

Nazrul's uniqueness in the presentation of poverty and begging: A study from Islamic perspective

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Abstract

In present western civilization, poverty and begging have always been neglected at both micro and macro-economic levels. The picture of poverty and, at its extremity, begging is one of the most tragic scenarios across the world. However, in Islamic tenets, begging as a profession and action is discouraged since men are created by Allah as the best of all creations. Though, many literary works dealt with the pathetic pictures of poverty and begging, the literary contribution of Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976) dealing with poverty and begging is seemingly a true reflection of Islamic creeds. His picturesque presentation of poverty from his first-hand experience urges rapid steps to alleviate poverty and begging. Above all, his human-centric mental set-up plays the key role here. Therefore, Nazrul is not to be recognized as the proponent of the familiar Western concepts like Socialism or Marxism or Capitalism. This paper aims at exploring how in his literature Nazrul, with diametric discarding of these Western concepts, deals with poverty and begging as a true reflection of Islamic paradigms to find a solution to the problems.

Keywords Buccal delivery, Solvent casting, Drug release

Paper type Review paper

Introduction

Poverty alleviation and helping the poor or beggars and eradication of begging are the growing concerns all over the world. Though many national and international organizations like the United Nations, World Bank and World Trade Organization are putting forth their efforts to solve the problem, they have not been successful in alleviating poverty due to various shortcomings. We perceive so because it seems that poverty and begging are increasing geometrically, particularly in the third world countries. In this case, the ways that are shown by prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who represents Islam are unique and exemplary. The famous Bengali poet Nazrul



Islam also raises his voice for the rights of the poor and against the injustice done to them. He also observes the pathetic picture of begging and plays his vital role to put an end to their subhuman condition. In Nazrul's attempts to find a solution to these problems, we have traced a noteworthy similarity between the tenets of Islam and the philosophy of Nazrul, on which this paper focuses.

Literature review

So far as our observation goes, any parallel discussion on Nazrul's realization of poverty and begging in relation to Islamic viewpoints is still an unexplored area. But, some studies have explored Nazrul's ideas of universal brotherhood, Zakaah, equality between man and man in connection with poverty and begging. Thus, Ruhee (2013) has studied some songs of Nazrul chosen on various subject matters. Some of them focus on the five pillars of Islam, namely, Kalima or shahada (Muslim declaration of belief in the oneness of Allah and in Muhammad as His final prophet), Salah (Daily obligatory prayers), Saum (fasting in the month of Ramadhan), Zakaah (an Islam-enjoined obligatory charity) and Hajj (Islamic pilgrimage). She thinks these songs evidently contain many Islamic teachings because they are often based on the Holy Quran and the Hadith of Prophet (peace be upon him). She has also discussed Nazrul's idea of universal brotherhood. Likewise, Tajuddin (2015) has discussed Nazrul's struggle for economic equality, his voice against societal injustice to the poor and the needy, etc. Tajuddin observes, "Nazrul lived under the oppressive British rule which is", he thought, "responsible for all kinds of social evils or economic oppression, and he dedicated his whole life and poetic career to destroy this regime" (37). Similarly, Hoque (2015) has explored into Nazrul's literature that deals with Zakaah and other charitable activities, and his voice against inhumanity, societal injustice done to the poor, etc. that goes simultaneously with the paradigm of Islam.

However, we have tried to discuss Nazrul's ideas of poverty and begging from the perspective of Islam though there are other opinions expressed in some other studies examining Kazi Nazrul Islam from secular and communist points of view with which we have also compared our view of Nazrul as an Islamic thinker.

Universal brotherhood and humanity in the poetry of Nazrul

The USA and Europe, perhaps for controlling the trade and commerce of the world, talk about globalization, not universal brotherhood because universal brotherhood makes obligatory the sharing of both happiness and sufferings with the poor countries. And, what we see is that luxury

and happiness are all enjoyed by the rich whereas the sufferings, by being transferred to the poor, by the rich, are entirely experienced by the poor. One of the examples of such transfer of sufferings is seen in the issue of economic repression. It is to some extent like a rich man's termination of the job of two of his gardeners out of five to keep his luxury constant in times of economic repression. Thus, the rich man transfers the problem of weak economy to poor men, endangering their existence. In this scenario, Nazrul understood the worth of universal brotherhood and humanity hinting at equal share of the world's resources among all the nations of the world both in happiness and sufferings. In the poem 'Manush' (Human Being) Nazrul says: 'গাছি সাম্যের গান-/ মানুষের চেয়ে কিছু নাই, নহে কিছু মহীয়ান,' (pp. 184-186)

