Humanism: Truly Human Point of View

Humanism is a term with a very complex history and a peculiarly wide range of possible meanings and contexts. Diverse writers have employed it in different ways much to the bafflement of the readers. It is not so easy to offer a precise definition and an explanation which may be acceptable to all without any doubt or confusion.

Humanism is a cultural, literary, scientific and intellectual movement that promoted the study of humanities—the languages, literature, and history of ancient Greece and Rome. Humanist scholars took the ancient authors as their models in writing, scholarship, and all aspects of life. They believed that a classical training alone can form a perfect man. The movement originated in Italy in the 1300s and eventually spread throughout Europe. It had a great influence on many areas of Renaissance culture including literature, education, law, and the arts.

Humanism as an organized, provisional philosophy is relatively new but it is the product of several millennia of human growth and development. It helped to civilize man, to make him realize his potential powers and gifts. It is also a philosophy of life inspired by humanity and directed by reason. It promotes a fulfilling and ethical life. A. S. Hornby defines Humanism as,
a system of thought that considers that solving human problems with the help of reason is more important than religious beliefs. It emphasizes the fact that the basic nature of human beings is good. (Hornby 635)

Humanist philosophies have evolved separately in various cultures over many centuries. There may be no formal use of the term ‘Humanism’ but majority of the people in the world agree with the humanist philosophy of living a happy and productive life based on reason, experience and values like co-operation and compassion. Many Humanists find no convincing evidence for gods, the supernatural, or life after death. Humanists emphasize the need to make the most of this life for themselves, one another, and the world.

Humanism is engaged with what is human. It’s a philosophical and literary movement in which man and his capabilities are the central concern. Humanism, in opposition to all theories of universal determinism, fatalism, or predestination, believes that human beings, while conditioned by the past, possess genuine freedom of creative choice and action, and are, within certain objective limits, the shapers of their own destiny. Peter A Angeles calls it a

A Philosophy that (a) regards the rational individual as the highest value; (b) considers the individual to be the ultimate source of value; and (c) is dedicated to fostering the individual’s creative and moral development in a meaningful and rational way without reference to concepts of the supernatural.(Angeles 116)
The whole of human history can be seen as man's attempt is to be freer than what he already is. The quest for freedom and search for truth are the innate urges of man. To him, freedom is the highest value, and the amount of freedom the individual citizens enjoy in any society is the sole criterion of judging the progressive character of that society. Ancient man struggled to free himself from the tyranny of the natural forces and by now man has achieved some success in that attempt. Now man is individually trying to free himself from the tyrannies of the society and the state. Humanism provides the acme of freedom to experience, enjoy, and appreciate the many dimensions of being human. Humanists cherish and extol the enjoyment of life, the claims of individuality, literary art and fame, the beauty of nature.

Humanism and Art: Humanism believes in the widest possible development of art and the awareness of beauty, including the appreciation of Nature’s loveliness and splendour, so that the aesthetic experience may become a pervasive reality in the lives of all people. The movement developed from the rediscovery by European scholars of many Greek and Roman texts. Its focus was on human dignity and potential and the place of mankind in nature; it valued reason and the evidence of the senses in understanding truth. For them art and beauty represent deep inner virtue and value. They are essential elements in the path towards God.

Humans are social by nature and find meaning in relationships. One of the biggest philosophies in Humanism is that all morals are relative to the situation and their future effects. All people have equal rights to live and enjoy their life, and any attempt to reduce a person’s rights, whether through law, or violence, is unacceptable.
Humanists are informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion. Humanism entails a commitment to the search for truth and morality through human means in support of human interests. Humanism is not merely a theory, but is primarily practical in attitude; its main concern is to show the means and ways to eliminate human suffering. The premier agenda of Humanism is to create enlightened, free, healthy and happy individuals in a free, enlightened, enriched and harmonious society. In spite of this practical inclination of Humanism, its realm is confined only to philosophy.

Humanist concept of Knowledge: Humanism accepts that perception (as helped by inference) is the real source of true knowledge. Perception also is the ultimate verifier of the truth or falsity of the knowledge obtained. Humanists believe that there is no such thing as universal and absolute knowledge. The humanist is realistically aware of the possibility of his information being erroneous. According to him, any knowledge is true until proved otherwise. Moreover, he knows that the things to be known are infinite in number, and hence he is all the time aware of the fact that our knowledge is partial, incomplete and likely to be proved wrong. Hence the humanist is generally humble in his claims and is never dogmatic, fanatic, haughty or absolutely certain about them.

A Humanist is always tolerant of others' views; he is open-minded and is always open to correction. He readily gives up his beliefs whenever they are found wrong. Every change in his knowledge makes it increasingly more reliable because fallacious elements in it are removed. But it will be found that the perceptual knowledge although it is never completely true, it is never completely false either. There is nothing mysterious in the humanist concept of knowledge. Knowledge of the
world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis. Humanism focuses on our capacity for self-determination and rejects transcendental or arbitrary justifications such as a dependence on faith, the supernatural, sacred texts, or religious creeds. The humanist knowledge is the same truth affirmed by sciences. Religious knowledge differs from religion to religion, while scientific knowledge is the same all over the world. According to the humanists, each knowledge, whether it changes the object (the idealist position) or not (the realist position), definitely changes the knowing person.

Man is Unique: Being rational, man is also self-conscious, moral, free and creative. Only man has created civilization, culture, commerce, industry, engineering, technology, medicine, *etc.* No one else has created history and religion. Man has created literature and various objects of beauty and joy. In this way man is unique. Man has performed experiments not only in natural sciences but also in social sciences. In its more extreme form humanistic attitude man is regarded as the crown and glory of creation. The humanist emphasis on the value and importance of the individual was not necessarily a total rejection of religion. What Humanism clearly rejects is blind deference to supernatural beliefs in resolving human affairs, not necessarily the beliefs themselves. Humanists endorse recognition of a universal morality based on the commonality of human nature, suggesting that the long-term solutions to our problems cannot be parochial.

Life's fulfilment emerges from individual participation in the service of humane ideals. The humanists emphasized the importance of human values instead of religious beliefs. Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience. As a reaction against the
religious authoritarianism of Medieval Catholicism, Humanism emphasized human dignity, beauty, and potential, and affected every aspect of culture in Europe, including philosophy, music, and the arts and brought about social and political change in Europe. Humanists shifted intellectual emphasis off of theology and logic to specifically human studies. The movement started to change the idea of life from being one continuous moral struggle to find redemption in the end, to life being full of love and interest in the world. Humanism turned out to be a form of philosophy that concentrated on the preparation of a worldly life, rather than on the preparation for an eternal and spiritual life.

