CHAPTER-III

HUMANISM
Humanismus is a term coined, probably by the educationist Friedrich Immanuel Niethamner in the early nineteenth century in Germany. It described a high school and university curriculum based on 'humanities' for the development of the Greek and Latin Classics. The Roman authors like Cicero, Gellivus and others refer humanism to the term 'humanities' or 'studies humanitatis' from liberal or literary point of view. Humanism in the nineteenth century generally means devotion to the literatures of ancient Greece and Rome, and the human values that derived from them. The studia humanitatis or 'study of humanity' emerged from ancient Greek and Roman authors. It constituted the study of 'arts' subjects – language, literature, history and moral philosophy in particular.¹ The people who taught or wrote about humanism referred to themselves as umanisti or humanists. In Italy in the fifteenth century, umanisti meant professional teachers and scholars. The umanisti promoted the humanistic 'new learning', a 'Renaissance' or rebirth of Greco–Roman civilisation. The

¹ Footnote: [Details about the significance of the study of humanity in the ancient literature could be added here.]
Renaissance humanist expressed that the study of humanism contributed to the education of a desirable human being. They indicated a basic concern for man and his dignity. Hence, this study was of vital concern for man. Humanism places man at the centre of all values. The Italian academic jargon in the fifteen century used the term *umanista* to mean a teacher or student of classical literature and the arts associated with it that includes rhetoric. In the late sixteenth century appeared the English equivalent ‘humanist’ having a very similar meaning. Humanist in the sixteenth century signified one who taught or worked in the humanities, that is, grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry and moral philosophy. Renaissance humanists underlined the dignity and importance of man in the universe, the value of the study of classical, imaginative and philosophical literature, as against natural science and the primacy of reason as opposed to instinct and passion in ordering human life.

Pietro Pomponazzi, one of the most important philosophers of Italian Renaissance expressed that man stands at the centre of the world. Pomponazzi's philosophy states:

> The dignity of man is not only maintained, but man's present, earthly life is credited with a significance that does not depend on any hopes or fears for the future.\(^2\)

Like Pietro Pomponazzi, Nissim Ezekiel does not pin his hope in the after-life. In his opinion, man cannot know the absolute, whereas man, from the Biblical point of view has been created to have a fellowship with God. Spinoza argues that man should submit his will before God. *The Book of Job* expresses an emphatic reference to the unfathomable suffering of Job for his unfailing faith in God. However, this suffering in the end leads to Job’s redemption.

The concept of Humanism offered by various eminent Humanists are so varied that it has no fixed meaning. Humanism does not have a constant
meaning. As such, defining Humanism has been a hard nut to crack, for the canvas of it is too large to draw a precise and accepted definition where conceptual controversy creeps in as to what constitutes humanism. However, at least to know what really constitutes humanism, this chapter shall examine the various concepts and definitions of humanism given by great humanists of different periods.

Jacob Burckhardt, a German-speaking Swiss defined humanism as the 'discovery of the world and of man.'³ From this broad generalisation, many critics have drawn some interesting concepts of humanism. In order to understand a humanistic assumption, Meera Panigrahi says:

No one has the right to say that his view of the humanist tradition is definitive, it can only be a personal... one and in judging ideas and assessing their value we should also bear in mind that any view which is deterministic or reductionist in its view of human life and consciousness, or which is authoritarian and intolerant is non-humanistic.⁴

However, one thing is clear that Humanism is a concept of man and humanist is concerned with human being. H.J. Blackham says:

For Christianity man is 'fallen', for Hinduism and Buddhism man is 'earth-bound' for Hegel 'empirically worthless', for Marxism man is 'alienated', for existentialism 'inauthentic'. In each case, there is a justifying total view and a dependent strategy for living: man becomes his true self by obedience to the divine will, by conformity to the cosmic design, by identification with Being or with historical process, by assuming his autonomy in the continuous exercise of choice. Some of these concepts are historical, some metaphysical, some are centred in the cosmos, some in the Creator, some in man himself or in a transaction in which he is partner.⁵
All these statements lead to a deeper philosophical thinking on the predicament of man and the idea of humanism. H.J. Blackham takes human responsibility as the nuclear idea in defining Humanism. Blackham believes that man is his own rule and his own end. Moreover, he thinks that human life is in human hand. According to Nietzsche “If man is totally responsible and there is no built-in order, if ends are open and history is merely ‘a great index of human possibilities’, everything is permissible.” Humanism in this sense is the attempt to recognise the equality of all men and their effort to bring a harmonious coexistence.

The service of men for the good of humanity is generally understood to be a Humanistic service. What humanists are concerned with is man’s relationship to man. Humanists reject all totalitarian forms of government over authoritarianism. They placed the value of reason over superstition. They also practise an ‘attachment’ to life rather than detachment from it. They know the association of Nature and art with that of peace of mind and inspiration, refreshment in solitude and recreation. No man is an isolated man. It is impossible for a man to live long in the imaginative world happily. Humanists do not believe in the biological, mental, or spiritual supremacy of one sex over another, and no colour of man’s skin decides his betterment over another. Corliss Lamont, the American Humanist writes:

Humanism as a philosophy of joyous service for the greater good of all humanity in this natural world and according to the methods of reason and democracy. Humanism, is a way of thinking and doing for average men and women seeking to lead happy and useful lives. It does not try to appeal to the intellectuals by laying claim to great originality of thought or to the multitude by promising the easy fulfilment of human desires either upon this earth or in some supernatural
dream-world. But Humanism does make room for the various aspects of human nature. Though it sets up reason as the final judge of what is true and good and beautiful, it gives ample scope to the emotional side of man.7

The humanists are prepared to open their minds and their hearts to other people. Simone Weil speaking with a Humanist voice says:

He who treats as equals those who are far below him in strength really makes them a gift of the quality of human beings, of which fate has deprived them.8

Lester A. Kirkendall another eminent humanist emphasizes his interest in the kind of Humanism that refers to mankind. 'Any meaningful Humanism must speak in a language that includes all mankind.'9 Humanism will be falling short of its goal until it follows this statement. Lester gives adequate recognition to human emotional needs besides agreeing with the stress laid upon rational thinking and the intellectual processes underlining the development and success of Humanism. He asserts:

Man is a creature who needs to care and be cared for, to give and receive love. Thus Humanism must recognize man as a unity. His reason and his emotions are inseparably linked, and Humanists must take this into account.10

If there are people who claim that the immature and uneducated person is incapable of adopting Humanism as a philosophy (Philosophical way of life), they are underestimating the natural kindness and good sense of a great many people. Certainly, a Humanist would consider it a vital duty of all countries to abolish poverty and provide food, shelter, privacy and security. Humanists although reject the idea of salvation of the soul and the glory of supernatural
being, they cherish all that is good in the teachings of Jesus and in the wisdom of Buddha and Confucius. George Santayana, the humanist says:

