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*Portrayal of women in Indian English fictions
and human rights*

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Abstract:

A person has "human rights," or inherent entitlements, just by virtue of their humanity. Everyone, regardless of background, race, religion, sexual orientation, or country of origin, has this as a fundamental human right. Human rights are vital for the full and equal participation in society of every member, and as such, they should be safeguarded and made accessible to everyone. The defence of human rights is an area where literature has made significant contributions. We may find the solace, hope, enthusiasm, and fortitude to fight for a better future for ourselves and the world around us in literature. Novels, short tales, and other works of literature reflect society as a whole. Novelists writing in English from India have a great awareness of the underlying incongruities with which we are constantly confronted in our daily lives. R.K. Narayan's heroes show the ironies of life, while his heroines show the plight of ordinary housewives who are denied basic civil liberties. Great humanitarian Mulk Raj Anand cares deeply about the plight of his fellow humans. The miserable existence of Assamese tea plantation workers is shown by Manohar Malgoankar. Kamla Markandeya draws attention to the dismal living circumstances of Indian farmers. Women's lack of access to social justice is shown by Anita Desai. The cases of sexual assault of minors are brought to light by Khuswant Singh and Salman Rushdie. Thus, literature conveys the human experience, touching the hearts of people wronged by the denial of fundamental human rights.

Keywords:

Human rights, literature, women, injustice, incongruity.

1. Introduction:

Since literature and Human Rights are mutually enhancing, the former may be seen as a powerful and abundant resource for correlating and studying the notions of the latter. Human rights are as ancient as the arts themselves. Art is nourished by life itself, making it not just an artistic expression exposing a deep aesthetic construct, but also a messenger of social and human meaning. This aesthetic preoccupation may be seen, for example, in the investigation and articulation of Human Rights. Literature, probably more than any other creative form, deals with and describes life in all its many forms. In doing so, literature not only immerses itself in the vicarious potential of human-rights notions, but also lays the way for interdisciplinary readings of these connected fields. These apparently unrelated fields are really very interconnected, especially at the theoretical, practical, and pedagogical levels. The purpose of this paper is to get an appreciation for Indian fiction written in English by analysing selected works in order to better grasp the Human Rights principles buried within them. The research plans to progress as a sociological and deconstructive interpretation of the selected literary works. Human rights problems would be problematized via a study of women's depiction in selected works of English-language Indian fiction. Women, God's most precious creation, are often the victims of violence and abuse. Women make for about half of India's population. From death forward, women have no legal protections. The birth of a female child is seen negatively in many communities in India. That is dangerous to women's very survival. It's shocking all over again that women in the male world are clueless about their own rights. Most don't get to experience childhood at all, and others are even treated like slaves as adults.

The defence of human rights is an area where literature has made significant contributions. An essential and vital part of the fight to safeguard human rights is literature, and the purpose of such works is to unite the literary impulse with the drive to act. Human rights are promoted, either explicitly or implicitly, through works of literature that address such topics. The works of Indian authors who write in English reflect Indian culture and society. Novelists writing in English from India have a great awareness of the underlying incongruities with which we are constantly confronted in our daily lives. They don't question the truth since it's already been laid out for them. They have a detached, sardonic perspective on society and its progress, and they accept reality without complaint.

Some established authors, like Mulk Raj Anand, have strong reactions to the inequality, poverty, and prejudice they see in the world today. Others, like R.K. Narayan, prefer to remain on the sidelines and don't see the value in intervening or making changes. That's why R.K.

Narayan writes in Mr. Sampath (1949) that trying to "analyse, criticise, and attempt to set things right anywhere" is a "futile and presumptuous occupation.". R.K. Narayan's main characters represent all strata of society. Narayan's heroes are conscious of social and political developments, but they do not take sides or do acts of responsibility until it serves to highlight their humanity, as R.S. Singh so well puts it. The depiction of life's ironies in a comical light is his primary interest. Their primary goal is to highlight the hypocrisy of ideals, ambitions, and pride without guiding the society in any particular direction; they expose the denial and privation of human rights and probe the ills of society too, but never for sadistic pleasure or for scathing disgust among readers.

