

# Human Rights in Indian Context: A Look at Indian Mythology, the Constitution, and Literature

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**ABSTRACT:** Human rights are a concept that has been around since the dawn of human society. Its emergence is a consequence of advancement in religiosity, culture, society, and government on a global scale. All of humanity relies on these fundamental principles. Human rights are a vital part of Indian mythology and culture. Numerous social norms and practises have been passed down as part of India's cultural legacy. It creates a favourable setting in which people may flourish socially, politically, economically, spiritually, and ethically. Basic, natural, and inherent rights are all terms used to describe human rights, which are all interconnected and cannot be taken away from anybody. The governments of the world have a responsibility to ensure that all of their citizens are aware of and able to benefit from the protections, equality, dignity, and justice guaranteed by international human rights law in order to create a peaceful global community. The Indian constitution plays a key role in protecting the rights of Indian citizens and keeping them safe from abuse.

**KEYWORDS:** Righteousness, Non-Violence, Untouchability, Transgender Rights, Fraternity, Gender discrimination.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In addition to Hinduism, other major faiths in India include Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, and the country's many varied traditions and Castes reflect this diversity. Human rights have been enshrined in its Vedas for more than four thousand years, making India the world's greatest democracy. Vedas, Puranas, Arthashastra, Dharma Shastra, Epics like Ramayana, Mahabharata, etc., are ingrained in Indian culture, and they are where ideas like equality, the right to life, and civil and political rights were first codified. Human rights are a concept that has been integrated into ancient Indian culture via the teachings of religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, and others. These have to do with how people and cultures change over time. Human rights matter in Hinduism's sacred text, the Rigveda. The Vedas are a collection of sacred texts that promote human values and the worth of every individual existence.

"Rigveda manuscripts have been selected for inscriptions in UNESCO's "Memories of the World" registered in 2007" [1].

Vedas ascertain that 'Happiness' is the fundamental right of mankind. It apprises- "Sarvepisukhinasantusarvesantunirāmayā Sarvebhadraīpaśyanti ma kaśchiddukhābhāgbhavet" i.e.

"Let all be happy, let all be free from diseases, let all see auspicious things and let nobody suffer from grief" [2]. The epics or Vedas of Indian culture are the source of Dharmas which emphasize civil rights. In the Shrimad Bhagavad-Gita, the Lord says-

"Ahamamātāgudakeśasarvabhūtāyasthitah Ahamādiścamadhya ca bhūtānāmantaeva ca"

i.e. "I am the self seated in the hearts of all beings. Therefore, according to our Shastras, all living beings are essentially identical although we make distinctions of each species based on certain arbitrary norms"[3].

Manusmrithi has rightly established the fact that irrespective of age, caste or class to which one belongs, one should fulfill ones duties. One should be equal minded towards all living beings irrespective of gender and religion.

"Dusitoapicareddharmam yatra tatraseramatah Samahsarvesubhutesuna lingam dharmakaranam" [4]

The Indian philosophical concept of "VasudhaikaKutumbam" views the whole cosmos, all human cultures, and all mankind as interconnected. In this view, there is just one God. Everyone has a common humanity and is a creation of the Almighty. There is just one human family, and all men are members.

The rights provide everyone safety from harmful social and political forces. Everyone in the universe, regardless of race, creed, gender, or country of origin, is born with the same inherent human rights.

From the epics and the shastras, we learn that there is a hierarchy of rights and responsibilities known as 'Dharma' in Indian culture. Dharma, the obligations of an individual to society, are sacred in Indian culture.

Everything a human does should be done in accordance with Dharma. Honesty, nonviolence, fairness, uniqueness, and consideration for others are all possible components of these responsibilities. These responsibilities give birth to the rights, and vice versa. By fulfilling his responsibilities, man is granted rights such as the right to life, equality, freedom, protection against exploitation, and so on.

According to Kana Mitra, "Dharma implies justices and propriety as does the word 'right' of the UN Declaration" (Revised material from faith in Human rights, 3 quotation). However, unlike the word 'right,' the connotation of 'Just claim' is not expressly present in dharma.

Human rights are well honoured throughout the Mahabharata, the longest epic. Stories in the Mahabharata highlight civic, political, religious, cultural, educational, and property rights as we see the Kauravas and Pandavas fight for survival. The Mahabharata explores a wide variety of topics, including identical with the liberties of the present day. In the Mahabharata, the concept of 'Dharma' is the central focus of the many stories that make up the epic. Pandava-Kaurava battles symbolise both the upholding and breaking of Dharma. The epic also includes 'the sacred obligation' that links the many personalities shown in the stories.