Supernatural religion should be treated as a poetic myth to be enjoyed and understood rather than dark superstition to be abolished.\textsuperscript{11}

It is also not to be ignored that each world religion possesses its own aesthetic masterpieces of music and architecture and painting to offer to mankind. Thus, the King James translation of the Bible contains some of the most splendid English words and sentence structures. Time spent on condemning the beliefs of others is time wasted. However, it is essential for one to know what one’s religious belief offers him. Sir Julian Huxley writes:

It is possible to encourage or promote right beliefs. This cannot be done by force, or by mere moralizing, or by setting up of orthodoxies, still less by encouraging uniformity and discouraging originality. It must be done with the aid of another belief - the belief in human possibilities, in the value of free creative activity, whether intellectual, scientific, artistic, practical, or moral, or concerned with the development of one’s own personality. We must believe in this, and in the eventual rightness of the results; that is the long-term lesson of history.\textsuperscript{12}

Humanists, thus hold a very compact belief in Man’s ability to achieve good. Humanists honour truth, wisdom, praise, kindness and compassion. They find courage and inspiration in the appreciation of the best in others and in themselves. They do not consider Nature as superior to man and do not indulge in the pantheistic romanticism of Wordsworth. However, there is not any room to question for a man to replace God. Humanism is a philosophy of those who
are aware of their responsibility to humankind and live to the potentialities of this world. Horace L. Fries writes:

Humanism involves recognizing human dignity and power in some of its important dimensions, accepting responsibility for their cultivation and for making them effective in the whole sense of life. In general, we can define Humanism as a perceptive loyalty to man and a generous caring for him. Its universal tendency is to stress human self-understanding and self-determination.13

J.P. Van Praag says it is impossible to define humanism in the sense in which scientific concepts are defined. Scientific concepts are unambiguously defined by eliminating confusing existential elements. Whereas humanism, on the other hand is what it is through its existential value, for it is bound up with emotions and evaluations. More than a theoretical speculation, it is a moral conviction. As such, more than giving an unambiguous definition a clarifying description suits better.

Praag puts forward two principle approaches to describe Humanism; namely, an approach from the point of view of what it starts from and an approach from the point of view of what it stands for. The first approach leads to a phenomenological description and the second one to a statement of aims. Praag provided his ten formulated starting points as equality, secularity, liberty, fraternity, evaluation, experience, existence, completeness, evolution and contingency.14 They explain the common basis of Humanist thinking and acting. He suggests the common aims of various types of humanism, which is formulated as follows:

Humanism is a moral conviction characterized by the attempt to understand life and the world and to act in it
by appealing exclusively to human faculties; and it is directed towards everyone's self-determination in a common humanity. It naturally considers all fixed positions as subject to discussion. However, it reminds us of certain ideas that under varying circumstances must be converted into concrete purposes.\textsuperscript{15}

Again, with Paul Kurtz, Humanism is neither a dogma nor a creed to draw a proper definition as it has many varieties with different meanings attributed to it. Nevertheless, there are four characteristics suggested on what Humanists emphasize.

Firstly, Humanists have some confidence in man and they believe that the only bases for morality are human experience and human needs. Secondly, most Humanists are opposed to all forms of supernaturalistic and authoritarian religion. Thirdly, many Humanists believe that scientific intelligence and critical reason can assist in reconstructing our moral values. Fourthly, Humanism is humanitarian in that it is concerned with the good life and social justice as moral ideals.\textsuperscript{16} Humanism is a wide movement, which includes many people who would agree to some of the above points if not to all.

According to John Herman Randall Jr., Humanism is a certain religious temper, a certain set of values and the faith in intelligence and in man. It would be worth mentioning what Horace L. Fries has written on humanist temper:

\begin{quote}
The Humanist temper is man's awareness of a sense of human dignity and power, and of a sense of responsibility for cultivating and maintaining it, and for achieving an integrity and wholeness of human life.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}
John Herman Randall Jr. makes a comment on certain aspects of this statement in order to bring out the major factors in the Humanist temper. In the first place, he gives emphasis on the power and dignity of man and on the worth of human personality. In the second, Randall Jr. emphasizes on the obligation to respect and cultivate the dignity and worth in oneself and in others. In the last, he emphasizes on responsibility, on self-control, on self-direction towards integrity and wholeness as the foundation on which the others rest. What does responsibility and obligation implies here? Responsibility here means man's freedom in some meaningful human sense. Obligation means man is not wholly free as far as man recognises that obligation. The very essence of the moral life is bondage. Obligation curtails the freedom to do wrong. Self-control unites both freedom and obligation. Algernon D. Black who values the aesthetic and emotional aspects of man states:

Humanism may include the intellectual, rational, logical and scientific dimensions of man; it may include the aesthetic, sensibility to beauty, nature and civilization; but it must also include the deep and rich emotional and spiritual elements which are part of man's relationships – the affection, compassion, the identification and the love which is a potential in human beings in all the relations of life.¹⁸

Man, though, may be the highest form of life in existence; the universe does not revolve around man only. Nor does the universe exist necessarily for man alone. The natural environment too has its own share. Man is not a superpower in a humanist's view. None can live a perfect life on this earth. Man does have certain shortcomings. But Humanism makes no false promises. It does not hold that man is perfect or perfectable. Yet it has hope and faith for man. Our entire fulfilments are partial – greater in some and less in others.
H.J. Eysenck writes, 'Humanism is the use of reason in human affairs, applied in the service of compassion.' To Eysenck, 'reason marks out the method to be used on all occasions by Humanists; compassion marks out the ideal in the service of which reason is employed'. Humanists put their faith in reason as religious people put their faith in faith. Science, which is the embodiment of reason, is equally capable of being employed in devising new medical methods of saving live and in devising new military methods of destroying life. Eysenck's definition of humanism tries to reconcile the two fundamental contributions – reason and compassion without which life on this planet is unlikely to continue and would be intolerable if it continues.

Lester A. Kirkendall put forward his knowledge on humanism in the article 'Humanism as I view It' contain in the book, The Humanist Alternative: some definitions of Humanism. Kirkendall wrote in this paper that man 'had altered his environment, had made his own problems, created his great moments, and all these were his own responsibility.' According to Kirkendall man created all these with his own responsibility without the influence of a supernatural power possessing the ability to reward one for good deeds or to punish one for disobedience. Man had to solve his pressing problems or it will not be solved. Kirkendall believes that man can hope for a better world through his knowledge, his strength and weakness, his capacities and potentialities and his ability to change the best that is within him. Kirkendall thought this point of view to be central to humanism. He also regards Humanism essentially as a philosophy of man, his needs, and his potentialities. Humanism in this sense is different from religion. He does not see it as a religion in the traditional sense. Gilbert Murray's says:

