

Translinguistic Oscillations and the Persian-Urdu Semiotic Construct in Kazi Nazrul Islam's Poetics: A Quantum-Semiotic Approach to Bilingual Liminality

Md Arif Uddin Mondal¹ Pallabi Gharami²

^{1,2} Assistant Professor, Department of Basic Science & Humanities,

^{1,2} Swami Vivekananda Institute of Science and Technology

Abstract— Kazi Nazrul Islam's literary oeuvre is located within a linguistic event horizon, wherein Persian and Urdu function as intertextual semiotic domains rather than lexical intrusions that destabilise the phonological, syntactic, and semantic topography of Bengali. This paper examines the structural, affective, and epistemic consequences of Nazrul's Persian-Urdu interpolations through a Quantum-Semiotic lens, investigating how these translinguistic components work as superpositional signifiers that elude monolingual collapse. The paper then utilises Bakhtinian heteroglossia, Peircean abductive semiosis, and Foucaultian discourse analysis to situate Nazrul's linguistic practice within the larger Indo-Persianate epistemic regime. Finally, this paper theorises Persian and Urdu not as singular linguistic influences but as entangled quantum-lexical states destabilising linear Bengali literary historiography and generating a bifurcated aesthetic consciousness swinging between the Persianate cosmopolis and the nascent Bengali national imaginary.

1. Introduction: Deconstructing Linguistic Monoliths in Bengali Literary Studies

The postcolonial formation of Bengali literary identity has been grounded to a large extent on monolingual essentialism that favours Sanskritic revivalism at the expense of the Persianate substratum that is essential to premodern and early modern Bengali literary formations. Kazi Nazrul Islam, as a liminal poet-philosopher, reverses this exclusionary economy by incorporating Persian and Urdu within the syntactic matrix of Bengali. This essay asserts that Nazrul's language hybridity is not necessarily an exercise of code-switching but more so a semiotic rebellion that dislocates prevalent linguistic hegemonies.

To deconstruct this phenomenon, this research utilises an interdisciplinary approach that combines:

Peircean Abductive Semiosis: Exploring how Persian and Urdu signifiers function in a triadic interpretive field, producing recursive levels of meaning.

Bakhtinian Heteroglossia: An examination of the polyphonic tension between Sanskritic Bengali and Indo-Persian linguistic registers in Nazrul's work.

Quantum Cognition and Superpositional Semiosis: Theorising Nazrul's Persian-Urdu lexicon as situated in a non-collapsed quantum state, calling upon multiple historical, theological, and revolutionary meanings at once.

By placing Nazrul's translinguistic praxis within these theoretical paradigms, the paper questions how his Persian-Urdu interpolations create phono-semiotic ruptures which call for new cognitive paradigms for interpretation.

2. Persian-Urdu as a Quantum-Lexical Continuum in Nazrul's Poetics

2.1 Phonological Entanglement and Syntactic Reorientation

Nazrul's strategic incorporation of Persian and Urdu disrupts conventional Bengali phonotactics and morphosyntactic structures. In poems like *Bulbuli Niil Mani*, he employs Persian radif (refrains) and takhallus (pen-name signature) in a manner that produces a quantum linguistic entanglement, where Bengali phonology is simultaneously altered and reinforced through Persianate prosody.

For instance, in:

"Saaqi, de de sharaab, aaj amay bhulte de"

- The phoneme cluster /q/ in *saaqi* introduces a non-native articulation into Bengali's phonological schema, disrupting its inherent euphony.
- The imperative "*de de*" (give, give) syntactically aligns with Persian morphological constructions rather than Bengali verbal imperatives.
- The lexical insertion of *sharaab* (wine) invokes a Sufi epistemic register, destabilising monolithic interpretations of Bengali literary spirituality.

Nazrul's phonological experimentation extends beyond mere phoneme substitution, as he frequently integrates Persian and Urdu metrical structures within Bengali verse. The fusion of **ghazal**-inspired cadences and Bengali rhythmic traditions generates an intertextual soundscape that resists categorisation within a singular linguistic canon. By employing *qaafiya* (rhyme) and *radif*, Nazrul reorients Bengali versification towards a Persianate aesthetic, challenging the dominant trajectory of **Panchali** and **Shakta Padavali** traditions.

