Chapter-5

CONCLUSION

Humanism is a cultural movement that promoted the study of the humanities—the languages, literature, and history of ancient Greece and Rome. Humanist scholars used the works of ancient authors as models in writing, scholarship, and all aspects of life. The movement began in Italy in the 1300s and eventually spread throughout Europe. It had a great impact on many areas of Renaissance culture, including literature, education, law, and the arts. Humanism is also a philosophy of life inspired by humanity and guided by reason. It provides the basis for a fulfilling and ethical life. Humanist philosophies have arisen separately in many different cultures over many thousands of years. Whether or not they use the term Humanism, hundreds of millions of people around the world agree with the humanist philosophy of living a happy and productive life based on reason and compassion.

Humanists make sense of the world using reason, experience and shared human values. Many Humanists see no convincing evidence for gods, the supernatural, or life after death. Humanists believe that moral values are properly founded on human empathy and scientific understanding. Humanists consider we must make the most of this life for ourselves, each other, and our world. The second chapter of this thesis has examined the evolution of ‘Humanism’ from a God-negating theory to the theory celebrating of ‘Self’ (Humanity).
Tagore is a poet of man and earth. His is a sense of belonging to earth. For Tagore, the earth is not only a stage where man strives for a fuller life, but also a loving mother that watches over his efforts to find a richer meaning in all experience. Tagore treats things as they are. Deep acceptance of life is fortified by his Humanism. The world is no dream for him. Life on earth is reality. He does not talk about life after death. Man’s stay on earth is significant; he is not an unwanted guest on earth. Tagore deifies the physical world. In spite of all its imperfections life for him is full of significance and value. He repudiates the practice of renouncing the world of men and women and seeking union with God in the solitude of a mountain cave. He affirms his desire to live in the human world. Death assumes many beautiful forms like marriage etc. in the poetry of Tagore. Death is a gateway to a new life or a new world. God’s love sends death to us. Death is not the destruction forever but a celebration.

In Tagore’s scheme of things, there is no cleavage or distance between the senses and the spirit. He says, ‘I will never shut the doors of my senses’. Every human being is a temple of God. Deha, the body, is Devalaya or the temple of God. Body housed the soul and the soul grew in the body. According to him there are two ‘I’s in everyman: petty individual and lofty universal, essentially based on spiritual foundations. Man has to be interpreted in the perspective of the eternal; and the supreme person dwells in the personalities of all living individuals of the world. The Supreme Being does not live in temples and golden homes. It lives in those, who till the soil, build the road, write books and compose poems. Therefore, the courage to fight for the vindication of freedom of these human spirits is a true homage to the Supreme Man. Human spirit is
free and is also autonomous. For Tagore freedom is the source of artistic excellence. The ‘Innermost One’ appears only when the mind is liberated.

Tagore has sanctified the moral and spiritual freedom of man. His conception of freedom is purely spiritual and has roots in entire humanity. Its chief aim is the attainment of universality; and to reach the doors of universality is possible only through love, sympathy and adjustment. The aim of spiritual freedom is the illumination of human personality by self-realization. Separateness is the enemy of freedom and it is only through sympathetic co-operation, compassion and trustful understanding that one can bring happiness to all. Egoism is not suited to the needs of spiritual freedom. Freedom needs a free mind and head. It does not want any kind of fear, but knowledge and fearlessness. Freedom needs an environment of liberal relations, and not the world broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls. Without ever-widening thought and action, freedom cannot be realized.

Tagore has emphasized that men, in their quest for Universal Humanism, should make available to all men the significant values of every culture and binds them into a peaceful brotherhood. In this adventure, Tagore was inspired by the fact that men's passionate local loyalties should not come in the way of universal harmony. The whole of Tagore’s Humanism, thus, culminates in a vision of the supreme and ultimate spiritual end. Tagore’s is a religious poetry woven into human situation. Poetic intuition embedded in the Upanishadic vision and inspired by scientific comprehension of life and space. Tagore expresses his complete agreement with Buddha’s attitude to the world and man.
Spiritualism of Tagore is not equivalent to godliness. His God manifests Himself in “the divinity of Man.” Tagore rebelled against orthodoxies, religious practices, rites and rituals as they are the real barriers to the growth of kinship and brotherhood.

