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Persian Words Used in Kazi Nazrul Islam's Poetry

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Kazi Nazrul Islam, the national poet of Bangladesh, popularly known as Nazrul-the rebel poet, is undoubtedly one who may rightly be called as one of the greatest “poets of people” of the world. He was the first poet in Bengali literature that used extensive Arabic and Persian words to express his views and to create a Muslim renaissance within the whole Bengali nation. He was a multi-lingual poet. That’s why we see huge Arabic, Persian, Hindi, Sanskrit and Urdu words, even sentences in almost everywhere of his literature. This article is about the Persian words that Nazrul had used in his poetry. Though the majority of his poems consists of more or less Persian words, in this article, we discussed five of his poems named Shat-il-Arab, Moharram, Kamal Pasha, Qorbani and the 12th Fateha that has most Persian words comparatively.

Keywords: Kazi Nazrul Islam, Persian Words, Shat-il-Arab, Moharram, Kamal Pasha, Korbani and the 12th Fateha.

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*“Khudro koro na hey prabhu amar ridoyer parishar,
jeno somo thai pay shotru-mitro-por.”*

[Oh, Allah! Let me make my heart big enough so that I can keep all my enemies, friends, and strangers close to my heart.]

(Fervent Prayer by Nazrul; Nazrul-Rachana Samvhar 1969, 16)

Introduction

If we have to name an outstanding Bengali Muslim writer who played the vital role of awakening the Muslims of Bengal, the first name would be Kazi Nazrul Islam, the rebel poet. Nazrul was born a poet. He arrived at a time when Rabindranath Tagore was the undisputed master of the Bengali literature. However, with his arrival, he made everyone understood that he had come to be on the top forever, and he did so. As we can see, through his poetical language and fearless expressions of his own views-that had next turned to the views of the masses of that time, and even today-he has reached him to the position of the National poet of Bangladesh.

Words are the heart of any writing, especially of poetry. A well-skilled poet can reach to his readers only through the power of his words. Right words in right places make any writer an all-time successor (Kabir Chowdhury 1991, 5).

That is what happened with Nazrul. That is why the language style he followed has become his own language style, not of any significant region or religion's language.

The most important feature of Nazrul Islam's language style is the extensive use of different regional and religious words and sentences all together in his poems, like Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Hindi and Urdu. However, his literature, particularly his poems, was marked by the generous and very effective use of Persian words. He profusely used Arabic and Persian words in his poetry; choice of words mingled with words from the other languages. This kind of wide use of multi-lingual words in his writing at that time shows his bravery and self-confidence (Ataur Rahman 1993, 37).

He was not so well educated, but it is interesting how it was possible for him to have such grip on different languages and use them with such powerful meaning? First, let us take a short look on his life.

Nazrul was the fourth son of his parents Kazi Fakir Ahmad and Zaheda Khatun. Kazi was his family title as his father was a respected village chief. Kazi Nazrul Islam was born in the village of Churulia in the Asansol subdivision, Burdwan district of the Bengal Presidency (now in West Bengal, India) on 25 May 1899. His father wanted him to be educated. Nevertheless, as there was no good institute of education in Churulia and his father was not well to do enough to admit him in a renowned school; Nazrul was sent to the local school where he learnt Arabic, Bengali and Persian languages. In fact, his Persian knowledge started to bloom from that institution. In 1908, after his father's death, Nazrul's family was devastated. He had to leave school to maintain his family. However, he was starving to knowledge. He took his father's place as the caretaker of a local mosque where he had an uncle named 'Bazle Karim'. He was also fond of Persian poems. He introduced Nazrul with Rumi, Hafiz Shirazi, Saadi, and Khayyam significant poets of Persian

literature. Depth of their thoughts and sweetness of their poetical language attracted Nazrul deeply (Taha Yasin and Katha prakash 2008, 12).

At the age of 18, Nazrul joined the Bengal regiment of British Indian Army. In his regiment, there were Hindu, Sikh and Bengal Muslim soldiers who had deep intimacy and unity in between. British government was not very fond of their unity. Therefore, they appointed a 'Moulana' to divert Muslim soldiers. However, that moulana was not as orthodox as the British rulers were. His most favorite book was lyric poetries of Hafez¹. He taught Nazrul the eternal meaning of Hafez's Ghazaliat and Nazrul fell in love with Hafez. Later, he translated full 'Divan-e-Hafez' and wrote some lyric poems², which inspired him (Taha Yasin and Katha prakash 2008, 21). Later, he learned Persian language in different spans of his life. In short, that is how Nazrul Islam has to know Persian language.