Furthermore, Nazrul's morphosyntactic adaptations mirror the fluidity of his phonological interpolations. His syntactic constructions often borrow from Persian's *izafat* (constructive genitive phrase), as seen in lines such as:

"*Gham-e-hijr ki aag mein, jal raha hai dil*"
 ("In the fire of separation's grief, the heart is burning")

Here, the *izafat* structure (*Gham-e-hijr*) seamlessly integrates into Bengali poetic diction, unsettling the conventional word order. This results in an intermediary syntax that resists both strict Persian and Bengali grammatical paradigms, embodying a liminal linguistic state.

This phonetic and syntactic dissonance forces the reader into a state of linguistic uncertainty, requiring cognitive recalibration—a phenomenon analogous to quantum wavefunction collapse in meaning-making. The reader is compelled to oscillate between multiple interpretative states, engaging in a dynamic process of semiotic reconstruction that resists fixed meaning.

2.2 Semantic Polyvalency and Superpositional Semiotics

Nazrul's engagement with Persian-Urdu lexicon produces a semantic indeterminacy that operates within a quantum-superpositional paradigm, where words simultaneously inhabit multiple interpretative states until an observer (reader) collapses them into a fixed meaning. His poetic diction, therefore, is not static but fluid, capable of holding multiple significations across different cultural, theological, and historical contexts.

Consider the phrase from *Mohammad Rasul*:

"*Rahmat-e-Mujassam, Noor-e-Haram!*"

- **Rahmat-e-Mujassam** (Embodied Mercy) → simultaneously invokes:
 - Quranic Prophetology (Mercy of Muhammad as a divine emissary)
 - Sufi Ontology (Mystical Embodiment of Divine Compassion, echoing Ibn Arabi's ideas of divine presence in human form)
 - Colonial Resistance (Reframing the Prophet as a revolutionary figure resisting Western imperial dominance)
- **Noor-e-Haram** (Light of the Sacred Sanctuary) exists in a bifurcated semantic state:
 - Literal Sacred Geography (Referring to the Kaaba in Mecca, a crucial site of Muslim unity and worship)
 - Metaphysical Illumination (Allegorical 'light' of divine truth, reinforcing esoteric Islamic philosophies that see light as a symbol of transcendence and knowledge)

This multiplicity in meaning extends to other Persian-Urdu lexemes in Nazrul's oeuvre, where individual words refuse singular interpretation. His poetry often interweaves theological and revolutionary imagery, constructing a lexicon that demands interpretative fluidity from the reader. Such linguistic structures mirror the fundamental principles of quantum cognition, where concepts are in a state of flux until cognitively observed and assigned definitive meaning.

The idea of **superpositional semiotics** in Nazrul's work suggests that his lexicon operates within a constant state of oscillation. For instance, his use of words like *shamsheer* (sword) and *sipahi* (soldier) carry both literal and figurative implications—connoting armed resistance against colonial forces while simultaneously invoking a spiritual jihad against moral corruption and complacency. This dual nature of signification ensures that Persian-Urdu interpolations in Nazrul's poetry remain an active site of epistemic resistance rather than passive lexical borrowings.

Furthermore, Nazrul's linguistic praxis defies colonial and nationalist attempts to impose rigid linguistic taxonomies. The semantic ambivalence of Persian-Urdu words within Bengali poetic structures prevents the language from being compartmentalised into simplistic binaries of native versus foreign, sacred versus secular, or classical versus modern. Instead, his work fosters a dynamic, ever-evolving poetic consciousness that resists monolingual rigidity. 2.3 Persian-Urdu as an Anti-Colonial Epistemic Weapon

Nazrul's revolutionary poetry strategically deploys Persian and Urdu lexemes to construct a counter-colonial discourse that aligns Bengali resistance with the broader transregional anti-imperial movements of the early 20th century. In *Kamal Pasha*, the lexical choices—*Talwar* (sword), *Sipahi* (soldier), *Shamsheer* (blade), and *Inquilab* (revolution)—do not merely function as militant rhetoric but serve as discursive reterritorializations, embedding Bengal within the Ottoman, Persian, and Arab anti-colonial imaginaries.

