

**India-Bangladesh Joint Celebration,
113th birth anniversary of Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam and
90th year of his poem `Rebel'**

Address by

Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

The Chair, my revered teacher Prof Rafiqul Islam

Hon'ble Indian Minister for Law, Justice and Minority Affairs Salman Khurshid,

Dear colleagues,

Guests from home and abroad,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamu Alaikum. Very Good Morning to you all.

I welcome you all at the inaugural ceremony of the celebration of 113th Anniversary of our National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam and the 90th anniversary of his poem `Bidrohi' or `Rebel'. On the occasion, I pay my deep homage to the national poet.

The `Rebel' is an immortal creation of poet Nazrul. He wrote the poem in December, 1921 and it was published in the `Bijli' in January, 1922. The `Rebel' is one of the best poetry works of the world.

"Say, Valiant, Say:

High is my head!

Look at my head, Is cast down the great Himalayan peak!..

The verses written 90 years ago still arouse each and every Bangalee, and Bangla-speaking people. They encourage and provide us strength to be defiant against all sorts of injustice, deprivation and exploitation.

The call of the `Rebel' in fact is the call of self resurrection and self-freedom. Poet Nazrul wanted freedom of selfness through this call.

Poet Nazrul was born at the juncture of the 19th and the 20th century when the entire sub-continent, including Bangladesh, was under colonial rule. An unbearable poverty and motherland's subjugation made the poet desperate to get freedom. He had devoted his life to wage a struggle against injustice, oppression and exploitation.

*"Weary of struggles, I, the great rebel,
Shall rest in quiet only when I find
The sky and the air free of the piteous groans
of the oppressed.
Only when the battlefields are cleared of
jingling bloody sabers
Shall I, weary of struggles, rest in quiet,
I, the great rebel.*

As a poet, it was not easy for Nazrul to ignore the shame and disgrace of subjugation. The agony of the suppressed and oppressed humanity was reflected in all his literary works. Nazrul brought not only a rebellion but also a revolution in the Bengali poetry.

Many works of Nazrul were banned. Not only that he was thrown to jail on charge of sedition. The rebel poet embarked on a hunger strike in the jail in protest against inhuman torture meted out on him. Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore had to send telegram requesting ailing Nazrul to break his hunger strike. The imprisonment did not stop him from writing. Rather his attack against unjust and injustice became more vigorous.

The life and works of the Greatest Bangalee of all time, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were highly influenced by Nazrul. Both are rebellious-one through literary works, another through politics. Both of them fought for

realizing people's rights. Both of them are highly vocal against communalism and religious fundamentalism.

We see that Bangabandhu had been struggling to realise peoples' rights ignoring the red eyes of the rulers. He was embracing imprisonment time and again. He could have been spent a luxurious life joining hands with the rulers. But Bangabandhu did not walk in that path rather did welcome jail repeatedly. Even he did not bow down at the threat of hanging. Here lies a unique similarity between rebel poet Nazrul and 'poet of politics' Bangabandhu.

The Bangalee nation, inspired by the 'mantra of the rebel poet', snatched away the long-cherished sovereign and independent Bangladesh under the leadership of Bangabandhu in 1971.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Nazrul is the poet of equality, the poet of non-communalism. People of all classes and strata, irrespective of religion, caste, creed and rich and poor, were equal to him. He himself witnessed the consequences of intemperance of religion. He made salvos of attack against communalism and religious fundamentalism. Human being was the supreme to him.

As he was against the excesses of religion, similarly he was against unequal treatment to women. Women's contribution to the society and the family is no less than that of their male counterparts. This has been reflected in his writings.

"I didn't see any difference

Between a man and a woman

Whatever great or benevolent achievements

There are in this world

Half of that was by woman,

Half other by man."

Rebellion was the main tune of his writings. But it was not the lone characteristics of the poet. He was the poet of beauty and emotion. The love and nature have especially been reflected in his songs. Nazrul is our close kin in our time of joys and sorrows.

Although Nazrul was born at village Churulia of Bardawan district in West Bengal, he had spent a substantial period of his life in Bangladesh. He first came to Trishal of Mymensingh along with police officer Rafiz Uddin. Nazrul was enrolled at Darirampur High School. He had the opportunity to roam around rural Bangladesh and watch peasant society closely while staying at Trishal. The experience of Trishal greatly influenced his literary works.

Later, poet Nazrul frequently visited Bangladesh during adulthood. He got married to Promila, a girl from Comilla. He wrote a lot of famous poems and songs while staying in Comilla.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bangabandhu made the song "*Onward march, Onward march, Onward march*" as the national marching song of the country in the first meeting of the cabinet on 13 January 1972. After a few days, during his visit to Kolkata, Bangabandhu discussed with the sons and other family members of the poet to bring him in Dhaka.

On his return, Bangabandhu communicated with the then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to bring the poet in Dhaka marking his birth day. Mrs. Gandhi gave permission. Accordingly, Bangabandhu sent a delegation to Kolkata and brought the poet along with his family members to Dhaka on 24 May 1972. He allotted the house number 330 at Dhanmondi on road number 28 for the poet.

Bangabandhu along with my mother Begum Fazilatunnessa went to the *Kabi Bhaban* as soon as he arrived there and garlanded the poet. Bangabandhu often visited the house and enquired about his health and well-being.

The poet was conferred on D. Lit degree by the Dhaka University on 9 December 1974. During our previous tenure, we took a two-year programme to celebrate the birth centenary of the national poet in 1999-2000.

We built a monument at the site of the grave of the poet. Buildings having facilities of library, auditorium and guest house were built at Trishal and Darirampur in Mymensingh.

We also took initiatives to collect notations of Nazrul songs. Some 50 music teachers were trained with original music and lyrics of Kazi Nazrul Islam.

This time a memorial centre is being built at Dharmasagar in Comilla in commemoration of Nazrul. Such centres will also be built at Chittagong, Sylhet, Rajshahi and Teota of Manikganj.

Nazrul Institute has already published some works of the poet in English, French, Latin, Chinese, German and Hindi languages. Programme has been undertaken to translate some of his works in Arabic. I would like to urge to translate his works in all popular languages of the world. The government would provide all support.

Dear guests,

There is no area in Bangalees life where Nazrul's presence is absent. Not on the language and culture, Nazrul's thought inspires us in every sphere of our life.

Ideologically and philosophically Nazrul and Bangabandhu were at the same horizon. Nazrul desired to build an exploitation free society. Bangabandhu dreamt to build *Sonar Bangla* free from exploitation and poverty.

We want to fulfill the desires of these two great Bangalees. We want to build a Bangladesh as dreamt by national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam and Father of the Nation Banabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman breaking the vicious cycle of poverty. We want to build a Bangladesh where every citizen will enjoy equal and basic rights. There will be no difference between the citizens. Women would enjoy their just rights. I urge all to work towards building such a Bangladesh.

I once again convey my best wishes to you all and declare the programme open.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu

May Bangladesh Live Forever.