CHAPTER IV

HUMANISTIC PHILOSOPHY
Life on earth is compounded of relationships. Nothing remains single or isolated. Inter-personal relations, especially within the family, pave the way for successful social living. Steinbeck was a determined advocate of collectivized living. His early novels expound the group man theory, emphasizing male companionship. From his *The Grapes of Wrath* onwards the family assumes an important place within this larger social family. Steinbeck believed that an individual cannot be a successful individual unless he has been a group man first. Whether the concept deals with group or with the individual family it boils down to the significance of human relationships.

(Sivanandham 173)

Man and relationships, man and society, and man as an individual form the prime concern of humanistic philosophy. Human relationships form the core of Steinbeck's humanistic philosophy. A derivative from the concept of humanism, humanistic philosophy concerns itself with humanity in general and individual in particular. Humanism literally refers to the 'concern for human interests and values'. In fact humanistic philosophy is the love of mankind in all its nobility, dignity and generosity. Emotions form the basis of this philosophy that links man to man and man to society for the individual cannot survive in
isolation; he needs the love, support, friendship and brotherhood of his fellow beings.

Humanistic philosophy or contemporary humanism can be traced back through the Renaissance to its ancient Greek roots. The term *humanism* was coined in 1808, based on the 15th century Italian term *umanista*, meaning 'student of human affairs or human nature' as coined by Ludovico Ariosto. It is a democratic and ethical life stance which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. It stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethic based on human and other natural values in the spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities.

‘New Humanism’ was propagated in the 1920s by classicists Irving Babbit and Paul Elmer More. In 1941 was founded the American Humanist Association and its journal, *The Humanist*, inspired by such philosophers as Roy Wood Sellars, Corliss Lamont and Sidney Hook, and loosely associated with the Ethical Culture Societies. This so-to-speak institutionalized strain of humanism in the United States shows three traits which set it apart from humanism more generally: its moralistic tendency, its suspicion of Christian faith and religion in general, and its fervent, bland, debilitating attachment to principles.

However it is Hegel who can be truly considered as the pioneering protagonist of the humanist lineage. Hegel’s teaching was potent, pregnant with thought. It can be claimed that all humanist sociologists today descend from Hegel despite the variations to their concept of it. The history of the world
according to Hegel's is none other than the progress of the consciousness of Freedom. Hegel's *Philosophy of History* displays all the defining characteristics of the humanist outlook: autonomy, freedom, reason, consciousness, change, perfectibility, the possibility of actualization of inner potential, and all these as attributes of nothing and no one but humanity. Hegel argued in effect that there is nothing in our experience but process, nothing but an intangibility in human intercourse striving to realize itself. It is from Hegel that later doctrines of Humanism arose: the Marxist, the Frankfurt School, sociologists of knowledge and the Pragmatists. All these and more share the awareness that defines our lineage and that is according to a quote from the *Anthropology and Humanism Quarterly*, an awareness of "humanity's habit of continually reshaping its own reality".

In other words humanism is the naturalistic philosophy or way of life centered on human concerns and values that asserts the dignity and worth of humans and their capacity for self-actualization through the use of reason and scientific inquiry. Humanists seek to understand the universe by using science and its methods of critical inquiry—logical reasoning, empirical evidence, and skeptical evaluation of conjectures and conclusions—to obtain reliable knowledge. Humanists affirm that humans have the freedom and obligation to give meaning, value, and purpose to their lives by their own independent thought, free inquiry, and responsible, creative activity. Humanists stand for the building of a more humane, just, compassionate, and democratic society using realistic ethics based on human reason, experience, and reliable knowledge, an
ethics that judges the consequences of human actions by the well-being of all life on Earth.

Humanism is the philosophy of life which enables one to know their proper place in the universe and begin living a life based in reality that is capable of self-realization. Humans are part of the environment; we are dependent on nature; we are not different in kind from animals, only different in degree, because we all share an evolutionary history and none of us possesses a soul.

The theistically-inspired elevation of humans above animals and nature is false and will lead to our destruction unless we stop believing it. Believing that humans have some divine attributes and divine mandates leads many theists to oppose birth control, environmental protection, and the scaling back of non-sustainable exploitation of natural resources. Only humanism offers a realistic and healthy understanding of our true relationship to our ecosystems: we are part of the biosphere, we depend on it for our survival, and we do not have a divine license to destructively exploit it.

Humanism features an optimistic attitude about the capacity of people, but it does not involve believing that human nature is purely good or that all people can live up to the Humanist ideals without help. If anything, there is the recognition that living up to one's potential is hard work and requires the assistance of others. The ultimate goal is human flourishing: making life better for all humans, and as the most conscious species, also promoting concern for the welfare of other sentient beings and the planet as a whole. The focus is on
doing good and living well in the here and now, and leaving the world a better place for those who come after.

In other words humanistic theories attempt to describe the phenomenologically constructed world by exploring the potential of humanity through the nature and experience of values, spirituality, meaning, emotions, transcendence, intentionality, healthy relationships, the self, self-actualization, creativity, mortality, holism, intuition, and responsibility.

We are the masters of our own fate and the captains of our own soul. This is humanism boiled down to its essence. A way of life that teaches us that humankind must focus on what is right and just so as to contribute in the largest way possible to the fullness and freedom of human life.

