

THE REBEL

by Kazi Nazrul Islam

Say, Valiant,
Say: High is my head!

Looking at my head
Is cast down the great Himalayan peak!
Say, Valiant,
Say: Ripping apart the wide sky of the universe,
Leaving behind the moon, the sun, the planets and the stars,

Piercing the earth and the heavens,
Pushing through Almighty's sacred seat
Have I risen,
I, the perennial wonder of mother-earth!
The angry God shines on my forehead
Like some royal victory's gorgeous emblem.
Say, Valiant,
Ever-high is my head!

I am irrepressible, cruel and arrogant,
I am the king of the great upheaval,
I am cyclone, I am destruction,
I am the great fear, the curse of this universe.
I have no mercy,
I grind all to pieces,
I am disorderly and lawless,
I trample under my feet all rules and discipline!
I am Dhurjati, I am the sudden tempest of untimely summer,
I am the rebel, the rebel-son of mother-earth!
Say, Valiant,
Say: Ever-high is my head!

I am the hurricane, I am the cyclone,
I destroy all that I find in my path!
I am the dance-intoxicated rhythm,
I dance at my own pleasure,
I am the unfettered joy of life!
I am Hambeer, I am Chhayanata, I am Hindole,
I am ever restless,
I caper and dance as I move!
I do whatever appeals to me, whenever I like,
I embrace the enemy and wrestle with death,
I am mad, I am the tornado!
I am pestilence, the great fear,
I am the death of all reign of terror,
I am full of a warm restlessness for ever!
Say, Valiant,
Ever-high is my head!

I am creation, I am destruction,
I am habitation, I am the grave-yard,
I am the end, the end of night!
I am the son of Indrani,
With the moon in my hand
And the sun on my temple,
In one hand of mine is the tender flute
While in the other I hold the war-bugle!
I am the Beduin, I am Chengis,
I salute none but me!
I am thunder,
I am Brahma's sound in the sky and on the earth,
I am the mighty roar of Israel's bugle,
I am the great trident of Pinakpani,
I am the staff of the king of truth,
I am the Chakra and the great Shankha,
I am the mighty primordial shout!
I am Bishyamitra's pupil, Durbasha the furious,
I am the fury of the wild fire,
I burn to ashes this universe!
I am the gay laughter of the generous heart,
I am the enemy of creation, the mighty terror!
I am the eclipse of the twelve suns,
I herald the final destruction!
Sometimes I am quiet and serene,
I am in a frenzy at other times,
I am the new youth of dawn,
I crush under my feet the vain glory of the Almighty!
I am the fury of typhoon,
I am the tumultuous roar of the ocean,
I am ever-effulgent and bright,
I trippingly flow like the gaily warbling brook,
I am the maiden's dark glossy hair,
I am the sparkle of fire in her blazing eyes.

I am the tender love that lies
In the sixteen-year-old's heart,
I am happy beyond measure!
I am the pining soul of the lovesick,
I am the bitter tears in the widow's heart,
I am the piteous sighs of the unlucky!
I am the pain and sorrow of all homeless sufferers,
I am the anguish of the insulted heart,
I am the burning pain and the madness of the jilted lover!

