CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

Malamud has diligently and decently categorized the intricacies and delicacies of life's ups and downs. The real duty of an artist does not stop with depicting society's past history and present situation, but he has to suggest certain ways and means to correct the basic faults and prove that every individual is equally important as any one else. Malamud has presented a new outlook of life's mission in his works. His ideas and ideals are highly informative, suggestive and instructive.

Every age has witnessed certain triumphs and failures, certain glories and glooms. Man irrespective of his vast knowledge and experience has succumbed to political upheavals, religious persecutions and personal dejections. Artists of great calibre, while depicting the ordeals undergone by a society, have also suggested certain means to get away from the clutches of evil forces. Such transformation can be achieved only through humanism.

Malamud through his works has suggested that humanism would lead to a world of happiness, hope and love. While suffering has a cathartic effect on the human psyche and chastens it, compassion redeems man of all his sins. Malamud believes that human virtues like love, compassion and responsibility are the panacea to the present society that is disintegrating by the nihilistic forces. Malamud wrote against the devaluation of human potential and the denigration of human beings that exist in the modern society. On the occasion of receiving the National Book Award for The Magic Barrel Malamud said:
Whatever be the reason, his fall from grace in his eyes is betrayed by the words he has invented to describe himself as he is now: fragmented, abbreviated, other-directed, organizational ... The devaluation exists because he accepts it without protest. (qtd. in Hicks 32)

Malamud's writings instil the faith in the ability of human beings to break away from the clutches of the dehumanizing forces. The humane traditions of the past stand a testimony to the greatness of humanity and Malamud's writings echo this belief. Malamud is of the opinion that art must not be just a means of delight alone but the main purpose of art is to instruct and educate men towards a glorious future. Malamud has emphasized through his writings his intention to inspire love and hope in the hearts of fragmented modern men. Malamud has portrayed the predicament and experiences of modern man. Through his writings Malamud has tried to bring about a sanctified effect on his readers.

The Jews came to America with the hope of realising the American dream of equality, liberty and fraternity. Malamud has written about the reversal of the American dream. The American dream of success crashed during the First World War and during the stock market crash in 1930s. In the post-war period of nihilism, the Jew emerged as a symbol of compassion. Malamud's novels mirror the modern life of commotion and he has shown that men could lead a contented life based on the values of compassion. Malamud's works are based on the belief that compassion alone could bring salvation and show way for a decent life. Although Malamud has presented the tragic undercurrent in man, he is interested in bringing out the hidden strength present in the resources of the human spirit. Compassion remains as an essential component in Malamud's moral vision.
Suffering for Malamud would become nihilistic and corrosive if it is not endowed with compassion. Malamud has proved that suffering and compassion are the integral part of human life.

There is a broad humanistic concern in the novels of Bernard Malamud. He has highlighted the suffering of the Jews because he had first-hand knowledge of the existential anguish faced by the Jewish immigrants in America. Malamud views Judaism not as a ritual based religion but as a means of attaining universal brotherhood. All religions instruct men to lead a righteous life and to be merciful to their fellow men. People are more concerned in following the rituals and customs but they fail to understand the inherent meaning of their religion. Malamud has said:

I handle the Jew as universal man. Everyman is a Jew though he may not know it. The Jewish drama is a ...symbol of the fight for existence in the highest possible terms. Jewish history is God’s gift of drama. (qtd. in Astro 101)

To Malamud the Jew became the symbol of a good man who strived to maintain his honesty and morality amidst many demoralizing forces. The characters in the three novels are regenerated after undergoing suffering. They learn to live a new meaningful life according to the humanistic principles. Malamud has proved that suffering produces efficacious results in human life. The characters identify themselves with others by sharing their sorrows and sufferings. Confession of their past mistakes and miseries and sympathizing with each other is the sign of love between the hero and the heroine.
The Natural is about the temptations undergone by the baseball hero Roy Hobbs and his eventual transformation. In his pursuit of money and fame Roy Hobbs forgot the trust placed on him by his fans. His desire to marry Memo Paris led to further deterioration of his moral values. Roy was unable to concentrate in his game due to Memo's rejection of his love. During the period of his failures, Roy was asked to hit a homerun by a poor truck driver for the sake of his son who was critically ill. The sight of Iris Lemon standing among the audience infused confidence in Roy and he was able to hit a homerun. For the first time Roy experienced the happiness one feels when he works his best to make others happy. Roy confessed his past suffering and failures to Iris Lemon. Iris said that experience should make people better and that suffering should teach people to select the right path. Iris Lemon taught Roy that a naturally gifted hero must have the power to vitalize a spiritually dead society. This is one of the genuine concepts on which Malamud's humanism has been founded. Roy Hobbs was unable to understand the impact of Iris Lemon's advice and he returned to his former way of life. Under the insistence of Memo Paris, Judge Banner and Gus Sands, Roy decided to give up the final course of the match. Iris Lemon was hit by Roy's misdirected ball. The wounded Iris requested Roy to win the game for his numerous fans who considered him to be their hero. Roy came back with the determination to win but he lost the game.

