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1914-1918

CONFERENCE PAPER • MOFIDUL HOQUE



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From War-front to the Front of National Liberation: The Impact of WWI on Kazi Nazrul Islam

Abstract

Kazi Nazrul Islam, National Poet of Bangladesh, was born in 1899 in an impoverished rural family. At an early age he joined a travelling musical group which introduced him to the rich and diverse musical heritage of Bengal. He also got enrolled to different schools at different places of Bengal.

It was a period of popular national upsurge following the partition of Bengal and school-boy Nazrul got involved with the revolutionaries. WWI opened the doors of the military service to Bengali youths ending the long denial since the so-called Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. Nazrul left his study to join the British Army at the end of 1917 and the new recruits were sent to Nowshera in Frontier Province, later on posted in Karachi. Nazrul's career in the Army ended in March, 1920 when his unit was dismantled following the peace treaty.

Nazrul served in the Army for almost two and half years which was also formative years of his life. Although he was not in the battle-field but his senior colleagues had the baptism of fire in Mesopotamia. The paper will look into various aspects of his life in the military service with exposure to multi-culturalism and anti-colonialism, the mingling of which led to the emergence of Nazrul the Rebel Poet, a distinct voice echoing the dreams of national liberation.

Profile

Mofidul Hoque (b.1948) is a publisher, author, cultural activist. He is the Founder Trustee of Liberation War Museum. He has written extensively on culture, literature, art and social history and has twelve books to his credit. He is the co-editor of *World of Theatre*, biannual journal of the International Theatre Institute. As a FIPRESCI jury he participated in the Kerala, India and Fribourg, Switzerland Film Festival. He is a member of International Association of Genocide Scholars and also a Fellow of International Centre for Transitional Justice.