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The World He Sought: Nazrul in Coolies and Laborers

Winston E. Langley[1]
University of Massachusetts Boston, USA
W & B Center for Peace, Cambridge, MA, USA

Abstract: Kazi Nazrul Islam, the national poet of Bangladesh, envisioned a future possibility for humankind, a community of care. The dominant socio-economic and political thinking of this century, however, finds his vision and unrealizable dream, especially in the light of the cleavages that wall human groupings from another—ethnicity, gender, geography, language, nationality, race, religion, and social class, among others. The focus of this article is to show that the dream has been informing some of the thinking of the last and present century, from a variety of cultural traditions, and that its policy implications, through a number of forums, including the United Nations, offer a future within which the entire human species, together, and the Earth, can mutually thrive and grow.
Keywords: Community, political realism, “social flesh”, intellectual solidarity, common heritage, and humiliation.

Let people of all ages, all countries/Stand on the shore and listen
to the flute-call of unity
And if one human being is hurt, then
let each of us of the whole humanity
feel the pain equally
If one human being is humiliated, then
let it be considered humiliation
of the whole humanity (Kamal, 1999, p. 45).

The Then Existing Setting

The poem was written within the context of disunity, locally and globally, a context within which the call for universal, common feelings toward pain and humiliation could not exist. That world--and, to a large extent, the present world--was and is divided by social class, religious cleavages, gender oppression, linguistic prejudice, national domination, ethnic and racial hatred, privileges of political and sexual orientation, and broad cultural discrimination.

If one were to take the category of nationality, for example, with its political divisions and domination, its associated ethnic and racial hatred, along with its cultural discrimination, one would, first, find a world dominated by nationalism. This ideology espouses the almost sacred character of the nation-state and the traditions it purportedly claims to or believes it does represent. As well, it focuses on the identity of each nation-state and the extent to which the latter’s professed

[1] Corresponding Author: Professor Emeritus, Department of Political Science & International Relations, Senior Fellow at The McCormack Graduate School for Policy & Global Studies, University of Massachusetts Boston.
E-Mail: Winston.Langley@umb.edu

traditions and ideals make it different from every other nation-state. This supposed difference was and has been a basis of distrust and suspicion, and this resulting system of mutual suspicion and taught distrust became associated with (and was often used to justify) the socio-economic and military domination, called imperialism, with its obverse condition of subjugation, called colonialism.

As respects ethnic and racial hatred, the poem was written during a period of time when notions of racial superiority and inferiority were widespread, especially among dominant countries, and when— within a short period of time—the moral outrage of genocide reigned at the center of what was then regarded as the most advanced culture, western civilization, and in the latter's geographic and spiritual core, Europe. It was also a time when a new socio-economic system, informed by Marxism and represented by the former Soviet Union, although offering a new culture that accentuated class differences and promising social equality, became part of World War II--a war, within and outside that civilization, which witnessed a degree of human slaughter beyond anything previously imagined. Out of that war, sponsored by fear and ascribed differences, emerged nuclear weapons, the use of which in the latter phase of the war (its inter-civilizational component), demonstrated the possibility of the destruction of the human species.

Undergirding the international system has been a dominating political philosophy (or worldview) called political realism. This view, from its origins thousands of years ago, has had a negative view of human nature, which it claims is unchangeably selfish, cruel, and evil. This nature, which must be the basis for the constitution of any human association, can be controlled and made to accept order, only with the exercise of power, physically coercive, and other. Nazrul may not have formally grappled with much of this theoretical claim, but he was a careful student of human behavior, the human condition, and human possibilities. He did not believe that either the past, the present, or both, exhausted what human beings could be and achieve. He did not share the dominant world view of his day.

One, in other words, could say (in the light of all the divisions mentioned above) that the world Nazrul inhabited at the time of his writing the poem was not only one universally defined by human humiliation and pain, but one whose values were such that it could not possibly heal itself. It, therefore, had to be replaced, if a healing were to be realized. That replacement, as he envisioned it, as he imagined, or visualized it, this article argues (in contrast to some passing fancy mistakenly ascribed to him under the misunderstood term "romanticism"), could be realized by a willingness to pursue radical changes in human association---the path of *The Rebel*. And he gave us some hints concerning how we may go about bringing those changes into being, including a listening to the song of unity, with all ages and countries; he also gave us a hint by way of the social location of his inspiration: "coolies and laborers."

This article further contends that human beings, without knowing Nazrul, have been trying to achieve the ends he sought (some examples of which are touched on); that the elementary body of moral norms we call human rights is an example of that sought achievement; that the changes, envisioned by the drafters of our basic international human rights instrument, are in close alignment with the type of human association that he envisioned; and that on-going work concerning cosmopolis, a single universal city, is part and parcel of the intellectual, moral, and emotional solidarity (unity) he sought to bring about.

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Human Association: Two Forms

There have been two basic forms of human association. Although they have been experienced by human beings for thousands of years, they have come to assume a formal theoretical elaboration but relatively recently, namely, in the nineteenth century, led by the German sociologist, Ferdinand Tönnies. In 1887, he introduced the two analytic concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, "community" and "society," respectively, and challengingly outlined their differences. The work, coming as it did at a time when members of peasant societies were being hurriedly replaced by what we now call modern, industrial ones, offered an explanation for what was seemingly taking place (Tönnies, 2001).