Nazrul: the All-embracing Poet

Nazrul Islam was the introducer of Muslim heritage in Bengali literature. He was brave enough to put Hindu and Muslim cultural words side by side; had he hesitated neither to take example from Hindu Puran or Sanskrit language, nor to use Arabic, Persian, Hindi and even Urdu words and sentences. Interestingly, those words were so appropriately placed that no other word could have replaced them with such strong feelings and rebellion (Kalaj Kalottor and Abdul Mannan Syed 1987, 18).

If Nazrul had not born, Bengali Muslim society might have lagged at least one century behind. Nazrul was not a sudden poet. He entered into the literary sector after some notable wars, like-Caliphate movement of India and the First World War. At that time, India was full of corruption; people were dying of hunger, poverty, frustration and injustice, and yet the government was unwilling to even take a look at them. On that time, Nazrul entered into Bengali literature, picked those sorrowful pictures of the society, and expressed them in his poems with revolutionary attitude. He also wanted to raise a unity and awareness between the people living in that torturous society helplessly. He wanted people to understand their lost heritage and fight back to return that. Therefore, he decided to write his words in the form of poems so that all the people can reach them. He used Arabic and Persian words to raise Muslim goodwill by creating a Muslim atmosphere, and other religion's words to create unity among them. Therefore, he mixed them up to nurture their unity and strengthens the bond of the humanity. Like in the poem named "Kandari Hushiar (Careful Leader!)" he said:

*Hindu na ora Muslim oi jiggashe kon jon
Kandari bolo dubiche manush-shantan mor ma'r!*

[Meaning: Who is asking about their identity if they are Hindus or Muslims? Leader you say that humans are drowning, children of my mother (country)] (Nazrul 1983).

Thus, to make a bond between the people and to bond humanity, to elope the discrimination from the society, and to spread non-communalism among the people he used almost all languages of the sub-continent in his literature, particularly in his

¹ Ghazaliat-e-Hafez Shirazi

² Ghazals

poems. That's why he was named as the 'all-embracing' poet.

Nazrul and Muslim Renaissance

Starting his literary career during a period when the country was passing through very unstable conditions and some renowned movements like Khilafat and Non-co-operation movement, Nazrul found the Muslim community in stagnant and sleeping condition. He was a rebel poet who protested against all forms of oppression, injustice, and British domination. So, being inspired by the ideal of pan-Islamism, he wrote innumerable poems on various aspects of Islam and Muslim community during the 20th century. (Ahmad Sharif; Adil bro and et. al. 1974, 20)

Nazrul played a vital role to create Muslim environment in Bengali literature by using the mostly known Arabic and Persian words of the then Muslim society. As we all know that Bengali language has been mostly adapted from Sanskrit language, but as Persian had been the official language of this area for more than 600 years, many Persian words had been intruded into Bengali culture, especially in the language of Bengali Muslim society.

Though Nazrul was not the first to attempt this; before him, renowned Bengali poets like Shattendranath Dutta and Mohitlal Majumder had also used many Arabic and Persian words (Muzaffar Ahmad 1995, 53 & 54), but they failed to achieve as much success as Nazrul Islam. The difference between them and Nazrul Islam was that they used those words only to create Muslim atmosphere in their poem; however, Nazrul used Persian words to communicate with them, to deliver his thoughts and messages to them. This uniqueness of his style has made him the leader of Muslim renaissance in Bengali literature.

Persian Words Used in Nazrul's Poetry

Though almost his entire poem consists of more or less Persian words in general, but there are some poems that have extensive use of Persian words mainly. Such poems are:

1. Shat-il-Arab, Korbani, Moharram, Kamal-Pasha (Agni-Beena 1922);
2. Fateha-e-Davajdahom (Arrival and Leaving) (Bisher Banshi 1924);
3. Ghazaliat-e-Hafez Shirazi (1930) (Translated);
4. Rubaiyat-e-Omar Khayyam (1960) (Translation from the original).