I sing of equality
There's nothing greater than a human being,
Nothing nobler! [Translation: Sajed Kamal] (1988, pp. 184-186)

Prophet Muhammad (SM) considered brotherhood and humanity among men as essential and always inspired them. As a result of the Prophet's teaching, the sacrificing spirit shown by his companions for the sake of brotherhood is unique in the history of the world. One of the Hadiths, narrated in the following way by Anas (R.), exhibits the genuine brotherhood that was established by the Prophet between Abdur-Rahman bin Auf and Sad bin Ar-Rabi-al-Ansari,

When Abdur-Rahman bin Auf came to Medina and the Prophet established the bond of brotherhood between him and Sad bin Ar-Rabi-al-Ansari, Saud suggested that 'Abdur-Rahman should accept half of his property and family. Abdur Rahman said, "May Allah bless you in your family and property; guide me to the market." So Abdur-Rahman (while doing business in the market) made some profit of some condensed dry yoghurt and butter. (Bukhari: Book 5: Volume 58: Hadith 274). [Translation: Imaan Star] (2006)

From the Hadith, it is understandable that Muhammad (SM) could establish such a bond among His companions that even they sacrificed half of their property and family (those who had two wives left one) for their Muhazir (who left Makkah for Madina for the sake of Islam) brothers.

Nazrul's emphasis on Zakaat

In the wealth of the rich, the poor have a right by which they can share a particular portion of the wealth of the rich. Islam has made it compulsory

for the affluent Muslims to give away a particular part of their wealth to the poor. Thus, in the Holy Qur'an, giving Zakaat is encouraged in the following manner:

Indeed, those who believe and do good deeds and establish the prayer and give the *zakah*, they will have their reward from their Lord, and they will have no fear nor will they grieve. (2: 277) (Shaikh & Khatri, 2007: 62)

The reflection of this teaching is found in the first part of Nazrul's view as expressed in Prabandha Shamagra (Huda & Nabi, 2009:141) which says, 'In the wealth of the rich and knowledge of the knowledgeable, all people have equal right'. Zakat may be called humanitarian economy because of the form given to it as one of its five pillars or the five most important and compulsory duties of a Muslim. The poet Nazrul understands the need of this system of humanitarian economy which, according to him, will not only stop the tendency of the rich to torture the poor, but also create an equilibrium among people in terms of socio-economic condition-the equilibrium that enables all to share joys and sorrows equally. Through movement by the poor, Nazrul is in favour of forcing the rich or affluent to give away their wealth in regular charity if they are reluctant to give Zakaat.

In his poem 'Eid-er Caand' (The Moon of Eid) from Shrestha Kabita ed. Biswajit Ghosh, he shows that the joyful event of Holy Eid is associated with Zakaat and Allah's instruction to the rich or the affluent to give Zakaat to the poor on that happy and holy occasion. In the poem representing the poor (Casha Majur- farmers-labourers, Bidiwala-smokers smoking a kind of slender cigarette made of tree-leaf as enclosing materials, for example) whom Nazrul really follows in smoking in his practical life, Nazrul consolidatingly writes:

সিঁড়ি-ওয়ালাদের দুয়ারে এসেছে আজ/চাষা মজুর ও বিড়ি-ওয়ালার/ মোদের হিসসা আদায় করিতে
ঈদে/ দিল হুকুম আল্লাহ্ তায়ালা। (2014, pp.523-525)

At the doors of the owners of staircase (buildings) have arrived today
Casha Majur and *bidimala*;
In order to obtain our portion at Eid
Command is given by Allahta'ala. (Our translation)

Until Zakaat is given, the affluent people's money or wealth cannot be valid and purified. It continues to remain impure. The Holy Qur'an rightly says in this regard:

O you who believe! When you privately consult the Messenger, then offer something in charity before your private consultation. That is better and purer for you. But if you do not find (the means for it), then indeed,

Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (58:12) (Shaikh & Khatri, 2007: 757)

This Qur'anic instruction is mentioned by Nazrul. Since, at present, there are many affluent rich Muslims in Bangladesh and elsewhere in the world, who are careless about giving Zakaat. Nazrul is relevant enough to mention the Qur'anic view on alleviating poverty and begging in 'Eid-er Caand':

