

# Romanticism And Kazi Nazrul Islam: An Evaluation

Dr. Md. Zillur Rahman  
Patuakhali Science And Technology University

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## Abstracts

*This study seeks to analyze the significant trends of English Romanticism and its reflection on the life and works of Bengali poet Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976). Though Nazrul Islam knew very much the socio-historical condition and the most important poets of the then Romantic period of English literature, especially the late Romantic poets like Shelley, Keats, and Byron, it does not become virtually possible to emulate utterly following the directions of the ideology over the manifold unaccommodating romantic dictions and feelings what is captivated by Nazrul. This paper intends to present the socio-historical scenario and the poetry of Nazrul, the major romantic poet of the generation in Bengali literary history, beholding in his poetry for squeezes of romanticism equally embellished by the English Romanticism. Studying Nazrul Islam's age, life and works, this study pursues to discover to what extent Nazrul's life and works were reflected by European Romantic sensibilities and in what ways his literary contributions went through the romantic philosophies in his unique fashion and context.*

**Keywords:** Romanticism, Romantic themes, Kazi Nazrul Islam, the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Bengal.

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## I. Introduction

Romanticism or Romantic Movement is a term that typically allures anybody's attention to a specific place and time, especially in literary and historical context as of England in the first 19<sup>th</sup> century. The capacious meaning would margin the platform to Europe mainly from the late 18<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. What is precisely meant by the term "Romanticism" in Bengali literature after hundred years of its onset in Europe? Is there a neighboring literary relation, influence or attraction amid Romanticism and Bengali literature, especially the famous Bengali Romantic poet—Kazi Nazrul Islam, in terms of period, region, history, and philosophy? Wordsworth's notion of poetry, as parroted here, would undoubtedly answer:

"In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs; in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed; the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it spreads over the whole earth and over all time". Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802)

Therefore, this study primarily explores the socio-historical background and the common ideals or themes of Romanticism and its influence or impact on Bengali poets, especially on the most prominent Bengali Romantic Poet—Kazi Nazrul Islam. The ultimate goal of this paper is to analyze the socio-political, historical, and religious conditions where Nazrul Islam was actively involved in composing his poetry, letters, songs, and leaving speeches. It also strives to trace his works' romantic themes as the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century English Romanticism materialized.

## Socio-Historical Background

It was a literary movement, Romanticism, originated from Europe, the United States, and Latin America and continued from the last part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Throughout the history of English literature, the 19<sup>th</sup> century is often branded as the Romantic or Romantic era. This Romantic era is an essential age in Europe's literary, philosophical, and political history. Romanticism, or the idealistic era, had come through a movement in the history of culture, aesthetic style, and aptitude. Essentially, it was a revolt against the existing systems and authority and search for freedom in all spheres of life. The all-important spirit of Romanticism was an upheaval counter to the conventional order of things-against setting rubrics, decrees, beliefs, and formularies that pigeonholed Classicism in all-purpose and the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Neoclassicism in specific. The seeds of this concept of Romanticism are planted by the social and political failure of the then society. The result of movement like the French Revolution and Napoleon's conclusive defeat disheartened the people and the writers which led them to revolt. The writers of this time began to culture some new concepts and ideals into their writings coming out from their harbingers. They emphasized thoughts

over motive, passions over judgment and perception over science-making means for an immense form of literature of prodigious responsiveness and appetite. It reacted against the neo-classical and rationalistic ideals of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and a movement towards awareness of emotional experience and personal feelings and independence. Romanticism, as a rediscovery of the magical power of imagination, achieved a principal character in the advance of lyrical prearrangement instead of faith in reason that had shaped the preceding age. The Romantic poets considered poetry as the center of all knowledge, and the theme of poetry was to discover the inner reality of things. The typical Romantic poet became a dreamer and an individualist, an idealistic prognosticator, and a guide who mediated between nature and man, identified the problems of humanity, chalked out the source of social evils, and avowed the essences of beauty, genuineness, right, and holiness. But they never went away from reality: indeed, they valued the natural flora and fauna and the works. They were affluent in recounting of natural rudiments and settings.

