Chapter Two

The Human Face of Religion

Most of the writers and religious philosophers of our time accept the fact that the root cause of the modern malaise is the absence of the truly 'religious' spirit in the life of man. T.S. Eliot, for instance, stresses the need for "the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life" (52). The materialistic progress, devoid of spirituality, has become the main target of attack for many writers today. Frank E. Manuel cites a few examples, "For Berdyaev ... the idea of progress is the seductive teaching of a modern Anti-Christ; for Neibur ... a new idolatory; for Dawson ... a failure to understand the corruption inherent in all things" (145).

In the Gifford Lectures of 1949, Christopher H. Dawson says:

The events of the last few years portend either the end of human history or a turning point in it. They have warned us in letters of fire that our civilization has been tried in the balance and found wanting - that there is an absolute limit to the progress that can be achieved by the perfection of the
To Bede Griffiths,

Materialism is of its nature a kind of violence to the spirit of man. It is an attempt to subject everything, and above all, the human person, to the law of matter, and the law of matter is the law of violence. It seeks to impose itself on every form of spiritual life. (141)

The horror of the world which Greene so closely knew as a child, grew up along with himself. A passage from his The Lawless Roads bears it out in clear terms:

In the land of the skyscrapers, of stone stairs and cracked bells ringing early, one was aware of fear and hate, a kind of lawlessness - appalling cruelties could be practised without a second thought; one met for the first time, characters, adult and adolescent, who bore about them the genuine quality of evil. (14)

Even as a child, Greene became aware of the perils of the "Commercial Civilization" (The Lost Childhood 152) and "the evil of capitalist society" (28)
and "a ravaged world" (Lawless 15). David Pryce-Jones has already indicated Greene's intense interest in contemporary socio-political affairs, "His sense for news" (Graham Greene 8) and his "interesting reflections on those years" (8). His words throw ample light on Greene's awareness of the world around him:

Greene's observation, concentrated on details of poverty and misery and human shabbiness, gives him in particular an affinity with Orwell, for both of them seem to penetrate to the weak spots of the capitalist world. (9)

Greene's art is shaped by the modern malaise of materialism and it faithfully reflects the predicament of man, inextricably caught up in a world, which is essentially evil. It is here that Greene's Catholicism becomes relevant. In this context, John Atkins' observation that Greene became a Catholic "on intellectual grounds" (Graham Greene 55) is worth remembering. Catholicism gave Greene a new anchorage and a more comprehensive perspective to understand the human struggle. Greene himself said in an interview: "If my critics still think that I am a conforming Catholic, I admire their forbearance for evil" (A.S. Raman, Illustrated Weekly 20).
As an artist, committed and true to his profession, Greene does not dilate, like any die-hard theologian, on his personal experiences, his inherited, and regimented dogmatic system of beliefs, but tries to redefine and revise the Catholic orthodoxy as far as possible, to accord a sympathetic treatment to the discarded, suffering humanity. In fact, he maintains a delicate balance between the secular and the spiritual, in order to offer us "a tragic vision of man's predicament" (David Pryce, Graham Greene 105), which is "closely woven into the novels through Greene's literary approach" (105).

Greene's conviction is, that the Church has to accept within its folds, the convicts, the sinners, the misfits, the neurotics and the wash-outs. Atkins rightly observes:

One attraction of the Church for Greene must have been its refusal to victimize tarts. He is faithful to the Church because of its whisky priests and Scobies, not because they are pardoned, but because they are damned. (208 - 09)

Greene's sensibility was outraged when the Church turned out to be dogmatic with its inviolable rules of
regimentation. Paul West says:

Greene, in fact, the man who rebuked the Cardinal-Archbishop of Paris, for refusing Christian burial to Colette, whose life has become ... a series of well-timed sorties to the secular trouble-spots, who is as much a journalist as a jansenist, is closer to an enraged compassion than to sectarian hebetude. (94)

It is mainly because of his abiding interest in according a religious sanction to the sinful humanity, that Greene has rejected religious orthodoxy and fundamentalism. Viewed in this sense, "Greene is surely claiming the right to say what he likes to be, the keeper of his own artist's conscience" (Atkins 169).

The forging of a bond between the secular and the spiritual is agreeable, to many of the Christian thinkers who can understand only too well, the need for the redemption of Man from his modern predicament. For instance, the Humanist Manifesto II reads:

First ... we believe, however, that traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual
or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species. (Quoted by McDowell and Stewart 81)

Paul Van Buren is of the opinion that, "An analysis of the Church as a human community, does not strike us as out of place today" (57). Further, D.B. Taylor demolishes the dividing line between the secular and the spiritual by pointing out that the gospel picture of Christ is "definitely that of a human being" (66). In a highly convincing presentation of his religious principles, John Stott argues that a reinterpretation of "salvation as the liberation of the deprived" (89), is essential in the modern context. He traces even some of the steps which have led to this. To start with, he says, salvation "was a personal deliverance from sin by faith as a result of the proclamation of the gospel" (89). Later, the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism raised the question: "What is the form and content of the salvation which Christ offers men in the secular world?" (89). In consideration of this, Stott adds that the reports from Western Europe, entitled "The Church for Others", and from North America entitled "The Church for the World" defined "the gospel of mission" (89) as "humanization" (89) and stressed that Christ is
"the true man, the head of the new humanity" (89). Stott concludes his argument, quoting from *The Church for Others* (pp 77-78):

Wherever men and women are led to restored relationships in love of neighbour, in service and suffering for the sake of greater justice and freedom, these things must be recognized as signs of the fulness of humanity which Christ is providing. (89)

It is interesting to note that Greene too cannot conceive of a Christianity without the aforesaid human qualities. He looks upon the Church not as a mere structure, but as a living organization, united from within, by three essential human values, namely, love for others, duty-consciousness and selfless service, which make people spiritually, morally and socially creative and meaningful beings.

In Tamil literature also there has been a similar shift in focus in the modern age. I. Pakkiamuthu, a critic of repute, makes the following observation:

First, we fought for independence. The struggle gave our literature a new area to deal with ... After Independence, Bharathy who gave a clarion call for the freedom struggle
earlier felt sorry for the sad plight in which he found our people. He was for the elimination of caste and religion ... He could not stomach what he witnessed all around ...

In recent times, the best novels speak of human salvation. They seek to save men, greatly affected by the many changes that have taken place in our country. (39-40)

At present, religious clashes are ever on the increase in India. More often than not, the solution for this worrying phenomenon lies in the humanization and secularization of religions. Realizing this vital factor, Swami Vivekananda turned Hinduism into "Practical Vedanta". Swahananda, one of his disciples writes:

This worshipful attitude to man as God, has been described as the socialization of the Ultimate Reality is true religion, which in its expression, is both individual and social. This realization is individual but men of realization see God everywhere as the Spirit, as the sum total of all souls. Seeing God in society, thus, becomes a spiritual discipline. (22)
To Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, religion which does not have a human identity is useless. He observes:

Religion is all or nothing. Every religion should have sufficient respect for the dignity of man and the rights of human personality ... Religion is the perfection of the truly human. Humanism today is in search of a soul. (50)

The belief that God takes a mortal form to do service to humanity, love it and save it from perils, is not alien to Indian mythologies and literatures. Rama takes a human avatar ("a human form"). The Gita declares: "whenever there is a decline of righteousness and rise of unrighteousness, then I send forth myself" (4:8). Commenting on this, Vimala Manuel says: "All these helped to evolve a new image of God as a personal being, who is not indifferent to mortal sufferings - one who is on the side of those who work for righteousness and truth" (11).

That Swami Vivekananda has repeatedly spoken about the vital need for the humanization of religion is well known. According to him, "The end of all religions is the realizing of God in the soul" (What Religion Is 8).

It is interesting to note in this context, that Jayakanthan calls himself a writer having a distinct
"socio-spiritual vision" (Cutantira 159) and "socio-spiritual responsibility" (52). He observes,

A truly religious person is one who sacrifices his self and life; gives up all his worldly desires and gains; challengingly accepts all sufferings and thinks and works for the betterment of humanity and social life on the basis of humanism. (155)

Jayakanthan is nurtured in the religious and cultural life of the middle class Tamils and in Gandhian humanism, which according to Mulk Raj Anand lies: "in the ever-recurrent question which he [Gandhi] asked himself throughout his life: 'Oh God, how shall I serve the people now?'" (30).

