

Musical diversity in Kazi Nazrul Islam's Song

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Abstract

If we analyze the history of world music we can see that one person owns the crown of the arts, culture and music of a certain region in a certain time frame. This is where the genre of Bengali music is different from others. In the genre of Bengali music we must mention the names of 'Five Lyrical Poet' as our crown king. They are- Rabindranath Tagore, Dwijendralal Roy, Atul Prasad, Rajanikanta Sen and Kazi Nazrul Islam. This is the uniqueness of Bengali music. When Rabindranath along with the other musical writers have been dominating the thousand year old ancient Bengali songs that is when the emergence of Kazi Nazrul Islam took place. Although he stayed with the 'Leto' team from childhood, his musical intellects came out from 1920 to 1942 in these 22 years. In this short span of time he made coalescence of the tunes with the lyrics by enriching the emphasis of lyrics in Bengali music, which is its main characteristics. Sometimes he took grasp of the tunes and created lyrics based on that. On the other hand sometimes he created the lyrics and gave tunes to it. Tunes, lyrics, songs and Nazrul are one and inseparable. The intellect of Nazrul mainly orbits around music. In terms of writing music, his writings were beyond any boundary. These were not result of any kind of forced imagination, rather he wrote songs one after another, spontaneously, and added variety of tunes to them. He wrote patriotic songs, motivational songs, songs of awakening, poem-songs (Kabya geeti). He also wrote Ghazal, Thumri, Kazri, Hori, Bhatiali, Bhawaiya, Jhumur along with Raga based songs, Kheyal 'Bhanga' songs and not to mention, he created new Ragas and Raginis. Kazi Nazrul Islam was an entity who was filled with the 'Energy of Creation (Srishty Shukher Ullashe- a famous poem by him.)'. Just like how his songs give a flawless description of the beloved in worldly love, the same way they create a thirst to embrace the purity of love for Divine behind the love for human. The biggest success of Nazrul Sangeet is that in his songs Nazrul could create an unbelievably successful bonding between tradition and the demand of the contemporary era. When he started writing songs, from that time he led Bengali songs to a dimensional change but also kept the company of the traditional thematic and the characterized reform of the Bengali music. His creative creations went beyond person, place and time in search for the deeper meaning of life. Through his generous creations one can actually feel the heritage and truth of the genre of the thousand year old Bengali songs. And that generous creation is his music; through the thinking of which the creative philosophy of life of Kazi Nazrul Islam as a person is reflected.

When Rabindrantah Tagore was on the top of succes by virtue of his own intellect in the realm of Bengali Music, that is when Kazi Nazrul Islam came to the picture. There was no prominent and famous litterateur or musician who could shine through their own intellect by overcoming the huge influence of Tagore in the Music of Bengal. In every sector of music and literature of the then Bengal we can see the deep impact of Rabindranath. Every writer who wrote poems, stories and songs then besides Dwijendralal Roy, Atulprasad Sen, and Rajanikanta could not come out of writing, thinking and philosophy of Rabindranath. This is where immensely exceptional Kazi Nazrul Islam appears. He entered the Bengali literature and Music by being enlightened with his very own intellectuality. Even though as a litterateur his philosophy reflected thoughts and corresponding time but his music went beyond time by introducing new and different genres. In the theme, framework and melody of his music, nowhere the direct impact of Rabindranath Tagore can be seen. During his early life he started by composing and tuning 'Leto Songs' but during the 1920s decade his musical genius bloomed. From 1920 to 1942 in these 22 years of work life he kept showed the prominence of his musical genius everywhere. He did not only confine his musical thinking in the conventional ways but also affluenced the thousands of years old Bengali music through the introduction of various new genres.

from the very childhood Nazrul's musical intellect was spontaneous. Very early in his childhood he faced harsh reality due to extreme poverty. That is why he joined the team of 'Leto' singers. He then started writing songs in that team and soon just at the age of eleven he gained the position of the chief poet of the team by his intellect.¹ At that time his lyrics and tune might not have been of high value but the fact that he could instantly write and tune Leto songs and present it on the stage at that age was of great intellectuality which Nazrul had.

