Chapter One

The Making of the Humanists

A brief survey of the life experiences of Graham Greene and Jayakanthan will bear out the fact that all through their lives, these writers have attached a great importance for human love and warmth in personal relationships. In fact, their works are little more than explorations of their own selves in the profoundest sense of the term. Their insistence on human dignity, their plea for the practice of compassion as a living and lasting value in life, their faith in the 'religion' of Man, their crusade against all that is inhuman in life and the essential Catholicism of their outlook — all point to their humanist preoccupations. Their humanism is the result of their own respective life experiences, religious perceptions, literary influences, metaphysical reflections and ideological commitments at certain phases of their lives.

Graham Greene was born on October 2, 1904, as the son of Charles Henry Greene, headmaster of an English Public School at Berkhamsted. His father had very little time or affection for the young Greene, being extremely devoted to his job "and gently conservative in his morals" (Greene, A Sort of Life 20). Strangely
enough, his mother too had very little time to spare for the young, sensitive child and "she paid occasional state visits to the nursery in the School House" (A Sort of 15). Only "a long succession of nursery-maids" (15) served the little Greene as some steady sources of affection. Consequently, he was living in a regimented world and a veritable prison erected on a lot of do's and don't's. If 'home' provided to Greene, a considerably cramping atmosphere, the school proved to be no better, for it gave him a mere conventional middle class, Anglican upbringing within its confines. To the growing young boy, the school seemed to be utterly distrustful, and even sinister, denying him a positive, free development. To quote Greene's own words as reported by John Atkins: "I cannot believe that my own school so progressive in many ways, was peculiar in its mistrust, the attitude that privacy could only be misused ..." (47).

At the age of thirteen, Greene was sent to a Boarding school situated very close to his home. But he was not permitted to go home as often as he wished. So strong was the boy's attachment to home that, in exasperation, he tried once to cut his "right leg open with a pen knife" (A Sort of 54). He also found it
difficult to mix freely with his school-mates, one of whom, Harker, was invited by his mother to play with him, but he "treated him as a pariah" (19). Some called Greene a Quisling because he was the son of the headmaster. Greene hated gymnastics, O.T.C. parades and all games. Often he chose to play truant and secretly walked into the Common all alone or in the company of some book or other and considered only them as the happiest moments in his life. The young Greene found it extremely difficult to relate himself to the other boys and the strict regulations laid down by his school authorities. "School rules, like those of the Roman Curia ... the censorship of books from home ... the lavatories without locks ... and Sunday walks ... that no one would ever walk dangerously alone" (58) created in him a feeling of disgust and nausea. One day he ran away from school and hid himself in the Common, only to be humiliatingly ambushed by his shrewd elder sister. Realizing his problems, his father sent him to a London psychoanalyst. The treatment had little effect and he lapsed into boredom and got himself fixed in it "like a negative in a chemical bath" (93). Gradually, a momentary relief came to the boy in the form of a ballet-student with whom he "nearly fell in love" (75). To escape the on-growing ennui, he leaped into the world
of sexual explorations. He had "a frightened longing for the prostitute in Jermyn Street" (87) and he felt a longing for "an unusual romantic love for a girl with a tress of gold, and a cousin who played tennis when it was almost too dark to see the ball ..." (87). He had also a brief affair with a nurse who was appointed to look after his brother and sister "who ill-treated them and fancied me" (87). In 1922 he found himself to be a "muddled adolescent" (87) with thoughts of "the girl with the gold hair" (88), a cousin in Germany and "a young waitress at the George in the Cornmarket ..." (88). In 1923, Greene really fell in love with the governess of his sister and brother, who was elder to him by several years, and already engaged to another man. And Greene confesses: "I was too inexperienced to press her for more than kisses ..." (91). However, despite all his momentary frustration, "passion had temporarily eased the burden of boredom ..." (92). Soon after the marriage of the governess, the depression he experienced "reached an intolerable depth" (93), and he tried out other methods of 'escape'. In fact, Greene had attempted suicide on four earlier occasions by drinking hypo, under the false impression that it was poisonous; a bottle of hay-fever drops and by eating a bunch of deadly night-shade and by swallowing
"twenty aspirins before swimming in the empty school baths" (64). He had even simulated suicide a few times, by putting a revolver to his head and by pulling the trigger, keeping the magazine empty.

It was the journey to Liberia, which Greene undertook then, that settled things once for all, and gave him a fuller shape of things to come. R.W.B. Lewis has described this "conversion" as "... from something like death to the outlines of something like life - from a felt loss to a potential gain" (Picaresque Saint 28). Thus, by risking danger and death, Greene gained a vivid sense of reality.

When Greene was in Paris, he and Claud Cockburn, a friend, became "probationary members of the Communist Party at Oxford ..." (A Sort of 97). He joined the party, with characteristic levity, merely in the fond hope of winning a free trip to Moscow and Leningrad. He even attended a meeting, where he came across a series of endless, dry messages and, subsequently, he simply slipped away. However, the Communist ardour continued to burn in him and he got the chances of interviewing Ho Chi Minh in 1955 and Fidel Castro in 1966.

In February 1926, Greene was received into the Roman Church, through his marriage with Vivien Bayrell
Browning, a Roman Catholic girl. But the conversion could not change his outlook on life, as he could never subscribe himself to religious orthodoxy. However, the new religion enabled him to redefine his vision of reality. As David Pryce-Jones rightly observes: "Catholic doctrine could add no more than an outward form, and a suitable grammatical clothing" (6) to Greene. Thereafter, for three years he worked as a journalist on the Nottingham Journal and, eventually, on The Times. It was during this period that Greene published The Man Within (1929), his first successful novel. This was followed by a series of novels, some of which he classified as 'entertainments'. According to Greene,

The strain of writing a novel, which keeps the author confined for a period of years with his depressive self, is extreme, and I have always sought relief in 'entertainments' - for, melodrama as much as farce, is an expression of a manic mood. (Three Plays xiii)

In most of his works Greene makes an in-depth study of the predicament of Man in an evil world. Most of his characters are endowed with their creator's spirit of challenge and revolt against evil thereby finally revealing their own innate, essential humanity.
Most of Greene's characters, function at times, as the author's own self-projections, unfolding in public view his inner spiritual dilemma, ultimately ending up with the assertion of his unwavering faith in Man. Andrews, the hero of Greene's maiden novel *The Man Within* has a very unhappy childhood. His father is a bully who beats him often and kills his mother. Andrews resents the cruel authority of his father and a gang of smugglers who employ him in the place of his father after the latter's death. Eventually, he runs away from the smugglers after betraying them to the officers and comes into contact with Elizabeth who is "a saint" (*The Man Within* 57) and whose voice "wrapped him in peace" (69). Her holiness, love and charity thoroughly humanize him, eliminate his cowardice and lust and, in a profoundly religious sense, help him achieve his redemption and salvation.

Greene's novels *It's A Battle-Field* (1934) and *England Made Me* (1935) also present a thoroughly dehumanized, and sharply divided world of good and evil, where the innocents are denied justice and love. Referring to these works, Allott and Farris say: "Both depict the chaotic dissolution and cut-throat value of contemporary Wasteland" (70).

During this time, Greene also wrote 'religious' novels like *Brighton Rock* (1938), *The Power and the Glory* (1940), *The Heart of the Matter* (1948) and *The End of the Affair* (1951). Again, like Greene himself, the protagonists of all these novels, with the exception of Pinkie in *Brighton Rock*, are unorthodox Christians. In these works, Greene throws his lot with the sinning mankind. Significantly, he accords divine sanction to the human qualities, like, love, pity, compassion and understanding, all of which, he believes, are the saving graces of Man. For instance, Querry in Greene's *A Burnt-Out Case* observes: "Perhaps it is true that you can't believe in a God without loving a human being or love a human being without believing in a God" (114).
In the later novels like *The Quiet American* (1955), *A Burnt-Out Case* (1961), *The Comedians* (1966), *The Honorary Consul* (1973), *The Human Factor* (1978), *Monsignor Quixote* (1982) and *The Captain and the Enemy* (1988), Greene's protagonists tend to proceed from total isolation to complete commitment. What is unique about them, in the end, is their willing involvement in the lives of others, and their consequent readiness to suffer for the sake of such victims. And what seems to be the primary preoccupation with Greene, in these novels, is that human problems can be solved only through mutual respect, concern, and commitment. Such a vision places Greene in the company of Sartre who defines man "only in relation to his commitments" (*Existentialism 50*).

Thus, Greene's early life experiences which were extremely bitter, determined his vision of Man vis-a-vis a world of Evil. As a journalist, Greene visited all the troubled parts of the globe and could observe the plight and predicament of modern Man. Eventually, he found enlightenment when he learned to discern "the universal in the local" (Walter Allen, *The London Magazine* 74). Wherever he went, he found Man battling against the horrors and evils of life without losing his
essential human qualities like love, pity, compassion, charity, nobility, and dignity. Like Joseph Conrad, Greene too thought that man should come out of his private cell and show care, concern and sympathy for his fellow beings and work towards some great act of human intercourse, based on brotherly love.