Rabindranath is a humanist not in the sense of merely exalting or praising man as the ‘crown of creation’ or making him the pivot around which the whole universe revolves, but rather in the much deeper sense of transcending the criteria of utility, efficiency and power, and viewing man’s true uniqueness in a larger perspective. He appreciated the spirit of scientific quest and adventure, its practical approach, its political idealism and social realism. Tagore was a great poet, a cultural leader of Eastern spiritualism and inner humanity of the world. As a cosmopolitan humanist, he raised his voice against social inequality, tyranny and oppression. Spirit of Man lies not in machine-guns and cleverness, but in a simple faith. He is against greed, profit-making, aggression and militarism. Tagore was one of the first to see the dangers of the aggressive nationalism which has raised the nation to the status of a demi-God. He proclaimed in unequivocal terms that the blind worship of the nation state contained the seed of disaster for man. Two World Wars within the space of thirty years have proved how tragically correct his reading was.

Tagore’s poems and songs deal with universal themes, the vicissitudes of friendship, the joy of love, the pain of desolation; what one may call the shame of infamous conduct: themes which are universal in their nature. Of course, he does not believe in India as a geographical
entity. It is as a spiritual personality that he gives India. He is a lover of India, not of the Indian soil, but of the spirit for which India actually stands. Tagore was indeed one of the architects of modern India and even in the galaxy of the great sons and daughters of India, he shone out as a man apart because of his abundant gifts and all-embracing Humanism. Tagore did imbibe the western spirit of Humanism. He respected science as a part of the grand quest of man for knowledge, and himself wrote a handbook *Vishva-Parichaya*, an introduction to the universe. But in the wake of science came the machine, and Tagore brooded anxiously over the problem of man-machine relationship.

It would be a mistake to equate Tagore’s love of man with European Renaissance Humanism, which no doubt influenced him as just mentioned above. Western Humanism is man-intoxicated; it has put man at the centre of the scheme of things. Tagore’s Humanism is not just man struggling against and conquering nature. Man pitted against an unkind universe, or man entrapped in a cruel destiny. Over and over again Tagore hints at a harmony between man and man, man and nature, man and the Universal spirit. The motto he selected for his University is; यत्र विश्वं भित्येकनीडम् (Yajurveda 32-8) – where the universe has become a single nest. The free and unfettered expression of personality, i.e., selfless creativity, is the key to attaining All-Manhood. The Cultural Humanism of Tagore condemns the narrow type of nationalism, because his thought stands firm for the spiritual fellowship of all men and conceives the coming era of ‘the great federation and fellowship of men.’

Walt Whitman is a seer, a mighty prophet inventing a new kind of poetry. Tagore admired him as America’s greatest poet and even
attempted a translation of one of his poems. His *Leaves of Grass* is the Bible of democracy, containing the highest examples of life yet furnished, and suited to the present age and to America. As Shakespeare represents England and Goethe stands for Germany and Dante for Italy, Walt Whitman enshrines the typical and vital spirit of American culture, in his unconventional epic, *Leaves of Grass*. It is a national phenomenon in which a poet identifies himself not only with a continent but with the cosmos. Uttering the word ‘democratic’ and the word ‘en-masse’ he sings seemingly of himself but actually of life immense in passion, pulse, and power, cheerful, for freest action, formed under the laws divine. He declares how freedom may be secured for the body through democracy, for the heart through love, and for the soul through religion.

*Leaves of Grass* is a mystical saga of the self with all phenomenal existence. Whitman is the most self revealing poet. He is a protagonist of the common man, ‘the divine average’. Whitman celebrates humanity—proud, affectionate, sensual, garrulous, and domineering—by celebrating himself. His ‘I’ as fragment of World-soul is akin to Emerson’s Oversoul. This ‘I’ is generic and representative of all men. ‘Myself’ of *Leaves of Grass* represents a person, a persona or a series of Personae. For the first time in American literature, perhaps for the first time in all literature, he created a generic and inclusive, ‘I’ that embraces many minds and many experiences. The quest of the inner self and the soul is seen very much alive in *Leaves of Grass*.

Whitman mingles with the crowd, for he is one of the crowds. He sees himself in everything, in every object, animate and inanimate around
him. He attempts to blend everything in the universe. All things for him are of equal value. So his celebrating America results in catalogues of the American scene. He celebrates all that is democratic, common and lowly. He strives to do justice to every individual that forms the great people of America. America is and always should be a nation of free individuals. He represents America’s intellectual independence through his style of poetry.