Iris Lemon's tender compassion and love gave Roy the courage to fight against the evil forces and the strength to bear suffering. Roy threw away the bribe money at the evil trio. Roy's corrupt deal was published in the newspaper. Due to his selfish pursuit of money Roy lost his fame. The story ends with the
dejected Roy crying bitterly for his foolish mistake. Roy’s inability to learn from suffering and his egoism led to his moral denigration. Roy was able to transform into a virtuous person by renouncing the temptations of the materialistic society. Iris Lemon was a victim of rape. She was able to bring up her daughter amidst great difficulty and her self-sacrificial suffering. Iris Lemon’s life exemplifies the fact that human beings have the strength and endurance to overcome suffering. The message of the novel *The Natural* is that people should learn through suffering to lead a life of compassion.

*The Assistant* deals with the transformation of a criminal, Frank Alpine, into a virtuous man. Malamud has dealt with the relationship between Jews and non-Jews in the novel and has proved that all men are vulnerable to suffering. Morris Bober was a poor grocer but he had a deep compassion for humanity. On seeing the poverty of the grocer Frank gave up his criminal life and decided to stay in the store as Bober’s assistant. Frank was fascinated by the honest and compassionate nature of Morris Bober. Bober was able to maintain his virtues in spite of poverty and continual suffering. Frank tried to correct himself by following the footsteps of Morris Bober. Frank was unable to stop his habit of stealing. Once Bober caught him in the act of stealing and dismissed him from the store. Frank was in love with Morris’s daughter Helen and he intended to marry her. In an attempt to possess her physically, Frank lost the trust and love Helen had for him. When Morris was sick, Frank worked in the store without receiving any salary. Frank decided to win back the love he had lost by disciplining himself. Morris died leaving Helen and his wife in a state of penury. The Rabbi at Morris’s funeral said that, Morris had lived according to the spirit of Judaism because — “to
want for others that which he wants also for himself' (The Assistant 229) was the Jewish Law.

The funeral speech of the Rabbi shows that Malamud's humanistic principles are identical with his Jewish ethics. Frank worked day and night without any rest and he gave his earnings to Ida. Ida and Helen realised that they were able to live in a decent manner only due to Frank's hard work and selfless nature. Helen started to attend college and she thanked Frank for helping her to attain her long cherished ideal. Frank converted to the Jewish faith after realising that one's life would become meaningful only when he accepted suffering in order to make others happy. "Frank's conversion is interpreted not as the victory of one religion over the other but as the triumph of humanism over the 'deceitful devaluation of man'" (qtd. in Hicks 5).

The hero of the novel A New Life accepted a position of lecturer at Cascadia College with the hope of leading a principled life. Levin was asked to teach language skills to science students while he felt that the duty of the teacher was to educate the future generation about the ways "to keep civilization from destroying itself" (A New Life 115). Levin worked with an aim to liberalize the English department and to reinstall humanity courses in the college curriculum. The adulterous relationship, which started between Levin and his colleague Gilley's wife Pauline, became an enduring love affair. Levin was instrumental in bringing about the Great Book Program, which would eventually open the avenue to humanities at Cascadia. When Pauline came seeking a new life with Levin, he had lost his former passion for her.
But he accepted her out of responsibility and compassion. Gilley agreed to give back Pauline’s adopted children only if Levin promised to resign his job. Levin agreed to Gilley’s condition. Levin’s love for Pauline gave him the courage to sacrifice his job and to bear suffering. Love gave direction and meaning to their life. Levin left Cascadia along with his wife and children and with the determination to face the pitfalls that lay ahead. Through this novel Malamud drives home the point: “To be good, then evil, then good was no moral way of life, but to be good after being evil was a possibility of life” (258).

