



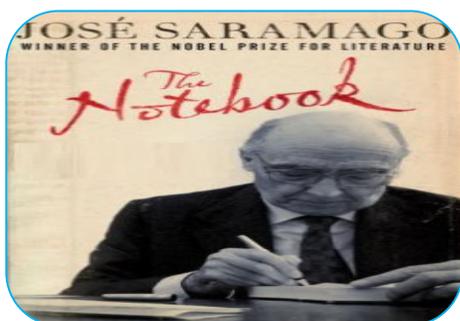
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## HUMANISM IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF JOSE SARAMAGO

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### ABSTRACT:

Jose Saramago, the famous Portuguese Novelist and writer and the Nobel Prize champ of 1998, turned out to be extremely mainstream not long after the production of his novel *Blindness* (1995). He has fused the authentic foundation of his own nation and legends with a surrealistic creative ability of an essayist. He got Nobel Prize for Literature in 1998. It is seen that his books speak to the perspectives about human instinct and they are concerned about every single individual in the general public. Clearly, there is a summing up

of moralism in his compositions and a curious odd inclination and abhorrence or aversion to the hierarchical authorities. He is a self-built individual. In other words, he designed his own way. The novels *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ* (1991), *Blindness* (1995), and *Seeing* (2003) are acclaimed the most prevalent books of Saramago and in some cases, they are translated as controversial or questionable works as well. By and large, they paved way for hot discussions among the reading public and the faithful. The writer addresses the dehumanizing components in religion and society and he feels sorry for the degeneration of culture and progress. He searches for a prospective social set up and an idealistic world where equality and freedom generate and share. This paper intends to focus on the sustained imagination of Jose Saramago with a compassionate heart towards the individuals and his own society. He lights the flame of humanity even amidst dimness in culture, human civilization, moral quality, and politics.

**KEYWORDS:** Ideology, Moralism, Plato, Humanism, Catharsis, Identity.

### INTRODUCTION:

The most conspicuous and featured topic as represented through the books of Jose Saramago titled *Blindness*, *The Double*, *Seeing* and *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ* is humanism and we watch its different imperative parts, such as, humility and humanity, compassion and search for identity. The relevant inquiries

are that in what capacity would that be able to be gathered out of these books? also, how does this idea have an inbuilt effect in connection to these books? These are pertinent questions that can be gleaned out in these novels. Before getting into the process of locating the cherished principles and the esteemed standards of humanism, humility, compassion, and individuals search for belongingness in this world, it is basic to investigate the significance of the hypothesis

humanism and it is imperative to take a deep and profound look at the meaning of the theory humanism. First of all, it is a theory of pragmatic nature having the characteristics of primary belief in science, rationality, and reason, having a doubt regarding the very existence of Gods, Demons and Heaven and Hell. It does not have any interest in the belief of a life after death, promotion of a moralistic life here on this earth, the affirmation of the faith in ethical ways of life and the

absolute freedom of the individuals. This philosophy renders on the desire to make a society of equality, justice and fair-play, the establishment of a secular society where religions do become the private matters of the individuals and the installation of a world of peace, tranquillity, solace, and serenity. Here the first importance is accorded to human beings and the due emphasis is given to the protection of the fellow creatures on this world as well as the construction of an egalitarian, ecologically sensitive, culturally well-versed and morally well-attuned society. The quest for happiness, contentment and complete satisfaction in life, the insertion of naturalism in relation to life, the advancement of human rights, freedom of speech and expression and the basic rights to lead a life of straight-forward nature are the thematic expressions of this theory which are selected to analyze the above mentioned four select novels. The formidable stress bestowed upon human life in general and the cooperative mentality displayed through this theory of benevolent tone and tenor is an outstanding commentary that is revealed during the close reading of these four texts.

### HUMANISM AND SARAMAGO'S THOUGHT PATTERNS

The principle of Humanism does arise above all the barriers, boundaries, and restrictions. That is why it is termed as the most secularized and inclusive ideology existing in today's world regarding the application of humanism. One focal point must be stressed here. i.e. it can be a whole and one at the same time. The Platonic idea of art is a very peculiar one. He made it clear that 'Art is an imitation of imitation and it is thrice removed from reality, and it is a distortion of the truth.' Based on this statement the novels of Jose Saramago put a mirror on the faces to tell that the distorted truths which are present in the world are packaged as mainstream and widely acceptable to a domineering race. The view of Aristotle about art is that although it is an imitation, for that imitation to be redeemed, it should be adduced with imaginative power and creative endeavours. According to him, an artwork does have four aspects ingrained in it all along. They are Mimesis, Catharsis, Hamartia and Spoudaios. Here the principle of Catharsis does have much traction with the novels of Jose Saramago owing to the purgation of feelings, emotions, and sentiments, the readers would feel as a result of the characterisation of different characters in his novels. The characters of his novels prompt the reader to think about a world which is caught up between contending force with no space of escape. Moreover, his characters shed light on how to see the world from a different perspective and angle apart from the binary ways suggested by the occidentals. The evaluation of Jose Saramago's novels reveals the fact that they are the amalgamation of the idea expounded by two well-known critics in the name of Plato and Aristotle. That is why this study is not only an application of certain theories in relation to the works of Jose Saramago; rather it sheds light on the blending of the criticisms of two principal adversaries in the field of literary criticism. The ideas that are drawn out of the novels of Jose Saramago are relevant to all periods because they envisage a society which is forward-looking and deprived of all malicious intentions. In fact, the decorum associated with a literary work is not the focal point; rather it is how the ideas which are expressed bringing about a world of equality, justice, liberty, and fair-play.