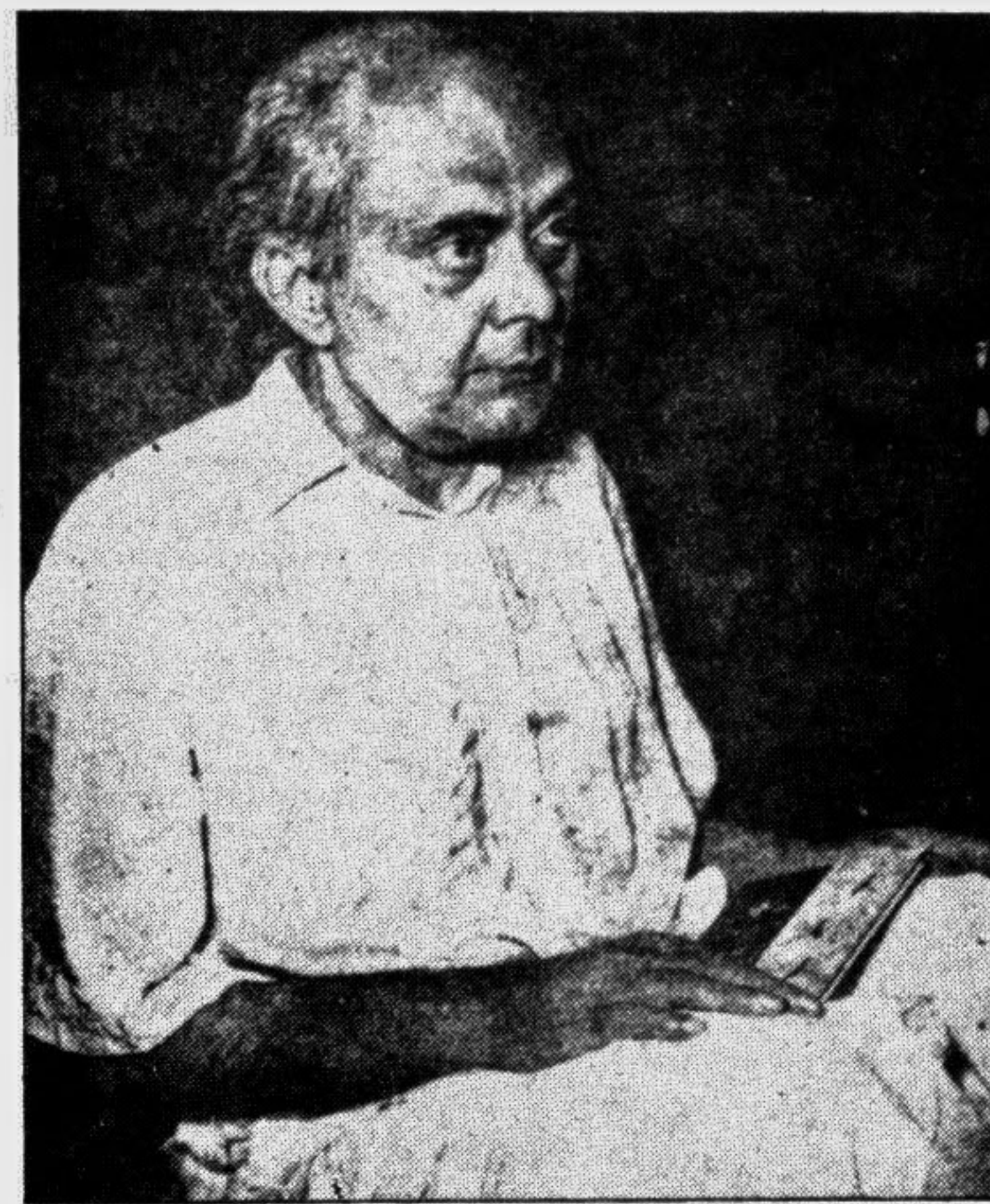
I am the unutterable grief,
I am the trembling first touch of the virgin,
I am the throbbing tenderness of her first stolen kiss,
I am the fleeting glance of the veiled beloved,
I am her constant surreptitious gaze,
I am the gay tripping young girl's love,
I am the jingling music of her bangles!
I am the eternal-child, the adolescent of all times,
I am the shy village-maiden frightened by her own budding youth.

I am the soothing breeze of the south,
I am the pensive gale of the east,
I am the deep solemn song sung by the wandering bard,
I am the soft music played on his lyre!
I am the harsh unquenched mid-day thirst,
I am the fierce blazing sun,
I am the softly trilling desert spring,
I am the cool shadowy greenery!
Maddened with an intense joy I rush onward,
I am insane! I am insane!
Suddenly I have come to know myself,
All the false barriers have crumbled today!
I am the rising, I am the fall,
I am consciousness in the unconscious soul,
I am the flag of triumph at the gate of the world,
I am the glorious sign of man's victory,
Clapping my hands in exultation I rush like the hurricane,
Traversing the earth and the sky,
The mighty Borrak is the horse I ride,
It neighs impatiently, drunk with delight!
I am the burning volcano in the bosom of the earth,
I am the wild fire of the woods,
I am Hell's mad terrific sea of wrath!
I ride on the wings of the lightning with joy profound,
I scatter misery and fear all around,
I bring earth-quakes on this world!