Human Life and its Goal: Humanists are concerned with life on this earth. They have no faith in the tenets of rebirth, supernaturalism, the immortal soul or the God in heaven. They focus on the very life on earth which is perceivable through senses. The absolute truth for them is that living beings are born, they mature, grow old and die; they need food, water and air for growth; and they give birth to young ones of their own species. The growth of Man and civilization is a natural process for them. That is why this worldly life is not mysterious for them. The species continues, but the individual is never reborn again.

Welfare of man is the goal of Humanism. Humanism does not set before itself such fantastic, high-sounding but unattainable objectives like absolute truth, absolute knowledge, eternal bliss, immortality and so on. On the other hand, it keeps before it such achievable objectives as social justice, equality, liberty, fraternity, and joy. Worldly joy for humanists is not a fantasy; it is very much a fact. Therefore, creation of a progressively happier and a better society are the lawful goals for a humanist. Man with his intelligence, imagination and memory lays a sound foundation of future on the basis of past experience. Contemporary Humanism leads a
qualified optimism about the capacity of people, but it does not involve believing that human nature is purely good or that all people can live up to the Humanist ideals without help.

Humanism holds as its highest goal worldly happiness, freedom, and progress—economic, cultural, and ethical of all humankind, irrespective of nation, race, or religion. This movement promoted well balanced and well educated people to raise the standards of humanity. The ultimate goal is human flourishing; making life better for all humans, and as the most conscious species, also promoting concern for the welfare of other sentient beings and the planet as a whole. The focus is on doing good and living well in the here and now, and leaving the world a better place for those who come after, but Humanists hold humanity as the primary concern. Humanist values also brought about social and political change by acknowledging the value and dignity of every individual regardless of social and economic status.

Humanism and Nationalism: Love for fellow citizens and the motherland is always considered as a good human quality. But a strong sense of patriotism sometimes causes conflicts and is harmful to universal brotherhood. A nation is by definition only a part of humanity, not the whole. Nationalism is thus, something less than universal in scope. Humanism appears as an amendment to nationalism, as a reminder that nationalism is not the final word in human relations.

Humanism and Humanitarianism: Humanism and Humanitarianism both have concern for Man and are dedicated to human welfare. But they differ in their motives and approach. Humanism is a philosophy in itself; whereas humanitarianism is an expression only of human feelings.
Humanitarianism adheres to certain beliefs such as faith in God, supernaturalism, grace of gods, transmigration, divine deliverance, heaven or hall which have no place or relevance in Humanism.

Humanitarianism is based upon religion. The devotion to God prompts Humanitarians to perform various welfare activities. They do so because they want to please God by serving humanity. Humanists also perform the same welfare activities, but they perform them out of rational self-interest. There is no other universe than the human universe for Humanists. So Humanism rejects whatever is other-worldly from its domain, while eternal bliss of other-worldly nature is the utmost desire of all humanitarian people. For the humanitarian, service to people is as important as service to God. The humanists consider service to people valuable in itself; it is an end in itself. The Humanitarian consider that humanitarian works are a pre-requisite to the attainment of the eternal spiritual bliss. They believe that ethics (morally good life) leads to religion and thus ethics is lower than religion. They feel that men should live like brothers because they belong to the family led by God himself. For them, moral life is to be transcended and ‘higher’ goals are to be achieved. For most of them God is the storehouse of all values. Values for Humanitarians are supreme and eternal because they exist eternally in God. Shri R S Tiwari declares that Humanism has much wider and comprehensive outlook:

Humanitarianism is different from Humanism in as much as it emphasises the humanising qualities such as sympathy, compassion, generosity et cetera whereas Humanism is a fuller and broader concept, taking into account the whole Man, his virtues and limitations together. (Tiwari 1)
Humanism and Creativity: Creativity is a very important faculty of man. Through creativity one can give something a new vision, elucidation or can find out new dimensions of something. It also consists in setting out new goals and in finding out new resources to the existing goals. A creative person contributes innovation, beauty, ease, joy, better quality, greater value and greater enrichment to our life. Creativity is the result of the self-conscious and self-critical nature of man. This creativity according to D.D. Bandiste makes Man very special:

Man is a self-conscious, intelligent, imaginative, rational and a free agent. That is why he is also a creative agent. That is why he improves as an individual and also as a society. Being sufficiently rational helps man to be a free and creative agent. (Bandiste 87)

Thus Humanism is a comprehensive progressive life stance that, without supernaturalism, affirms human ability and responsibility to lead meaningful, ethical lives capable of adding to the greater good of humanity. It is opposed to feudal and religious doctrines and scholasticism of the mediaeval times, advocates academic studies, freedom of thought and emancipation of individuality, and asserts that human beings are the centre of the world. All of these are the features of Humanism.

As the thesis focuses upon the works by two giants, namely Whitman, a poet from the western tradition and Tagore, a poet belonging to the east, it is necessary to understand both the shades of Humanism as they are reflected in the works of Whitman and Tagore respectively. Occidental as well as Oriental theories of Humanism have influenced majority of the poets from every corner of the world.
Occidental Theory of Humanism: The Ancient Greeks could perhaps be argued to be the most humanistic of ancient civilizations. The aphorism “Know thyself” was inscribed in the pronaos (forecourt) of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, has been attributed to at least six ancient Greek sages: Chilon of Sparta, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Socrates, Solon of Athens and Thales of Miletus. Sixth century BCE pantheists Thales of Miletus and Xenophanes of Colophon prepared the way for later Greek humanist thought. Xenophanes refused to recognize the gods of his time and reserved the divine for the principle of unity in the universe.

Greek thinker, Protagoras (ca. 490-ca.420 BCE) said: “Man is the measure of all things” (http//www.dictionary.com), he was widely regarded as a sophist. Later Anaxagoras, often described as the "first freethinker", contributed to the development of science as a method of understanding the universe. Pericles, a pupil of Anaxagoras, influenced the development of democracy, freedom of thought, and the exposure of superstitions. Protagoras and Democritus espoused agnosticism and a spiritual morality not based on the supernatural. The historian Thucydides is noted for his scientific and rational approach to history. In the third century BCE, Epicurus became known for his concise phrasing of the problem of evil, lack of belief in the afterlife, and human-centered approaches to achieving eudaimonia. He was also the first Greek philosopher to admit women to his school as a rule.

The nature of the anthropomorphic conception of deity was evolved by the Greeks and Romans. The gods are generally depicted as human in form and in character, but although they look and act like men, very often their appearance and their actions are at least to some extent idealized. Their beauty is beyond that of ordinary mortals, their passions
more grand and intense, and their sentiments more praiseworthy and touching; and they can embody and impose the loftiest moral values in the universe. In general the gods are more versatile and more powerful than men. They are able to move with amazing speed and dexterity, appear and disappear in a moment, and change their shape at will, assuming various forms, human, animal, and divine. Their powers are far greater than those of mortals. Their knowledge, too, is superhuman, but on occasion limited. Omniscience is most often reserved as a special prerogative of Zeus and Apollo, who communicate their knowledge of the future to men.