The novel The Fixer stands as a parable of human dignity for Yakov Bok becomes the representatives of the Jew as he suffers for them. Yakov who claims to be apolitical exemplifies that by chance even apolitical persons might get caught into the political turmoil of the era. The Fixer is based on the historical Mendel Bellis case. Yakov yearns to change his luck by changing the place. He feels that his chances to succeed in life are limited since he is a Jew. He abandons his Jewish identity and goes to the city of Kiev. By chance, Yakov saves the life of a member of the anti-Semitic Black Hundreders, who assuming that Yakov is not a Jew, gives him a job in his brick factory. The secret police found a blood strained corpse of the Christian boy and they arrested Yakov in the name of Nicholas II. Yakov says: “I am not a political person … the world is full of it but it’s not for me. Politics is not in my nature” (The Fixer 45). Though Yakov claims to be devoid of any political ideology, gets to understand that the political turmoil of the country is planned by the anti-Semites and are making him a scapegoat for their political benefits. The Russian government plans a pogrom against the Jews and tries to initiate it by accusing the innocent Jew, Yakov of killing a Christian boy.
for a ritual purpose. In the prison Yakov undergoes untold suffering and torture. Even while in solitary confinement Yakov believed that "life could be better than it is" (79) and this staunch belief in humanity and positive outlook made him endure the unbearable tortures. Bibikov is the only Russian official with conscience and he is the only person who believes in Yakov's innocence and fights for the cause of truth. Although Bibikov is put into a tight corner, in order to uphold truth and justice, he ends his life. Bibikov is the foil of Malamud and in the conversation between Bibikov and Yakov, the former expresses rather the views of Malamud. Bibikov says: "There's something cursed, it seems to me, about a country where men have owned men as property. The stink of that corruption never escapes the soul, and it is the stink of future evil" (172). Bibikov further says: "I respect man for what he has gone through in life, and sometimes for how he does it, but he has changed little since he began to pretend he was civilized and the same thing can be said about our society"(173). Malamud voices his disillusionment through Bibikov. At the same time, Malamud warns the society that if such selfish attitudes and nihilistic tendencies prevailed the fact that men are civilized would become a humbug.

Yakov realizes through Shmuel that he is representing the Jewish community and his suffering has a meaning and purpose. Yakov endures soul-rending humiliation for refusing to confess the murder he had not done in order to save the nation from pogrom. After two and a half years of solitude and suffering, Yakov was taken to the trial. On the way to the trial, Yakov had an imaginary conversation with the Tsar. Yakov accused the Tsar of misgovernment and for creating racial prejudice in the country. The Tsar expresses his inability in
maintaining justice in the country. He says: “In a sick country every step to health is an insult to those who live on its sickness” (308).

Yakov who in the early stages of the novel thought to overcome his limitations by rejecting his Jewish identity learns in the end that the Jew can never escape from his identity. He realises that freedom cannot be achieved by escaping from one’s identity but by becoming a part of one’s identity and by working for the upliftment of one’s brethren. Yakov on his way to the trial comments: “So for a Jew it was the same wherever he went, he carried a remembered pack on his back – a condition of servitude, diminished opportunity and vulnerability” (315). The novel ends with Yakov on his way to trial. Gaining the right to be tried in court itself is a success for Yakov’s fortitude and patience. The concluding lines of the novel: “What is it that Spinoza says? If the state acts in ways abhorrent to human nature it’s the lesser evil to destroy it. Death to the anti-Semite! Long live revolution! Long live liberty!” (335) These lines stand a testimony to Malamud’s warning to future generation that if men lack compassion and fellow feeling then disaster is inevitable. Yakov Bok triumphs in the end because his existence acquires meaning through his positive attitude towards suffering and by accepting responsibility towards the Jews.

In The Tenants Malamud has tried to explore the relationship between African-Americans and Jews in the second half of the twentieth century. Both the African-American and American Jews have undergone a traumatic past of slavery and the Holocaust. Instead of finding affinity, they rebel and treat each other as strangers. Harry Lesser who represents the Jewish community is a self-centred person who lacks the concern to understand others’ miseries. He turns out to be a
hypocrite by trying to create love in his fiction while he himself lacks concern and compassion. Levenspiel, the landlord pleads with Lesser to vacate the building. Lesser involves Levenspiel in a prolonged legal battle as he refuses to vacate his house and also turns a deaf-ear to his repeated pleas of compassion. Harry is self-centered to the core that he never feels guilty for seducing his friend’s mistress. Being a close friend of Wille and sensing how intimate and important Irene means to him, Harry should not have robbed his best friend of his beloved. Harry’s love towards Irene is not based on genuine love but is based on his jealousy towards the closeness between Irene and Willie.

Though Willie lacks form to express his feelings and emotions, he yearns to make his writing as a weapon to help his suffering lot to realise their worth and dignity. He looked upon Lesser as his mentor. When Willie realised the true colour of Lesser, he was disheartened because the heavy blow came from the corner he least expected. Willie’s disappointment took the form of violence and he burnt Lesser’s manuscript.

Lesser’s self-centred aim to create a masterpiece became a failure because of his egoistic attitude and lack of compassion. Malamud presents three hallucinatory ends to the story. In the end both the writers brutally attacked each other resulting in mutual murder. Even in this novel, which seems to exhibit Malamud’s disillusionment, he ends it with a ray of hope by saying: “Each, thought the writer, feels the anguish of the other” (The Tenants 230). The concluding lines reveal the fact that they were able to feel the anguish of the other proves one’s capacity for compassion.
Levenspiel cries for mercy. The word "mercy" is repeated hundred and fifteen times at the end of the novel. Jacob Korg points out: "mercy leaves the pages of this book and hangs in the air; becoming a supplication addressed to the universe in general" (Korg 84). In the end the spirit of humanism triumphs because even in the moment of destroying his enemy and being destroyed by him, he feels the anguish of the other, and the mercy prayed for by Levenspiel becomes a redeeming possibility.

