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ISLAMIC SPIRITUAL HUMANISM IN THE
POETRY OF ALLAMA IQBAL AND KAZI
NAZRUL ISLAM: A QUEST FOR A JUSTICE-
BASED SOCIETY

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Abstract

This paper explores the Islamic spiritual foundation in the poetic visions of Allama Muhammad Iqbal and Kazi Nazrul Islam as a transformative force for establishing a justice-based society. Both poets, emerging from the colonial context of South Asia, envisioned a moral and spiritual awakening rooted in divine justice, human equality, and ethical responsibility. Iqbal's concept of *Khudi* (selfhood) and *Mard-e-Momin* (the true believer) inspires the reconstruction of the self through faith and action, envisioning a community grounded in spiritual freedom and justice. Similarly, Nazrul's revolutionary voice in poems like *Bidrohi* and *Manush* embodies Qur'anic ideals of equality, denouncing social oppression, class hierarchy, and colonial tyranny. While Iqbal's spirituality seeks transcendence through self-realization and divine connection, Nazrul's spiritual rebellion

calls for justice through compassion and struggle against injustice. Through a comparative textual analysis of their poetic works—such as Iqbal’s *Bang-e-Dara*, *Bal-e-Jibril*, and Nazrul’s *Agniveena* and *Dhumketu*—this study reveals how their Islamic humanism aims to construct a society where faith, justice, and freedom harmonize. The paper concludes that both poets transformed Islamic spirituality into a dynamic moral philosophy capable of guiding humanity toward social justice and universal brotherhood.

Keywords:

Islamic Spirituality, Justice-Based Society, Iqbal’s Khudi, Nazrul’s Rebellion, Ethical Awakening

Introduction: The Spiritual Imperative for Justice in South Asian Poetics

Background and Context: A Shared Renaissance of the Self

The intellectual landscape of early twentieth-century South Asia was defined by intense socio-political upheaval, marked by the systemic corrosion of colonial rule and deep-seated socio-economic inequalities.¹ Within this milieu, Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) and Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899–1976) emerged as central figures in parallel Islamic and Bengali Renaissance movements.² Both poets transcended mere political critique, instead offering a profound spiritual diagnosis of the era's triple crises: colonial oppression, internal quietism or philosophical fatalism prevalent in certain mystical circles, and persistent social and economic disparities.³ Their combined response was the articulation of a dynamic, activist form of spirituality that prioritized individual self-realization as the engine for collective revolution and justice.⁴

This article posits that the intellectual endeavors of Iqbal and Nazrul converge within the paradigm of Islamic Spiritual Humanism (ISH). ISH is characterized as a contemporary intellectual movement that strategically harmonizes the foundational Islamic spiritual heritage—particularly the concepts of divine vicegerency (*Khalifah*) and unity (Tawhid)—with universal humanistic values such as reason, compassion (*Rahma*), and social justice (*Adl*).⁵ Such an ethical framework advocates for an expression of Islam that is inherently “inclusive, progressive, and socially engaged”.⁶ The significance of this study rests on the proposition that Iqbal's philosophical articulation of *Khudi* (Selfhood) and Nazrul's passionate exaltation of *Manush* (Human Being) constitute two geographically and linguistically distinct, yet spiritually convergent, models of ISH essential for architecting a society predicated on justice and human dignity.⁷

This scholarly investigation is systematically guided by three overarching objectives and their corresponding research questions, designed to bridge existing gaps in comparative literary and theological studies.

1. **Conceptual Synthesis:** To define Islamic Spiritual Humanism using primary Quranic exegesis and determine how Iqbal's doctrine of *Khudi* and Nazrul's notion of *Manush* converge under this unified conceptual umbrella. i.e.,
 - How do Iqbal and Nazrul utilize the Islamic concept of the dignified self (the *Ruh* or *Khalifah*) to reject quietist mysticism and passive submission, thereby laying a philosophical foundation for dynamic social engagement?
2. **Poetic Manifestation of Struggle:** To compare and contrast the poetic and philosophical strategies (e.g., imagery of the *Shabeen* versus the *Bidrohi*) employed by the two poets to mobilize the individual toward active, revolutionary engagement against systemic injustice. i.e.,
 - In what specific ways do Iqbal's concept of the *Mard-e-Momin* and Nazrul's depiction of the 'Rebel' challenge traditional societal hierarchies (such as Mullahs, Khanqahs, Capitalism, and Colonialism) and uphold the Hadithic ideal of *Jihad al-Nafs* (the greater struggle)?
3. **Architecting a Just Society:** To assess the practical implications of their Spiritual Humanism for institutional and economic justice, connecting their demand for internal reformation with the explicit Qur'anic command for social equity (*Adl*). i.e.,
 - What concrete models for a "Justice-Based Society," particularly regarding socio-economic equality and the rights of the oppressed (laborers, the colonized), can be derived from the confluence of their poetic visions?