The humanity of man is an immense spirit seen in the saints and heroes, seen in religious bodies; seen in dull
prosaic societies of philanthropists trying, skilfully or blunderingly, to help the unfortunate; seen in the ordinary social life of families and peoples. And the conception that God is ‘the helping of man by man’ is acceptable to many Humanists who reject totally the idea of a super-natural being who threatens those who offend him. In Humanism, as in positivism, Man must serve his fellow man without bribe or promise. He ‘performs his act of love or sacrifice for the sake of others and their good, whether in the end it be fruitful of good to himself or utterly wasted. And this is the difference from Theism, in which reward is certain to those who practise virtue.’21

Auguste Comte’s conception of God was both spiritually and intellectually satisfying to many Humanists who cannot accept positivism. Comte believes that what we call ‘the divine in man’ is the same as ‘the human in God’ and that the love of God expressed in the lives of the saints was not God himself (as many liberal Christians would claim) but the humanity of Man – ‘the quality which exalts him above the beast.’22

Kirkendall gives primary importance to the individual needs than that of the structures of social organization. He explains that the structures of social organization keep changing. Different historical patterns, and cultural demands and inevitable future changes signify that the social structures of today will not serve the purpose of tomorrow. The task of humanism is to assess and evaluate these structures and help in order to develop those families, marriages, industrial, legal, and other social patterns that will best enable human beings to realize their potentialities. However, individual’s inseparable link to the group for his personal satisfaction should not be forgotten. Abraham Maslow puts it ‘good human beings will generally need a good society in which to grow ... [this is necessary if they are] to actualize themselves as good specimens.’23 This
statement signifies that it is impossible for a man to consider an individual apart from his group and to the society he lives. Lester pointed out the issue of the increasing separation of man from nature. He warned all man not to forget that everyone is a part of nature. To weigh and evaluate the way in which man’s development impinge upon nature is one of the ethical tasks of humanism. With all these points, discussed, Kirkendall concludes:

The humanistic contribution lies not only in helping man solve his present and forthcoming problems, but in insuring a better, more humane world for those who follow us. The demands facing Humanism represent challenge enough for any daring soul.24

Meera Panigrahi in his book Humanism and Culture: Lionel Trilling and the Critical Tradition pointed out that humanism today is used in various contexts, all of them pointing towards the perfection of human life in a material sense, its progress, comfort, and security. This philosophy has influenced the thoughts of all great men who have felt the urge to improve the human condition. Humanism in literature has been the moving force of great works that have withstood the test of time. It addresses itself to the general and universal values of life, as distinct from the temporal and the local.25 Panigrahi’s idea of humanism stresses the importance of the individual human personality and its power to learn from suffering. The individual is a part of the cultural environment that shapes him. However, the self is always in conflict with the culture that helps in moulding him. There is, thus, a double task to perform. In the first, it aims to create a cultural climate by perfecting the political, social, religious, and artistic foundation of a society to suit the needs of the times. The second task is making the individual perfect as a living, thinking, and an honest human being, sincere to himself to act upon firm moral convictions. Humanist
who follows the footsteps of the great classical, scholars and writers aimed at the development of their emotions, intelligence, reason, and instinct.

Humanism makes men live by great ideas that can be derived from any source – theology, science, politics or history. Our knowledge should derive from meaningful experience. The very purpose of humanism should be cultivating a frame of mind that can evaluate, judge and analyze, so that the usable elements of culture are preserved or suitably modified to relate to the changing social conditions. Again, the most essential humanistic approach is to relate ideas to society and history in order to see them in their proper perspectives. Panigrahi points out that not only the material but the spiritual welfare too becomes the object of intense consideration for the humanist. The humanist also made us to see social institutions like politics, philosophy, education, literature and art. Simultaneously it aims to make perfect environment and develop inner faculties of individuals.

T.S. Eliot in his essay “Some Thoughts about Humanism” describes humanism as a general culture, not concerned with philosophical foundations, but then goes on to say that “it is a mediating and connective ingredients in a positive civilization founded on definite belief.”26 Eliot further states, humanism “is necessary for the criticism of social life and social theories, political life and political theories.”27

Having discussed thoroughly what Humanism is by considering from the varied sources available and from the definitions and contributions made by great humanists we will now study the period when Humanism initially started and what it means to people of different period and time.
Aristotle’s work in particular had been translated into Arabic and had found its way to the Latin West via North Africa and Spain, where many translations into Latin were made between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. But the Greek language itself was virtually not known in Italy. Indeed, it was not known in the rest of Europe in the early fourteenth century. Barlam, a Brazilian monk, a native of Calabria had spent some time in Constantinople but transferred his allegiance to the Latin Church and moved to King Robert’s court. He was one of the first men to make a significant impact on the humanists.

The year 1397, has been seen as a key date in the history of humanism and even of European culture. Chrysolora’s grammar book *Erotemata* (Questions) was the first of its kind to be printed in the late fifteenth century and enjoyed a considerable success among his pupils and a leading humanists like Erasmus. Greek regained its status as part of the *Studia Humanitatis*, and humanism entered a new phase by the contribution of Chrysolora’s outstanding scholars like Leonardo Bruni and Guarino of Verona in the advent of fifteenth century.

In England Humanism took its root in the fifteenth century. However, Clare Carroll points out that it was not until the next century that it bore fruit in vernacular literature. The Florentine humanists, Poggio Bracciolini visited England (c.1418-22) [sic] and Bishop William Waynflete founded Magden College School at Oxford in 1480. The English book collectors, diplomats and grammarians increased their knowledge of Italian classical learning in the period between Poggio Bracciolini’s visit to England and Bishop William Waynflete’s founding of Magden College School. The cultural linked of England with Italy promoted the creation of the humanist libraries and grammar school, that later educated the Tudor elite. Sir Thomas More was the first great humanist among
the Tudor elite. He had no direct contact with Italy, unlike, many of his counterparts. Like that of Italy, humanism in England took root at a time when the education, it fostered, suited the needs of the governing classes: the monarch, members of the council, church officials and civil servants.

The responses of two continental humanists Poggio and Erasmus gauged the contrast of English learning in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. Poggio arrived at England in around 1418. He made a complaint in a letter to his friend Niccolo Nicoli that his search for classical texts proved fruitless. Thus he says, 'better give up hope of books from England for they care little for them here.' Yet Erasmus, who visited England for the first time in 1499, came out with praise for the native humanists William Grocyn, Thomas Linacre and Thomas More. Erasmus felt marvellous to see the extensive and rich crop of ancient learning that sprang up in England.

Pietro Del Monte was one of the first Italian humanists to visit England, next to Poggio Bracciolini. Del Monte contributed to English humanist culture by spreading the reputation of his teacher Guarino of Verona and by giving advice to Humfrey, Duke of Gloucester, a major book collector and patron. He dedicated his Latin treatise on the *Virtues and Vices* (1438), the first humanist work written in England to Duke Humfrey and encouraged him to support the Ferrarese humanist, Tito Livio Frulovisi.