Most important of all, the gods are immortal, and this is perhaps the one most consistent divine characteristic that in the last analysis distinguishes them from mortals. Yet these same gods too can mirror the physical and spiritual weaknesses of human counterparts: they may be crippled and deformed or conceived as vain, petty, and insincere; they can steal, lie, and cheat, sometimes with a finesse that is exquisitely divine.

There are traces of Humanism found in Roman Playwright Terence (195/185–159 BC)’s *Heauton Timorumenos* (The Self-Tormentor). When asked what business it was of his? Cheremes replies to Menedemus “*Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto*”, meaning “I am a man; I count nothing pertaining to man foreign to me” (Bauman 26). Terence was well placed to preach the message of universalism, of the essential unity of the human race. Two hundred years later Seneca proclaimed the unity of mankind with a clarion-call: ‘There is one short rule that should regulate human relationships. All that you see both divine and human, is one.’ (Bauman1). The romantic Humanism of Feuerbach's is well-known
by “*homo homini dew est*’ (*man is god to man*, or ‘god is [nothing other than] man to himself.’) (Davies 28)

Renaissance Humanism: The Humanist movement was born and blossomed in Italy as scholars became increasingly familiar with classical texts. Writers of the 1200s, such as Brunetto Latini of Florence, saw Rome as a good model for the Italian city-states of their time. Latini and many other writers of his day encouraged Italians to return to the Roman values of civic harmony and cooperation. They hoped that these values would help end the power struggles between rival factions in the city-states. Around the same time, Italian poets began producing Latin verses in the style of the ancients. Lovato dei Lovati (ca. 1240–1309) was one of the first Italian writers to capture the style and rhythm of classical poetry. He considered the Roman style to be the highest form of verse. Humanism first took hold in Florence and spread from there to the rest of Italy. Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406), the Chancellor of the city, promoted the movement. He invited other Humanists, including Poggio Bracciolini and the Greek scholar Manuel Chrysoloras, to live in Florence. This generation of intellectuals unearthed a large number of ancient texts, including works on rhetoric that became the basis of humanist education.

Dante (1265-1321) and Petrarch (1304-74) are known as pioneers of Italian Humanism. Dante was merely a precursor while Petrarch initiated the movement and led it on to success. Petrarch is the first Humanist who held ancient Roman culture in high regard. He stressed the importance of rhetoric as a form of argument. In his view, rhetoric had the power to convince people to make positive changes in their lives. Petrarch argued that simply knowing what goodness is would not make a person better. The stirring words of a skilled orator, however, could inspire people to become good. Petrarch views the Eternal City with the
enthusiasm of a Humanist, not with that of a pious Christian. He declared virtue and truth to be the highest goal of human endeavour. Petrarch was also one of the first humanists to introduce religious ideas to the movement. Petrarch added various Christian elements to Humanism. This spiritual approach held particular appeal for religious scholars in northern Europe.

In the mid-1300s, Italian scholars at the Papal court in Avignon brought Humanism to France. In the early 1400s, the center of French Humanism, the College of Navarre in Paris was known as the "cradle of French Humanism." In the 1450s Guillaume Fichet introduced Italian Humanism to the University of Paris. He also founded the first French printing press, which produced editions of classical works and books by Italian humanists. In the early 1400s Manuel Chrysoloras and other scholars brought Humanism to Lombardy, Milan, Venice, Padua, and Verona. Pope Nicholas V actively supported Humanism by hiring humanist scholars to translate Greek texts into Latin. Alfonso I, the king of Naples, also encouraged the growth of Humanism. The Growth of Humanism in Florence was closely linked to the artistic Renaissance of the 1400s. Artists such as Donatello studied classical principles of art and imitated ancient models. Leon Battista Alberti wrote a landmark book, *On Painting* (1436), in which he argued that painters should study history and poetry and associate with poets and orators. Throughout the 1500s and early 1600s, Renaissance Humanism had an impact on education, law, religion, philosophy, literature, medicine, and astronomy.

The historical and literary use of the word “humanist” derives from the 15th century Italian term *umanista* meaning a scholar of human affairs or human nature or Classical Greek and Latin literature and the ethical philosophy behind it. Around 1806 *Humanismus* was used to
describe the classical curriculum offered by German schools, and by 1836 “Humanism” was borrowed into English in this sense. In 1856, the great German historian, a cultural historian and philologist Georg Voigt used Humanism to describe Renaissance Humanism. In the mid-eighteenth century, however, a different use of the term “Humanism” began to emerge. The Oxford English Dictionary records the use of the word “Humanism” by an English clergyman in 1812 to indicate those who believe in the "mere humanity" (as opposed to the divine nature) of Christ, i.e., Unitarians and Deists.

A Dictionary of Philosophy defines Renaissance Humanism thus:

“1 is the intellectual movement that characterized the culture of Renaissance Europe…. (Renaissance students) were optimistic about human possibilities, attended enthusiastically to human achievements, and eschewed refined enquiries into theological niceties. However in this sense, Humanism was perfectly consistent with belief in God…. 2 In this century the label has been appropriated by those who reject all religious beliefs, insisting that we should be exclusively concerned with human welfare in this, allegedly, the only world.”

(“Humanism,” def. 1, 2)

Humanists wrote in a variety of literary forms, including poetry, dialogue, letters, history, and biography. Humanists broke away from the medieval view of history as a steady decline from a glorious past to the present. Instead, they saw their own era as a time of revival after the long Dark Age that had begun with the fall of Rome. They also believed that the lives of historical figures could serve as valuable examples of virtuous behaviour. Humanists also introduced major changes to the
Renaissance Humanism in British Literature: The roots of Renaissance Humanism can be found in the literary works of Geoffrey Chaucer. Chaucer was the first modern, the first English writer who paved his own way quite different from his medieval Predecessors and contemporaries. He had gained the power to survey the world from a central, a truly human point of view before Renaissance. Chaucer gave a wonderful slice of medieval society through his idiomatic characters with their eccentric individuality. He viewed them not as the playthings of an inscrutable deity but as fellow creatures, citizens like himself, with the common human frailties and aspirations. Thus Chaucer's humanity is general and special, common and rare.

In the 16th century, Renaissance spread to Britain. British literature was greatly influenced by Renaissance Humanism. Thomas Moore as the representative of Renaissance Humanists did his utmost to pursue the equality and freedom of everyone. The happiest blend of the spirit of Christianity and Humanism can be seen in Moore. Thomas Moore wrote *Utopia*, the masterpiece of English Humanism, a critical examination of contemporary English institutions and customs. He had nothing but hatred and contempt for wars and war makers. Soldiers to him were “men slayers”. He extolled Communism, outlawed the acquisition of property...
and discredited gold. He made work compulsory for all men. He believed
in the goodness of the human heart.