As such, in astonishingly similar ways, Jayakanthan also redefines Hinduism, a caste-ridden religion, and renders it more human, thereby offering the rightful place to the oppressed, the sinners, and the suffering. Critics like Periakaruppan and M. Thirumalai have already noted this overriding humanistic concern in Jayakanthan:

We perceive the 'humanism' that stands out in the works of Jayakanthan, fashioned essentially from a spiritual point of view.
Better a man i.e., someone endowed richly with human sympathy — than an outstanding writer, is his motto. (61)

Here again, as in the case of Greene, Jayakanthan focuses his attention mainly on three issues, namely, love for others, duty-consciousness and selfless service, which, he believes, besides making people socially more advanced, endow them with an unmistakable religious identity.

Greene is highly censorious of those who are incapable of establishing healthy relationships with others based on genuine love. Mr. Surrogate in Greene's It's a Battle-Field, is a fake Communist who harangues on social progress, but is utterly devoid of love, to the point of isolating himself from others. To him "individuals gave pain by their brutality, their malice, their lack of understanding" (44). He loved only "abstractions" (43) like "Social Betterment, the Equality of Opportunity, the Means of Production" (43). But he shudders before personalities who "had always betrayed him" (44). Greene says that if at all he takes somebody into confidence, it is only "to help to confirm his belief that these things were real—Capitalism and Socialism, Wealth and Poverty" (44). He has nothing to
do with "these other things, champagne and charity balls, and women bearing their twelfth child in an overcrowded room" (44). He is, in short, a pretender who masquerades as one dying for a social cause. In the same work, Greene disapproves of people being treated merely as objects to be manipulated. The sheer, heartless mechanicality of the atmosphere in a Press Bureau is presented in stylistic terms by Greene with a latent irony:

Immediately all the typewriters in the room became silent, the keys dropped as softly as feathers ... on the floor below the leader-writers sat in little studies and smoked cigarettes and chewed toffee, held up for the right word, looking in dictionaries, leading public opinion. On the floor below, the sub-editors sat at long tables and ran their blue pencils over the copy, scrawled headlines ... screwed the whole bunch into a metal shell, and sent it hurtling with a whine and a rattle to the composing room. (24)

Here, the workers themselves are reduced to mere objects and automated parts of the productive process, totally incapable of having any personal human warmth or familial affection. In this work, Greene sees the world
in terms of a battle field where each character, while professing to fight a common battle, is interested only in his/her own self: "The truth is, nobody cares about anything but his own troubles. Everybody's too busy fighting his own little battle to think of the, the next man" (188).

Greene is also a profoundly psychological writer. In his novel Doctor Fischer of Geneva OR The Bomb Party, he probes deep into the question of finding what renders people incapable of establishing any concrete relationship with others. In the case of Dr. Fischer, his venom and hate for others spring from a deep sense of hurt inflicted on him by his wife. When his wife starts attending the concerts of Steiner, he presumes "She was leaving him by entering a region into which he couldn't follow her" (40). He considers her unfaithful to him and is not able to "forget her betrayal" (40). The result is, that he turns a misanthrope. Jones, his son-in-law says: "I hated him for his pride, his contempt for all the world, and his cruelty. He loves no one, not even his daughter" (10).

Expatiating on the nature of hatred Dr. Fischer observes in terms bordering on the sadistic:
When one despises .. it's like a deep and incurable wound, the beginning of death. And one must revenge one's wounds while there's still time. When the one inflicted it is dead, one has to strike back at others. (105)

In the novel, Dr. Fischer "strikes back" at his friends by exploiting their innate greed, thereby humiliating them as much as possible. In a party, he makes his rich friends contend with each other for five Christmas crackers containing a bomb capable of killing the person who pulls its fuse. Even at the risk of imminent death they participate in this macabre game, because of sheer greed. Ultimately, hate breeds hate and brings about Fischer's despair and death.

Greene says that man's preoccupation with capitalism, industry and economic interests in the modern age, has dispossessed him of his innate capacity for love towards his fellow beings. The story of Krogh, the tycoon, in England Made Me can be considered here as a fine illustration for this. He is a man "made of money" (116) and "tied to the end of a phone" (44). "Money, figures, shares, morning till night" (44). "... there was nothing he didn't know about figures, there was nothing he couldn't do with them, there was
nothing human about them" (131). His love of wealth has utterly deprived him of the essential human concern and love for others. In an extraordinary moment of self-conscious insight, Krogh reflects on his singular capacity for human relationships:

One could not plan a human relationship like a graph of production. He tried to encourage himself ... I have been too taken up by finance, I must enlarge my scope - the human side. (49)

Krogh throws Andersson out of job and wants to marry Kate so that his business secrets will be intact. Despite all his wealth, he suffers from a "sense of something lost, neglected ..." (39).

Yet another victim of modern materialism, alienating man from man, is the head clerk in Greene's short story, "A Drive in the Country". Engaged in mad pursuit of wealth, he gets himself thoroughly dehumanized in the process:

His home was like his office, run on the same lines, its safety preserved with the same meticulous care, so that he could present a faithful steward's account to the Managing Director. (Greene, Twenty-one 52)
After taking a hearty meal he says: "I've improved the property ... I've wired this room for power, ... this radiator", the final stroke of satisfaction, the garden" (27).

His daughter entertains nothing but contempt for him, runs away from her loveless home with the jobless Fred, only to return shortly, when the latter commits suicide in self-hatred.

That Greene is concerned with finding reasons social, personal, familial, psychological, ideological and even philosophical, which prevent individuals from having meaningful contacts with others, is evident in many of his novels. Pinkie in Brighton Rock, for instance, is a study of a character "in relation to the ravaged world" (Allott and Farrie 121). Socially, he is a product of the seedy environment in Nelson Place, the place of his birth. His unhappy, poverty-stricken childhood creates in him, a feeling of loneliness and a sense of meaninglessness. The abhorrence of sex he develops within himself through witnessing several shocking episodes of sexual intercourse of his parents on Saturday nights, makes him loathe marriage and "the double bed" (Brighton 132). This rude, psychological and existential awakening of his self makes Pinkie
reject summarily the codes and values of the society around. The impact of all these eventually change him into "a nasty, totally anti-social juvenile delinquent" (31) leading a horrid, loveless life, believing only in violence, murder and suicide.

Greene's humanist vision recognizes the streak of goodness and kindness, even in the so-called evil people. He is of the view that love of others springs up in human hearts, quite naturally and spontaneously. Anthony Farrant in England Made Me, who stoutly, and successfully, resists an incestuous relationship proffered by Kate, his twin-sister, is given to "boasting or lying" (135), preserving yet a "genuine sense of decency" (136) and a revulsion "at injustice and cruelty" (136). Being a warm human being, Anthony does not want to work under the money-minded Krogh any more. When the young Andersson comes to see Krogh about the dismissal of his father, Anthony's love and sympathy for him well up spontaneously, as he finds in him, a kindred spirit:

Andersson at any rate was national (sic) in his heaviness, his fairness, his inability to talk another language, and a thin spray of sympathy passed between the two of them, as if
they recognized each other's limitations in a strange world. (172)

When Krogh refuses to see the young Andersson and asks Anthony to throw him out, the latter replies: "I'm damned if I will" (173). "'I'm damned if I will', Anthony repeated" (174). He is determined to defy Krogh now, despite all the odds, and says: "I'm throwing up this job. I'm going back to England, to Coventry" (170). Unfortunately, Anthony is pushed soon into a lake by Hall, a henchman of Krogh, and is drowned. In G.S. Frazer's words: "Evil seems to have triumphed. But, in fact, Anthony's soul is safe, in his weak way he has borne witness for goodness" (1953, 136).

A similar trait of goodness and kindness can be seen in James Raven who figures in A Gun for Sale (1936). Being an embodiment of evil, his entire life is marked by crime, violence, murder and death. Like Pinkie in Brighton Rock, Raven is also conditioned by his environment and upbringing. He carries with him evil as "a load around with you; you were born with some of it because of what your father and mother were ..." (160). Because of his badly sewn harelip, Raven feels there is hardly anyone in the world to love him. "There was no one, outside your own brain whom you
could trust: not a doctor, not a priest, not a woman" (219). Eventually, Raven is cheated with forged notes, over his murder of a minister, and Dr. Yogel, who himself is corrupt, tries to get him arrested. There is no honour even among thieves, he realizes at last.

However, Raven gets a chance to experience goodness when he comes in touch with Anne. He dares to takes her into confidence at such a time, when he knows nobody should be trusted. Feeling relaxed in her company, he gets a low, passionate urge to confess to her, all the murders he has committed. Anne, however, betrays him to her detective fiance and the readers, are left with, in the words of Webster, "something of the same feeling for him [Raven] as one has for Macbeth ..." (12).