During the ancient times, God, religion, and myth making ensured man's happiness on the earth. While in the middle Ages, man's faith in a divine order, and moral order could fetch happiness and certitude. Faith in high standards was the only end in view venerated by the classics and ancient Greek and Roman philosophers and writers in the Renaissance. In England, the aim of humanism
was training in virtue and wisdom along with the classical principles and Christian values, in order to prepare the individual to live as a true Christian. The humanistic writings of authors like Sir Thomas More, Erasmus, Covet and even Milton provided an educational and moral standard stressing the virtues of common sense, reason and ethical discipline.

The Renaissance humanists were Poet Scholars and imitated the Greek literature. They studied and imitated the classics and made them the objects of their literary criticism. According to N. Foester, “we must call the Humanist a scholar-poet-critic.” Their literary criticism searches for values in order to establish norms for the “good life” having a life of many sided, harmonious development. The Renaissance and the Reformation said that the human being is the image of God – the ultimate, infinite, universal. According to John Calvin it is certain that man cannot know himself unless he first looked upon the face of God. However, scepticism and naturalism generated by the new science attacked the Renaissance tradition of Christian humanism.

The seventeenth century marks the rise of the physical sciences and decline of medieval concepts. The scientific theories shook the absolute authority of the classics and the traditional humanistic discipline. Men were no longer satisfied by supernatural explanations of natural phenomenon during the era of scientific movement. The rational approach of science deemed the universe as the Great Machine “working by rigidly determined laws of material causation ...”. Yet the belief in the Divine was still a potent force in the society.

Science could also provide the rational basis for a belief in a divine universe. It was because the “findings of science, up to-date, could fuse harmoniously with the presuppositions inherited from Christianity.” Science
revealed that laws, which points to the existence of God, guided the universe. There was order and law everywhere, because Nature was designed and planned out. Some great scientists were theists; Newton is one of them. The scientists discovered that the laws of nature were the laws of reason. Modern science is the product of humanistic thinking of the Renaissance.

What is unique in the Age of Enlightenment is the harmonisation of science, religion and moral. The proper objective of all studies paving the way to a secular form of humanism is the study of man. Science gave a rational basis to religion by stripping away superstitions. This engendered reliance upon observation and experiment to bring forth realism opposed to the supernaturalism of the earlier ages.

The later part of the eighteenth century marked the Romantic Movement gaining ground over science. Rousseau was the new philosopher of the romantic ideas of individualism, freedom and inherent goodness of man. Romanticism in order to celebrate the gift of imagination revolted against scientism in seeking to overcome the claims of reason. To Coleridge reason meant “the combination of Imagination with Method.” Such a combination was the basis of the ‘unified sensibility’ that marks a ‘whole’ man. Science saw the degeneration of reason into rationalism from the nineteenth century onwards. Scientific rationalism replaces reason in the age of science. According to Foester “science worked out the idea of organic evolution and placed man in nature, not spiritually as the romantics had sought to do, but physically.” The scientific method revealed a world of positivistic laws, which reduced human instincts and impulses to mechanistic processes. Even the psychological development was supposed to be based on certain mechanism that prevails in the inmost recesses of the soul.
Nietzsche struggled against this “over-organised and over-rationalised civilization.” He exalted instinct and emotion and was fascinated by the irrational. Nietzsche posited the dangers of nihilism that the “death of God” makes evident. When he declared, “God is dead” he meant it in a wider philosophical sense. According to Nietzsche God does not exist, because reason fails to prove. May be Nietzsche here fails to understand that there are certain things that exist beyond human reason. David Hume demonstrated that our reason was not capable of proving God. Vishal Mangalwadi also made a statement on the limitation of reason to prove on the existence of God. He says:

Human reason may be incapable of proving God, but can it prove that God does not exist? If reason cannot prove God, does it necessarily follow that God does not exist? Could it be that reason is a limited faculty and needs some a priori assumptions to work with?  

Reason thus becomes a guiding principle for a man. The Enlightenment for example refused to see the limits of reason as such denied the existence of God. What they believed is that if reason could not prove God they should stop believing Him. On the other hand, there are people who believe that a thing exists beyond human reason. The thing that exists beyond human reason is nothing but God. Radhakamal Mukerjee in his book *The Way of humanism: East and West* states:

Humanism may be defined as an integrated system of human meanings, goals and values and harmonious programme of human fulfilment, individual and collective. It seeks to clarify and enrich man’s goals, values and ideals and achieves his full humanness through bringing him in ever deeper and more intimate kinship and harmony with the surrounding life, society and cosmos.
Humanism rests on ‘value-realism’ involving the concrete fulfilment of human life and potentialities. The real value of human fulfilment is that of humanity’s experience of both the self and society. Mukerjee says:

Humanism pins its faith in both human understanding as well as human belief in the ultimate reality of the All-Mind, Imagination and Purpose which embody themselves in ever-evolving patterns, rhythms, dialectics and values in the universe, of which man is a reflective, self-evaluating, and self-directive fragment and participant.  

Besides all these, harmony is another important element of humanism that embodies the goal or perfection of all meanings and values of life and cosmos, all values and meanings comprising facets of transcendence that belong to the essence of the world process. We find the fundamental notion of Harmony equally significant in Greek, Chinese and Indian humanisms. One of Plato’s main doctrines centres round Harmony. A.N. Whitehead considers that the Greek doctrine of harmony interwoven with mathematical proportions is vindicated by progress of thought. Greek humanism is essentially man-and-society centred with its goal to bring order, harmony and beauty into the world, unifying and orchestrating the arts and philosophy into the integral ‘architectonic’ enterprise of living in freedom, wisdom and happiness. The Bible has repeatedly urged humankind to live together in peace and harmony. By only loving one another, we can maintain harmony. Thus, the Bible states:

Behold, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.  

Love is a very prominent word in the Bible. In another verse, it tells us to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.
Again, the spirit of Harmony is embodied in the Confucian Golden Rule and principle of reciprocity in Chinese humanism. The idea of justice and fairness in all human relations is included in the Chinese concept of harmony of Earth and Heaven. The Chinese *Book of Rites* formulating the ancient idea of Grand Harmony observes:

> When the Great Way prevailed in the world, all mankind worked for the common goal. Good faith was universally observed and friendly relations cultivated. The people were loth to let the natural resources lie underdeveloped in the earth; but they did not desire to hoard riches in their own houses. They were ashamed to be idle; but they did not labour for their own profit. In this way, the sources of all greed were stopped up, and there was no occasion for the rise of theft and banditry, nor was there any need to lock the outer door of one’s house. This is called the age of Grand Harmony.⁴⁰

Having discussed what humanism is about, how, and when it has evolved to be a channel of creative writing in literature, we shall now analyse the types of humanism developed by humanists. Some important concepts of humanism taken up for studies include- Christian Humanism, Marxist Humanism, Existential Humanism, Neo-Humanism, Scientific Humanism, Ethical Humanism and Radical Humanism. All these studies will make us clear of the varied concepts of humanism and will help in understanding the kind of Nissim Ezekiel’s Humanism, which is reflected in his works.