Contrary to extreme form of individualism that alienates us from our surroundings, humanism re-connects us to our environment and to our selves in the process. Individualism leads to aloofness and indifference. It often makes an individual so insensitive in his relations to others as to develop an illusion of being really able to stand and act alone. We think and act as though we're separate from our surroundings, like sacks of skin or disembodied minds. The most critical question in the twenty-first century is how we can give interdependence a moral meaning? We don't like the fact that we depend on a lot of other people, or that what people do in other parts of the world can have effects on our lives. A complementary moral image can be drawn from the ecological sciences. Ecology (from the Greek oikos, meaning 'household') is the study of our home in the broadest sense. An ecological approach in fact
highlights that we function only as integral parts of a larger natural, cultural, and interpersonal system. Just as gestating organisms must be nourished to survive, a nurturing natural and social environment is required for human well-being. Since a self-aware gestating organism is unified with its environment, it would be incoherent for it to ignore that environment. The organism identifies itself with the welfare of its natural and social environments not because it makes it feel good inside or because a deity wills it but because, lacking this, interactions are harmful.

Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself. Interdependence is integral and primary to the survival of life. How to integrate life situations with moral reasoning and values comes under the purview of humanistic philosophy for humanism in its essence concerns itself primarily with man, life and morality, trying to associate life in the process with a higher philosophy. Humanism believes that the basis of morality lies in the facts and realities of human life.

Humanists believe in naturalistic ethics, that humans are the ultimate source of morals, values, purposes, and meanings. Moral values find their source in human experience; ethics stem from human need and interest; the purpose and meaning of life are what we make it to be. Human ethics and values are an outgrowth of the cooperation necessary for the survival of a social species. Thus, ethics and values can and should be chosen by the application of human reason.

It is here in life that we see the right and wrong, and witness how they work. We experience, and therefore know, love and justice and peace and we
can witness the positive effects they have on life. Although we often fall short, we do see the way in an enlightened manner and we instinctively realize what will make life better.

We have been exposed to the fact of some elemental societies, which have existed quite well having no concept of a supernatural being or of an afterlife. Most of these societies possess loving and caring communities that treat each other with mutual respect out of love and consideration. The Native American cultures of North America serve us well here. It is common for Native Americans to view the creation thusly: God, or the Creator, takes a piece of him or herself and creates the rocks and the rivers and the mountains and the deserts and finally creates humankind. The beauty of this view of creation is that The Creator is a part of everything. The Native American thus experiences everything with a sense of reverence and awe and respect, as something of which they are a part and not something "outside" to which they pay homage.

Humanism celebrates humankind and gives him and her glory. The humanist understands morality to be the ability to choose between right and wrong, as opposed to the more traditional view, which defines and assigns right and wrong to specific acts or actions. When humankind understands the issues involved in human conduct, when it sees that true morality is the way of life and that immorality is the way of death to humans and to their communities; then there is no reason why humankind, conscious of its responsibilities and great opportunities thereby afforded to them, cannot be touched with reverence and awe. This is much like the Native Americans. There is no reason why morality
and social justice should not be the object of the emotions that are such a part of religion. It then follows that morality and social justice become a religion in the fundamental sense of the term.

Stories play a significant part in making us aware of life and its problems, and moral reasoning by showing the struggle of people with moral choices and presents alternative perspectives.

Novels and stories are renderings of life; they can not only keep us company, but admonish us, point us directions, or give us the courage to stay a given course. They can offer us kinsmen, kinswomen, comrades, and advisers—offer us other eyes through which we might see, other ears with which we might make soundings... a moment of recognition, of serious pause, of tough-self scrutiny. (Coles 159-160)

As a novelist, John Steinbeck is concerned with right and wrong choices and the consequences of those choices. He was an ardent humanist, representing fresh and powerful insights into the human experience through his fiction. Through his novels he explored the enduring questions of nature of humanity, of good and evil, and of tragedy and triumph. In the words of Louis Owens Steinbeck’s vision of America was in reality his ideal of commitment to humankind and to the environment; a holistic reverence for life. His concern with morality is visible in all his works.
John Steinbeck was identified by The Humanist magazine in 1951 as an 'ambiguous or equivocal humanist'. But if Steinbeck is ambiguous, then it is in such ambiguity that humanism lies. He had written in The Grapes of Wrath:

The last clear definite function of man—muscles aching to work, minds aching to create the single need—this is man. To build a wall, to build a house, a dam, and in the wall and house and dam to put something of Manself, and to Manself take back something of the wall, the house, the dam: to take hard muscles from the lifting, to take the clear lines and form from conceiving. For man, unlike any other thing organic or inorganic in the universe, grows beyond his work, walks up the stairs of his concepts, emerges ahead of his accomplishments. (GOW 137)

However Steinbeck was not interested in philosophic theory divorced from lived experience. In a reply to Warren Allen Smith's question about his views on humanism, Steinbeck said that he didn't have the slightest idea about what his approach is or even whether he had one. In fact when we turn to life experiences, we discover that moral decision making at its best has little to do with ready-made rules singling out the right thing to do. Principles are helpful summaries of past moral experiments, but letting them dictate behaviour saps our ability to respond intelligently to unique situations that cannot fit predetermined dictums. Steinbeck a believer in "is" thinking reiterated this in his narratives. He was reluctant to explain causes and effects; how existence got to be a certain way and what it is leading to. This approach lent itself to a holistic.
integrated vision of humanity and nature in which all things are literally united. This point of view carries an important implication for morality because it accepts things as they are without assigning blame to individuals or situations.

