

# WORLD NAZRUL CONGRESS 2020

ON

*EQUALITY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND FRATERNITY*



December 27–29, 2020

**Nazrul Center for Social and Cultural Studies**

**KAZI NAZRUL UNIVERSITY, INDIA**

Kazi Nazrul Islam, the illustrious poet is generally characterized as the “Bidrohi Kobi” or the poet of rebellion. While there are enough grounds to look at him that way, his poetic universe however transcends any specific classification, as it contains multiple thematics, wider imaginative flourish and global ramifications. His poetics, his general literary *oeuvre*, and his life-long activism can however be summarised as a quest for an equal world marked by fraternity and cohesion, a dream that can be actualized only through the ethos of equal rights for all. He is already a well-known voice in the South Asian subcontinent but his message of cosmopolitanism, peace and equal rights for all as articulated in his vast literary corpus should be globalized for wider dissemination of principles of equality, global amity, brotherhood and peace.

Nazrul began as a subaltern voice, hailing from a rural backdrop, struggling for his living all through, had to even work as a soldier under the British Army in the Karachi cantonment during the First World War. His literary dispatches from the barracks created ripples among the mainstream Calcutta literati in early twentieth century Bengal, as his diction, ethical realism, tonality and aesthetic philosophy were markedly different from conventional mores of literary articulations. Although he was initially published in various fringe magazines and cultural platforms, very soon his resounding poetic talent was recognized across the board for its unique diction, uplifting cadence, and its remarkable content of humanism, and

radical hope. His perennial words and expressions in all his textual practices earned him immense popularity and he emerged as a leading literary voice in Bengal, motivating the vanguards of the anti-colonial struggle in India through his inspiring words and rhapsodies of poetic exuberance. His seminal works such as *Bidhrohi* (The Rebel), *Samyobadi* (The Egalitarian), *Agnibina* (The Blazing Lyre), etc became household names in the Indian subcontinent. He was even imprisoned by the colonial rulers for his valiant editorials published in his journal *Dhumketu* (*The Comet*), *Nabayug* (*The New Dawn*) and *Gonobani* (*The Collective Voice*). Continued surveillance and harassment by the British rulers, his economic hardship and his struggle to get recognition in the mainstream literary sphere of that time, could not dampen his indomitable spirit and courage to resist all forms of oppression and social division. Nazrul, through his vast literary corpus epitomised the spirit of humanism, equality and amity for all. Through his works he tried to fraternize warring groups, asking for harmony and cooperation – a mission that had far reaching consequences in a subcontinent which was plagued by communal tension, colonial tyranny and other forms of social and cultural conflicts.

Along with fictional texts, poems and essays, Nazrul also emerged as a highly popular exponent of Bengali songs, his vast repertoire of songs and poems were marked by the use of Urdu or 'Farsi' words, something unprecedented in the pantheon of Bengali literature or song writing. His immensely popular songs, commonly known as *Nazrul Geeti*, vast and varied in their enormous range, encompass heterogenous and mind-boggling ranges of devotional songs (*Aradhona Sangeet*), patriotic songs, songs celebrating Nature, song rendition for some of his poetic compositions, songs composed for various dramatic productions, Islamic songs, *Gazals*, miscellaneous songs based on international melodies, classical ragas, radio songs, etc. His songs were also enlivened by the predominant presence of Arabic or Persian melodies and other enriching influences of Middle Eastern musicology, a feature that also uniquely enriched Bengali song traditions. Being a Muslim himself, he scripted devotional songs for Goddess Kali, a popular religious icon in Hindu theological pantheon. This speaks volumes for the syncretic tradition of composite culture embodied and practiced in India since long and Nazrul perfectly materialized that tradition of cosmopolitanism and plurality in all his artistic and literary works. The legacy of Nazrul continues today and his philosophy of radical hope, fraternity and activism is more than pertinent today when we are engulfed in internecine strife.

The *World Nazrul Congress 2020* revisits the liberal and humanitarian legacy of Nazrul, it intends to reengage with his everlasting words – “... Of equality I sing / where all barriers and differences / between man and man have vanished/ where Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and Christians/ have mingled together. Of equality I sing ...”