Similarly, the shifting content of Romantic concepts led to the cataloging of Romantics into two reproductions. The early ones, often called “the lake poets” or “the first generation” included: William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Robert Southey; another one titled “the second generation,” involved: Lord Byron, P.B. Shelley, and John Keats. The first generations were, for the first time who, realized the extenuatory controls of natural creation and became justly the forerunners of what moved, “back to nature.” Exclusive from the predecessors, the late Romantics were more strenuous on the familiarity between life and art or the true ethical discerning assembled on truth and beauty. The first-generation Romantic poets wanted to theorize about poetry. They were interested in politics and social problems; they braced the revolution that took place in French with its morals of self-determination and equivalence. But after the Napoleonic wars and the appalling social conditions in England produced by the Industrial Revolution, both Wordsworth and Coleridge experienced profound disillusionment, and adopted conformist’s sights in their last period of breaths. In the period of late Romantic poets, Romanticism peaked during the French Revolution and turned into the era of individuality, rebellion against domination, imagination, captivation with nature and the natural world, and attention to the paranormal and legendary facets. The French Revolution is extensively embraced as one of the most compelling proceedings of the then Europe given its long-run values in social, cultural, political, and literary stadiums. The Romantic poets were impacted profoundly by these socio-political scenarios. The Romantic protagonists, fashioned in this uproar, disparate traditional literary stars were recluses who vetoed established social and moral principles during their period. They also experienced political disillusionment. Furthermore, all the second-generation romantic poets deceased at very young ages. The writings of second-generation Romantic poets evident these features of the Romantic period, which is reflected, even in their poetry.

On the other hand, at the time of Nazrul's appearance on the literary scene, Bengal was run by the colonial rule of the British Raj. The British administration had produced economic, social, religious, and cultural evils. Economically this area needed to be in better condition. It did not have any famous or productive industry, while at the same time, the cottage industries had been destroyed. The agricultural sector was very sick. The aims of the then-rulers were straightforward and plain. As in other countries, they looked for to cuddle as many returns as the country could recompense, trade as many of their goods as likely, and purchase raw supplies for their productions as low-priced as possible. They had abetted to appoint the local bourgeoisie generally covering their mediators and teams. The followers of this group relished particular economic and social privileges and measured themselves to be refined elite, which, indeed, they positioned. But then again, the many mainstreams of the population, who were planters of the soil, breathed in semi embryonic shadow.

Creating this economic backwardness and deterioration by domination to a non-native rule abetted the longstanding powers of dusk-of unawareness, fallacy, and communal protectiveness that directed a societal catastrophe. People are apprehensive of each other in a densely inhabited India, where Bengal was even more packed with its population compared to other provinces. Moreover, the rulers took this opportunity to play the fierce and proper game of continually dividing the people; instead of fighting the rulers, they might fight each other under their theory, “Divide and Rule”. This Divide and Rule policy is a approach that was applied by the British throughout colonial rule in India. This policy was recycled to retain the Indians divided so that they can control easily. The British approached this policy to make divisions among the different religious groups, ethnicities, and castes. The population was indeed divided; communalism, superstition, and trust became an important fact of life. This is the socio-political background where Nazrul continued his literary works in an atmosphere heavily charged with political conflicts, social upheaval, and the ominous signs of revolution and anarchy in society.

Kazi Nazrul Islam was born during the then British Raj of India. He was from a Muslim family and emerged at a period of such concentrated intensity and fight in the society. Undeniably, his early life was curbed by World War I, when he connected to the Army in 1917 at only 18. Walking with his Army life in Karachi, Pakistan, he composed prose and poetry. His fascination with writing did not stay with him even in the Army barracks; it would not until 1920<sup>s</sup>– when he left Army and began living at Calcutta in India. Staying here in

Calcutta, Nazrul moved to compose poetry, dramas, proses, songs and genres of Bengali literature that brought him to a very popular writing stage of the then society. His most fabulous piece of writing– the poem, *The Rebel (Bidrohi)* was composed and published in 1922. This particular poem reinvigorated the whole Indian liberation movement and ultimately became the anthem for the independent movement of India even in 1947. Living at the junctions of arts, values, and politics, Nazrul was bold and defiant in every reason of the expression. As a many-sided, synthesizing sketcher, his work competently covered transversely many fields. His multi-dimensional writing power made him also a compact Romantic throughout his life. Nazrul's form of Romanticism mirrors indirect transformations from the English lookalike, with an unpleasant boldness in the direction of the writer's character and an exclusive outset of the control of nature. Until now, most of Nazrul's poetry, songs, speeches, and letters are usually classified as Romantic.

