humanism and (2) Humanism as a Movement. It is considered a movement where the principles of individual freedom and collective establishment of any belief related to the impact of any divine force on human welfare are critically examined and civilized thought and evidence are established. The humanism that arose from the European Renaissance is included in such humanism.

Here, Protagoras' famous statement is noteworthy: "Man is the measure of all things." In religious humanism, the main focus of Nazrul Islam's humanism is on human freedom of thought and rational contemplation. Human love means placing humanity above all else, and there is no truth greater than humanity—this statement reflects his ultimate goal. He has tirelessly strived to free humanity from all forms of corruption, sectarianism, and oppression. In the presidential speech at the Silver Jubilee of the Bengal Muslim Literary Society held at the Muslim Institute in Kolkata in 1941, Kazi Nazrul Islam said, "Hindus and Muslims ----- my ultimate beauty." Abdul Mannan Syed: Previously mentioned, p. 565.

In the poetry of Kazi Nazrul Islam, the expression of human consciousness or quest for truth is evident in his works such as "Samyabadi" (1925), "Sarbahara" (1926), "Phanimanasa" (1927), and "Pralayashikha" (1930). In these poems, he has transcended all limitations and sung the victory of humanity. The main theme of Nazrul's discourse is human love.

In his childhood friend Shailaja Nand's book "Keu Bhole na Keu Bhole," there is a wonderful description of the environment in which Nazrul Islam grew up.

The tremendous influence of various factors such as rural life, religious atmosphere, entry from the Mughal era to the British era, new thoughts, consciousness, the incredible impact of Rabindranath Tagore, the national movement, the Young Bengal of Derozio, the left movement, the movement against Brahminism, the inclination to capture Brahminism, the development of nationalism, the idea of enlightenment, the struggle against oppressors—all these events have contributed to the growth of poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. The history of literary practice in the Indian subcontinent began to evolve with the arrival of Persian literature, which introduced a new kind of literary creation. Later, during British rule, Indian literature acquired yet another different dimension.

Literature is considered a mirror of society. Existing or new ideas, characteristics, traditions, or aspirations of literature are reflected in society. The desires of many people are expressed in a creative format in certain literature. In Nazrul's literature, his unique perspective has generally deviated from the norm. Nazrul's literature serves as a beacon of light for the emancipation of all humanity.

Nazrul's literature embodies an extraordinary philosophy. Let us discuss it progressively.

1. Nazrul's philosophy:

Human love, Humanism -

Many people have created fear in the minds of people by labeling me as a rebel. This harmless nation has never harbored any desire to suppress or oppress anyone. I have rebelled, sung the songs of rebellion against injustice, against oppression, against tyranny, against the falsehoods and the archaic systems. Against the hypocrisy and the atrocities in the name of religion and against cultural degradation.

Even in the present year of 2017, the people of Shahbagh have been engaged in the same struggle against injustice. The powerful always try to label the righteous movement as atheistic to maintain their hold on power.

2. Nazrul's Philosophy:

Kazi Nazrul Islam, the foremost poet of Bengali and Bengalis, characterize progressive thought and consciousness. His works encompass poetry, songs, essays, stories, and novels, all reflecting elements of rebellion, patriotism, love for humanity, humanism, and secularism. The essence of his sharp writings and

rhetoric revolves around the triumph of humanity and humanism, the consciousness of freedom and liberation. He didn't discriminate between people, not tolerating oppression and injustice upon the weak. He didn't condone the exploitation and oppression of the oppressed by the rulers. He consistently protested and resisted against all injustices. He embodied an unwavering commitment to justice and equality. His voice resonated with songs of religious, social, cultural, and national liberation. His creative works and thoughts have profoundly inspired the Bengali nation and the subjugated Indian populace. His words and tunes of rebellion and dissent have been echoed constantly in the minds and hearts of those who cherish freedom in British India. The oppressed and humiliated have been ignited by his rebellion against injustice. His enduring inspiration for resistance against injustice and oppression continues to fuel the aspirations of the oppressed.

In the history of Bengali literature, Nazrul was the first poet to be imprisoned for writing against the rulers and newspapers were shut down. His rebellion against foreign rule stemmed from the depths of his heart. His dissenting voice reached the minds and consciousness of the freedom-loving people of dependent India. Hence, he is referred to as the poet of rebellion or revolutionary poet.

In the Bengali literature of the twentieth century, Nazrul stood tall against injustice and tyranny. His poetry and songs always echoed the truth and beauty. With a intense pen in hand, he entered the arena, becoming a beacon of light. His life and works were devoted with the essence of rebellion. He actively participated in direct fight against British rule. He produced unparalleled poetry and fiery contemporary writings akin to a comet's blaze. He boldly penned literature like "Rajbandir Jobanbondi", depicting the fearless struggle against British colonialism. His creative works opposed imperialism as ferociously as they supported the aspirations of the subjugated Indian populace for freedom and liberation.

