CHAPTER-VI

CONCLUSION
The analysis of Ezekiel's poems and plays depict that Ezekiel's primary concern is with man, his mind and his environment. He believes in a classless society based on common decency. His writings show that Ezekiel is not in favour of any institution, which is totalitarian and inhuman in nature. He is in favour of the oppressed people rather than the oppressors. Ezekiel's humanism extends a profound love and sympathy for the suffering humanity. He craves for certain positive values for the survival of man in the world.

Ezekiel emphatically exposes the pathetic condition of the downtrodden and the poor living a wretched life in the city and slums of Bombay. He finds these people as an embodiment of human values, generosity and uprightness. George Orwell wanted to expose the exploitation and injustice of the capitalist states. Alike Orwell, Ezekiel wanted to expose the exploitation and injustice meted out to the proletariat of Bombay. Ezekiel gives a description of all that he finds in real life. Many of his poems are a portrayal of events that he comes
across. He uses a constant metaphor to symbolize his environment such as the railway clerk in ‘The Railway’, the Indian environment in ‘In India’, every day scene such as a monkey-show in ‘Entertainment’ etc. The portrayals of these characters are not a rejection of an Indian scene but the acceptance of Indian realities. He neither squeals nor complains but there is a ‘grim acceptance of facts’. In his article “Nissim Ezekiel’s India’ Ananya Sanker Guha writes:

Nirad Chaudhuri remarked in *The Continent of Circe* that to be an Indian one should not be different towards what he called the “ubiquitous human excreta”, meaning that the true Indian must remain indifferent to poverty, filth and squalor which are integral to Indian scene. Ezekiel’s poetry portrays this social aspect of Indian society, and always with a humanistic strain.

Human emotions like love and sex dominate his early poetry. His poems bear the echoes of the poetry of John Donne, W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot. Gradually, Ezekiel overcomes other influences and discovers his own voice. City is another theme, playing a vital role in Ezekiel’s early poetry. He creates a new image of the city that occupies a prominent position in his poetic consciousness. Thus, city becomes the ‘locale’ of most of his poems. This reinforces Ezekiel’s sense of belonging to Bombay and it gives him an identity. Ezekiel clearly shows that a poet can write good poetry on contemporary society without harking back to the tradition. City becomes the nerve-centre of some of his poems. Ezekiel incorporates the heat and dust, the sun and floods, the sense of poverty and deprivation of Indian life in his poems. He comes to terms with reality without putting down shutters and putting on blinkers. Thus, his poetry transcends the limitations of time and place.
In his memorial lecture on Yeats, Eliot said that the great poet is the man who “out of intense and personal experience is able to express a general truth: retaining all the particularity of his experience to make it a general symbol.” Eliot’s statement on Yeats is also true to Ezekiel’s poetry which reveal Indian reality and the prevailing situation of his time. The poems like ‘A Morning Walk’, ‘In India’, ‘The Railway Clerk’ etc. describe Indian environment vividly. In this regard, it is appropriate to mention what A. Raghu says:

Perhaps Ezekiel’s greatest achievement has been his success in encouraging the Indian content in his poetry to sprout roots into the physical reality of the country. Ezekiel has been able to do this because he is a man of broad sympathy, wide experience and a poet constantly preoccupied, almost obsessed, with the technical aspects of the art.

Critics have often described him as a poet of the body, of sensory perceptions and physical evocation. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar drawing this aspect of Ezekiel’s poetry says, “He was painfully and poignantly aware of the flesh, its insistent urges, its stark ecstasies, its disturbing filiations with the mind.”

