Islam, Kazi Nazrul

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known as

the Rebel Poet of Bengal

the National Poet of Bangladesh

1899-1976

Bengali poet

Born in the West Bengali village of Churulia, into extreme poverty, he rose to fame in the 1920s as a poet and leader of the anti-British movement in India with his poem The Rebel. He published a bi-monthly radical magazine, Dhumketu ("The Comet"), which was revolutionary and anti-British, and he spent 40 days on hunger strike in jail. In the 1930s he concentrated more on composing music and songs - over 4,000 songs and lyrics in all - and became well known as an actor and radio personality. In 1942, brain disease left him bereft of his faculties, including his speech. After Partition, which he had always opposed, he lived in penury until he was brought home in honour to the newly independent state of Bangladesh and installed as the national poet. A Muslim, he married a Hindu and was a lifelong advocate of Muslim-Hindu unity, and wrote more than 500 devotional Hindu songs.

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