He had deep affection for the neglected and his fellow people. He was a restless soul for the liberation of subjugated India. His writings played a pivotal role in creating the awakening needed for the liberation struggle in the subjugated country. His fiery poetry sometimes ignited the flames of democratic consciousness and sometimes kindled the inspiration for just rights. With a flute in one hand and a sword in the other, the rebel Nazrul soared high, leaving a lasting impact on various branches of Bengali literature.

Nazrul protested against colonial rule in numerous writings. He made comprehensive efforts to establish communal harmony in India. He was always eager to

overcome the Hindu-Muslim divide. A significant portion of his poetic vision is dedicated to the desire for Hindu-Muslim unity. In modern Bengali poetry, Nazrul stands as the only poet who skillfully utilized both Hindu and Muslim traditions. Historically, Nazrul awakened a unified consciousness among Bengali Hindus and Muslims, transcending religious conservatism and the limits of thought and consciousness. He ignited a vigorous wave of that consciousness within the entire Bengali nation.

Nazrul's conception was that one of the main reasons for Hindu-Muslim discord was Hindu orthodoxy. Therefore, he wrote in his essay "Chhutmarg", "Let the Hindus remain Hindus, and the Muslims remain Muslims, but just once, let us stand together in the boundless freedom of the great sky and, expressing the primal words of creation from the voice of humanity, proclaim, 'My religion is humanity.' I will see the sovereign atmosphere echoing all around. In this great era of humanity, step out beyond boundaries just once and declare, 'You are human, you are truth.'"

Conservative, ignorant, and socially unconscious Muslims have branded him a 'kafir' (infidel) and criticized him in various ways. Even from their perspective, such things have been said as, "The person is not a Muslim but a devil."

Conservative, extremist Hindu nationalists have also attacked him in various ways. But the anger of both communal Muslims and Hindus could not diminish the clarity of Nazrul's thoughts, the progressiveness of his ideas, and the integrated cultural response. On this matter, Nazrul said, "... If they think what will happen if they take the names of Hindu gods and goddesses, then the situation will be unjust. Therefore, Bengali literature cannot exist without the name of Hindu gods and goddesses... without the scent of jasmine. Bengali literature is the literature of both Hindus and Muslims."

Nazrul approached the unity of Hindus and Muslims as complementary, not contradictory. Because of his syncretic thinking, he advised against the deterioration of Hindu-Muslim unity for the freedom of India in his poem "Kandari Hushiar". He said, "Is he a Hindu or a Muslim? Who cares? The drowning man calls for help, not his caste or religion." In his poem "Hindu-Muslim", he wrote, "We are two flowers on the same branch, Hindu and Muslim, the Muslim is his eye, the Hindu is his soul."

Nazrul, through his poetry, highlighted the consciousness of humanity and the pursuit of truth in works like "Samyabadi" (1925), "Sarbahara" (1926), "Phanimanasha" (1927), "Sandhya" (1929), and "Pralayshikha" (1930) directly. In these poems, he overstepped all barriers and sang the victory of

humanity. He recognized humanity as paramount. Therefore, he vehemently opposed religious fanaticism and criticized idol worshipers and mullahs in his poem "Manush". He said, "There is no temple or Kaaba greater than the heart, and to find the creator, he advised, 'Do not delve into scriptures, drown yourself in the ocean of truth, O friend.'"

Poet Nazrul's goal was to criticize British oppression and colonialism. Therefore, even amidst Hindu-Muslim riots, his aspiration was, "The stick that breaks the dome today, falls on the temple steps / That stick will crush the enemy fortress at dawn" (Hindu-Muslim War: "Phanimanasa"). He didn't just critique religious conflicts but also desired to eliminate social and economic disparities. His consciousness of equality, truthfulness, and humanity also aimed at establishing women's dignity. He advocated for the respect of laborers and farmers' rights. His passion accelerated the pace of consciousness and belief, setting the speed of thought. That's why his expression is so intense and sincere.

According to Humayun Kabir, Nazrul had a deep affinity with the vast peasant society of Bengal. Subhash Mukharjee stated that Nazrul was a child of the peasant family; hence, his compositions quickly resonated with the masses. One reason for his acceptance among the masses was his politics and political sensibility.

When the intellectuals of the thirties were discussing separatism, the educated section of Indian society was organized in anti-British struggles. Even ordinary people were awakened by them. Nazrul expressed the sentiments of this section. That's why he considered Dhumketu Patrika as the organ of various revolutionary groups.

Mujaffar Ahmed wrote: "We didn't have the strength of our language, nor the militancy. It was because we felt that this idea was deeply rooted in us that we gave slogans in Hindustani. After the emergence of Nazrul Islam, we understood that Bengali language is powerful, militant, and boundless. Just like the breaking of the chains of oppression in 'Bhangar Gaan'—the courageous recitation by the poet, 'Break those chains of oppression/ Break the iron chains of jails/ Blood clotted/ The worshipper of stones in heaps!'"