When it comes to everyday rights and responsibilities, housewives in India are often denied them, as seen in R. K. Narayan's 'The Dark Room' (1938). They have little to no interest in exercising the equality guaranteed by Article 14 of the Indian Constitution. Savitri represents all the oppressed housewives in our society who are used and abused. Graham Greene claims that the educational system is flawed because it "makes us (nothing but) morons, cultural morons, but efficient clerks for all your business and administrative offices" in his novel "The English Teacher" (1945). (9] R.K. Narayan's books are therefore more of a social record than a creative creation.

In order to examine the follies, eccentricities, and other problems of a society in which fundamental human rights are denied to everyone, Mulk Raj Anand chose a key figure through whose point of view he looks. Therefore, Anand is a wonderful humanist whose primary focus is the plight of humans. The economic exploitation of the poorer sections of society and the existing class prejudice that causes substantial inequality are important themes in Anand's works. The oppressed members of Indian society are shown to be in a pitiful state in Anand's 'Untouchable' (1935), which also exposes the hypocrisy of the current Brahmin class. The film "Coolie" (1936) sheds attention on the struggles of low-income workers. The 'establishment' is exposed in "The Road" (1961) because doing so is the first step towards a future where everyone is free to pursue their own version of pleasure without interference. In particular, his writings depict the misery of India's impoverished in minute detail.

Retired Indian army lieutenant colonel Manohar Malgoankar has shown his mettle as a writer in addition to his mettle on the battlefield. His book "Combat for Shadow" (1964) vividly depicts the miserable existence of workers in the Assamese tea industry. The story sheds attention on the exploitation of tea plantation workers and their denial of basic social and legal protections. The Princes (1943) shows the problems that arise when royal palaces become hubs

of intrigue and luxury. The protagonist of the story is a leader of a reformist movement challenging the political corruption and monopoly of power of his day. In "A Bend in the Ganges," set in 1964, we see how sectarian disturbances turn Hindus and Muslims against one other and destroy the social and religious tranquility that existed between them. Both populations were subjected to unspeakable cruelty, but Muslims eventually came to see Hindus as an even greater threat than the British.

Kamla Markandey is also very cognizant of several pressing societal concerns. The book 'Handful of Rice' (1996) by this author demonstrates the significance of rice to the lives of the underprivileged. The pre-independence plight of the peasant class is explored in "Nectar in a Sieve" (1954). In India, rice is grown by farmers who stand in water up to their knees while enduring the scorching heat of the sun. Rice is God's precious gift to these farmers, and it is like honey to them. They put forth a lot of effort to grow rice, but they can't keep it in their homes. Rice, like water, which can't be contained in a sieve, always seems to find its way into the corn-bins of landlords and moneylenders. Millions of rural Indian women in "Nectar in a Sieve" (1954) are shown in a heartbreaking light. Rukmini exemplifies the plight of rural Indian women who are denied proper recognition and compensation for their efforts. They accept a lifetime of prejudice, discrimination, and dehumanisation as inevitable. Every possible hardship is visited upon Rukmani and her peasant family by a brutal and unfair social system. The novelist's goal is to strike at the unfair current social and economic system in rural India by depicting the plight of the ordinary rural people. Novelist Anita Desai's primary focus is on the protagonist, who she uses to investigate larger societal themes. The issue of 'misfit marriages' is discussed at length in the 1963 film "Cry, the Peacock." Maya is a young woman at the height of her emotional and intellectual development who is forced to marry an elderly man. She gives little weight to the Constitution's guarantee of the right to life and liberty under Article 21. The film "The Village by the Sea" (1982) sheds light on the reality of India's poor. Khushwant Singh also discusses a wide range of human concerns. One of the best books of Indo-Aryan literature, 'Train to Pakistan' was published in 1956 and was his first attempt at writing in the genre. Images of actual communal violence that broke out during India's division are shown. In his work "The Company of Women" (1999), he writes about youngsters who have been sexually abused. In the story, Molly reveals that her uncle, her mother's younger brother, who was twenty years her senior, sexually abused her. Beast! used my naiveté and vulnerability to their advantage" Shushantika, another main character, states, "I was sixteen when I was first sexually exploited." The deflowering was not a romantic gesture. My own uncle, the youngest sibling of my dad. In most cases like these, you can rely on the advice of