In terms of music Nazrul had habitual spontaneity. In his 22 years of active career he composed almost Three Thousand and Two Hundred songs.² He composed modern songs, motivational songs, Gazals, songs of folk tunes, religious songs, songs of drama-cinema, songs of different genre of classical music of north and south India, Kheyals, Kheyal influenced songs and concentrated on creation of new and different Ragas and Rhythms.

From 1920 to 1926, in these years Kazi Nazrul Islam established himself as a famous music composer. In his early creative career the most part of songs were patriotic or motivational where the words were full of emotions. Besides being politically aware, his direct connections with the Congress Party played an important role here. Even though during the starting of the 1920's decade Nazrul Islam's songs were composed and tuned by keeping in mind patriotism, Bangladesh, socialism, equity, Muslim awareness, women awareness, sectarian unity but they did not follow the orthodox framework of songs. At that time in the news papers and literary papers the above mentioned published notations of Kazi Nazrul Islam's songs. Then Mohini Sengupta requested Nazrul in a letter to write songs by following the usual framework i.e. Sthayi, Antara, Sanchari, Abhog etc.³

Actually that is when Nazrul started composing songs according to the established framework of songs. Because of this Nazrul could show controlled emotions and moderation in his songs. This emotion of Nazrul in literature often passed the controls of music, lengthened and became even greater in expression in his poems, stories, novels and other writings. This is where his songs are unique from his other literature work. In his confined frame of music he expressed a greater and more dignified philosophy. Thoughts, words, sentences and tunes became a unique creation by mingling with each other. Rhythm and ornamentations in Kazi Nazrul Islam's songs along with his subjective choice of words made his music more beautiful. For example, in order to enrich his Islamic songs with Islamic philosophy he has used Arabic, Persian and Urdu words. As an example his famous Islamic Song can be mentioned-

“Bury me beside the Mosque O brother, (মসজিদেরই পাশে আমায় কবর দিও ভাই) So that I can listen to the calling of prayer from inside my tomb. (“যেন গোর থেকে মুয়াজ্জিনের আযান শুনতে পাই”)

Just like the above mentioned verses he used Arabic and Persian words like Azan (Calling of Prayer for the Muslims), Muajjin (Person who calls for prayer), Gor (Tomb) etc. Alongside Bengali in the whole song. Again, while composing Hindu religious devotional songs in the lyrics prayers of Hindu Gods, praised them through different mythical stories, Hindu rituals etc. has playfully come up. For example Nazrul's famous Shyama Song 'Bol re Joba Bol' has the following Sthayi-

“Tell me O Hibiscus flower- (বলরে জবা বল)

¹ Karunamaya Goswami, *Nazrul Geeti Prasanga*, Bangla Academy, Dhaka, January 1978, P-03

² In the January, 2011 issue of *Nazrul Sangeet Sangraha* edited by Rashidun Nabi, Published by Nazrul Institute there is mention of a number of 3176 songs.

³ Muzaffar Ahmad, *Kazi Nazrul Islam Smritikatha*, National Book Agency Pvt. Ltd., Kolkata, September 1965, P- 309-311

Through which kind of devotion did you get the blessing of Mother Shyama” (“কোন সাধনায় পেলি শ্যামা মায়ের চরণতল”)