Dubin's Lives reflects Dubin's struggle between his temptations and responsibility. Dubin is a famous biographer and at the age of fifty-two he suffers from discontentment and loneliness. Dubin finds Fanny's youthful beauty and love as a source of forgetting his worries. Dubin married Kitty out of compassion for the young widow. He goes to the extent of adopting Kitty's son as his own. Even in his old age when Dubin lacks passion for Kitty, he never belittles his responsibility as her husband. When Dubin was with Fanny in Italy for a rendezvous, he abandoned her and went in search of his daughter. He took immense pains to see his step-son in Switzerland.

When Dubin came to know that Fanny looked upon him as his mentor, Dubin understands the pains she undergoes to make life purposeful and helps her to get the position of a clerk in a lawyer's office and to pursue her law studies simultaneously. In the end Dubin overcomes his temptation and sacrifices his lust for Fanny and goes back to his wife with love.

The novel God's Grace is set in a situation where the world is devastated by nuclear war and the survivor Calvin Cohn is left to exist alone, along with a chimp Buz. "He felt sick horror and a retching contempt of the human race"
Later Cohn finds a group of chimps in the island and tries to form a society based on humanistic principles. Cohn in his desperation and loneliness tried to converse with God, regarding His justice to humanity. The conversation between Cohn and God reveals the irresponsibility of man and his selfish nature. Cohn wondered about God thus: “He enjoys performance, spectacle - people in peril. His most entertaining circus. He loves sad stories, with cast of thousands. Cohn hid his anger at The Lord, turning it low, then hid his thought” (24).

Cohn tries to humanize the brutes by training them to control their natural instincts and to reason out their actions. He tries to build a society based on compassion and goodwill. But the animals reverted to their former self inspire of Cohn’s advice: “Remember man destroyed himself by his selfishness and indifference to those who were different from, or differed with, him. He scorned himself to death. At least learn that lesson if you want to evade his fate” (199-200). The chimps start to murder each other as he restricts original instincts. The novel ends with the gorilla singing Kaddish for Cohn.

The true failure of the chimps and the ultimate failure of humanity stand as a warning to future generation that the result of selfish motive and the lack of compassion would lead to disaster. The failure of man stems from the fact that he had misused his freedom and rational power of thinking.

In an interview with Helen Benedict, Malamud discussed the theme of God’s Grace. He felt that the novel embodies his belief that “there’s a vast sense of failure that has clouded his (man’s) best efforts to produce a greater freedom than he was born with” (36). Thus the novel can be interpreted as Malamud’s
warning to the society, which was groping in moral failures after the Second World War.

Malamud's heroes begin their life as victims in search of a better life. They lead a wayward life until they find an ideal worthy of commitment. Usually the selfless love of the heroine induces them to bear the suffering in the course of attaining their ideal. Finally suffering teaches them that they must make their life purposeful by living for others. Roy Hobbs in The Natural started his life as a victim of Harriet Bird, who shot him in the gut. After many struggles, he achieved his ambition of becoming a great baseball player. After achieving the pinnacle of fame, Roy Hobbs succumbed to the temptations of Memo Paris and accepted the bribe. Iris Lemon's selfless love gave him the confidence to fight against the evil forces and to accept the suffering he had to face for his mistakes. Roy learnt that his life was a failure because of his selfish nature. Roy's realization of his mistake redeemed him.

Frank Alpine in The Assistant was an orphan and started his life as a criminal. Morris Bober's compassionate nature and honesty transformed Frank. Frank was able to face the hardships for the sake of his love for Helen. He was redeemed when he started to live for Helen. Likewise Levin in A New Life led a wayward life and he came to Cascadia with a hope of changing his life. His love for Pauline gave him the confidence to bear future suffering. He sacrificed his job and accepted her as his wife. Malamud's protagonists transcend their selfish nature by apprehending the value of love and suffering. Their lives are filled with meaning only when they start to think and live for others.
Malamud’s heroes are caught between the power of materialistic wealth and spiritual value. Due to their concern for their fellow men, Malamud’s heroes select the life of morality by rejecting material wealth. Success and victory in Malamud’s fictional world depends upon the protagonists’ ability to fight against the corruption and the temptations offered by the materialistic society. Malamud’s heroes assert their compassionate nature by suffering for the sake of others. By leading a life principled by humanistic values, a person does not enjoy any materialistic comfort in society but achieves spiritual maturity. The characters attain spiritual maturity only by disciplining themselves and by overcoming their selfish nature. Malamud has emphasized that every individual has the capacity to grow spiritually.