I am Orpheus' flute,
I bring sleep to the fevered world,
I make the heaving ocean quiet,
I am the flute in the hands of Shyam!
When I rush across the sky mad with anger,
The fires of the seven hells tremble in fear and die,
I carry the message of revolt to the earth and the sky!
I am the mighty flood,
Sometimes I make the earth rich and fertile,
At other times I cause colossal damage,
I snatch from Vishnu's bosom the two girls!
I am injustice, I am the shooting star,
I am Saturn, I am the fire of the comet,
I am the poisonous asp!
I am Chandri, the headless, I am the ruinous Warlord,
Sitting in the burning pit of Hell,
I smile as the innocent flower!
I am the cruel axe of Parshurama,
I shall kill all warriors,
And bring peace and harmony to this universe!
I am the plough on the shoulders of Balarama,
I shall uproot this miserable earth effortlessly and with ease,
And create a new universe of joy and peace.
Weary of struggles, I, the great rebel,
Shall rest in quiet only when I find
The sky and the air free of the piteous groans of the oppressed.
Only when the battlefields are cleared of jingling bloody sabres
Shall I, weary of struggles, rest in quiet,
I, the great rebel.

I am the rebel-eternal,
I raise my head beyond this world,
High, ever-erect and alone!

Translated by
Kabir Chowdhury



MAN

by Kazi Nazrul Islam

Of equality I sing,
Man comes first,
And there is nothing nobler than him,
Differences of caste or creed,
Of ages or countries
Matter little.
Wherever men are, far or near,
They are comrades and friends,
They are brothers and dear,
The priest woke up
From his dream one evening,
He dreamt as if some one
Was knocking at his door saying,
"Open the door, priest,
The hungry god waits outside.
The hour of prayer is come."
The eager priest woke up with a start
And thought,
At long last God was pleased with him,
Now he could get as a blessing
All the riches of the world
Merely for the asking,
With trembling hands
He opened the door,
And lo, what did he behold?
There was an old and skinny traveller,
Tired and hungry.

Who murmured piteously,
"Open the door, Father,
And give me something to eat.
I have not eaten anything for the last seven days."

Promptly was the temple door
Slammed right against his face.
The weary traveller turned back
And trudged along, through the dark night,
Nursing his hunger,
And muttering to himself,
"O God, the priest may reside in that temple,
But not you, never you."

The Mollah was very happy over it.
Lots of loaves and meat were left over
Out of yesterday's feast in the mosque.
The Mollah was going to pack up.
And then, from nowhere, all on a sudden,
Appeared a traveller,
Shabbily clad, pleading,
"Father, I am hungry and tired.
I have not eaten for the last seven days.
Please give me something to eat."
The angry Mollah growled,
"Oh, it is a nuisance.
If you are hungry,
Why don't you go the graveyard
and quietly die?"
Then he paused and asked,
"Well, look here,
Do you say your prayers?"
The hungry traveller replied,
"No, father," and that
brought on him the wrath
And curses of the Mollah,
Who shouted angrily,
"You blighter, then get away from here
And be quick."

So went away the traveller,
And once again trudged along his weary way,
Speaking to himself,
"O Lord,
For eighty years have I lived
And never did I say my prayers
And yet, did you ever refuse me my meals for that?
Your mosques and temples are not meant for men,
Men have no right in them.
The Mollahs and the Priests
Have closed their doors under locks and keys."

Where is Chengis?
Where is Mahmood of Gazni?
Where are the bold iconoclasts of yesterday?
Break open the locked doors
Of those holy places of worship,
Who can lock up God's House?
Who can put its doors under seal?
They must remain always open
For man in suffering and in woe.
Comrades,
Hammer away at the closed doors
Of those mosques and temples,
And hit with your shovel mightily,
For, climbing on their minarets,
The cheats are today glorifying
Selfishness and hypocrisy.

Translated by
Kabir Chowdhury

Nazrul's Contributions Recalled

THE outstanding creative genius and the rebellious role of Quazi Nazrul Islam, an epoch-making poet of Bangla Language" was the topic of discussion in the first session of the seminar held on 26th May at the auditorium of the National Museum, arranged by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs on the occasion of 94th anniversary of birth of the national poet.

The seminar was presided over by Dr. Mohammad Maniruzzaman, while poet Mohammad Nazrul Huda presented the key-note paper and poet Al-Mahmud and Dr. Saikat Ashgar took part in the discussion. The speakers dwelt at length on the outstanding contribution of Quazi Nazrul Islam in the development of Bengali Language and opined that the rebel poet did only not made his rebellion against the British domination and all sorts of oppression and social injustice, he had also rebelled in the field of the use of words, vocabularies and in Bengali Language.