According to Tönnies, community (*Gemeinschaft*) is constituted by social interactions that are interpersonal in nature, with an overall emphasis on the values of co-operation and reciprocity. These interpersonal interactions and the ties they nourish he saw as defining of rural peasant societies, and were, in his view, grounded on emotions and sentiments linked to a strong sense of obligation to others, not unlike the sense of obligation within a family. He also touched on the homogeneity of such associations. In contrast, he saw society (*Gesellschaft)* as socially and otherwise heterogenous, with complex divisions of labor, and characterized by indirect, often, impersonal ties and interactions. The latter, implemented today by way of telegrams, telephones, fax machines, e-mail, and the internet in general, and based on agreements (contracts) marked by mutual consent, emphasizes the values of efficiency and rationality.

On the one hand, we have a human association called "community" which is family-like, defined by cooperation and the ethic of mutual obligation, and fueled by emotion and common interest, along with inefficient operation (too little division of labor). On the other, we also have an association called "society," which is characterized by competition, contract, little by way of felt obligation--except that of honoring an impersonal norm we refer to as law--that is suspicious of emotions, and rejects the common interest, in favor of self-interest. The reader will immediately see, in a nineteenth-century world, led by the West, society fitted with the other norms of the day—social Darwinism, the worship of the rational, the "victory" of self-regulating market within capitalism, and the espoused self-interest, at both the individual and collective (national) levels. Equally noteworthy, despite the mourning of the progressive passing of community—as illustrated in Oliver Goldsmith's poem, "The Deserted Village," in Britain, the near-worshipful efforts to preserve the *mir* in Russia, the revered "town hall meeting," in the U.S., and the strong advocacy of the *ashram,* by Gandhi—works of thinkers such as Max Weber, which focused on the rational, won the day (Waters & Waters, 2015). This is not to say that a continuing fight for community was absent or had diminished. On the contrary, the very development and spread of the idea of the nation (nationalism), has been, in large measure, a search for community. And the link between the nation and the state (the nation-state) has been a struggle concerning whether the government of the state should pursue community, on behalf of all, or society, on behalf of a few (Anderson, 1983).

While the two concepts—community and society—have but relatively recently been articulated, the psychological, social, and moral substance of the phenomena the abstract concepts have sought to capture has been co-eval with human beings. Nazrul, who yearned for community (the only human association that could provide the quality of social intimacy, as well as psychological, moral, and intellectual solidarity that he sought), largely experienced society only (Cohn, 1996). In the poem under discussion, he sought to summon us—individually and collectively, the centuries of human culture, and the principal contemporary political international political actors—the nation-states—to a re-recognition of community's important status, to its

revival and reconstitution, and to its expansion and protection. Let us now turn to some of those to whom he appeared to have called on for help (all ages and countries), bearing in mind that the two concepts with which we have been dealing are ideal types, with variations of an impressive kind.[2]

The People of All Ages

The people of all ages cannot be with us, at this time, as was the case in Nazrul's day, except in the form of culture. So, Nazrul was calling on the culture of all ages to help in the construction of the community he envisioned. In so doing, he was saying to us, among other things, that he did not share the view that neither the present, the past, or the cleavage of a single culture--however reputedly magnificent--is exhaustive of human possibilities. In the classical *Greek tradition*, we find a rather impressive recognition of the idea, especially in works of tragedy. Plato's view, to which all of western philosophy is said to be but a footnote, saw community as the form of human association that is most desirable. In search for it, he was unwilling to allow any Greek leader the right to enjoy private property; and, in the case of parents, they would be denied having any sense of the identity of their own children, thinking, as he did, that such knowledge would predispose them to a preference of their own, instead of the whole community of children. Plato (428-347 BCE) had questions, however, concerning the geographic and populational reach within which community could exist. Even in the relatively small city of Athens, he found it was not fully possible.

In the case of the *Chinese tradition*, the ideal of community was embraced by both the Confucians and critics of Confucianism. One of these critics, a contemporary of Plato, Mo Tzu, contending that Confucius had focused too much on the family, advocated for a world-wide community based on "universal love." In his view, the idea of family ties and sense of mutual obligation could find their reach to the world, as a whole. Indeed, for him, anything else was morally impracticable. Neo-Confucianism, today, espouses the possibility of a world-wide family (Beijing Institute of Wang Yangming Philosophy, 2018).

Within the *Islamic trad*ition, one finds the idea of community transcending the borders of states and geographic contours—a form of Muslim nation, by way of the doctrinal concept of *ummah*, within which each member's welfare is the concern of the other. This community is largely confined to Muslims, however, and this limits its inclusiveness. It does not, as did Plato, think size of territory or population is an obstacle to community

The *Judaic tradition* comes at the concept through the story of two brothers, Cain and Abel. The former killed his younger brother, because he was jealous of the more favored reception God had given Abel for the latter's religious gift. When God asked Cain, "Where is Abel thy brother?" Cain responded: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (*The Holy Bible*, 1952, Book of Genesis 4: 8-10). The major lesson from this story is that murder, individual and collective slaughter, is the logical consequence in social and political relations, if one is not his sister's or brother's keeper. This view on blood relations has been haunting us, and the claim, the cry of Prince Arjuna, in the *Hindu tradition*, as he--in the *Bhagavad Gita*--confronted the Almighty Krishna concerning the prospect of killing, murdering kin, members of the human race, for but the "bauble of dominance." (Ramacharaka, 1930). If we are urged by Nazrul to oppose the hurt and humiliation of everyone, throughout the world, how much more so those threatened by murder? Within Christianity and

[2] For example, within societies, there are always pockets of communities, often religious, ethnic, racial, or linguistic minorities, that seek special protection. Within communities, there are always those who seek more individual pursuits, careless of the group as a whole.