Ezekiel frequently uses irony, paradox and metaphor in most of his poems. Irony is one of the most outstanding features of Ezekiel’s poetry. The poem “Background Casually” is a fitting example of his use of irony. In this poem, Ezekiel ironically describes himself as “a poet-rascal clown” and “a mugging Jew among the wolves”. The irony becomes more conspicuous when he writes that he was accused of killing Christ while he won the scripture prize in the same year. Ezekiel takes a certain situation by examining it. He can describe it in such a way that it becomes socially significant.
Ezekiel’s life is like that of Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce’s novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Dedalus leaves everything when he grows up. He leaves the Catholic Church, his family, his country (Ireland) and his friends:

I will not serve that in which I no longer believe; whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church; and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for defence the only arms I allow myself to use—silence, exile, cunning.\(^5\)

The lives of Stephen Dedalus and Ezekiel bear certain similarities while they got frustrated in their homes and the society, where they live. Ezekiel had a bitter relationship with his wife in his 50s. He exiled himself to a separate apartment aloof from his family. However, he served his wife by delivering kitchen goods every evening, but they would part in silence. In an interview, Khorsheed Wadia Ezekiel (Ezekiel’s sister-in-law) tells R Raj Rao, “His daily bazaar jog to Grand Road from Marine Lines and up the hill to Daisy’s house was quite bizarre; probably some form of atonement.”\(^6\) What Ezekiel does is a sort of guilt trip. Again, in the later part of his life, he shuns his friends to visit him at his home. He forbids his friends from visiting him at his home in order to hide his messy room. He lives a wretched life. Ezekiel eases out his emotional pains in his writings and expresses his mode of life in art. Perhaps, his love for art has caused him an uneven life in reality.

In chapter One, Ezekiel’s important works and the critical writings on him have been discussed. It describes his life and the causes of his creative writing. Moreover Ezekiel’s elements of humanism are highlighted.
Chapter two of the thesis has examined the birth and growth of Indian English poetry and the development of Indian writing in English. It has explained what Indian writing in English means. Regarding Indian English poetry, it can be broadly divided into Pre-Independence Poetry and Post-Independence Poetry. Henry Louis Vivian Derozio has been commonly accepted as the pioneer and father of Indian English Poetry. The contributions of some of the poets towards the growth of Indian English poetry have been discussed briefly. Some of the pre-Independence poets mentioned in this chapter are Derozio, Kashiprasad Ghose, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, and Sarojini Naidu.

Prof. V.K. Gokak classifies the Indian poets as 'neo-symbolists' and 'neo-modernists'. The poetry of the 'neo-symbolists' is coloured with mysticism and romanticism. Poets who brought in the neo-symbolists are poets like Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo etc. The romantic poets influence the neo-symbolists and they follow the traditional way of writing. However, the neo-modernists write by employing the new form of language used in everyday life. Ezekiel is one of the pioneer poets of the neo-modernists. The poems of the neo-modernists have a sense of vision with humanism. Ezekiel’s poetry is written in an authentic Indian voice. The analysis of his literary career shows that Ezekiel has contributed tremendously to the development of modern Indian poetry in English. Ezekiel will have an everlasting name in the realm of Indian English poetry for all his efforts and contributions he made towards the success of modern Indian English poetry.

The third chapter has extensively studied the ideas of humanism. Humanism conveys different meaning to different people of different times. In the nineteenth century, it means devotion to the literatures of ancient Greece and Rome and its human values that sprang from them. To the ancient Greek and
Roman authors *umanisti* or ‘humanist’ refers to those who taught or wrote about humanism. In the sixteenth century, *humanist* signified one who taught or worked in the humanities, which includes the study of grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry and moral philosophy. The various concepts of humanism offered by various writers have been studied in this chapter. Humanism according to H.J. Eysenck is to use reason in human affairs with compassion. Meera Panigrahi points out that though humanism may be used in different context, it points to the perfection of human life towards its progress, comfort and security. Panigrahi’s humanism stresses the importance of both the material as well as the spiritual welfare of a man. For Corlis Lamont, humanism stresses upon leading a happy and useful life. He placed reason to decide what is true, good and beautiful and does not ignore man’s emotional side. Similar to the views of Corlis Lamont, Lester A. Kirkendall considers man’s reason and emotion inseparable. Kirkendall offers adequate recognition to rational thinking, intellectual process and emotional needs. They are necessary for the success of humanism. Again, according to Horace L. Fries Humanism denotes perceptive loyalty to man and a genuine care for man. He also stresses on self-understanding and self-determination as essential part of humanism. J.P. Van Praag’s humanism on the other hand is bound up with emotions and evaluations. It is a moral conviction characterized by the attempt to understand life and the world. Alegemon D. Black is another humanist whose humanism must include emotional and spiritual elements besides intellectual, rational, logical and scientific dimensions of man, the aesthetic sensibility to beauty, nature and civilization.