Historically, Nazrul was born and grew up in the age of romantic nationalism. The whole of Bengal was in turmoil because of ruler's suppression over the commoners and the commoners' movement to rescue their fundamental rights. Turning to this history, which persuasively travels in Nazrul's writings, becomes a thoroughgoing Romantic historicism at the turn of the era, becomes a new trademark of the firsthand responsiveness transported by the phase. Both the age and its history produced Nazrul. Nazrul became Nazrul by what was timing around in the arenas of political, intellectual, social, and religious, and the thanks passed on to his literary genius who was bequeathing to the creation of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Bengal. His early life's contentious poor condition, disobedient character, muslim family framework; his dedication to liberty in all respects, and persisting Bohemianism in social, political, religious, and aesthetic stuffs basically subsidized him becoming somewhat a resounding Romanticist.

### Significance of the Study

The significance of the present study stalks from the detail that it elucidates Romanticism and that of a Bengali poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. The extant work efforts to demonstrate the essential resemblances and cohesions of Romantic themes and practice as embodied in Nazrul's works. Notably, the investigation grasps to underline Nazrul, the man and his characteristic and independent shelters, which shimmer through Romantic ideals.

### Empirical Studies

Measuring the preceding revisions, theory, and articles, the examiner has yet to discover any work directly almost the procedural and thematic equivalents and communications concerning Romanticism and Nazrul Islam. All pertinent publications and ideas handle Romanticism and Kazi Nazrul Islam separately. Thus, there is a need for a study; this paper intends to do so.

## II. Methodology

In this paper, the investigator simplifies the procedures he has followed in conducting this work. Here the researcher clarifies the descriptive method used in investigating the poetries and contemporary literary history. The descriptive method used in this study rests on amassing information from the poetry of Kazi Nazrul Islam and the common themes of romanticism with particular concentration. The researcher designates the poetry with the Romantic ideals that have been characterized in his poetry. This technique hinges totally on unfolding the imageries, symbols, mythologies, love, nature, imagination, and visual beauty, which illuminate the connotation of the writing. It similarly pronounces the key features of Nazrul's poetry as he has an essential part in assigning the import. Furthermore, this approach is used to sightseeing the standard matches between Romanticism and Nazrul's works. The method is also important in the analysis of socio-political conditions and writings selected for the study.

### Procedures

The researcher has followed specific procedures to study the common English Romantic themes with the Bengali poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. The techniques are indispensable examining a literary script which ascertains the author's approach to cultivating subjects and procedures. The primary method is choosing and picking some poetic works, speeches, and letters of Nazrul from his selected works. The later rests in an all-embracing reading of works and sources from his writings and Romanticism. By experiencing the relevant sources, the investigator smudges them into the literary papers that facilitate the investigator to catalog the conjoint matches. The study will serve from understanding the critics' views and findings about Romanticism and Nazrul and his scripts, particularly those who dialog about the mutual themes and methodological feature.

Additionally, he will transpire with certain deductions about his poetry from his study understood from the standpoints he asserts. Finally, the researcher covers the tilt of the references connected to records, publications and essays, books, and dissertations that he hired applying in the study.

### III. Discussion

Romanticism focuses on critical areas like individualism, nature, freedom, imagination, emotion, love, and beauty. The slope of specific points of Romanticism embraces selfhood and the significance of identity; impulsiveness; autonomy from rulebooks; lonely life rather than social life; the views that imagination is more significant than reason and spirituality than beauty; love of and worship of nature; and fascination with the ancient, particularly the mythologies and holiness of the middle eons. In the works and life of Romantic poets, Western and Bengali (Kazi Nazrul Islam), East and West, there remains an emotional expression and commonality of cultivating imagination, passionate rebellion, revolution, youth, nature, love, beauty, intense agony, symbols, and myths.