**Christian Humanism**

Christian Humanism was nurtured in the Middle Ages by liberal bishops who helped in bringing the Humanism of the Greeks down to the modern
periods by means of the good libraries established by those bishops. It believes that the whole universe is God’s creation. It is based on love and charity. It is not anti-God, but pro-man. It does have faith on eternal life but is primarily concerned with the present life. Various Christian scholars and Pope Paul assert that Humanism without God is futile. The liberals among the Christians tried to recapture the word Humanism and make Church rituals and services more relevant to human need. A religion is the efforts of men to be better than what they are. There are various involvements of faith, aspiration, commitment, loyalty, hope and love.

Again, some Christian thinkers began to use the ideas projected in the humanist movement. This new trend of Christian humanism rejected the traditional concepts of God, Church, prayer and worship as anachronisms. They emphasized on the fact that the ultimate reality was to be found within man.

In America, this movement grew out of Unitarianism. This movement promoted the principles of freedom of belief, free use of reason in religious matters, universal goodwill of man, a creedless Church, a united world community, and vigorous programmes of liberal social activity. In this way, the American movement deviated from traditional humanism, and their movement was anticlerical in their approach. The new humanists who were involved in many literary activities emphasized the fact that man was to strive for his own progress unhindered either by theological or scientific determination.

Christian Humanism, which is a fusion of classical wisdom and Christian faith, is one of the important features of the Renaissance. According to Douglas Bush, “Humanism in the Renaissance normally means alliance with Christian faith with God-given reason, which is the most human faculty of man.” 41 The God-centred humanism of men includes names like Erasmus, Hooker, Donne,
Milton or Locke. However, the Christian humanism in the Renaissance tradition received an attack from Scepticism and Naturalism generated by the new science.

Many Renaissance Humanists were pious Christians. But, they “minimized earlier Christian emphasis on man’s innate corruption and on the ideals of extreme asceticism and on withdrawal from this world in a preoccupation with the world hereafter.” Writers like Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser and John Milton were called Christian Humanists because there was a blending of classical and Christian views in their writings.

Europe in the middle ages witnessed the rehabilitation of stoic and Christian faith and the conception of the unity of humankind under the Christian Church. Dante was the greatest and most influential exponent of the new conception of the unity of civilization under God. It was Dante’s speculation, which integrated the systems of Aristotle and Aquinas with the Christian Doctrine, who actually hoped the Holy Roman Empire would bring universal peace. In his *De Monarchia*, Dante says:

Mankind is most free and easy to carry on its work when it enjoys the quiet and tranquillity of peace. It exists at its best when it resembles God as much as it can. But mankind resembles God most when it is most unified, for the true ground of unity exists in Him alone. Mankind is most one when it is unified into a single whole, which is possible only when it submits wholly to a single government, as is self-evident. Therefore, mankind in submitting to a single government most resembles God and most nearly exists according to the divine intention, which is the same as enjoying well-being.
In Montague' view to be a Christian is to be more than ordinarily just, charitable, kind and one might say to be a humanist in practice is to be more than ordinarily honest-minded, public-spirited, and tolerant. Again, if faith without work is un-Christian, a nonbeliever without any effort to help shoulder the responsibilities for humankind is not humanism. Man holds a central position in the Christian view because man is seen as a special creation of God, created in His own image. Thus, Christian humanism has an anthropocentric view.

**Marxist Humanism**

Marxism primarily means the leading concepts expressed by Karl Marx. Besides Marx, Frederick Engels and V.I. Lenin are the two other principal Marxist thinkers. Marxist humanism is concerned with all men. Marxism believes, “mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion etc.” Marxist humanism is born out of the social and intellectual climate of western liberal Humanism with its alternations between fear and optimism, between gradual and peaceful social adjustment and sudden social upheaval. The Marxist humanism based itself on class struggle and revolution. It emerged as a revolutionary movement against capitalism. It believes in economic development to bring social change and abolish the exploitation of man-by-man. Horace L. Parson writes:

> The great drive of Marxism is the removal of all exploitation of man, the elimination of dominance as the principal motive in human life, the creation of a social order in which the generic possibilities of men for receptivity, dominance, detachment, for enjoyment, control, and thought, for individual resourcefulness and social restraint and concern, can develop in concert.
Marxist humanism is progressive. Marxism is opposed to all fixities in thought and practice. Karl Marx revolutionizes to be truly human. It is inhuman to remain unchanged, not to learn, not to grow and not to interact creatively with others and the world. Marx wanted to be a free, fulfilled human being, so he wanted others to be free fulfilled human being. In another word to free himself man must free all men. Karl Marx says, “Nothing human is alien to me.” Marx lived in a time of crisis. When he was asked, why he had broken with the bourgeois society into which he was born, and what need he had to become a radical. Answering to it, he said no man is whole when the social order is so alien and to end alienations one must become a radical, for ‘To be a radical means to grasp something at its root. The root of mankind is man.’ Marx was opposed to all divisions and alienations within man and his immediate relations to others. He was also opposed to the alienations in the society. Marx was against all partiality and fragmentation in human life, in both the individual and society. He had a hunger for unity—for the integrity of the person in the integrity of society. According to Marx, we fight with some classes for the love of mankind. In order to shape the future we should try to heal the broken present.

Thus, the conceptualisation of self-alienation or estrangement is the fundamental notion of Marxist humanism. Karl Marx derived this concept from Hegel’s thought but transferred it to the all-important socio-economic dimension reshaping it into a doctrine of social and economic transformation. Marx affirms that human nature in its reality is the ensemble of social relationship rather than the abstract inherent of separate individual. Man’s consciousness does not determine their being but it is a man’s social being that determines their consciousness. Again, man develops his real nature in society, because man is by nature a social being. Thus, man should measure his power by the power of society but not by the power of private individuals. Marx derives this essential
social perception from Feuerbach’s remarkable modern view of human nature. Feuerbach writes:

The individual man for himself does not have man’s being in himself either as a moral or a thinking being. Man’s being is contained only in community, in the unity of man with man—a unity which rests, however only on the reality of the difference between I and Thou. 48

In Marx’s view, the individual is a social and economic man, “rich in vocations and values, multifaceted in wants and talents, gifted with free time and a sense of wholeness.” 49 Marx also saw man as a social individual whose theory reduced human wants to economic goods and hence negated the existence of the spirit. Sunil Bhattacharya writes:

The main principles of Marxian practice were: abolition of private property as means of production through introduction of state ownership, establishment of dictatorship of a special group of people and elimination of democratic rights of the people, and planned and controlled economy. In the process, former Soviet Union could rapidly developed her economic and military might in a historically short period, but utterly failed to usher in freedom of individual, equality and economic prosperity of the people. 50