Kazi Nazrul Islam was a follower of Hafez and Molana Rumi. He was under their great influence. Thanks to them, he also fell in love with Persian language. Persian language had intimate relation with Bengali language and literature too. As a result, he used so many commonly used Persian words in his poems that when we read them, it never feels like a foreign language. But, we need to remember that he did not use them to decorate or increase their literal value, but with a great goal to unite humanity. Using Persian words in his poems is his credit in strengthening Bengali literature and its language by mixing Bengali words with Arabic and Persian words for the first time.

From the aspect of using Persian words, we can divide Nazrul's poems into two groups: poems full of Persian words and poems with less Persian words. *Shat-il-*

Arab, Korbani, Moharram, Nowruz, Kamal Pasha, Eid-Mubarak and Fateha-e-Davajdahom these are the poems of first group. *Bidrohi, Manush, Paap,* and *Kheyaparar tarani* are those poems include less Persian words in comparison.

1. 'Shat-il-Arab'

'Shat-il-Arab' is the first poem of Kazi Nazrul Islam published in 'Moslem Bharat' (Jaishtha 1327, 117; Nazrul 2001, 21).

Tigris and Fuertes are two rivers which met together near Basra city and were named as Shatil Arab that again flowed across Basra to the Persian Gulf. Exact date of writing this poem is not known. In this poem. there are 38 lines and almost every line contains a Persian Word. Though their pronunciation has been slightly changed than Persian, but the meaning and approach are the same. Like:

Table 1: Persian Words and Their Meaning in *Shat-il-Arab*

Bengali	Persian	Meaning
shohid	shahid	Martyr
dilir	delir	Brave Heart
khun	khun	Blood
azad	aazaad	free
shomsher	shamshir	Sword
doriya	daryaa	Sea
jinda	zende	Alive
gul	gol	Flower

Example:

*'Zulfiqar' r 'Haydari' hak hetha ajo Hazrat Ali-r
Shatil-Arab! Shatil Arab!! jinda rekheche tomar tir.'*

[Meaning: We can still hear the voice of Hazrat Ali (R), Hazrat Umar (R), whose call for Islam has kept alive the bank of Shat-il-Arab.] (<http://www.bangla-kobita.com/nazrulislam/Shat-el-Arab>)

2. 'Korbani'

'Korbani' was also first published in 'Moslem Bharat' (Vadro 1327, 289) It's a very long poem. In this poem Nazrul described Korbani (sacrificing animals in the name of Allah) as the power of Muslim to destroy all the bad things happening at the society. Persian words mostly used in this poem are given below with their Persian pronunciation and English meaning:

Table 2: Persian Words and Their Meaning in *Korbani*

Bengali	Persian	Meaning
korbani	qorbaani	Sacrifice
khamosh	khaamush	silent
jan	jaan	soul
khonjor	khanjar	two-headed sharp
gordan	gardaan	neck

Bengali	Persian	Meaning
dorod	dard	pain
mardani/parda	mardaani/pardeh	Manly/curtain
astana/ azadi	aastaane/ aazaadi	shelter/freedom
dost	dust	to like
molla/ khun bodon	mollaa/khun-e badan	Wise/Blooded face

Example:

*'Astana sidha rasta noy/ Azadi mele na postanoy
Shasta noy, she shosta noy'*

[Meaning: Goal cannot be easily achieved. Freedom is not so easy to find. It needs courage and sacrifice.] (<http://www.banglakobita.com/nazrulislam/Korbani/>).

3. 'Moharram'

'Moharram' is another symbol of Nazrul's strength of thought as a skilled poet. In *Moharram*, he sorrowfully narrates the tragic death or we can say martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hossain (R) and his family at Karbala, but says that its real significance lies not in 'Marsiya' (chest-beating) but in sacrifice and inspiration (Ashwin 1327, 361).

In this poem, we can see the following Persian words:

Table 3: Persian Words and Their Meaning in *Moharram*

Bengali	Persian	Meaning
asman	aasemaan	sky
duniya	donyaa	earth
ponjay	panjeh	palm of the hand
jada	zadeh	descendent
sher	shir	Lion
banu	baanu	lady
borbad	barbaad	destroy
dorbar	darbaar	gathering place
katra	qatre	drop (of liquid)
aftab	aaftaab	sun
khas	khaas	special
gor	gur	bury

These are the notable Persian words that we see in this poem. Besides, words like khun, dushman, shamsher, tig, and astin are also seen in this poem. *Moharram* has a speciality in this sense that it contains as much other words and sentences of other languages like Urdu, Arabic, Hindi and Sanskrit as well. And it's needless to say that no other words could have replaced those words with such integrity and perfection.

