PREFACE

John Steinbeck, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature is one of the greatest American authors. Steinbeck began his career as a novelist with his first novel *Cup of Gold*. However it was with his novel *Tortilla Flat* that the novelist first tasted success.

Steinbeck's life experiences inspired his writing and broadened his mind. He incorporated the lifestyles of those around him into his work. He created unique characters, each having certain flaws which gave them inspiration to transcend and break through the barriers of the socio-economic system at the time. His novels are unforgettable and he is still a popular and powerful author in America as well as a worldwide literary figure. To this day, his novels and literary masterpieces hold their prominent position and form an integral and invaluable part of American literature.

Steinbeck's fiction is his mouthpiece for voicing his beliefs, his thoughts and theories. A believer in the unity of all life and nature he expounded the theory of biological view of life as presented in *Sea of Cortez*. Many of his novels represent this very theory in the treatment of his themes and portrayal of characters and situation. One of his most important theories springing from his biological view of life is the group-man theory that fully matured in his strike novel *In Dubious Battle*.

His pragmatic approach to life and religious philosophy are also directly linked to, and influenced by his biological view of life. The resultant broader approach to life and people is envisioned by the author through 'is' thinking that
does not concern itself with the cause of problems but its effects. It takes a practical approach to life instead of delving into philosophical dogmas. The pragmatic approach leads to Steinbeck's unique philosophy of religion that is influenced by his wide reading of religious scriptures from around the world. His religion is inherent in the essential tenet of all religion and that is love and compassion. The novelist's pragmatic approach and religious belief is best portrayed in the character and belief of Doc Burton in In Dubious Battle and Jim Casy in The Grapes of Wrath. The novel East of Eden shows the novelist's growing concern with man's spiritual dilemmas that finds its solution in an exercise of free will by the individual.

John Steinbeck's religion is in fact based in his humanistic philosophy that includes all humanity in its scope. Love and compassion, an easy acceptance of all, is the basis of his humanism that is represented in his celebration of friendship and relationships within the family as well as in the form of community.

Being an ardent humanist Steinbeck was moved to anger by the deplorable conditions in which he found his fellow men living. Socially conscious and aware he registered his protest against exploitation and oppression through all his novels. His novels are not only novels of social protest but also studies of moral and psychological concern.

An excellent word artist, a painter of vivid images and master delineator of characters, Steinbeck remains a strong voice on the American as well as the World literary arena. His characterization, style and technique have given to the
world some of the most impressive characters and stories that have lived on to influence World literature with his deep insight, social and moral concern as well as his humanism and compassion.

A true representative voice of his nation and times, John Steinbeck has poignantly and dexterously represented not only the story of America, the Great Depression and the plight of the migrant workers but has in reality represented the story of the whole human race. He has in his novels envisioned the whole humanity in its struggle against oppression, exploitation and inequality; in its endeavour to transform life into a life of dignity, equality and freedom; in its conflict of good and evil; and lastly in its exercise of free will to overcome all obstacles and survive.

The present study is a modest attempt to understand humanistic philosophy of Steinbeck as revealed in his novels. The study aims to familiarize the readers to the works of Steinbeck whose very backbone is “Humanism”. An attempt has been made to analyze the themes and trace their development with reference to his novels, and present a point of view of the novelist. The method chosen is critical and discursive in terms of perspective of life, as a whole, presented in Steinbeck’s novels. Steinbeck’s novels not only deserve to be studied for a proper evaluation of the literary and artistic merit of his works, but also to recognize his contribution towards enriching the gamut of American literature in specific and the World literature in general.

AJAY KANT SHARMA
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"I have no preconceptions
whatever I see I swallow them immediately
just as it is
I am not cruel, only truthful"

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DATE: AJAY KANT SHARMA
By the early 17th century, sporadic development of colonies acquired a homogenous nature representing 'Unity in diversity', a distinctive trait that has come to mark the American way of life and literature. This coming together of the nation gave birth to the feeling of nationalism and oneness that provided the much needed impetus to the cultural and literary affairs of the nation. And gradually literature which was earlier the handmaid of religion in the colonial period became the handmaid of politics with the advancement of the Century.

There arouse an increasing demand for books and reading materials, thus giving life to an increasing number of newspapers, journals and periodicals. Literary, economical, cultural, religious and political issues were discussed in these journals and newspapers that generated a public awareness among the people related to nationalism and liberty. The country divided by the feelings of loyalty towards the British and the feelings of liberation from the British was given a voice by the various writers and rhetoricians. As a result the American literature flowered into an unprecedented grandeur especially in the genre of prose writings.

A new dawn of national consciousness and freedom emerged during the Revolutionary war or the American War of Independence, 1776-1781. The prose writings of the period further developed and achieved a finnesse, marked by simplicity and clarity of thought and form. Writers like Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson gave voice to the patriotic feelings of the nation and the integrity of the national character.
DEDICATED
TO
MY ELDER BROTHER
DR. VISHNU KANT SHARMA
WHO MADE ME
WHAT I AM TODAY.