a trusted relative. At first glance, kissing and snuggling seemed to be completely safe. Then, after he believed he had me worked up, he began rubbing my crotch and toying with my breasts. In his book *Shame* (1983), Salman Rushdie describes the plight of Bihari Muslims (also known as Mohajirs) in Pakistan after the partition of India. The group faces discrimination and must fight hard to get equal rights in the country. The term "Scheduled Caste" is used to describe the status of males from lower castes in Hindu society, which is discussed at length in *"The Satanic Verses"* (1988). The irony that Tmen aren't permitted to use the village well to get water is meant to be a condemnation of the rigid social divides that exist in Indian culture. In his book *"The Moor's Last Sigh,"* Salman Rushdie exposes church corruption, including instances in which horny young priests try to take advantage of vulnerable young women. Rushdie has strong feelings on the sexual abuse of minors. Uma Saraswati, an art student at M.S. University, Baroda, reveals that she was sexually molested as a youngster by her uncle (her father's colleague). She had been orphaned at an early age but hailed from a reputable Gujrati Brahmin family. Uma was only twelve years old when her depressed mother committed herself by hanging, and her crazed father followed suit. His father's teaching colleague had taken pity on Uma and paid for her education in exchange for sexual favours (so not's gentle' either), saving her from a life of abject poverty. Every nation and state has an inherent responsibility to guarantee its citizens access to basic necessities like food and healthcare. Every citizen, regardless of their gender, race, religion, socioeconomic status, or other identifiers, should exercise these rights. Human rights violations are commonplace nowadays. Human rights violations are reported in the media on a near-constant basis. Human rights, taken seriously, refer to everyone's entitlement to life, liberty, equality, and the preservation of their inherent worth and dignity, regardless of their race, religion, or gender. Every nation has a significant challenge when it comes to protecting and preserving basic human rights. Custodial violence, prostitution, trafficking, domestic abuse, and cultural practises like FGM and son preference are all examples of violence against women. From birth to death, women's human rights are infringed. Sex tests are so widely used in our society that they even deny female infants the right to life. Women in India are second-class citizens; in fact, the vast majority have no legal protections at all. Because they are following the dictates of Manu: first, the will of the father, then the will of the husband, then the will of the sons, and now the will of the daughter-in-law. Human rights must be protected and safeguarded not only by the government, but by every individual citizen as well. Subtypes of Women-Only Violence: Domestic violence is a problem in every nation and every state. This has been a private issue for quite some time, but now it has become a public tragedy.