Marx disagreed to the use of two different words like ‘Negro’ and ‘slave’ as if they were synonyms. Marx argued that a Negro is a Negro. He only becomes a slave under certain conditions that is not created by them but by their exploiters. Marx wrote to Frederick Engels on 11 January 1860, when John Brown led the attack on Harper’s Ferry mentioning that the biggest event in the world was ‘the movement of the slaves in America started by the death of John
When civil war broke out in 1861, Marx threw himself into the battle by spreading the words of the American Abolitionists in England and in Germany. The British proletariat mobilized itself to stop their bourgeoisie from flirting with the Southern oligarchy. With the leadership of Karl Marx, the first International Working Men’s Association was established. The establishment of this association was the impact of civil war in the United States and the strikes in Britain and France, as well as the Polish rebellion. Marx asserts “Labour in the white skin cannot be free so long as labour in the black skin is branded.” Marx proved the truth about it in the United States by establishing the National Trade Union after the abolition of slavery. Marxism in America is said to be a dirty word but it has its aim as social justice and a classless society. That man is the Supreme Being is the crux of the Marxist humanism ignoring the metaphysical problems like creation and existence of God. Marx considered religion to be the opium of man destroying man’s real potentiality. Marx’s humanism meant that the many worlds were one and this one world was moving towards full liberation. Nevertheless, many abhorred this movement since the movement is based on materialistic and advocated violence for social transformation.

**Existential Humanism**

The principal exponent of French existentialism, Jean Paul Sartre accords complete autonomy to human beings. He suggests that no reality is higher than human individual. He does not believe in the existence of a supernatural or God. The philosophy of existentialism upholds, ‘Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself’.

Sartre’s work, which at all times is a revelatory of man and society has been an influential form of humanism in the post war world of Western Europe and the United States. In Sartre’s view, the individual at any moment can negate
and escape from the determination of his environment. Thus, he considers, man’s individuality prior to society. Sartre accepts the Marxist diagnosis of the class struggle but rejects the metaphysics of the dialectical materialism that underlie it. According to him, Marxism and Existentialism are philosophies of freedom, as well as theories of a project and commitment. In his concept, Existentialism is a humanistic philosophy of action, of effort, of combat and, of solidarity.

Sartre strongly rejected the Christian Humanism and Positivist Humanism, and thereby considered them as his rival views. August Comte, the positivist humanist sees man as directed to a pre-determined, fixed end in itself. Whereas man according to Sartre is free by nature, and is still to be determined. Against Christian Humanism Sartre upholds the view that ‘If God exist, man is nothing ....’ He is determined to think of human being as the supreme and sovereign reality. Man has no pre-determined essence, rather he makes of himself only through his free activities. However, alike Sartre, August Comte and his followers proclaimed that we could do without God for God is useless and costly hypothesis.

Sartre throws all burdens on the individual’s shoulder in his play *Lucifer and the Lord*. Goetz, the hero of the play expresses clearly the existential atheism of Sartre:

I tried to make myself a pillar and carry the weight of celestial vault. I’ll tell you a secret; heaven is an empty hole. God is loneliness of man. There was no one but myself; I alone decided on evil and I alone invented God. It was I who cheated I who worked miracles. I who accuse myself today, I alone who can absolve myself, I, the man. If God exists, man is nothing; if man exists ... There was no trial; I tell you God is dead. ... We have
no witness now, I lone can see your hair and your brow.
How REAL you have become since He no longer exists. 55

Sartre, thus shows a clear picture of a solely human universe. Man is very free in
despite of having inevitable responsibility of the whole world. Sartre’s existential
humanism ‘... puts every man in possession of himself as he is and place the
entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders.’ 56 An
individual who lets a war to be fought is responsible for the war, though he
himself does not start the war or fight the war. Sartre does not believe in the
objectivity of values.

Thus, Sartre’s advocation of absolute individualism hardly leaves room
for social and collective construction. But, a true humanism accommodates both
the individual and the social aspects. The individual and the society must be
harmonized together. According to Sartre, man while discovering himself
discovers others. One does not get a true picture of his existence unless there is
the intervention of others. Others are necessary for one’s own existence and self-
knowledge. Sartre called the fact of knowing others through one’s own existence
as inter-subjectivity. Sartre endeavoured in the later part of his career to establish
his existentialism as true humanism. In spite of his earnest effort, he could not
convince the intellectuals. He felt that the individual could not carry on his
progress and welfare without the society. However, he could not properly
explain how the individual should reconcile with collective construction.

Neo-Humanism

Neo-Humanism is a school of philosophy, which is originated in the
literary criticism of Irving Babbit and Paul Elmer More. This is the American
movement started between 1910 and 1930. Neo-Humanism is derived from
Oriental, Greek and Christian sources emphasizing on the secular and ethical ideas. Neo-humanism asserted that man being a rational and responsible moral agent is in opposition against the idea of romanticism and naturalism as they identify man as a part of nature. This school of philosophy reasserts the moral qualities of literature and the importance of human reason and freedom of will.

The movement was anti-romantic which adhered to the authority of the past and valued classical training, tradition and discipline. It rejected the idea of natural goodness and argued for a return to humanistic education, with moral and literary values. The neo-humanists were conservative and aristocratic rather than liberal and democratic in their outlook.

Babbit, a scholar on the classics of the East and the West diagnosed the root cause of the sickness of his age as “the wrong type of individualism where the individual has repudiated outer control without achieving inner control.” 57 The Neo-humanism attacks on naturalism in literature and impressionism in criticism, wherein it shares an abiding taste for classicism.

Babbit’s Literature and the American College (1908) contains the major premises of the Neo-Humanism, which attacks the craving of the age for material prosperity and neglect of spiritual development and subservience to science and romanticism. It also criticises the educational policy encouraging the pursuit of science beyond a certain level, when it becomes detriment to humanity. However, due to the attack by Marxist and New criticism and the wave of social consciousness blown during 1930’s, Neo-humanism has been shattered losing its impact and favour after 1930.
Scientific Humanism

Scientific Humanism was a movement propounded by John Dewey, Julian Huxley and others, but can be traced to Bacon's *Novum Organum*. Dewey and Huxley affirmed religious Humanism as a religion without revelation. The conference on the scientific spirit and democratic faith was formed in the early 1940s, bringing the religious and ethical humanists together with various other philosophers and scientists. Among the scientists mention can be made of Dr Henry Margenau, Dr Gerald Wendt (later Editor of *The Humanist*), and Sir Richard Gregory. It was *The Humanist Magazine* that initiated a column called 'Science for Humanity' written by Dr. Maurice Visscher. While A.J.Carlson, a physiologist was an early contributor. A Geneticist and Nobel Prize winner, Dr. Hermann J. Muller served actively as the president of the American Humanist Association (AHA) for four years. Under Dr. Muller, the AHA tended to become an organisation of scientific Humanists. According to Kanthaka, the three main values of scientific humanism are freedom, rationalism, and secular morality.