Whitman always identified himself with the common man and considered himself as singer of the greatness and glory of the common man. No doubt, he intended his poetry and his philosophy to be meant for the soul of the common man. Whitman burns with great sympathy and brotherhood for all, high and low, rich and poor, noble and vile, thief, drunkard, and prostitute. He chants of evil and good alike or rather acknowledges them alike, feeling that everything which has the vitality to exist has therein the right to exist; he cannot indeed bring himself to allow that there is any evil.

Whitman’s ideal society is one where everyone is equal. Inequalities and social injustice do not exist there. He also advocates political, social and economic rights of women. In one portion of ‘Song of Myself’ Whitman expresses his admiration for animals. He claims he could turn and live with animals for a number of reasons. The individual merges into crowds that in turn merge with the stream of life. Whitman’s imagination recaptures the horrors of war and the wild waste of human life it brings about. We find the note of optimism in urging his country to rise and triumph over all the ugly memories of the civil war and face the
prospect of greatness lying ahead. He sees future of America with full of infinite promises.

Humanism reflected in Whitman’s *The Leaves of Grass* seems the result of the oriental influence on Whitman. He identifies himself with *Brahma*, equating Him with the Old Testament Jehovah. Whitman’s inspiration in writing something derived from Hindu doctrine of the relation between the ‘Atma’ and the ‘Parmatma.’ He embraced it and expressed it in its all manifestation—fields, trees, animals, birds, farms, light, air, sea, men, women, and their politics and social transactions, factories, workshops offices, stories, streets, critics, plains and the countryside. Whitman accepted these and many more items as the integral parts of democracy in America.

Rabindranath Tagore and Walt Whitman are two great poets who represent the national genius of India and America and acts as enduring bridges of benevolence and understanding between the two mighty democracies in the modern world. Apparently these two bearded figures seem to resemble in many respects. But on a closer look it has been found that graceful figure of Tagore stands in contrast with the rough and wild features of Whitman.

Being the child of the Romantic tradition Whitman and Tagore are similar to each other in many respects. They observe the vista of nature with the curious eyes of an innocent child with awe and wonder. Whitman searches for the mystery of all objects from small leaf of Grass to the heavenly stars with infinite sense of wonder however small or
grand they may be. Whitman’s attitude with which he attempts to absorbs into ‘gliding wonders’ is found in his poems: “Looking with side-curved head curious what will come next / Both in and out of the game and watching and wondering at it.” *(Leaves of Grass 32)* Tagore approaches Nature with the same sense of wonder in one of his early collections of nature poetry entitled *Chitra.* Nature mesmerizes Tagore as a source of ceaseless wonder and inscrutable mystery. The captivating beauties of nature thrill the mind ‘out of thought as doth eternity.’ Every morning becomes a call of his spirit. Every rose blossom as a tender and silent love-letter from God addressed to his responsive soul. Both Whitman and Tagore exhibit the poetic vision which sees a world in a grain of sand and heaven in a wild flower. The mother-earth nourishes them as if they are her first-born children.

The present study has revealed that both the poets show remarkable affinity in their approach to children when they are motivated by sense of wonder Tagore’s *Crescent Moon* presents remarkable treatment of childhood with insightful sympathy and deep understanding of child psychology. Whitman’s child-like spirit with infinite sense of wonder may be a source of his primitivism and adamic tradition. He goes to the extent of describing himself as a child. “What am I after all but a child, pleas’d with the sound of my own name, repeating it over and over?” *(Leaves of Grass 392)* In “Song of Myself” he declares that he knows nothing more than a child knows: “A child said, ‘What is the grass?’ fetching it to me with full hands; / How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than he.” *(Leaves of Grass 33)*

The sense of wonder motivates Tagore and Whitman to become great lovers of life. Whitman’s ‘Myself’ enjoys the extreme delight of existence. Every moment of life is a miracle for him. No other American
poet has sought to study a whole country within the covers of his book. Describing himself as the ‘caresser of life’ he refers to every profession and trade with the loving care of an insightful poet. His poetic sensibility is remarkably all-inclusive. He evades no aspect of life as undeserving and unpoetical. His enthusiastic soul wrestles with the perplexing variety of life. His soul tends outward to all objects under the Sun, the common prostitute, the criminals on trial at a court and even the compost. Whitman participates in the drama of life so delightfully that it leaves one almost breathless. It is unparallel in literature of any country. He has no faith in the Calvinist theories of original sin. Whitman considers life as a secretion from the fountain-head of pleasure but not a bitter cup of pain.