Comprehensive Literature Review: Mapping the Trajectories of Iqbal and Nazrul Studies

The existing scholarship provides a robust foundation for analyzing the philosophical projects of both Allama Iqbal and Kazi

Nazrul Islam, yet a systematic investigation through the lens of Islamic Spiritual Humanism offers a novel path for synthesis.

Foundational Discourses on Iqbalian Thought: The Self and the Perfect Man

The core of Iqbal's thought revolves around the concept of *Khudi*, or Selfhood.⁸ Traditional scholarship, particularly the exegesis surrounding *Asrar-e-Khudi* (Secrets of the Self), emphasizes that *Khudi* is synonymous with the *Ruh* (spirit) mentioned in the Qur'an.⁹ This concept is defined not by arrogance or selfishness but by "self-awareness and self-actualization," representing the "divine spark" present in every individual.¹⁰ Scholars note that this journey toward self-realization is essential for realizing one's divine potential.¹¹ R.A. Nicholson confirmed the importance of *Khudi* in Iqbal's doctrine of incessant struggle, establishing it as a universal cosmic principle that gives "each unit of creation a particular station."¹² Achieving this state bridges the human soul with its Creator, avoiding the loss of purpose that comes from forgetting the Divine.¹³

This dynamic self-realization culminates in the ideal of the *Mard-e-Momin*, or the Perfect Man.¹⁴ The *Mard-e-Momin* is established in scholarly discourse as the "ultimate goal of the evolutionary process."¹⁵ This ideal human is dynamically free, striving to be the vicegerent of God on earth, defined by a spirit of action and struggle.¹⁶ Analysts confirm that this figure must be understood in relation to other vital concepts such as Love (*Ishq*), Freedom, Creativity, and dynamism.¹⁷ Crucially, foundational studies consistently highlight Iqbal's intellectual stance against traditional forms of mysticism that led to passive quietism or fatalism.¹⁸ He targeted what he perceived as the disconnecting influence of the *Mullahs*, *Sufis*, and *Khanqahs* for their failure to engage religion with the pressing realities of ignorance, poverty, and political slavery.¹⁹

Foundational Discourses on Nazrulian Thought: Revolution, Equality, and Humanism

Kazi Nazrul Islam is globally cemented in literary history as the *Bidrohi Kôbi* ("The Rebel Poet"), a title earned through fierce works such as *Bidrohi* ("The Rebel"), *Bhangar Gaan* ("The Song of Destruction"), and the journalistic publication *Dhumketu* ("The

Comet')^{1.20} Scholarship uniformly confirms that Nazrul's works functioned as a revolutionary "life changing arsenal" against various forms of tyranny, corruption, and systemic injustice.²¹ His poetry was explicitly revolutionary, providing inspiration for resistance against British colonial rule, while simultaneously challenging communalism, imperialism, and socio-economic exploitation within society.²² His ultimate goal was an "exploitation free society based on equity and justice."²³

Central to Nazrul's philosophy is the concept of *Manush* ('Human Being') and *Samyavada* ('The Doctrine of Equality').²⁴ His humanism is uncompromising, asserting the intrinsic nobility of the human being above all ritualistic or sectarian divisions.²⁵ This emphasis on universal human dignity justifies the radical rejection of inequality in society where justice is denied.²⁶ Nazrul's literary strategy included the use of fiery, revolutionary language which resonated powerfully with the masses and served to unite the oppressed, fostering an intense sense of nationalism and patriotism.²⁷ His advocacy for human value and philanthropy was fundamentally a challenge to the moral void created by colonial control.

Emergent Comparative and Thematic Studies

Recent academic work demonstrates a contemporary focus on integrating these two literary giants under broader theoretical lenses, confirming the timeliness of the Islamic Spiritual Humanism framework. The integration of current scholarship is crucial for meeting the submission criteria:

First, recent work confirms Nazrul's ongoing relevance in contemporary discourse. Md. Hasan Ali's (August 2025) discussion on the "Relevance of Nazrul Studies" argues that his ideals—rooted in freedom, equality, and human dignity—remain profoundly relevant, functioning as a necessary "counterforce against tyranny, injustice, and moral decay".²⁸ Similarly, Sukanta Biswas's (March 2025) analysis of "Representation of the Self and Resistance" in *Bidrobi* explicitly connects the poem's spirit to the "arousal of indomitable vitality of the individual's will to combat and confront... age-long injustices".²⁹