Besides, the most influential writer in all of English literature,
William Shakespeare was also a prominent humanist. *Hamlet* as the most
famous tragedy of Shakespeare clearly reflected the Humanism spirit of
period of Renaissance. At the very beginning of the drama, Shakespeare
presented a hideous social image and aimed to criticize feudal society. As
the protagonist of the play, Hamlet was a typical representative of
humanists during the Renaissance. He flaunted equality and broke those
traditional concepts of grade. Hamlet viewed friendship and love as the
most wonderful things in the world. Moreover, Shakespeare embodied
the humanist thought in his drama declaring human being as the centre of
the world and having individual potential for accomplishments. He
enthusiastically affirmed and admired the great capabilities of human
being in Hamlet’s famous speech in Act II:

“What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason, how
infinite in faculty, in form and moving how express and
admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a
god—the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals!”

(*Hamlet* 2.2.293–297)

Shakespeare’s charity and sympathy are not confined to the human
world only. He has boundless love and affection for the hunted deer and
the hunted hare in, *As you Like It* and in *Venus and Adonis*.

Bacon has often been described as a humanist. Like Erasmus, he
despised the formalism and traditionalism of the ancient universities. His
*Essays*, addressed like so much humanist didactic to a young nobleman,
are a primer of civic *umanita*. Carlyle had shown great concern for the
horrors and terror of the new industrial order. In one of his writings *Signs of the Time* Carlyle made a plea for the recognition of the wholeness of man. E. M. Forster has abundant sympathies for the oppressed and the socially deprived people living anywhere in the world. There is a deep religious emphasis in Forster’s Humanism.

Milton, the truly religious man, wrote *Paradise Lost* “to justify the ways of God to man”. He was a man fired with deepest charity to infuse good things into others. Milton inspires us with his courage, temperance, toil and angelic devotion, which carried the life of man to new heights of spiritual grace and dignity. Alexander Pope gave priority to know one’s self than to God:

> Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; / The proper study of Mankind is Man. / (Pope 225-226)

And Dickens’ writings are thoroughly steeped in and and pervaded by the true religious spirit that provide for all those in suffering-women, labouring child; in all sick persons, young children, pities all prisoners and captives, defends and provides for the fatherless children and widows and all those who are desolate and oppressed.

Enlightenment Humanism: The second, great humanist period as a reaction against the religious dogmatism in European intellectual life was the 18th century Enlightenment. At this point, the word ‘Humanism’ first began to denote an avowedly anti-religious stance where human beings were not only the measure of all things’, but the only measure. The Enlightenment of 18th century Europe known as “the golden age of Humanism,” spread in a large measure to the English-speaking world by the philosopher John Locke and the scientist Isaac Newton. The
Enlightenment of the eighteenth century brought the development of science. Enlightenment Humanism is characterized by such key words as autonomy, reason, and progress, and it is usually distinguished from Renaissance Humanism because of its more secular nature. While Renaissance Humanism developing an internalized type of religiosity which influenced the Protestant Reformation was still somewhat religious, Enlightenment Humanism marked a radical departure from religion.

The intellectual leaders of the Enlightenment regarded themselves as courageous elite who would lead the world into progress from a long period of doubtful tradition and ecclesiastical tyranny. They reduced religion to certain basic moral principles and a few universally held beliefs about God. Apart from these universal principles and beliefs, religions in their particularity were largely banished from the public square. Taken to one logical extreme, the Enlightenment even resulted in atheism.

Humanism after the Enlightenment: After the Enlightenment, Humanism continued and was developed in the next two centuries. During the last two centuries, various elements of Enlightenment Humanism have manifested in philosophical trends such as Existentialism, Utilitarianism, Pragmatism, and Marxism. Humanism now is equal blend of Immanuel Kant, Thomas Jefferson, Martin Luther King, Jeremy Bentham, Karl Marx, Jean Paul Sartre and Victor Hugo. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy states that, ‘the term encompasses the four doctrines: Communism, Pragmatism, Personalism, and Existentialism.’(72)
Modern humanist movements: One of the earliest forerunners of contemporary chartered humanist organizations was the Humanistic Religious Association formed in 1853 in London. This early group promoted knowledge of the sciences, philosophy, and the arts.

The phrase the "religion of humanity" is sometimes attributed to American Founding Father, Thomas Paine. Active in the early 1920s, F.C.S. Schiller labeled his work "Humanism". In 1929 Charles Francis Potter founded the First Humanist Society of New York whose advisory board included Julian Huxley, John Dewey, Albert Einstein and Thomas Mann. He was an advocate of such liberal causes as women’s rights, access to birth control, civil divorce laws, and an end to capital punishment. The Humanist Manifesto drafted by Roy Wood Sellars was published in 1933. It defined religion in secular terms and refused traditional theistic perspectives such as the existence of God and his act of creation.

In 1941, the American Humanist Association was organized. Noted members of The AHA include Isaac Asimov and writer Kurt Vonnegut. After World War II, three prominent Humanists became the first directors of major divisions of the United Nations: Julian Huxley of UNESCO, Brock Chisholm of the World Health Organization, and John Boyd-Orr of the Food and Agricultural Organization. In 2004 American Humanist Association, along with other groups representing agnostics, atheists, and other freethinkers, joined to create the Secular Coalition for America which advocates in Washington, D.C. for separation of church and state and nationally for the greater acceptance of non-theistic Americans. Twenty-first century Humanism tends to strongly endorse human rights, including reproductive rights, gender equality, social justice, and the
separation of church and state. The term covers organized non-theistic religions, secular Humanism, and a humanistic life stance.

The International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) is the world union of more than one hundred organizations---Humanist, rationalist, secular, ethical, culture, and free thought organizations in more than 40 countries. The Happy Human is the official symbol of the IHEU as well as being regarded as a universally recognised symbol for those who call themselves Humanists. The International Humanist and Ethical Union, London, recommends use of “Humanism,” with no qualifying adjective at all, and with the capital "H" befitting a well-defined worldview clearly established after three quarters of a century of scholarly study and exposition. In 2002 the IHEU General Assembly unanimously adopted the Amsterdam Declaration 2002 which represents the official defining statements of World Humanism:

Humanism is ethical and rational. It supports democracy and human rights. Humanism insists that personal liberty must be combined with social responsibility. Humanism is a response to the widespread demand for an alternative to dogmatic religion. It values artistic creativity and imagination. Humanism is a life stance aiming at the maximum possible fulfillment through the cultivation of ethical and creative living. (www.iheu.org/adamdecl.htm)

Humanism and Positivism: August Comte (1798-1857), one of the 19th century French philosophers, propounded a positivistic theory for the reorganization of society along scientific lines. In his view, human society has passed through the theological and metaphysical stages, and has entered into the positivist stage. Positivism is a scientific doctrine which aims at progressive increase of materials, and intellectual well-
being of human societies all over the world. Welfare of mankind through scientific, technological, and educational progress is the sole aim of positivism. In Comte’s positivistic approach the entire humanity is the object of religious worship for individuals. He suggested that mystical religion could be replaced by religion of humanity.