Example:

*'Fire elo aj sei Moharram Mahina
Tyag chai, Morsiya krondon chahi na.'*

[Meaning: Again returned that sorrowful month of Moharram, but this time we want another sacrifice (to awaken Muslims), not the ritual of Morsiya (chest-beating).] (<http://www.bangla-kobita.com/nazrulislam/mohorrom/>).

4. 'Kamal Pasha'

In Kamal Pasha, the poet lovingly addresses Kamal Atatürk as “Kamal Bhai Kamal Kardia” (what have you done brother Kamal) and admires him for his revolutionary and progressive reforms in Turkey. As he also had keen desire for freedom, he actually expressed himself through this poem. This one is also from ‘Agni-beena’. The speciality of this poem is that Nazrul wrote this poem with a description of the incidents that were happening on that time. It made the poem more alive and visible. Mostly used Persian words with their original pronunciations and meanings of this poem are:

Table 4: Persian Words and Their Meaning in *Kamal Pasha*

Bengali	Persian	Meaning
taza	taaze	fresh
murda	morde	dead
gorom	garm	hot
hishab	hesaab	Measure
kharab	kharaab	ruined

Example:

'Shahid orai shahid!

birer moton Pran diyese kkhun oderi lohit!'

[Meaning: Those are martyr! Their blood has filled the Lohit Sea instead of water.] (<http://www.bangla-kobita.com/nazrulislam/kamal-pasha/>).

5. 'Fateha-e-Davazdahom' (Arrival and Leaving)

This poem was first published on ‘Moslem Bharat’ (Agrahayana 1327) as the first poem of the journal. It is a long poem and divided into two parts named ‘Arrival’ and ‘Leaving’. This was the First poem after which we find a long list of Arabic and Persian words used in this poem. It's been proved that Mohitlal Majumder (a renowned Bengali poet of the time) praised him a lot in a letter and asked for a small request to give the meaning of the Arabic and Persian words he used in his poem, so that non-Muslim readers can also understand his poems without any difficulties.

The notable Persian words of this poem and their Persian pronunciation and meaning are as follows:

Table 5: Persian Words and Their Meaning in *Fateha-e-Davazdahom*

Bengali	Persian	Meaning
kalam	kalaam	Sentence
salam	salaam	Muslim greetings
darwan	darbaan	Gateman
hordom	hardam	Always
doraj dast	deraaz dast	Open hand

This awesome poem along with 'Eid-Mubarak', 'Eid-er-Chand' [moon] and 'Shihidi Eid' speaks of Muslims' brotherhood and is also very inspiring and appealing to the Muslim heart.

Example:

*'Dukkho ki Vai, harano Yousuf Kinane abar ashibe fire,
dolito, shushko ai moru-vu puno hoye Gulista hashibe dhire.'*

[Meaning: Don't be sad brother, our days of sorrow will be finished, and our world will again become a Gulista (flower garden).] (Soumitra Shekhar 2001, 37).

6. Rubaiyat-e-Hafez and Rubaiyat-e-Omar Khayyam

Nazrul translated 'Rubaiyat-e-Hafez' and 'Rubaiyat-e-Omar Khayyam' into Bengali so that Bengali Muslims could get inspirations from the great poets of Iran.

Nazrul was so fond of Hafez that he named his son as 'Bulbul'-the mostly used word in Hafez's Ghazaliyat-but bulbul died only at the age of 4. This was a biggest shock for him. Meanwhile he was translating 'Diwan-e-Hafez.' This book was first published in 1930 (1337 Bang) in the name of 'Rubaiyat-e-Hafez.

Nazrul translated Khayyam's Rubaiyat directly from his writing, not from the English translation of Fitzgerald. It shows that he actually knew Persian. Nazrul said:

*I selected a little more than 200 rubaii's from 1000 rubaii's known as
Khayyam's Rubaiyyat; and that's from his Persian writing. (Shahabuddin
Ahmad 2001, 9)*

That means he knew Persian very well. Even we can understand that while reading his translations. He not only translated them but kept a sharp eye to maintain the consistency and meaning [both internal and external] of the original. That's why he translated 197 Rubaii's. When asked, he said that:

*I did not translate them as my wish. I had to work really hard... I tried my
best to keep Omariya style intake. That's why selected them because only these
rubaii's goes with his style. (Shahabuddin Ahmad 2001, 10)*

He couldn't have said that without complete knowledge of Persian.