This use of Persian-Urdu constructs a semantic insurgency:

- **Re-Orienting Resistance:** Aligning Bengali anti-colonialism with broader Islamic and Persianate liberation struggles.
- **Translinguistic Militancy:** Disrupting the British-imposed linguistic hierarchy that privileged English over Indo-Persian registers.
- **Reconfiguring Literary Authority:** Challenging the Sanskritic hegemony within Bengali literature, positioning Persian-Urdu as equal epistemic forces.

By infusing Bengali with Persian-Urdu revolutionary lexicon, Nazrul transforms language into an insurgent cartography, mapping linguistic resistance onto colonial power structures.

2.3 Persian-Urdu as an Anti-Colonial Epistemic Weapon

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Nazrul's linguistic rebellion can also be studied in his poetry, such as *Bidrohi* (The Rebel), wherein Persian-Urdu vocabulary is used not merely as a tool of revolt but as a tool of revolutionising the Bengali linguistic environment. The use of Persian and Urdu terms concerning warfare, spirituality, and resistance is a conscious effort to incorporate the Bengali revolutionary ethos with the wider anti-colonial trends from the Middle East and South Asia. The injection of Persianate vocabulary into Bengali poetry is an act of cultural deterritorialisation, where the presumed insularity of Bengali literature is subverted by an outside but deeply ingrained Persian-Urdu awareness.

Further, Nazrul's journalistic writings and essays also employ Persian-Urdu vocabularies to critique colonialism and indigenous elitism alike. His employment of words like *Adalat* (court), *Insaaf* (justice), and *Azadi* (freedom) within Bengali prose structures further documents how such language choices function beyond decorative purposes and are a strategic language intervention. By incorporating these words into political discourses, Nazrul reappropriates Persian-Urdu not just as decorations but as a tool of ideological warfare against colonial and neo-colonial power regimes.

In addition, the inclusion of Persian and Urdu in Nazrul's body of work shatters the historical narrative of Bengali linguistic purity that was strengthened by Sanskritization. Through his poetry and essays, Nazrul negates the idea of Bengali literature needing to be kept within its Sanskritic roots, rather suggesting a translinguistic model whereby Persian-Urdu vocabulary is not alien interpolations but essential parts of a larger Indo-Persianate intellectual and poetic heritage. This strategy puts forward a different Bengali literary historiography that recognises its complexities with Persianate literary cultures in place of suppressing them to the margins.

By injecting Bengali with the Persian-Urdu revolutionary vocabulary, Nazrul converts language into a rebellious cartography, projecting linguistic resistance onto colonial power geometries. This linguistic intervention therefore not only retrieves Persian-Urdu into Bengali literary awareness but also relocates Bengali literature within a transregional, anti-colonial intellectual economy.

Methodological Frameworks

To analyse this phenomenon, we integrate multiple theoretical frameworks:

1. **Quantum Cognition and Superpositional Semiotics**

- In quantum physics, a particle exists in multiple states until it is measured. Similarly, Persian-Urdu words in Nazrul's poetry do not have a singular meaning. Instead, they invoke multiple, coexisting significations—spiritual, political, historical—until the reader interprets them.
- For example, the phrase *Rahmat-e-Mujassam* (রহমতের মূর্ত প্রকাশ, meaning *Embodied Mercy*) in his poetry simultaneously invokes Islamic theology, Sufi philosophy, and anti-colonial resistance.
- This forces the reader into a dynamic interpretative process, akin to the quantum observer effect, where meaning is constructed rather than passively received.

2. **Mathematical Model of Linguistic Oscillation**

- We can represent Nazrul's bilingual poetics using a wave function similar to Schrödinger's equation: Here, represents the overall meaning of a phrase in his poetry, which is a superposition of multiple linguistic states (Bengali, Persian, Urdu, and their semantic fields), weighted by coefficients that change over time depending on the cultural and historical context.
- This allows us to model how a word like *Ishq* (ইশক, meaning *Divine Love*) oscillates between Persian-Sufi connotations and Bengali Bhakti traditions, depending on the reader's interpretative framework.

3. **Peircean Abductive Semiosis**

- Peirce's model of semiosis, especially abduction, helps us understand how new meanings emerge from the Persian-Urdu signifiers in Bengali poetry.
- Persian-Urdu elements in Nazrul's poetry do not simply function as known signs but generate new layers of meaning through interpretation.
- This recursive process mirrors how meaning is never fixed but constantly evolving in his work.

