

Kazi Nazrul Islam can be soft and vivid as well as ranting and impenetrable. He can be dyspeptic and bilious. Translation cannot do him justice. Anyone who has read him in the original will tell you that. Interpretation cannot do him justice as well. Anyone who knows about the cultural baggage that readers bring to a text will tell you about that. Nazrul, has been understood and misunderstood. August 27 was the twenty-sixth death anniversary of the rebel poet. We remember him in his own words and in his own works. And somewhere in the middle lies our hope. Taking liberty of Wordsworth's lines on Milton, we can say:

**"Nazrul, thou should'st be living at this hour:
Bangladesh hath need of thee: she is a fen of stagnant waters!...
Oh raise us up, return to us again."**

Will Nazrul's Dream Ever Come True?

M MIZANUR RAHMAN

KAZI Nazrul Islam (1899-1976) is one of the greatest poets of the world. He is the poet of the world in general but an epoch-making and outstanding national poet of Bangladesh in particular. His voice is the voice of the free-people of the world. His unbound stand for the have-nots and revolution against all sorts of hypocrisy, narrowness, falsehood and tyranny in society is absolute. He is that 'greater Man' of Milton's *Paradise Lost* to be agreed 'Of Man's first disobedience' to ill orders of the state and its unjust and inhuman alignment. His forceful voice is evident in his exultant poem 'The Rebel' which is un-parallel in the realm of world-poetry. His philosophy of revolution in the realm of poetical arena has its simile with Myakovsky's lines:

*"I'm everywhere
Where there's tears or pain
Crucified again and again
For every tear that's shed."*

While Nazrul declared,

*"Weary of battles,
I, the Great Rebel
Shall rest in peace only when
The anguished cry of the
oppressed
Shall no longer be reverbrate in
the sky
and in the air
And the tyrant's bloody sword*



On a shampaan at Chittagong

*will no longer rattle in the battle
fields,
Only then shall I, the Rebel, rest
in peace."*

(Tr. Sazed Kamal)

Nazrul like a violent comet rose in the firmament of Bengali Literature and brought about a new era of Bengali verses overwhelming every episode of the traditional aspects of Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) that swayed the misrule and tyranny of the imperialistic colonialism of the them British Empire. His fiery poems of 'Agni-Vina' Bisher Banshi, and the songs of his anthology 'Bhangar Gaan' gave a violent jerk to the colonialists as he sang of the oppressed people of the world and professed equality among human

beings irrespective of all shades. Though he had his natural flavour for the anarchism but to all unjustified anachronism of the capitalistic society of the few against the great masses of people all over the world. He however, made the way out. For that he proclaimed,

*"... Let peace prevail and equality
win,*

*Let truth reign supreme,
Let all unhappiness and misery,
all oppression and tyranny
all cowardice and falsehood
perish for good, for good!*

*Let all pain and sorrow,
all disease and want,
disappear.
Let there be no fear*

*of jealousy and hatred,
Let the timid, the weak and the
old*

*grow fearless and bold,
Let them conquer death
and glow with the fire of an undy-
ing faith.*

*All praise to Allah, all praise to
Him.*

*No more will recklessness and
disorder prevail.*

*The prison houses with their
fetters broken
will be of no avail.
Imperiously will men sail
over the barriers of hills, deserts
and seas.*

*Let dishonesty, ignorance, greed
and selfishness perish!*

*.....
Let youth prevail and senility
disappear,*

*One who has the spark of youth
in him
knows no defeat.
He always fights with his heart
and soul.
And when he fails to win
he never flees the battle field,
but fights on till the end.*

*Let the invincible youth reign
supreme."*

Nazrul opined equal rights for all in consonance with the orders of Allah. Thus in the same song he elaborated Allah's magnanimity for all humanbeings without any distinction.