Tagore also exalts the joy of existence as few Indian poets have done. He derives inspiration from the Upanishadic seers, and addresses man as child of the immortal spirit and child of delight. He is quite agree with the ancient seers that all elements emerge from bliss, are sustained by bliss and finally merge into bliss. He emphasizes much on spiritual values, but never sermonize the doctrine of negation. His poetry exemplifies the spirit of assertion and acceptance. Tagore does not seek deliverance in isolation---in the solitude of a forest or seclusion of a cave. Mildewed virtues practised without being sympathetic to humanity have no place in Tagore’s life and literature. He never evades the hardships of life and is never blind to its charisma. He imparts highest validity to the truths perceived through senses. He never shuts the doors of senses and enjoys divine sport of joy. His does not find salvation in escape, asceticism and renunciation. He joyfully accepts the thousand bonds of delight and looks the life in all its variety and complexity.
Cosmic consciousness is an important aspect of Whitman’s perception and this study has found a close parallel in Tagore’s philosophy of life. Whitman notices “the vast similitude that interlocks” all material objects and senses the throbs of the ‘Over-soul’ behind all the substantial phenomena. He identifies himself with the incessant current of life and becomes a committed contributor in the long process of evolution: “find I incorporate gneiss, and coal, long-threaded moss, / fruits, grains, esculent roots, / And am stucco’d with quadrupeds and birds all over,” (Leaves of Grass 59) Whitman takes proud in being human personality.

Whitman’s perception of evaluation starts from the rotten carbon and sluggish mist and he feels proud of his human personality which is the highest summit. Tagore too, expresses the same ecstasy and fulfilment in his poetry identifying himself with every atom and enjoying the throb of cosmic life in his heart:

The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures. It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers. It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and death, in ebb and in flow. (The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore 66-67 )

When Tagore exclaims “I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life. And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment,” (The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore 67) he shares the same enthusiasm articulated by Whitman in the following passage ‘Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheerful boatmen. For room to me the stars kept aside in their
own rings.’ The life-throb of ages is felt by both. They merge in and flow with the ocean of universal life.

Tagore and Whitman are extremely national but they both demonstrate broad universal attitude which embraces the whole human race transcending all narrow fences. The study has revealed that there is no contradiction between their patriotic fervour and universal sympathy. Tagore prays to God in “Where the Mind is Without Fear” to lead his country into that heaven of freedom which is not broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls. All the basic elements of the creation which form his country as a geographical entity—the dust, the very air, the sky, and the water of his land—are very dear to Tagore. But that passionate love does not stand in his way and rule out his broad global vision. He accurately “incarnates” the geography of India. The flowing rivers, the blossoming woods, the clear blue sky, the golden corn, and the grand Himalayas have conceded into the texture or his poetry. His identification with the motherland is so absolute that he has been acclaimed as the archetypal and representative poet of India who gives a reverberating voice to her spirit. The span of his outlook may be determined from his description of India as the ocean of humanity and as a convergence of the cultures of the entire world.

The same passion and scale co-exist in Whitman to the similar outstanding degree. To Whitman, America is ‘the race of races.’ His soul reacts to the country’s soul and absorbs every aspect of the national life into his poetry. “These states are the ampest poem”, exclaims Whitman and “hanging on its neck with incomparable love” he imitates in his work the coarseness of the Rocky mountains, the torrential current of the
Niagara, the expansiveness of the Prairies and the enormity of the Americans’ farms. At the same time Whitman addresses the whole of human race in his poems like “Salut au Mounde,” extending his love equally to all the nations of the world. Like Tagore he also breathes natural air and moves about in tranquil atmosphere without bothering for the narrow contemplations of the world. Both rise above by their poetic vision, “the time of tenses and the space of distances”, keen to found the one world where all men live in a spirit of brotherhood and abundance of freedom.