From this analysis, it has been found that most humanists put their faith on reason and emotion while few add the spiritual element. It is to be pointed out that humanism does not rest only on the materialistic world. The emotional and
the spiritual aspect cannot be neglected. Reason may be the foremost value of humanism but it requires emotional stability. A man will be an incomplete man without spiritual balance. The spiritual aspect of a man cannot be neglected.

Many concepts have been established in the light of humanism. The present thesis has studied briefly Christian Humanism, Marxist Humanism, Scientific Humanism, Ethical Humanism and Radical Humanism.

**Christian Humanism** based itself on love and charity. It believes God as the creator of everything. Its primary concern is with the present life but have faith on eternal life. Christian Humanism is man-centred, because man is a special creation of God according to Christianity. **Marxist Humanism** began as a movement against capitalism and based itself on class struggle. It targets to drive out the exploitation of man-by-man. Marx thinks that the power of man is gauged by the power of society and not by the power of private individuals. **Existential Humanism** believes that human individual is higher than any other reality. Existentialists emphasize on human existence. Sartre puts man’s individuality in the foremost and thinks human being as the supreme and sovereign reality. However, Sartre, later felt that individual alone could not progress without society. Because he learnt that in a true humanistic world individual and society are harmonized together. **Neo-Humanism** is based on secular and ethical ideas. This Philosophy does not identify man as a part of nature as romanticism and naturalism did. But it also does not prove of the age, which craves for material prosperity at the cause of spiritual negligence. It criticizes the age for being subservient to science. **Scientific Humanism** is against the idea, which suggests that some supernatural power determines the affairs of the world. It relies on human will and not on any other force to decide the future of man. The main values of scientific humanism are freedom,
rationalism and secular morality. Ethical Humanism does not posit on any fixed or uniformity of belief. Ethical Humanists emphasize on the co-existence of cultural, social, political and spiritual values. Nevertheless, authoritarianism and terrorism have no room and these systems should be discarded. It stands for equality of races. M.N Roy's Radical Humanism discarded socialism and communism because both reject the idea of freedom. The fundamental principle of Radical Humanism is sovereignty of man and freedom of man.

Nissim Ezekiel was influenced by Roy's Political thought. Again, reason is a guiding principle for both Ezekiel and Roy. Moreover, Ezekiel got attracted to Royist concepts of socialism and rationalism for which he participated in the freedom struggle. However, Ezekiel could not get along with Roy and discontinued his involvement in politics after 1948.

Chapter four of the thesis has examined Ezekiel's poems based on his humanism. Nineteen of his humanistic poems have been selected from sixth of his poetic volumes. Ezekiel had been an atheist at one point of his life but his poetry does not show his atheism. His poems from the volumes – A Time to change (1952) and Sixty Poems (1953) are mostly in the form of prayer where he expresses his desire to be a good human being. Ezekiel is very much aware of man's imperfection, man's sinful nature and man's predicament. His prayer to God is to grant him to lead and live a balance life. He does not pray for fame and riches but for a bit of land and a family to live with. Ezekiel expresses his wish to understand the various lives of man and show his deep affection for the world in "A Time to Change". He writes:

To know the various lives and dreams of men,
And show his deep affection for the world
With words emerging from a contrite heart. [Collected Poems,p.4]
In the poem ‘The Double Horror’ Ezekiel expresses a life being infected with the corruption and this very infected life corrupts the world again. ‘A Poem of Dedication’, ‘Prayer I’, and ‘Prayer II’ are all prayer poems. Ezekiel prays for “human balance humanly” in ‘A Poem of Dedication’. In ‘Prayer I’ Ezekiel prays for “quietude, the order mind, and to save him from the fluent wrong.” In ‘Prayer II’, he prays to be apart of man’s defeat and to be involved in man’s defeat. Failure and defeat are part of man’s life.