যক্ষের মতো লক্ষ লক্ষ টাকা জমাইয়া যারা / খোদার সৃষ্ট কাঙালে জাকাত দেয়না, মরিবে তারা। / ইহা আমাদের ক্রোধ নহে, ইহা আল্লাহ অভিশাপ, / অর্থের নামে জমেছে তোমার ব্যাঙ্কে বিপুল পাপ! (2014, pp. 523-525)

Depositing lacs of money like cheapskate, those who
Do not give Zakaat to the Allah-decided have-nots, will die.
This is not our wrath; this is the curse of Allah,
In the name of money accumulated in your bank a vast amount of vice! (Our translation)

His idea of equality in connection with poverty

Some critics of Nazrul think that Nazrul's Samyabad (The Concept of Equilibrium) portrays his preoccupation with Socialism, Communism and Marxism, that is, to Nazrul the sufferings of the poor accrue from the class difference caused by the rich. Thus, Awal (2010: 83) opines 'Nazrul is influenced by this concept to some extent', that is, Marxism. Al Azad (1995) after reading the poem 'Samya' (Equilibrium) of the collection Samyabadi, (The Upholder of the Concept of Equilibrium), observes it as 'the clear utterance of the possibility of the revolution of the working class' hinting at Communism as the source of the revolution (p.25). Likewise, Chowdhury (2000) views, 'But it was left to Nazrul Islam to introduce the message of the international communist movement into the hitherto closed house of Bengali poetry. As a young man of twenty, he had read about the Revolution and the Red Army, and was very deeply stirred' (p.125).

Sporadic discussion of Nazrul's poems on poverty and equality may exhibit him as a believer in Marxism. So, he has to be studied fully. His poem like 'Eid-er Chaand' vindicates his deeply rooted reliance on Islamic economics with its system of Zakaat that can solve the problem of poverty and begging. If he was inspired by Marxism or any similar Western concept, he would not talk about Zakaat and other charitable activities enjoined on the Muslims by Islam. Actually, he never supports Communist or Marxist idea which tends to do injustice by levelling the economic status of the citizens of the state by snatching away the wealth (even the wealth which is honestly earned) of the rich in the false belief

that class discrimination can be removed in this manner and the state is the real owner of the wealth.

Therefore, it is more logical to translate Nazrul's poem 'Samyavadi' as equilibrium, not communist but as Islamic equality or Equilibrium. Equilibrium gives space to the free expression of human potentials. If a person is, or can be, rich in a fair way, the Islamic economy of equilibrium does not discourage it though it is clear from the lives of the Prophet and his companions that they did not lead a happy life of comfort and luxury like a rich American or European or even a Bangali in spite of their possession of the supreme power in the country or a lot of wealth like Hazrat Osman (R.)

Some scholars view that Communism or Marxism has similarity with Islamic economic system and thus Nazrul's ideas on economy are both Islamic and Marxist or Communist. But a group of Nazrul's poems directly related to Islamic beliefs, ideas and historical events namely, 'Eider Caand' and 'Omar Faruque' indicate that the poems of Nazrul are encouraged more by Islam than other doctrines. Moreover, his focus on some Islamic economic systems namely, Sadaqa and Zakaat in some other poems rightly conveys the ideas of equality, brotherhood and balanced economic systems. Our aim of discussion here is not to demean any doctrine like Communism or Marxism, but to highlight Islamic economic systems as focused in Nazrul's poetry. But some critical observations on these doctrines may usually come to discussion, as the scholars holding the ideas of Communism or Marxism in Nazrul's literature totally avoid his focus on the Islamic Economic systems some of which we have discussed in the present study. However, it is sensible and safe to say that Marxism, in comparison to capitalism, is closer to Islamic economic ideas.