In this Shyama song it is being asked to the Hibiscus, which lays on the feet of ‘Shyama’ (A Hindu goddess) that by which virtue it achieved that noble place. Nazrul tried to see the conventional things this way through different perspectives in his Hindu religious songs. Again, in another Hindu religious arrival song compared goddess Durga with mother and wrote about the well being of the country, “The Durga that does not stay confined in the temple, that Durga is wanted by the country. O Mother! Please come with your animism” (মন্দিরে দূর্গে রহেনা যে বন্দি সেই দূর্গারে দেশ চায়, মা গো, চিন্ময়ী রূপ ধরে আয়) In the same way while composing modern songs he focused on humanly love and the thoughts of the poem. Adding metaphor and emotional choice of words he spontaneously expressed humanly love. Kazi Nazrul Islam has showed immense capability of creating stories through his songs. He said in his song-

“My chalice of keeping red color (আলতা রাখার পাত্র আমার)

A half-broken moon, (আধাখানা চাঁদ ভাঙ্গা)

It is that color that trickles (তাহারি রঙ গড়িয়ে পড়ে)

Coloring the whole sunset sky” (অস্ত আকাশ রাঙ্গা)

In these four verses Nazrul showed the expression of a girl’s heart who is sad. In the eyes of the girl, the moon her chalice of keeping the red color. During the dusk, the west sky turns ‘Crimson Color’. At that time beside the sun, in the crimson sky, appears half moon. In the eyes of the sad girl, that is her chalice of keeping colors. Here sadness or loneliness through the metaphor of the half broken moon has created a splendid storyline. That loneliness has expressed the crimson sky as the tricked down red color from its chalice metaphor. again, we can discuss the sanchari of a famous song of Kazi Nazrul Islam ‘My beloved will be the Queen’ (মোর প্রিয়া হবে এসো রানী). It says-

“I will wrap you with the mixture of moonlight and sandal (জোছনার সাথে চন্দন দিয়া জড়াব তোমার গায়)

I will bring the red color from the rainbow and put it in your feet.” (রামধনু হতে লাল রঙ ছানি আলতা পড়াব পায়)

In Bengali music complete use of metaphor and imagination cannot be seen much. The poet’s mind craves to mix the golden color of sandal with moonlight and wrap his beloved with it. This is where lies the greatness of the modern or poetic songs of Kazi Nazrul Islam. Here the story created with the mixture of imagination and metaphor mixes with tune to express modern poetism. During the mid 1900 century, patriotism, rise of nationalism, homogenous consciousness all these philosophies were echoed in the Indian subcontinent. At first it was confined only in educated and intellectuals but few decades later this resonance took the form of explosion through the writings of Kazi Nazrul Islam. He raised his slogan through his fierce words in his poems and songs right after returning from the 49th Bengal Regiment, Karachi. Famous Nazrul researcher Karunamaya Goswami thinks his patriotic songs can be divided into 7 types.⁴

⁴ Karunamaya Goswami, *Nazrul Geeti Prasanga*, Bangla Academy, Dhaka, January 1978, P-125 mentions that Patriotic songs by Nazrul can be divided into 7 types. Such as:

1. Worshipping of Country type, 2. Revolution against the Subsidence type, 3. Revolution against Exploitation type, 4. Awakening of Women type, 5. Awakening of Muslims type, 6. Patriotic Mockery type, 7. Revolution against Communalism type

The tunes, rhythms and protesting words of his songs openly called the undivided Indians towards independent. In a very short time he became the symbol of the revolution towards independence of the whole India. The patriotic songs that he composed by aligning the tunes and rhythms with the marching of the military opened new doors in the undivided Indian subcontinent. Those songs inspired the independence thirsty people of the subcontinent by making their blood scream for war. From 1920 to 1926, in this 7 years he directly took part in the revolution and politics against the British due to his direct linkage with the Congress. This political reality was expressed in his writings. He dreamt of a class exploitation free independent India for everyone. He is the architect Independent Bangladesh and its slogan 'Victory of Bangla' (Joy Bangla).⁵ The reality of that time has come up in "Sarbahara (The Proletariat)", "Vangar Gaan (The Song of Breaking)", "Jinjir (The Prison)", "Gaaner Mala (The Torsion of Songs)", "Sondhya (The Evening)", "Aleya (The Jack-o-Lantern)", "Bon geeti (The song of the Jungle)" etc. Books. Just like he wanted to wake up the Indian Nation through his protesting words during the Revolution against the British, just in the other way, with his love and simplicity he described the beauty and nature of the green and beautiful Bengal. His patriotic songs contained the simplicity of the description of the beauty of Bengal on one hand and the protesting strong words against the exploiting and the cry of the exploited on the other.