Malamud’s characters are placed between the multiple forces of materialistic success in life and the process of retaining their moral integrity. They prefer to be failures in the society in order to succeed spiritually. In The Natural, Roy renounces the temptations of the world to become rich by false means and prefers to be a failure. He retains the goodness within him and succeeds spiritually. In The Assistant, Morris Bober believed that there is a zone of goodness in everybody and trusted Frank Alpine who had tried to rob his store. Frank proved to be a humane person by completely sacrificing himself for Helen’s well being. He took the position of his mentor and steered the family to a safe harbour without any expectation. Levin in A New Life decided to take up the responsibility for Pauline and readily accepted the commitment of a family along with Pauline’s two adopted kids. Levin rejected a secure life with a permanent job for the sake of commitment and responsibility. In The Fixer, Yakov Bok has
become an epitome of compassion by willingly suffering for the innumerable innocent Jews and rises to the level of a martyr. In *The Tenants*, Harry Lesser and Willie fail to realise the meaning of compassion and brotherhood and thus destroy themselves. In *Dubin's Lives*, Dubin realises his commitment and responsibility as a husband and overcomes his selfish motives. Thus the theme of victory through defeat is consistently evident in Malamud's works. Malamud has dedicated himself in bringing out the virtue of compassion, which is the resource of the human personality and thus affirms his faith in humanity. Malamud authentically portrayed the moral dilemma of man in an era of powerlessness and where success is calculated by the amount of money a person has amassed.

Malamud has peripherally touched on the subject of the Holocaust, which was the greatest and horrifying situation in the history of mankind. Malamud has handled the inhuman conditions of the Holocaust in a tight vein.

In a fine essay on Malamud's work, devoted chiefly to "The Fixer", Robert Alter suggests that for Malamud this novel "1911 is 1943 is a small compass and sharp focus" that the Beliss case gives him "a way of approaching the European Holocaust on a scale that is imaginable, susceptible of fictional representation." But by reducing the scale of that event from the extermination of a people to the persecution of a person, Malamud does more than make that momentous atrocity manageable; he transforms it into a story of the affirmation of private dignity that elevates the ordeal to tragic dimensions. (Langer 146)

Morris Bober in *The Assistant* is a Holocaust victim who bears his suffering with dignity. Michael Brown describes the Holocaust as "a potent
symbol of the dangers posed by the modern world to any person who would be different, to anyone who would insist of being a man” (484).

Malamud’s characters grow from uncertainty and chaos into responsible individuals. Their morality and values are based on their commitments and sense of responsibility they develop for themselves and for others. The characters rise to heroic stature by sacrificing their materialistic benefits for the responsibility and love they had developed towards another person. The characters go through a lot of inner turmoil and moral dilemma in maintaining the moral values. They have to sacrifice one to gain another virtue and have to make a wise choice to come out of paradoxical situation. The heroes are representatives of an institution; the values of the institution, which have become rigid, come into conflict. The characters emerge as successful and compassionate human beings by following the right path and by adhering to the virtues that help humanity to climb the ladder of progress. In The Natural, numerous fans look upon Roy Hobbs as a hero and he represents the spirit of sportsmanship. In due course he is tempted by external forces to sever from his path of virtue by accepting bribe. After a lot of mental conflicts, Roy Hobbs decides to uphold the spirit of the game by playing sincerely even though it might bring an end to his career and also heavy financial loss. In The Assistant, Frank represents the humanistic traditions of the Christian faith but he proves his religious tenets by accepting Judaism. Morris Bober represents the quintessence of Judaism and willingly accepted poverty in order to maintain his moral integrity. Frank who led a wayward life rectified himself after accepting Morris Bober as his mentor. In A New Life, Levin passionately yearns to serve his students and to protect them
from the uncertain principles followed by the department of humanities. He strives hard to make the representatives of the education system to think rationally about making the rigid rules more flexible. Levin sacrifices his profession and career oriented dreams that he strives to achieve and accepts the challenges of an uncertain future by accepting responsibility for Pauline and by ascertaining his responsibility towards her. In *The Fixer*, Yakov Bok leaves the Jewish Shtetl (a country village) and stays in a non-Jewish quarters in the Kiev city. Bok's rejection of his Jewish background paves way for testing his credentials as a compassionate man and his integrity and faith in Judaism. Bibikov believes in the ethics of the law and staunchly believes that law would protect the people. He fails to prevent the unjust ways in which the law is being misused by the opportunists. Yakov proves himself to be a Jew to the core by resisting the temptation of gaining freedom by refusing to confess a crime he had not committed and by foregoing hardships in order to prevent a pogrom. In *The Tenants*, Harry Lesser represents the formalistic tradition of the White people while Willie represents the passionate spontaneity of the Black culture. Lesser fails in his ambition of creating a flawless artistic piece and Willie fails to represent his community's agony and anguish through his writing because they fail to break away from their egoistic nature and secondly they fail to realise the responsibility they have as literary artists and their commitment towards others. In *Dubin's Lives*, Dubin proves his affection for Fanny by deserting her and giving way for Roger to start a new life with her. Dubin proves his love for his wife by taking home the lust he had developed for his mistress. In *God's Grace*, Calvin Cohn tried to set up an ideal society among the abandoned survivors and
he took up the responsibility for civilizing the chimps as his ideal in life. Calvin Cohn is sacrificed in the end like Isaac as he strives to achieve universal brotherhood, the ideal which humanity failed to learn till the end.