Steinbeck’s opinions were founded upon what he saw in contemporary America; the moral degeneration and spiritual chaos. He felt strongly that despite the material prosperity, people were morally and spiritually poorer than before because, “we have the things and we have not had time to develop a way of thinking about them.” (Steinbeck America and Americans 174). As a writer Steinbeck believed in honest and true literature that endeavoured to understand human beings and their potentiality; what made them up and what kept them going. A true American writer he believed in the nation’s potential for greatness of spirit and moral leadership to offset greed and power. He expresses his faith in the capacities of men to make life worth living. For him literature was a celebration of the love, courage and compassion of men.

Steinbeck’s humanism is all encompassing, affirming his faith in humanity as a whole. In his narratives Steinbeck seems to be suggesting that while an individual has every right to strike out a path for himself, he should realize his role as a member of a community. He believed, “that man is a double thing – a group animal and at the same time an individual. And it occurs to me that he cannot successfully be the second until he has fulfilled the first.” (Steinbeck “Some Thoughts on Juvenile Delinquency” 22).

In his novels Steinbeck’s compassion and spirit of humanism is evident in the portrayal of themes, characters and situations. He depicts the life of the
common American working class people in their efforts to survive. In his
characterization Steinbeck often displays a strain of sympathy for the portraiture
of workers, and especially characters who can be called half-wits or misfits. In
his depiction of the misfits like the Paisanos or Lennie, he reflects society’s
attitude towards them; their prejudice and injustice. Steinbeck’s criticism of
society and his compassion for these misfits is revealed in his narratives.

Love and compassion can be easily traced in all the works of Steinbeck.
Instant acceptance of any kind of person, sympathy for the under-dog,
understanding of the inarticulate and a love for all the lives—these are the main
features of his fiction. His compassion or sympathy is what Dr. Martin Luther
calls—love. Another Greek word ‘agape’ can be stuck to his writings. It is cited
by Dr. King as an understanding, redeeming goodwill for all men. As a matter of
fact the word ‘agape’ literally means a love feast, a community meal. The pagan
feast was absorbed by Christianity where the community meal stood for
fellowship. And the people who participated in it were believed to be closer to
Christ, who was at the head of the table in an invisible form. Almost in all
religions, the sharing of food and drink is considered to be an expression of love
and brotherhood. In many of Steinbeck’s novels the scenes of communal joy are
enthusiastically described. Again touching scenes of fellowship and goodwill are
common in his works. Further he is concerned not only with man’s struggle for
survival or his biological needs but is also equally concerned with the fall of
man.
His compassion or sympathy is shown in the form of love and understanding. Due to this attachment, he is successful in giving a dispassionate view of the other side that they are also humans like us. He does not condemn even the big owners of *In Dubious Battle* in a straightforward way. In his view the cause of all confrontation, of the dubious battle is a lack of understanding. Human loneliness is yet another subject that troubles Steinbeck. His compassion for the loneliness is as deep and abiding as his sympathy for the homeless and the hungry.

Steinbeck’s love for humanity is reflected right in his boyhood. From his boyhood Steinbeck was aware of the hardships of labour class people. He himself worked with the migrant farmers, sharing their fears and dreams. From then onwards an abiding compassion for them was engendered in him. He shared the sorrows of others and desired to help them feeling their pain as his own.

But at first his compassion was expressed in the form of wrath. He was angry with those who were responsible for the exploitation of the poor workers. He was dissatisfied with those who completely ignored the problem of hunger and unemployment as if these did not exist at all.

While working on a ranch, he discussed socialism with the labourers. He was well acquainted with the fact that socialism would not succeed unless and until narrowness and greed existed. He was equally influenced by Marxism, for it demanded active participation in the communist party. His views did not tally with the party line. It is said that his attitude to communism was like the ancient Greek Citizen’s attitude to politics. His inspiration came from Marxist only in
passing, but in reality it was rooted deep in the philosophy of Emerson and Whitman.

In his works Steinbeck has repeatedly advocated a humanitarian religion based on love and understanding. In his "The Philosophical Joads", Frederic I. Carpenter admirably summarises all that Casy and the Joads think and do, which stands true of all Steinbeck's works:

For the first time in history, The Grapes of Wrath bring together and makes real three great skeins of American thought. It begins with the transcendental oversoul, Emerson's faith in the common man, and his protestant self-reliance. To this it joins Whitman's religion of the love of all men and his mass democracy. And it combines these mystical and poetic ideas with the realistic philosophy of pragmatism and its emphasis on effective action.

From this it develops a new kind of Christianity - not otherworldly and passive, but earthly and active. (Tedlock 249)

He believed that man is capable of great love and only he has the ability to understand and accept his cosmic, universal identity that is to learn that he is an integral part of his whole design of existence. In his Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech Steinbeck says that "a writer who does not believe in the perfectibility of man" (Steinbeck "Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech" 691) cannot assert to be true to his profession as a writer.

Charm, humour, pathos, wit, wisdom and most importantly warm humanity illumine the pages of the novel Tortilla Flat. In the novel Steinbeck
presents the basic tenet of his humanistic philosophy, namely the ‘group’ or the community. The novel depicts the ethnic community of the Paisanos living life at the subsistence level. They are all sons of nature, completely lacking of accepted morality, living life in their childlike acceptance of sunshine and the joys of wine and women.

Danny and his friends represent this essential interworking of life wherein one depends on the other for survival. “... when you speak of Danny’s house you are understood to mean a unit of which the parts are men, from which came sweetness and joy, philanthropy, ...” (TF 373). Life for them is a question for survival, scavenging foods and edibles. Material possessions for them are in fact considered as constraints to freedom. Friendship and companionship is the basic and only basis of their life. Though not devoid of negative qualities they are still simple people uninfluenced by the materialistic economy.