In his most remarkable novel The Power and the Glory, Greene shows that human love can elevate an individual to the stature of a saint, through the protagonist, a "Whisky Priest" (60). Greene assigns to him, the highest mark of heroism, not by presenting him as a dogmatic Catholic priest, but by making him a victim of human love. Realizing his essential, common humanity, Marie-Beatrice Mesnet remarks:

Greene himself has said that his purpose, like Francois Mauriac's, in choosing the weakest,
the most abandoned human beings as material for his creative imagination, was to throw a brighter light on God's infinite mercy and His power to turn even evil - *etiam peccata* - into good. (79)

In the past, the Priest used to be "conceited, proud, overbearing - a bad priest" (118). He was "a proud, lustful greedy man" (95), who loved authority too much. He ate good meals, had a woman and a bastard child through her, Brigitta, by name. Now, he is a "damned man" (60), "a common man" (61), "a beggar" (62) with "a buffoon's face" (59) and with hands "as hard as a labourer's" (75).

Paradoxically enough, through his immersion in sin and suffering, the priest has emerged as a human soul having love - "not the best love, but love all the same" (100). "Then, in his innocence, he had felt no love for anyone, now in his corruption he had learnt ..." (129). He has enormous love for his child "connected with his crime" (61). "... his heart beat with its secret and appalling love" (61-62). He even prays for her: "O God, give me any kind of death - without contrition, in a state of sin - only save this child" (82). "Oh God help her. Damn me. I deserve it, but let her live for ever" (207).
Soon his love for his child develops into his love for all. While in the prison "overcrowded with lust and crime and unhappy love" (125) "as a criminal among a herd of criminals" (128), he "was moved by an enormous and irrational affection for the inhabitants of this prison" (127). "A phrase came to him: 'God so loved the World ..." (127). He realizes the paradoxical truth that the half-caste, the Judas, who is out to betray him has "God's image" (101) and he experiences a "driven tenderness" (101) and a "contemptuous affection" (184) for him. "Poor man, the priest thought, he isn't really bad enough ..." (184). As Graham Smith says, the Whisky Priest "is unable not to love ..." (86).

It is worth quoting a central passage in the novel which faithfully brings out Greene's humanism:

But at the centre of his [the priest's] own faith, there always stood the convincing mystery - that we were made in God's image. God was the parent, but He was also the policeman, the criminal, the priest, the maniac, and the judge. Something resembling God dangled from the gibbet or went into odd attitudes before the bullets in a prison yard or contorted itself like a camel in the attitude of sex. (101)
Commenting on such a radical vision in Greene, Adele King observes:

The priest takes the biblical saying that man was created in God's image literally; not only is man like God in his spirit but in his body. Thus he imagines God dying, God having sexual relations. Most Christians would think such an interpretation absurd; to the priest, however, it is a way of seeing the divine in all life, even in the most sordid, and therefore, a path toward the love of his fellow men. (55)

Leon Rivas, the renegade priest, in *The Honorary Consul* is driven to rebellion by his compassion for the suffering humanity and sense of justice. The paradox of Rivas' life is that he has to do evil, out of love for those who suffer. He too finds the image of God in man. The following paradox in the novel is highly significant:

'I believe in the evil of God', Father Rivas said, 'but I believe in His goodness too. He made us in his image that is the old legend... So I too believe in an old legend which is almost forgotten. He made us in His
image - and so our evil is His evil too. How could I love a God if He were not like me? Divided like me. Tempted like me’. (227)

Charley Fortnum, the seedy, old man of sixty, figuring in the same novel, steeped in alcohol and married to an ex-whore, made pregnant by Dr. Plarr, confirms Greene's faith in human love. Charley feels "an odd kinship with that priest" (260), who intends to kill him and he has "a pang of pain" (266) for Dr. Plarr, about whom he says: "He was young enough to be my son" (267). Such feelings can spring only in the heart of a man who bears a true image of God.

Dr. Plarr embraces death out of concern for others. Out of compassion for Clara and his child she is carrying, he walks out of the rebel hide-out to die in the place of Charley Fortnum, her husband, who "would make a better father" (171) than himself to the child.

While most of the Catholic clergy in Greene's works are not sure of what they think of Christianity, the priests and the superior in Greene's A Burnt-Out Case expound it in clear terms. The Superior is a humanist par-excellence and, to him, man becomes God, when he starts loving others:
When you love it is Yezu who loves, when you are merciful it is Yezu who is merciful. But when you hate or envy it is not Yezu, for everything that Yezu made is good... When a man loves he must be klistian ... Yezu made love, he made mercy. Everything in the world has something that Yezu made. (81)

He asserts further that it is God, who makes one love his fellow beings:

I do not tell you to do good things for the love of God. That is very hard. Too hard for most of us. It is much easier to show mercy because a child weeps or to love because a girl or a young man pleases your eye. That's not wrong, that's good. Only remember that the love you feel and the mercy you show were made in you by God. (81-82)

The priests, the Superior and Dr. Colin in the novel, suffer for a cause, namely, the elimination of leprosy from the land. They love the lepers, make collections for them and suffer as much as possible in a colony of misery, heat and mosquitoes. They do not build churches, though they have their faith. Their life is quiet, calm and peaceful. They strive for the
betterment of the human condition as against the selfish and violent men and women of the so-called civilized world of the West.

Human love takes on very clear religious connotations in Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* too, in which Arnold Kettle says, "the relation between man and God ... is important" (185). "To be a human being one had to drink the cup" (*The Heart* 106). A readiness to suffer for the happiness of others is inborn in Scobie, the protagonist of the novel. Even the fear of eternal damnation and separation from his wife cannot deter him from bearing the burden of others. When he sees a dying child, he prays, out of sheer compassion and pity, reminded of his own dead child: "Father, look after her. Give her peace ... Take away my peace for ever, but give her my peace" (106). Again, it is only pity and compassion that goad him to fall in love with Helen Rolt, a nineteen-year old widow, rescued from a wrecked ship, incurring the righteous wrath of his wife, the Church and God. Despite the unmistakable evil strain in him, Scobie continues to remain so good, that he "can't bear to see suffering ..." (207), having constantly a nagging sense of responsibility for others. There is something sacrificial, vicarious and Christ-like about
Scobie's love. O' Brien says that his pity for others is "a simulacrum of the passion" (76). His essential loving goodness asserts itself when he says that "he could believe in no God who was not human enough to love what he had created" (The Heart 102).

Scobie is overcome by guilt, remorse and grief when he finds out that he has been responsible for the murder of Ali, his faithful servant. Here is another instance in Greene to find man in God and God in man. Seeing the dead body of Ali, Scobie cries: "O God, he thought, I've killed you: You've served me all these years and I've killed you at the end of them. God, lay there under the petrol drums and Scobie felt the tears in his mouth" (221). The dead body of Ali appears to him as the veritable "image of God coiled at the end ..." (221). Scobie's love for others should be understood in the light of the Pauline doctrine of the extreme kind of agape or human love, a willingness to save others through one's own damnation: "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:3).

Greene's novel The End of the Affair presents a superb portrayal of sacrificial love. Sarah Miles's love for Maurice Bendrix turns out to be agape-like
because of her supreme act of charity. To start with, they practise sex as their religion and totally "eliminate God from our World" (56). But during an air-raid, when he is knocked down unconscious, she triumphs over her physical weakness and cries to God, hitherto remaining unknown to her:

I knelt down on the floor: I was mad to do such a thing: I never even had to do it as a child - my parents never believed in prayer, any more than I do ... Dear God, I said - why dear, why dear? - make me believe. I can't believe. Make me ... Let him be alive, and I will believe. Give him a chance. Let him have his happiness. Do this and I'll believe ... I said very slowly, I'll give him up for ever only let him be alive with a chance .... (79)

This is a fine instance of the highest kind of selfless love a human being can bear towards another, a love that the Bible advocates: "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". (I John 3:16).

Like Greene, Jayakanthan also is intensely critical of people, who are not capable of forming healthy
relationships with those around them, on the basis of love. Like Surrogate, the fake Communist in Greene's *It's a Battle-field*, Jayakanthan's Vedhasalem Pillai who figures in his first novel *Vālkkai Alaikkiratu* is a fake spiritualist. The place where he lives is a veritable hell. A retired government officer and an adept on legal matters, he could have offered his immense help to neighbours engaged in endless feuds and cases in the courts (89). "But he lives apart from them all, without ever participating in their eternal karma" ("duty") (90). "He too has problems regarding his lands and with his neighbours" (90). But he never steps into a court or seeks the help of rogues like Sarankan. He has a stronger weapon in his hands to overcome his enemies and that is "the philosophy of Sankara and the religious poetry of Valluvar" (90). He has his own library of books in his bungalow where he often finds shelter, reading and learning by heart, verses from the sacred books. He is so crookedly clever that he can manipulate any dharma to suit his needs and for his own advantage.