Complete epistemology in his dealings with poverty

Being himself from poor background, Kazi Nazrul Islam has succeeded in delineating the authentic picture of poverty and begging. In 'Daridro' (Poverty), Nazrul declares that his poverty has never made him weak. It has rather made him strong to fight for justice. The poet writes: হে দারিদ্র, তুমি মোরে করেছ মহান। / তুমি মোরে দানিয়াছ খ্রীষ্টের সম্মান / কন্টক-মুকুট শোভা।-দিয়াছ, তাপস./অসঙ্কোচ প্রকাশের দুরন্ত সাহস; / উদ্ধত উলঙ্গ দৃষ্টি, বাণী ক্ষুরধার./ বীণা মোর শাপে তব হ'ল তরবার! (pp. 18-25)

O Poverty, thou hath made me great.
Thou hath made me honoured like Christ
With his crown of thorns. Thou hath given me
Courage to reveal all. To thee I owe
My insolent naked eyes and sharp tongue.
Thy curse has turned my violin to a sword.

[Translation: Kabir Chowdhury] (1988, pp. 18-25)

In 'Cashar Gaan' (The Song of Farmers), from Shrestha Kabita ed. Biswajit Ghosh, Nazrul, from Shrestha Kobita edited by Biswajit Ghosh, reminds the rich of the contribution of the farmers to their well-being. The poet writes: যে লাঙল-ফলা দিয়ে / শস্য ফলাই মরুর বুকে।/ আছে সে লাঙল আজও / রুখব তাতেই রাজার সিপাই। (2014, p. 398)

The cutting edge of plough with which
We produce crops on the bosom of the desert,
Still today we possess.
With it we will resist the soldiers of the king. (Our translation)

Despite its being the fact, the rich exploit and torture the poor or farmers. Therefore, the poet calls them blood-sucker. In 'Krishaner Gaan' (The Song of the Peasants) from Shrestha Kabita ed. Biswajit Ghosh, Nazrul writes: “আজ চারদিক হতে ধনী বণিক শোষণকারীর জাত / ও ভাই জোঁকের মতন শুসছে রক্ত, কাড়ছে থালার ভাত।” (2014, p. 205)

Today the rich, the greedy merchant and the profiteer have surrounded us, And are sucking our blood like leeches. They are robbing us of the food from our plates, [Translation: Kabir Chowdhury] (2012, pp. 264-265).

In the poem 'Jagoroni' (Raising of Consciousness) from Shrestha Kabita ed. Biswajit Ghosh, Nazrul pinpoints a beggar's earnest request for alms and food. He writes: ভিক্ষা দাও! ভিক্ষা দাও!/ ফিরে চাও ওগো পুরবাসী./ সন্তান দ্বারে উপবাসী./ দাও মানবতা ভিক্ষা দাও! (2014, pp. 126-130).

Give me alms! Give me alms! Look back O townsman (who are full-fed), At your door present is the child unfed, Give humanity as alms! (Our translation)

Whereas Allah does not withdraw from showering His blessings on men in the shape of food as well, His creation, human beings turn away from the beggars and do not give alms or food showing the lame excuse of the latter's not offering prayer to Allah. In 'Manush' (Human Being), from Shrestha Kabita ed. Biswajit Ghosh, such an example is presented. Nazrul writes: 'আশিটা বছর কেটে গেল, আমি ডাকিনি তোমায় কতু, / আমার ক্ষুদার অন্ন তা'বলে বন্ধ করনি প্রভু!' (2014, pp. 184-186)

I have lived for eighty years without saying a prayer, yet you've never deprived me of my food. [Translation: Sajed Kamal] (2012, pp. 184-186)

Here, Nazrul seems to draw on the teaching of the last Prophet Muhammad (SM). The following Hadith proves how the Prophet was humane to a poor man despite his being a sinner.

Narrated Abu Huraira

A man came to the Prophet and said, "I am ruined!" The Prophet said, "What is the matter with you?" He said, "I had sexual relation with my wife (while I was fasting) in Ramadan." The Prophet said, "Have you got enough to manumit a slave?" He said, "No." The Prophet said, "Can you fast for two successive months?" The man said, "No." The Prophet said, "Can you feed sixty poor persons?" The man said, "No." Then the Prophet said to him, "Sit down," and he sat down. Afterwards an 'Irqi, i.e., a big basket containing dates was brought to the Prophet and the Prophet said to him, "Take this and give it in charity." The man said, "To poorer people than we?" On that, the Prophet smiled till his premolar teeth became visible, and then told him, "Feed your family with it." (Bukhari: Book 8: Volume 79: Hadith 700) [Translation: Imaan Star] (2006)

Failure of the west to eradicate poverty as understood by Nazrul

Regarding the Euro-colonizers, Alam (2009) opines, 'Colonizers for their self-declared superiority inevitably inferiorize the colonized people' (p. 69). Thus, extreme poverty used to be forcefully established among an affluent or rich nation by an invading, subjugating and colonizing one to have unjust control over the latter's economic interest during the colonial period. It is shown by the poet Nazrul in his novel *Mrityu-Khuda* (Hunger for Death). Here Nazrul vividly portrays the excruciating socio-economic misery of the common people in colonial Bengal, which was artificially created by the British colonial power, when the colonizers' missionary activities were used as an opportunity to convert the Muslims of present Bangladesh to Christians with a view to strengthening the colonial occupation and ultimate economic benefits.