According to August Comte humanity is the Supreme Being, God. For Comte, all speculations about ultimate reality are futile. Our knowledge is confined to the knowledge which we obtain from the positive sciences. We recognize that Humanity is capable of attaining this knowledge. So reverence is due to humanity, all salutations to mankind, and none to god. To better the conditions of mankind is the best possible ideal to be achieved; cultivate reverence for human personality. Only in humanity, we ought to find aspirations to finer and loftier ways of life and a perfect soul. Comtean ideas inform the work of many of the major novelists of the later nineteenth century- Emile Zola, George Eliot, George Meredith, Thomas Hardy. (Davies 23)

Humanism and Existentialism: Some of the contemporary existentialist philosophers lay great emphasis on humanistic values. They aim at a new revaluation of human values. In existential philosophy ‘man’ occupies a central position in society. Man, in fact, makes himself through his own efforts in a given social setting. The existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre is humanistic in the sense that individuals themselves are the creators of values. Individuals, according to him, are free. They have the capacity for changing what is better not only for themselves, but for the entire mankind.
Oriental Theory of Humanism: Oriental Philosophy and moral system are based on a spiritualistic metaphysics where the essential elements of Humanism can be traced to centuries ago. The author of the great epic Mahabharata, the encyclopaedia of Indian moral- spiritual thought, felt free to proclaim: ‘Nothing superior to man exists.’(Devaraja 10) The Mahabharata had emphasized the essential dignity of man as the sole touchstone of all human thought and activity. Man is regarded as the highest in the creation not because of his superior intellect or rationality but because he is essentially spiritual in nature. Man is divine because of a soul or spirit in him which is his essence and can identify with the supreme reality.

Philosophical speculations in India originated in the existential situation of suffering and in the desire to escape, on the one hand, from the suffering, and on the other, from limitations imposed by man's finite existence. This circumstance invests Indian philosophic thought with perennial interest and abiding significance for thinking. Indian Classics have been discussing the goal of human life since ages. Upanishadic discourses are centered on self-perfection, self-knowledge or self-realization. There is no higher or greater goal of life than self-realization. Each soul is potentially divine and shares the same divine essence, so all are equal and equally divine. Thus there is no scope for hatred, enmity etc. and therefore the humanistic virtues of compassion, love; unity and brotherhood naturally prevail in society. The universalism of Indian thought emphasizes the motive of action as Loka samgraha (welfare of the world ) which is very foundation of the Humanism. Human-centered philosophy can also be found as early as 1000 BCE in the Lokayata system of Indian philosophy.
According to theists like Ramanuja and others each soul is potentially divine. According to the schools like Jainism, the soul possesses infinite capacity with which it can attain \textit{ananta chatushtaya}-infinite faith, infinite power, infinite knowledge and infinite bliss. Also in the sixth century BCE, Gautama Buddha expressed, in Pali literature, one of the earliest forms of humanist thought and a skeptical attitude towards the supernatural. Humanism is revealed in Buddha's concept of \textit{Maitri}, preaching unbounded love for everything, near or remote, above or below, visible or invisible. The whole earth becomes a home for all there.

In the sixth century BCE, Taoist teacher Laotzu brought such philosophy to China, where Confucius also taught secular ethics based on human values rather than the supernatural. The Classical Chinese developed a type of humanistic thought in the warring states period that would last for another 2500 years. Confucius, and later Mencius, would annunciate a philosophy that took it for granted that \textit{ren}, the ability to understand and act humanely, was the starting point and goal of human action and thought. The Confucianism has always been a humanistic school, and often in the best sense of the word.

Dr. Radhakrishnan cites Dr. Paul Deussen and very aptly explains how Indian Ethical System is more humanistic with its sound metaphysical (Spiritual) basis. Dr. Paul Deussen, the great Indologist, has sounded this note very beautifully and in straightforwardly manner in the following words that he uttered to a gathering at Bombay at the end of his Indian tour:

The Gospels quite correctly establish as the highest law of morality, ‘love your neighbour as yourselves.’ But why should I do so since by the order of nature I feel pain and pleasure only in
myself, not in my neighbour? The answer is not in the Bible….but it is in the Veda, in the great formula ‘That are Thou’ which gives you in three words the combined sum of metaphysics and morals. You shall love your neighbour as yourself because you are your neighbour. (Radhakrishnan 80)

Some Western thinkers do not find any scope for humanistic ethics in Indian thought because they take it other worldly and life-negating in its approach. Such charges of the Western thinkers’ were levelled against the Advaitic standpoint of Shankara. But it is very clear that Shankara’s Vedanta does not constitute the whole of Indian Philosophy and Indian Literature and Philosophy is thoroughly humanistic. Dr. Kedarnath Tiwari says:

The Advait Vedanta does not deny the reality of this world outright. Rather, on the contrary, it fully affirms the reality of the world from the practical stand point. And from this stand point all ordinary human relationship are fully real, so that there is a full-fledged scope for a humanistic ethics. (Tiwari K 35)

The Vedantic Universal Humanism propounds that humans could be properly understood only in the light of an understanding of the Divine---the Absolute. Liberty of the soul is also to be striven for along with liberty of the body. The Humanism based on Indian philosophy consists of rationalism; the thought that, अहं ब्रह्मास्मि (I am Brahma) (Brihadaranyak Upanishad 2-5-9). and तत्वमसि (You are That) (Chhandogya Upanishad 6-8-7, 6-9-4, 6-14-3.) Hindu philosophy is conducive for harmony and brotherhood of all peoples, in all countries. Ideas like ईश्वरावस्थिमिदं सर्वं यलिङ्गं जगत्यां जगत्। / तेन त्यति युद्धीवा: मा गृहः कस्यस्विद्यंम्। (Ishavasya Upanishad 2) propound reverence for life and
nature, non-exploitation and sharing with others. Above said is one of the most important sayings from Upanishads which says that everything animate or inanimate that is within the universe is controlled and owned by the Lord. One should therefore accept only those things necessary for himself, which are set aside as his quota, and one must not accept other things, knowing well to whom they belong. Indian scriptures have allowed everyone to enrich his/her life by understanding and imbibing them in whatever capacity the can. After imparting the knowledge of the entire Bhagvadgeeta Bhagwan Shri Krishna gives ample freedom of choice to Arjuna and thus lays the foundation of Indian Spiritual Humanism. He says (Shrimadbhagvadgeeta 18-63) Thus I have explained to you knowledge still more confidential. Deliberate on this fully, and then do do as you please. Oriental Humanism gives freedom which is untrammelled by any faith and religion and creed, inspires every person to work in the light of his intellect and reason. It is these ideas that are conducive to harmonious globalization.