As the world today is engulfed in racial, religious and class-oriented conflicts, Nazrul's immemorial and pioneering voice ushers in a ray of hope – “The helpless nation is about to drown, knowing not how to swim / Helmsman ! now is the hour of test for your vow to free the Motherland/ Who is there that asks, "What are they, Hindu or Muslim ?"/ Helmsman, say – it's humanity which drowns – my own mother's offspring !” This is a clear clarion call for human amity and connectedness, transcending all attempts of vicious division making because as Nazrul said the task eternal is not mutual animosity but

collective endeavours for a new dawn of possibilities: “Awake – / Awake all the starving millions in fetters !/Arise all the oppressed, ill–fated human souls !.../ There's the message bursting out of/the depths of oppressed mankind :/ Behold, there comes today a New World/ with a New Birth !” The *World Nazrul Congress 2020* disseminates this avowal of Nazrul for a new world of peace and collective striving.

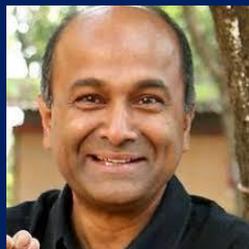
Speakers from various countries will deliberate on different aspects of Nazrul`s works and its global implications in today`s world plagued with violence and injustice.

Details with specific dates will be available very soon at <https://www.knu.ac.in>

## Invited Distinguished Speakers:



Rafiqul Islam, Eminent Nazrul Scholar and Biographer, National Professor, Bangladesh and Professor Emeritus and Adviser to the Centre for Bangla Studies, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh



Dilip Menon, Mellon Chair Professor in Indian Studies, University Witwatersrand, South Africa



Ananya Jahanara Kabir, Professor of English, Kings College, London



Rachel McDermott, Professor and Chair of Asian and Middle Eastern Cultures,  
Barnard College, Columbia University



Radha Chakravarty, Professor of Comparative Literature & Translation Studies at  
Ambedkar University



Dietriz Reetz, Senior Research Fellow & Associate Professor, Leibniz-Zentrum  
Moderner Orient & Freie Universität, Berlin



Neilesh Bose, Associate Professor of History and Canada Research Chair in  
Global and Comparative History at University of Victoria, Canada



Sumita Chakraborty, Former Professor, University of Burdwan and Eminent Nazrul Scholar



Winston Langley, Professor Emeritus and Senior Fellow at the McCormack Graduate School for Policy and Global Studies, Boston, Massachusetts



Liesl Schwabe, Director, Writing Program, Yeshiva College, New York



Gulshan Ara, Eminent Nazrul Researcher, USA, she established Nazrul Endowments at the University of Connecticut, Connecticut and California State University, California



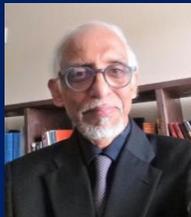
Ekram Ahmed, Former Executive Director, Kobi Nazrul Institute, Dhaka, Bangladesh



Amitava Chakraborty, Associate Professor, Modern Indian Languages and Literary Studies, University of Delhi



Ehsan Ghabool, Assistant Professor, Department of Persian Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran



Mustofa Munir, Nazrul Scholar, Poet and Translator, Texas, USA



Md. Amedur Rashid Choudhury, Publisher and Editor of free speech website *Suddhadhar*, Writer in Exile, currently living in Norway

Distinguished Invited Artists and Performers:



Subodh Sarkar, Eminent and Award-Winning Bengali Poet & Associate Professor,  
City College, Kolkata



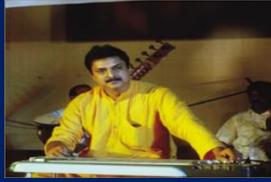
Shri Monomoy Bhattacharya, Eminent Bengali Singer



Ferdous Ara, Renowned Vocal Artist, Bangladesh



Smt. Kalyani Kazi & Kazi Anirban, Descendants of Nazrul Islam, & Musical Artist  
and Painter



Kazi Arindam, Descendant of Nazrul Islam and Guitar Artist



Ruchira Jain, Vocal artist of All India Radio and *Doordarshan*



Jiniya Ray, Assistant Professor, Department of Bengali, Women Christian College, Kolkata, Art and Music Researcher



T M Ahmed Kaysher, Director at *Saudha*, Leeds, United Kingdom



Saurav Moni, Indian Folk Singer and Music Researcher



Niknaz Mirghalami, Musician *Tanbour* Player, Composer, Dance Artist, Tehran, Iran



Aitor Alarcon Solana, Classical Guitarist, Madrid, Spain

**Patron**

Professor Sadhan Chakraborti  
Vice Chancellor  
Kazi Nazrul University

**Convenors:**

Dr. Swati Guha  
Professor Anindya Sekhar Purakayastha

Kazi Nazrul University

<https://www.knu.ac.in/>

For queries: [ncscs@knu.ac.in](mailto:ncscs@knu.ac.in)