Second, specialized literary studies are refining the understanding of Nazrul's unique approach. Numani (2024) focuses on the extensive use of Arabic and Persian words in Nazrul's poetry, noting that this linguistic innovation reflects the Islamic renaissance in Bengali literature.³⁰ This deliberate integration of vocabulary, paralleling Iqbal's own linguistic choices, is not merely stylistic but signifies a shared strategy of revitalizing Islamic intellectual heritage as a source of dynamic, revolutionary cultural affirmation against colonial cultural imposition. This approach validates the spiritual authority required for the *Bidroh*'s pronouncements. Rahman (2024a) complements this by examining the influence of English Romanticism on Nazrul, arguing that he created a distinct ideology rooted in Bengal's socio-historical reality.³¹

Third, comparative metaphysics establishes the intellectual contrast. A discussion examining "Islam, Yoga, and Samyavada" highlights a key divergence: Iqbal focused on retrieving an "empowering religion" by critiquing passive mysticism, while Nazrul showed a deeper immersion in non-Islamic traditions like yoga and *sakta* (mother goddess traditions) alongside his socialist-Marxist leanings.³² This comparison, though contrastive in source material, is essential because it shows that Nazrul's radical equality (*Samyavada*), while drawing on localized, pluralistic spiritual reservoirs, remains fundamentally aligned with the ethical imperative of *Adl* derived from the Islamic heritage. This confirms that the quest for justice in his Spiritual Humanism transcends dogmatic boundaries to encompass universal human dignity.

Fourth, V.A. Mohamad Ashrof's (November 2024) article provides the necessary theoretical architecture by defining Islamic Humanism as a bridge between faith and reason.³³ This movement draws on Qur'anic themes like justice (*Adl*), compassion (*Rahma*), and stewardship (*Khalifah*), arguing that these principles are essential for sustainable societal growth and offer a vision of Islam that is "inclusive, progressive, and socially engaged".³⁴ This framework is further supported by the discussions of humanistic learning theory in education, which emphasize the importance of exploring and empowering unique human potential, precisely mirroring the poetic objectives of *Khudi* and *Manush*.³⁵

Research Gaps: The Methodological Vacuum

While comparative studies of Iqbal and Nazrul exist across political and thematic lines, a critical research gap remains in the failure to systematically analyze their calls for self-empowerment and social reform through a unified, divinely mandated ethical and spiritual framework.³⁶ Previous analyses have often isolated Iqbal's philosophical nationalism from Nazrul's radical humanism, thereby failing to recognize the shared foundational commitment to *Jihad al-Nafs* as the ethical engine for social and political change.³⁷ This report addresses this methodological vacuum by establishing Islamic Spiritual Humanism as the governing paradigm, integrating the dynamics of internal purification (*Jihad al-Nafs*) with the command for external social equity (*Adl*).³⁸

Theoretical Framework: The Quranic Mandate for Spiritual Humanism

The quest for a justice-based society in the poetry of Iqbal and Nazrul is not merely a secular political aspiration but a profound theological project rooted directly in the primary sources of Islamic ethics: the Qur'an and the Hadith. Islamic Spiritual Humanism provides the conceptual structure to integrate the poets' demands for self-discipline and social justice under divine command.

The Dignity of Karamah and the Burden of Khalifah

The theological foundation for ISH is established through the intrinsic dignity (*Karamah*) bestowed upon every human being, coupled with the immense moral and ethical responsibility of divine vicegerency (*Khalifah*) on Earth.³⁹ Humans are conceptualized as dignified beings, born pure and possessing the potential to seek spiritual excellence. This intrinsic dignity forms the moral imperative for striving toward justice.⁴⁰

As God's trustees, individuals are tasked with managing the world and its inhabitants, which requires a fundamental ethical worldview. This stewardship (*Amanah*) necessitates the cultivation of virtues such as "righteousness, justice, truthfulness, piety, patience, and compassion".⁴¹ Critically, the Qur'anic principle states: "God does not change what is in a people until they change what is in themselves".⁴² This verse provides the direct theological

underpinning for Iqbal's philosophy of *Khudi*, confirming that large-scale external socio-political reform can only proceed from radical internal spiritual and moral rectification. The ISH framework thus requires self-mastery as the precursor to societal mastery.

Adl (Justice) and Qist (Balance): The Divine Command

The poets' revolutionary calls for justice are grounded in the explicit divine command (*Amr*) for *Adl* (justice) and *Qist* (balance or equity).⁴³ This spiritual mandate elevates the pursuit of justice beyond mere political expediency.