The Hindu “Vaishnava” Philosophy is one of the most, significant achievements in metaphysical or spiritual speculations of the world. It has been the Anthropomorphic Conception of the Ultimate Reality, that is, Humanisation of Supreme Being, making Him travel the realms of human life and behviour. The Literature of ‘Bhakti’ Cult sings of the Supreme Being who has descended from his ethereal heights to the terrestrial plane and has brought the message to common man that he can attain proximity to the Supreme Being, by following the ideals pronounced by His humanised behaviour. The Bhakti Cult represents a happy union between the calls of the flesh and the call of the spirit, suggesting the authority of
human affairs by some Transcendental Authority which is higher than and yet equal to man.

The entire gamut of human life is characterised by an interplay of obviously contrary pulls and yet culminating into a harmony. And, most important of all, the essential dignity of Man comes to be defended and protected by the very fact that the Supreme Deity has incarnated himself in human form, assumed human character, suffered and enjoyed together, in the fashion of a Son of the Soil. No other philosophy has ventured to such an extent to humanize the God-head. Thus Hindu Vaishnavasim is an exalted form of Humanism.

In India, in the last hundred years or so, quite a few experiments with Humanism have been noticed, of which two notable ones are the radical Humanism of M. N. Roy and his successors, and Gandhian Humanism which is a mixture of religious piety, social activism, and concern for the down trodden. Among those who contributed to the literature on Humanism in India is Shri Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar. His philosophy may be summarized in the acronym PROUT (Progressive Utilization Theory). According to PROUT human beings can only progress through a synthesis of the mental, physical and spiritual dimensions of our nature, which in turn will contribute to the establishment of a truly progressive human society. PROUT is an alternative to both capitalist and communist paradigms. It also seeks to harmonise the spiritual and material interests of human beings.

Unlike other forms of Humanism which are mostly rationalistic, PROUT is based on Sarkar’s Neo-Humanism which is also spiritual in that it believes that true Humanism can only be effective through the self-
realization and expression of spiritual qualities of human beings. According to Neo-Humanism, material or intellectual progress is not sufficient but these must be combined with spiritual transformation. Sarkar’s Neo-Humanism does not give up rationality but tries to go beyond reason towards the realization of supreme consciousness. For Sarkar, Neo-Humanism is nothing short of a blueprint for human perfection:

Devotion is humanity’s greatest treasure, but when this devotion is elevated to a devotional sentiment, a devotional mission, to the realm of devotional ideation – when the underlying spirit is extended to everything animate and inanimate in this universe – I have designated this as ‘Neo-Humanism.’ This Neo-Humanism will elevate Humanism to universalism, a cult of love for all creative beings of this universe. (Sarkar 7)

According to Sarkar the obstacles in the way of the Neo-humanistic world are what he calls “geo-sentiment and socio-sentiment”. Both these are parochial, restrictive and limiting, creating conflicts on the basis of nation, race, creed, community, case and so on. According to Sarkar, it is by harnessing the sentiment of devotion to the supreme that these prejudices and chauvinisms can be overcome. Sarkar advocated the cultivation of reason through study and education in order to overcome ones narrow mindedness, but ultimately only through the harnessing of ones finest inner resource, which is the sentiment of devotion to the supreme that the change can occur.

Sarkar’s Neo-Humanism is notable in that it includes non-human beings as well. In one of his discourses he asks,
Who says that those creatures who have lost their immediate utility value have no right to exist? No one has the moral right to say this. No one can dare to say that only human beings have the right to live and not non-humans. All are the children of Mother Earth; all are the offspring of this Supreme Consciousness” (Sarkar 66).

In fact in this discourse which he calls ‘Pseudo-Humanism’, Sarkar clearly says that such Humanism which only safeguards the rights of human beings at the expense of that of the other creatures on earth is no Humanism at all. He says that “human beings will have to progress further towards perfection.” (Sarkar 67) The way ahead according to Sarkar is through knowledge. Following traditional authorities, Sarkar divides knowledge into two types: Parajijnana or Aptajijnana on the one hand and Aparajijnana and Praptajijnana on the other. The first kind refers to transcendental knowledge and the latter refers to material knowledge. Transcendental knowledge is of “no use” as such but it does help us escape from the bondage of delusion, falsehood, defects in non-transcendental knowledge can only be corrected through scientific study and rationality. So in order for neo-Humanism to be established continuous research, development, progress in the study of the phenomenal universe is necessary. It is this that contributes to the material happiness of the people and will also counteract geo sentiments and socio sentiments.

Sarkar’s neo-Humanism seems to be a way of reconciling the tensions and oppositions between the spiritual and the material, the individual and society, the local and the universal. This philosophy invites further study and reflection.

**Forms of Humanism**
The epithet Humanism has acquired many telling adjectives as in the following: Marxist Humanism, Liberal Humanism, New Humanism, Religious Humanism, Atheistic Humanism, Scientific Humanism, Absurd Humanism, Ethical Humanism, Radical Humanism and Existential Humanism. And certainly there could be many more. Despite sharp differences on many levels, one thing can be stated without running into conceptual controversies: all these concepts single-mindedly dedicate their rhetoric towards the welfare of man or exclusively concern themselves with various aspects of man. Each presents so unique an outlook that one cannot reduce or combine them into one as there is no common pattern in them. Bogged down by a plethora of these terms, Vaan Praag wonders if it is possible to define Humanism at all, he says:

Humanism is what it is through existential values. It is bound up with emotion and evaluations. It is a moral conviction rather than a theoretical speculation. Therefore it is more suited for a clarifying description than for an unambiguous definition. (Praag 43)

It’s really very difficult to arrive at any universally accepted definition of Humanism because when we apply the epithets like, ‘ethical,’ ‘scientific’, ‘religious’etc. we create exclusive terms which suggest an exclusion of other aspects of man. It is advisable to know as many facets of Humanism as one can because each has its distinctive historical curve, its particular discursive poetics, and its own unique vision of the human. It is quite interesting to know how their conviction of the centrality of the ‘human’ is revealed in them.

Scientific Humanism: Scientific Humanism is oriented towards the reconstruction and progress of society along with scientific lines. Mature
scientific Humanism does no longer require a religious, spiritual, theological or metaphysical framework for explaining the values of individuals in society. Scientific Humanism is a new social philosophy which has considerable promise for mankind.

Cultural Humanism: A concept that knowledge can be obtained through rational thought and experimentation was developed into the scientific method and is the major underpinning of all sciences today. The label of Cultural Humanism is used to refer to cultural traditions which, originating in ancient Greece and Rome evolved through European history and have come to be a fundamental basis of Western culture. Aspects of this tradition include law, literature, philosophy, politics, science, and more.

Religious Humanism: Religious Humanism is the branch of Humanism that embraces some form of theism, deism, or supernaturalism, or considers itself religious (based on a functional definition of religion), without necessarily being allied with organized religion, as such. The existence of God or the divine, and the relationship between God and human beings is seen as an essential aspect of human character, and each individual is endowed with unique value through this relationship.