Jayakanthan, son of Thandapani Pillai, once a millionaire, was born in 1933 at Cuddalore. Having squandered all he had, his father ended up as a pauper. Hence, Jayakanthan's childhood experiences were bitter. It is remarkable that even at the tender age of two and a half, he became aware of the presence of Evil and the inexorability of death. At first, "a bearded grandfather died" (Ninaittuppārkirēn [As I Recall] 2) and then "succeeding my birth, five little kids, in quick succession passed away. The sting of that agony still lingers in me" (2). These sad events were to be followed soon by several shameful episodes, each of which exposed the growing boy to the pangs of hunger and poverty. And his father, an inveterate profligate, dealt a stunning blow on him, by eloping with another woman. Jayakanthan, his mother and his doomed younger brothers, watched helplessly, when their household utensils were appropriated by angry creditors, one after
another, and eventually he found "the house itself was gone" (3). "Yama-like ruffians appeared suddenly on the scene, and whisked a cot off. It seemed we were suddenly becoming poor ..." (3).

Little Jayakanthan was seized with an ever-increasing anxiety over the possibility of his father getting arrested for failing to clear his enormous debts. Further, it was the period of the Second World War, and every time the siren raised alarm, the little boy was filled with the fear of a possible explosion. Haunted by poverty, his family which was then living in a small rented house, had virtually nothing to eat. "Drinking plain water, father will play chess, at times, with mother, smoking beedi" (4).

Was it a money-lender or a court official who had just arrived with some judicial warrant, to arrest my father and throw him in jail? What is, then, a jail? What does it matter? Why should he run away in fear? O ...

I was utterly baffled. (3)

Like Greene, Jayakanthan too had difficult days at school. He recalls almost with reckless glee, how he failed three times in his fifth class: "I was the born genius who managed to fail three times in his fifth
"Kulanthaivelu came running to me, 'Hello! You've failed you know', he said. I couldn't contain my excitement. Aha! I've failed, I was jumping, absolutely thrilled" (Ninaittu 153).

Parental neglect, coupled with his own personal listlessness put an early end to Jayakanthan's formal academic pursuits. Besides, the growing boy was further subject to a clash of puzzling moral values. "It seems I can't even mention 'fish' at home. One can eat fish all right, but should not ever utter the word 'fish' outside" (6). "Why is it my father beats me so hard insisting that I should tell lies, while at school the teacher instructs that one should utter the truth at all times? I was thoroughly confused" (6).

In sheer desperation, young Jayakanthan ran away to Madras, travelling in the train without ticket and utterly penniless, even without a spare shirt for change. The trip was by no means a success. Being too naive and too small to face the challenges of the anonymity of the life in the huge city, he was compelled to beat a hasty retreat and he promptly returned home. "Having squandered the whole day, wandering all over, I finally broke down recalling my mother and teacher
Radhakrishna Iyer, fearing that I would be separated from them for ever" (10).

It is interesting to note that like the adolescent Greene, Jayakanthan too had his share of frustration in some of the early romantic episodes of his life. As a twelve-year old youth, he had a convent-going girl for his playmate. He lost his heart for her and they spent many an afternoon playing and enjoying each other's company. Then there came the inevitable separation which lasted for six long years. When she, finally returned to him, he was a lad of eighteen and she was sixteen and much taller than he. When she burst in, shouting his name, he was seized with a sudden sense of anxiety:

She stood at the threshold anxiously waiting for me, with my name on her lips. All my heart-cherished love for her collapsed at that very moment at her feet. For, she had grown much, much, taller than I. (8)

Like Greene, Jayakanthan too had his own moments of sexual frustrations. Once, during a train journey the latter was instinctively drawn to a girl travelling with him in the same compartment. He succeeded in surreptitiously touching and intertwining his fingers
with hers and became utterly infatuated with her. Eventually, in the following morning, the train departed carrying her away, leaving him behind on the platform, dazed, and lonely with his sleepless eyes burning red. "It's true you were a mere child. Yet how deeply red were your eyes too, lost in utter bafflement! Even as you went far out of sight, I remained seated on the platform weeping inconsolably" (69). On another occasion, he happened to kiss a girl to whom he felt passionately attached, but the lovers were brutally separated at the moment of an imminent bliss by someone who made a sudden entry to separate them for ever (101).

However, the most shocking experience Jayakanthan had as a youth, was when his father suddenly left his family in the lurch and ran away to Madras to live with his second wife and her children (10). Now, driven by the need to seek a job in order to look after his mother and brothers, he arrived at Madras. But, contrary to all his expectations, he landed himself straightaway in an underworld of Evil and crime:

Liars, thieves, smugglers, corrupt accountants, anti-social elements, murderers, hypocrites, misanthropes - life in this vast metropolis highlighted only the countless
atrocities of these hardened criminals. (Yōcikkum 15)

The city was nothing more than a hot-bed of all vices:

The lure of hypocritical and propagandist brand of politics, prostitution, bribery, brokerage, fraud, violation of law, crimes against the government in general and women in particular, threats of violence, mindless hooliganism - Madras was the veritable breeding ground of all such social evils. (15)

Later, Jayakanthan left for Tanjore, where he stayed in an inn which harboured gamblers, drunkards, and prostitutes. He found employment there as a handyman bringing them food, refreshments etc. Soon he moved switching from one job to another:

An assistant in a provision store; a doctor's attendant; a labourer in a flour mill; a compositor; a treadle-man; a bookseller; a newspaper boy for the Communist Party; a seller of film-song books; a fireman in a foundry; a helper in a soap factory; a worker in an ink-factory; a rickshaw-puller; an assistant to a rickshaw-wallah; a proof-reader and an assistant editor in a newspaper. (Ninaittu 15)
All these uncommon and unhealthy events are sufficient grounds for the grooming and moulding of a violent criminal in any society, even more so, in the case of an anxiety-ridden youth like Jayakanthan. Nevertheless, despite his youth, the above mentioned, multifarious experiences made Jayakanthan simply realize the existence of Evil alongside Good, and perceive the individual's need for a healthy adjustment in society, and realize the supreme need for tolerance. Viewed in respect of the course of development and the terminal world-view, Jayakanthan's early phase of development strikes an interesting parallel with that of Greene.

It is interesting to note that against such a bleak backdrop of the evil world surrounding him, Jayakanthan came across a number of men and women who were extraordinarily humane. One such person was a 'military man' (9) who paid him his ticket fare and procured him meals after rescuing him from the hands of an irate ticket examiner: "The military man was extremely good and gentle towards me. Casting the ticket fare on the face of the ticket examiner, he chided the latter for beating me inhumanly, seated me close by his side and consoled me" (9). Yet another such person who showed extraordinary goodness towards
him, was a prostitute who was kind enough to give him breakfast and money for buying a shirt. A third such character was an old poor rickshaw-wallah at Madurai. For a time, Jayakanthan, who lived with him, thought that he could even marry his daughter and "look after his family" (15). On another occasion, N.V. Kiri, a staunch Communist called him a 'genius' and handed over to him all the money he had, to start a film institute. Jayakanthan confesses that Malliyam Rajagopal was another such good character who "moulded and shaped me through his kindness and gentleness" (17).

It was his awareness of Evil and Good that transformed Jayakanthan into a humanist in a practical sense. Perhaps the best instance of his humanity can be seen in his treatment of his father, in the latter's old age, despite all his earlier misdeeds (64-65). When he came across his father at Madras in a pathetic condition, all his anger vanished in a trice. He stayed with him in the hospital, nursed him and even cared for his second wife and her two children (115). His affection towards his father was to survive even the latter's death (115). "Two months after his demise, I woke up once at midnight, and cried my eyes out, remembering my father" (115).
In short, Jayakanthan's world-view can at best be couched only in terms of humanism in the profoundest sense of the term. In his autobiography Niṇaṅṭūp-pārkirēn he asks: "Whoever is not good amongst this human race?" (34). He defines worship only in utterly humanist terms: "Should I pray to my God in my privacy? Isn't it enough that I long for the safety and happiness of my [our] child?" (35). He has nothing but compassion and "pity" (43) for prostitutes most of whom, he observes, are "neurotic cases" (41). Whatever he writes, he says "should spread humanism" (44). In every child he finds "an element of godhead" (65). He can't bear any harm done even to animals (79). He admires "selfless, disinterested youth who are filled with love and prepared for any sacrifice ..." (85). He hopes: "It is not impossible to create such mighty personalities like Swami Vivekananda out of our youngsters" (85). Like Gandhiji, he advocates total remission of punishment even for murder (93). He accepts in plain terms that he has grown up and become gentle in his attitudes and hence, there is "no violence in me" (131). He wants everyone to live without fear as "fear alone is the prime source of all sins" (162). In short, Jayakanthan's advocacy for love of humanity, in all its
pluralistic nuances can be satisfactorily defined only by the phrase "humanism".