Whitman and Tagore both possess the similar attitude to God. Tagore worships God who is imminent and all-pervading; God is not a distant and unattainable absolute but a personification of love. It is his conviction that Finite is the actual entrance to the Infinite and love has the key. So Tagore’s God is there ‘where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking stones.’ Similar to Tagore, Whitman also finds God in Man. His Humanism is articulated when he says: ‘In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass, / I find letters from God dropt in the street, and everyone is signed by God’s name.” (Leaves of Grass 87)

Whitman believes that democracy should replace God-Man by Man-God and raise humanity to the pedestal of divinity. Therefore he urges that every man shall be his own priest and that churches be built for the worship of Man. The humanism of Tagore and Whitman obtain its strength from faith in God whose love does not disdain to become even a caterpillar beneath the grass. It is not the Humanism of the rationalist but the Humanism of the mystic visionary that gets articulated in their poems.
The comparison of the poems reveals that Whitman’s acceptance of life is more universal than Tagore’s. Whitman’s poetic world welcomes everything under the Sun. He does not want not to exclude anything which the Sun does not. The poetic tradition of India which gives much importance to propriety and taste naturally prevents Tagore from indulging into bold description of sensuous experiences. Considering sex as a basic fact of life Whitman rises as a bold pioneer who declares that “all were lacking if sex were lacking.” (Leaves of Grass 101) He glorifies the human body and all its appetites with the firm belief that a proper appreciation of sex prepares the basis of a well-ordered life. Human body and all its pleasures receive poetic treatment at Whitman’s hands. He does not become libidinous while dealing with sex in his poetry. Whitman seeks to denounce all tendencies of suppression and repression which are unfavourable to sane and healthy living. Sex is an aspect of life which receives no attention from Tagore the poet. But Whitman holds a broader and deeper view when he affirms that “sex contains all,” bodies, souls,/ Meanings, proofs, purities, delicacies, results, promulgations./ Songs, commands, health, pride, the maternal mystery, the seminal/milk,/ All hopes, benefactions, bestowals, all the passions, loves, beauties,/ delights of the earth.” (Leaves of Grass 101)

Whitman’s poetic-sensibility is comprehensive and it is more inclusive than Tagore’s. “Seeing, hearing, feeling are miracles, and each part and tag of me is a miracle” (Leaves of Grass 53) says Whitman with an almost primordial enthusiasm for life. Extreme love of life does not reject death but looks at it in the right perspective. Both Whitman and Tagore share the Romantic attitude towards death, regarding it as life’s highest aim and achievement. Tagore addresses death as a true friend in appealing terms: “O, thou the last fulfilment of life, Death, my death,
come and whisper to me.” (The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore 74) Tagore equally celebrates love of life and longing for death and asserts thus: “And because I love this life, I know I shall love death as well. / The child cries out when from the right breast the mother takes it away, / in the very next moment to find in the left one its consolation.” (The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore 75)

Similar attitude is found in Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*. Death is charming and loving for him and holds no terrors or horrors for him, because he does not regard it as termination and suspension of life. “Has anyone supposed it lucky to be born? / I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die, and / I know it.” (*Leaves of Grass* 35) Whitman finds proof of everlasting life in the smallest sprout which shows “there is really no death.” (*Leaves of Grass* 34) Like all Vedantists, Walt Whitman’s attitude towards death is very optimistic and he never takes death as destruction of life. Death for him is a life-enhancing and always a march onwards. He says “All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses” (*Leaves of Grass* 35)

It is significant that Tagore and Whitman both have admired and listened carefully the ‘whispers of heavenly death’ (*Leaves of Grass* 441) Their firm faith in eternal existence of humanity has repeatedly welcomed and accepted death. “I know I am deathless. My foothold is tennon’d, mortised in granite.” (*Leaves of Grass* 48) Tagore and Whitman could save themselves from existentialistic pessimism of gloomy death-wish because of their enduring faith in God. According to Whitman, “faith is the antiseptic of the soul” and it can save one from being soulless and faithless creatures without redemption. Whitman describes death as a
pleasant need—the “invisible need of every seed” and “the central urge in every atom,” (Leaves of Grass 553). All organic matter has a desire to return to their original state and this desire can be fulfilled through death only. Therefore, Whitman greets Death thus: “Thee, of Heaven—thee envoy, usherer, guide at last of all, rich, florid, loosener of the structure knot call’d life, sweet, peaceful, welcome Death.” (Leaves of Grass 581)

The affinity in the use of imagery is seen frequently in both the poets. They have employed the same figures of the mother, the cradle and the sea where they portray the mystery of death. The sea whispered a word to Whitman and emerges like some “old, crone rocking the cradle, swathed in sweet garments, bending aside.” (Leaves of Grass 253) The same figure with all its overtones appears in Tagore’s Crescent Moon when he illustrates the game of children on the sea-shore. Death-dealing waves sing meaningless ballads to the children, just like a mother who sings while rocking her baby’s cradle. Both Whitman and Tagore consider the sea as an old mother who rocks in the cradle of her waves the ‘delicious word’ which reveals the mystery of death. Similarity of the imagery employed by the two poets suggests their identical outlook and approach.