Nazrul evolved a poetic language of his own using words from different origins, comprising of Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Urdu, Turkish as well as local words in the context of the history and traditions of Bengali Language. He was the only poet who did not hesitate to use those words and had mastered them in his works based on both the Hindu and Muslim traditions and culture.

Nazrul not only broke superstitions and dogmas in the social arena, but also in the literary and cultural fields, by using various themes and languages in his compositions having different cultural contexts.

Nazrul had close links and deep connections with the masses, he picked up their words and vocabularies and mastered them in his poetic and other words, and by doing this Nazrul made a rebellion.

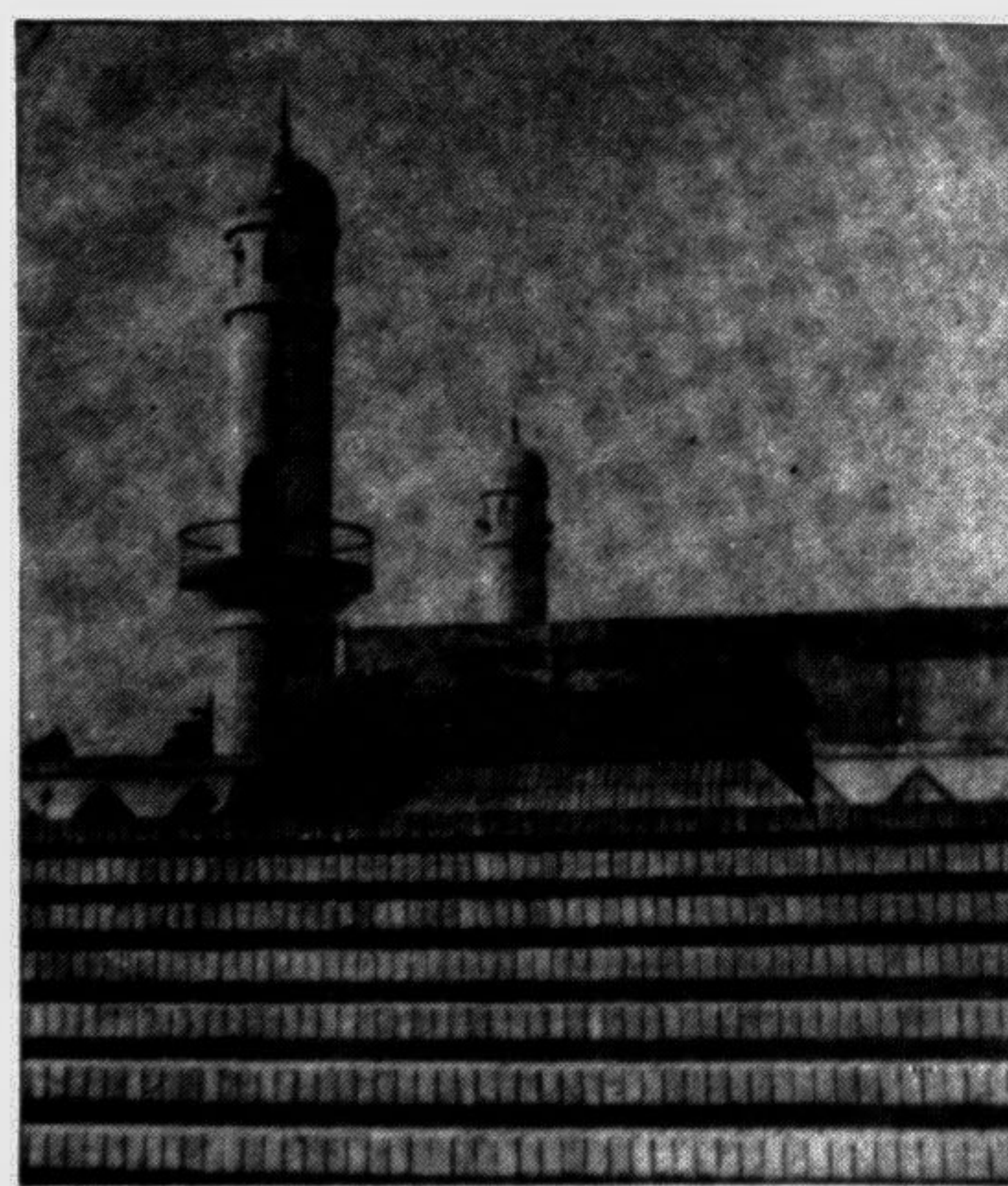
The second session of the seminar was presided over by Dr. Rafiqul Islam, while the key-note paper was presented by Dr. Karunamoya Goswami on the "distinctiveness of Nazrul Songs" in the context of the history and development of Bengali songs and lyrical compositions. He opined that Nazrul was not only a great poet, lyricist and composer of songs, he had also evolved various