In a later foreword to the novel, Steinbeck assesses the Paisanos as people who merge successfully with their habitat. In men he calls this as philosophy, which according to him is a fine thing. In their celebration of friendship the Paisanos are truly the representation of the novelist’s humanistic philosophy; in fact the closest that he had come to own up in his definition of a philosophy.

The Paisanos are great moralizers: their moralizing mostly consists in finding noble reasons for satisfying desires at a friend’s expense. But even greed cannot fully obliterate their mutual concern in friendship. Pilon steals the trousers of Joe while he is sleeping and exchanges it for a quart of wine.

However, soon enough he is filled with remorse and, “thought sadly of his friend
out there on the beach,” (TF 444). Pilon recovers the trousers back and returns them to Joe.

For the Paisanos personal freedom is the only possession that he really treasures, and is usually destroyed by possessions. Danny’s ownership of the houses is like an obstacle to their community of friends and so is his intimacy with women. When the house that Danny had rented to Pilon burns down and as a result his relationship with Mrs. Morales breaks, there is a return of a happy camaraderie between the friends; a strictly male group of friends. The reduction in the economic status of Danny returns him to essential humanity.

The goodness of these simple people are contrasted to the complicated systems of the American business and Steinbeck depicts them as more healthy and having viable values. In his exploration and celebration of friendship through the Paisanos of Tortilla Flat, Steinbeck represents his faith in humanism inherent in fellow feeling and compassion. When Jesus Maria makes a pledge to Danny, “It shall be our burden and our duty to see that there is always food in the house for Danny.” (TF 415), everyone at once realizes the magnitude of the vow and its eventual consequences. Pilon feels it is worse than paying rent but still they swear by it, everyone fully aware that it won’t be kept as far as the economic aspect of it is concerned but as for the friendship it implies, it will be kept and honoured. There is an identity of understanding between the men, which is the basis of their friendship and the essence of their identity as Paisanos.
In *Dubious Battle* represents comradeship and influence of greed and power on men and relationships. The economy and its tentacles of greed seep into the lives of the striking workers; their usefulness and relationships depend upon their utility to the cause. Everyone is expendable in the fight; either a victim of the owner’s exploitation or a pawn in the cause of the strike. Relationships are based on each person’s usefulness to the struggle. Jim finds a reason to live in the companionship of his co-workers, his comrades. He assures himself that he would gain a lease of life by joining the Party. He has no sympathy with the Party or any man or the group. He therefore represents only self-love. The story presents an exploration of individual morality submerged and lost within a group.

The novel is concentrated superficially on Jim’s initiation into violence and power but lying underneath is Steinbeck’s humanism and his affirmation of the power of the group. The novel deals with the theme of selfless love that embraces all humanity and requires the surrender of individuality. The three principal characters in the novel, Jim, Mac and Doc Burton display the presence of self and selfless love in their characters. Jim and Mac surrender their individualities partly to the Party but Doc Burton annihilates it by a willful effort to assume the role of a completely detached observer. Jim brings himself to a state of total isolation due to his egocentricity cutting himself off from the spring of life: humanity. He does not lose himself in the group but only uses it to gain control and power. Once he gets the power, the Party as well as Mac loses their influence and importance for him. Mac maintains his individuality by using his
personal talents and control over the Party but still he and Doc retain an element of selfless love.

In the novel Steinbeck represents the coming together or the birth of the group-man and its potential for violence. It portrays the continuous conflict between the forces of self-love and selfless love. Selfless love enables men to pool their energies by forming a group whereas self-love and selfishness tends to utilize the already formed group for fulfillment of egoistic desires and dreams resulting in disenchantment and disillusionment.

In fact Steinbeck’s focus on Jim and his responses to violence affects his concern with morals, a study of the good and the evil; an inherent feature of humanistic philosophy. The novelist tries to depict the moral concern innate to the specific conflict that exists between ends and means in the context of the strike.

The novel contrasts Jim’s conviction in violence with the compassion of Doc Burton. A detached observer of life he is fearful of the group-man, which is based upon moral values. His humanitarianism is set in contrast with that of Mac whose love of individuals’ conflicts with his willingness to use them for furthering the cause of the Party and so he says to Jim, “Don’t you go liking people, Jim. We can’t waste time liking people.” (IDB 619). Doc’s benevolence is evident and he is a man loved by all the men he cares for. He is the true embodiment of the novelist’s humanistic concern and beliefs.

In the strike novel, In Dubious Battle the contemporary dream of collective action is present. The main aim is building up of a new social order
through war waged by the migrant workers against the owners of orchards. As the issue is not clear to both the warring parties, it is called 'dubious'. The workers strike against the wage cut, whereas the owners try to break the strike with the help of police and vigilantes. There is no end to this battle like the never ending war between Satan and God. Steinbeck justified the ending of the novel saying, "A story of the life of a man ends with his death, but where can you end a story of man-movement that has no end . . . I have tried to indicate this by stopping on a high point but it is by no means an ending." (Steinbeck A Life in Letters 106)

The migrant workers are not able to materialize their dream due to the weakness of poverty and hunger in themselves. They do not see that small owners are no better than themselves. Because of their weakness, they become easy prey to violence and hatred provoked by Mac and other leaders. They do not realize that they are being used by them as mere puppets in creating troubles rather than solving their genuine and immediate problems. They are used like a football kicked from both sides; owners on the one hand and the scrupulous leaders on the other. Their unhappy state can be compared with that of a helpless powerful animal whose strength is being manipulated by the leaders. Steinbeck's compassion for the strikers is expressed here with reference to their misery. Though he tried to express compassion in a very objective manner, yet he conveys the impression of being a loving and an understanding man. His compassion for the migrant workers and even the radical leaders is revealed through Doc Burton. Burton, who is basically a man of science helps the strikers
with his knowledge but never supports their battle directly. He has sympathy for
their cause but never comes openly to protest against the fact. This paradoxical
figure represents, indeed, the author's own views on non-teleological thinking
and the group-man. When the tension is high in the orchards, he is calm,
speculating its cause and consequence. He disappears from the scene when the
condition becomes violent. His death can be predicted as put by the vigilants.
Though he has been assigned no positive role in the novel, yet he can be
paralleled with the inexorable human suffering and drawing wisdom from every
act. In fact he attempts to understand sympathetically the genuine problems of
the strikers.