One striking feature of similarity between poems of these two legendary poets is the use of free verse as a medium of expression employed by them. Whitman’s innovative use of free verse has given full and free expression to the tone and temper of the demands of the modern age breaks down the essential barriers between prose and verse. He casts off rhyme and metrical conventions to reflect the democratic spirit of his poetry. The flow of the thought decides the length of the line and punctuations are determined by its periodicities. Each line remains an independent unit and bears the same relation to the whole as an individual
stands in relation to the society. An extraordinary fusion of form and content provides Whitman’s Free-verse an important contribution to modern poetry. But Tagore’s purpose in utilizing Free-verse is more humble than Whitman’s. Tagore proves his mastery in employing intricate metrical patterns in Bengali poems and in utilizing free verse in Gitanjali, Gardener and other collections in English. It is only during the last phase of his poetical career that Tagore uses Free-verse in his Bengali poems like Lipika. Tagore’s poetry in English displays some outstanding features of resemblance to the Free-verse of Leaves of Grass.

The celebrated poem “India’s Prayer” runs on beginning with ‘where,’ and the main clause is retained for the last line. Whitman makes frequent use of parallelism and takes advantage of its balancing quality: “I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul, / The pleasures of Heaven are with me and the pains of Hell are with me.” (Leaves of Grass 48) Though not so often Tagore too makes use of the device in lines like—“Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well.” “Every moment and every age, every day and every night he comes, comes, ever comes.” (The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore 56)

Tagore’s treatment of Free-verse illustrates his full acknowledgment of the potentialities of the medium and his growing awareness of its value may be concluded from his use of Free-verse in his Bengali works of the last phase of his literary career without confining it to his translations into English.

Though Whitman and Tagore are similar to each other in many of their attitudes, there is a basic difference in their personalities. Steeped in the Vedantic tradition Gurudev Tagore could attain an integrated vision. Unlike Tagore, Whitman’s nature thrives in contradictions and
unresolved-tensions. In spite of his constant and fierce struggle for unity Whitman’s nature continues to be subject to enormous perturbations. It is praiseworthy that Whitman does not stamp out the contradictions in subservience to any discriminating principle. His best poetry seems to come out of those tensions and polarizations which persuaded a critic to call him one of the great erratics of literature. On the other hand the best poems of Tagore spring from a unified sensibility and integrated vision. Whitman catches the attention of the modern reader who is baffled by unresolved tensions. He participates sincerely in the struggle of the modern mind which is torn between conflicting loyalties to attain an integrated view of life. While Whitman rises thus as one of the moderns,

Though the world has changed considerably since the days of Tagore and Whitman, it has not changed wholly. In many fundamental aspects the world as a whole remains the same way. And so while in certain respects the specific suggestions may have lost their relevance, but the outlook of Tagore and Whitman, in general still remains valid. The most relevant aspect of these poets is their ceaseless effort to march in step with history in a fast changing world, outgrowing themselves continuously at every twist and turn. Both the poets infuse in us healthy nationalism—a sense of gentle pride that we as a nation are inferior to nobody and similarly nobody is inferior to us, the world is a community of equals. Such nationalism breeds love and harmony between nations as a community of equals, which is very much needed today.

The thesis has made arguments for Rabindranath and Walt Whitman’s paramount commitment is to Life, to Man and to Peace in the world. They all go together and they all stand menaced today as never
before in history. Today nuclear destruction stares mankind in the face. Bombs, a thousand times more powerful than the ones dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, stand on their launching pads primed of their targets. There are enough nuclear stockpiles in the world to destroy our planet several times over. The truth is that it is precisely this dangerous game of proliferation of nuclear weapons that has brought the world to the present brink of total nuclear extinction. It is, indeed, a very grim scenario as we have celebrated the 150th birth anniversary of Rabindranath; but it is precisely for that reason more imperative that we should celebrate Rabindranath now because he celebrates Life and the Joy of Life as probably no other poet does. That indeed is the essence of all his poetry.