Kazi Nazrul Islam has made the humorists face a magical reality in his modern songs. The depth of thought, width of imagination, contemporarity and proper choice of words and use of metaphor made his creations poetic. When his songs created new genres, record companies labeled it as 'Modern'. It means at that time in thinking, depth of thoughts and writing the successful entrance of modernity in Bengali music took place. Humanly hopes, disappointment, wants, not being able to get what is wanted, confusion in the heart of a lover, the thrill of sudden acquirement etc. things mixed together in his tunes and created a new dimension in Bengali music.

In order to discuss creating new genres in music, the first creation that Kazi Nazrul Islam made was 'Ghazal'. Atul Prasad Sen was the first to compose Ghazal in Bengali.⁶ Although in the writings of Atul Prasad Sen Ghazal was used in the way of Bengali songs, its first embodiment took place in the hands of Kazi Nazrul Islam. Ghazals are mainly Poems of Love in Persian. It is considered in genres of music through adding tunes to it. Tune is not the primary focus of a Ghazal rather the depth of thought in the lyrics and the presence of 'Myst'. Lyrics of a Ghazal with its two meanings, metaphors become successful when it is 'Mystic'.⁷ On one side of the two meanings stand pure love of human being and on the other hand love going beyond human towards supernatural or God. Nazrul tried to embody this form of Persian Ghazals through tunes and lyrics. That is why Kazi Nazrul Islam's Ghazal is a significant love song in the thousand years old music of Bengal. This love simultaneously expresses divine and human love. According to Persian way the first verse of a Ghazal is played along with rhythm, the next verse is recited like a poem in tune but without rhythm. It is called 'Sheyor'. By analysing the framework, the Ghazals of Kazi Nazrul Islam can be divided into roughly four types.⁸ The First part consists of Ghazals written according to the Persian style, in the Second part, Ghazals that are written by lightly following the subjects of the Persian Ghazals, in the Third part there are Bengali Ghazals that are written by following the style of Bengali musical poems and in the Fourth part

⁵ In August 1924 Kazi Nazrul Islam wrote the 'Bhangar Gaan' poetry book. Congratulating Purnachandra, a leader of the Revolution against the British, Nazrul wrote this poem. A verse of this poem includes "Victory of Bengal's Purnachandra, Victory of the Confined" (জয় বাংলার পূর্ণচন্দ্র, জয় জয় আদি অন্তরীণ),

⁶ Karunamaya Goswami, *Nazrul Geeti Prasanga*, Bangla Academy, Dhaka, January 1978, P-167

⁷ Abu Sayeed Ayub, *Ghalib-Er Gazal Theke*, Dey's Publishing, Kolkata, 1976, P-104-105

⁸ Lina Taposhi Khan, *Nazrul Sangeet-e Rager Byabohar*, Nazrul Institute, Dhaka, February, 2011, P-55

there are Ghazals that are written by following the Islamic History. Among these, the Ghazals in the Third part are the newest addition. In this genre, the lyrics are built up by following the style of poems of Bengali musical poems. Even in the tunes, it is seen that the influence of Persian tunes are left and replaced by the Indian classical music