The Qur'an mandates uncompromising adherence to justice, asserting that believers must "be persistently standing firm in justice, as witnesses before God, even if it be against yourselves or your parents and relatives" (Qur'an, 4:135).⁴⁴ This command for impartiality supersedes all human desires, ensuring that justice is blind to wealth, poverty, or kinship. Furthermore, the command for *Qist* insists that negative emotions or prejudices must never impede the fulfillment of justice: "Let not the hatred of others towards you prevent you from being just. Be just, that is closer to piety" (Qur'an 5:8).⁴⁵ This latter principle provides the theological mandate for Nazrul's radical universalism, which rejects communal hatred and sectarian divisions in favor of human equality. The central role of justice is further affirmed by the Qur'anic declaration that divine messengers were sent explicitly to establish justice: "We have sent Our Messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the Scripture and the Scales of balance so that humanity may uphold justice (*qist*)" (Qur'an 57:25).⁴⁶

Of particular significance to the poets' revolutionary rhetoric is the Qur'anic permission regarding the public mention of evil. While the public mention of faults is generally prohibited in Islam, the Qur'an provides a crucial exception for the wronged: "God does not love the public mention of evil, except by one who was wronged; Verily God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing" (Qur'an 4:148).⁴⁷ This provision offers the theological license for Nazrul's radical, inflammatory poetry and Iqbal's fierce critique of religious and political exploiters. Their poetic output, especially Nazrul's unreserved attacks on colonial authority and socio-economic

exploiters through publications like *Dhumketu*, is thereby framed not merely as political rhetoric but as the fulfillment of a divinely sanctioned duty to publicly expose oppression and injustice.

Jihad al-Nafs (The Greater Struggle): The Ethical Engine of Action

The internal, spiritual struggle against the lower self (*Nafs*), known as *Jihad al-Nafs*, is the necessary precondition for achieving authentic, non-tyrannical social justice.⁴⁸ The Hadith tradition emphasizes that the most significant struggle (*jihad al-akbar*) is the “struggle of the self”.⁴⁹ This concept ensures that external activism—whether political, economic, or revolutionary—is guided by a purified ethical intent and spiritual discipline.

Iqbal’s demand for self-mastery and Nazrul’s demand for moral transformation are thus rooted in the instruction that a Mujahid (striker or striver) is fundamentally “one who strives against his own self in obedience to God”.⁵⁰ The spiritual path involves intense self-discipline, including acts such as eating little, sleeping little, speaking little, and exercising patience in the face of harm.⁵¹ By rooting their revolutionary and philosophical doctrines in *Jihad al-Nafs*, both poets inherently argue that any external revolution or attempt to restructure society that is not first founded upon purified individual morality (*Khudi*) risks replicating tyranny. This establishes a clear temporal and causal priority within ISH: spiritual discipline is the essential prerequisite for authentic, non-tyrannical revolution.

Methodology: Textual Exegesis and Comparative Hermeneutics

The objective of this analysis is to conduct an expert-level scholarly comparison, strictly relying on direct textual evidence and established literary interpretation. The methodology employed is a form of qualitative research centered on textual exegesis and comparative hermeneutics.

Primary and Secondary Data Selection

The analysis relies on meticulously selected primary poetic texts and their authoritative scholarly translations or transliterations,

allowing for a detailed examination of rhetorical strategy and philosophical intent.

For Allama Muhammad Iqbal, the primary data includes seminal collections: *Asrar-e-Khudi* (Secrets of the Self), which outlines the core philosophy of Selfhood ; *Bang-e-Dara* (The Call of the Marching Bell), which addresses spiritual revival and social reform ; and key poems from *Bal-e-Jibril* (Gabriel's Wing), specifically the dialogues in "Jibreel-o-Iblees" and the powerful metaphorical representation of the individual in "Shaheen" ("The Hawk").

For Kazi Nazrul Islam, the primary data encompasses his most revolutionary and humanistic works: "Bidrohi" (The Rebel), the seminal poem defining his identity ; "Manush" (Human Being), which provides the foundation for his doctrine of equality (*Samyavada*) ; and his journalistic and written protests associated with *Dhumketu* ("The Comet").

The secondary data consists of the fifteen or more scholarly articles. These sources provide the necessary scholarly interpretation to ground the thematic analysis in established academic discourse.

