

English (Hons) Part-1; Paper-I; Unit:-1; TOPIC-  
HUMANISM; Lec-seri-39: by-GIANDESH  
KUMAR; ANJ College  
Patory.

## HUMANISM

'Humanism' had its beginning in Italy as early as 14th Century, when its pioneer, Petrarch reached its height throughout Europe. Later it gained momentum when the lost manuscripts were recovered after the fall of Constantinople in 1435. It spread throughout Europe before it reached England in 16th Century and became synonymous with the Renaissance. Long says that, "Humanism applies to the revival of classical literature, and was called by its leaders, following the example of Petrarch, because they held that the study of the classics, 'literae humaniores' - i.e., 'the more human writings', rather than the old theology - was the last means of promoting the largest human interest."

The humanist began by criticizing and evaluating the Latin and Greek authors in the light of what they thought to be the Roman and Greek standards of civilization. The most important European humanist was a Dutchman, Erasmus, and the most prominent and chief exponent of this movement in England was his friend, Sir Thomas More. The important consequences the humanism have were the rediscovery of many ancient Greek and Latin works; the establishment of new standards in Greek, and



Latin scholarship; Latin literature to be indispensable to civilized man; the beginning of scientific thinking; the introduction of middle age for a particular period. (between the fall of Roman Empire of the West (5th Century A.D) and the Renaissance). etc. Initially, the church was not hostile to humanism because the Pope Leo X was himself a humanist. However, when the movement became an increasingly aggressive weapon in the hands of the religious reforms like Renaissance and Reformation, the attitude of the church hardened, and restrictions were imposed on humanist on account of the religious differences between the Catholics and protestants. As a result, humanism hardened in the 17th and 18th centuries. However, the religious reforms such as Renaissance and Reformation made their impact on humanism and the principles of humanism became broadened as the man became the centre of all human activities. God, religion and all spiritual and abstract things started losing their significance. The human dignity got importance with utmost priority. Man has to tap his potentials for increasing his knowledge, explorations, discoveries inventions etc.

Humanism, in this way, has several branches and off-shoots like



like liberal humanism, Christian humanism, scientific humanism, Platonic humanism and economic humanism. The term 'Humanism' is now so broad that it can assume any shape and fit in any context concerning man and his activities in any sphere.

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