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Buddhism, we also have the idea of community as something respected, to be courted, and an end for which all should strive.

Saint Augustine (354-430 CE), a major Christian thinker, offers us a view of society and community, in his now famous, two metaphors, the "City of Man" and the "City of God." The former, rooted in vice and sin and animated by selfishness is operationally defined by greed, conflict, corruption, and destruction; the City of God, on the other hand, is grounded in virtues, including that of cooperation and sharing, both of which are brought to life and energized by love (God's love) and resulting in peace, fulfillment, and eternal life (Augustine, 1985; Fox, 2015). To be part of the community of eternal life, peace and fulfillment (Augustine took the position that no human-created institution or body of thinking, however rich and insightful, can even presume to satisfy the spiritual hunger of human beings), one must be a person who accepts Christianity. Other areas of the Christian faith, such as some pronouncement by the Nazarene, Jesus (the actual founder of Christianity) suggest a more open possibility for community. He did not only teach that one should love one's neighbor as one loves oneself but proceeded to give a definition of neighbor in a non-geographic, religious, national, linguistic, ethnic, or cultural sense. One's neighbor, he said, is a person who is in need of one's help (*The Holy Bible*, 1952, St. Luke 10:25-37). This statement is Nazrulean.

The *Buddhist tradition* (particularly from the Mahayana subgroup) has an equally telling cultural contribution to the idea of community—a contribution that forms part of that religion's very foundation. It is the idea of "dependent origination," sometimes called "dependent arising." According to this concept, it is the natural order of things that whatever comes into being does so (and this included the process of coming into being) in a condition of dependence on other things. If one exists (in complete contradiction to the self-made person) it is because others exist. One is part of a chain of interdependence (Ikeda, 1988; Queen, 2000).

Religious, literary, and philosophical traditions are not the only ones at which we may gaze to seek support for the type of human association Nazrul sought, if one thinks in terms of the conditions under which his vision, in the poem under discussion, were to be brought into being. The very idea of modern science itself, and more particularly, modern biology and neurology, speaks of a certain type of human association.

The idea of science, throughout the ages, has never been solely the accumulation of knowledge, although that accumulation--beneficial and detrimental--has always been a common feature of its sought results and its processes. The central idea of science is one which at its foundation humbly admits to the frailty of knowledge, and based on this admission, seeks to put and sustain in place processes and methods by which the results of this frailty can be recognized and corrected. At the heart of the idea of science, therefore, is the principle of *falsifiability*--claims or propositions made by anyone or any group should and must be subjected to the possibility of being proven wrong; and that those claims admitted to the forum of proof or disproof should not be the person or group making the claim (although she, he or it is expected to clarify and discuss matters, if deemed desirable or necessary), but all those who are universally competent to do so, regardless of national, linguistic, racial, ethnic, religious, ideological, social, or political borders. Hence the idea of sharing data, on any claim, with the world at large, with the claim deriving its legitimacy not from the ascertainment of one or a few, but from the affirmation or disaffirmation of all who are in a position to evaluate, on the behalf of everyone.

Obviously, the history of human interactions, in the area of science, has not been as the idea re-commends and best practice endorses. The push to advance "national science" still haunts humans. Indeed, during the time of Nazrul, we had one of the most compelling examples of how society sought to and did, for a while, overrule community, as we are today facing. Then, it was

Germany; now it involves China, which the U.S. is organizing to deny the benefits of certain areas of science, if at all possible. In the case of Germany, one of its citizens, Albert Einstein, had proposed, in 1915, the general theory of relativity, but it was an abstract claim, untested, and thus, unconfirmed. World War I was so bitter that Britain and its allies cut off all ties with German scientists, causing consternation among many members of the scientific community, including Einstein himself. One Britisher, Arthur S. Eddington, a Quaker and a person committed to peace and the universality of science (for him the lines of latitude paid "no attention to national borders") was able, through tact and secrecy, to arrange a test and a proof of the theory, one of the most remarkable theoretical achievements, ever, in 1919. Doing so did not prevent scientists in the U.S., the British Empire, and France from continuing what was begun in 1918, though the instrument of the International Research Council, to isolate Germany and its allies, and to make science more national (JASON Task Force Report, 2019; Stanley, 2019). Germany has not fully recovered from this treatment, and the world has been deprived of its possible achievements.[3]

The *traditions of science* have, also, at different times, been manipulated to satisfy existing social prejudices, such as issues of race and beliefs concerning human selfishness. Each of these two manipulated distortions is on-going, and both have been used to deny and oppose notions of community. Social class has served the same purpose.

With regard to race, it has been used in many different ways to pinpoint and claim certain alleged differences among peoples, despite evidence to the contrary. Indeed, the category of race cannot be defensibly defined, but views in its favor have flourished (Kenneally, 2014; Yudell, 2014). It has, as a physical category, enjoyed much support for its claims (socially and morally), because of human physical diversity; and those claims have mutated into asserted privileges and even rights, rooted in supposed superiority and inferiority (Cavalli-Sforza & Cavalli-Sforza, 1995). The diversity is sometimes expressed in terms of civilizations, and both civilization and race have continued to be among the great subverters of community (Huntington, 1996).