Most of Ezekiel’s poems that we find from the volume of poems like *The Unfinished Man, The Exact Name* and *Hymns in Darkness* depict the city of Bombay, the landscape and the life of the Bombay dwellers as Ezekiel finds it. Ezekiel expresses the lifelessness of the Bombay city in the poem ‘Urban’ and ‘A Morning Walk.’ The various life symbols cease to become the true-life symbols. ‘A Morning Walk’ resembles T.S Eliot’s ‘The Wasteland’. There is lifelessness and rootlessness in the city. The poem ‘Morning Prayer’ expresses Ezekiel’s yearning to have kinship with nature such as sky, air, earth, fire and sea. The poems ‘Night of the Scorpion’, ‘In India’, and ‘The Railway Clerk’ portray the various types of life Ezekiel finds. ‘The Egoist Prayer’ is a unique kind showing existentialism with irony.

The poems taken up from the volume *Latter-Day Psalms* are ‘Counsel’, ‘Minority Poem’, ‘Undertrial Prisoners’ and ‘Latter-Day Psalms.’ The poem ‘Counsel’ advice us to express our gratitude without expecting a return gift. ‘Minority Poem’ conveys that a compassionate act communicates better than a mere talk. Ezekiel draws an example of mother Teresa who let her guests die in her arms. Her act of sympathy and care is understood without her delivering a word. On the other hand, his listeners leave a speaker who endlessly talks with inscrutable faces. This is a clear example of the vanity of a mere talk. In the
‘Undertrial Prisoners’ Ezekiel conveys the flaw of jail rules and the corrupt practices of jailers. The last poem discussed is, ‘Latter-Day Psalms’, which is a parody of the Biblical Psalms. The poem comprises ten parts altogether. Ezekiel describes human mind, shortcomings, desires and the feelings of man. The poem is significant because it shows how Ezekiel does not blindly follow the conventional concept of God. His poem expresses Ezekiel’s true feelings about God and man. Though Ezekiel’s prayer and his concept of God is unique, he also expresses his consciousness of his Jewishness. The lyrical quality and the rich images of the Psalms show Ezekiel’s genius.

In chapter five, an analysis has been made on three of Ezekiel’s plays. They are Nalini (1969), Marriage Poem (1969) and Don’t Call It Suicide (1993). In the play Nalini, Ezekiel has shown his humanism through his characters – Bharat, Raj and Nalini. Raj is portrayed to be a selfless character who begs Bharat for the help Nalini seeks for her exhibition. Bharat, a self proclaim a connoisseur artist is ready and willing to help Nalini for the publicity of her exhibition. Nalini is a symbol of emancipated woman. She is an independent woman who wants to create a world of her own. Nevertheless, she has accommodative nature. Bharat, in the beginning had claimed to acquire knowledge on art. However, he turns out to be an imposter. Nalini does not like Bharat but she shows her sympathy towards him when Bharat confesses the truth about himself on his ignorance of art. This exemplifies that Ezekiel hates hypocrisy.

In the play Marriage Poem, Ezekiel conveys his humanism through his awareness of life. He explains the misunderstanding that crops up between married couple. Ezekiel portrays Mala, the wife of Naresh as an innocent and devoted wife. However, the couple can never get along. The two always end up
quarrelling over silly matters. Ezekiel, through this play wants the readers to learn and accept marriage with certain limitations. Only then, a husband and a wife can get on well in life. One should not expect a partner to be a god or goddess. It is not to be forgotten that imperfection is part of our human nature.