Nazrul's view is still relevant to this present world of the post-colonial period. Now, with the dehumanizing concept of capitalism, the West (the ex-colonizers) declares itself as the first world and identifies the poor countries as the third world, forcing the third world to remain poor. Notably, capitalism is the root cause of this misery because this concept 'in the modern commercial sense as a system' is 'somewhat usurious or interest-based and monopoly-oriented trade and business enterprise' (Khan 1990, 12).

Thus, the USA-led first world wants to control the trade and commerce of the world. In this effort, among other measures, they take control of the agriculture and farmers of the whole world relegating the farmers of the third world countries to extreme poverty. Realizing their attitude, South Korean farmer Kyung-Hae Lee lodged his strong protest against WTO's preparation to include agriculture within its purview in its

fifth meeting in Cancun of Mexico in 2003. Lee says, 'In the morning, I see going to a certain home that a farmer has died by taking poison by being unable to pay off the debt and his wife is lamenting. How will it feel if you see such situation?' (quoted in Mazhar, 2011: 56). Lee declares, 'The World Trade Organization (WTO) which was founded with concentration on multi-participatory trade treaty can at best function to preserve the interests of the rich countries, especially those of the USA' (Mazhar, 2011: 53, translated by us). At last, he commits suicide conveying his unflinching protest. To Mazhar, 'He has written down with his blood the protest of all the farmers of the world' (p. 56).

The West gives loans to countries like Bangladesh specifying almost all the time the construction of roads and highways as the area to spend them on. Firstly, they do it for their mammoth interest business. Secondly, it multiplies the import of motor vehicles from those countries, especially India. Thirdly, it enables more supermarkets to grow and more customers to buy products of those developed countries. Clearly, in manufacturing these products, the labour which is needed has only one economic aim that is never accompanied by moral purpose. So, this is not the labour of human beings as 'the labour of human beings produces double fruits—immediate and ultimate, implying the economic and moral fruits' (Khan 1990, p. 37). Ultimately the spine of Bangladesh's economy turns even weaker. Poverty becomes even more extreme. The loans are never sanctioned for establishing any mill or factory. Thus to be able to establish fully self-dependent mills and factories like Karnaphully Paper Mills or Adamji Jute Mills with the help of the developed countries is next to impossible. Increase in the number of roads and highways is necessary, but having them without any ability of producing goods truly contributory to country's economy is futile.

Still, yoked to the legacy of colonial inferiorization and resultant lack of self-confidence, there is no endeavour to go ahead utilizing indigenous resources. Actually, considering the West superior, there occurs catastrophic conversion into modernity, the post-colonial religion generated by the West. This modernity is the kaleidoscopic disguise of capitalism. Interestingly, when the West is modern, it is both consumer and seller but when the people of the third world are modern, they are only consumers.

Discerning this scenario while encountering his own socio-economic conditions, Nazrul's concepts are not Western.

Success of Islamic economic system as viewed by Nazrul

After the failure of the West, concentrating on pivotal Islamic economic system as the guiding force both on local and global platforms, humanity is sure to overcome the crisis of poverty. One example may be drawn here. Nadzri, Rahman and Omar (2012) opine:

Islam, being a religion of balance, views poverty as social and ideological problems. It is considered a social problem because its effects are felt in the society as a whole. It is an ideological problem as it affects the performance of one's socio-religious obligation towards the community and Islam, and may even lead to kufr. (p. 63).