Again, portraying economic exploitation, in his poem 'Kuli-Mazur', he writes, 'See, on the day, in the train/ The babu shoves the coolie down and throws him underneath!/ Tears welled up in his eyes,/ In this way, will the weak world survive?'

Expressing disdain, condemnation, and satire against religious hypocrisy and exploitation, in his poem 'Manush', he writes, 'Oh, worship halls,/ On your

minarets, the triumph of selfishness! / I detest humanity' / And those who recite the Quran, Vedas, and Bible, dying, dying/... The book-worshipper crowd worships! Listen, fools,/ Man brings books; books bring no man.'

Again, speaking of women's equal rights, in his poem 'Nari', he says, 'Sing the song of equality/ In my eyes, there's no difference between man and woman.'

And speaking of equality for all, echoing the famous phrase from the Middle Ages, "Man is above all," with the famous quote, "There is nothing greater than singing the song of equality for humans than that, nor anything more important/ No difference in caste in any country, any time/ In every house, in every country, he is known as human."

The poet studied both Islam and Hinduism. He wrote countless Islamic songs, hymns, odes, and poems. He also composed Kirtan, Shyama Sangeet. He spent his childhood in mosques, madrasas, and mausoleums. He played music in the Letho troupe. Life was also in the bounds of the jungle. He also witnessed the harsh discipline of military life. He directly experienced the various ups and downs of creative and free life and their real reflections in literature and music, as well as the fulfillment of dreams and aspirations, and the manifestation of deficiencies and retaliations.

Nazrul could not study due to financial difficulties. He worked in various jobs, including as a guard on the railway, and even baked bread in a tea shop. His childhood and adolescence were spent in considerable hardship. In his youth, he joined the military without sitting for the pre-test for secondary education, and participated in the First World War. He spent eighteen years in military service. It was during this soldier's life that his literary talent flourished. He wrote his first prose work, "Baunduler Atmakahini," and his first published poem "Mukti" along with stories such as "Bethar Dan," "Meher Nagar," "Ghumer Ghore," and "Kobita Samadhi." During this time, he also studied Persian, received music lessons on various indigenous and foreign musical instruments, and engaged in discussions on various prose and poetry.

He read works by Rabindranath Tagore, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, and the Persian poet Hafez in Kolkata's literary magazines such as Prabasi, Bharatvarsha, Bharati, Manasi, Marmabani, Sobujpatra, Saogat, and Bangiya Muslim Sahitya Patrika.

After the First World War in 1920, Nazrul left military life and came to Kolkata. He immersed himself in literary discussions. His writings were published in "Muslim India", "Bangiya Muslim Sahitya Patrika", and "Upasana Pravati". Some of Nazrul's writings were highly praised in Kolkata's literary society. As a result, the poet, literary figures, and readers became familiar

with Nazrul and found him acceptable. He formed friendships with distinguished poets and literary figures.

Through various processions and gatherings, he revived the people by singing songs. During this time, Nazrul's writings, songs, and articles clearly expressed rebellion. It was through this rebellion that his famous poem "Bidrohi" was published in 1922. Through this poem, Nazrul became famous throughout India's literary society. Nazrul's "Bidrohi" is an extraordinary poem of the awakening of human power. It tells us that the rebel, exhausted from battle, will not be peaceful until the cries of the oppressed resound in the sky and the sword of the oppressor stops raging on the battlefield. The rebel poem is a call to empower a subjugated nation.

Nazrul became the "National Poet" at the age of thirty for his unforgettable national consciousness and patriotism. In 1929, the Albert Hall in Kolkata hosted a reception committee for the celebration of the victory of the Bengalis, where Nazrul was honored as the "National Poet" of Bengalis. At this reception, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose himself was the chief guest, and scientist Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray was the president, with prominent critic S. Wazed Ali as the key speaker. They praised Nazrul's courage and patriotism.

On April 5 and 6, 1941, during the Golden Jubilee celebration of the Bengal Muslim Literary Society at the Muslim Institute in Kolkata, in his speech as president, the poet suddenly spoke about himself, saying, "If the flute does not play anymore, I was loved by you, saying with this right, you will forgive me, you will forget me. Believe me, I did not come to be a poet, I did not come to be a leader. I came to give love, I came to get love. Since I did not get that love, I bid farewell to this loveless, silent world forever."

Although he left, the Bengalis could neither forget nor ignore him. That's why the poet left saying, "I will go far away forever, but do not make a mistake about me." No, he didn't let them forget. Bengalis could not forget him, nor will they ever. Because he is eternal in the hearts of Bengalis - the eternal Bengali.

3. Conclusion:

Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, through his poems, songs, dramas, articles, speeches, and letters, ignited the flame of harmony, human love, and humanism. If we can follow in his footsteps, we will be able to build the earth as a truly habitable place for humanity's natural liberation and development. Therefore, Nazrul's study is urgent and relevant for the natural development of humanity.

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