Since the very beginning Man has made himself constantly busy forming various communities, necessarily growing into geographical enclosures. With the advent of high technology in communication and transportation many civilizations have come face to face today. The geographical distance between contrary communities has been reduced but if we do not accommodate one another the world will go up in flames. The super-computerized education has to be compassionate towards the terrible massacre of civilization in Afghanistan or Bosnia. The face of the world is changed so much, but the heart has remained the same---indifferent towards personal and universal problems like: deprivation, discrimination, violation of human rights, terrorism, war etc. The lack of human values in every sphere of life has become a common worry for all the disciplines in the 21st century. We can look forward to a great federation of men by co-operation, unity and love. Since ages it is the literature that has helped in spreading such values. In order to create a
sane society and to maintain the equilibrium; it is necessary to re-read and compare the classics that have already shown a path to generations of scholars and to the laymen. Mark William Roche traces how literature in the light of Humanism can make one race of the humanity and one country of this world:

Since the time of Socrates and from the ages of ancient Indian literatures the significance and roles of literature and Humanism have been questioned by rationalists. The pursuit of literature is an ethical pursuit, not because literature is compelled to make didactic claims upon its readers, but because it forces its readers out of the isolation and solipsism created by the modern age. (Roche 29)

The present study has revealed that it is not so easy to define or embody, yet Humanism remains the continuous dialogue of civilization. It is known as the literary and aesthetic Renaissance with which Medievalism ended and the Modern Age began. Humanism is not authoritative or authoritarian but democratic in nature. A Humanist has scientific and rational approach to life. He prefers to be guided by perception, reason and experience of his own. He asserts that the life on earth is all; and ‘Man is the future of Man’. His ‘grand individuality’ submerges in to the entire human society and promotes human welfare through mutual co-operation, service, love, unity, brotherhood and peace. Body and soul, both are equally important for him. He loves sensuous experience and believes in humanised God. The ethics of Humanism varies between the Buddha’s compassion, and Machiavelli’s Realpolitik. Humanism has assumed various shapes and meanings with the passage of time, yet it has remained with us all the time. Oriental Humanism is free from the self-centeredness, race prejudice and economic aggressiveness
of Occidental counterpart. The present study has come to the conclusion that Humanism is truly a human point of view.

The best poetry of the world always conserves Humanism in one or another form because Man has been the prime object of exposé in all good Poetry. The study of poems of Rabindranath Tagore and Walt Whitman reveals that they love common man as they love their God. Tagore was a great poet, a cultural icon of oriental spiritualism and internal humanity of the world. Tagore has expressed his principles of Humanism and concepts like ‘Universal Man’, ‘Creativity in Man’, ‘Surplus’ etc. in his prose works like *The Religion of Man* and *Creativity*, etc. He seems indebted to Vedanticism, Vaishnavism, Buddhism, Brhamosamaj, and Baul poets for his formation as a poet and as a man, yet he remains aloof from any sectarian religion. His open-minded approach helped him easily imbibe and merge with western view of Humanism. He was overwhelmed by western intellectualism with its literary and artistic behaviour. Whitman was the greatest poet of democracy who absolutely absorbed the great Indian thoughts in his poetry. Quakerism, Transcendentalism, Emersonion philosophy and Orients have played a major role in shaping Whitman as a poet and man. His frank and rebellious attitude towards religious orthodoxy could not prevent him to absorb the eastern mystic Humanism which talks about happiness for all without any prejudice or preference.

Tagore and Whitman both are the celebrated poets of humanity. They have vision of the world as one community. Whitman’s ‘Myself’ and Tagore’s *Vishva Manava* represent the Universal Man. They have deep faith in man as a reservoir of infinite potential. Their poetry proposes how one can lead life in accord with fellow human beings, Nature and God. Tagore and Whitman both discarded mere traditionalism
and ritualism, and suggested a greater human content for it. They longed for material and spiritual growth of the humanity and emphasized on upholding above all human personality and values. They seek harmony between body and soul and glorify human body, and life on earth.

Tagore ascribed humanity to God and divinity to man. His *Religion of Man* designated an ultimate and ‘humanistic’ way for attaining God. Their God is a humanized God. God and man unite in their poems and assume several kinds of relationship like companions, friends, co-travellers, lovers, master-servant, father-son, etc. The ‘surplus’ according to Tagore is an innate source of energy in man that always incites him to create values. When man surpasses the animal in him, he cultivates the ideal of unity and appeals to the Universal Man in him. The creativity instigated by ‘Surplus’ is essentially spiritual and the source of freedom. Without freedom, man cannot be moderate and democratic. Tagore’s unique Humanism was rooted in his notion of this creative unity of personality.