Upholding the success of the Islamic economic system, Ahmed writes from the history of Islam. He mentions, during the regime of Umar bin Al-Khattab (as reported by Abu Ubaid in 1353 H from Amr bin Shuayb) the Yemen governor, Mu'adh bin Jabal sent one-third of the zakat collection in a particular year to Umar bin Al-Khattab (13-22 H). Umar rejected the fund by saying, 'I sent you to take from the rich and render it to the poor among them'. Mu'adh later claimed that he could not find anyone who deserved the zakat money. In the following year, Mu'adh sent half of the zakat collection and similar conversation took place between them. Later, in the third year, he sent all the zakat collection to Umar and said, 'This year I did not find a single person who needed from me anything of the zakat'. A similar scenario was found during the reign of Umar bin Abdul Aziz (99-101H) where an Egypt governor sent him a letter asking him on what to do with the proceeds of zakat funds as no deserving poor and needy persons were found in Egypt. According to Umar bin Abdul Aziz, the funds then shall be used to, 'Buy slaves and let them free, build rest areas on the highways and help young men and women to get married' (Ahmed, 2004, p. 31). Thus, it seems that practically, zakat is efficient in combating poverty if managed properly.

Nazrul emphasizes this Islamic economic system. If we look at his following verses of 'O mon ramjaner oi rojar sheshe' (Eid, at the end of fasting of Ramadan), we can see how encouraging his appeal is to the rich for giving Zakaat: তোর সোনা দানা বালাখানা / সব রাহে লিগ্লাহ / দে জাকাত মুর্দা মুসলিমের আজ / ভঙ্গাইতে নিদ। (২০১০)

Offer all your wealth and treasure
for the sake of your Benevolent Lord,
Pay zakat to awaken the dying Muslims,
from the slumber that they can't afford.
(Translation: Mohammad Omar Farooq) (2012, p. 97)

His importance to Islam's practical stand in eradicating poverty and begging

Allah has sent both the rich and the poor to keep balance in society. If He made every man equally rich, the social system would collapse because of the lack of mutual understanding. None would listen to anybody's command. In this regard Allah, in the Holy Qur'an (43:32), says:

Do they distribute the Mercy of your Lord? We distribute among them their livelihood in the life of this world, and We raise some of them above others in degrees so that some of them may take others for service. But the Mercy of your Lord is better than what they accumulate (Shaikh & Khatri, 2007: 688).

But Allah commands the rich to give a portion of their wealth to the poor. Again, He instructs the poor to earn their livelihood by working. Because earning without labour may not be valuable to them. Moreover, He does not like His best creation to stretch their hands for alms. So, instead of criticizing, we have to rehabilitate or give alternative professions to the poor and beggars for stopping their begging. One of the Hadiths (Dawud: Book 9: Hadith 1637) of the Prophet shows the best example of rehabilitation for the problem of begging. As narrated by Anas ibn Malik, it says, when an extremely poor man from the Ansar came to the Prophet (pbuh) and asked for alms, the Prophet (pbuh) told him to sell his belongings if available. The man sold his only possessions-one piece of cloth and a wooden bowl-for two dirhams. The Prophet (pbuh) then gave him one dirham and told him to buy food for his family and with the other dirham he himself bought an axe and fixed a handle to it, asking him to cut wood with it and sell the wood in the market. The man followed the instruction of the Prophet and became self-reliant.

This practical standpoint of Islam is supported by Nazrul. It becomes clear when we see him expressing his indomitable spirit of revolt for freedom from British colonialism to have a free atmosphere where all can freely work and earn livelihood as well, never thinking of begging.

Nazrul's view on expenditure on priority basis

In the context of a country of poor economy like Bangladesh, the government's measures in term of eradicating poverty are more important than erecting aesthetic construction like Hatir Jhil in Dhaka or statues at important causing poverty and begging, aesthetic sense does not points of metropolitan cities because each penny matters here. When severe wants prevail function. Consequently, the greater numbers of our population that is poor cannot have the eyes to discover architectural or aesthetic beauty. Nazrul, from Shrestha Kabita ed. Biswajit Ghosh, understands the

truth in his poem 'Daridryo' (Poverty). Nazrul shows the terrible misery that can be generated by poverty which creates a situation in which aesthetic faculty can only visualize nothingness. The poet writes: 'শীর্ণ করপুট ভরি' সুন্দরের দান / যতবার নিতে যাই-হে বুভুক্ষু তুমি / অথ্রে আসি' কর পান! শূন্য মরুভূমি / হেরি মম কল্পলোক। আমার নয়ন / আমারি সুন্দরে করে অগ্নি বরিষণ!' (1988, pp.18-25)