The traditions of science, in the area of biology, have also made their mark on the contention that human beings are selfish—basically selfish, as individuals and as socio-political collectivities which individuals form and with which they become associated. So, one, for example, has a form of the most selfish collective patterns of behavior in what, in my field of international relations, has been called "national interest." This interest is used as a cover to justify almost every inhuman form of behavior, including the collective practice of murder we call war. One state is expected to advance its own interest, regardless of what that advancing could or does mean for other countries, or the international system, as a whole. This is exactly the behavior of society, against the rise of community, but it is done with an aura of protecting the interest of all individuals within a given nation-state--a supposedly communal matter—against the "other," an "other" that belongs to a group of selfish others, who cannot be trusted. This has been the source of "killing fields" and genocidal onslaughts.

At the modern center of reasoning supportive of alleged human selfishness has been the idea of the "selfish gene". This idea contends that the gene, the basic unit of biological system--in the natural selection process in the evolution of living things--has little or nothing to do with the wellbeing or welfare of the species, or the group, including community. Its concern is with the welfare of the individual human being, only, who is but a vehicle, an instrument, operating on behalf, and at the instruction, of the gene. The search for community among human beings, therefore, is but an illusory pursuit, according to this view, and, thus, society is, while not perfect, a better fit for what each of us is and can ever be. Such, largely, was the reasoning of a most

[3] Before 1914, Germany had more Nobel laureates in physics, chemistry, and math than the UK and the U.S. combined.

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influential paper in 1957, by George C. Williams, Professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at the State University of New York, Stony Brook, and it influenced generations of scientists, including Richard Dawkins, author of the book, *The Selfish Gene* (Dawkins, 1976). The results of the human genome project (HGP), however, suggest the contrary, and studies concerning the social life of forests indicate that the roots of trees share to ensure common survival, even across species, in some instances (Jabr, 2020, pp. 34-41).

Now that we have touched on the call of Nazrul to a variety of cultural traditions—of religion, philosophy, literature, and science, among others, let us turn to his call to countries, which I interpret to mean existing nation-states—actual and prospective.

All Countries

In appealing to all countries, on behalf of unity and the moral and psychological solidarity he sought, Nazrul must have been looking toward a change in international behavior—as earlier said. Support for this position is found in the textual context of the poem itself, in which he was registering deep dissatisfaction with the ways coolies and laborers were then being treated and in their general status and condition. This type of status and condition was not peculiar to Bengal or British India; it was present throughout the world. Hence his focus on all countries. He was likewise not seeking a reduction in the vile harm the oppressed of the world was facing but, more important, a removal of the source or sources of that harm. He was therefore, unlike the British poet, Matthew Arnold, who sought comfort in the "private shelter" of lovers' commitments, suggesting a general structural change in the order of things. Here Arnold's imagined two companions:

> *Ah, love, let us be true*
> *To one another!*
> *for the world, which seems*
> *To lie before us like a land of dreams,*
> *So various, so beautiful, so new*
> *Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,*
> *Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help from pain;*
> *And we are here as on a darkling plain*
> *Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,*
> *Where ignorant armies clash by night.* (Arnold, 1987)

The gap between the community of dyadic love relationship and the society from which the dyads sought escape could not be more distant. In that society there was no help from pain—the very help Nazrul sought. Worse, there was no escape for lovers. The late French existentialist, Jean-Paul Sartre, would say, there is "no exit." (Sartre, 1989). Approximately twenty-five years after Arnold's death, the nation-states of Europe engaged in a course of mutual slaughter, referred to as World War I; and about twenty years after that slaughter, another followed, as hatred in a variety of guises behind the walls of nationalism, patriotism, and racism, deployed prejudices that resulting in a butchering, including genocide, that was never before even imagined. For the bauble of domination, as Prince Arjuna pointed out, and from behavior consistent with the notion of not being one's brother's or sister's keeper, the world experienced the greatest assaults on the prospects for community. The using of the first atomic bombs by the U.S. against Japan only accentuated the barbarity of World War II.

Three Attempts at Community

What Nazrul by intuition envisioned, others by experience came to seek. It is from that experience that, after World War II, one heard the "never again" promise, and at the center of that nevermore was a human rights regime that sought, as its principal aim, a shift from society to community, beginning with notions of a common sisterhood and brotherhood of human beings, the recognition of all human beings as having a common and equal moral status and dignity, and a universal--human--identity. True, we are accustomed to a number of moral claims under the human rights regime--the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, of speech, to receive information, to health care, to education, and a fair trial, among others. Nothing is contained in this reciting of rights about the grounds on which those rights are based or the type of human association they envision. For these grounds, we must look at the *concept* of human rights, which is the first of the three attempted examples of attempts at community.

Conceptually, the human rights regime emerged from the idea of a common identity, rooted in our species kinship (whether species be seen in terms of evolution or some unique expression of a divine spirit) and a political philosophy based on membership in a single universal city, often referred to in the West as *cosmopolis* (Toulmin, 1990). Within that city, all human individuals are members, by virtue of their membership in the family of humans. So, membership in the body of the kinship community called humanity brings with it membership in the political community called *cosmopolis*.