Devotional songs are one of the most exuberant genres of Nazrul Music. Kazi Nazrul Islam mainly based his devotional songs on Islam and Hindu religious characteristics. Among the Hindu devotional songs he composed, Kirtan, Shyama Sangeet, Song of Uma, Song of Shiva, Shyam Sangeet, Agamoni Gaan, Song of Sacrifice etc. Along with description of different events such as- Nilkantha Shiva, the Dance Macabre of Shiva, the Dalliance of Radha and Krishna. There he added tunes by basing on different Ragas and Ragin's of India. Only in case of Kirtan, along with his lyrics to describe the Dalliance of Shri Hari and Shri Radha beautifully, his tunes bases on the tunes of Kirtan of the Ancient Bengal, which is rooted in South India. Kazi Nazrul Islam has composed his Islamic songs based on Muslim awakening, Islamic heritage, Pride of the Muslim reigns, Awakening words of the Muslim women, Mecca-Medina, The Sacred Kaba, Generosity of Allah, Life lessons from Hazrat Mohammad (PBUH) and other Prophets lives etc. Almost all the songs were tuned by Kazi Nazrul Islam himself.⁹ Through his Islamic songs, Nazrul made even the conservative Muslim society his fan. He composed songs on the 5 pillars of Islam. Besides, composing songs on the generosity of Allah, 'Hamdh' and the admiration of Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (PBUH) 'Naat', he enriched the collection of Bengali songs. At the same time, he has also composed songs on the only musical genre of ancient 'Sufi' way of Islam 'Qawali' by keeping the theme unharmed.

In the collection of Songs by Kazi Nazrul Islam folk tuned songs have taken up a special place. Since Folk Songs are a strong genre of the ancient Bengali songs, it is said that Nazrul's songs are 'folk tuned' rather than 'folk songs'. Folk songs have travelled from generations after generations through people's mouth, sometimes the name of the writers in this genre cannot be found which is considered to be okay. The songs that flow by carrying the specialty of a specific region or locality through being on people's mouth from generations to generations is known as Folk Songs. But in terms of Nazrul's folk tuned songs, we can find the identity of the composer and writer and also the written form of the songs, which is why the songs are termed as folk tuned songs, not folk songs. Nazrul have tried to keep the traditional form and thematic unharmed of the ancient Bengal in case of lyrics and folk tunes while writing the songs. The people and earth of the Bengal were tied together in his songs. In all the regions of the Bengal, there can be seen conventional folk language or regional language. Accordingly, regionally folk songs bloom by basing on those forms. Kazi Nazrul Islam has carefully kept the simplicity of those regionalism. He wrote 'Bhatiali Songs' based on the specialty of tunes of the riverine Bengal. Here the relation of people with the river, their tragedy, and lifestyle have been described. Separating 'Bhanga' tune along with the anxiety of a woman heart, mixing these two together he wrote 'Bhawaiya' of the North Bengal. In this genre of songs, he maintained the conventional specialty of tunes of the 'Rarha' region and applied his own beauty of tunes. Besides the two folk songs Bhawaiya and Bhatiali, in his huge collection of folk tuned songs, Kazi Nazrul Islam has 'Jhumur' genre songs. Jhumur is the song of the Santals. The life in the coal mines, humane love-separation, and nature are the subject of this song. After working for the whole day, drinking a type of locally made alcohol, with the rhythm of dancing, this song is sung. The childhood of Kazi Nazrul Islam was passed in Asansol. The experience of his childhood are reflected in the forming of these songs in is later life. Besides Jhumur, songs of the Gypsy named 'Jhapan' has come up in the writings and tunes of Kazi Nazrul Islam. In order to use in the film named 'Sapurja' (The Snake Charmer) he wrote some 'Jhapan' songs. Although Kazi Nazrul Islam tried to give precedence to the folk tunes while writing folk genre songs, the influence of Indian conventional raga music in the form of folk music can be seen. But the influence of Ragas have never come out in its own form by separating itself from the lyrics of the songs and its theme, rather it has mixed itself with the folk tunes and made the songs even more majestic. This is where the artistic thinking of Kazi Nazrul Islam has been more cordial in writing the folk tuned songs.