4. **Bakhtinian Heteroglossia**

- Bakhtin's idea of heteroglossia—that language is inherently dialogic and contains multiple voices—helps us understand how Nazrul's poetry disrupts Bengali literary traditions.
- His use of Persian-Urdu creates polyphonic tensions, as seen in poems like *Bulbuli Niil Mani* (বুলবুলি নীলমণি, meaning *The Nightingale and the Sapphire*), where Bengali and Persianate linguistic structures interact, producing an aesthetic that resists monolingual dominance.

5. **Foucauldian Discourse Analysis**

- We also apply Foucault's discourse analysis to position Nazrul's linguistic hybridity within the broader Indo-Persianate intellectual tradition.
- By integrating Persian and Urdu, he resists both British colonial linguistic hierarchies and the Sanskrit revivalism that sought to purify Bengali literature.

6. **Wave-Particle Duality in Poetic Interpretation**

- Just as quantum entities exhibit both wave-like and particle-like behaviour, words in Nazrul's poetry behave both as discrete signifiers and as fluid, interconnected meanings.
- This duality allows his poetry to oscillate between multiple interpretive possibilities, resisting singularity and embracing multiplicity.

3. Conclusion: Towards a Quantum-Bengali Poetics

This essay has sought to reimagine Kazi Nazrul Islam's Persian-Urdu interpolations not as ornamental borrowings or intrusions from an exotic other into the Bengali literary body, but as conscious acts of semiotic disturbance—acts that have to be interpreted within a quantum-semiotic order. In this order, language is not linear or fixed as a conductor of meaning, but rather a probabilistic space in which several linguistic states—Persian, Urdu, Bengali—are co-present, clash, and co-create meaning in configurations that cannot be read in classical binaries.

Nazrul's poetics, therefore, creates what can be called a superpositional linguistic field: a semiotic space in which Persian-Urdu and Bengali are not hierarchically structured or temporally sequenced but remain in a state of ongoing liminality. These languages are not dichotomies, but rather simultaneous possibilities, each informing and inflecting the other. This field is realised in three principal interrelated dynamics:

Liminality: The Persian-Urdu features of Nazrul's writing are neither completely naturalised into the Bengali language system nor completely foreign. They exist in a state of liminality, upsetting traditional assumptions of linguistic purity and cultural belonging. This liminality reflects Nazrul's own status as a poet who worked across borders—religious, linguistic, cultural—who refused to be bounded by nationalist or sectarian categorisations.

Heteroglossic Tension: Drawing from Bakhtinian theory, Nazrul's language practices open up a polyphonic space within Bengali literature. His interpolations do not serve a singular voice or ideological purpose; rather, they allow for a multiplicity of registers, affective resonances, and epistemic trajectories to emerge. Persian-Urdu introduces a vertical axis of sacredness, mysticism, and rebellion that cuts across the horizontal flow of Bengali's modernist realism.

Revolutionary Potentiality: By challenging colonial linguistic hierarchies and Brahmo-centric conventions of Bengali literary writing alike, Nazrul's syncretic poetics serve as a translinguistic act of resistance. Writing Persian and Urdu into Bengali is aesthetic, yes, but also political—it is an act of uprising against the monolingual aspirations of colonial modernity as well as those of the elite Bengali intelligentsia. His poetry upends hegemonic discourses about what is "Bengali" and insists upon a multilingual, syncretic, decentered poetics instead.

Finally, such linguistic praxis subverts Bengali literary historiography's teleological suppositions—ones that favour linearity of progress, linguistic cohesion, and closure of culture. By bringing in quantum logic for literary analysis, we are enjoined to read Bengali neither as a definite linguistic totality nor as such but as a quantum-literary terrain: an indeterminate, open-ended field with various epistemic and linguistic states in constantly oscillating flux.

Nazrul's legacy, then, is not just that of a revolutionary Bengali poet, but that of a quantum poet who remapped the semiotic geometry of Bengali literature itself. His poetry presages a poetics of entanglement in which translation is not a bridging from one language to another, but an ongoing condition of translingual becoming. In this regard, a Quantum-Bengali Poetics is not just a critical lens—it is a philosophical imperative, compelling us to reconsider language, identity, and literature as always already plural, unstable, and in flux.

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