"All men have equal rights

*Over the gifts Allah has
bestowed on this earth.*

*The sun and the moon shed their
light
equally on all.*

*When rain falls, it falls too for all.
That is the divine decree.
If someone acts contrary to this
and hears everything in his
coffer,*

*many are inevitably deprived and
robbed.*

*Rise up, all the downtrodden and
oppressed
of this earth,*

*Unite and wrest your right
from the tyrannous lords,
else you will violate Allah's own
decree
and burn in eternal hellfire.*

*Let there prevail again on this
earth
equality and comradeship.*

*There will be no inequality or
poverty anymore.
City folkles and villagers will get
food equally.*

*There will be no kings, emperors,
landlords
and moneylenders.*

*You will not find festivity in one
household
and hungry means in another.*

*You will not find some one
living in a big palace
and another in a dilapidated
cottage.*

*All such inequalities will perish
for good,
and the world will turn into a
beautiful abode
of loving brotherhood.*

*Let there be complete equality
and peace,
Let truth reign supreme!
All praise to Allah, All glory to
Him."*

(Tr. Kabir Choudhury)

This excerpt of Nazrul's long lyrical poem denotes his true Islamic spirit which is yet to be achieved by the state at present so that the dream of our national poet will come true. He did not speak all these for his countrymen only but he put it before every soul for the emancipation of all people of the world.

It is really regrettable to mention that every year the birth and death anniversary of this great revolutionary poet are being held with due solemnity in seminar and symposium. Do we practice in our day to day life the ideals of this great poet what we preach reciting and singing him? Or these are mere gibberish glib? How could we pay proper respect to our poet Nazrul unless and until we put the abovenoted ideals in practice. Though it is an well known adage runs that practice makes man perfect. Let's have the start first.

Only then we can honour the poet when we play our role of life in the truest sense of the terms that he laid before us in social, economic



Playing flute, in love and in anger

and political arena in all arteries and capillaries of life in the state as a free and sovereign nation. None of us can achieve any goodness by pleasant swimming in the favourable sea of hypocrisy, narrowness and falsehood. And only then the

cherished dream of our national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam might come true, provided we carry on practising his ideals from the top to the bottom line of our day to day life. Example is better than precept. Let us see it started from our leadership.

LETTER

Nazrul in his Own Words

The **Bhadra** edition of **Naoroj** (1934) carried a letter of Principal Ibrahim Khan addressed to Kazi Nazrul Islam. The poet responded in the **Push** edition of **Saogaat** (1934). The following is an excerpt of that letter that sums up the essential Nazrul.

I don't know whether Muslims of Bangla are impoverished in wealth or not, but they sure are so in their minds. I have reckoned it with sadness. I have humbly accepted the 'kafer' title awarded to me by the Muslim community. I don't think it as an injustice. The only thing that bothers me though is that I am not great enough to be a kafer. Still I am ranked with names like Hafez-Khaiaam-Mansoor.

The Hindus--writers and non-writers alike--have reared me with love and care, and if I don't acknowledge that I'll deny the blood in me. However, some filthy Hindus and Bhrahma writers are hurling invectives at me out of sheer envy and some conservative 'Hindu-meeting mongers' are spreading rumours against me. They're not many in number. Their grudge is either communal or personal. I don't blame the entire Hindu community for these selected few. Besides, in the communal frenzy, my Muslim identity matters more to many Hindus than my secular-views.

The first blow, I admit, comes from my Muslim corner. That is not to say that the Muslims do not appreciate me. Those who are the lifeblood of the country, the youth, have braced me with leaps of love to mitigate the critics scorns. I have not received the blessings of the elderly. I am not any apple of their eyes, but love from the youth, their garlands have decorated me. I have found harvest in somebody else's ruin.

The leaders of this young force are Ibrahim Khan, Kazi Abdul Wadud, Abul Kalam Shamsuddin, Abul Mansur, Wazed Ali, Abul Hossain. My young friends have canonised me; they have placed me in the altar of their heats. Those who have given receptions to me in Dhaka, Chittagong, Noakhali, or Faridpur are the young. But, this youth do not belong to any race, they belong to all races.

You (Principal Ibrahim Khan) have urged me to wake others. I think I have already done it even before you asked me to do so not only through writing but also



Listening to the drumbeats of youth

through my life and work.

In my limited capacity, I have trodden down the rural roads for eight years, sang like street bards, written songs, spoken to organize the youth, the labourers and the youth. I don't have money, but I have never shied away from putting my efforts at least you should know that. If I sing after Whitman, "Behold, I do not give a little charity, When I give, I give myself" - don't take it as arrogance on my part.

You have called society 'fallen, pitiable'. I too think society as fallen and demoralized, but not pitiable. My experience tells me society is to be feared. This society is always holding its stick, if you try to discuss its fault, then your head is at risk. You are probably laughing, but I know how many brickbats have been aimed at me.