In the Romantic concept, the individual issue has been more emphasized than the society. The Romantics are fascinated by the individual consciousness - especially the individual imagination. Individuality stands in the Romantic view as one driving mechanism that personalizes Romanticism from neo-classicism. The celebration of "the individual" in Romantic poems and other literary arrangements denotes to a perfect that the solitary being, individual, life is intrinsically significant and influential. Furthermore, the individual in Romanticism deserves the solid point for flourishing and standing gallant within oneself. Nature occupies a large area of Romanticism, vital in helping the individual understand. The impression of what the individual can absorb from nature, ignoring endorsed edification, salutes the power and capacity of the individual.

Nazrul's poems like 'Bidrohi (The Rebel)' and others depict a tremendous Romantic festivity of the distinct. Nazrul's poetry proclaimed his very patronizing intelligence of individualism. The awareness of individuality and individual thoughts is given more emphasis in his poetry. He never venerated any mastery or control, however prodigious it might be, not even to the Creator, as he once avowed in a rage of thirst. Autonomy or liberty was an extensive notion to Nazrul aside from dogmatic liberty and liberty from rubrics and settlements, promises and handcuffs, proscriptions, and prohibition. Nazrul exposed his sense of freedom to explore every human self or individual confidence. Nazrul strongly believed that before rising in revolt, it would be necessary to know thyself where he boldly uttered- "I bend my head to none except myself." This declaration was not ego-centric but self-reverence and self-confidence. The 'I' here is not self-centered, haughty, or arrogant; contrariwise, Nazrul has branded himself with the anguishes of everyday individuals, continuously voicing representing the peasant and people in need. Nazrul is found in every single line he transcribed; obviously, it is a pleasing way and encouragement to discover individual confidence.

The treatment of nature in Romanticism is virtually constantly logical or didactic. The emphasis on nature and natural life does not indicate merely the attention of Romantic embitterment with the new manufacturing survival of the late 18th century. Nature was presented as the reflection in which the Idealists could perceive the undying supremacies which had created both man and the human world – it was no longer just the painting on which the traditional hallucination of order was printed. Frame of mind in the direction of nature, the romantic poets glanced at nature mainly as a kingdom of awe-inspiring loveliness and appealing pleasure.

Similarly, Nazrul Islam cultivates nature in many of his poems. When Nazrul inscribes nature, he capitalizes nature with a character; natural entities in his poetry are animated, not mealy onlookers, nonetheless partakers in human businesses. The natural object has been hired in some of his poems as a symbol, but in most of his nature poems, he made a live speech of association with and love for nature. Nature is seen, construed, and valued in human standings. In Bengali literature, nature has never been a simple canvas, but in Nazrul Islam's poems, nature appeared as a significant accumulation of our ironic tradition and heritage.

The most common reviews on Romanticism established the conspicuous hallmarks by trying to analyse and convey to our close reflection the initial and the best influential of them— the flourishing of imagination. Romantic poets carrying the spirit of imagination travelled the mysterious maze of the world. Considering the primary imaginative faculty, "imagination was invested with an extraordinary range and depth of power" (Lillian 144). Romanticism adjudicated imagination as an inherent, combative influence, the cautious equivalent of the inventive and robust controls of nature or God. The Romantic authors calculated imagination to be an inclination or cause that control the human cognizance to reveal the shielded effects, which not at all comprehended through the lucid astute what was uttered that the developments of the imagination were "forms more real than living man" (Shelley). They assumed determinedly that imagination was the rudimentary aptitude of a poet, and it endowed the poet to revise the full descriptions to contribute togetherness to assortments and clutch entire businesses in the renewed stare.

Imagination in Nazrul's perception is both auditory and visual, and affable composition of his verse aptitudes the readers flora and fauna not every time of plausibility but undoubtedly of amorousness and melodious. After going through Nazrul's early poems titled, *Kheya parer Tarani (The Ferry Boat)*, Mohitlal Mojumdar marked:

"Nazrul Verse is an irresponsible manifestation of the spontaneous flow of surging ideas. Although only one meter has been used in his prose in his pause, he has been able to create a rhythm appropriate to the

flow of his ideas ----- Wonder, fear, respect, courage, unwavering faith, and above all a very sombre imagination of supernatural show themselves through his juxtaposition of words and meter." (Ali Ahsan, 202)