Scientific humanism rejects the view that the affairs of the world are determined or influenced by any supernatural power. It believes that the future of man is determined, not by divine will, but by natural forces, the most important of which is the force of the human will. Scientific humanism also insists that man, being an end in himself, cannot be required to merge into, or sacrifice himself for any imaginary collective ego such as a nation, a community or a class. Rejecting the existence of any supernatural power, scientific humanism traces all the mental attributes of man, including his will, reason and emotions, to the millions of years of physico-biological evolution.58
**Ethical humanism**

Ethical humanism mainly grew out of the work of the American Ethical Union (AEU) having its most important emphasis on right relations between people. This movement considered itself religious and grew out of a religious background. In 1952, a conference on Humanism was organised internationally in Amsterdam and it was called the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) to keep the ethical emphasis in the picture. Ethical Humanism, founded upon the twin principles of human responsibility and personal worth is a philosophy and moral faith. It does not believe in uniformity of belief. According to Edward L. Ericson:

> The substantial and rational character of our deepest and most enduring values enables the ethical Humanist to live in the rational belief that he is dealing with goods that are objective without the further claim of their being absolute, and that are relative (relational) without the false inference of their being merely subjective. The ethical Humanist finds his ‘golden mean’ in an earth-born, life-centred and realistic ethic—open, empathic, pragmatic and nonexclusive—enabling us to avoid the extremes of absolutism and nihilism, which are alike corrosive of meaningful freedom and responsibility.59

The views of ethical humanists are held widely among educators, religious liberals, secularists and theorists of democratic life. The philosophical heirs and successors of William James, F.C.S. Schiller, John Dewey, Morris R. Cohen and related thinkers subscribe to variations of the same outlook.

Ethical Humanists, being social thinkers and activists, emphasise the interdependence of cultural and social systems, the equality of races and the values of open political and spiritual interchange. They all profess the use of
democratic methods and the avoidance of authoritarian and terrorist means, whether exploited by left or right, which break down the relationships and trust upon which mutual help and civilized standards rest.

In the view of Horace L. Fries, Ethical Humanism has a focal interest for integrity and justice in the treatment of persons and groups. It does not subscribe to a fixed moral code, but is rather concerned with the development of standards in these matters. In a world of suffering, it would extend an ethic of compassion. It seeks constructive paths towards non-exploitative relations and toward freeing people for mutually supportive growth.

Radical Humanism

Radical Humanism is a philosophy developed in the late forties by M.N. Roy and his associates. Prakash Chandra in his article “The Future of Radical Humanism” asserts:

Radical Humanism hopes that given economic progress and cultural advancement, cosmopolitan humanism, which it advocates, can eliminate the tendency to merge the human individuality into an aggressive collectivity of different variety. 60

The theory of moral order inherent in universe and in man is one feature of Radical Humanism having its contemporary relevance. Prakash Chandra says:

It is remarkable that in a period of growing moral cynicism Radical humanism has blazed a new Humanist Axiology combining truth, knowledge and freedom. It holds the view that the personal conduct of an individual should be inspired by three main values, each one of which is derived from the science of biological evolution. They are the values of freedom, rationalism, and self-sustained morality. Freedom
represents the biological urge for existence on the human plane of intelligence and emotion. Rationalism is recognition of the value of reason, which itself is a faculty derived by the human species through biological evolution and which enables an individual to distinguish between right and wrong. Morality is a function of the human conscience which is also a biological heritage, which enables a human being to derive happiness by promoting the happiness of others.61

Radical humanism envisages a new form of political and economic system that would guarantee freedom and progress to operate as man and not as a representative of a nation or a race. It rejects economic determinism of Marx. Though Roy was an ardent Marxist in his early political career, he renounced it in later years. He finds Marxian socialism inadequate to solve the problems of humanity in general and India in particular. Roy walked away from communism because he discovers its faults and shortcoming. He adopts Radical Humanism, which to him is a philosophy of life embracing all aspect of human life. Radical Humanism considers human will as the motive force of social evolution. It holds that progressive satisfaction of material necessities is the precondition for the individual members of society upholding their intellectual and other human potentialities. The objective of radical humanist is an economic reorganisation, as it will guarantee a progressively rising standard of living. The masses liberated from economic hassle will advance towards the goal of freedom. The economy of the new social order will be based on production for use and distribution with reference to human needs.

Roy in his earlier days denounced Gandhi’s non-violence. He said Ahimsa in politics merely tends to support the forces of violence and exploitation. However, Gandhi’s walking tours in Noakhali to restore communal
peace and his efforts generally from August 1946 to his death in January 1948 immensely moved Roy. Thereby, Roy began to praise non-violence. Roy came to believe with Gandhian thoughts that the means are as important as the ends. However, Roy believes in rationalism, science, machines, a cooperative economy instead of “trustee capitalism”, and a modern good life for all. Gandhi had no such faith in the power of reason, he has little consideration for science and machines, and was for a primitive village economy form of life, as he lived in his ashrams at Sabarmati and Wardha.62

M.N. Roy had the unique experience to participate actively in the armed freedom struggle in India in the beginning of 20th century. He participated in the movements of many other countries of the world namely, in the socialist and communist movements in Mexico during 1917-1920, in Soviet Union and China as a leader of the Communist International during 1920-1928, in Germany during 1928-1930 and thereafter in India. Based on his observation and understanding he found both capitalism and Marxian socialism incapable of securing freedom of individual, eradication of exploitation of man-by-man, removal of glaring economic disparity and establishment of an egalitarian society. In his article “Royism—A Social Philosophy For The 21st Century” Oroon Ghosh says:

Roy’s philosophy is not bound up with any concept of the unseen world. It draws upon all sources relevant to modern life.63

As such, Roy is not a metaphysician. Radical Humanism will be a participatory democracy where power will remain vested in the people and will not be concentrated in a few hands. Radical Humanism will be a co-operative commonwealth where the right to gainful employment will be available to every individual. In addition, economic inequalities will be narrowly limited. Radical
Humanism does not believe that a world of freedom can be created through the establishment of a dictatorship. It defends the limited democracy of today in order that it may be transformed into a comprehensive political, economic and social democracy of the future.

Radical humanism is not a closed system of thought. Being a philosophy of freedom-loving individuals, it is always open to revision based on fresh additions to human knowledge. Radical humanism is both personal and social philosophy. Since the basic tenet of humanism is the centrality of man, among the individual, there is no discordance between its personal and social aspects. It provides the cultural base of a free moral and democratic society. A radical humanist movement is required wherever freedom is denied or restricted, moral principles are widely violated, and democracy is absent or is only partially realised. M.N. Roy's political and psychological reasons attracted Nissim Ezekiel than that of the ideas of Gandhi, Nehru and Congress nationalism. The way Roy saw failure as the inevitable consequence of intellectual and moral integrity appealed Nissim Ezekiel, who himself was afflicted with a sense of failure. Moreover, reason to which Nissim Ezekiel held in high esteem is the sole guiding principle of Roy. In addition, some of the Royist concepts of socialism and nationalism attracted Nissim Ezekiel to participate in the freedom struggle.64

However, Nissim Ezekiel went away from politics after 1948, for he could not see eye-to-eye with Roy, who saw the business of Radical Democratic Party as a hindrance to exercise sovereignty and obstacle to democracy. Nissim Ezekiel was not enthusiastic about New Humanism developed in place of Radical Democratic Party. Roy after 1948 changed the name of his journal to the Radical Humanist from Independent India. Although Nissim Ezekiel had
actively been writing poetry during his Royist phase, he had not written a single poem on a nationalist theme. Perhaps not even one in his entire corpus of poetry. For this, Nissim Ezekiel cannot be called a poet of Indian democracy, as Walt Whitman was a poet of American democracy.