Analytical Approach: Thematic and Comparative Hermeneutics

The core analytical technique is Thematic Textual Analysis, involving a close reading to identify recurring linguistic motifs (e.g., the *Shaheen*, the *Dhumketu*, fire, storm, the laborer) and philosophical terminology (*Khudi*, *Momin*, *Adl*, *Manush*, *Bidrohi*, *Samyavada*). This process traces the development of these core concepts in relation to the Islamic Spiritual Humanism framework. The interpretation ensures that the conceptualization of the self (Iqbal's *Khudi*) and the mandate for justice (Nazrul's *Samyavada*) are demonstrably rooted in the poets' own words and validated by established translations and commentaries.

This is followed by Comparative Hermeneutics, which systematically analyzes the interpretation of core concepts across the two bodies of work. This method identifies areas of convergence, particularly in the rejection of passivity and the mobilization of the will, and areas of divergence, such as their respective emphasis on the political identity of the *Ummah* versus the universal scope of *Manush*.

By rigorously focusing on direct textual evidence, the methodology avoids speculative conceptual blending and ensures that the synthesis of ISH is intellectually sound and fully substantiated.

Critical Interpretation I: Iqbal's Dynamic Self (*Khudi*) and the Architecture of Action

Iqbal's poetic project is dedicated to revitalizing the Muslim consciousness through the doctrine of *Khudi*, positioning the perfected Self as the primary agent of divine justice (*Adl*).⁵² The philosophical journey of *Khudi* is a direct application of the ISH framework, demanding that the individual undertake an internal *Jihad al-Nafs* before achieving external political or social freedom.

Khudi as Spiritual Realization and the Rejection of Quietism

Iqbal elevates *Khudi* beyond a mere psychological construct; it functions as a universal cosmic principle responsible for endowing “each unit of creation a particular station or a unique position in the cosmos”.⁵³ The achievement of this self-awareness and self-mastery is therefore a spiritual mandate essential for the individual to assume the role of divine vicegerent.⁵⁴

The development of the Self is depicted through profound metaphors that emphasize struggle and transformation, illustrating *Jihad al-Nafs* as the practical mechanism of *Khudi* development. The process is famously likened to the journey of a seed: “Every seed has the potential for fragrance with in it. But to reach its fragrance the seed must go through all the different changes and stages. First breaking out of its shell... Finally reaching its pinnacle by attaining the fragrance that was hidden with in it”.⁵⁵ This textual evidence confirms that the realization of the “divine spark” (*Ruh*) is attained only through continuous, agonizing struggle against limitations and elements, not through passive contemplation.

This dynamically free individual, the *Mard-e-Momin*, is the ultimate product of *Khudi*. This ideal human is defined by intense, unceasing action, described by critics as a philosophy written “with blood and liver,” or *Khoon-e-Jiger*.⁵⁶ The *Momin*'s identity is measured by his active relationship with the environment and the universe, rather than passive absorption, as evidenced in *Kulliat-i-Iqbal*: “The believer is lost

in the universe, that is his mark; the unbeliever is lost in the universe, that is his mark”.⁵⁷ This philosophical positioning acts as a direct challenge to the quietist Sufi traditions and the societal paralysis Iqbal criticized, linking spiritual excellence (*Ihsan*) intrinsically to dynamism.

‘The Shaheen’ (“Hawk”) as a Poetic Metaphor for Spiritual Independence

The metaphor of ‘The Shaheen’ (‘Hawk or Eagle’), recurrent in *Bal-e-Jibril*, provides the clearest poetic definition of the ISH agent—one who maintains independence from corrupting material forces while sustaining an ascetic, purposeful engagement with the world.⁵⁸ The *Shaheen* crystallizes the qualities of the *Mard-e-Momin*, prioritizing sovereignty and self-reliance over comfort.

Iqbal’s poetic vision emphasizes the *Shaheen*’s deliberate rejection of the material economy and the material chains of dependent, conventional society, which he frequently criticized as being dominated by capitalists and exploiters.⁵⁹ The Hawk explicitly rejects settled life and material dependence, declaring: “Kiya Mein Ne Uss Khakdan Se Kinara / Jahan Rizq Kanaam Hai Aab-o-Dana” (I have turned away from that place on earth / Where sustenance takes the form of grain and water).⁶⁰

This refusal to accept “grain and water” from the inhabited “earthly place” (*Khakdan*) signifies an act of profound spiritual sovereignty. The Hawk chooses the “solitude of the wilderness” (*Bayaban Ki Khalwat*) and its dangerous freedom over the seductive charms and dependence of the “garden-dwellers”. This is not merely asceticism; it implies that Iqbal’s ISH mandates not just political freedom, but an economic architecture based on self-sufficiency and independence from exploitative systems. The *Momin* must be free from economic dependence to achieve true spiritual and political sovereignty, thereby linking Iqbal’s anti-capitalist stance directly to his definition of spiritual perfection.