Religious Humanism is practised in a religious setting with fellowship and rituals. John Dewey is perhaps the best known exponent of religious Humanism. Humanism, for Dewey, was the "common faith" of the world, destined to replace archaic theisms. He defines God as “the unity of all ideal ends arousing in us desires and actions” (Dewey 42). Religion is the bridge between the actual and the ideal. Humanism within organized religion can refer to the appreciation of human qualities as an
expression of God, or it can be to acknowledge and serve the needs of the human community. Religious thinkers such as Erasmus, Blaise, Pascal, and Jacques Maritain hold this position. Religious Humanists, despite believing in a religion, don't consider it necessary to derive all their moral values from it. Some feel that, because their religious beliefs are moral, and therefore humane, they are humanists. The power of Religious Humanism is in ‘minds that are open to change, hearts that are open to each other.’ We are co-equal centres of freedom, value and authority. Religious Humanism respects the dignity and mind of humans because God made us and loves us.

Religious Humanism puts Humanism first and religion second. Humanism in general emphasizes moral responsibilities in this life and finds human intelligence up to the challenge of figuring out how to live ethical lives. Religious humanists gain inspiration and wisdom from religious traditions, spiritual leaders, nature's wonders, and extraordinary personal experiences. Religious humanists see Humanism as fulfilling the traditional social role of religion.

Religious Humanism believes that, we do not need a god who is Absolute Being or the Transcendental Supreme, cut off from the world and mankind. God is to be found in the world especially in mankind and that too, in the poor, the sick, the deprived and the neglected ones. Whatever excellences which we so far have attributed to god shall now have to be attributed to mankind. It will be worship of mankind rather than of god.

Anti-religious Humanism: Marxists advocate anti-religious Humanism. The man next door is more important than god for them.
Human progress and human welfare are the primary concern of Humanism. According to Anti-religious Humanism confidence has to be developed in humanity. A war must be waged to end all wars. A war against illiteracy, ignorance, superstition, ill health, disease, deprivation, oppression, poverty, etc. has to be waged for that purpose. The temples, churches, mosques, etc. replace should be replaced by mental hospitals, clinics, infirmary, educational institutions, workshops, industries, public parks, recreation centres etc.

Non-Religious Humanism: Non-religious Humanism believes in pure naturalism which accepts the world as found out by science, and rules out all forms of supernaturalism. It regards man as a product of evolution. It is the unique faculties of thought, conscience and aesthetic appreciation which distinguishes him from other species. Man has power and potentialities of solving his own problems relying on reason and scientific method. He need not rely on god or supernatural powers. He is not determined, but free in so far as he is able to understand and control the laws of nature and society. Non-religious Humanism is committed to human rights, democratic aims and international peace. It holds that, we must resist the temptation to flee, to some other realm for supernatural solace. This life is all and man’s destiny is within the limits of this natural world.

Secular Humanism: In the 14th and 15th centuries, there were people who called themselves “humanists” celebrated man and man's achievements more than the One who created man. Even ancient Greek culture was centered on man, not God. Secular Humanism is a non-religious philosophy promoting man as the measure of all things that emphasizes human worth and the rights of human beings. ‘Secular
Humanists consider all forms of religion, including religious Humanism, to be superseded.’ (Kurtz 8) They reject theistic religious belief, and the existence of God or other supernatural being, on the grounds that supernatural beliefs cannot be supported rationally. Secular Humanism is often associated with scientists and academics, although it is not at all limited to these groups. Secular humanists generally believe that successful ethical, political, and social organization can be accomplished through the use of reason or other faculties of man. Many theorists of modern humanist organizations such as American Humanist Association hold this perspective. Some secular humanists feel that the ethical side of Humanism transcends the issue of religion, because being a good person is more important than in supernatural belief.

Secular Humanism, in its neglect of God as the source of human values, risks an impoverishment of meaning. Yet Humanism is an inevitable reaction to theism when it is authoritarian and dogmatic. For human beings created in the image of God, the values of Humanism express of human beings’ are God-given nature. Hence, while secular Humanism is antithetical to theism, religious Humanism and theism are complementary.

Inclusive Humanism: Humanism increasingly designates an inclusive sensibility for our species, planet and lives. While retaining the definition of the IHEU with regard to the life stance of the individual, Inclusive Humanism enlarges its constituency within homosapiens to consider Man's broadening powers and obligations. It identifies pollution, militarism, nationalism, sexism, poverty and corruption as being persistent and addressable human character issues incompatible with the interests of our species. It asserts that human governance must be unified
and be inclusionary in that it does not exclude any person by reason of their collateral beliefs or personal religion alone.

It contrasts with contemporary American and British Humanism, which tend to be centered on religion to the extent that “Humanism” in these societies is too often being equated with simple atheism. Humanism may be the only philosophy likely to be adopted by humanity as a whole--it has thus become necessary for Inclusive Humanists to not place unwarranted or self-interested conditions on its prospective believers, nor associate it with religious rancor.

Literary Humanism: Literary Humanism is in many ways an aspect of Cultural Humanism. It involves the study of the “humanities.” These include languages, philosophy, history, literature---in short, everything outside of the physical sciences and theology. The study of the humanities could be an important virtue itself or a means to the development of an ethical and mature human being. In the 20th century, the movement in the humanities focused almost exclusively on “literary culture”---that is to say, the ways in which literature can help people through introspection and personal development.

Literature is the interpretation of life through imagination and passions. The subject matter of literature is man and its theme is human life---its infinite forms and manifestations. The mind of the artist is all-free, unrestricted and can take flight in any direction, can talk of any subject under the sun in a personal way. The literary attitude is the attitude of freedom, of liberal Humanism. A literary man is the Universal man for all seasons and climates.
Literary Humanism stands somewhat on different grounds as compared with other forms of Humanism: realistic, naturalistic, pragmatic and creative.

Educational Humanism: Humanism, as a current in education, began to dominate school systems in the 17th century. It held that the studies that develop our intellect are those that make us "most truly human". The practical basis for this was the faculty of psychology, or the belief in distinct intellectual faculties, such as the analytical, the mathematical, the linguistic, etc. Strengthening one faculty was believed to benefit other faculties as well. A key player in the late 19th-century educational Humanism was U.S. Commissioner of Education W.T. Harris, whose “Five Windows of the Soul” (mathematics, geography, history, grammar, and literature/art) were believed especially appropriate for “development of the faculties”. Educational humanists believe that “the best studies, for the best kids” are "the best studies" for all kids. While Humanism as an educational current was largely discredited by the innovations of the early 20th century, it still holds out, in some elite preparatory schools and some high school disciplines especially in literature. Educational Humanism believes that education should create enlightened, good and kindly persons; such an education would go a long way in removing our ignorance, foolishness, superstitions, narrow-mindedness and wickedness. It is expected that through proper education there would be some check on our greed, hoarding and consumerist attitude.