Man's responsibility towards humanity and the realization that his activities not only affect him personally but its repercussions have an effect on the society at large forms the basis of morality in Malamud's moral universe. As Sheldon J Hershinow comments:

In the world of Malamud's fiction, compassion, love and understanding - the human values - rather than physical circumstances give meaning to one's life. It is a world that blends hope with despair, pain with possibility and suffering with moral growth. Out of everyday defeats and indignities of ordinary people, Malamud creates beautiful parables that capture the joy as well as the pain of life: he expresses the dignity of the human spirit searching for freedom and moral growth in the face of hardship, injustice and the existential anguish of life in our time. (146)

William Faulkner in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech asserted that man will not endure but will prevail. Likewise Malamud has his insistent belief in the triumph of the human spirit and that there is always scope for people to change for the better. Through suffering and experience, Malamud's characters understand the true substance of life. Malamud's characters never bow down under the weight of the hardships they face nor do they adopt any self-destructive methods like suicide. They face difficulties with dignity and struggle to attain self-knowledge and redemption. Malamud's characters have a sudden insight and they realise that their life has a purpose. They accept responsibility for their past mistakes and
strive to improve their stature. Roy Hobbs in *The Natural* disappears from the game after he was shot by Harriet Bird. With renewed potentials Roy entered the baseball team and strove to become a hero. Frank Alpine in *The Assistant* who wandered aimlessly without any values suddenly realises his mistakes in a visionary moment. He symbolically falls into Morris Bober's grave and arises out of it as a man with discipline, love and responsibility. Levin in *A New Life* lived in a state of self-hatred for nearly two years. Levin suddenly realises that life is a gift given by God. He accepts his position as a lecturer with the aim of redeeming the student community. In the end he rejected his job and returned with an adopted family and with a set of values and responsibility. Yakov Bok in *The Fixer* starts life as an apolitical man. But he ends up spending many years in solitary confinement. Yakov has an insight that his suffering can be meaningful if he learnt to suffer for others. Though Malamud's characters have chance to amass wealth, they reject physical comforts in order to gain spiritual rewards. The characters do not rebel against oppressive forces and prefer to be victimized. Malamud himself commented on the question in a 1964 interview in the National Observer:

A bad reading of my work would indicate that I'm writing about losers. That would be a very bad reading. One of my most important themes is a man's hidden strength. I am very much interested in the resources of the spirit; the strength people don't know they have until they are confronted with a crisis. (qtd. in Astro 65)

In all Malamud's fiction the characters leave their home in search of change and new opportunities. The change is not just outward in the settings but in the process the characters mature morally: they grow from an unfocussed life into
responsible people who identify their sufferings with problems faced by mankind. In the process of their transformation the characters depend on the moral support rendered to them by the surrogate father figure. In due course, they destroy their selfish ego and grow up in stature to the extent of accepting responsibility of a father. In *The Natural*, Roy Hobbs leaves his hometown and comes to the city with the ambition of becoming a baseball player. Pop Fisher was Roy's mentor. He was the one who recognized Roy's talents and accompanied him till his death. It took many years for Roy and he underwent many bitter experiences to attain maturity and the novel ends with the positive note that he would accept his responsibility towards Iris Lemon and that he would willingly become a responsible father to the child that is to be born. In *The Assistant*, Frank Alpine accepts Morris Bober as his role model. Bober teaches him not only the values of life but also the virtues of life. After Bober's death, Frank took the position of Bober in the store. He voluntarily suffers for helping the family, especially Helen. Helen realises the sacrifice and commitment of Frank and the novel ends with the assistant replacing the mentor in spirit and form. In *A New Life*, Levin left the city and travelled towards Cascadia with the idea of making his life more meaningful. He thought that his idea was in liberating college education from the clutches of selfish people and to give a new aura to collegiate education. He ends in asserting his morality and dignity by sacrificing his job and by accepting the child that is to be born to Pauline and her two adopted children as his own. Levin was unable to get the help of a father figure who could act as a catalyst in his transformation. In *The Fixer Shmuel*, Yakov's father-in-law took the position of a surrogate father and instructed Yakov about the pitfalls he would face at Kiev and it was not correct to disregard
his religious beliefs. Yakov who slights Shmuel's advice realises that his suffering is meaningful as he represents the Jewish community at large. Yakov imbibes the selfless nature and compassion of Shmuel when he accepts Raisl's illegitimate child as his own. In The Tenants, Willie and Lesser considered each other as brothers. They fail to bridge the barriers between them with compassion and end up with destroying each other. In Dubin's Lives, Dubin legally adopts Gerald, his stepson as his own. He acts as a source of inspiration for Fanny and helps her to orient her life. He helps her in pursuing a profession and sacrifices his passion for her in order to give her a better chance of marriage. In God's Grace, there is a father-son relationship between Cohn and the chimp Buz. Cohn accepts his position among the chimp society as their saviour but the chimps sacrifice him as Isaac in the Judaic tradition of Abraham sacrificing the ram.