For the duration of their exile, the Pandavas, who were originally from the Kshatriya caste, are portrayed as Brahmins in the sub-book of the Mahabharata known as Virataparvam. This helps to confirm that the 'right of caste' did indeed prevail in ancient Indian society. Arjuna's transgender allies in 'Bruhannala' support the human rights for the transgender population that are part of the current UDHR. Different characters in the parables of the Mahabharata are seen to embody truth, honesty, and the code of conduct in different ways. The principles of ethics, spirituality, humanism, righteousness, secular organisation, and human existence that are illuminated in the Mahabharata are identical to those enshrined in the modern Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Civil, legal, political, economic, and the right to justice are all advanced by Kautilya's Arthashastra. During his reign, laws were passed guaranteeing women's rights, such as the 'Stridhana' (Women Estate). Stridhana is analogous to modern criminal code. Arthashastra tames ethical standards, which have a disproportionate impact on society. It details the role of the monarch in the government, the policies of the legal system, helps to settle legal disputes, addresses economic and social issues, and facilitates efficient, orderly administration.

Islam also connotes the need to live a moral life.

Poets like Saint Kabir and Thulsidas, thinkers like Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, and social reformers like Raja Ram all contributed to the development of our modern understanding of what it means to do what is right.

Mohan Roy and Rabindranath Tagore, in line with Articles 21-A of the Indian Constitution, advocated for girls' education and the empowerment of women and spoke out against child marriage and widow remarriage.

Inspiring young Indians with his speeches on national growth and independence, Swami Vivekananda is widely regarded as India's greatest philosopher. He spoke out against taboos in society such as untouchability and religious bigotry. 'Every human being has the right to ask the reason, why, and to have his query answered by himself, if he only takes the bother,' he says. [7]

Swami Dayanand Saraswati promoted equality, education for everyone, and marriages amongst widows. He took a stand against the social norms of untouchability and caste prejudice.

Human rights as we know them now emerged in India during British rule in the 18th and 19th centuries. All of our civil and political rights were at stake, as well as our freedom, justice, equality, and brotherhood. After India gained its independence, it laid a solid foundation for human rights.

Mulkraj Anand was the first Indian writer in English to become popular internationally as an English novelist and short story writer. He received a civilian honour Padma Bhushan. He wrote many novels like Untouchable, Coolie, Two Leaves and a Bud, The Village so on. He was a great humanist and his novels constitute penurious people who were the victims in the Indian society. He delineated the pathetic condition and divergence of a weaker section, superstitions, hardships in the society through central character of the novels. [7] The protagonist of his novels may be a coolie, a sweeper, washer man, a labourer or a hide gatherer acclimatized to suppression, exploitation, inhumanity of the upper level mankind. His novels reflect the thirst of basic rights for poor. He wrote against injustice and adverse experiences of the deprived people. In his novels, he depicts the businessman, money lenders, higher officials of British native rulers, Brahmins and priests are the aggressors on the underprivileged sections of the society which reveals the breaking

of human rights like right to life and equality. Hariharan writings are peculiar represents myth and conventional stories embrace with different events, various characters distinctly ancient but interwoven with the current circumstances and characters of her stories, as mythology is a part of Indian community and its lifestyle. Through myth she illustrates cultures, traditions in the society, liberty and the human values. She tried to articulate on the identity of a woman in the family, society and her complications, limitations in the male dominating society. In Arundati Roy's "God of Small Things" through different characters in the novel, she represented the caste, religious dissimilarities embedded in the society. Politics human relations, marriage, love, disloyalty are also the elements of the story which accord Booker Prize in 1997. Roy's God of Small Things is a Kerala family story of Christian community it encompass on caste system prevailed in Southern India. Ammu, Velutha, Margaret, Rahel, Chacko, Kochamma are the deferent characters binds with caste system, social, emotional relationships where the novel intervenes with present, past incidents and memories. Several different explanations were proposed. One theory was that the state's sizable Christian minority was to blame. St. Thomas the Apostle, on his way East after the Resurrection, converted one hundred Brahmins to Christianity; these Syrian Christians, who made up 20% of Kerala's population, claim they are direct descendants of the apostle. This quite simplistic argument claimed that Marxism could easily stand in for Christianity in terms of structure. The shape and aim of the voyage remained same even when God was replaced by Marx, Satan by the capitalists, Heaven by a classless society, and the Church by the Party. It's a race with obstacles and a finish line with a reward. The Hindu mind, on the other hand, required more intricate adaptations. [19] The narrative focuses on the plight of a victimised woman named Ammu, who is separated from her loved ones and forced to raise her children alone. Ammu and Velutha, two outcasts, fall in love and suffer the repercussions of their secret relationship being exposed.

## II. CONCLUSION

Human rights are a central theme in Indian mythology and culture, which date back millennia. 'VasudaikaKutumbam' means 'the whole universe is one family.' The Rigveda proclaims the rights to life and equitable treatment for everyone. The Buddha himself preached the rights and responsibilities of mankind. Eventually, the Indian constitution took up the reins and codified the natural rights into a set of basic rights, obligations, and guiding principles. The time was dominated by the work of Indian authors who, via their development of subject-aware, intersubjective, and interactive works, illuminated social, economic, political, and cultural prospects. Thus, human rights and dignity are firmly rooted in Indian society and culture from antiquity to the present day.

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