

## Three Faces of Eve in Nazrul's Life

Dr. Sunanda Ghosh

Kazi Nazrul Islam appeared on the literary firmament of Bengal when the most famous Bengalee poet Rabindranath Tagore was reigning in full glory. Yet he made a niche for himself and was adulated by people. Throughout Bengal he was known as the 'rebel' poet but against this, there was an image of a 'lover' poet whose melodious songs enchanted scores of fans. Which was the real Nazrul? Poet Nirendranath Chakroborty wrote that Nazrul was fifty percent a rebel and fifty percent a 'lover' poet. The answer to this enigma may be sought from his personal life.

Let us describe his physical features. Big luminous eyes, ever smiling face, long mane of hair loose on his shoulder, he was an epitome of youth, an eternal adolescent, vibrant with overflowing energy. No wonder he became the heart-throb of many young damsels, in his twenties. He was quick to reciprocate their feelings and fall in love, the incorrigible romantic that he was.



There were three distinct love interests running almost simultaneously through his conscious, alive existence spanning his twenties and late thirties: These three women of

his life were Nargis [Sayda Khatun], whom he almost married; Pramila, his Hindu wife, and Fazlitunnessa whom he loved dearly but who did not appear to reciprocate his love.

In 1921, the poet went to a village named Daulatpur from his temporary residence of Comilla. At Daulatpur he was shown a beautiful girl, Sayda Khatun, a.k.a Nargis, and was coaxed to agree to marry her. But on the wedding night Nazrul sneaked out of the marriage hall in total disgust, when he discovered that there was a plot by the guardian of the girl, Ali Akbar, to keep him captive in that village so that they could exploit his name and fame as a singer to make money for themselves. Besides, he did not like the unhealthy intimacy between Ali Akbar, the girl's maternal uncle and Sayda. He saw him tying the bridal sari on to the blushing bride. Repulsed, he left the wedding hall quietly and came back to Comilla to stay with some Sengupta's place. There he found open armed welcome and love from two elderly ladies, Birajasundari Devi, whom he called "Ma" (mother) and her sister-in-law, Giribala Devi, whom he called Mashima (aunty). Pramila was the teen-aged daughter of Giribala. A romance blossomed between the fugitive groom and the young damsel. Three years later he married Pramila despite strong objection from the girl's uncle Indrakumar Sengupta but with the blessings of Giribala, the girl's mother.

This married love lasted till Pramila's death in 1962. In 1939 Pramila was stricken by a stroke and remained paralysed waist down. That was a huge blow to Nazrul who tried his utmost to nurse her back to health, but alas, he too lost his speech and mental faculty in 1942. Even in her helpless position Pramila used to feed her husband, her only love, with her own hands. He adored his child-bride whom he called Dolon, about whom he wrote his lovely lyrics, [Ooh! My queen, I surrender to you at the end of the day; my victory flag tumbles at your feet.], whom he dedicated his book of melody, Dolon champa. The love for his Dolon remained locked in his heart for ever. He thought of her to be as tender and as precious as when he first clapped his eyes on her.

What became of Nargis, the girl whom he almost married? In 1937, sixteen years after that fateful night when Nazrul left the marriage hall, he wrote a letter to Nargis, presumably in response to a love letter from her. He wrote, "The Lord of my heart knows what a deep wound in heart do I bear for you. But I alone had been burning in that fire of pain as I never intended to burn you with that....Your sublime beauty that I first saw in my youth still remains ever resplendent in my heart." How could this flame of love burn despite so many years of a successful marriage and several children's birth? The answer could be that Nazrul was an indefatigable romantic. He himself identified self as such. He wrote, "You should not forget, I am a poet, even if I strike I strike with flower."

Beside this love interest for Nargis, there was a third woman in Nazrul's life. Her name was Fazlitunnessa, a brilliant student who always topped in her class. She finished her M.A in Mathematics from Dhaka University in 1928. At that time Nazrul was a rage with the entire youth community for his gazals (love songs) and lyrics. Motahar Hossein, a youth union secretary introduced Kazi to Fazlita. He took Nazrul to her house to examine her palm as Nazrul had earned some fame as a palm reader. The poet returned to Motahar's house to spend the night there. In the middle of the night, Motahar got up and

found Nazrul's bed was unslept. Nazrul came back about breakfast time and explained that he was awakened up in the middle of the night by a mysterious light beaconing him to Fazlita's house. He sleepwalked there and knocked on her door. It was opened by a lady and he was ushered to Fazlita's bedroom and they sat together on her bed throughout the night! Was this a delusion or was it for real? Nazrul wrote several letters to Motahar and at least one to Fazlita expressing his passionate love for her. Possibly he proposed to her and was rejected.

He wrote to Motahar, "I leave with you the most secret and the tragic leaf of my life...I consider her [Fazlita] the most beautiful woman. My feeling tells me that the one who had declined me in life will accept me in death." Fazlita did not accept Nazrul, the impetuous lover; may be she did not want any break in her steady scholastic journey or for fear of scandal to get involved with such a married celebrity. She eventually became the Principal of Eden College, Dhaka. But the evidence of her deep unspoken love for Nazrul is found in the fact that when she came to give birth to her only son at P.G. hospital, she kept a notebook under her pillow. This notebook was given to her by Nazrul after he had written nine poems dedicated to her. On 24<sup>th</sup> February, 1928 she wrote in her diary the following lines from Tagore as if in response to Nazrul's letter:

"My mind longs to give you something  
Even though you may not need anything."

It came to light later that she used to visit Nazrul in the hospital during his last days. She breathed her last one year after Nazrul's demise in 1977.

Can a man love three women simultaneously? Apparently Nazrul did just that. In 1941 he addressed the young students of Muslim Samity Sammelan, thus: "Trust me, I did not strive to be a leader or a poet. I came to give you love and get love. I have not got that love I longed for and therefore I bid adieu for good in silent despair to this loveless dry world."

How can Nazrul love three women at the same time? Nazrul's answer may be summed up in the following quote:

"Prem ak, premika se bohu,  
Bohu patre dhele pibo sei prem."

In English, this means:

The ambrosia of love is one sweet drink.  
It may be drunk from different containers.  
Love is one but lady-loves are many.

**Editor's Note:**

Full name of the poet: Kazi Nazrul Islam

Born: May 26, 1899, Burdwan District, West Bengal, India

Died: August 29, 1976 (at the age of 77) in Dhaka, Bangladesh