However it is the group-man which is the main symbol of the novel and is
a complex entity of good and evil. It is good so far as it empowers the strikers
but evil in its capacity for violence and lack of morals. This complexity in fact is
an assertion of the acceptance of both good and evil in life.

One of Steinbeck's best works, Of Mice and Men, is a tragic story that
demonstrates simple human values. It explores the close bond between Lennie, a
physically strong but mentally impaired farmhand, and his friend and guardian
George.

The narrative in Of Mice and Men centres on ethical dilemmas and social
problems as racism, sexism and social disparity, as also on the significant theme
of friendship. The novel also portrays the moral dimensions in the depiction of
love and friendship and focuses attention on society's obligation to the
unemployed and the marginalized. The novel again represents the presence of
good and evil inherent in life and in people.

The friendship of Lennie and George forms the basis of the narrative of
the novel. They both complement each other in a way that is beneficial for their
survival. George represents humanity and is aware of the innate evil unlike
Lennie who lives life in a childlike innocence.

Moral issues weave their way through the novel. There are moral
dimensions in the depiction of love and friendship between George and Lennie
as well as in the dilemma that George faces at the end of the story.

Delving into his humanistic concern for equality and dignity of every
individual, Steinbeck raises issues of gender discrimination through the character
of Curly’s wife and racism through Crooks, a farmhand who is reduced into
insignificance because of his identity as a Negro. The great dream that George
and Lennie nurture about their own farm reflects the camaraderie and a sense of
community among the farm workers. It represents the essential group and its
desire to escape from the economic imprisonment and dispossession that restricts
their freedom. The good life in the future, “we’re gonna have a little house and a
couple of acres an’ a cow and some pigs.” (OMM 807) is opposed to the harsh
reality of the bunkhouse and the ranch.

Here again the struggle between individual and the group is depicted by
the novelist. Both Lennie and George are unable to lose their individualities and
are destroyed. Their individual wills come in conflict with the social will. In
their dream they are determined to create an illusive Eden outside the social
structure. They feed their individual dream and thereby alienate themselves from society or the group.

Steinbeck portrays an unconventional morality in his acceptance of life’s goodness and also evil. Lennie is a character who is good in his intentions but evil in fact. He is guilty of murdering Curley’s wife which is an accident. The group is good in wanting to punish a murderer but evil in misunderstanding that Lennie is in fact guiltless. Contrasted with both Lennie and the group the characters of George, Candy and Slim are endowed with an understanding but are helpless against the group. In their relationship, George and Lennie, actually represent an idealized variety of group-man. Slim in his insight into their friendship says early in the novel:

“You guys travel around together?” His tone was friendly. It invited confidence without demanding it. “Sure,” said George.

“We kinda look after each other.” He indicated Lennie with his thumb. “He ain’t bright. Hell of a good worker, though. Hell of a nice fella, but he ain’t bright. I’ve knew him for a long time.” Slim looked through George and beyond him. “Ain’t many guys travel around together.” he mused. “I don’t know why. Maybe ever’body in the whole damn world is scared of each other.” “It’s a lot nicer to go around with a guy you know,” said George. (OMM 822)

The world is incapable of celebrating and cherishing this relationship for long. Lennie dies because friendship can go no further and is made a victim of the harsh reality of life succumbing to its evil. Like the dream of an ideal farm
its illusion wavers in the wake of reality. As a responsibility of a perfect friendship George had to shoot Lennie to save him from the violence of the group. The act of George’s killing of Lennie is in fact a killing of his own dream.

A sad contrast between the dream and the disenchantment can be traced in the novel. Here the present want is indicated by dreams while the dreamer becomes an object of compassion, especially when his little joy of dreaming is shattered with the sad reality of facts. However the destruction of dream brings wisdom instead of despair and sadness that is the concern of Steinbeck. The central characters of this novel George and Lennie who are contended in recitation of their dream to posses a home, their own piece of land and a sense of belonging. They move from one ranch to another, working hard to fulfill their dream. The dream appears to be close to realization with the collection of dollars.

Most of the dreams discussed are individual dreams. Sometimes few men team up into couple of friends and share their dreams in common. George and Lennie in Of Mice and Men share such a common dream. They are basically rootless men, belonging to labour class and have the dreams and pleasures of everyone in the world.

In fact it is every man’s dream but to dream of it during Depression period was like asking for the moon. However the dream appears to be close to its realization when they count the collected money. In the mean while there are some other characters who join in the dream of George and Lennie. Perhaps it is the case of natural sympathy for others which raise the dream above private
enterprise and also love for ‘lonely guys’ like themselves. And it is touching for all those who have common sharing of the dreams, when disenchantment comes. Therefore the inevitable tragic end represents Lennie’s insanity, which is symbolic for the inarticulate and powerful yearning of all men. As such when he is killed by George, the dream is given up. George is a man of compassion and he in turn receives compassion. From biological point of view the theme of this novel can be defined appropriately. Animals emphasize the human tragedy.