You know what I think? This rotten society cannot be embalmed with soothing words. Someone with psychic power' can give it a shot. But when the blister gathers pus, the patient fears the surgeon. The quick steps in, saying he can cure you without

operation - only to the delight of the patient. But the skeptic doctor thinks otherwise. He dips his surgery knife into the sure. The patient cries out in pain, struggles to free himself and swears at the doctor. The surgeon does his duty, ignoring the swearing. He knows that the same patient will hail him once he is cured.

What do you think? I am in favour of the surgeon, though. Society will throw its firsts, swear, and those who don't have the thick skin to stared those, must not come in aid of the society. That is why I have always summoned the youth force. Only they can bring social reform. They are not hungry for glory. They do not lack in quality. They have the stomach to withstand hunger, and they have the back to withstand beatings. They will create the new art. They will bring new ideas. They will sing fresh songs.

You probably took me as their leader. Like you, I also keep on brooding, who is the lucky one to young. I think, the lucky one hasn't come yet. I've said it many times

I'm telling it again I haven't seen him. But I'll recognise him the moment I see him. My songs signal his coming. My drumbeats proclaim his arrival. I think, I have only followed the instruction of that lucky one and tried to awaken other have kept on singing the wake up call despite the insults, mockery showered at me. I don't know, how this idea has got in me. I just feel, some invisible proclamation is finding its way through me. I feel his footsteps in my heart beats, his sighs in my breathing.

At the same time, I feel he can assume the shape of any one of us.

I have searched for him beyond me. I have searched for him in me, also. I won't claim meeting him. But I confess, I have felt his proximity. I often feel, I will reach him only if I stretch my arms.

Source: Nazrul Patrabali, Edited by Kalyani Kazi, Shahityam, Calcutta (1999). Translated by Shamsad Mortuza

POEM

The Rebel

KAZI NAZRUL ISLAM

Speak up, Hero -
Say: I stand with my head high.
Beholding my lofty head
The Himalaya bows shy.
Proclaim Hero, Hi.

Say: Through the endless space of voids,
Past the sun, the moon, the asteroids,
Piercing the globe, the heaven and earth
Past God's throne in the cosmic berth
I shoot through and rise,
I'm the Creator's surprise.
Furious God burning bright red
Is a royal-mark of victory in my forehead.
Say: I'm forever high-head.

I'm ever unruly, so ferocious,
I've no manners,
I'm dancing Shiva of the Armageddon,
I destroy, fly cyclone's banner.
A curse to the earth, I'm a deadly dread,
I'm unstoppable, a turbulence-bred.
I smash everything into pieces.
Discipline I know not and I'm a lawless.
I maul all bindings, law and orders,
I break all rules, I breach all borders.
I'm a torpedo, I'm a giant limpet-mine,
Bringing disasters about I feel fine.
I'm sinister Shiva, out-of-season storm,
Rebel-child of the mother earth
Rebellion is my norm.

Say: ever high-head is my form.

I'm a tempest, a whirling tornado,
I crush all that come my way in bravado.
I dance on and on, I dance wild
In my own rhythm - a happy-go-lucky
child.
I dance in the rhythm of humber, musical
chime,
Flash in restless style, mime and rhyme,
Swing in metres - turn, twist, skip and
tickle,
I am such a wanton fickle.
I do whatever fancy I,
Embrace my nemesis, death I do defy.
I'm pestilence, a killer, a typhoon,
A terror to the world, a hot-head, I'm a
loon.
To high-head forever attune.

I'm forever restless and raving,
My cup of life is always full and raging.

I'm a pyrophile, I'm sacrificial flame
I'm the homage, the priest; fire is my
name.
I'm creation, I'm dissolution,
I'm the abode as well as the place of
cremation.
I'm day's end, I'm the dawn.
The sun and the moon are my pawns.
Child of a goddess, I play on a bamboo
flute
While blowing a war-horn, I'm such a
brute.

Poison-drunk blue-throat I'm an ocean of
pain,
Flow of the Gangotri in my hair I rein.
Say: high-head I'm sure and certain.

I'm an ascetic, a divine soldier
I'm a prince, my royal robe's in sombre.
I'm a nomad, I'm Chenghis,
It's only myself who I salute in bliss.

I'm a thunder, I'm the siren of a horn,
Angel Israfil's booming trumpet I adorn.
I'm Shiva's drum, his trident, a sceptre of
just
I'm the Supreme conch-shell call loud
and fast.
I'm mad Durbasha, the fire-eating sage,
I'm a wildfire, I'll set this world ablaze.
With bursts of merry laughter,
I'm an horrific creation-buster,
Suns and stars I eclipse in a cataclysmic
haze.