of highest number of songs, but also introduced various Ragas Ragines and musical traditions both in light classical veins.

In his presidential speech, Dr. Rafiqul Islam, an eminent Nazrul researcher, made a detailed analysis of Nazrul's distinctiveness and unique contribution in Bengali songs and music and opined that Nazrul's Songs had combined all the trends of Bengali music of last thousand years and blended folk and classical traditions to the ecstasy of the music lovers.

Nazrul had himself carved a new path, and enriched the Bengali lyric and music immensely by introducing classical with the light veins, specially by introducing Persian gazal style. Nazrul's Songs and music are the embodiment of highest order of songs.

Speaking on the distinctiveness of Nazrul Songs, Mohammad Mozakker opined that, Nazrul is unparalleled in Bengali music in the sense that he was not only the composer



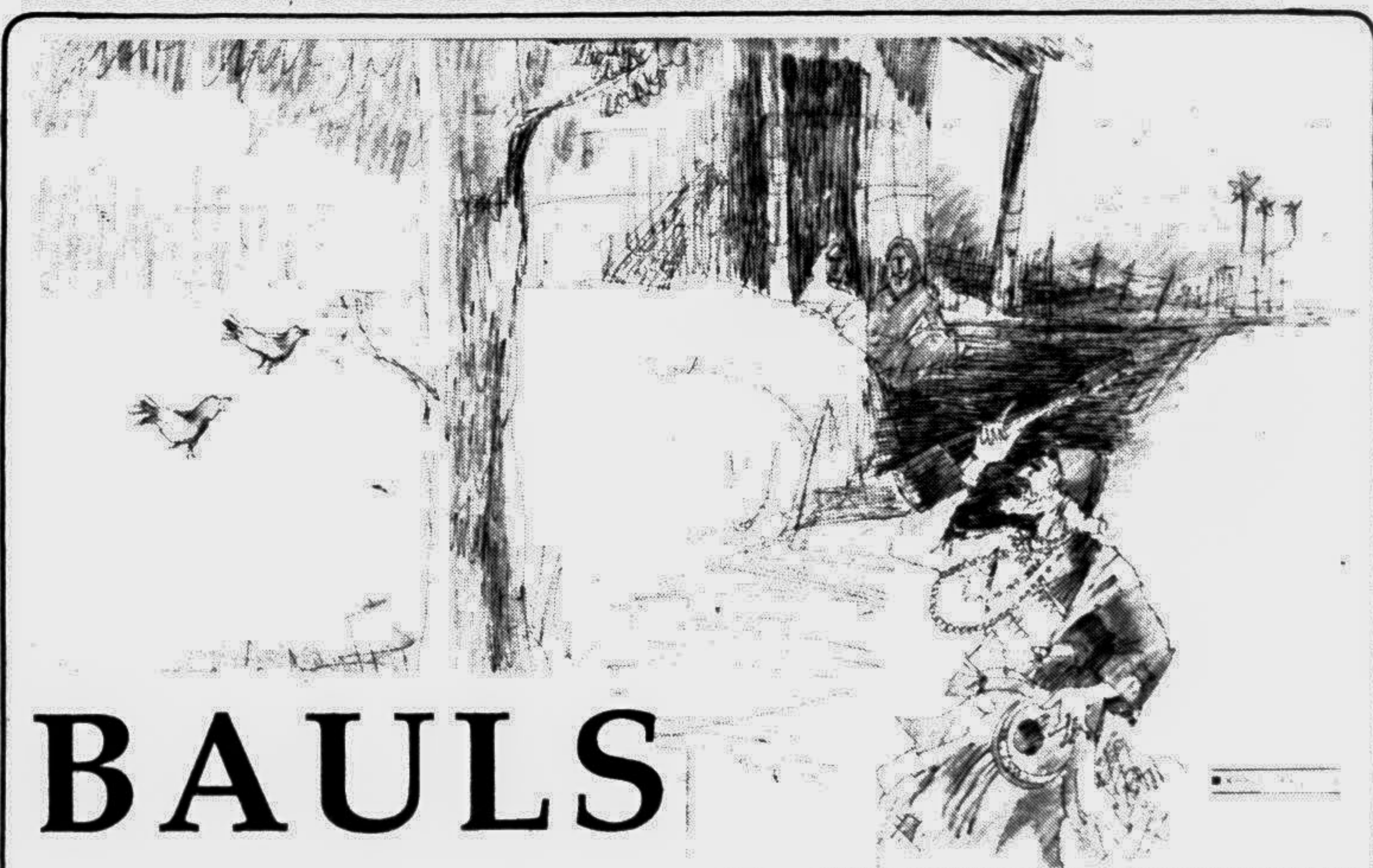
Nazrul's Mazaar in Dhaka — beside the DU campus mosque.