Thus, there are some remarkable similarities between the early experience of Greene and Jayakanthan. Jayakanthan's early experience of deprivation of love in the immediate family circle, indifference to the need of formal education, suffering at the hands of the elders, his option for a vagrant life—all these constitute a useful backdrop to a sound understanding of his characters. Jayakanthan's principal protagonists can be termed as "anti-heroes" like those of Greene, since most of them, unlike traditional heroes, are disintegrated beings, frequently figuring as neurotics and sometimes as psychotics. They are all victims in a world of violence and cruelty. Most of them have to stumble through life, and the causes of their failures primarily lie in their childhood.

In his first novel Valkkai Alaiirkuthu [Life Beckons], Jayakanthan fictionalizes his early experiences through Raja, the protagonist whose father becomes a yogi ("ascetic"), forsaking his family. As Raja finds no honourable job in the immediate locality, he runs away to a distant village, and encounters there, all kinds of depraved characters. However, he manages to
befriend a bully by name Sarankan there, who treats him as his very brother, and Thangam, a widow, whom he marries at the end, throwing to the winds all social taboos. The message of the novel is summarized in the words of the protagonist thus: "I do not anticipate forgiveness from anyone. If a man is expected to live a life which is good, he must be allowed to do certain things which are wrong" (137).

In the preface to his second novel Unnaippol Oruvan [An Individual like Yourself], Jayakanthan says that the novel is about a boy, Mottai, who was working with him in a soap factory in 1949, when he was only fifteen. Mottai, who is called Chiti in the novel, is a fatherless vagrant who finally gets himself reconciled to his dying mother who delivers a bastard child like himself. Appu, in Appuvukku Appa Conna Kataikal [Father's Narratives to Appu] runs away to Madras, because he is said to be responsible for the death of one of his playmates. He works as an assistant to a fruit-seller and then becomes a labourer in the gang of a building contractor. He goes in search of his father, who has deserted his mother, and is now living with a second wife and a little daughter. He forgives his father unconditionally and looks after him when he is
admitted in the hospital. Later, he even accepts his second wife also as his own mother and the girl as his own sister.

Atmaraman, the boy-hero in Kārru Veliyinile [In the Windy Moors] is an exact replica of little Jayakanthan. He works as an assistant to an old rickshaw-wallah in Madurai, almost falls in love with his daughter, passes on a secret message to the Communist headquarters, becomes a full-time Communist Party worker, breaks away from the Party eventually, over certain differences of opinion, comes home to look after his mother, becomes a book-seller, helps others in distress and finally marries a prostitute who turns over a new leaf, choosing to live with him.

The 30's were a period of intense social awakening in England, and the literature written then had a "topical urgency reflecting a feeling of tension and an awareness of crisis" (Frazer 1961, 84). The novels of the time, in a way, turned out to be "the focus of the insecure, frightening dangerous state of the contemporary world" (86), as every work of the period shows traces of the impact of Marxism. "Between 1935 and 1939", George Orwell says, "the Communist Party had an almost irresistible fascination for any writer under
forty" (Selected Essays 32). Though Greene did not feel any such fascination, as he affirms in his autobiography, A Sort of Life, it was with a sheer "mercenary motive" (97) that he became an official member of the Communist Party at Oxford, as he thought such a membership would win him a free trip to Moscow and Leningrad, "cities which six years after the Revolution still had a romantic appeal" (97). Later, he says, he attended a meeting of the Party in Paris which "bored me to exhaustion" (97). Years later, while writing his novel It's A Battle-Field, he deliberately "... used this meeting and the sense of futility it conveyed, to describe rather unfairly a branch meeting of the Communist Party in London" (97-98). In this novel, Greene portrays Mr. Surrogate as a fake Communist, who, is full of abstractions but has no genuine love for people.

In the late thirties, Greene visited Mexico, to find out how the ordinary folks there had reacted to the brutal anti-clerical purges under President Calles, and he personally witnessed there the atrocities committed by the revolutionaries, presumably the Communists. His response to the situation was: "The world is all of a piece ..." (The Lawless Roads 33). In most of the
states of Chiapas, no churches were open; the bishop was in exile. In Las Casas, however, churches were open, but priests were not allowed to enter them.

In his novel *The Power and the Glory*, Greene recreates the entire Mexican scene, with the real people he encountered on his journey except the Lieutenant, as he met perhaps no one with such integrity among the Mexican Police. In the novel, Greene presents the Lieutenant who serves as a foil to the dissolute Whisky Priest as a representative of Communism, which promises to build up a revolutionary society based on perfect terms of equality. The Lieutenant, with his secular aura, strives for the material well-being of the people without any facade of humility, while the priest, with his religious 'mystique', strives for the same ideal without any pretence to asceticism. In short, one complements the other. However, Greene did not totally repudiate Communism in spite of his Mexican experiences. Perhaps he still felt, that Communism would be a healthy alternative to Fascism. As George Orwell puts is: "From the grip of Communism upon the intellectuals there followed the tendency to see the world situation in the simplified terms of absolute German evil and absolute Russian purity" (*Selected Essays* 113). Nevertheless,
Greene's expectations did not come true, as he realized during his visit to Indo-China in the fifties, in the capacity as a Correspondent for Life and the London Sunday Times. In a B.B.C. talk he delivered, he makes a self-conscious reference to the background for the novel, he is currently engaged in writing:

... there is no coincidence about Indo-China. I went there because there was a war on and I stayed there every winter for four years to watch a war. And out of that, a novel emerged. I suppose it's a relic of one's old journalistic past, but I see no reason why the novel to-day shouldn't be written with a background of world events, just as a novel in the nineteenth century could be based entirely on a long experience of Warwickshire or Dorsetshire. (Quoted by A.S. Raman, "Chiaroscuro", Illustrated Weekly 21)

The Indo-China in The Quiet American is totally ravaged by various conflicting political and ideological groups - pro-Western Government at Saigon, underground Communist cells in the South, Chinese Communists on the northern border, war-lords like General "The" in both the areas and the "third force", breaking the deadlock
between colonialism and Communism. There is absolute lawlessness, and violence is rampant everywhere. Significantly, Greene, for the first time, shifts his focus from presenting images of seediness and decay, which constitute what is generally known as "Greeneland" to the imagery of a world torn by brutal violence and suffering. The following is just one such instance of the novel's savage imagery: "There was one girl in the mortuary - they had not cut off her breasts, they had mutilated her lover and stuffed his ..." (198). Fowler, the protagonist of the novel, presents another such scene of violence:

The canal was full of bodies. I am reminded now of an Irish Stew containing too much meat. The bodies overlapped: one head, seal-grey, and anonymous as a convict with an unshaven scalp, struck up out of the water like a buoy. There was no blood. I suppose it had flowed away long time ago ... I ... took my eyes away. (51-52)

When Pyle in the novel tells Fowler that people do not want Communism, the latter heartily agrees with him:

They want enough rice. They don't want to be shot at. They want one day to be much the
same as another. They don't want our white skins around, telling them what they want. (94)

In fact, Fowler who gets disenchanted with Communism at this point, seeing the violence perpetrated by the loyalists, denounces both God and all "isms". The near-hysterical tone of Fowler in the following passage, bears out in ample measure his inner bafflement, with regard to dogmas and ideologies:

Isms and ocracies. Give me facts. A rubber planter beats his labourer - all right, I'm against him. He hasn't been instructed to do it by the Minister of the Colonies. In France I expect he'd beat his wife. I've seen a Priest, so poor he hasn't change of trousers, working fifteen hours a day from hut to hut in a cholera epidemic ... I don't believe in God and yet I'm for that priest. Why don't you call that colonialism? (95-96)

It is this callous disregard to fundamental human values of love and compassion displayed by all those who profess some socio-political ideology or other of the age, that eventually drives home in Greene's mind, the essential need for basic humanism.
Greene's *The Comedians* is set in Haiti under the dictatorship of Doctor Duvalier, better known as 'Papa Doc'. In this work, Greene condemns all forms of dictatorships and their coteries sworn to mindless violence, and cripple the lives of innocent civilians. In Haiti, "violent deaths are natural deaths" (*The Comedians* 97) and it is a country of "fear and frustration" (43) and a "shabby land of terror" (222). Greene is so much obsessed with the prevalent violence around that he finds "the universal in the local" (Walter Allen, *The London Magazine* 74). Mr. Smith's observation in the novel is sympathetic: "When you look properly at things, they are pretty bad everywhere" (*The Comedians* 20). The horrors of Haiti are nothing but symbolic of ubiquitous terror. Significantly enough, the best Communist in the novel proves to be a genuine humanist. Dr. Magiot, the black Communist, in fact, turns out to be a profound humanist, disgusted with the rule of the dictator and believes in a palace-revolution, "a purge from the people" (233) as well as "in the future of Communism and in certain economic law" (176). His letter to Brown in the novel is highly significant, in the sense it recognizes the ambiguities embedded in all leading socio-political doctrines,
subscribing only to the basic tenets that constitute the bedrock of humanism:

Do you remember that evening when Mrs. Smith accused me of being a Marxist? But Communism, my friend, is more than Marxism, just as Catholicism is more than the Roman Curia. There is a 'mystique' as well as a 'politique'. We are humanists, you and I. (286)

It is in his *The Honorary Consul* that Greene eschews both Marxism and Catholicism in preference to humanism. The gun-carrying renegade priest is almost a Communist, fighting against the government and the Church, the rules of which, "do not apply to any human cause" (219). He talks of Christ only in terms of a good man - "a carpenter from Nazareth" (220). Deeply touched by the suffering of the poor, he breaks his priestly vows, marries a woman and becomes a political terrorist, leading a plot against General Stroessner. When Dr. Plarr, the protagonist of the novel, is shot by the paras surrounding his hut, he, because of his basic humanism, rushes to save him and to give him his absolution saying "I thought you might need me" (253).
Jayakanthan's association with Communism has been a very long one, so much so, that in popular opinion in Tamil Nadu, he is better known as a Communist than as a novelist. While still a boy, he thought of Gandhiji who fought for Indian Independence as "an incarnation of God" (Oru Illakkiyavāti 20). First, during his boyhood he worked as an election volunteer of the Congress Party. Soon, he came under the dynamic influence of the veteran Communist leader, B.C. Joshi and joined the Communist Party. The Communists, the boy thought, were great, highly educated, courageous, without pretences, and ready to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the nation (31). The Party people, he says, civilized him, taught him Tamil, made him a literary writer and changed him into a cultured person (Ninaittu 16). To start with, he was employed to distribute propaganda materials and later he became a totally committed member of the Party. He intensified his Party activities, as he was convinced that Communism alone can usher India into a new era (Oru Illakkiyavāti 36). In fact, the Communists of the time were engaged actively in trying to end the communal clashes between the Hindus and the Muslims (37). However, his enthusiasm cooled down soon, when he found that some of the members were bent on setting aside Party interests with a view to getting
married and settling down in a life of reasonable comfort.

At this point, came the shocking news of the brutal assassination of Gandhiji. For a short period, the Communists supported Jawaharlal Nehru, because he professed himself to be a leftist, a socialist and a secularist. But soon, they condemned him as a bourgeois and a stooge to American despotism. There were also naxalites and sectarians within the Communist Party, who practised very openly the cult of violence. Jayakanthan did not think a revolution, based merely on violence, could improve the deteriorating economic conditions of the country. He preferred, on the other hand, a revolution based on dharma ("ethics") and moral principles of discipline (77). But contrary to his beliefs, the Communists turned out to be violent and in those days, he says, people were actually afraid of seeing a Communist (80). However, he tried his utmost to continue as a member of the Party. For four long years, he could not come to any definite decision with regard to his stance vis-a-vis the Party.

Jayakanthan first broke away from the Communist Party when a violent mob threw stones at the U.S.I.S. Library at Madras. This, he thought, was a shameful act.
It was something unbearable for a lover of books and a cultured scholar and creative writer of Jayakanthan's stature. Moreover, he became furious when many of the Communists openly supported China in its aggressive war against India (193). He eventually broke away completely from the Party and from 1967 to 1971 he was with the Congress Party, supporting the leadership of K. Kamaraj, the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. During these years, he was a bitter critic of the newly-emerging D.M.K. Party, and said it alone was responsible for all the communal clashes, people's insecurity, police inefficiency, corruption and despotism (335).

All these experimentations on Jayakanthan's part, throw ample light on two of the main streaks in his personality. One, he is extremely sensitive with regard to the preservation of his self-respect, and two, he is dead against all forms of violence as part of a political strategy. It is a well-known fact that when an individual bothers about his self-respect, he is naturally opposed to the collective interests of the people at large. Communism, being a mass movement, cannot certainly tolerate such a liberal attitude. Jayakanthan has always been an independent intellectual, very much conscious of his social responsibilities. As
such, he cannot be controlled or dictated to, by an external authority which assumes all the air of a superior body (138). His characteristic trait has always been that of a liberal humanist, even as a good many of his protagonists.

In Vālkkai Alaikkiratū, for instance, Raja, the protagonist, has as his prime motive, the safeguarding of his own self-regard at all costs. "They tried their level best to fashion him as a liar, a cheat, and a thief, so that he could eke out his livelihood. That was their dharma. But he simply refused" (8). Chiti, in Unnaippūl Oruvan, though a boy of twelve, knows his responsibilities; he earns, learns and grows up and is full of self-awareness (17). His self-respect prevents him from allowing his mother to work as a coolie (18). Even his mother is terribly afraid of him, when he walks out of his house in utter shame, having come to know about her liaison with another man. Later, in her death-bed, she tells him never to give up his self-respect and anger at any time in his life (186). There is a scene in the novel in which Chiti stands before his immoral mother with folded hands, like a person with the cross of his birth, which is a burden, on his shoulders, and like one to be sacrificed at the altar of a wicked
goddess (112). The images here coalesce into a picture of a person who vicariously offers prayers for the salvation of an entire sick humanity.

In the same way, Sarankan, the protagonist of Parisukku Pō [Go Back to Paris] fights till the end for his personal freedom, basic rights and convictions (23), and when he is not able to exercise them fully, gets himself ready to go back to Paris from where he came. Murali in the same novel, says that there is nothing costlier and healthier than human freedom (155). Ganga, in Cila Nēraṅkalil Cila Manītarkal [Some Men on Some Occasions], fully exercises her free will and individuality which prompt her to accept in marriage only the man who has raped her. Prabhu, in the same novel, who is presented as "a dissolute person" (R. Tagore 119) undergoes a tremendous change in Gaṅkai Eṅkē Pōkiral? [Where Goeth the Ganges?], a sequel to Cila Nēraṅkalil, in the hands of Jayakanthan, the humanist, thereby maintaining his individuality, dignity and self-reliance, and pooh-poohing all parental taboos.

Atmaraman in Kāṟṟu Veliyinilē is an autobiographical character, bearing all the unmistakable traits of his creator. Having been betrayed by the Communist Party leaders whom he supports, and the agitating tram
labourers, he leaves the Party itself, and works as a coolie on two rupees a day. With that meagre sum, he leads a happy life in a hut with his mother basking in the latter's love and affection (269). In Ürukku Nūrupēr [One Hundred From Each Village], Ananthan asserts his individuality by fighting against the government for the revoking of a death sentence. However, when he fails in his attempt, he drifts away to join a progressive reformist organization, which, he says, has nothing to do with bloodshed and violence (71). Ammasi in the novelette Piralayam [The Flood], also says that the low caste must prefer to starve in order to safeguard their self-respect rather than fall for the crumbs offered by the rich who can only offer false pity for the poor, all for the sake of propaganda, even in the face of the calamitous occasion of a flood (91).

These are just a few of the examples found in the corpus of Jayakanthan's works to point out how the author puts the individual above any collective, external will or authority, thereby asserting his basic, innate humanist concern.

Greene's vision of humanity is not simply coloured by his own personal experiences. Several existential thinkers like Kierkegaard, Marcel, Buber, Tillich,
Sartre and Camus have all exerted their impressions on Greene's intellect during his formative phase as a writer and thinker. This can be seen from the plethora of references to several existentialist observations in his works. Robert O. Evans' comment on Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* confirms this:

> After *The Heart of the Matter*, where Greene seems much more openly attracted to heresy than in the earlier books — especially because of its denouement in which Scobie commits suicide — I descry not so much St. Augustine behind Greene's ideas, or in his intellectual background, as Kierkegaard. (*Some Critical Considerations* X)

Herbert Haber finds that there is a definite similarity between the "State of anxiety-ridden impatience" of Bendrix in *The End of The Affair* and Kierkegaard's idea of "the sickness unto death" (*Some Critical Considerations* 134). James Noxon treats Querry, the protagonist in Greene's *A Burnt-Out Case*, only as a character who passes through the Kierkegaardian "stages on life's way" (*Review of English Literature* 90). David Pryce-Jones finds a close relationship between Greene's thematic concerns as a
whole and "the sense of an absurd ... pattern in human affairs", dealt with by the French existentialist thinkers (77). A.A. De Vitis says that Greene is definitely interested in the "cult of the individual" (151), which is central in existentialist thinking. According to Mihalich: "Reality is revealed in the context of the individual's subjective experiences - which for the individual are more significant and meaningful than transcendent abstractions" (Existentialism and Thomism 68).