Apart from these poems, Nazrul Islam has used many Persian words in his other poems as well, but they are less in number. Like *Kheyaparer Tarani (Agni-beena)*, *Shahidi Eid (Sindhu-Hindole)*, *Bidrohi (Agni-beena)* these poems also have some Persian words. For example:

*"Shudhabene jobe o re kafer, ki korecho tumi Islamer?
Islame diye jahannam
Apni Eshecho Beheshto 'por*

Punno-Pishach! Sharthopor! dekhsh ne much! lage shorom!

[Meaning: When ALLAH will ask you that what have you done for Islam in the world that you want to go to Zannat, what will you say brother?]
(<http://www.bangla-kobita.com/nazrulislam/Shahidi-eid/>).

Analysis

If we judge Nazrul's poetry from the aspect of Persian language, we can definitely divide those Persian words in two types: one is those words that are

common and mostly used; and the other one is the rarely used words. Such as commonly known Persian words in the table below:

Table 6: Commonly Known Persian Words

Commonly Known Persian Words	Meaning
ʔandar	inside
aaraam	rest
aavaaz	sound
kaarsaazi	plan
janwar	animal
jaadu	magic
dushman	enemy
naam	name
pasand	like
farmaayesh/farmaan	order
baag/baagcheye gol/golistaan	flower garden
baazaar	market
paadshaah	king
baadaam	almond
bahaane	excuse
bibi	wife
bi dard	heartless
bichaareh	poor soul
khodaa	Allah
behesht	Heaven
cheraag	light
chehre	face
maghz	brain
sharm	shyness
shahr	city
shaagerd	student
sowdagar	merchant

And, some of the rarely used words are:

Table 7: Rarely Used Persian Words

Some of the Rarely Used Words	Meaning
andishe	thought
aalude	spoiled
kami	less
khaak	soil
khubi	beauty
khuni	killer
qami	sadness
biaabaan	desert
sang del	stone hearted

But Nazrul's best credit was in creation of new words by linking two words of different languages together and turning them into one. On this aspect, Nazrul Islam is still the one and only exceptional successor of Bengali literature. For example:

garuri=garur (Arabic) + i (Persian)
zolfwali=zolf (Persian) + wali (Hindi)
jhaaru bardaar=jhaaru (Hindi) + bardaar (Persian)
Sher nar=Sher (Persian) + nar (Sanskrit) etc.
(Hakim Arif 1997, 40)

Like what he said in the poem *Moharram*:

“Dui hat kata tobu sher-nar Abbas
pani ane mukhe, hake dushman-o ‘shabbash.’”

[Meaning: at Karbala, enemies had cut off both hands of Abbas but he still tried to bring water for his child by mouth. Seeing this, even his enemies admired him. Nazrul compared this bravery of Abbas with a Tiger and named him the Tiger-Man] (Abdul Qadir 1969, 163).

Conclusion

Nazrul generated a sense of dignity and self-confidence by using Arabic and Persian words extensively, at the same time enriching Bengali literature. His first appearance occurred when Bengali literature was completely under Tagore's inflation. But he proved that successful literature is clearly possible without following Tagore's style. Tagore himself praised Nazrul for his powerful writing. Nazrul reminded the Muslims about their glorious past through his writing and called upon them to rebuild their present and future following their eternal tradition.

He was basically a Humanist. That's why he got the honor to be called as 'mass poet'. Nazrul had deep affection and desire for his community and because of his this kind of feeling he contributed significantly to the awakening of Muslims through his pen.

But one of his biggest misfortunes may be that he did not get a good translator. While saying that, I did not forget the innumerable translations of his works that have come out since his death in 1976. But it's a recent phenomenon, in his lifetime, more appropriately during his active life, not much of his works was translated to any other languages. Even today, Nazrul is not as world-widely known as he deserves. The good thing is that with the financial assistance of the Nazrul institute of Dhaka some work on Nazrul is on the progress and some are under process. But still it's not enough. Nazrul literature is a vast sea to discover. And as I said earlier translation is the work that makes a poet first international, then eternal. So, more and more translation on Nazrul Islam is required. Researchers must pay attention to this field. We are looking forward to their skillful contribution.

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