Nissim Ezekiel was a rationalist and atheist under the influence of Abraham Solomon and M.N. Roy in the late forties. But Ezekiel gave up atheism altogether in the late sixties. There is the marked occurrence of frequent inconsistencies in Nissim Ezekiel’s jobs and faith in against his constant and unshaken love for writing a humanistic poetry right from the start of his first volume, A Time to change (1952) till his last volume, Latter Days – Psalms (1982).

Nissim Ezekiel is one of the few Indian poets who have been consistently concerned with the human aspects of living in the city as a modern Indian. Moreover, all through his career as a poet, Nissim Ezekiel has been committed to the liberal humanistic values of democracy. As a poet, committed to liberal humanism the survival of the individual is central to Nissim Ezekiel’s credo. The feeling of alienation compels Nissim Ezekiel to come to terms with himself. His mind explores, at a personal level, emotions of loss and loneliness, which are analysed with ironic detachment. Unlike Eliot, he commits himself to his native environment to overpower this sense of alienation. His poem “Background Casually” shows Nissim Ezekiel’s deep rootedness in the Indian soil. His ‘Growth of Mind’ is helped by unhitable [sic] condition of the city. In his article “Nissim Ezekiel’s Humanistic Poetry: An Overview” Bijay Kumar Das writes:

If Wordsworth could measure his life with ‘mountains and valley’s and Eliot with ‘Coffee spoons’ then Nissim Ezekiel does so with ‘slums and skyscrapers’65
Slums and skyscrapers refer here is the city of Bombay. Ezekiel states his commitment to the place of his birth in the poem 'Island':

I cannot leave the island,
I was born here and belong. [Collected Poems 1952, p.182]

Ezekiel made a commitment not to leave the island where he was born and where he belongs. He accepts all that is around him be it squalor, slums, heartlessness, brutality and destruction of human potential. Later he turns to Psalms and Hymns approaching God in a different way from that of a devoted spiritual man. Nissim Ezekiel, when having established his identity and made his mark as an Indian English poet, turn to his inner life for inspiration. In 'Poster Prayers-III,' he says:

I have to sing
The song of my experience.

In one of his interview, Nissim says:

To start with, my own inspiration is and always was 'my inner life'. And writing is, for me a way of coping with tension between my inner life and the outer life. Looking back, this from the earliest days seems to be the main source of my writing. Every other source is somehow related to it, even the experiences of people. My poems are often introspective and therefore express self-criticism and self-doubt. I also write about my relationship with other people: love, sex, the individual in society etc. 66

The poem 'Hymn in Darkness' is significant because Nissim Ezekiel states many facts about his life where he defines his state:

partly in exile from himself,
partly in a prison of his own making [Collected Poem, p.223].

His awareness of the surrounding milieu brings feelings of loss and deprivation. His quest for metaphysical truth in later life leads him to Psalms and Hymns, which becomes a major source of inspiration for writing many of his poems. In Gieve Patel’s observation, the presence of Judaism is strong in the tone of lament in many of the poems, particularly of ‘Later Day Psalms’. Nissim Ezekiel, though not committed to any particular system of thought or religion, the religious discourse provides him a mode of progression and a way of ordering his thoughts. Nissim’s concept of religion and his observation on his own self can be seen from the following statement:

I am not a religious or even a moral person in any conventional sense. Yet, I have always felt myself to be religious and moral in some sense. The gap between these two statements is the existential sphere of my poetry.67

Again, in the poem, ‘Prayer I’ Nissim Ezekiel writes if he could pray he would simply pray for “Quietude” and “the ordered mind”. He does not pray to God only for his self-good but for the good of others too. Adil Jussawala rightly says:

It is surprising how often the word ‘Prayer’ occurs in the work of a poet whose approach to life far from being religious is one of philosophical humanism.68

Nissim Ezekiel’s noted poem ‘Night of the Scorpion’ helps in defining the humanist element in his poetry. Nissim Ezekiel portrays a typical Indian mother who is superstitious and religious and is deeply concerned with the well-being of her children. But the poet has convincingly depicted the humanity of the mother which triumphs in the end even to survive the ironic sarcasm of the
urbanized poet. Thus, 'Night of the Scorpion' clearly shows that Nissim Ezekiel's poetry is concerned with the sufferings of others. Chetan Karmani avows:

Generalizing from his own particular case, Ezekiel has turned to the human situations.  

Nissim Ezekiel proceeds from the particular to the general. The urban element in his experience leads Ezekiel to the general human situation. Moreover, Nissim Ezekiel's preoccupation with the theme of God is inseparable from his exploration of the theme of love. To Ezekiel, God and love are metaphors of freedom. Both are searches for 'Secretive privacy' and in accessibility of the soul. Both call for participation in the process of life and make an end of separation. Thus, Nissim Ezekiel's pursuits of love and God define a dialectic that is against alienation of the spirit, Gieve Patel states:

The reiteration in poem after poem of the desire to break out of self regarding loneliness ends in Ezekiel throwing himself into what's around him. India, Bombay more specifically, the here and now.  

Though many studies and research works have been carried out on Nissim Ezekiel's work in different aspects, researchers and critics are yet to unearth the underlying humanistic elements in Nissim Ezekiel's poetry. The next Chapter of the present thesis shall investigate exhaustively on the varied humanistic elements of Nissim Ezekiel's poetry. Nissim Ezekiel excels most of his contemporaries in this aspect of humanism. An attempt will be made to focus on his poetic works. The detailed studies of his poems on humanism in chronological order shall be taken up in the following chapter.
Notes


11 Kit Mouat, *What Humanism Is About*, p.27.


23 Lester A.Kirkendall, “Humanism as I view It”, *The Humanist Alternative: some definitions of Humanism*, pp.119-120.

24 Lester A.Kirkendall, *Ibid*, p.120.


41 Meera panigrahi, *Humanism and Culture: Lionel Trilling and The Critical Tradition*, p.27.


49 Meera Panigrahi, *Humanism and Culture: Lionel Trilling and The Critical Tradition*, p.34.


69 Z.F Molvi, “Nissim Ezekiel: Surviving in the City”, *Indian Writing in English*, p.152.