It should be emphasized here that Greene makes a deliberate use of existential themes in order to highlight Man's predicament in the modern world. However, it should be borne in mind in this respect, he emerges as more of a humanist than an existentialist, his major concerns being Man's freedom, choice, commitment and community. Most of his characters evolve themselves realizing their responsibility and commitment to society and, finally, achieve their humanity. During this process they inevitably experience 'angst', 'dread', 'fear', 'disgust', 'despair' and 'meaninglessness', like all existentialist characters. Ignoring all pre-established authorities and restrictions, Greene's existentialists strive for their own freedom
that also entails care and concern for the freedom of others.

Greene's protagonist Andrews in The Man Within (1924) can be seen as an ideal illustration of the evolutionary process described above. At first, he is "friendless and alone" (12). His father, a bully, beats him up often, and sends him to a school to study subjects he does not like. Alienated from home and school, Andrews longs to enjoy his personal freedom and he finds it only in brothels and alehouses. It is interesting to note that he pays "street women simply to talk to them" (38) and leads a "rough life" (48). In his eyes, there "seemed something fine in it - adventure, courage, high stakes" (48). He has no faith in God and spirits - "that stuff" (37). Eventually, he makes his own free choice by joining a gang of smugglers who had been earlier led by his father. But when his talents are measured against those of his father, he exercises another free choice by betraying them to the excisemen. Thereafter, there is no peace for him as he is relentlessly pursued by them. By sheer luck, he happens to drop in the cottage of Elizabeth who in the novel, stands for holiness, purity and all that he has missed so far in his life. Having
succeeded in inspiring the feelings of trust and friendliness in him, Elizabeth sends him to Lewes to bear witness against his pursuers. But on his return, he finds that Elizabeth has killed herself with the knife he has left behind, tortured by one of the smugglers. It becomes a moment of self-awakening and self-realization for Andrews, as the lower self in him, marked by his father, has been at last killed:

To his own surprise he felt happy and at peace, for his father was slain and yet a self remained, a self which knew neither lust, blasphemy nor cowardice, but only peace and curiosity for the dark which deepened around him. (182)

His brief fellowship with Elizabeth, the saintly woman, totally transforms him, and, in his turn, he is now ready to suffer for others. When the officers come, he says: "I killed her ... You'll find my name on the knife. You are safe, now Carlyon ..." (182). He is now completely dispossessed of bitterness and jealousy, and what reign supreme in his mind toward the end, are love, peace, friendliness and ... "a sense of discovery and exhilaration." (182).

Fowler, in The Quiet American is also, to start with a totally alienated character. He is estranged
from his wife; he has no God; no religion; no politics and no interest in life. "I'm not engage" (121), he says. He enjoys his freedom, which simply consists of drinking, scamping work, picking up women and deserting them. It is true that he needs Phuong for his physical comforts but does not care for "her damned interests" (59). He says "... let them fight, let them love, let them murder, I would not be involved" (28). But soon, he makes a free choice of getting himself involved with the suffering humanity. The brutal killing of the innocent people in a bomb explosion caused by his friend Pyle, moves him a great deal and he turns over a new leaf, by instantly throwing his lot with those around him. He feels the existential anguish and thinks that he is responsible for all the suffering caused:

I was responsible for that voice crying in the dark. I had prided myself on detachment, on not belonging to this war, but those wounds had been inflicted by me just as though I had used the sten. (113)

Such existential themes and motifs can be traced in almost all the works of Greene, though he does not profess to be a literary proponent of existentialism as Sartre and Camus do. Moreover, his existentialist ideas are intermixed and interwoven with his own personal
vision of life which is essentially humanistic. One has to be, therefore, very cautious while studying Greene's peculiar brand of existential preoccupation without muddling it up with the basic issues of Humanism inherent in his works.

"Man has a condition, he is always in a situation", says Margaret Chatterjee (23). A literary work which deals with men and his problems, proves often to be essentially existentialistic. Novelists like Jayakanthan, write in an intellectual climate suffused with the raw materials of existentialism - a climate marked by the loss of traditional values, a sense of a hostile, indifferent, or absurd universe, and the consequent need for man, to turn to his own inner resources.

Even while appearing to be 'existentialistic', the tendency of Tamil literary criticism, which is yet to totally familiarize itself with the literary trends in the West, pertains more to the social sphere rather than man's sense of metaphysical alienation. The prominent Tamil critic P. Thothadri, for instance, casually mentions that Existentialism, Freudinism and Surrealism find a place in the Tamil novels written after 1960, and comments that "it is in such a literary climate
that Jayakanthan started writing his works" (10). Yet, in Thothadri's critical work, Jayakanthan - a Study, one does not find either specific or any detailed discussion of the above "isms' or their definitive applications to Jayakanthan's creative works. In such a context, deprived of a comprehensive understanding of theoretical concepts of Western metaphysical and literary criticism, a full-length study of both the influence/reception of Existentialism in Tamil works in general, and in Jayakanthan in particular, becomes more relevant. However, only the 'humanist' aspect of Jayakanthan's existentialist 'reception' has been undertaken here.

A close reading of the works of Jayakanthan reveals beyond any shade of doubt that he is preoccupied with three salient aspects which form the warp and woof of the Existentialist philosophy, namely, the free exercise of the human will, the making of a personal choice in a crisis and the terminal vision of man's alienation from his fellow beings in society.

Self-assertion is both the forte and the weakness of Raja, the protagonist of Jayakanthan's first novel, Vālkkai Alaikkiratu. Having lost his father even before he is ten, Raja, brought up under the care of his mother, is essentially self-made. He cannot follow the
dictates of his mother and do any dishonest job at the cost of his self-dignity. Pragmatic neighbours around are shrewd enough to observe: "Brother... you cannot live in this world" (8). Having to run from pillar to post in quest of a job which is amenable to his disposition, he finally has to give up all the idealistic dreams born of his innate integrity. At this point, the omniscient narrator presents his existentialist plight in the following terms: "As one who has come out of nothingness, he was moving towards nothingness. Where else would he go?" (13). His act of joining the hoodlums and prostitutes residing in a dilapidated inn which is "an altar where people are sacrificed" (14), is a deliberate choice of his will, least of all in commensurate with his inborn character. Despite being a coward, he chooses to risk saving Thangam, an innocent widow, brought to the inn for immoral traffic. He also dares to fall in love with Geetha, a rich cousin, fully aware of the yawning social gulf separating them. Finally, after losing his mother and Geetha, and driven to the point of desperation, in the face of a malicious rumour that he has a liaison with a girl next door, he chooses to commit suicide:

He was staggering and walking like a drunkard, tearing his dhoti in the process.
Right before him was the ruddy river, foaming full and gushing forward ... yet life seemed to snatch him out from the hands of imminent death ... He turned round, and saw with his bewildered eyes Thangam, standing there with a bundle of faggots on her head. (194)

Having no second thoughts, Raja makes another heady choice now to marry Thangam, whose offer of marriage he had turned down earlier. "Holding his hands, she called him and he followed her in silence" (194). Thus Raja overcomes his social and existential alienation. His life proves to be a long struggle to identify his 'self', through an endless series of self-willed choices, entirely his own.

Chiti in Jayakanthan's Unnaippōl Oruvan too has an unbending will. "That he was capable of extreme anger and savagery was known only to his like-minded comrades and the teacher who dismissed him from school" (36). Despite being a mere young lad, living in a morally depraved slum, Chiti asserts his self before his mother, saying that he will go to work, just to keep the pot of rice boiling at home, as he does not want her to work in the company of abusive and impudent male coolies. And, at last, when his mother strikes up a liaison with
Manickam, he chooses to run away from home "struck by treachery, disgrace and anger" (35). "It is only when he reached an open deserted space, far beyond the reach of men who could recognize him and indulge themselves in suppressed laughter, that he dared to look up" (35).

Now, Chiti does not choose to go back to Thuraikannu, the social worker who had corrected him on an earlier occasion, when he played truant. But he chooses deliberately the company of his former unruly friends bonded together by the common fact that they all have "no father and mother" (119). Chiti's decision here, means, in existentialist terms that, he has scant respect for conventional norms and codes. His life is, thus, an endless search for a new 'self' to attain a new better identity. Though the methods he chooses towards this end are uncommon from the point of view of the values of the slum he dwells in, thy are his own, and hence, distinctly existentialistic. His social and existentialistic alienation comes to an end, only when his dying mother entrusts in his hands her new-born bastard. Chiti's 'self' now finds an identity, as he realizes that he too is a fellow-bastard: "As there is now meaning for his life in this new responsibility, he accepts the child" (189). He feels now, a new sense of responsibility, commitment and involvement. Ironically,
Chiti also accepts Alamelu, a neighbour, as his mother, whose moral values are equally questionable:

Little wonder then that there was none, to condemn that child, calling it the 'fruit' of a crime, forbidden and shameful, in the eyes of everyone around. That was the superb sign of abounding humanity around here - the source of natural sympathy in this world! (190)

Jayakanthan's Prabhu, Ranga, Anantharaman and Sarankan - all face in varying degrees, some kind of existentialist encounters or other in their lives. They struggle for self-identity, eventually ending up their alienation, and settling for a humanism which accepts the pain of existence. Though Jayakanthan does recognize the values of human individuality, he shows a profound concern for the greater need of the harmony between the individual and the society to which he belongs.