Right from the beginning to end the device of providing a ritualistic chant of the dream of George and Lennie, increases the tragic intensity. Earlier the title of the novel was Something that Happened, but later it was changed to Of Mice and Men drawn from a poem by Robert Burns. Just as the mouse is not alone in its sorrow; George and Lennie are not the only unhappy migrants whose hopes and aspirations are broken. Lennie’s craziness for the dead mouse links mouse and man. And when he returns the mouse to George, he symbolically replaces himself as substitute for the mouse.

They hope thereafter to live better and invite all those who were lonely as they had been. It is natural to have sympathy for the others having a similar fate and also love for them. But the tragic end is inevitable. It is not because of any error in the efforts of dreamers but the futility of the dream. Compassion for these dreamers is expressed by Steinbeck with understanding and sympathetic.

The novelist by referring to the dream in the social context presents the study of man working his way against the social environment. Humanism thrives
Steinbeck’s most famous novel The Grapes of Wrath is his best representation of humanism inherent in family values, compassion, endurance, optimism and survival. It is an appeal for the creation of a just society and more compassionate economy. Concerned with democracy, Steinbeck looked upon agrarianism as a way of life that would enable man to realize his full potentialities and so portrayed the agrarian community of Oklahoma.

The Grapes of Wrath is a testament of love and sacrifice and not mere wrath or social protest. Steinbeck felt a responsibility to make not only America but also the whole world familiar with their genuine problems of survival and identification. He personally joined a group of migrants and traveled with them. His intention was to make people understand each other. His artistic integrity and his love for the people about whom he was writing never let him be callous. He did not let hatred dominate over his compassion. As such The Grapes of Wrath had depicted understanding, sympathy and love. Especially in the last pages of the novel where Rose of Sharon attempts to save the hungry old man suggests deep compassion.

The novel again presents the novelist’s concern with the conflict between the simple working class people and the aggressive commercialism of the capitalist landowners. The migrant workers are dispossessed from their lands and livelihood. Forced to undertake journey west into California they face a lot of difficulties and ultimately realize the potential of the group. The novel
represents the individual's acceptance of the group through a painful realization of the biological truth that life goes on, though individuals may perish. The voice that dominates throughout in the novel is the voice 'We' instead of 'I'. To grow and expand to universal dimensions the novelist seems to be saying requires the surrender and annihilation of egotistical and self-centred individuality. When the novel opens, all the characters are either rooted in themselves or in the family. They are thus spiritually and morally uprooted and alienated. All sin is born of selfishness and egocentric acts. But by the end of the novel after undergoing a lot of hardships they realize the relevance of love as a faith that is linked with the universal love in the Over-soul, the humanity. Casy preaches this love and is followed by the others like Ma Joad and Tom who realize the importance of being one with the masses.

Three characters drive the action in The Grapes of Wrath. Central to the narrative is the key role of Mother Joad. She is the strength and driving force of the family, intuitive to its every need and nurturing and protecting it from all adversity. In her character Steinbeck depicts the positive aspect of a woman and her significant role as the instrument of a more humane transformation of the social structure. Steinbeck suggests that women are more equipped to lead in times of crisis because they are closer to nature and to the natural rhythms of the earth. When the morale of the family is at its lowest, Ma Joad continues to nurture confidence with her wisdom and strength for her interests are always with those of her family and children. She acts with kindness and generosity and also with great determination and will-power. She fiercely protects her family as
for instance when Granma dies but she keeps the fact from her family till they
safely cross the desert. In her acceptance of Jim Casy into her family despite
Pa’s opposition, Ma Joad also represents her compassion for fellow brethren in
need. Ma Joad recognizes the potential strength of group action and transcends
her primary concern for the family and expresses a concern for all people. “‘Use’
ta be the fambly was fust. It ain’t so now. It’s anybody. Worse off we get, the
more we got to do” (GOW 408). She embraces the love of mankind and is
determined to help people however she can. It is her optimism that the people
will survive. As her family continues to crumble, Ma’s strength, drawn
intuitively from love, continues to grow, making her a physical symbol of the
humanism strand of Steinbeck’s social theory.

Casy is the next character in the novel who truly represents the
humanitarian concern of the novelist. He accompanies the Joads in their journey
to California because he wants to be with people and help them. During the
journey he perceives the potential for social change which exists in mass
migration. “‘They’s gonna come somepin outa all these folks goin’ wes’ – outa
all their farms lef’ lonely. They’s gonna come a thing that’s gonna change the
whole country” (GOW 159).

Further in the story Casy does keep his commitment to help the Joads
when he gives himself up to the Deputies in order to protect Tom from arrest. He
goes to jail and later explains to Tom that men must unite and work together in
order to promote social change. When he is killed by the Deputies, Casy dies
sacrificing his life for others and his last words echo the words of Christ. He is
truly a humanistic character in his love, compassion and sacrifice. He acts with
genuine feeling and humanitarianism, and always maintains his respect for the
migrants.

Tom Joad is the moral conscience of the family. His growth and
development in the novel culminates in his decision to act upon the ideas and
beliefs of Casy. Like Casy he believes ‘Two are better than one’, which
reinforces his belief in the strength which men can achieve through unity. Tom is
the true follower of Casy carrying forward his message of love, compassion and
brotherhood; the basic tenets of humanistic philosophy. Being able to share the
sorrows of others he says to Ma Joad, “Then I’ll be all aroun’ in the dark. I’ll be
ever’ where-wherever you look. Wherever they’s a fight so hungry people can
eat, I’ll be there... An, when our folks eat the stuff they raise an’ live in the
houses they build-why I’ll be there.” (GOW 385).