Vedhasalem Pillai likes only those who patiently listen to his "useless abstractions" (137).

He is not only a person who is very much learned, but also one who follows the rule
that the world should have the benefits of what he has learned and enjoyed.

For that, if he comes across anyone, he will give him coffee and tiffin and 'roast him alive' at least for an hour, in his **vedantic philosophy**. (114)

As one who tries to find ways and means to make himself alone happy (90), he has no concrete relationship with anybody in society including his wife, daughter, sister and nephew. What alienates him from others is his "money-mindedness" (90), his class and social-consciousness. Thothadri rightly comments that in **Vālkkai Alaikkiratu** "those who are at the upper strata of life are leading a false life" (31). Geetha, his daughter says that "he has lived like a machine and he does not know what life is all about" (143). Geetha reminds one of the daughters of the head clerk in Greene's story "A Drive in the country", who rightly punishes her father, at the end, by committing suicide on the day of her wedding, as Vedhasalem goes against her wishes of marrying her cousin, Raja, on the grounds of the latter's poverty.

The characters in Jayakanthan's novel **ō Amērikā [Oh, America]** may make the readers of Greene, recall
the disintegrated, rootless and lonely characters who figure in Greene's *It's a Battle-Field*. They imitate, "the modern capitalist social life in America" (3) without knowing what it is actually. Kamalammal, the mother in the novel, has built up an educational institution by sheer dint of hard work and "through a dedicated life" (8), but "pampered and ruined her two sons" (10) by lavishing on them both her blind love and affection. She ends up, becoming a living witness to their dirty lives and still does not feel any qualms about doing so.

Kamalammal's elder son, Naren, lives in his own world among fashionable friends, both male and female, who often "dance, howl, and roll on the ground" (17). He is at home only amidst flatterers, drunkards, gossips, lost in cigarette smoke. He has married Archana "in great haste out of sheer lust" (21) and both derive a sadistic kind of pleasure only in quarrelling endlessly with each other day and night.

Archana is a free woman, a representative of the so-called civilized society and as such she has no particular home (46). She calls her husband "an idiot" (23). She "whistles" (24); drinks and "wants others to fall in love with her and admire her" (46). "She wants
a man only for the game of love and not for raising any family" (56). In respect of her nymphomania, Archana can be considered as a prototype of Greene's Kay Rimmer in his It's A Battle-Field, who "never felt more at home than in bed or a man's arms" (Battle-Field 58).

Though the characters in Ō Amēricā find a common cause in building "Kamalalayam" (8), an educational institution, their motives differ. They tend to work at cross-purposes and make futile attempts to ward off their loneliness through drinks, role-playing and sex. Like the characters in Greene's It's A Battle-Field, they also tend to drift aimlessly towards nothing in particular, cherishing their own selfish Bohemian desires.

However, all these characters redeem themselves in the end turning over a new leaf, responding to the sensible counsel of Thankaraj, the head of the family, who returns home after a passage of twenty-five long years.

Again like Dr. Fischer of Greene in Doctor Fisher of Geneva OR The Bomb Party, Jayakanthan's Jessiah in his Pārisukku Pō, is disturbed by a deep sense of hurt caused in him by his son Sarankan. Though the hurt does
not affect him as terribly as in the case of the former, it certainly coarsens him and makes him a little inhuman.

Jessiah, the court musician of a Maharaja, is deeply hurt when the Maharaja compels him to compete with a musician he holds in very high esteem. Jessiah gives up his profession and "thereafter for forty-five years, he keeps his violin in the Pūjā-room ("Prayer-room") and never again touches it to please any human individual" (98).

But the most unkindest cut off all is given to Jessiah by Sarankan, his son, who goes to London much against his will. In anger, Jessiah tears away all the letters Sarankan writes to him from there. He does not care even to inform him about the death of Rangayya, his other son, saying, "He has been always very stubborn interfering in the life of all at home" (124).

However, when Jessiah becomes very rich on account of a flourishing business, he starts fashioning the life of his children according to his own fancy. He even develops an obsession that others should obey his dictates implicitly. For instance, he compels Sarankan to get married, administer a business and earn money.
When Sarankan refuses to oblige him, he tries to bring him round, by cutting off the power supply to his air-conditioned room and by even threatening to disinherit him. Not being able to adjust himself to the situation brought about by his sanguine father, Sarankan returns to Paris, fretting and fuming.

Jessiah's attitude to Narasiman, his other son and his grandson Murali, is also characterized by the same kind of stubbornness. "Had Narasiman dragged him to the court for a share in the property, he would have given him up as dead" (232). Murali feels Jessiah has ignored his [Murali's] father because he is poor. Moreover, he is not willing to spend money on a new business concern which Murali wants to start.

However, Jessiah is very much attached to his son Rangayya. But when he dies, Jessiah, in intense hate, turns against his pregnant daughter-in-law, Lakshmi. When she delivers a boy, he turns against him also "in some sort of superstition" (85). As Thatchinamoorthy, the critic says, "Jessiah inhabits a too narrow circle, upholding old feudal values" (70).

However, Jessiah's obsessional hate in no way undermines his basic humanism which shines forth at the
close of the novel. He is lying on bed for two days in a raging fever and there is nobody to attend on him. On the third morning, quite unknowingly, the child Kannan, the son of Rangayya, stumbles into his room, and Jessiah, touched in his conscience, instinctively rushes towards him and lifts him up in both his hands. He also becomes reconciled with Lakshmi, his daughter-in-law and entrusts her with all the family responsibilities. His final realization is that "money is useless and the fate of those who live with no love is similar to his" (Pārisukku 281).

Unlike the capitalists in the works of Greene, Jayakanthan's well-to-do characters ultimately change their attitudes towards the poor and reveal their essential humanity. The story "Latchāthipatikal" ["Millionaires"] illustrates this. At the dead of night a one-time millionaire, now reduced to a pauper, out of sheer desperation, drives his car in a mad rush in an attempt to commit suicide. On the way, he is stopped by an old, tottering woman in the company of a young pregnant girl who is on the throes of an imminent delivery. He rushes them in his car to a hospital where the girl dies, giving birth to a male child. Earlier, he used to be the man "given to using cheap and obscene
language like a vagabond on the street, whenever abusing his servants" (Cuya Taricagam 117). His wife had walked out ten years earlier, because he was "a dissolute spendthrift" (118). Suddenly, after this new dramatic episode in his life, he slowly begins to understand the meaning of human love: "He took the infant in his hands and stood as if in an attitude of prayer" (127). He wants to live now as he has discovered a meaning in life. And, "the car was moving towards a new life amidst an alien people of a different language and culture" (129).

The rich man who figures in Jayakanthan's novel, Illātavarkal [The Have-nots] is good and kind even to thieves. Tony, in the novel, is a drunkard and a notorious gangster. After stabbing a man in a political riot, under the threat of being arrested, he runs away to a distant place, climbs the wall, enters a room in the first floor of a house and hides himself there. The owner of the house, a fun-loving, rich old man notices this and locks him in from outside. Through the window the old man carries on an interesting conversation with Tony; plays cards with him; promises to help him and offers him coffee and tea. The following morning, after removing the grill work, Tony manages to escape leaving a letter behind with the following words:
Swamiji, I shall never forget your help. I discovered a god where I came to plunder. What a heinous sin I was about to commit when I came to you only to steal! ... I wish to see you again, if fortune favours me, as a totally transformed man. (67)

The narrator observes: "Tony felt a twinge of deep anguish when he dwelt on the treacherous mode of his escape breaking the grill work" (70). Tony calls the old man "a father" (50) and "a god" (66).

The rich, well-to-do characters of Jayakanthan, unlike their counterparts in Greene, try to reform even the worst sinners who come under their influence by providing them a second chance. It is true Jayakanthan does deal with capitalism and materialism and their evils. But, unlike in Greene, his focus is mainly on love and underlying human goodness.

Jayakanthan's Sarankan who figures in Vālkkai Alaikkiratu reminds one of Greene's Pinkie in Brighton Rock and Anthony Farrant in England Made Me. Raja, the protagonist of the novel, stung by the harsh words of his mother for throwing up a job which makes dishonest demands on him, launches himself on a quest of self-discovery. Unwittingly, he stumbles into a brothel where
Sarankan, a rogue finds in Raja some semblance of his dead brother, welcomes him and showers upon him all the love he looks for. He calls him "Brother" (28), offers him food and a job. This is a totally new experience to Raja who has so far met with nothing but unkindness and indifference. "Raja who was yearning for the love and protection from others followed Sarankan to the inn" (29). He frees Thangam from the inn and the clutches of Sarankan, on learning that she has been kept there for extracting money from the affluent Municipal Chairman. Ironically, Sarankan excuses Raja presuming that he is in love with the woman. By now, Sarankan is so totally transformed that he becomes kind to Thangam, to the point of incurring the wrath and displeasure of the Chairman, and ends up even beating the local inspector of police. Raja, who had run away from Sarankan earlier in fear, now returns and Sarankan, in his turn, sends them away together to be married to ward off any possible danger to their lives. At the end, Sarankan is shot down by the inspector and on the verge of death, "his eyes bore the expression of repentance for all the mistakes he had committed in the past" (208).