Whenever I stretch
My feeble hands
For bounties of beauty,
You devour, ye hungry devil,
Leaving to my imagination
Dreary, desert sand. (Translation: Syed Mujibul Huq) (1988, pp.18-25)

Nazrul hints at taking decision in the field of economy on priority basis. On 6th & 7th Feb 1926 at Krishna Nagar, in the 2nd session of Nikhil Banghia Praja Shammilan (All Bengal People's Conference), Nazrul supports four out of eighteen proposals, one of the four being the 16th which opposes 'The Preservation Act of Fish Fry', the government's decision of prohibition with regard to catching fishes during the Bangla months Baishakh, Jaishtha & Ashar allowing fries of fishes to grow big ; the decision which was to make the fishermen's means of livelihood disfunctional bringing about poverty and begging (Rahman 1993, p. 101).

His concern of Islamic philosophy of social conduct with the poor

The society in which there is of peaceful, harmonious and brotherly co-existence of the rich and the poor is a place of equity that Islamic philosophy of social conduct emphasizes. The picture of Islamic equality is drawn by Nazrul when he, in his poem 'Omar Faruque', poetically narrates the event in which the Khalifa of the Islamic State Hazrat Omar (R.) shared the riding of the camel by turns with his servant while on a journey to Jerusalem through the Sahara desert. Being astonished, the servant asked Hazrat Omar (R.) how the servant would be on the back of the animal while the master who was also the ruler of the country would condescendingly be on foot pulling the rope. Hazrat Omar replied that he was the ruler but he was also a human being. So he has no right to have service from another human being. Nazrul, in 'Omar Faruque', from Shrestha Kabita ed. Biswajit Ghosh, puts in the mouth of Hazrat Omar the following lines: 'আমি তোমাদের প্রতিনিধি শুধু, মোর অধিকার নাই।/আরাম সুখের, -মানুষ হইয়া নিতে মানুষের সেবা।/ইসলাম বলে, সকলে সমান, কে বড় ক্ষুদ্র কে-বা।' (2014, pp. 325-333)

I'm nothing but your representative, I have no right
Of comfort and pleasure, taking service of men being a man!
Islam makes no discrimination between the rich and the poor.
(Our translation)

Thus, Nazrul paints this essential scenario exemplified by a historical event of Islam shedding light on the relationship between the Khalif and his servant in order to stress the need of equity between the rich and the poor. In the poem 'Kuli-Majur', from Shrestha Kabita ed. Biswajit Ghosh, the poet shows an ego-centric sahib who pejoratively pushes a porter down off the train. The poet writes: 'দেখিনু সেদিন রেলো / কুলি ব'লে এক বাবু সা'ব তারে ঠেলে দিলে নীচে ফেলে!' (pp. 195-196).

That day I saw in rail,
A fop Sahib pushes a man down off the train, for his being a porter! (Our translation)

But, some critics mistakenly deem Nazrul secular. Chowdhury's appreciation provides the correct insight into the poet's being imbued with Islamic thought when he comments that Nazrul has 'created images and symbols out of the well-known heroes from Muslim history' (2000: 127).

His View in Parallel with Islamic View on the Payment of Wages to the Labourers.

From a Hadith of Ibn Majah (2443) it is known that the Prophet (SM) instructed: 'Give the workers his wages before his sweat dries' (our translation). He also asks not to pay labourers less than they deserve or not to keep them unpaid. The following Hadith (though we are not sure of the source) in this regard is worth mentioning:

Narrated Abu Huraira

The Prophet said, "Allah says, 'I will be against three persons on the Day of Resurrection:

1. One who makes a covenant in My Name, but he proves treacherous.
2. One who sells a free person (as a slave) and eats the price,
3. And one who employs a laborer and gets the full work done by him but does not pay him his wages. [Translation: Imaan Star] (2006)

Similarly, in the poem 'Kuli-Majur', Nazrul shows a sahib who exploits porters through his negligence in giving wages to them. If in any way he gives, it is much less than it actually is. The poet asks the sahib: 'বেতন দিয়াছ?—চুপ রও যত মিথ্যাবাদীর দল! / কত পাই দিয়ে কুলিদের তুই কত ক্রোর পেলি বল!' (pp. 195-196)

“Have you given the wages? . . .