Membership in either or both of the communities is morally prior to--it comes first--to membership in the society of states (what we refer to as citizenship), or the society among states. This moral priority has been repressed, and almost outlawed, with very few mentioning community, except through deliberate attempts to have individuals misunderstand the distinction between society and community, by using the terms interchangeably. (The idea that one's highest loyalty should be to the nation-state--something Islam opposes--is but one example of this attempted confusion.) States fear people could begin to develop other like loyalties (especially in the West, where Roman Catholics and Jews have been falsely accused of being unpatriotic, and communists have been seen as subversives.) A number of developments, since 1945, however (apart from the human rights regime just mentioned) have offered evidence of a strong continuing fight for the type of community envisioned by Nazrul. Two of those developments are the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 and the Law of the Sea Treaty of 1982.

In the case of the Outer Space Treaty, which came into being at the dawn of outer space exploration, international sentiments were that outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, should not be exposed to the practices, including greed, to which the Earth has been subjected, by rival national societies. One, therefore, finds that the treaty prohibits any country from seeking to exercise sovereignty over *any* area of outer space; provides for *equal* access to all states which seek to explore it; and then, stipulates that *all* of the area constituting outer space shall be the common heritage of humankind--the species (United Nations, 1967).

With respect to the Law of the Sea, its concern is with that portion of the Earth referred to as oceans, which make up over 70 percent of this planet's surface. As modern technology provided the means by which the oceans (outside of national jurisdiction) could be explored, human beings, world-wide, decided that the spirit of actions taken in respect of outer space should be applied to the oceans, also. It was therefore decided, under the treaty, that areas of the ocean outside national jurisdiction should be designated *res communis*, meaning, those areas belong to everyone. The treaty also created an enforcement mechanism, the International Seabed Authority (ISA), to exploit what the treaty refers to as "the Area," on behalf of all humankind (United Nations, 1982).

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The last two of the three examples were chosen to say that the peoples of the world, especially those from the Group of 77 (a group formed in 1964 with 77 members, but which now number over 130, most of which gained their independence after 1950) have not only been exploring the idea of community on a world-wide basis, but they have been creating institutions to advance that idea. These institutions have been primarily administrative and legal, as in the case of the ISA which, today, oversees the manner by which the mineral riches of the international seabed are explored, mined and distributed. (And here, the reader should be aware that the struggle over whether the seabed should be governed by ideas of society--sought by the U.S. and a number of its allies--or the ideas of community was not an easy one, especially in view of the fact that, materially, so much was at stake. The quantity of minerals in the international seabed, for instance, is such that it makes what we have on land seem tiny.)

For Nazrul, the socio-economic and moral context out of which the poem under discussion emerged was not that of coolies and laborers, only; it was about conditions they faced--conditions that were universal in character, and he used coolies and laborers he had observed as expressions of those conditions. In his own words, he was focusing on the conditions of "the world's suffering, oppressed humanity," whose spilt blood had reddened the dawning sun, and understood that full freedom from this type of universal violence could not be realized through legal and administrative institutions, alone. Greater changes, informed by social, political, and moral transformations would have to be brought into being.

The need for greater changes is one thing; the collective conviction and passion to effectuate them are another. As people measure the gap between abstractly stated norms and values and the actual life they lead, the norms, ideals, the promises (and Nazrul promised that another day will be coming) begin to appear too distant to be bridged, and they often return to their day-to-day experiences with a sense that promises of change are illusory and utopian. Those who benefit, from this sense of gap that cannot be bridged, have been enthusiastic reinforcers of it. The latter speak of what is practicable, of "common sense" solution; of being realistic. For Nazrul, the mode of thinking captured by cosmopolis and its embodiment of human kinship, one re-affirming the equal moral dignity of each person, regardless of markers of race, social origins, gender, language, geographies, has roots in our being. It is the unfolding from those roots, along with some other changes that will close the gap between the actual and our ideals, defeat the "common sense" advocates, and help all to live, wholly, those ideals. The drafter of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the moral center of the International Bill of Human Rights (IBHR),[4] understood this gap-closing challenge. And this understanding has been part of a wider, collective unfolding reflected in two developments: a greater awareness of Article 28 of the UDHR and the transformation it seeks, and a move to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

Greater Social and Moral Change: Article 28 of UDHR and Nuclear Weapons

Nowhere is the gap between the idea of human rights, the kinship community or cosmopolis and inter-national society more clearly demonstrable than in the area of warfare and nuclear weapons, as well as this society's addiction to war and its possession, threatened use, and use of nuclear weapons. While other major weapons systems, expressive and nurturing of fear, distrust, suspicion, and sown hatred, have allowed for mass murder, wholesale social destruction, and even genocide within a divided human family, nuclear weapons have offered the possibility humanicide-

[4] The term refers to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Together, the form the IBHR.

-the destruction of the species which, if one reflects on it, is a logical follow-up to genocide (Rhodes, 1986; 2007).