The central motif in the work may seem farcical and the sentiment facile, because a rogue of the type of
Sarankan may not be naive enough to respond to love, in sheer fondness for a familial likeness in a stranger. However, Jayakanthan succeeds in highlighting the fact that human love and goodness can find a natural existence even in a most hard-hearted villain like Sarankan. The following conversation between Raja and Thangam deserves a mention in this context:

"These people are extremely good, do you know?"

"Are they?"

Yes, Thangam, Sarankan and Rashiya are really good. I don't know whether rogues are good or bad. But there are so many who are good among them" (38).

Jayakanthan makes no pretences. He even goes to the extent of calling Sarankan 'god'. For, when Thangam says: "Only God has sent you here" (38), Raja replies: "If so, Sarankan is really a god" (38). Sarankan is a 'god' to Thangam, for it was he, after all, who was instrumental in ushering Raja into her life, thereby paving the way for her escape from the dragnet of the Municipal Chairman.

Sarankan's sacrificial love has a tremendous impact on the attitude and character of Raja. For, till then,
Raja had a feeling that he was somehow socially superior to Sarankan and Thangam. But now, after seeing the importance of human love in life, having witnessed what Sarankan has done, he comes forward to marry Thangam. "... he has at last understood what life is like" (202).

Again, like Greene, Jayakanthan also finds agape, which Martin Luther King defines as "the love of God operating in the human heart" (84), springing spontaneously even in people who are thoroughly immoral, and sexually permissive.

In Jayakanthan's novelette "Illakkanam Mīriya Kavitai" ["The Poem Sans Poetics"] Krishnaiyar tells Ramanathan:

Your poetry and life may not have any poetics. But those prostitutes go by a rule. ie, cheating you of all your money. Even if god Manmathan [the counterpart of Cupid in the Hindu Pantheon] makes an approach, they would chase him out. (Pirammpatēcam 72-73)

But Sarala, the prostitute whom Ramanathan happens to meet, goes beyond all monetary aims motivated only by human love. When Ramanathan comes to her house without money, she tells him that they are being watched by the
other prostitutes who will laugh at him if he leaves her house so soon. "It will be a shame to you. So please stay with me some more time and then take your leave" (78). She offers him tea and cigarettes and he feels that he is "in the house of an intimate friend or relative" (79). She adds:

God has not written on my head that money-making should be my sole aim ... You don't have what you want and I don't have what I want. Money gets you whatever you want. That alone is its value. (86-87)

Sarala tells him "I have money now and so I spend for you. Is that all right? If you think it is improper, you are free to leave the place" (87). Ramanathan replies: "No Sarala, I respect you ... I respect you as I respect myself." (87). Being overcome by emotion now, he breaks down bitterly. He spends a night with her and she cooks for him. While taking leave of her the following morning, he stands like a shy novice in her presence: "She combed his hair with her fingers ... She was like one who was anxious to cling to the love and affection of a man. She held his face tight with both her hands" (92).
The motif of sexually corrupt people showing abundant human love and goodness can be seen in Jayakanthan's novel Yārukkāka Alutān?, translated into English by A.A. Hakim under the title Joseph Wept. Joseph, the protagonist of the novel is charged with the theft of a purse from a rich Sait, who comes to the lodge where he is employed. Actually, the real culprit is the proprietor of the lodge himself, for whom Joseph is working day in and day out, on a meagre sum. Subsequently, Joseph is let down by everybody and beaten up most mercilessly. "He was on the verandah wiping with his dhoti-end, the blood oozing on his swollen lips" (35). The only person touched by this cruel scene, is a prostitute residing in one of the rooms of the lodge:

The sight of his swollen lips and bruised nose brought tears in her eyes. 'Come here', she called him. When he entered her room, she bolted the door and wiped his face with a wet towel. The flow of her copious tears did not stop". (35)

Later, the prostitute even dares to enter into an altercation with a gambler who "mercilessly beat" (37) Joseph. "The woman's voice was heard from the Verandah.
'You heartless creatures! Are you human? ... without finding out who the thief is, why do you beat up an innocent chap?'" (37). Later, when the gambler mockingly calls her "the goddess of chastity" (38), she retorts: "Did I tell you that I was a goddess of chastity? I am of course a fallen woman but I am at least honest" (38). She is even prepared to go to the police to rescue Joseph. When, at last, the frightened proprietor of the lodge deposits the purse back in the room of the Sait, without being seen by anybody and when everybody feels happy, she exclaims: "A poor man does not covet another's money" (43). The readers find in her an extremely winsome character indeed.

In his short story "Antakōlaikal" ["Those Cowards"] Jayakanthan throws his lot once again with the morally depraved, who have an underlying warmth and goodness, which elevate them to the stature of 'gods'. He does this without any ambivalence as in the case of Greene. In the preface to the collection Cuya Taricanam [The vision of Oneself] in which one finds the above story, Jayakanthan observes: "It is not so great creating characters, as much as cherishing them to the point of getting persecuted" (6). Emphasising the essential human need for a higher code of morality to be applied to the sexually and morally depraved he asks:
Did the messenger of God advocate the cause of immorality when he said 'whosoever has never committed any sin, may cast the first stone on her' pointing to the prostitute who, was about to be stoned to death by a village mob? (8)

The protagonist of the story is Raghavan, a thirty-year old bachelor doctor. His friends call him "a pervert" (Cuya Taricanam 46) as he always talks about sex. Two years earlier, he had aborted Radha, a young girl, out of sheer pity. Having become a prostitute now, owing to poverty, Radha comes to Raghavan again for another abortion, She asks him:

Is only aborting this child a crime? Legally speaking, the very process of bringing it to life itself has been a crime .. Yet speaking from a moral point of view, is it a sacred act to give birth to someone who is going to get persecuted lifelong, as a bastard with a nameless father? (59)

Moved by her words, and taking pity on her, Raghavan tells her: "Isn't it what you need now is a father for your child? Tell it then, that he is, Dr. Raghavan" (60).
Falling at his feet headlong on hearing his words, she says: "You are my god" (61). Jayakanthan observes rightly in this context that only a love of this kind can be called great as it is being shown to "a woman who in no way deserves it" (61). It is only Raghavan's basic humanism - and not his "impotency" (14) as Ponnarasu thinks - that makes him accept Radha as his wife.

The motif of finding the image of god in people capable of love is common to Greene and Jayakanthan. In his short story "Orupakal Nērap Pāssenger Vandiyil", Jayakanthan points out that human love should transcend caste, colour and creed. The dying Brahmin woman in the story tells the low caste Ammasi: "Sir, whoever you are, it is God who has sent you here. You are the sole support, relative and brother at this moment for me" (Putiya 134). And, while handing over her child to him, she holds his hands tightly and whispers in a gentle voice: "Whoever you may be, to me, you are like a god" (139).

The jail superintendent Raghava Iyer in Jayakanthan's novel Kai Viḷaṅku [The Handcuff] is a personification of human love and an image of god. To him and his wife, the prisoners are children entrusted to their care. As he is childless, whenever he comes
across a young prisoner, he addresses him as "my son" (53). His heart melts in pity when he learns that a prisoner's poor, old mother is very sick and about to die. As he loves him as his own son, after consulting his subordinates, he sends the prisoner home for a night, taking a personal risk, against all rules in force, as he has so much faith in the boy.

But Manickam, the prisoner, fails to return to the jail on time, as he is involved in a love affair. Later, the superintendent readily forgives him, when he is brought back to the jail along with the girl by the police.

The narrator concludes the story thus: "Manickam, contemplating with folded hands, on the sacred image of love who used to say often 'I trust for ever, do not worry'" (116). He asks:

What does it matter, if one finds himself in handcuffs? Can't he worship in mind his favourite god, the giver of his life, the moulder of his character and one who could bestow nothing but kindness both on men and god? (116)

To Manickam, the jailor is one such 'god'.
The need for one's devotion to one's duty, and the ideal of selfless service towards humanity, assume highly significant religious overtones in Christianity and Hinduism. For instance, a rich young man asks Jesus in the Gospel: "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (St. Mark 10:17). The earnest enquirer is subsequently driven to despondency hearing the reply of Jesus:

Jesus, looking upon him loved him, and said unto him. One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. (St. Mark 10:21-22)

The theological challenge posed before the rich young man in the Gospel of St. Mark and Arjuna in The Bhagavad Gita can be almost stated in the following terms: "What is the sure step towards God-realization?". In the battle of Kureshestra, when Arjuna is asked to kill his own kith and kin "he lost his nerve, his mind simply whirled, and he was overcome by sorrow and distress" (Bhavyananda 106). It is now
that Lord Krishna takes upon himself the task of
restoring sanity and clarity in the baffled mind of
Arjuna by stressing on the vital need of the discipline
of **Karma-Yoga** ("God-realization through disinterested
action").