God's Grace "tests as never before the resource of the redemptive spirit one finds at work in most of his earlier fiction" and despite much critical comment to the contrary, Richman discovers in Malamud's harrowing conclusion "an unconditional mark of God's mercy."(qtd. in Salzbery)

In Malamud's fictional universe, characters who break free from their egocentric life achieve success. Characters who try to escape from their past mistakes and forego reality are doomed to failure. Characters who resurrect themselves from their failures learn to reconcile themselves with their past and become accomplished by creating a profound relationship. They learn to be committed to their ideal and create a name for themselves in society. It is through commitment, responsibility and compassion these characters realise their freedom.
Most of the contemporary novelists are concerned with the forces that alienate and demoralize our lives. Malamud has not given importance to such concepts in his works. Malamud has affirmed his faith in the capacity each individual possesses in transforming himself and thereby the society in which he lives. In the society in which nihilism and denigration has become the norm, Malamud has tried to instil faith in the compassionate nature of humanity. Frank N. Magill says:

All Bernard Malamud’s fiction seems based on a single affirmation; despite its disappointments, horrors, pain and suffering, life is truly worth living. His work may be best understood in the context of mid-twentieth century American literature. When Malamud arrived upon the scene he disagreed with the periods twin pillars of negativism and nihilism and his work is a reaction to this prevailing trend (1567).

Malamud’s novels affirm that there is a possibility of redeeming ourselves by leading a life directed by humanistic principles. Malamud’s heroes are inspired by the power of love to transcend their selfish nature. They realized the value of human life by undergoing suffering. They readily sacrifice their materialistic comforts for the well being of humanity.

Malamud’s moral vision is humanistic and it is not concerned with religious beliefs. Through his novels Malamud insisted that we should express love and show respect to people though they may belong to various religions and faiths. Malamud has emphasized the equality of all men. A person’s life would become worthwhile only when he realizes the sanctity of the human life.
According to Malamud: "Love for mankind is a prerequisite to love of God" (Sharma xii). Love and being loved is the aim of life. Without love the very meaning of life would become void. God lives in the heart of a compassionate man. Instead of realising God in love, modern man is searching for Him elsewhere. Compassion captures the quintessence of human relationships. Material obsession on the other hand leads only to the mechanization of the soul. According to Malamud culture and civilization would survive only when compassion and humanism are valued. Malamud has remarked about his stance as follows:

My premise is that we will not destroy each other. My premise is that we will live on. We will seek a better life. We may not become better, but at least we will seek betterment. My premise... is for humanism – and against nihilism. And that is what I try to put in my writings. (qtd. in Sharma xxxv)

The twin forces of compassion and humanism could mould man, society and nation. Earth can become a paradise if people co-exist in a peaceful manner respecting each other’s feelings. God made the world and man made the barriers. Extending a helping hand to our downtrodden and deprived fellowmen without expecting retribution is essential. Malamud suggested through his writings that a peaceful, congenial and glorious generation would evolve only if people adhered to humanistic principles with true perspective.

To sum-up: The Natural deals with a naturally gifted hero who has the power to vitalize a spiritually dead society. People’s suffering and endurance lead them to a life of compassion. The Assistant reveals the spirit of Judaism: "to want
for others that which he wants also for himself' (229). A New Life drives home the point: "To be good, then evil, then good was no moral way of life, but to the good after being evil was a possibility of life" (258). The Fixer shows that even apolitical persons get caught in the swirl of political turmoils. Yakov Bok, the Jewish protagonist, triumph in the end for his existence has acquired significance by his positive attitude towards suffering and by recognizing the fact that he is the representative of the Jewish community. The Tenant is a novel highlighting the virtues of mercy, the word "mercy" being repeated a hundred and fifteen times at the end of the novel. The mercy prayed for by Levenspiel becomes a redeeming possibility. Dubin's Lives reflects an individual's struggle between temptation and responsibility. At last Dubin overcomes his temptation of the flesh and accepts the responsibility of going back to his wife with love. God's Grace is Malamud's warning to the society, groping in moral failures that the result of selfishness and lack of compassion for the fellow creatures would lead to disaster.