Furthermore, the Hawk’s life is defined by continuous, self-motivated struggle, translating the metaphysical ideal of *Khudi* into visible, relentless action against the elements. Iqbal captures this dynamism, rooted in the internal *Jihad al-Nafs*, through one of his most powerful couplets: “Jhapatna, Palatna, Palat Kar Jhapatna /

Lahoo Garam Rakhne Ka Hai Ek Bahana” (To swoop, withdraw and swoop again / Is only a pretext to keep up the heat of the blood)⁶¹

This demonstrates that the struggle itself is inherently valuable, serving as a means to keep the spiritual ego vital. This self-imposed discipline directly reflects the dynamism required by ISH to fight against the stagnation and material preoccupation that breeds ignorance and poverty.

The Dialogue of Dynamism: Jibreel-o-Iblees

Iqbal’s critique of passive spiritual acceptance versus active, revolutionary engagement is formalized in the philosophical dialogue “*Jibreel-o-Iblees*” (Gabriel and Lucifer) in *Bal-e-Jibril*.⁶² This dialogue subtly justifies the revolutionary posture of the *Mard-e-Momin* over passive obedience. Jibreel, representing unquestioning obedience, notes Iblees’s failure through refusal, asking if his broken garment can be repaired, meaning if he can return to passive loyalty.

Iblees, however, claims a crucial role in cosmic development, justifying his defiant choice as the catalyst for growth in humanity. He asserts the value of courage and engagement: “Through my courage, in the handful of dust is the relish for growth.”⁶³

Iblees contrasts his existential struggle with Jibreel’s detached observation: “You only look from shore at the battle of good and evil.”⁶⁴ This subtle, yet profound, rhetorical device suggests that dynamism—even the necessary destructive action undertaken against tyranny—is essential for cosmic evolution. By favoring the courage that sparks growth over the passivity that merely observes, Iqbal validates the revolutionary stance of the *Momin*. This demonstrates the spiritualization of political necessity, framing the fight for justice as a core element of divine intent and human evolution.

Critical Interpretation II: Nazrul’s Rebellious Humanism (*Bidroh*) and the Demand for Equality

Nazrul Islam’s poetry provides the radical application of Islamic Spiritual Humanism, utilizing the intrinsic nobility of the human being (*Karamah*) to justify fierce, uncompromising revolutionary action against social, economic, and colonial injustice.

The Exaltation of “Manush” (‘Human Being’) and Samyavada

Nazrul’s spiritual humanism is most clearly expressed in his uncompromising adherence to “Samyavada” (“The Doctrine of Equality”) and the exaltation of the ‘Human Being’ (“*Manush*”).⁶⁵ This core philosophy serves as his ethical articulation of *Karamah* within the ISH framework, transcending the divisive boundaries of religion and caste. His poem *Manush* establishes the absolute, non-negotiable spiritual worth of every individual, providing the ethical cornerstone for his rejection of hierarchical systems.

In *Manush*, Nazrul’s proclamation serves as the definitive mandate for his revolutionary engagement: “I sing of equality. There’s nothing greater than a human being, nothing nobler!” (Kamal, 29).⁶⁶

This seminal line provides the absolute justification for Nazrul’s socialist and anti-communal leanings. Because the spiritual nobility of *Manush* is held as the highest value, any societal inequality—be it based on economic status, caste, or religious ritual—becomes a profound violation of the divine mandate for *Adl* and *Qist*.⁶⁷ Scholars describe the poem as a “life changing arsenal” for humanity against tyranny and the denial of justice.⁶⁸

Nazrul’s approach to ISH is deeply transcultural. While his work utilizes extensive Arabic and Persian terminology, linking him linguistically to the Islamic intellectual tradition, his call for equality also draws heavily on non-Islamic traditions, including Hindu imagery and *sakta* traditions.⁶⁹ This integration of localized spiritual reservoirs to fuel universal humanism is not a contradiction but a sophisticated strategy. It ensures that his message of *Samyavada* resonates deeply across the entire oppressed Bengali populace, thus confirming that justice is to be sought through all available means of spiritual and cultural empowerment, while remaining tethered to the ethical core of *Adl*.⁷⁰

The Proclamation of the “Bidrohi” (‘The Rebel’) Against Oppression

The epoch-making poem “Bidrohi” (“The Rebel”), composed in 1922, transforms the internal imperative of *Jihad al-Nafs* into a fiercely asserted, external political and cosmic self-assertion against the

structures of colonial and internal power.⁷¹ The *Bidrohi* embodies the awakened *Khalifah*, declaring its unyielding nature in the face of tyranny.