**The Gita** teaches that man should eliminate his
desire for the fruit of his action, but not his desire
to carry out the action: "The right is to work only; but
never to the fruits thereof; Be thou not the producer of
the fruits of thy actions; neither let thy attachment be
towards inaction" (*The Bhagavad Gita* 2:47).

This teaching of **The Gita** on what is popularly
known as **Nishkama-Karma** is definitely "activistic and not
ascetic" (David 67). It is man's logical desire for the
fruits of his action that he is precisely required to
give up. Viewed in human terms, this is impossible and
Arjuna is too quick to point this out, feeling despondent
over ever attaining the required equanimity of mid.

Thus the way of the "Cross" and the way of the
**Nishkama-karma** underline the need for the evenness of
mind and dispossession, both of which are possible only
through self-denial. Both indicate that one must work,
serve and suffer without passion, and through a negation
of materialism in order to find one's salvation. To quote Jesus again,

... whoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. (St. Mark 10:44-45)

Swami Vivekananda too employs a nearly identical exhortation, stressing the need of service to humanity at large:

May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls, - and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship. (Swahananda 95)

It is interesting to note that some of the characters of Greene and Jayakanthan are duty-conscious in the extreme and they selflessly serve and suffer for the sake of others. They rise far above their ego-status and attachments, realize an exalted feeling of goodness and attain a remarkable widening of
consciousness through suffering. Though, some of them are sinners in every, worldly, sense of the term, by asserting their own essential humanity, they become 'gods' among men, in a profoundly spiritual sense.

Greene is highly critical of those self-centred people who refuse to recognize the ideal of service to humanity and are mere mechanical slaves to systems. For instance, the highly qualified doctor, Herr Professor, in Greene's short story "Dream of a Strange Land", refuses to attend on a leper on grounds of legality. Ignoring the wishes of the leper, he insists on sending him to a hospital as "contagious cases must always go to the hospital" (A sense of Reality 81), failing to realise that "leprosy is a word - it's not a disease" (82). He also fails to understand the psychological wounds he himself is causing in the leper. He feels "far from home as though he were living in a strange country" (88). And the patient feels his home too, is "too far away" (91), and, in desperation, shoots himself. Greene deplores such impersonal and mechanical behaviour on the part of intellectuals in the modern bureaucratized society.

Padre Jose who figures in Greene's The Power and the Glory becomes a slave of the anti-Catholic system of
government in Mexico, and, in fear of law and police, gives up his chosen vocation. He is "A fat, aging, cowardly ex-priest" (Hoskins 121), currently a henpecked husband and an object of insufferable mockery. The children who have "little, shameless voices" (The Power 30) mock at him: Jose come to bed Jose" (30). "... there was no respect anywhere left for him in his home, in the town, in the whole-abandoned star" (30). He has "... nothing to do at all but to sit and eat - eat far too much. She [His wife] fed him and fattened him and preserved him like a prize boar" (30).

The primary narrative of The Power and the Glory is the story of the hunted priest, namely the Whisky Priest, who attains martyrdom through his selfless love, sense of duty and spirit of service in a godless universe. In the first section of the novel, one finds him trying to escape from the country where he finds himself to be the last representative of the Church. All the other law-abiding priests have either fled or settled in married life, in the face of persecution by the State. In the second section, he returns to his native place, where he has a wife and a daughter and narrowly escapes arrest. It is when he comes to the town for buying wine for conducting the mass, that he is
arrested. In the third section, having been set free, he is about to escape, but when summoned back to minister a dying yankee, he knowingly walks into the trap. He is tried and sentenced to death, only to be replaced by another priest to carry on his selfless mission.

Of the Whisky Priest's essential spirit of service, Morton Dauwen Zabel makes a pertinent reference:

... the hunted, shameless renegade priest ... trailing his desecrated sanctity through the hovels and jungles of the Mexican State yet persisting in his office of grace, and, so embracing the doom that pursues him. (281-82)

R.W.B. Lewis calls him "The chaste and fiercely dedicated priest of the godless society" (252). What is most lasting and impressive about him is his "undying power and glory" (Collins 255), "however flawed by weakness" (255). When an old man asks him whether he could bring women for confession, he says: "'Oh, let them come, - Let them all come', the Priest cried angrily. 'I am your servant'. He put his hand over his eyes and began to weep" (The Power 45).

The Priest is utterly dispossessed of all he has. As Neil McEwan observes:
Like a hero in a tragedy, the priest is gradually stripped of the costume and all the insignia of his rank. He has lost his altar stone ... He abandons his last priestly possession, an old scrap of paper with notes for an address to his parishioners, when he is about to be arrested for brandy. His thoughts strip him of pride, and of ignorance, of the appalling nature of the world .... (63)

The Priest in his 'nudity', reminds one of the typical Hindu Sanyasin, pictured by Abhishiktananda in the following words: "Space is garment, the palm of his hand his begging-bowl, the earth his couch" (23).

The Priest, thus, reaches, a supreme state of God-realization through his self-denial, selflessness, dispossession and service. Significantly, Greene seems to stress secular values are more valid than the cliched religious ones.

The Assistant Commissioner in Greene's It's A Battle-Field is a character fully committed to his job, who "did not care for politics" (7) and "justice was not his business" (7). His "job is simply to get the right man" (7). He is a true Karma-Yogin.
The Assistant Commissioner did not listen; he had learnt to husband his hearing; he cast his mind back over the work of the afternoon. The morning work had already been docketed in his mind while he ate his lunch .... (10)

He has been trained in the East where "his duty had been plain ..." (169). But amidst the London flux, he feels lonely among his subordinates. The only thing which delights him is his work. He is appalled by the filth and failure, betrayal and emptiness that surround him and deter him from doing his work. Having no faith in God, or in "a great directing purpose" (191), he is still devoted to his duty. He clings to it as a child would cling to its mother, against so much of the chaos and confusion around him. The only "higher motive" (81) he has, is "doing his job" (81). The thought of his retirement chills his heart because it would mean the loss of the only value he knows in life.

During an agitation in the Sunday Press over the brothels in London, the Assistant Commissioner thinks: "... Morality no more his business than politics" (8). He is capable of loving his enemies who are "the brutal and the depraved" (165) whom he "pitied" (165) and "wanted to help" (165). He is totally selfless and
impersonal in his attitude to work: "God help the one responsible for the way that life is organised; I am only a paid servant, doing what I am told" (166).

Selfless service and duty-consciousness are again at the centre of Greene's novel A Burnt-Out Case in which Dr. Colin, the Priests and the Superior are totally dedicated to the service of the lepers in a colony.

Dr. Colin has no God. To the superior he says: "Your God must feel a bit disappointed... when he looks at this world of his" (199). He works "below a make-shift" (18) in a "continent of misery and heat" (20) with very meagre facilities. More than his medicines, his fingers "gave the patients comfort" (18). To him, the lepers "were not untouchables" (18), and leprosy was to him, merely "a psychological problem" (18). With no money available "even to provide decent mattresses in the hospital" (17), for fifteen years, he has been serving the lepers with utmost dedication. His only wish is "Christianity could reduce the price of cortisone..." (81), so that he can serve his patients better, at a lesser cost.

The Priests in the novel too are against wasting money on a Church, when people still live in mud huts.
"They are more interested in electricity and building than in questions of faith" (39). The Superior tells Mrs. Rycker "Doctor Colin would never forgive me for wasting money on a Church" (71). Querry talks about a Priest whom one can meet "at any international conference on leprosy carrying his skull [the skull of a dead leper] with him ..." (121). To Querry, Dr. Colin says that "the fathers believe they have the Christian truth behind them and it helps them in a place like this" (123). When he adds: "You and I have no such truth" (122-23), he actually means "you and I have no God".

With regard to their service to the lepers, the Priests are totally dispassionate. "The fathers were unconcerned with private lives" (120). For instance, they were not concerned with their morality. "The fathers were too busy to bother themselves with what the Church considered sin (moral theology was the subject they were least concerned with)" (120). Their goal in life is to eliminate leprosy from the leper settlement. Irrespective of their belief or non-belief, what unites them is their total devotion to the cause of the lepers.