According to M.H. Abrams, "The Romantic period was eminently an age obsessed with the fact of violent change." The Romantic authors did not appear as traditionalists. They didn't trail the social or state subroutines, guidelines, or traditional writing approaches. The Romantic writers' incursion on the literary sky appeared to shatter the outmoded societies that walked against individuals and society. The Romantic authors didn't come to be the pupils at the high school level who attire costumes, attend to provocative music, and don't go with anyone else. They didn't walk with the nonchalant troop; contrariwise, they deride at the whole thing that everybody otherwise presumes cool or trendy because they used to go through their particular, exceptionally erudite, typical freshness. One of the Romantics' stands of freshness was to halt against the grain. The Romantic authors didn't maintain and wished to be controlled by social, political, or literary levies. The Romantics were relieved, immediately different, in being spot-on to their uniqueness.

The poetic surge in Nazrul knew no bounds. The rebel with his truth sword cannot be confined to the nation, society, race, humiliation, or ridicule, injustice knows no border, and its conquest must be co-existed with its reach. His great poem "*Bidrohi (The Rebel)*" seems to have all aspirations of the human psyche with contradicting and conflicting trends of realism and Romanticism. Nazrul Islam encounters an imposing evidence of incessant struggling life against the repression and unkindness, the spinelessness, callousness, and self-centeredness he had discerned and come across. The discontent, he sensed, went right into the making of his poetic nature. Otherwise, Nazrul's flair is like Byron's dazzling but unpredictable: the equal raw fierceness, that constant, virtually spontaneous flow; that happy-go-lucky and even inconsiderate masterhood; and essentially, the shallowness of thought-substance. It is true of Nazrul, What Goethe said of Byron: "The moment he thinks, he is a child" (Storey). What creates things substandard for Nazrul is that he does not walk with Byron's palliative nature of irony. In his distinguished poem, *Bidrohi*, he announced, "I am the eternal child, the eternal adolescent (youth)" (Line-91). In his revolt poems, Nazrul displays, unlike Shelly, a faithful love for nature's peripatetic and shifting phases. Nazrul Islam patented symbols for his state of observance in them.

The Romantic conception of art addressed symbolism with great importance. In the Romantic atmosphere, symbols appeared as the human artistic correlatives of nature's figurative language. Symbols are highly considered as they could concurrently advocate many things and were therefore supposed loftier to the one-to-one allegorical transportations. Somewhat, it may have been the longing to express the inexpressible—the infinite—through the offered means of language directed to symbol at one stage and myth (as symbolic narrative) at another.

Nazrul was rather direct in using symbolic allusions to myth. He declared himself the *Bhrigu* and put his footprint on the breast of *Bhagaban* (God), *Narayan*, to make him aware of the chaotic conditions of the world for the betterment of humanity. The poet hired a Hindu mythological God in his poems as a symbol of destructive and constructive power to guide the Indians. Nazrul has also composed a poem about the unrivaled attractiveness of the sea; and the lyrics of sea, where the sea is caught as a symbol of youth and strength.

Romanticism recommends the author's receptivity towards the natural ground as it adores individual taste and exceptional standards such as love and beauty. It has been identified in denominations of exceptional standing connected to the imagination. It is undoubtedly the satisfying cravings that sketched the poets' emotions. It is even a scream for autonomy from the sustenance socio-political controls that pickpocket the beauty and block the sweeping idea of each individual. Poaching is frequently perceived as the sacrament of beauty to divulge and savor beauty in the spiritual rationalities of the soul, embodying a life force of revolt and a longing for the establishment of new holiness.

Nazrul Islam always worships beauty, and he hungers for life to be beautiful. But when he went through after experiencing life pickpocketed of beauty, he was sickened, and it was against the powers that were answerable for the destruction of beauty. Nazrul's fascination with beauty is clearly expressed in a speech titled "Protivashon (Acknowledgement of Speech)" where he uttered, "I don't hesitate to admit that I've not exceeded the attraction of power, the beauty and grace, the beauty. Like the thoughtful child of beauty my motto is also "Beauty is truth, truth is beauty." (Das, 28)

Nazrul's treatment differs from the treatment of Keats. To Nazrul, beauty is one of the essential attributes of life, which is constituted by and seeks beauty, although both beauty and ugliness struggle to represent life. He may be said to be one of those who life calls to represent — beauty expressed through a shape of innovative control to destroy the horrid, but also in the form of love, truth, justice, equality, freedom, peace, and individuality.