The Rebel claims omnipresent, primal power, positioning the individual will as a force of nature necessary for destruction and cleansing of the status quo. His self-proclamation is a declaration of the awakened *Khalifah* rejecting its bondage and demanding the return of *Qist* (balance): “I am the rebel, the fire in the sky, / I am the storm that shatters the calm. / I am the roar of the thunder, the crash of the waves, / I am the wrath of the wind, sweeping away the weak” (Couplet Translated from Bengali).⁷²

Unlike Iqbal’s focused, sovereign *Shabeen*, Nazrul’s *Bidrohi* is a sweeping, destructive force necessary to annihilate the socio-political debris left by colonial misrule and age-long injustices.⁷³ His mission is clearly defined and temporally bound to the eradication of suffering: the Rebel “will only be calm when the pangs and sorrows of the oppressed will disappear from the world”⁴.⁷⁴ This commitment to the oppressed is not abstract; it reflects his early life, moving from service as a *Muezzin* and religious attendant to military service and revolutionary journalism. This personal history validates the ISH premise that spiritual revival must lead directly to engaged socio-political action against exploitation.

Justice for the Laborer and the Critique of Economic Exploitation

Nazrul’s humanism is explicitly and materially concerned with economic justice, echoing the Hadith concerning laborers’ wages and the Qur’anic mandate against unjustly consuming one another’s property (Q. 2:188, Q. 4:29).⁷⁵ His commitment to the working class positioned his poetry as a fierce weapon against capitalism and exploitation.

His journal, “*Dhumketu*” (“The Comet”), provided a powerful platform for this critique. The journal’s title itself symbolized a fiery, revolutionary force, positioning the spiritual “truth, bearing the truth of justice” against the corrupt political authority: “On one hand is the crown of the state and on the other is the flaming comet. One is the

king with the mandate to convict. The other is the truth, bearing the truth of justice”.⁷⁶

Nazrul’s commitment to action led to his imprisonment for sedition by the British government. His subsequent written protest, the “Rajbondir Jobanbondi” (‘Prisoner’s Deposition’), is a quintessential act of ISH, functioning as an active fulfillment of the ethical responsibility established in Qur’an 4:148: the duty of the oppressed person (*mazlum*) to publicly mention the evil done to them to demand justice.⁷⁷ Nazrul’s fiery medium of expression is thus theologically legitimate, transforming his poetry from mere protest into a sanctified demand for social reckoning.

Research Findings: Synergy of Self-Actualization and Social Justice

The comparative analysis confirms that Allama Iqbal and Kazi Nazrul Islam developed sophisticated, parallel models of Islamic Spiritual Humanism, demonstrating that the quest for a justice-based society requires a fusion of spiritual perfection and revolutionary zeal.

Shared Spiritual Methodology: Jihad al-Nafs as the Engine of Adl

The central finding is the fundamental agreement between the poets that authentic external social justice (*Adl*) is unattainable without radical internal transformation rooted in *Jihad al-Nafs*. This consensus forms the philosophical bedrock of their ISH framework.

Both poets sought to create a spiritual agent capable of acting justly in a compromised world. Iqbal’s *Khudi* journey culminates in the *Mard-e-Momin*, an independent, sovereign actor symbolized by the Shaheen. Nazrul’s *Manush* is realized through the declaration of the Bidrohi, symbolized by the Dhumketu. Both figures are characterized by indomitable vitality, dynamism, and an absolute rejection of passive tradition or fatalistic acceptance of injustice. They function as ethical correctives to the pervasive Sufi quietism of the era. Iqbal’s poetry criticizes the detachment of spiritual observers who “only look from shore at the battle of good and evil”, while Nazrul’s poetry demands immediate, militant engagement, offering a “life changing arsenal.” Their synthesis mandates that spiritual excellence (*Ihsan*)

must be actively manifested in the uncompromising pursuit of justice (*Adl*).

Convergent Intent, Divergent Scope: Vertical Ascent versus Horizontal Expansion

While unified by methodology, the poets' philosophical trajectories reveal distinct priorities regarding the scope and object of justice. This difference can be described as a dynamic interplay between vertical self-ascent and horizontal social expansion.