The last play that has been discussed is *Don’t Call It Suicide*. The play deals with the suicide story of Mr. Nanda’s eldest son, whose name has not been given. After the death of the deceased son, his wife Meeta suffers untold misery in the hands of her cruel mother-in-law and from other members of the family. Only Meeta’s father-in-law, Mr. Nanda feels pity on Meeta and treats her kindly. Mrs. Nanda is too rude that even her husband could not bear her rudeness and dominating nature. Thus, Mr. Nanda ends his life by consuming a set of pills. Mrs. Nanda realizes now that not only she lost a son, but her husband too and she becomes a widow like Meeta. Now, Meeta comes to rescue her mother-in-law from frustration and affliction. Thus, Ezekiel reveals his humanistic feeling from the characters Mr. Nanda and Meeta in the play.

It may be noted that Ezekiel projects a realistic image of the lower middle class society in his poems and plays. He concentrates on the less privileged section of the people. He does not portray a character who live in the glittering social circle with luxurious life. Ezekiel’s eyes are on to the bereft man, who misses or lacks something in life. His characters narrate their own frustrated life. Not a single character discussed so far is born with a silver spoon in his or her mouth. Perhaps only Miss Pushpa T.S. a character from the poem ‘Goodbye Party’ for Miss Pushpa T.S’ is the only character Ezekiel draws from a well to do family whose father is an advocate. Though Ezekiel lived in Bombay, one of the glamorous cities of India, he does not present its glamour in his writings. He seems to portray only the gloomy side of the city and the
afflicted people. But, Ezekiel never forgets to present his humanistic view through his characters.

It may however be noted that Ezekiel is presenting a section of unfortunate class of the society. He adequately presents the characters as he find them in reality. Thus, his characters speak in the colloquial language. There is no pretension in manner and language. His realistic writings carved out a distinct place for himself among the eminent poets of India. Ezekiel uses typical colloquial Indian English, spoken by the less educated groups in some of his poems such as ‘The Railway clerk’, ‘Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.’, ‘Very Indian Poems in Indian English’, ‘Songs for Nandu Bhende’ etc. Some critics attack Ezekiel for using this kind of language. Nevertheless, Ezekiel uses the kind of language really spoken by his characters in real life situations. This shows how closely Ezekiel observes his environment. This linguistic aspect could be an area to be studied more in detail in future.

Ezekiel does not follow any fast and rigid rule. He is neither wholly influenced by the common concepts of humanism discussed. Nevertheless, he is partially influenced by certain concepts of Existential Humanism, Neo-Humanism, Ethical Humanism and Radical Humanism.

Agreeing to the views of Existential Humanism, Ezekiel portrays his characters as living human being. But Ezekiel is not an atheist like Kierkegaard and Sartre. Human being is not supreme and sovereign reality in his writings as it is in existentialist concept. He acknowledges God’s existence, which the existentialists deny.

Ezekiel subscribes to certain ideas of Neo-Humanism like the ethical ideas and the rationalism. Moreover, Ezekiel is not influenced by romanticism.
He is neither under the influence of classicism. None of Ezekiel's characters analyzed so far had been drawn from high-class society with material comforts. Neo-Humanism too does not generally approve characters from high class and extremely materialistic people. Ezekiel's humanism goes in favor of the co-existence of cultural, social, and spiritual values.

Ezekiel's Humanism also bears certain similarities with the concept Ethical Humanism, as both do not posit on any fixed belief. Both stand for equality of races and do not vote for authoritarianism. Ezekiel's humanism goes in favor of the co-existence of cultural, social, and spiritual values.

Thus, we may conclude that Ezekiel's Humanism cannot completely be categorized under any of the facets of humanism. Ezekiel does not go entirely by intellectual belief. He feels obliged to go by his impulses and accepts his normal response to situations. His concept of religion and his concept of man-woman relationship are unconventional. Ezekiel is not pleased to follow the conventional set of attitudes. His view on life and human relationship is partly ironical, partly humorous, and sometimes sad but it is realistic. He sees life in its natural form and manner.
Notes