Nuclear weapons, which twentieth century humans invented, brought with them horrors built upon horrors. These and other weapons and the social institution of war itself were understood by those who drafted the IBHR. As (and perhaps more) important, for purposes of this paper, it was further understood by those drafters of the UDHR that as long as the institution of war lasted, the rights recognized under the just mentioned international human instrument could never be fully realized. Human beings, however, have an irreducible right to their full realization, as recited by Article 28 of the UDHR:

> *Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.*

One should note, here, that the article refers to a human *entitlement.* Everyone, on equal terms, is enfranchised, vested with, and has an endowed claim to it. This entitlement is not to a partial fulfillment or realization (as is the case today, in face of an institution--war--that compromises *every* human right; rather, the entitlement is full. And since the moral claims of human rights, of those who are members of cosmopolis, are--as before mentioned--prior to, take precedence over, come before those which war-sponsoring societies can properly claim (national security, for instance), one should seek to rid human association of war and help make possible the social and international order within which the full realization of all the rights to which each and every human being is entitled, including the rights to community and to peace.

Some activities in the last five years have begun to offer new hope toward a world-wide community of humans—a community, within which subcommunities of a national character can for the first time exist, also, because each will not have to be cultivating, as we will later see, the culture of war. Two of these activities--one state-led, the other a collaboration among states, intergovernmental organizations, and private entities--are particularly worthy of mentioning. The first is the 2045 Project (the Global Zero Action Plan, the GZAP, or just Global Zero, as it is sometimes called), is a coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments, civic leaders, diplomats, and students constituting over half a million members committed to the elimination of nuclear weapons by 2045.[5] This initiative, and the movement with which it has been associated, actually began in 2008 and got a special boost in 2017, when a treaty of the latter date--the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons--was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly. Also known as the Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty (NWB), the TPNW is the first legally binding international agreement to prohibit, comprehensively, nuclear weapons, with the ultimate aim of total elimination (United Nations, 1967).

For all countries that are parties to the treaty, it prohibits the development, testing, production, stockpiling, receiving, stationing, transfer, use, or the threat of use of nuclear weapons. For nuclear-armed states joining or otherwise adhering to the treaty, it provides a time-limited scheme within which negotiations leading to verified and irrevocable elimination of their respective nuclear weapons program. Along with the Global Zero campaign, this time-bound structure is, at least, now being seen and treated as part of a popular global effort to eliminate nuclear weapons.

The idea of eradicating nuclear weapons and, hopefully, weapons of mass destruction and even the abolition of war--at least, making it unequivocally a criminal activity as the 1928 Treaty of Paris (often referred to as the Kellogg-Briand Pact or the General Treaty for the Renunciation

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[5] See https://www.globalzero.org

Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies
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of War) has sought to do-is not an achievement that is going to be easily realized, despite the re-emerging popular support it has been gaining. War has long been viewed as not “contrary to the law of nature” and, therefore, not contrary to the law of nations (Tuck, 2005). This view has been with us since the seventeenth century and has formed the basis for the war culture that now pervades national and international societies. The U.S.’ exertion of pressure on states not to give support to or to withdraw support from the NWB treaty, therefore, (this treaty came into force on January 22, 2021), should be understood in this cultural context.

Getting rid of something such as nuclear weapons or the social institution of war itself (if the latter were to be realized) does not by itself deal with the wider problems associated with that which has been banished. There must be something affirming that can concurrently replace that which is being disposed of or otherwise eradicated. Despite the war-instilling culture that now pervades national and international life, there is a modicum of security that is varyingly provided by national armed forces. Simply removing this modicum, along with nuclear weapons—a very praiseworthy course of action—would bring into being something disaffirming, most likely a general state of anarchy that would defeat the ends being sought by abolishing nuclear weapons. In a more fundamental sense, security for human beings cannot be assured if at the earliest stages of a would-be, comprehensive global *community*, there were the fear of a return of an international *society*, with all the latter’s expressions of selfishness and aggression. Indeed, the people of national societies (including those most deeply inspired by the prospect of an emerging global community) would oppose the type of disarmament just touched on, if there were no prospect of a system of common security, including a just sharing of material and cultural returns from common efforts. This brings us to what must be done to replace the existing, community-disenabling international security system.

Moral and Intellectual Solidarity

The existing system of security has been one constructed out of a war culture, the legality of which we touched on in the preceding subsection. Thus, getting rid of a weapons system, or even all weapons could be reversed anytime, because the cultural expressions of war would still be with us. The makers of arms, the suppliers of weapon-makers, the “defense” bureaucracy (often the largest national employers), the families of members of the armed forces, the military bases, the patterns of production and trade, along with military alliances and targeted enemies, the curricula offerings of schools, colleges and universities, the attitudes—steeped in patriotic songs, statutes, flags, distorted and distorting histories, the myths linked to heroes, and the lives of individuals and groups captured in literature and films, along with an integrating ideology, all form the war culture that remains and could again become dominant.

To avoid a fear of such a return, one could begin with Article 109 (3) of the U. N. Charter which, grounded in the “San Francisco Promise” acknowledges that the existing Charter--which was and has been unsatisfying to many--could be subject to complete review in ten years. In 1955, an effort to that end has stalled since. Such an attempt should be pursued to correspond to the disarmament efforts between now and 2045. Under such a review, in the spirit of Wilson’s Fourteen Points,[6]*national* arms could be reduced to police forces and a common defense arrangement

[6] This is a reference to the integrated body of proposals made by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, articles 3, 4, and 14 of which, respectively, provide for equality of trade conditions among all nations, the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety, and a general association of all nations to offer mutual guarantees of security for each and all countries.

created, consistent with the emerging security needs (including that of the environment) of the globe at large that would, by this time, be without nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The national constitutions of some countries (such as Germany, Italy, and Japan, among others) already provide for such a contingency.