The novel is optimistic in favour of massive social change. It chronicles
the journey and education of the Joad family but is in fact a representation of the
group from which they have come. In the last scene of the novel when Rose of
Sharon gives birth to a stillborn child and her final act of feeding a starving man
to save his life displays compassion and an endurance to survive. The novel
affirms the novelist’s faith in the human spirit and its potential for goodness and
endurance.

In The Grapes of Wrath, the loneliness of migrants is painful because of
their struggle against rootlessness. They are denied a sense of belonging and are
deprived of their lands. They achieve a sense of belonging within their own
circle of lonely man and women. There is a hope for a better understanding when the emphasis shifts from 'I' to 'we'. Yet as groups of migrant workers they are lonely.

The dream and the battle of the migrants continue in The Grapes of Wrath. However the novel ends with a note of affirmation. The very title of the novel and its content point towards the presence of plenty of wrath, yet it preaches love and sacrifice and rejects violence and hatred. It is a high water mark of Steinbeck's achievement during the thirties. In fact he has poured compassion in abundance in the novel.

The dream here is of a land of milk and honey; and the dreamers are the Joad family who are thrown off from their lands along with thousands of families. They migrate to California in search of employment in the cotton fields and orchards. On their way they meet people returning from California, disappointed and tired. They are told about exploitation there. Yet they continue their journey towards the Promised Land, as they have no choice. The novel does not deal merely with the story of a doomed dream but it also reveals the suffering inflicted on the migrants. And despite all these adverse conditions they adapt themselves to the new atmosphere. The hunger of the Okies is dealt with sympathetically as the unemployment of the migrants in In Dubious Battle. Among the sufferers, there are people like Ma Joad and Tom who are equally considerate for others. Their concern for the "I" is shifted to the "We". Like Doc Burton in In Dubious Battle, Steinbeck here creates the character of Jim Casy who understands human sufferings and is almost created in the image of the
Christ. It is through him that Ma Joad and Tom learns the lesson of universal love and sacrifices which forms the principal message of the novel.

If The Grapes of Wrath celebrated collectivity, East of Eden celebrates the individual. Here the individual is not the ‘I’ we all know of but it stands in relation to all the people and places. More than a concrete and physical embodiment of a man, this ‘I’ is the essence of the vital human element embodied in all men undergoing and registering variations and changes under the impact of its environment as well as the conflicting forces of good and evil. East of Eden is a study of the complex relationship between moral goodness and wealth. It deals with the acceptance of the evil innate to human beings and the potentiality to choose goodness over evil.

Inspired by the biblical story of Cain and Abel, it represent the conflict between good and evil through the sibling rivalry of characters Adam and Charles, Aron and Caleb representing good and evil respectively. Steinbeck alters the biblical story to present the humanitarian notion that good and evil are intermixed in men in order to force individual choice between any specific good or evil.

Dreams of establishing a dynasty recur in East of Eden. Here the dreamer is Adam Trask whose dreams too end in disenchantment. He has the dream of having children and an Eden. But he is never loved by his wife Cathy. She is neither compassionate nor does she care and share his dream. On the contrary she attempts to abort her pregnancy. Contrast between dream and harsh reality is well treated by the novelist in this novel that covers almost three generations.
The very theme of the novel based upon the war between good and evil indicates Steinbeck's compassion for man. Steinbeck conceived the character of Adam as a symbol of all good in man, a symbol of compassion and meekness. In the story he endures a lot of pain and suffering but harbours no trace of hatred or malice. On the contrary he grows more tolerant and kind. Samuel and Lee are the other two characters who represent the goodness and compassion in men. They support and help Adam when he is alone. Adam's friendship with these men and especially Lee represents the essential brotherhood necessary in life for sustenance and survival for it is because of their love that Adam is able to understand and forgive Cathy.

Lee, the Chinese cook and friend of Adam is another compassionate character drawn up by the author. He is resourceful, understanding and wise. Steinbeck has conceived him as a wise and virtuous man, who is above all human frailties. His love for Adam and the twins is deep and genuine. It is because of his sympathy and understanding that Adam is able to overcome the difficulties of his life.

The novel also asserts that love is identical to goodness. This assertion is a theme present throughout the novel. In his portrayal of the Cain-Abel conflict, Steinbeck shows the absence of love and acceptance as the main cause of Cain's crime. The symbol of love, the mother is absent in both the stories of Adam and Charles, and Aron and Caleb. Again it is the rejection of the father that makes Charles brutal to Adam. His feelings of love and hatred are inherited by Caleb who under the neglect of his father turns violent. Caleb's struggle with good and
evil is in fact the struggle of every man. Having the potential for good in him but always drawn to evil, his misery becomes the misery of all. In Adam’s life love is present in the form of two good men, Samuel and Lee who love him with an equal fervour. Their insights are valid as they know that Cathy is evil and help Adam in his loss. It is again love, the ignorance of which makes Cathy purely evil and the presence of which in the form of Adam’s and Abra’s love which eventually saves Caleb. Presence or absence of love strongly influences the choice that a person makes towards good or evil. Adam’s final acceptance and forgiveness of Caleb saves him and presents him with the choice to goodness through his last word, ‘timshell’.