Greene considers that only through selfless service to the most miserable lot in society, one can recover
one's 'self' and identity. This, in fact, is the central thematic motif in his 'religious' novels. Strangely enough, it is Dr. Colin in *A Burnt-Out Case*, a novel, which is not classified as 'religious', who highlights the value of suffering in the cause of service:

Sometimes I think that the search for suffering and the remembrance of suffering are the only means we have to put ourselves in touch with the whole human condition. With suffering we become part of the Christian myth. (122)

Like Greene, Jayakanthan also castigates those who are callous, indifferent and inhuman by being the abject slaves of mere systems. The inspector of police in his novel *Oru Manitanum Cila Erumai Matukalum* [One Man and a Few Buffaloes] may be cited as an instance. He is "a drunkard" (12) and "a womanizer" (14), yet he does not have any compassion for those who have the same physical weaknesses. When he is not in his uniform, he freely enters an arrack-shop or a brothel. Sabapathy, whom the officer has shot down, rightly observes: "Sir, once we both have shared the same cup of liquor ... Has the law changed so soon? Go to, Go to, you and your whimsical laws" (12).
As a passive slave of the system, the police officer feels suspicious about everyone he encounters. He is disappointed when Leela, the ex-prostitute tells him that "hereafter she will be only one man's woman" (97). He cannot believe that a bootlegger like Sabapathy can ever give up his profession and turn over a new leaf in his life (104). He utters a lie to Leela that personally, he has no grudge against Sabapathy (105). In fact, he is angry with both, because the former prostitute and the bootlegger have become lovers now. And when he gets an opportunity, he shoots down Sabapathy in the most brutal manner. Leela calls him a "swine" (119) and "an animal" (119). Though he asks Leela forgiveness for what he has done, one has to take his words only with a pinch of salt. Quite ironically, with a view to stressing deliberately his inhumanity, Jayakanthan pictures him through suggestive phrases like "a black shadow" (9) and "a lean and black man" (118). In fact, in this novel, Jayakanthan castigates the entire police system which imposes rules and disciplines on people, through his highlighting of the evil prevalent among such corrupt and unscrupulous officers.

Jayakanthan is a "socio-spiritualist" (Cutantira 159) and, as such, his characters who serve humanity are
endowed with a high degree of social consciousness. His objective is mainly to reform the erring individuals through idealistic role models. In this respect, they are to be compared with Greene's religious characters who are interested more in the welfare of humanity than in building churches and in the preaching of the Gospel.

One early instance in this regard is the social worker Thuraikannu in Jayakanthan's Unnaippūl Oruvan. A Christian by religion, Thuraikannu finds in Gandhiji a visible God comparable to Christ and gladly joins the freedom struggle and courts arrest. "He finds that it is more difficult for the rich man to enter heaven than the camel to enter through the eye of a needle" (52). Like the priests in Greene, Thuraikannu leads a life of self-denial and dispossession. "His wants are very few and simple" (57). His companions are "the poor and the socially oppressed" (52). He understands that "the liberation of the oppressed is not antithetical to spiritual salvation" (52).

What characterizes Thuraikannu most is his inordinate love for his mother who dies when he is in jail. His love for her becomes such an obsession with him, that he refuses to marry. To him and to those who come under his influence, she becomes a source of
spiritual guidance and everlasting source of inspiration.

Thuraikannu takes upon himself the task of moulding the character of the slum boys now. He runs a night school for them, and gives them employment in his small ice-factory. His conviction is that if delinquents are properly educated and employed, they will look after their mothers, families and later develop into useful citizens. When he finds little Chiti picking up cigarette butts "there emerged a metaphorical image in his mind that the entire Indian posterity was busily engaged in picking up spittle-stained cigarette butts." (58).

Out of a sense of priority to be given to the work culture, Thuraikannu exhorts Chiti: "Find the means first and then smoke ... Don't pick up the refuse butts for smoking. Do you understand?" (66). Because of this timely advice, Chiti's love for his immoral mother is revived and he accepts the responsibility of bringing up her bastard child. It is implicit in the novel that Chiti will ultimately succeed through his example in creating a better society in the slum.

Like Greene, Jayakanthan also accords divinity to those who serve society selflessly. Thuraikannu himself
relates social redemption with spiritual service (52). He observes at one point: "Chiti felt that the social worker Thuraikannu is neither an ascetic nor a god but a man" (70). He implies that man can also rise to the stature of God through his utter commitment and selfless spirit of service to humanity.

Greene's Whisky Priest in his The Power and the Glory and the Priests in his A Burnt-out Case have their prototypes in Jayakanthan's Joseph in Yārukkanāka Aṉutān?. Through Joseph, Jayakanthan presents a true picture of a Karma-yogin. He is totally detached, having no wife, no children and no relatives. But he simply "revelled" (17) in the work assigned to him:

Joseph alone had the right to carry out work of all kinds. It was a right he had assumed on his own. The others had working hours and holidays. To Joseph, all time was working time and all days were working days. As for wages, he would accept whatever was given. (5)

Joseph has completely dispossessed himself. His belongings are very few - one dhoti, a Bible and a picture of St. Ramalinga. He is a Christian convert, but he worships all 'gods'. He worships even men, both good and bad. He is paid a meagre monthly salary of rupees ten. He keeps all his savings in a tin-box.
In life, Joseph has one big responsibility which he calls his "duty" (17) and that is, by all means, he should send money regularly to Parvathy, his ex-wife, who developed an affair with Marimuthu, a friend, who converted him to Christianity. He has pardoned both of them. His mother has told him that it is his duty to protect Parvathy though she is no longer his wife.

Joseph does not know what is evil. He always keeps with him a toy whose image Mahatma Gandhi himself liked very much - the toy which held three monkeys together with each monkey closing his eyes, ears or mouth with both his hands. "Don't see evil; don't talk evil and don't hear evil" (18), is the basic moral conveyed by the toy.

Impressed by his character, humanity and duty-consciousness and moved by his suffering, Naidu, a senior worker in the lodge, compares him with Christ: "Joseph, you are not a human being - You are a god ... you are not a Christian, you are like Christ Himself" (17).

At the end of the novel, "Joseph [who] would never weep but only feel sorry" (13) is found weeping.
"Suddenly he turned his face to the wall and began to cry as if his heart would break" (44). "For what did he weep so soulfully?" (44), the novel ends with this ambiguous question. One may say that Joseph is weeping for the world which is steeped in misery, pain and evil. Joseph emerges as a true karma-yogin who attains "freedom from the bondage of good as well as from the bondage of evil" (Swami Vivekananda 200), through his non-attachment, self-denial, and incessant, selfless service.

Pūntottattu Śāmiyār [the Priest of the flower garden], the protagonist of Jayakanthan's short story "Chattai" ["Shirt"], found in the collection Cuya Taricam is also fully devoted to his work. He too presents some of the characteristic traits of Greene's Whisky Priest in his The Power and the Glory and the Priests, Dr. Colin and the Superior in his A Burnt-Out Case. "Throughout the day he is doing some work or other for someone" (64). Jayakanthan's portrayal of this character reveals the influence of Poet Bharathy, who visualized the god Kannan as a duty-conscious domestic servant:

He will water the plants; split wood for the temple choultry; sweep the temple precincts; pluck coconuts for the priest; carry gingely
seeds to the merchant; and bring the milled rice home in cart for the military man. In short, he is a servant to all. Does the sole purpose of life consist in such a service utterly unrelated to returns?, one wonders. (65)

In truth, he is not a Swāmiji ("a Priest"), but one who has only the appearance of a Swāmiji: "A loin-cloth round his waist, a dense beard reaching down his chest, eyes ever set on a steady quest for truth mark him out" (76). It is interesting to note that even the stylistic construction of the words here describing his looks, reminds the Tamil readers of Bharathy's demeanour. Incidentally, it must be recalled here, that in the novelette Kaiyil Oru Vilakku [A Lamp in Hand] found in the volume entitled Innum Oru Pennin Katai [The Story of Yet Another Woman], Jayakanthan relates Mani, the selfless servant boy, to God Kannan in very clear terms and quotes profusely from the poems of Bharathy to drive home the point that those who are duty-conscious bear the unmistakable stamp of religious identity.