The publication of Greene's trilogy, Brighton Rock (1938), The Power and the Glory (1940) and The Heart of the Matter (1948) firmly established his reputation as a 'Catholic' novelist, and 'Catholic' judgement came to be increasingly applied to him. In these novels, the characters discuss quite self-consciously Catholic
concepts like grace, sin, salvation, damnation, confession, faith, sacraments, baptism, communion, good and evil etc. The Catholic characters in Greene's early novels, have extraordinary inner resources to fall back upon. For instance, Elizabeth in The Man Within with whom Andrews, the protagonist, falls in love, is a true Christian, symbolizing its professed holiness, purity, serenity and chastity. Similarly, in The Name of Action Oliver Chant, the protagonist, believes that the happiness and security of Fran Weber's married life depend on her own religious beliefs. In Greene's mature novels, the priests who figure as major or minor characters, believe in miracles and God's endless mercy. Non-clerical figures in these novels, also undergo the experience of a certain mystic religious awakening, and even some sinners turn out to be saints. For instance, Sarah, the mistress of Bendrix in The End of the Affair eventually gives up all her excessive sexual indulgences and ends up as a martyr. Frank Kermode calls this "the unwilling sanctification of Sarah" (Puzzles and Epiphanies 186).

No wonder then, that Greene has been the proud recipient of phenomenal acclaim from well-known Catholic critics of his times. Marie-Beatrice Mesnet,
for instance, is of the following view: "It is only by bearing in mind and heart, the Christian views of life, that a reader will appreciate the profound significance of his [Greene's] work" (81). David Pryce-Jones says that Greene's novels "are attempts to prove the connexions between sin and God's purposes. All of them have something of the moral theologians' disputation about them ..." (78). According to Harold C. Gardiner, Greene's primary concern is with "the geography of the soul" (12). A. Wichert's finding is that Greene "wants God to have the last word" (183), and A.J.M. Smith maintains that "the very crux of Greene's plots is the true Cross" (17).

In this context, it is pertinent to bear in mind what Greene himself has got to say about Catholicism. In *Journey Without Maps*, he states: "I had not been converted to a religious faith. I had been convinced by specific arguments in the probability of its creed" (263). Greene is quoted as saying in 1978 "I've always found it difficult to believe in God. I suppose I'd now call myself a Catholic atheist" (Ivasheva 236). In his *In Search of a Character: Two African Journals*, Greene is modest enough to submit the following truth: "I would claim not to be a writer of Catholic novels, but a
writer who, in four or five books, took characters with Catholic ideas for his material" (24).

During his Nottingham Journal days, Greene started receiving instruction from one Father Talbot "to learn the nature and limits of the belief she [the Roman Catholic Vivien whom he was to marry] held" (A Sort of 118), while his "primary difficulty was to believe in a God at all" (120). It is not easy to believe that Father Talbot totally succeeded in his endeavour. It is not for nothing that Greene has painted a host of ineffectual Catholic priests in his fictional world, ranging from Father Rank in The Heart of the Matter to Father James in The Living Room. The poems in his Babbling April (1925) too suggest that Greene's conversion to Roman Catholicism, offered him only some momentous anchorage from his sense of drift, and dissatisfaction with life continued to whet his intellectual curiosity.

Greene's Javitt advises young William in the short story "under the Garden": "Be disloyal. It's your duty to the human race" (A Sense of Reality 48). One who is loyal, has the obligation to be a Catholic propagandist, but one who is disloyal, has the freedom to roam through the human heart, and has an extra-dimension of
the responsibility of understanding. This is exactly what Greene has been harping in all his novels and short stories. To put everything in a nutshell, it is Man and his human heart and not mere Catholicism, that is ultimately Greene's major concern. Such a view must be seen along with what Father Rank in The Heart of the Matter has to say about Scobie's salvation: "For goodness' sake, Mrs. Scobie, don't imagine you - or I - know a thing about God's mercy ... The Church knows all the rules. But it doesn't know what goes on in a single human heart" (296-97). According to Greene too, the Church formulates rules, but it does not necessarily have to know the human heart. Evidently, Greene inverts Christianity and goes by the rules of the heart, to accord a place for sinners in the Church. This eventually leads to the much disputed phenomenon of the sinner-saint paradox in Greene.

Greene's awareness of the existence of evil in the world was aroused in him when he was a mere child. This awareness deepened in him with the passage of time, and still later, was intensified when he read Marjorie Bowen's The Viper of Milan:

Anyway she [Marjorie Bowen] had given me my pattern - religion might later explain it to
me in other terms, but the pattern was already there - perfect evil walking the world where perfect goodness can never walk again, and only the pendulum ensures that after all in the end justice is done.

(Collected Essays 17)

Greene's conversion to Catholicism and his understanding of it, helped him look at evil even more closely in a new perspective. The result was that he revolted against his God and the Church and assumed the role of a spokesman for all those who wallow in filth and evil. Like his Scobie, he can believe in no God who is not "human enough to love" (The Heart 114). Ironically, it is the agency of human love in Greene's so-called Catholic novels which overwhelms the readers. Rose's love and responsibility for Pinkie in Brighton Rock, the Whisky-Priest's efforts in ensuring the happiness of others in The Power and the Glory, Scobie's obsessive sense of responsibility for Helen in The Heart of the Matter and Sarah's lustful love for Bendrix and her prayer to God to save him from a bomb-explosion in The End of the Affair continue to loom large in the mind of the readers, rather than any specific cryptically-phrased Catholic dogma, which prescribes a condition for salvation.
Greene's humanity found nurture also from the suffering humanity he encountered during his journeys; the fate of the married priests he came across in Mexico; the Liberation Theology from Latin America; the practical Christianity which emphasised service and "love-thy-neighbour" precept preached by Christ, and St. Paul:

We know that we have passed from death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death ... Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John 3 : 14-16)

By birth Jayakanthan is a Saivite, a follower of Saivism, one of the ancient religions of India, commonly known as the religion of love. Tamil Siddhars ("Those who had attained Siddhi, special psychic and supernatural powers") and saints, preach that Lord Siva and love are not different. Thirumantiram says that "the ignorant say Lord Siva and Love are two different entities" (Paloor Kannappa Mudaliar 167). Jayakanthan's upbringing and life in a Brahmin environment also taught him many of the theoretical and practical aspects of
Vaishnavism, another major Hindu religion of India which describes God as a "perfected man", one who has "bound himself to men, and in that consists the greatest glory of human existence" (Tagore, Sadhana 96). Jayakanthan is also well-acquainted with a number of Hindu religious works like Thiruvācagam, Thirukkūṟaḻ, Kamba Rāmāyanam, the works of the Nayanmars, Siddhars, Ramalinga Adikal and Poet Bharathy (Cutantiraccintanai [Free Thought] 30).

However, Jayakanthan does not subscribe to any institutionalized religion, with its rigid dogmas and doctrines meant for implicit adherence. In fact, his penchant is for reorienting the religious values with a new humanist purpose in order to suit the needs of the common man.

Communal clashes, religious calamities and segregations based on caste and class are ever on the increase in India in general, and Tamil Nadu in particular. These evils, both social and religious, according to Sardesai and Dilip Bose, come within the framework of the Hindu religion. They opine: "So long as Hinduism is there, castes have to be there" (88). Being a humanist, championing the cause of the socially oppressed, Jayakanthan feels the urgency to redefine in
specific terms, the fundamental Hindu tenets on caste, instituted by Manu, the ancient Hindu law-giver, who said that the **Brahmin** is the Lord of all creations and he has to guard the treasury of dharma (Zachner 109). Jayakanthan submits that even a man of low caste, if he is righteous enough and follows his dharma, can be accorded a religious sanction and identity. In his novel *Jaya Jaya Saṅkarā* [Hail, Hail, Sankara], Jayakanthan makes even the Hindu religious head, Sri Sankara Acharya, grant such an approbation to the low caste Āti. Sankara Sarma in *Pirammōpatēcam* [The Exhortation of God], says that one can be a Brahmin if he follows the dharmas prescribed by the vedās ("Hindu religious works") 58. Violating the Brahminical code, he presents the **Pūnāl** ("the sacred thread") to a low caste youth who says that his life-time vocation is to serve the growth of Saivism and Tamil (59).