It is found through the close study of *Leaves of Grass* that Whitman sings Song of ‘Self’ and finds God in the ‘faces of men and women.’ Real men are greater than unreal gods for him. All men are as mystic and as majestic as God himself. Whitman offers himself to humanity as candid and comforting comrade in his poetry. His service, compassion, love, and adoration are meant for ‘All Men.’ He can paint hundreds of heads, but paints no head without its nimbus of gold-coloured light. Whitman is brotherhood personified. He presents in his catalogues endless varieties of radiant and wonderful creatures, all the more sacred for being genuine. Whitman is a born-fighter who tries to confiscate from their high pedestals the gods of the ancient world-aristocracy tradition, superstition and instate in their places the gods of
the new world-democracy, science and reason. Unity, equality, human dignity, and development are the recurrent themes of Whitman’s poetry.

The Humanism reflected in the poems of Tagore and Whitman is wholehearted and fundamental Humanism, in which religion is exclusively a device by which human beings can serve each other, in form of love and unselfishness, and in which any infinite which may exist can claim status only as a human infinite-and not as a transcendental. They sang for glorification of the insignificant, innovation of science and spiritual implication in the activities of daily life. Humanism for them is not an aggression but it’s an expansion of nationalism. Both the poets create an atmosphere of love and unity, comradeship and friendship, harmony and adjustment—a genuine association of peoples and cultures. Tagore does not restrict his love for his countrymen only but expands it to the people of China, Africa etc. Whitman has great love, sympathy and brotherhood for all --- high and low, rich and poor, noble and vile, thief, drunkard, and prostitute. Both of them are anti-imperialist. And their poetry can help in bringing consensus against imperialism which is the root cause of war and terrorism. They encourage universal brotherhood and the ideal of a common goal for all humanity. Their love for motherland in no sense is exclusive as it comprises noble humanistic ideal of world unity, and universal brotherhood.

Tagore and Whitman, both sang for the harmony between Nature and Man. They attempted to realize profound human significance in the world. Their Humanism prevails for enjoying nature by the creative human spirit. It is pleasant harmony, and not brutal confrontation with nature, that can provide happiness to man. The adaptation with nature is a prerequisite for love, peace, and happiness. Thus nature turns into an avenue of divine communion. In every walks of human life, Tagore urges
people for co-operation and peace; and not for any unfriendly relationship either with man or nature. The relation between Man and Nature in Tagore’s view is that of interdependence and cooperation. They need each other and remain incomplete in separation. This unique relationship of nature and mankind inspired Whitman to grasp the diversity of mankind as a whole. For him Nature looses all its significance without man and is ‘as good as nothing at all.’ In their search for Universal Humanism, Tagore and Whitman emphasize that men should make available to all men the significant values of every culture and unite them into a peaceful brotherhood.

This thesis has attempted to show the significance of the great classicist ideologies in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. By studying the literary works of two literary giants, the thesis has explored the possibility of finding common as well as uncommon traits among them and has hypothesized that the ultimate aim of literature is to unite and not to divide the entire humanity on the name of nation, caste, class, gender and religion. In doing so the thesis has also explored how two national poets on the opposite sides (hemispheres) of the planet have tried to communicate their ideas of Humanism through their works of art and shown an eternal path to the readers with an emphasis on patriotism as well as on nationalism by keeping humane values at the centre. In the era of globalization when the entire ideology of ‘nationalism’ is being questioned, it becomes obligatory for us to teach the coming generations, with the means of literature, the basic human values that can help to protect and nurture the universe: यत्र विश्वं भित्येकनीडम् ! (Yajurveda 32/8) (Where the world meets in one nest).
The present study has focused upon poems as a conscious-raising tool, so that harmony between body and soul, man and nature, man and God can be achieved. It is only an attempt I can make to project my views, this is how I am growing as a thinker and I have a faith that there is always a room to grow, to improve, to change, to reconsider and to expand my intellectual processes as long as I show an inclination to sustain what Tagore calls ‘surplus’ in me.
Work-Cited List

Tagore Rabinranath, *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*  