The Sāmiyar has no particular 'god' to worship. "He is someone who shuns the worship of just any god" (73) and he is "a non-worshipping savant of the temple
garden" (73), who considers only work or service as god. Once a visiting Pundit to the temple, remarks in the manner of Lord Krishna in The Gita:

None can exist without doing any work. All lives, willy-nilly, are in nature linked with some work. Arjuna! you are empowered to do only your work; not to anticipate any reward at any time. A true yogi or sanyasi is one who executes his work utterly indifferent to returns. (74)

The Sāmiyār is profoundly moved by the Sermon. For a few days, he is not at all to be seen in the village and, at first, people think that he has simply gone away. But one day, he jumps down from a military vehicle in a military outfit. He has come to bid farewell to his former friends. To the queries of the people he says: "After all, isn't this body a garment for the soul? The old shirt does not agree with my soul. What does it matter which kind of wear I put on?" (77).

The Sāmiyār has changed his old shirt in preference to a new shirt, symbolic of his dedication to the cause of the nation. Through the character of the Sāmiyār, Jayakanthan says: "Asceticism does not consist in an outright rejection of life, but having understood it in
a profound sense, striving for a life surmounting the facades in life and its illusions" (Mohan, Jayakanthānin Cintanaikal 28).

Muthu, the inspector of police in Jayakanthan's novel Jaya Jaya Saṅkarā is an admirable character as Greene's Assistant Commissioner in It's A Battle-Field. He is also known for his duty-consciousness and selfless service. He is working as a jail warden. Satyamurthy, an extremist, currently in jail, is his one-time college friend. "He is arrogant because he is conscious of the fact that he can handle any prisoner in the jail, in whatever way he wants" (Part 3, 56-57). Muthu is so strict in his administration of the jail, that no prisoner can exchange words with him. If anybody dares to do so, he will simply "slap on the face" (59). For the benefit of the prisoners, he maintains a library and a park. Soon, at the advice of Satyamurthy, he brings about a number of reforms in the jail. The prisoners come to the library and learn to read and write. Though his house is close to the jail, he is found mostly in the company of the prisoners.

Slowly a great change comes upon his attitude towards the prisoners, when Satyamurthy comes to the jail. He learns that it is his duty to love the
prisoners and make them "good men and great citizens" (59). Satyamurthy and he become good friends once again; play chess and often have their tea together.

The police officer feels sorry that he has become a mere slave of a government machinery which compels him to ill-treat the political prisoners "using intimidations and threats" (Part 4, 11). "In fact, this has caused him an intense mental agony for a few days" (11). He confesses to Satyamurthy that really "he is very much upset" (12) about the present turn of events:

The officer undergoes a terrible conflict within himself for several days, unable even to eat properly, feeling that he has to act in a ruthless manner in obedience to a satanic crowd dictating from a distance, shelving aside, the inmost dictates of his heart. (13-14)

However, what is most admirable in him is his duty-consciousness. He does what he is asked to do by a system which has appointed him: "He cannot bother about the question of justice or injustice; he has to simply carry out the orders sent" (15).

Later, the police officer meets Sinkarayyar, the father of Satyamurthy and makes a solemn promise that,
"he will be compassionate and kind to the prisoners, though continuing in his profession of the official hangman" (29).

He will neither resign his job nor question "the system of which he and his subordinates are parts" (15), but he will continue to serve, with this newly acquired humanist vision.

The features that are common to Greene and Jayakanthan with regard to the exercise of human love can be seen in instances such as the following:

Greene's Mr. Surrogate in It's A Battle-Field and Jayakanthan's Vedhasalem Pillai in Vāikkai Alaikkiratu are fakes, impostors and pretenders, interested chiefly in their own "abstractions" than in the people living around. The characters in It's a Battle-Field and Jayakanthan's Ō Amerika are selfish and lonely, craving mainly for sexual gratification. Dr. Fischer in Greene's Doctor Fischer and Jayakanthan's Jessiah in Pārisukku Pō are given to obsessional hate, caused by an external hurt. The former strikes back at others by spending money on them in order to draw out their greed and the latter by being stubborn and stingy, even to the point of earning the ill-will of his children. Whereas
Dr. Fischer dies of too much hate, Jessiah just manages to escape through redemptive love at the most critical moment of his life.

Greene's Pinkie in his *Brighton Rock* and Jayakanthan's Sarankan in his *Vālkkai AlaiKKiratu* are the products of an unhappy childhood and a seedy environment. Pinkie dies at the wake of a terrible existential awakening while Sarankan rises above the forces binding him both within and without, and reveals his innate, irrepressible human goodness through his sacrificial death. Anthony Farrant in *England Made Me* and Jayakanthan's Sarankan in *Vālkkai AlaiKKiratu* are predominantly evil characters. But their basic goodness enables them to find a benevolent identity within themselves and establish a sense of brotherhood with others.

Jayakanthan's capitalists, unlike their Western counterparts, easily manage to come out of their private worlds of selfish motives, and turn altruistic overnight, exercising human love, attaining thereby a god-like stature. The Whisky Priest in *The Power and the Glory*, Charley Fortnum, Leon Rivas and Dr. Plarr in *The Honorary Consul*, Sarah Miles in *The End of the Affair* and Sarala, the prostitute in Jayakanthan's
"Illakkanam Mīriya Kavitai", the prostitute in his Yārulkāka A1ūtān? and the sexually perverted Raghavan in his "Anta Kōlaikal", are strikingly evil or immoral. But beyond doubt, they all do have their saving graces. They end up demonstrating their love and respect for others. Ultimately, they find either the image of 'god' in others, or transform themselves into god-like figures through their supreme acts of sacrificial benevolence. Dr. Colin, the Priests and the Superior in Greene's A Burnt-Out Case and Jayakanthan's jail superintendent in Kai Vilaiṅku are essentially moved by human love to the extent of risking their own lives for the sake of others.

From the above study, it becomes obvious that some characters in the fiction of the writers under discussion show a pronounced streak of dishonesty and ultimately succumb themselves to an inviolable existential mode. Greene's Mr. Surrogate and Jayakanthan's Vedhasalem Pillai are clear illustrations for this. Both the writers concede that human love is not always possible in the case of those who are intensely selfish and excessively desirous of sexual gratification. The seedy characters in Greene's It's A Battle-Field and Jayakanthan's Ō Amērikā exhibit such a weakness.
The novelists in question also present certain psychological complexes as Greene in his Pinkie and Dr. Fischer and Jayakanthan in his Jessiah, which prevent them from establishing healthy contacts through human love. Both the writers strive to show that a streak of goodness is present even in the most evil individuals as in the case of Anthony Farrant, Raghavan and Sarankan. And lastly, both highlight the fact that those who show the capacity for love and being loved, bear the image and the likeness of 'god' as amply illustrated by Greene's Whisky Priest, Charley Fortnum, Leon Rivas, Sarah Miles, the Priests, Dr. Colin, and the Superior, and Jayakanthan's jail superintendent in his Kai Vilańku and the prostitutes in his "Illakkanam Mīriya Kavitai" and Yārukkanā Ahutān?.

With regard to duty-consciousness and selfless service, both Greene and Jayakanthan are intensely critical of those who allow themselves to be victimized by established systems. Greene's doctor in his "A Dream of Strange Land" and Jayakanthan's inspector of police in Oru Manitańum Cila Erumai Mātukalum are imaginative mandarins, bent on serving only institutions and not humanity. Greene's Padre Jose in The Power and the Glory is weak and thoroughly demoralized and gives up
his chosen vocation as a priest in the face of police persecution.

In contrast, Greene's Whisky Priest in The Power and the Glory and Jayakanthan's Thuraikannu in Unnaippōl Oruan and Joseph in Yārūkāka Ałutan are determined in serving the cause of humanity against all odds, and, in the process, get themselves dispossessed of all they have and attain a certain divine stature at the end.

The Assistant Commissioner in Greene's It's A Battle-Field and Jayakanthan's Muthu, the inspector of police, in Jaya Jaya Saṅkarā are true karma-yogins fully committed to the work assigned to them without getting themselves involved in temporal issues like justice and morality. Greene's Priests, Dr. Colin and the Superior in his A Burnt-Out Case are totally involved in their work, utterly unmindful of returns. Though they have their religion to serve, they accord overriding priority only to service to humanity. Whereas Greene's characters follow the example of Christ in their attitude to service, the Sāmiyār models himself after Kannan, the popular Hindu avatar, who dispassionately preaches the doctrine of duty-consciousness in The Gita and is visualized as a servant of humanity by poet Bharathy.
The characters of Greene and Jayakanthan who are duty-conscious and who serve people selflessly are not hampered by their families. Though they are religious, they do not necessarily or consciously put God at the centre of life. They are totally dispossessed and do not have worldly attachments. In their service to humanity, they find either 'god' in others or the others see them attaining the stature of 'gods'.

Thus, to Greene and Jayakanthan, religion does not mean any facile conformity to cliched doctrines or "theological conclusions" (Wilshere 122), but an active participation in the mysterious web of human existence, showing love towards everyone with a desire to ensure the happiness of one and all.