Nazrul's Poetry

Continued from page 7
partial but strong Nietzscheanism in Nazrul can further be explored. Nazrul's silence, as we could observe it during his last days, has more aesthetic implications than otherwise, and looking backward, one could see yet another form of violence, chosen for a life-making struggle against deaths and diseases, in the silence of Nazrul. The poetry of silence which, Nazrul produced is still unread, for his silence is more pitted than otherwise. That silence, too, was one of the greatest contributions Nazrul made, for his silence was an unparalleled metaphor for an incessant stylistic struggle which Nazrul alone could have the capacity for

embarking on. Silence, for Nazrul, was not a disease nor an accident but a choice — a choice none could make so visibly and intensely as Nazrul himself. The silent poet, it needs repeating, was thus a struggling poet as Nazrul was.

In this essay, I have only briefly and roughly indicated an aspect or two of Nazrul's creative violence interestingly compounded by his own kind of Nietzscheanism, all of which, in fact, demand and deserve further critical inquiry in terms of an exacting textual scrutiny that I could not do here owing to obvious space-constraint. However, the tinkling is necessary, as Nietzsche once epigrammatically put it. Yes, seize the sign — and one may advance.



BAULS

Symbol of Revolt Against Orthodoxy

Kakoli Banerjee

THE Bauls of Bengal — the itinerant singers who sing in the praise of the Lord — are in fact a symbol of revolt against the orthodoxy and fanaticism of both Hinduism and Islam. They scoff at the rituals and ceremonies associated with the both. The origin of Bauls dates back to the Bhakti movement and they are a sect belonging to the Udasini class of people who are spiritually inclined and have no fancy for materialism.

Folk music of a place is spontaneously evolved by the people of the soil themselves. No idea can influence its essence of natural growth; hence it is free from any kind of sophistication. Baul Sangeet is the music of Bengal. The Bauls lead a nomadic life and depend for their sustenance on donations and charity though they are not beggars. Because, in return for the charity and donations, they regale the donors with their lyrics. A Baul can be either a Hindu or a Muslim. It is quite possible that a Hindu Baul may have a Muslim Guru or teacher or vice versa. This very fact signifies their attempt to break away from the shackles of religious orthodoxy and tradition.

From time immemorial, Goddess Kali has been viewed as the Destroyer. Rama Prasad

man's life. They have a deep insight into the human psyche. Bauls serve as a medium of non-formal social education to the village folk. Their songs deal with national integration, futility of the caste system, rituals, values of mental discipline, preaching of the spiritual teachers and enquiry into the nature of God.

The dance dramas of Rabindranath Tagore at times have glimpses of the Baul dance movement. Baul songs are rendered as full-fledged music which has an appropriate structure or form. The tunes conform to the Classical Ragas (Style). Their musical instrument is the Ektara, a one-stringed instrument, which serves the purpose of a drone in order to maintain the continuity of a tune.

Women have an important role in Baul philosophy whose aim is to discover truth through the mysteries of the human body and male-female relationship. The female body is the basis of meditation, creation and inspiration. Baul woman realises the necessity for small families, for, they cannot afford to have too many children as their work requires them to be mobile.

Modernism and commercialism is now catching up with the Bauls. They actively perform before sophisticated audiences. Radio and television have taken these singers and their music right into our drawing rooms!

The author is a freelance writer.
Courtesy: India Perspectives