Liberal Humanism: It is apolitical but not necessarily amoral, assumes that human nature is fixed and constant, and believes literature is only great when it expresses a great truth about human nature.
Eco Humanism: Humanism as a worldview has much to offer environmentalism. Since humanists are committed to work for a global community in which all humans can flourish, they are as concerned about ecological degradation as environmentalists. But in regard to what should be done about environmental problems, humanists do not hesitate to use the best scientific information and technology to reclaim the natural world while ensuring the welfare of all human beings. Humanists stress that science and technology must be used responsibly and that human beings must learn to give up destructive ideological fantasies, whether political or religious.

Global Humanism: Since humanists are committed to work for a global community in which all humans can flourish, they are as concerned about ecological degradation as environmentalists. But in regard to what should be done about environmental problems, humanists do not hesitate to use the best scientific information and technology to reclaim the natural world while ensuring the welfare of all human beings. Humanists stress that science and technology must be used responsibly and that human beings must learn to give up destructive ideological fantasies, whether political or religious.

Neo-Humanism: Neo-Humanism can also be called 'Humanism Redefined for the 21st Century'. Various sentiments such as geo- and socio-sentiments cause great harm and destruction in the world due to their narrowness of vision. The solution is in imbibing the mind-set of Neo-Humanism--- the love for all created beings; as if all were a part of one's own family. Neo-Humanism is a process of becoming consciously, self-consciously, human. It is the philosophy that makes people
understands that they are not ordinary creatures. This philosophy liberates people from all inferiority feelings and defects and makes them aware of their own importance. Neo-Humanism suggests that human beings, as the most thoughtful and intelligent beings in this created universe, will have to accept the great responsibility of taking care of the entire universe. They accept the responsibility as if the entire universe rests on them. Neo-Humanism holds that Man should be truly critical, completely positive and through experience, reach unity as a standard for life. The Neo-Humanists maintain that man can be truly "modern and critical" in art, politics, religion, et cetera when he utilises “the best of the past as signposts for the present.” (Tiwari 383)

Neo-Humanism derives from the deepest recesses of the human personality, that vast reservoir of untapped spiritual inspiration. However, most human beings have limited mind-sets based on geo-sentiment (geo-patriotism, geo-economics and geo-religion), socio-sentiment (allegiance to one community) or human sentiment, which is mainly confined to the realm of ideas. Neo-Humanism is the realm of action. Neo-Humanism means elevating Humanism to universalism, having love for all beings of this universe. Neo-Humanism is philosophical in form, revolutionary in spirit and spiritual in orientation. Neo-Humanism describes the wonders of this world and one’s role within it. It is critical of anything that impedes one’s individual and collective journey through life. It is synthetic in character. It allows for no distinction based on race, sex, caste, religion or even species. A Neo-Humanist agenda is a liberating agenda. It places great store on human rationality as a tool in over-turning all forms of dogma and prejudice. It links morality to this rational process in order to make the mind pure enough to function without bias, and the heart strong enough to embrace all in the endeavour to forge single
humanity. Neo-Humanism is a spiritual force because it acknowledges and actively promotes spiritual practice as the only way to achieve a sense of belonging in the universe. This sense of belonging cannot come from simple assertions that we belong: the rhetoric of belonging. Our awareness of our inter-connection with others enables us to harness the power of love as we turn from being self-serving beings to beings of service.

Some thinkers argue that Humanism being too anthropocentric neglects Nature-the non-human phenomena in our world. Nature comprises of the physical elements; water, air, fire, earth, space and the sun and the moon; the vegetative world and the living worlds of animals, insects and birds and marine life. Man's real happiness lies in his having friendly relations with Nature. This planet is home not just for humans but many other types of life. If Humanism means the welfare of human beings to the exclusion of others, it seems to be an ideology that supports human domination to the extent of the extinction of other species. With complete denial of the divine or the trans-human sphere of consciousness Man thinks that there is nothing above or beyond him. Man may indeed be the measure of all things but to consider man as sovereign may also result in the diminution, not enhancement, of human possibilities.

History shows that Humanism has been often seen as being against religion: Renaissance Humanism occurred in the fourteenth century as a reaction against the religious authoritarianism of Medieval Catholicism, Enlightenment Humanism naturally emerged as a movement against Lutheranism, Calvinism, Anglicanism, and the Counter-Reformation in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and its tradition even led atheism and Marxism. In 1844 Marx was happy to write that “Communism . . . is Humanism.” (Marx 149) and in 1945 Sartre gave his
famous lecture “Existentialism is a Humanism.” (Sartre 1987). Today, so-called secular Humanism constitutes a great challenge to established religion. Yet one should not forget that the idea of value, dignity and divinity of man is derived from and is dependent upon the belief in god. So the theists maintain that the only way in which we can fully realize ourselves as human beings is to put ourselves in relationship with god. A man’s incapacity for self-perfection is itself a pointer to the existence of god.

Religion cannot be replaced by pure morality or mere Humanism or both. Neither Humanism nor any philosophy of life is purely intellectual. So, humanist approach to pure morality without religion tends to ignore the demands of unconscious. Even rational Humanism without some sort of religion is not possible. ‘Humanism without religion lacks depth, purpose and authority.’ (Phillips 130) The moral life of dedication and sacrifice is not possible without religion. If ‘human concern’ is the basic object of attention for Humanism, then ‘spiritual sensitivity’ and ‘religious aspirations”, which are integral parts of human constitution, should not be and cannot be ignored by Humanism. Thus pure Humanism divorced from religion, will remain away from human beings themselves. The best mind among the humanists T. S. Eliot rightly said, “Humanism is in the end futile without religion.”(Lewisohn 444)

For the world of the 21st century, humanistic values must project the vision of a peaceful world in which no man, woman or child, or class of men, women, or children shall live as servants or slaves existing simply to fulfil the whims and wishes and desires of others, a world in which no man or woman or child shall be used as a tool to satisfy the lusts or greed or ambitions of others, a world in which every human life, the life of every man, woman, and child shall be a wanted, welcomed, and esteemed
member of the one human family. In their quest for universal Humanism, Tagore and Whitman emphasize that men should make available to all men the significant values of every culture and bind them into a peaceful brotherhood. The corresponding chapter studies both the poets separately and reveal their unique shades of humanism.

The next chapter discusses how Tagore helps his countrymen to keep the window open on the wide world and to be a true world-citizen. It also discusses how his broad passion for the whole of the human race reaches its acme of Humanism and seeks welfare not for India alone but for the entire world. The aim of the study in second chapter is to reflect on a depiction of mutual relationship of the Trinity: Man, God and Nature. It is interesting to know about Tagore’s attempt at establishing a kinship with man in all his efforts and strivings, his hopes and failures, his aspirations and his daily work in his poetry. The next chapter examines some of Tagore’s poems in the light of his views discussed above.
Works-Cited