If these are the significant features of humanism, then these aspects are amply demonstrated through the four novels of Jose Saramago such as *Blindness*, *The Double*, *Seeing* and *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ*. The additional principles of humility, compassion, and search for identity are so obvious in these novels. In fact, these principles are born out of or extension of the theory of humanism in an enormous and substantial manner. Now, it is the need of the hour to pinpoint the influence of these theoretical constructs in relation to these novels.

### LANGUAGE OF HUMANISM IN SARAMAGO'S WORKS

It is observed that the principle of Humanism is the predominant idea articulated through the novels of Jose Saramago's *Blindness*, *Seeing*, *The Double* and *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ*. Indeed it is a pragmatic ideology which is to be given added importance in a world which always works on set systems and established ways of life and turns it back on ideas which are gravitated towards overall human liberation, social equality, environmental protection, ecological sensitivity, compassionate dealings, and indigenous struggles.

There are altogether more than thirty books under the authorship of Saramago. He was awarded Nobel Prize for Literature in 1998 after the publication of the novel *Blindness*. In his Nobel lecture, he talked about the book. The following lines from the article "How the character became the Teacher and the author his Apprentice"; talk about the book *Blindness*:

Blind. The apprentice thought "we are blind," and he sat down and wrote blindness to remind those who might read it that we pervert reason when we humiliate life, that human dignity is insulted every day by the powerful of our world, that the universal lie has replaced the plural truths, and that man stopped respecting himself when he lost respect for his fellow creatures. (Saramago & Costa 119)

His contentious book titled *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ* was published in 1991, and it was banned entry into the European literary competitions by the government authorities because of its perceived and assumed anti-Christian leanings. It was his most controversial and best-selling book, and he traveled on a quest to find 'What is behind things.' It was the most untouchable of all stories in the western world. As a result, we see the gospel truth is changed into a poetic, provocative, humorous and an iconoclastic presentation and narration of events. The book was not a sourcebook for Orthodox Christians, and the author was portrayed as a self-proclaimed atheist. Moreover, the book brought divisiveness into the Portuguese people rather than ensuring their true integration. The claim was made that the book disturbed the spiritual patrimony of the Portuguese people. Even Vatican came out with the view that Jose Saramago turned out to be an inveterate communist and he also possessed a vision pitted against religions in general.

*The Double* orchestrates a puzzle or a riddle where the game begins with binaries. Here all the powerful and the all the knowing narrator is playing with his self and the reader. It has been analyzed that the novel has a complicated plot. At the same time, we see that the novel dismantles the accepted truths that were prevalent earlier. The main character asks genuine questions in the novel *The Double*. *Seeing* also projects above-mentioned problems and struggles. *Seeing* focuses on the idea that humility and humanity are to be taken care of in a world where struggles and protests against values and human concerns prevail.

In connection with the language of humanism, all other theories are dovetailed to the predominant theory Humanism when it comes to their application in the novels of Jose Saramago because there is a synthesis among other theories under the stewardship of Humanism. This very coming together of all other theories under the umbrella of Humanism is the most significant relevance of the study of Saramago's novels because there is probably no novelist in the world whose novels can contain so many theories within their scope and reach once. The characteristics of the language of Humanism as reflected through the works of Jose Saramago are:

### **1. The Reasoning Tendency**

The characters of Jose Saramago dwell upon reasons to justify the conditions they are placed. They even extricate themselves out of various situations and circumstances by employing new interpretive skill set wherein the normal narrative techniques are given an inflated tone and tenor without them being over dramatized.

### **2. Fair Criticism launched at all Confirmed Structures of the Society.**

A deep analysis his novels sets there as a criticism launched against so many frameworks in the society. These are political, social, religious, moral, ethical, economic, cultural, traditional and commercial frameworks which are inherently exploitative one way or the other. His novels chastise and spew venom upon religious hierarchies which are disconnected from the fundamentals of religions. His language takes the position that religions are deprived of their sum and substance in today's world, and the domineering doctrines associated with religions around the world are to be humanized to a large extent fair and square. His language of humanism takes up a position concerning morality that it should be practiced in letter and spirit without it being philosophized and theologized unnecessarily. In fact, his language gives utmost emphasis to the implementation of an ethical system which is meant to bring people to the path of humility and humanity. It also envisages an economic system which is eclectic and

egalitarian. His novels stress upon the view that cultural practices should not dehumanize humanity in any way.

### 3. The Meaningless Existence and Hyperactivity through Postmodern Ways

Entertainment-oriented existence of human beings is branded as an aspired lifestyle emulated by all. But that is not the end of the story; rather the endgame is all about finding meaning in the inherently meaningless ways of postmodern life. Hence the novels of Jose Saramago try to reconcile with them all by putting up a spirited counter-narrative which is all pervasive and all-inclusive and does touch upon basic human feelings, sentiments, and emotions.

### 4. Emphasis upon the most sensitive of Human Affairs

The novels of Jose Saramago comprehensively concentrate on human feelings from multiple angles or perspectives. Human affairs are centralized and decentralized at the same time. Moreover, the center of the gravity of the novels of Jose Saramago is all about the exploration of human ways and means to pinpoint the cardinal aims and goals governing humanity.

## CONCLUSION

In short, the language of humanism in Saramago's novels reflects ideas such as a world of utter chaos and resetting. It shows the humanity going topsy-turvy and rough and tumble. It sheds light on a world in the grip of hallucinations, human beings placed in the whirlpool of struggles and trials and tribulations experienced by the individuals. So, the above four novels of Jose Saramago are obviously studded with the cherished principles of humanism, humility, compassion and search for identity in more ways than one. These principles make these novels harbingers of change to the society at large. The enlightenment vision of the theory of humanism triumphs through these novels like shining stars of reformation and renaissance. By and large, the absurdity of human life is reasserted through the language of humanism focusing on the four-mentioned novels.

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