Disarmament and modified national or global constitutions, while suggesting important moral and intellectual solidarity, are insufficient to build and sustain the community Nazrul is, in his poem, seeking. We need, in addition, a culture of peace, as part of a transforming social order and a built world-wide body of sentimental ideals, around which a new public emotion can sustainably constituted. This is what Article 28 of the UDHR and Nazrul's poem are suggesting to us.

Culture of Peace

By "culture of peace" we mean those patterns of human behavior, those lifeways, beliefs, values, and principles, along with their associated institutional arrangements that promote mutual sharing, mutual well-being, as well as an equality that recognizes the moral royalty and priceless worth of every human being, differences among them, a sacred stewardship of nature, and the equitable sharing of the Earth's and outer space's resources among human beings and all other living things (Boulding, 2000, p.1). The culture also offers and cultivates mutual security for all humankind, through an ever-deepening sense of our kinship and species identity, as well as our relatedness to the Earth, which itself is a living thing.

Nazrul, as in the case of Prince Arjuna, spoke of this kinship; he did so implicitly and explicitly; he spoke about mutual aid, to common experiences and sought escape from pain (even within the borders of affluent nations) to the sharing of the Earth's resources, to respect for the resources of nature--the "veins of exhausted earth," and to life as well as the social forms on it. In very few of his poems are these features of his work more evident that "Pioneers," in which he invokes common effort and concern of "every land" on a march to the socio-political and moral changes he envisioned.

> *Ireland, Arabia, Egypt, Korea, China*
> *Norway, Spain, Russia—we're indebted to all*
> *We sense blood-kinship with them/ we are comrades of a shared pain*
> *We're everyone every land!*
> *timeless travelers, with forceful steps—march on*!! (Kamal, 1999, p. 86)

March on to the social and international order where the pain of one is the pain of all, including Kurds, Palestinians, Kashmiri, and indigenous peoples (Rubin, 1976). While he did not specify the particular institutional forms to be associated with the values and vision he espoused, he would (in my view) support the type of U.N. that would not only assume the responsibility for the security of all countries and peoples, but—in accordance with article 56 of its Charter—the terms of which members "pledge themselves to take joint and separate action," in co-operation with the U.N. to "promote a) higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development; b) solutions to international economic, social, health and related problems; and international cultural and educational co-operation; and c) and universal respect for and observance of, human rights…"[7] In short, a radically altered international

[7] See Arts. 55 and 56 of the UN Charter (https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text).

Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies
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order, when the end of war is added to the reformed social and economic emphases and their allied institutions.

That altered order, of course, must also have--among its institutions--those which can help to find peaceful solutions to human conflicts, which will continue, not unlike the immediate or extended family. Chapter VI of the U.N. Charter, which provides for pacific settlement of disputes, contains references tosome of these institutions: mediation, arbitration, and judicial settlement, among others, for example. The recently established International Criminal Court and the older International Court of Justice, would have to be refined; and the Permanent Court of Arbitration upgraded and broadened. With such refinements and upgrading, the "rotting old and dying decrepit" will not only be "wiped out for good," as he contended in his "The Ecstasy of Destruction," but, also serve as the launching of "the birth pain of a new creation." (Huda, 1997, p. 93). Without such creation and destruction, even the admirable spirit of initiatives such as the 1974 proposals for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) or the 1995 Report of the Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighborhood*--a report which sees other people, throughout the world, as neighbors, regardless of position and location, and the world, as a whole as a neighborhood--will have little chance of succeeding (Payoyo, 1995).

Cosmopolis and Public Emotion

There is one last area that must be covered, before the "flute-call of unity" can have its call evoke the type of world-wide consciousness and felt intimacy for the common and equal pain and humiliation Nazrul spoke to. Cosmopolis must be sufficiently inclusive and defined by certain political or public emotions. The consciousness itself, without the inclusiveness or intimacy, can be encountered in a poem of another poet, who also had a vision of the future—one frequently quoted in the English-speaking world. It is "Locksley Hall," by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, which, in part, reads as follows:

> *For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see*
> *Saw a Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be*
> ...
> *Till the war-drum throbb'd no longer/and the battle-flagswere furl'd*
> *In the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World.* (Kennedy, 2007)

Here Tennyson envisions a world federation, but it was not the inclusive type of unity Nazrul sought. There would be no war, as we know it, but there would not be a community, because it would be constructed on the same social class and racial cleavages that define society and the British Empire represented. As such, it could have some degree of military and political unity, but not a social, moral, and intellectual one. Cosmopolis, within which people enjoy equal dignity, the sensibility, and the kinship-like connectedness to feel pain equally, throughout the world, would be absent. The "decrepit" would still be present. This is not the type of unity Nazrul sought.

Tennyson did not place his federation within the context of public emotions, either, except for that largely composed by commerce ("saw the heaven filled with commerce, argosies for magic sails, / Pilots of purple twilight dropping down with costly bales;/…"). Nazrul did not give us, in any single poem, as did Rabindranath Tagore did in his *Amar Shonar Bangla*— "My Bengal of Gold, / I love you. / Forever your skies,/ Your air, set my heart in tune/As if it were a flute." He did, however, in a variety of poems create the possibility for such emotions. So, I will come to this in the concluding paragraphs.