Women's human rights are often violated by cultural norms in numerous nations. Many detrimental practises are well ingrained in the cultural norms of the community at large. Women in Indian society are generally seen as little more than an accessory to their male relatives or spouses. Karpagam, a friend of Akhila's, mocks Manu's tenets in the book *Ladies Coupe*. Asking, "Who exactly made these rules?" Some guy who couldn't stand the idea that his wife was still appealing to other guys after he was dead". Most of the women in Anita Nair's films feel the weight of Indian culture's expectations for their roles as wives and mothers. Many moms are affected by their sons' tastes. Girls are disproportionately deprived of basic necessities including food, healthcare, and education. Numerous gender reassignment hospitals perform abortions on female foetuses. In Roy's 'The God of Small Things,' Ammu's father retires from his work in Delhi and moves the family to Ayemenen the same year that Ammu finishes school. However, Chacko, the son, is sent to study in Oxford, far away from home. The education of daughters is seen as a waste of resources in Indian patriarchal culture since they are expected to marry outside the family. Thus, a woman's exclusive roles in society are those of caretaker, sex object, and mother to healthy male offspring. Parents of Ammu did not provide a dowry or actively seek a partner for her. Ram in 'Rich Like Us' is granted permission by Marcella to have an affair with her lover, Marcella, and to marry two women, Mona and Rose. Hemant, the husband in "A Married Woman," initially has open attitudes towards his daughter and son, but he changes his mind when Astha becomes pregnant for a second time and expresses a desire for a boy. When it comes to wealth, women are always second to males. Although they take advantage of educational opportunities. However, it also depends on the preferences of the husband's family. Sons are the only ones allowed to choose a profession. They are selected by male family members if given the opportunity to work. They still haven't been paid what they're owed. They may keep the homes as long as they continue to make mortgage payments. Neither they nor their spouse's parents have any legal claim to their property. Rose is killed by her stepson Devilkin because of her ownership stake in the family's property in the book *Rich Like Us*. The laws of society have greater sway. It's unusual to hear of a daughter requesting her fair portion of her father's estate, but this is the case at the house of her in-laws. The legal requirements and field circumstances are both unique. Dowry is one of the worst forms of violence against women. Even if the woman can contribute financially to the household, dowries are still expected. Violence might occur if a dowry is not paid. Numerous incidents go unreported. Human rights violations also include settling marriages between minors (like Bimmy's in "Rich Like Us") without their permission. Pregnancy and marriage at a young age may have long-lasting negative effects on a woman's health. Narayan

Sahgal demonstrates that dowry deaths, in which wives are burned for money, persist in independent India. In this case, the bride is killed by her in-laws even while her spouse is still alive. "The brides' avaricious demands for a larger dowry are unfulfilled."

Because our culture prioritises material possessions and established norms above emotional connections and psychological well-being. There is an urgent need to revise our social laws. Both Sahgal and Arundhati Roy depict the hardships that women face. Their suffering is unfathomable. They will always be doomed to a life of misery. As evidence of Rose's murder, the armless beggar describes how eight officers sexually harassed five women from his hamlet. Police officers took advantage of them. In the book "The God of Small Things," Velutha's passion for a lady from a higher caste leads to his being beaten to a pulp by the police. The way police handle Ammu at the station is likewise a perfect example of a serious breach of human rights. As Ammu said, Inspector Thomas Mathews gazed at his chest. Neither veshyas nor their illegitimate offspring were required to provide testimonies to the Kottayam police, he claimed. A tool in the subjugation of women is rape. No place is secure for the woman. Any location is at risk for rape. For instance, Mariakalanthu is raped by Chettiar's nephew, Murugesan, in the book "Ladies Coupe." Because of him, she is now a single mother. At the time of Pongal, she is the victim of a rape. After he cornered her, he raped her severely. She cries out, "I felt him tear into me, filling me with great anguish," describing the moment she realised how much he had hurt her. Thick, sticky tears that slithered their way through me. My eyelids were firmly pinched together, and tears of a pale, translucent colour squeezed out.

2. Conclusion:

This means that Indian authors who use the English language are highly attuned to social and political events. Inequality, exploitation, discrimination, untouchability, and the denial of human rights are just a few of the issues that prompt them to speak up. In the process of expressing their creative drive, several Indian novelists working in English may be considered the "human rights activist behind mask" for the way they portray social and political issues in their works. Gender roles and the power dynamic between men and women need to be reevaluated. Combating violence against women calls for rethinking how authority and privilege are distributed in our society. Women are considered less important than males in many societies. It will take a long time to change people's mindsets and perspectives about women. Equally crucial to legislative safeguards for women's rights is public education and awareness-raising about the problem of violence against women. When every member of

society shares responsibility for human rights abuses, the National Human Right Commission has no one to place the blame on except itself. NHRC's job is not to monitor every citizen of the nation. No government agency can effectively monitor the whole nation. We the people must rise to the challenge, as it is our civic obligation to do so. Only a widespread awakening, in which people of all backgrounds learn to recognise the inherent worth of every human being, can accomplish this.

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