The Romantics examined personal experiences, and they tried to struggle to connect their power in evocative techniques. To practice this, the Romantic writers hired simple and direct language. In this way, the

Romantics cast off the neoclassical drive expected to follow the early authors in supercilious panaches and language.

Nazrul also, with intent, scanned diverse traditions, values, and cultures and employed them purposefully. He speaks muscularly to the necessity to produce a new social order on more egalitarian lines. Aphorisms, bucolic idioms, shots of phrases in everyday practice, and words hired from imported languages discover a place in his works. He never cares for choosing a nonexistent purity of speech and receives whatever he likes to suit him in producing new imagery and modifying the variety of his focuses.

Romanticism measured every poet exceedingly as an individual one. Standing far away from their more socially included neoclassical companions, the Romantic bards were typically rebuffed and misjudged by society and assumed to be solitary figures. Individually, they carried strong looks encouraging them to practice their works based on their own observation and individual response to life. The sense of incompleteness and contemplation often stems from the great idealism and its accompanying exuberance that fills and defines the Romantic—idealism, which the world of the fact finds difficult, if not possible, to fulfill, at least in the life of any given Romantic. The most romantic poets felt this very romantic theme, especially the English late romantics and Bengali poet Nazrul, which made them contemplative, quiet, and melancholic. He speaks of the pain of poverty, starvation, insult, illness, and death. Regarding this theme, compassion for human suffering is articulated by Nazrul in many of his poems. After visiting his creation of 'power truth,' as he sounds it, to that of 'Beauty-truth' is to arrive at an unlike world and encounter a diverse feature of the poet at this point, in the province of beauty, like all other romantic poets, Nazrul a poet, who is inaudible, gloomy and introspective.

Moreover, Nazrul's romanticism notion is significant in Bengali literature and deserves inclusive contemporary applicability. The romantic ideas of Nazrul are preordained to regenerate order in society, build harmony by returning human beings to nature, and produce a new domain of Bengali literature. The typical romantic themes bred in Europe and cultivated into the then-romantic writings also traveled the Bengali literature through the writing hands of Nazrul even after a hundred years of its plantation with the full test, temperament, and sensibility.

#### IV. Conclusion

Nazrul is a poet; he is Romantic, whether one practices the term 'Romanticism' to denote upheaval, the skirmish for harmony, and the importance of passion, minds, and beauty, or the references to or an emphasis on spirituality, incompleteness, or a convinced love for nature. The poetry of Nazrul is burdened with the call for revolt against the "brute fact," the single vision of not only social, political, religious, economic, gender, and other elites like the British Raj that one person or one group of a community has the right to exercise. One only has to review his poem, "The Comet" (Dumketu), to receive a sense of romantic temperament. He wrote:

I come in every age, I have come  
Again for universal insurrection  
I am the eternal enemy of the creator  
I am eternal Dumketu, the terrible. (Nazrul, 1-2, Translated)

Considering these lines combined with the earlier stanzas of "The Rebel," an attribute always accompanies the romantic temperament. This attribute can also be called Romantic heroism.

However, Romanticism after the 1920s in Bengal, as represented by Kazi Nazrul Islam, is an unparalleled literary drive. Moreover, while considered outstanding, Bengali Romanticism absolutely outbursts within the extensive constraints of Romanticism as demarcated. The highlighting of nature and the pantheistic potency, the incredible supremacy of the mind, and poetry as an influential potency are all instituted in Bengali Romanticism. The Bengali Romantic poets, slightly more than simply replicating English Romanticism, familiarized it and enhanced their distinctive historical and traditional viewpoints. They appear as the new Romantics, providing one of the West's prodigious literary movement consequences to 20th-century Bengal. However, eventually, Nazrul's Romanticism is his personal, developed of his abysmal pledge to the quest for beauty and passionate veracity alongside the daunting impediments to the early 20th century Bengal.

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