In the short story "Oru Pakal Nērap Pāssenger Vandiyil" ["In a Day-time Passenger Train"], found in the collection *Putiya Vārppukal* [New Creations], a Brahmin widow, ignored by the people of her caste, and left alone to die in poverty, finds no relevance of caste, and willingly hands over her little daughter to an old low caste man for adoption. Jayakanthan is very
emphatic in saying that the habits of thought and modes of behaviour advocated by the dogmatic Brahmins, should be eschewed by all means, paving way for an enlightened humanist, casteless social order. This, in fact, cuts at the very roots of the caste-ridden structure of Hindu religion. Such a daring revision of an age-old religious doctrine invites comparison, with what Greene says about the religious absolution to be extended freely to the so-called sinners. Thus, both the writers resist orthodoxy in their defence of humanism.

Another significant aspect of Jayakanthan's humanism is his socialization of the Hindu religion. His religious men are socially committed people, like those of Greene. His Sadhus and Swamijis ("religious folks") like their traditional counterparts, do not resist the reciprocity of their fellow beings, and escape to jungles to do tapas ("meditation"). On the other hand, being extremely sensitive to the needs of the common humanity, they disapprove of religious intolerance and fanaticism. To Jayakanthan, a true Sanyasin ("ascetic") is not one who curses society and turns his back upon it, but one who actually lives with people and works with a social purpose, and creates an enlightened generation of men and women (Gaṅkai Eṅkē 169). In his Cutantiraccintanai Jayakanthan says:
Sanyasm ("renunciation") is not a mere show in dress, appearance and speech. As a physician is important to the diseased, so also, is the sanyasi to the householder. In this sense, great kings like Janakan, Ashoka, and Akbar and social philosophers like Socrates, Karl Marx, Lenin and Gandhi can all be defined as sanyasis ("ascetics"). (10)

In his novelette Vilutukal [Aerial Roots], found in Pirālayam, Ōṅkūr Swāmi is a Siddhar, almost a village deity, worshipped as a god. He advises his devotees to ensure harmony in their social life. His heart moves in compassion for a prostitute, supposed to be the worst sinner in society, and he makes his physician-disciple eschew the age-old religious and social taboo of segregating such women. The disciple not only cures her of her disease, but also finds for her a mate. However, when she delivers a child, the Swāmi is found lying dead. This means that even the child born of a prostitute out of wedlock can have all the attributes of the divine, and the event can also be interpreted in symbolic terms, as the rebirth of the Swāmi. The novel drives home the message that true and sincere asceticism entertains limitless love for the suffering humanity
(Pirālayam 137). In his preface to the novel, Jayakanthan affirms that he presents the loftiness of life through the shining examples of those who practice asceticism (7).

Further, Joseph, the protagonist of Yārukkāka Alūtān? [Joseph Wept] and Henry in Oru Maṅitaṇ Oru Viṭu Oru Ulakam [One Man One Family and One World] are linked to Rishis. Henry, for instance, like Christ, endures all hardship and through his supreme self-sacrifice lightens the burden of all those who come within his orbit of life. The Acharya in Jaya Jaya Saṅkarā is primarily concerned with pragmatic social issues like casteism which endangers the lives of the youth in particular.

Jayakanthan is never tried of hailing Swami Vivekananda and Poet Bharathy. As Gnani observes, it is in the light of the work done by these reformers, that Jayakanthan blends his social vision of life with Advaita (68-69). Bharathy was the first Tamil Poet to welcome the October Revolution. In his poem "New Russia", he says that it was his goddess Mahakali (Goddess Sakthi, consort of Lord Siva) who brought about such a Revolution and he ardently believes that the same will end the Kali Yuga ("Evil Age"), and bless the lives
of the people and usher India into a new era of peace and prosperity (Ramanathan 87-88). Commenting on this, the veteran Tamil Scholar Mā. Pō. Sivagnanam says that Bharathy uses the symbol of Kali ["Evil"] for Capitalism and Kirta Yugā ["Golden Age"] for Socialism (110).

Following the footsteps of Bharathy, his mentor, Jayakanthan also spiritualizes his social thoughts. This comes easily for him because, in a profound sense, he is also a Siddhar who knows Advaita ("unity in duality"). Sankara, in Jaya Jaya Saṅkarā, who tries to eradicate social evils, is none other than Jayakanthan himself. Āti and Sankara, the low caste and the high caste Brahmins respectively, achieve an advaitic oneness in the art of Jayakanthan. The same can be seen depicted in the character of Oṅkūr Swāmi in Vilutukal, who advocates the cause of humanity. As Gnani says that the Siddha tradition is still very much alive in Tamil Nadu (69).

Greene's humanist outlook was also shaped by some authors who exercised considerable influence on him. In his "personal prologue" in The Collected Essays he says that he started reading books when he was "only ten years old" (16), adding a remark of great significance: "We are more likely to find in books
merely a confirmation of what is in our minds already" (13). "In childhood", he further says, "all books are books of divination, telling us about the future ..." (13).

What struck the young Greene was a definite awareness of the existence of Evil in the world. His early readings not only confirmed such a phenomenon, but also intensified his vision of it. The impact of The Viper of Milan by Marjorie Bowen on Greene, has already been discussed. This work, formed part of the core for several of his creations, in the guise of anti-heroes who turn from good to evil. Most of such characters can be directly identified with Gian Caleazzo Visconti, the archetypal villain, depicted in the above book. To Greene, the character of Visconti confirmed the possibility of the existence of bullies like Carter, an early real-life tormentor of schooldays. The reading of the works of Rider Haggard and Pester John instilled further in Greene, "The odd African fixation" (Collected Essays 15) which, subsequently, made him undertake a journey to Liberia.

Moreover, Montezuma's Daughter generated in Greene a profound longing for Mexico, which, eventually, goaded him on to visit that country and witness, at first hand,
the anti-clerical purges under President Calles. Greene had read Captain Gilson's *The Private Aeroplane*, "Six times at least" (14), a book which deals with the fate of a young subaltern, who manages to creep into the enemy camp, and put an aircraft out of action. Eventually, he is captured to be shot at dawn. At this juncture, a Yankee Pirate offers to play cards with him to keep his mind away from harassing thoughts about the imminent death. Greene acknowledges the impact of this fictional incident on him: "The memory of that nocturnal game on the edge of life haunted me for years ..." (14). Later, Greene was to successfully convey the above personal experience through his novel *England Made Me*. Greene was also attracted by the character called Quartermain in Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*, which he admits "certainly influenced the future" (Collected Essays 15). Further, in his essay "The Burden of Childhood", Greene discusses at length, how he became more sensitively aware of the existence of Evil after reading Charles Dickens, Kipling and H.H. Munro: The abandonment to the blacking factory in Dickens' case and in Kipling's to the cruel Aunt Rosa living in the sandy suburban road were never forgotten. All later experience seems to have been related to those months or
years of unhappiness. Life which turns its cruel side to most of us at an age when we have begun to learn the arts of self-protection took these two writers by surprise during the defenselessness of early childhood. (Collected Essays 99)

Dickens' father incurred a bad debt and was, consequently, sent to Marshalsea Debtor's Prison for his failure to clear it. Later, he was to be joined by Dickens' mother and the other members of the family. Therefore, Dickens must have had a very miserable and lonely childhood. Angus Wilson describes Dickens' early predicament thus: "He found himself an abandoned small boy, ill-lodged, underfed, often aimlessly wandering the streets - 'no advice, no counsel, no encouragement', ... and it all happened in a horrible flash of time" (The World of Charles Dickens 51-52). Kipling and Munro, on the other hand, lacked parental love and were left to the care of wicked and cruel aunts. However, while all the three writers suffered in some way or other, and became aware of Evil quite early in life, their reactions were remarkably different. Kipling turned angry, thirsting for revenge; Munro pleaded the need for justice at the hands of elders and Dickens was deeply moved to sympathy and compassion. When Dickens visited
Marshalsea prison later in life, he did not express any grief, but underlined the need to show sympathy towards the poor and the down-trodden. Angus Wilson observes:

... the misery of those abandoned months, the suppressed panic, the shame of loneliness, bit so deeply into him that only Dostoevsky, Gissing and Jack London among novelists, have equalled his absolute power of identification with the outcaste. (58)

Greene's response to the misery experienced in childhood, is closer to that of Munro's than to that of Kipling's or Dickens'. Kipling is too revengeful, and Dickens is too generous and forgiving. Munro and Greene are bent on exposing injustice and punishing the wicked. This is an important and recurring humanistic burden in Greene.

Yet another writer who reinforced the awareness of evil in the mind of Greene, is Henry James. In James, Evil first appeared in the form of the terror of insanity which possessed his father, his sister Alice and his brother William. James was also to suffer a sense of treachery, at the hands of relatives who let his family down. His brothers Wilky and Bob were failures in life, drifting from the army to petty business. "His cousin, Mary Temple, was the model, a
model in her deadly sickness ..." (Collected Essays 26). Greene says that it was this consciousness of Evil that determined James' view of the visible universe. He realized early in life, that people are egotistic which makes them necessarily evil in their quest for earthly gains. Viewed from an ethical angle, such people may be wrong, but the reality continues to be the same. James loves and pities "the most shabby, the most corrupt, of his human actors, that he ranks them with the greatest of creative writers" (34). In his novels, Greene too does the same. No wonder, Greene owes something of this noble virtue of humanism to James, his mentor.