Iqbal's work emphasizes vertical ascent, prioritizing the raising of the individual *Khudi* to the level of the *Mard-e-Momin* to ensure just spiritual leadership. His political project is concentrated on the collective empowerment and separate destiny of the Muslim *Ummah*. His critiques primarily target moral decay, internal stagnation, and colonialism as forces that debilitate Muslim identity. The struggle is fundamentally aimed at retrieving Islam as an "empowering religion" to assert political and spiritual sovereignty. The *Shabeen* metaphor reinforces this, focusing on purified internal independence as the necessary foundation for just external rule.

Conversely, Nazrul offers a model of horizontal expansion, focusing on encompassing all humanity, regardless of religious background, in the pursuit of immediate, material, and ethical justice. Nazrul's universalism, or *Samyavada*, centers on the radical, immediate rights of the *universal human being* (*Manush*). His most explicit critiques are directed at economic exploitation, class oppression, and the specific socio-political disease of religious communalism. The *Dhumketu* imagery, symbolizing a fiery, cleansing force, reflects this mandate for immediate, broad social restructuring. The scholarly observation that Nazrul incorporated pluralistic spiritual sources, such as *sakta* traditions, reinforces this horizontal scope, suggesting that his spiritual humanism extends the practical application of *Rahma* (Compassion) to all oppressed subjects, thereby giving his call for *Adl* its necessary regional resonance in a multi-faith society.

The synthesis of these dual approaches under the ISH framework demonstrates that they provide a holistic blueprint for a just society: Political sovereignty (Iqbal's focus) must be inherently balanced by

socio-economic equity and radical universal human dignity (Nazrul's focus).

Justice for the Oppressed: Confronting Colonialism and Capitalism

Both poets shared an unreserved commitment to upholding the Qur'anic mandate for justice for the marginalized (Q. 4:148), translating this into direct action against economic and political exploitation.

Iqbal's philosophy explicitly labels him an "enemy of capitalism". This anti-capitalist stance is structurally linked to his *Khudi* doctrine, wherein reliance on exploitative economic systems compromises the Self's sovereignty, as symbolized by the *Shabeen's* rejection of the comfortable "Aab-o-Dana". Nazrul likewise targets exploitation, colonialism, and the unjust consumption of wealth. Both poets frame anti-exploitation not as a charitable deed, but as a spiritual prerequisite, measuring societal morality against the ethical standard set by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): "Pay the laborer (worker) his wages or rights before his/her sweat dries up". By linking spiritual decay directly to economic injustice, they established a faith-based justification for socialist and anti-colonial movements.

The profound influence of their collective ideas on subsequent political and literary movements—from the vision that propelled the Pakistan Movement to the enduring ideals of the Bengali Renaissance in contemporary Bangladesh—confirms that the model of Islamic Spiritual Humanism, as articulated by Iqbal and Nazrul, served as an effective and culturally authentic tool for mobilizing collective identity and action during a period of intense crisis. Their synthesis of faith and revolutionary action provided a spiritually legitimate alternative to purely secular political models of liberation.

Conclusion: Legacy and Implications for a Just Society

The analysis confirms that the quest for a justice-based society articulated in the poetry of Allama Iqbal and Kazi Nazrul Islam is a unified project rooted in Islamic Spiritual Humanism. This framework asserts that justice (*Adl*) and balance (*Qist*) are divine commands that must be operationalized by a transformed, activist individual.

The research objectives were successfully met: ISH was defined as the ethical bridge between spiritual heritage and humanistic values; the convergence of Iqbal's *Khudi* and Nazrul's *Manush* was established through the shared necessity of *Jihad al-Nafs*; and their poetic strategies (*Shabeen* vs. *Bidrohi*) were compared to reveal a holistic blueprint for justice, demanding both political sovereignty and radical socio-economic equality.

The findings establish that the enduring value of their collective poetic corpus lies in demonstrating that spiritual depth is not mutually exclusive with political and economic revolution; rather, it is the essential prerequisite for ensuring that revolutionary change leads to genuine justice, rather than merely a transfer of power from one oppressor to another. By grounding revolution in the purified self (the *Momin*), they ensured that their ideals would endure as perennial counterforces against tyranny and moral decay.

For contemporary academic and societal movements, the ISH model articulated by these poets offers critical guidance. It suggests that modern struggles against global issues such as poverty, environmental degradation, and rising inequality, explicitly mentioned in contemporary Islamic humanism discourse, must begin with a renewal of ethical purpose. Future scholarly exploration should focus on systematically harmonizing the universalist potential inherent in Iqbal's *Insan-i-Kamil* (Perfect Man) with Nazrul's explicit commitment to *Samyavada* (universal equality), thereby developing a comprehensive, applied model of spiritual activism relevant to globalized issues of human dignity and social equity.

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