Let it suffice here to say that human beings do not respond well, individually, or collectively, to that which is rendered in the abstract, only. That rendering must have ideals around which sentiments can cluster--we can call them "sentimental ideals." One can look at national anthems, in countries, in general, and the constructed historical heroes and the values they are made to embody; so, too, are the myths from which the young learn. The question for us, at this juncture, is how the sentimental ideal of the global community envisioned by Nazrul might be made operational in a psychological and emotional vein. How can the social and international order envisioned by article 28 of the UDHR, and the values of the Nazul poem we are discussing, come into being with the public emotions required, without constructing myths or creating false heroes?

A partial answer to the question can be found in the scholarship of a group of thinkers and in new explorations of neuroscience, as well as Nazrul's poems and songs. The group of women I will call the "social flesh" thinkers. They, among other things, give flesh to the abstractions of Plato, Mo Tzu, authors of the *Gita*, in addition to furthering our understanding of community and its possibilities. They ask us to think of human associations such as the city, cosmopolis, not in terms of buildings, offices, packed streets, commercial transaction, only, but more so terms of an entity that has flesh and bones, as humans do, with vulnerability to ambition, disappointments, humiliation, sickness, pain, death (after all it does contain, and is constituted by, human beings), complicated aspirations, and memories,including nostalgia. They are centers of love, hatred, anger, wonder, delight, griefs, longing (Beasley & Bacchi, 2007; Betcher, 2014; Butler, 2015; Nussbaum, 2013).

Central to the idea and experience of the city are complex *relationships*, out of which are born the sorrows, cruelties, the love and flourishing, along with the promises made, relied on, dashed, and within which dreams are fashioned, and accountability carved. They, the relationships, are the sources of some of the most daring imaginings and visions, including those of Nazrul. The community, the world community, envisioned by the first-quoted lines (in this article) of Nazrul poem ask us to reflect and act on the basis of those relationships, as a social and moral obligation.

Developmental psychology and social neuroscience have come to affirm, if not bless, Nazrul's vision, as has (as mentioned earlier) the life of forests and the operation of our genes, and the very idea of science. Human beings grow and develop throughout their lives, and the human brain changes, over time, with changes that can only be properly understood by locating biology in the context of individual and social interactions and relationships—relationships with other human individuals and groups (Schutt et. al., 2015). The brain, of infants and young people, as well as that of older individuals (and one should re-examine the poem "Pioneers" for Nazrul's interest in young people) responds to templates of values, beliefs, norms, and actual interactions people engage in. We are, therefore, predisposed to change, and few (if any) of the ends we envision are beyond us. What is left to be touched on is the role of the individual and the public emotion to which we just referred.

The Individual and the Community

The emphasis on community in this article, does not suggest any de-emphasis on the individual and her or his role in human association. On the contrary, unlike those who see themselves as belonging to the worldview called liberalism (which espouses beliefs in the self-made, autonomous individual and is suspicious of community's claim on that autonomy), the individual, as elaborated in Nazrul's thinking, has a central role to play in community. She or he is the center of its imaginings, its creative ideas, and a focal participant (along with community) in the evaluation and validation of those ideas and imaginings. She or he is also the seat of

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understanding (independent of any need to rely on priest, temple, or mosque) (Huda, 1997, p. 266; Seneca, 1969, p. 86), theoretical and applied, along with the potential for the recognition of and development intothe noble and the great (Reid, 1969).

All great human accomplishments, whether in art, politics, ethics, science, or human association, are unconfined by national borders. This does not mean they do not, in part, have a local or national origin; their greatness, however, resides not in their locality or temporality but in their relationship to the human family and the universe at large and to a certain timelessness. Those who seek to limit us to an individual and national self, or individual or national love (the latter called patriotism) are not only immature and self-defeating,[8] but are imposing on us, including the young, a restriction or limitation that is difficult to bear; and, for the "great soul," a limitation that is impossible to endure. As such, the individual is at once the seat and the bridge to the world-wide family, hopefully conscious, as the Buddhists have taught us, that from birth, we are part of a biological, literary, moral, physical-chemical, political, scientific, social, and symbolic network that nurtures, enriches, and fulfills as well as sponsors images that energize and catapult the imagination and the will.

The community, including non-human nature, is also a center of learning. Out of that learning and development, we construct our public emotions, with images consistent with the world-wide community that human beings, proleptically, embody and represent. Taking "Noble India!" and "Pioneer," together with "Human Being," and "Coolies and Laborers," perhaps an anthem for the worldwide community can find some of its beginnings, especially as the works of other poets from throughout the world are included.

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[8] One has but to look at patriotism and nationalism in respect of vaccines to deal with Covid-19. The pandemic knows borders and leaving out some portions of the world from access to vaccines or giving preferences to one's citizens or nationals offer those nationals no safety.

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Notes on Contributor

Winston Langley is professor emeritus of political science and international relations and senior fellow at the McCormack Graduate School for Policy and Global Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston. He is also the former provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs of that university, where he has taught for over 35 years. Among his publications are The Encyclopedia of Human Rights; Women's Rights in the United States; and Kazi Nazrul Islam: The Voice of Poetry and the Struggle for Human Wholeness. His most recent book (co-edited with Dr. Hasan Aydin) was Human Rights in Turkey: Assaults on Human Dignity, which Springer Press published.