⁹ M.N Mustafa, *Amader Sangeet Itihaser Aloke*, P-225

In order to discuss the music thinking of Kazi Nazrul Islam, songs of 'Kheyal' genre or the influence of the raga music in his songs demand detailed discussion. The musical intellect of Nazrul is obedient to raga music.¹⁰ That is why the use of raga music has been spontaneous in his music. The lyrics and tune of Kazi Nazrul Islam's songs have walked together hand to hand. The charisma of tune has never outran the lyrics of the songs, and the gravity of the lyrics have never become primary by making the tunes secondary, but in Indian classical music, lyrics is not primary. The motion of tunes, alap, prastar, bistar, murki, taan, and gaat these things become primary. The combined expression of these characteristics could make the poeticism of Bengali songs secondary, so was the fear. This is where the moderate thinking of Kazi Nazrul Islam has kept the tidiness of expression of the Bengali music unharmed. Kazi Nazrul Islam kept the form of raga of the North and South Indian form unchanged, sometimes added a necessary mixture of other ragas, added poetic lyrics to that, this is how he kept the simplicity of the Bengal music unchanged. In his raga based songs just how the lyrics can create a poetic imagination, the same way the tunes also follow the raga music perfectly. It's a perfect combination. During the end of his career, he realized the lack of 'Symmetry' and 'Uniformity' in the contemporary Bengali music and started to create new ragas and raginis.¹¹ In this continuity he created a total number of 17 ragas including Nirjhorini, Benuka, Dolonchampa, Bonokuntola, Shiv-Saraswati etc. and wrote songs with them. In 1939, in order to recover lost ragas and raginis Kazi Nazrul Islam started directing a series in radio named 'Haramoni'. It is found out that 33 episodes of the series were aired.¹² In this series he recovered almost extinct North and South Indian ragas like Ahir Bhairav, Nilambari etc. composed songs on them and made arrangements to air them from the radio. Not only that, he also wrote songs following some of the famous 'Bandishes'(verse) of famous singer of the Agra genre Ustad Foyyaz Kha and recorded those songs on the voice of his very own pupil Dipali Naag. Analyzing the lyrics of Kazi Nazrul Islam's raga based songs, it can be seen that the lyrics follow the poeticism of the thousand year old Bengali songs. Then again the tunes follow the Indian classical music. No other music experts could show such complete combination of the thematic of the lyrics along with the tunes of Raga music before Kazi Nazrul Islam. This is why Kazi Nazrul Islam is a successful leader in the genre of this raga based songs.

Nazrul have enriched Bengali music by using many Western tunes in Bengali songs. He used Arabic, Persian, Cuban, Western, Egyptian tunes in Bengali songs. He has gifted us with many famous songs without changing the framework of the Bengali songs and applying foreign tunes in them. Besides, he also made the foreign tunes likeable and acceptable to people. The biggest success of Nazrul's musical intellect is that he was astonishingly successful in creating a bridge between heritage and the demand of contemporary art in his music. When he started writing songs, he took Bengali songs through a state of change but he made the traditional appeal and the characteristic reformation of the thousand year old Bengali songs his companion. He filled the collection of Bengali songs with abundance and wealth of different kinds of music. There is no one equal to him in this regard in the history of Bengali music. In this discussion not only his 3200 songs count, but the artistic values of those songs count as well. His creative creations went beyond time, person and space in order to find a deep meaning of life. Through his generous creations, the heritage and truth of the thousand year old Bengali songs can be revealed. And this generous creation of his is his music, the thought of music which reflects the creative philosophy of the life of Kazi Nazrul Islam.

¹⁰ Karunamaya Goswami, *Nazrul Geeti Prasanga*, Bangla Academy, Dhaka, January 1978, P-219

¹¹ Poet's opinion were printed under 'Two Raginis' (দুটি রাগিণী) in the 1940 Issue of *Betar Jagat* published from Kolkata.

¹² Asadul Haque, *Nazrul Jokhon Betare*, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka, March 1999, P-50-255