VIDYASAGAR UNIVERSITY

Journal of the Department of English, Vidyasagar University
UGC-CARE Enlisted (previously) National Level Peer Reviewed Annual Journal

ISSN 0973-3671
Call for Papers: Volume 20, 2027

The Department of English Literature, Language and Cultural Studies

Vidyasagar University

Call for Papers
on
Literature and Human Rights

In 1948, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights articulated the foundational principle that all human beings are equal in dignity and rights, irrespective of differences of nationality, gender, race, class, or belief. Conceived as natural, universal, and inalienable, human rights challenge the legitimacy of governments that fail to safeguard them. Yet, despite their normative force, human rights remain historically contingent and unevenly implemented. The discourse of rights developed through multiple global processes including colonialism, slavery, imperial expansion, Cold War politics, global capitalism, and postcolonial struggles. Concepts such as humanitarianism, dignity, and justice possess complex intellectual genealogies that challenge Eurocentric accounts of universalism. The tension between the universal aspirations of human rights and the political realities of nation-states remains a central concern. Political theorist Hannah Arendt famously argued that stateless persons are deprived of the "right to have rights," revealing how political belonging determines access to legal protections. Refugees, migrants, and displaced populations continue to demonstrate the fragility of rights frameworks when citizenship is absent or precarious. International institutions such as the United Nations often struggle to enforce rights effectively, particularly when states simultaneously endorse and violate global rights norms.

The relationship between literature and human rights is reciprocal and dynamic. Literary forms influence how injustice is narrated, how victims and perpetrators are represented, and how readers emotionally engage with suffering. At the same time, human rights discourse shapes literary production, interpretation, and critical methodologies. Scholars such as Julie Stone Peters have traced the genealogy of "atrocity narratives" from eighteenth-century humanitarian fiction to contemporary truth commissions, questioning whether storytelling functions as ethical intervention or aesthetic spectacle. Similarly, Elizabeth Anker examines

Downloaded from Vidyasagar University by 10.1.48.225 on 20 Apr 2026 20:03:23 PM; Copyright (c) : Vidyasagar University
http://www.vidyasagar.ac.in/api/website/ViewNoticeFileByRef?fileRefId=2026041614775

VIDYASAGAR UNIVERSITY

Journal of the Department of English, Vidyasagar University
UGC-CARE Enlisted (previously) National Level Peer Reviewed Annual Journal

ISSN 0973-3671
Call for Papers: Volume 20, 2027

the limits of literary form in articulating human rights claims. Nonetheless, Literature has played a crucial role in shaping the ethical imagination through which human rights are conceptualized, debated, and critiqued. From eighteenth-century novels and political philosophy to slave narratives, testimonios, poetry, graphic narratives, and contemporary fiction, literary forms have helped articulate ideas of personhood, justice, freedom, moral responsibility, and dignity. As a powerful example of testimonial narrative, *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984) documents the brutal human rights abuses suffered by indigenous Mayans during the Guatemalan Civil War. Rigoberta Menchú's advocacy for indigenous rights and social justice was internationally recognized when she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992. From Primo Levi's *If This Is a Man* that bears witness to the horrors of Auschwitz to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* which documented Soviet labour camps, Literature has historically engaged in documenting diverse forms of human rights violation. More recently, Refaat Alareer's widely circulated poem, "If I Must Die", bears witness to the ongoing violence in Gaza, articulating resistance in the face of Israeli state violence.

The aforementioned texts not only represent suffering but also shape our understanding of who counts as a subject of rights and what justice might entail. Writers frequently act as witnesses, critics, activists, demonstrating the close relationship between literary production and human rights advocacy. Globalization has further complicated the discourse of rights by intensifying the movement of people, capital, and information across borders. Contrary to earlier expectations, globalization has not eliminated inequality, violence, or structural injustice. Instead, it has generated new ethical and political challenges related to migration, economic precarity, ecological crisis, and political violence. Scholars have also raised concerns that the language of human rights may sometimes be appropriated by dominant powers, transforming an emancipatory discourse into an instrument of governance or control. Human Rights and Literature has therefore emerged as a rich interdisciplinary field drawing upon law and literature studies, memory studies, media studies and cultural studies. Literature frequently performs crucial "memory work," preserving histories of trauma related to war, genocide, displacement, and systemic injustice. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* addresses war, memory, and postcolonial trauma and closer home, Bama's *Karukku* foregrounds caste oppression and gender discrimination. While graphic novels like

Downloaded from Vidyasagar University by 10.1.48.225 on 20 Apr 2026 20:03:23 PM; Copyright (c) : Vidyasagar University
http://www.vidyasagar.ac.in/api/website/ViewNoticeFileByRef?fileRefId=2026041614775

VIDYASAGAR UNIVERSITY

Journal of the Department of English, Vidyasagar University
UGC-CARE Enlisted (previously) National Level Peer Reviewed Annual Journal

ISSN 0973-3671
Call for Papers: Volume 20, 2027

Palestine by Joe Sacco, highlight the ethical complexities of representing political violence, *Animal's People* by Indra Sinha, critiques neoliberal appropriations of humanitarian discourse and expose the intersections between environmental injustice and global capitalism, which also forms the bedrock of Arundhati Roy's "The Greater Common Good".

This issue invites articles that examine the complex intersections between literature and human rights across historical periods, geographical contexts, and theoretical approaches. The journal also welcomes reviews of relevant books in this field - published in recent times- along with the permission of the copyright holder, in less than 1500 words.

Suggested Topics (not exhaustive):

- Human rights in Literature
- Literary genealogies of human rights discourse
- Narratives of atrocity, witnessing, and testimony
- Literature and the politics of empathy
- Human rights, colonialism, and postcolonial critique
- Migration, displacement, and statelessness
- Human rights and environmental justice
- Gender, sexuality, caste, race, and the limits of universality
- Memory studies and trauma narratives
- Literature and international law
- Globalization, neoliberalism, and rights discourse
- Politics of 'development', violation of human rights and Literature
- Ethics of representation and the aesthetics of suffering
- Narrative as resistance to institutional power

Important Dates and Instructions to Remember:

Last date of submission of Abstracts: **15.05.2026**

Date of communication of selected Abstracts: **25.05.2026**

Downloaded from Vidyasagar University by 10.1.48.225 on 20 Apr 2026 20:03:23 PM; Copyright (c) : Vidyasagar University
http://www.vidyasagar.ac.in/api/website/ViewNoticeFileByRef?fileRefId=2026041614775

VIDYASAGAR UNIVERSITY

Journal of the Department of English, Vidyasagar University
UGC-CARE Enlisted (previously) National Level Peer Reviewed Annual Journal

ISSN 0973-3671

Call for Papers: Volume 20, 2027

Last Date of submission of papers with Declaration, Similarity Check Report & Bio note: 31.07.2026

Submission Guidelines:

9th edition of MLA handbook. Papers will be summarily rejected if not submitted as per the guidelines.

Font type, size & spacing: Times New Roman, 12-point, 1.5 line spacing

Email address for submission (electronic version only):
editor_english@mail.vidyasagar.ac.in

[Abstracts submitted to any other email address will be summarily rejected.]

Word-limit: Abstract: 300 (maximum) [inclusive of the title and keywords]

Keywords: not more than 6

The final paper should be strictly in the range of 5000-6000 words. Papers will be rejected if the word limit is not maintained.

Downloaded from Vidyasagar University by 10.1.48.225 on 20 Apr 2026 20:03:23 PM; Copyright (c) : Vidyasagar University
http://www.vidyasagar.ac.in/api/website/ViewNoticeFileByRef?fileRefId=2026041614775