The presence of Dostoevsky can also be seen in Greene. Dostoevsky elaborately dwells on themes such as sin, repentance, evil, salvation, suffering, humility and human love which are quite common in the works of Greene. In fact, Dostoevsky is obsessed with the repentant transgressor. Such a figure appears time and again, in Greene too. For instance, Father Zosima in The Brothers Karamazov is presented as:

... a man who had sinned much, and had wasted his life, and had squandered his means, and had lifted his hand against his neighbour .... lastly a man who had become saved through
humility and now stood divested of his ego.
(Soloviev 235-36)

What looks like an exact replica of this priest is the nameless Whisky Priest in Greene's The Power and the Glory. Dostoevsky humanizes Christianity and Christ, thereby becoming eligible to merit Middleton Murry's comment: "Christ was for him the most valiant, the most noble, the most gentle, the most perfect knight ... Christ was a man who had asked, not a God who answered and Dostoevsky loved him" (133). Perhaps Greene's The Power and the Glory is an amplification, along the lines of the above redefinition of Christ and Christianity.

The struggle between good and evil in the human soul as portrayed by Dostoevsky, is so convincing that it made a tremendous impact on Albert Einstein who said: "It [The Brothers Karamazov] is one of those books which smash the mechanical ideas of man's inner world and of the frontiers between good and evil" (Ilya Ehrenburg 9, 522-23). It is the confrontation with evil and the way it affects the innermost being, causing all the consequent painful conflicts, leading eventually, to repentance, that brings Greene closer to the Russian writer.
Further, in respect of his themes, settings and characterization, Greene's work shows a great affinity to that of Joseph Conrad. For example, the theme of transition from non-commitment to commitment is central in Conrad's novels Victory and Lord Jim and his short story "The Secret-Sharer". Axel Heyst in Victory (1915) believes in his father's philosophy of detachment. Already, he has learnt from him that life itself is evil, and one should always observe the world without involving himself in its dramatic flux. Especially, to fall in love means to be lost, to him. Yet, soon, he sympathises with poor Morrison and lends him money to pay off some fine. He also becomes a partner in a coal-mining enterprise. Lena, in the same novel, reminds the readers of Greene's Elizabeth in his The Man Within. The former saves Heyst, her lover, by arming him with the dagger, which she has taken from Ricardo, who had planned to use it against him. Elizabeth kills herself with the knife left behind by Andrews for her protection, when she is tortured by one of the smugglers. Greene's Castle in The Human Factor is a prototype of Conrad's Razumov of Under Western Eyes to whom life is a "dream and fear" (Western Eyes 262) and who wants to remain as a "helpless spectator to the end" (278). But soon, he is drawn into the vortex of
activities seeing the sufferings of Haldin and Nathalie, and winces on the sudden realization of his human responsibilities.

Scobie in Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* offers a parallel to Conrad's Jim whose "life had begun in sacrifice" (*Lord Jim* 138) and "all he needed was peace" (*The Heart* 48). It is interesting to note that the protagonists of both Greene and Conrad come to stay in a colony in the Congo, and refuse to return to the so-called civilized world. Greene's Querry in *A Burnt-Out Case* wants to remain for ever there, dispossessed of all material values, and Conrad's Kurtz in *the Heart of Darkness* wants to stay back because of his own acquisitive instincts.

Thus, both Greene and Conrad have painted almost a similar vision of life. Man in their fiction, plays the game of the "romance of illusion" at every moment of his life, and ultimately, when he loses his best chance in life, embraces death as the only redeeming force. Placed in such a tragic predicament in the game of life, Man still, emerges not as an abject creature who invites mere pity; his tortures do not evoke in us any mean sense of terror; and certainly, he is not a nerveless weakling. It is true he fails, but he does not bend; he
is buffeted by adverse situations, but does not prostrate himself before any enemy, and herein lies the tragic humanism of both the writers.

The most singular, potent influence on Jayakanthan has been that of Bharathy, the well-known Tamil poet and humanist of the twentieth century. The impact of the latter on the former has been so pronounced that Jayakanthan wrote a book entitled Bārati Pāṭam [The Lesson From Bharathy] which contains a number of ethical prescriptions of Bharathy, meant especially for children. The relationship between Jayakanthan and Bharathy is that of a devotee and his deity (Oru Illakkiyāti 355). Jayakanthan, the Bhakta ("devotee"), places all his works at the "lotus feet of his Guru" (Bārati Pāṭam 7). Besides quoting profusely from the poems of Bharathy, Jayakanthan has directly borrowed from him some of his salient humanist concepts for his novels and short stories. His anti-Brahministic stance, Jayakanthan admits, is a debt he owes directly to Bharathy (Oru Illakkiyavāti 242). In fact, Jayakanthan's rejection of renunciation and asceticism; his passionate espousal of the Advaita principle of "Oneness of all"; his assertion of the reality of the world and life; his yearning for a golden age and his advocacy of feminism - are all directly traceable to Bharathy.
Jayakanthan was also influenced by Thirukural, which, he claims, he learned as a boy, from the veteran Communist leader Jivanantham (Ninaittu 16). The value of the Kural has already been realized by great minds like Albert Schweitzer, who has observed:

Like the Buddha and the Bhagavad-Gita, the Kural desires inner freedom from the world and a mind free from hatred. Like them, it stands for the commandment not to kill and not to damage. It has appropriated all the valuable ethical results of the thought of the world and life-negation. But in addition to these ethics of inwardness, there appears in the Kural the living ethic of love. (Quoted in Tamil Culture 276)

It is evident that Jayakanthan's opposition to intolerance and fanaticism, his universalist outlook and his emphasis on compassion which is the true voice of humanity - all have their origin in his profound understanding of Thirukural.

Jayakanthan is also well-read in Rāmāyanā of Kamban, the works of Swami Vivekananda, Bertrand Russell (Ninaittu 38), the Bible, the Kuran (24-25), Sri Ramakrishna (189), the Russian writers like...
Chekhov, Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Gorky (104), D.H. Lawrence (91), Freud (92) et. al. It is true that these varied writers and their works have no avowedly common purpose. Yet the element that lends unity to them all, is their all-embracing quest for universal peace through a realization of the principle of brotherhood. In the words of M.S. Venkataramani:

Jayakanthan found added strength to his spiritual perceptions, through an in-depth study of the poems of Bharathy; precepts of Mahatma Gandhi; the soul-nourishing verses of Nayanmars, Alwars, Thirukural, Rāmāyanā and the devotional songs of Saint Ramalinga. (27-31)

From the foregoing discussion, it becomes clear that the humanist outlook in the case of both Greene and Jayakanthan, has been nurtured by nearly similar or at least comparable life situations. The early loveless home atmosphere; encounters with violence and death; sexual love and consequent despair; leftist leanings; religious beliefs and convictions; existential thought and their reading of contemporary humanist writers - have all contributed their share to their emergence as humanist writers par excellence.
Moreover, quite early in life, both Greene and Jayakanthan had developed an awareness of Evil, existing side by side with Good. Their characters are, therefore, pitted against a world, which is predominantly Evil. In their characters' endless resistance to Evil, both the authors, by virtue of their innate human concern, find themselves on the side of the erring humanity, thereby lending it even a religious identity, regardless of their respective, 'religious' codes and values. Their treatment of romantic love which almost invariably ends in despair and disappointment; sexual repression and its tragic consequences; possessive love; oedipal complex and sexual absurdities - are all related to their own life experiences. Though they both affirmed their allegiance to Communism at a particular phase of writing and expressed their faith in their respective religions at some point, humanism has continued to remain their central concern. Though there are no authentic records to prove that both the writers were directly influenced by Existentialist thought, both use existentialist themes to highlight the predicament of Man in the chaotic modern world.

Thus, if Greene's awareness of the existence of evil was intensified by his readings of Dickens and
other writers, he learnt from Dostoevsky the art of humanizing Christianity and according divinity even to the most depraved of humanity. Further, Greene's nausea for the civilized world of the West and his preference for the simple, peaceful life of the African natives to which he has given expression in his A Burnt-Out Case, are directly traceable to Conrad. Jayakanthan too is indebted to both Tamil and Western writers. He has emerged as an uncompromising critic of the Hindu orthodoxy under the potent influence of Bharathy and he finds the oneness of humanity as exemplified by the vedas and advocated by Gandhiji and Swami Vivekananda. Further, as J.T. Shaw says in his "Literary Indebtedness and Comparative Literary Studies":

The original author is not necessarily the innovator or the most inventive, but rather the one who succeeds in making all his own, in subordinating what he takes from others to the new complex of his own artistic work.

(Comparative Literature 86)

Both Greene and Jayakanthan are adepts at such a kind of subordination of their respective adapted material, with a view to facilitating the exposition of their paramount humanist concerns.