By paying what amount of penny how much crore have you gathered, tell me!” (our translation)

Nazrul is not asking the employer to pay more than the labourers deserve. He knows that by paying more, the employer will face financial loss. Here Nazrul hints at a balance in the society which is quite Islamic. This Islamic view is also realized by Beekun (1996). He observes that in a business farm run in accordance with Islamic paradigm, the amount or rate of wages must be harmonious both for the employees and the employers.

Observations

Nazrul's literature, thus, relating to Islamic viewpoints, we think that the following steps can play vital roles to eradicate extreme poverty and street begging.

The establishment of universal humanity in man's heart can be an essential mental preparation to be translated into action that will ultimately be instrumental to eradicating poverty and street begging. The Hadith mentioned here is a good example of universal humanity:

Jabir b. Abdullah (Allah be pleased with them) reported: Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him) visited the orchard of Umm Ma'sud and said: Umm Ma'bad. Is he who has planted this tree a Muslim or a non-Muslim? She said: Of course, he is a Muslim, whereupon he (the Holy Prophet) said: Any Muslim who plants (trees) whose fruits human beings or beasts or birds eat has performed an act that would be taken as an act of charity on the Day of Resurrection. (Muslim: Book 10: Hadith 3767) [Translation: Imaan Star] (2006)

It is obvious that it is Islam which has made a portion from the wealth of the rich to be given away in charity compulsorily to the poor. Therefore, communal implementation of Zakaat can play a pivotal role to eradicate poverty and begging. Finding none to receive Zakaat during the regime of Umar bin Al-Khattab and Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz is a burning example in this context.

Sadaqatul Fitr is also a kind of compulsory payment of money deserved by the poor. The amount is fixed. It is less than Zakaat; yet on more people it is obligatory. This system can be introduced. The following Hadith is worthwhile to mention here:

Narrated Ibn Umar

Allah's Apostle has made Sadaqatul-Fitr obligatory, (and it was), either one Sa' of barley or one Sa' of dates (and its payment was obligatory) on young and old people, and on free men as well as on slaves. (Bukhari: Book 2: Volume 25: Hadith 588) [Translation: Imaan Star] (2006)

Encouraging such payment of money to the needy, Nazrul truly says in 'O mon ramjaner oi rojar sheshe' (Eid, at the end of fasting of Ramadan) from 'যারা জীবন ভরে রাখছে রোজা/নিত- উপবাসী / সেই গরীব এতিম মিসকিনে দে/যা কিছু মফিদ।'

Remember those in perennial fast, constantly in hunger and deprivation, Share with the poor, orphans and the destitutes, to make inclusive your celebration. [Translation: Mohammad Omar Farooq] (p. 97).

The sense of equality shown by Hazrat Omar (R) as available in Islamic history and included in Nazrul's 'Omar Faruque' may significantly be inculcated upon the minds of people. Islam's equality which Nazrul promulgates in his works is not similar to that of Communism or Marxism which controls even the rational and legitimate freedom of individual income. The appropriate term used in Islam for this type of equality is 'Ihsan' (equilibrium).

At the primary, secondary and higher secondary levels, Nazrul's literature may be introduced in academic curriculums and thus, rereading of him may be arranged from the perspective of poverty eradication in Bangladesh. Thus, our young generation will assume humanity-centred cultural edge, besides the intellectual one, to sincerely and competently concentrate on removing poverty from Bangladesh. Significantly, being acculturated with Nazrul means adopting Islamic teachings as well that has already been discussed. At higher level, a university can play pioneering role by facilitating education and research on Nazrul for counteracting the national crisis of poverty. This may be done through promotion of Islamic culture that Nazrul has dealt with in his works as culture is all-pervading in human life.

Conclusion

Kazi Nazrul Islam truly understands that it is religious instructions which can encourage the rich to take the responsibility of the poor. So, in much of his poetry and other literary works he talks about the poor and their rights which are enforced by Islam on its followers. So it will not be just to assess him from secular point of view without considering the immense influence of Islam that has exerted on him. The following statement of Nazrul from his *Nazruler Prabandha Samagra* shows his Islamicity and his

giving priority to Islam over Socialism or Marxism.: “Turn your face to Allah, look at Rasul (the Messenger), Mother Fatema, listen to the lamentation of Hazrat Ali, Kashem, Sakina... and decide what is your duty, O Muslim” (p. 106). His works treat implicitly Islam and its history as a solution to poverty and begging the images of which have frequently appeared in them.

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