Now I'm calm, now vicious, free and
uncaught,
New-blood youth, boasting gods I thwart.
I'm an outburst of gusts, the oceans'
raves,
I'm bright and burning, I'm pounding
waves.

In insurgency and fall, I'm the wake up
call,
Triumphant victory banner of humanity I
install.
I storm around heaven and earth in a rush
Riding courage and valour my heavenly

Pegasus.

I'm a volcano, I'm an eternal bonfire,
Underworld hell and its deafening blare.
I fly in lightning, I jump and I skip,
I tyrannise, cause earthquakes in a flip.

I grab the snake-god Basuki by its hood,
I seize Gabriel's fiery wings pretty good.
I'm angelic, I'm restless,
Insolent, I tear up nature mother's head-
dress
With my teeth. I'm Orpheus' hypnotic lyre,
My melodies send chaotic seas to retire
And kisses the noisy world to sleepy
mute.
I'm Lord Krishna's magical flute.
But when I explode and roar up the sky
Seven hell-fires go out shivering and die.
For revolution around the globe I vie.

I bring devastating flood
To fertilise the fields or bury their crops in
mud.

I'm unjust, a calamity, a meteor's wake,
Curse of a comet, I'm a venomous snake.
I'm a headless devil, a mischievous
warrior,
I laugh happily sitting in a hell's interior.

I'm earthly, I'm spiritual,
I'm ageless, endless, I'm immortal.
I instil fear in men, demons and angels,
I'm invincible, I whisk through all hells,

Heavens and earth. I'm the supreme
manhood,
I'm the Truth, lord of the lords, the Divine
Good.
I've gone mad, I'm a mad,
I've discovered myself, I've thrown out all
fads.

I'm Parshuram's dire hatchet, I'll wage
wars
For peace and freeing the world of
warmongers.
I'll destroy this world in bondage
For the sheer pleasure of bringing in a
New Age.
That day I'll stop and calm down -
I'll be quiet, when the earth wouldn't
drown
Its sky, its air in heart-rending cry
Of the oppressed, the tyrants wouldn't pry
The lands and wouldn't flash their
swords,
The earth's freed from savage barbarian
hoards.
I'll calm down and stop,
Battle-weary and tired, I'll drop off.

I'm the rebel Hero forever -
Head high alone I soared past the sphere!

Translated by Dr Aziz Islam, from Western Australia

in history

THIS WEEK

August 31

1688: John Bunyan dies, aged 60, at the house of a friend in Holborn after a ride through the rain from Reading to London. He is buried in Bunhill (Bone-hill) Fields, in the City.
1867: Charles Baudelaire, stricken with paralysis during a Belgian lecture tour the previous year, dies in Paris at 46.

September 1

1729: Sir Richard Steele of The Tatler and The Spectator, dies in Camarthen, Wales.
1875: Edgar Rice Burroughs born in Chicago. The creator of Tarzan will bemoan: "I am one of those fellows who...always gets to the fire after it is out."

September 2

1666: The Great Fire of London begins. When the flames are finally extinguished four days later, four-fifths of the city will be in ashes.

September 3

1592: One of the most popular English prose writers of the later 16th century, the author of more than 35 books, Robert Greene, dies in London.
1962: e.e.cummings dies in North Conway, New Hampshire, aged 67.

September 4

1904: Richard Wright novelist and short-story writer who was among the first American black writers to protest white treatment of blacks, notably in his novel Native Son (1940), is born in Natchez, Mississippi.
1941: Faber and Faber publishes T. S. Eliot's The Dry Salvages.

September 5

1905: Arthur Koestler, who will indict the police state in Darkness at Noon, is born in Budapest, Hungary.
1936: The first and most persuasive advocate of vers libre, Gustave Kahn, dies in Paris.

September 6

1890: When the captain of the Roi des Belges succumbs to tropical fever on the Congo River, is made master of the ship, an experience he will later draw upon for "Heart of Darkness" and "An Outpost of Progress."
1952: Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid dies in Edinburgh. In 1922, he founded the monthly Scottish Chapbook, a journal dedicated to a Scottish literary revival. His later style will return to standard English and include A Kist of Whistles (1947) and In Memoriam James Joyce (1955). Autobiographical volumes include Lucky Poet (1943) and The Company I've Kept (1966).

Source: Internet