Humanism is the basic foundation of culture. Without humanism, the human society will become a pandemonium. It is heartening to note that the present generation is slowly losing its grip from the hands of humanism and walking towards the path of destruction by massacring innocent people in the name of terrorism and violence. The importance of humanism should be stressed to the present generation since the whole world is under the threat of nuclear domination.

Rabindranath Tagore suggests that there are ways of helping a sick society, which is devoid of love, mercy, selflessness and duty-consciousness. Spiritual help, mutual help and physical help are his three important mottos to eradicate the
selfish spirit that is overruling a man. The quintessence of humanism is to help others in every possible way to show man is not made up of alabaster but of flesh and blood. All religions advocate, all philosophies from Socrates to Osho, preach, advocate, preach and dictate their followers all scriptures dictate to be compassionate. The following is a relevant passage from Gita that emphasizes the importance of the undaunted spirit in sharing one’s best to humanity.

Like a lamp, in a pot sheltered from the wind,

Does not flicker, the mind that is restrained

By concentration on the good, is steadfast (Bhagvat Gita 6,18).

Those who help the people in distress are considered to be the true children of God. Those great personalities who have sacrificed their wealth, sacrificing their lifetime for the welfare of society are to be adored. Florence Nightingale, Hellen Keller and Mother Theresa are few rare personalities who served for the upliftment of humanity. Albert Schweitzer who dedicated his life and wealth for the sake of eradication of leprosy expressed his view on compassion as: “Even the smallest creature contains something of the profound mystery of life and is entitled to a fellow feeling which must find expression in gentleness and kindness.”

www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-13566115.html. Gautama, the Buddha and the sage Mahavira found a religion based on humanism and gave this message from India to the whole world two thousand five hundred years ago. Abraham Lincoln gained a new insight into life by the rare quality called compassion. His service in the emancipation of slaves stands testimony to his compassionate nature. Mahatma Gandhi’s sympathetic heart, which was brimming with compassion, thwarted the racism in South Africa. This led to the social reform and political freedom through
non-violence and through soul force. Mother Theresa’s concept of doing something beautiful lies in helping the most neglected poor in the world who are longing for help from others. Thiruvalluvar, the ancient Tamil poet has ascertained the fact that compassion is the basic virtue of all and only on that; the good man may build up all his edifice of righteousness.

To put in a nutshell, humanism is not pertaining to an individual but towards the whole human race. The individual is a drop of water among the ocean called human race. As the world is witnessing cruel and drastic happenings, it is the duty of the intellectuals who have mastered human psychology and philosophy of all religions to come forward to guide humanity towards a constructive path. Christ summarised his teachings into two great important messages to the world community. “Love of God and love of one’s fellowmen” (Math.22: 37-40). In the sermon at the mount, mercy and compassion were stressed by Lord Christ as prime virtue. Man is born as a human being but he can lower himself or degrade himself as an animal and at the same time he can raise himself as a God. This liberty to become either an animal or God is given to man. This is his misery as well as his blessing.

Culture of a country is based on its literary wealth. Books are like the lighthouse to people who are struggling in the sea of ignorance. Future of our society is not in the hands of science but in the hands of great literary writers and great thinkers. Malamud’s works light the candle of hope in the hearts of suffering multitudes those who have lost hope in humanity. Selfless sacrifice, compassion and benevolence must prolong to make this world into a beautiful park filled with smiling roses gently tossing their heads in the cozy breeze called love. Love conquers all.
One should not be the prisoner of yesterday. The past taught many bitter lessons to humanity. With a new hope and broad mindedness, let the individual, society, community, nation and the world march towards a new direction to instil everlasting faith and respect on humanism. To nurture and enrich humanism, everyone in this world has to do some service to his fellow men to pave a new way to a brave new world filled with a fresh zest to render their hands and heart to do real service to humanity. Life is not a destination but a voyage. Let this voyage be sweet and gentle. If this humanism runs through the world with real spirit, then this earth will become a paradise. Life and sacrifice should not be separated for any cause.

Realisation regarding the purpose of living should be inculcated at the appropriate time to do great sacrifices and help humanity with proper perspective and show a new bright direction to the ensuing generation. To honour humanism with the right direction necessitates everyone to realise the meaning and purpose of life. Great thoughts are always not only significant but also practical. Malamud's panaromic view inspired millions and opened the doors of optimism, hope and meaningful life.

A research project is an attempt at analyzing certain facts on a hypothesis and proceeding to establish the correctness or otherwise of the hypothesis by highlighting the viewpoints with the help of primary and secondary sources. This project has made an earnest attempt to analyse and highlight, 'Humanism in the Novels of Bernard Malamud' and if the thesis can awaken the conscience of the people to be more humanistic in their attitude, that attitudinal change is an ample reward by itself, the research scholar believes. In all humility it is felt that the research project is only a beginning in pursuit of knowledge but not an end.