The concept of ‘timshell’ is a major thematic concern throughout the novel. It translates into ‘thou mayest’ and expresses the choice that every man is invested with in his choice of good or evil in life. The concept stipulates that every individual can choose which direction his/her life is to take as reflected in the last scene of the novel when a dying Adam pardons his son Caleb who is afraid of the inheritance of evil from his mother Cathy, and blesses him with the word ‘timshell’, signifying the fact that he can decide his own moral destiny for himself irrespective of his dark family history.

In the novel Steinbeck rises to a much elevated level to become the apostle of freedom that overcomes all the obstacles in its path. The novel is truly an epic of all humanity and not any single individual.

Steinbeck’s characters are the representatives of his humanistic philosophy. George has compassion for other rootless fellows like himself which
he gives up after Lennie's death. Burton is compassionate for the migrants but is not willing to suffer and sacrifice in their protest. But Jim Casy is more compassionate as he has a broad vision and also, he accompanies the Joads and other migrants in their journey and struggle. He even sacrifices his life in the process. His ideal is later carried forward by Ma Joad and Tom who have understood and grasped his gospel of humanitarianism. Now they no longer consider their needs as personal and treat the lot of the migrants as a part of the family.

Steinbeck's compassion for man is also expressed through his yet another concept of group and individual. His novels are based on the understanding of the group. But the novels written after the forties show a shift from the group to the individual. His realization of the unity of all life is same as preached by Jim Casy.

Steinbeck's works have a dominant social attitude intermixed with compassion. However his sympathetic approach is confined to middle class values. Ambition, money, material success, property, all these aspects of bourgeois life perceives short shrift in his novels. On the contrary universal themes like survival instinct, physical and financial security, loneliness, rejection are dealt with in his works. Further he lavishes loving attention on the characters those who rank lowest in the respectable world of commerce and industry as the farm hands, the Paisanos, the migrant labourers, etc. An honest sketch of living men and women along with their eternal reality of psychological, moral and spiritual states reflects understanding, loving and compassionate nature of the
author. Through all these writings over the years if there was one unifying and common factor, it was his compassion for man. Seeds of compassion were sown in his compassionate feelings to his characters and immortalized them.

Steinbeck never asserted his philosophy explicitly and often denied having any philosophy at all. His philosophy is ingrained in his works, and is represented through the characters and situations he depicts in his novels. A true humanitarian, Steinbeck’s humanistic philosophy is primarily concerned with his feeling of compassion for all humanity, his firm belief in love, unity, and the human spirit. According to him there is strength in unified action and essential brotherhood between men. Concerned with moral values, he depicted the eternal struggle of good and evil accepting the fact that both are integral to men and life. It is only through love and acceptance that good can prevail.

In his humanitarian approach Steinbeck felt deeply for the pain and struggle that ordinary working class people had to endure for survival in the wake of rising commercialism and aggressive business systems. It was his believe in humanism that generated anger at the plight of the common people and communities of workers which resulted in the strong presence of the theme of social protest in all his novels. He spoke out vehemently and openly in his narratives against the oppressive powers that manipulated and exploited the people, dispossessing them of their land, livelihood and identity.

In his compassion for people and humanism, John Steinbeck has a close resemblance to writers with a social concern and humanistic philosophy. In his compassionate philosophy encompassing all humanity he carries forward the
legacy of his predecessors like Charles Dickens and finds an echo in the writings of the Indian English novelist, Mulk Raj Anand.

In his assessment of Mulk Raj Anand as a humanist, Mr. S. Lakshman Shastry says:

Dr Mulk Raj Anand is a unique type of optimistic humanist who is capable to move the most pessimistic man to action. He is very sensitive lover of all that is good and lovable on earth. . . . He stands for lasting peace and friendly relations between nations. At the same time he is also ruthless critic of all that is worn-out and decaying- dehumanizing and degrading customs, manners, outdated social and political institutions, reactionary thoughts and ideologies. (Shastry 10)

Anand is a thorough humanist who always emphasized on the dignity of man, irrespective of caste, creed and wealth. In his works he pleaded for compassion to be accorded the principle of all life. In his humanism he championed for the cause of the poor by bringing forth their misery and struggle in his narratives. Like Steinbeck his American counterpart in the realm of fiction, Anand portrayed the life of the simple common man living in the villages and slums of India bearing the burden of poverty and social disparity based not only on economy but also the caste ridden social structure. Similar to the striking apple pickers in In Dubious Battle or the migrant Okie workers in The Grapes of Wrath, Anand's Baka in Untouchable or Munoo in Coolie or Gangu in Two Leaves and a Bud reflect the compassion of the novelist for the
poor, the factory workers, sweepers, and plantation workers. Anand's narratives also expose their exploitation by the mighty and the powerful. The economic situation as portrayed in *The Grapes of Wrath* that impels the Joad family and other peasants to leave finds an echo in the words of Dr. Mahindra, a character in Anand's *The Old Woman and the Cow* (TOWC):

"... we pile up gold upon gold; silver upon silver ... the Sethias, who buy and sell, have brought falsity into the life of the village. In the old days, there was often scarcity. But as no one owned the land, the five elders could give fertile land to whoever complained that his land was fallow ... And there was milk and butter and whey ... Now, every peasant owns his land and can sell it ... And cash has become more valuable than the earth. And thus there is wretchedness everywhere." (TOWC 239-40)

Culture, society and tradition that has inspired and influenced these works of literary art may be different but the compassion and humanism glowing in the hearts of these two great literary geniuses are the same. Both Steinbeck and Anand are humanists to the core and this is abundantly evident from a study of their fiction and the strong tone of social protest present in them. The stories that they weave through their imagination are an authentic reflection of the society they live in and its total apathy towards the marginalized sections. Their narrative art is in fact a medium of their social protest against these existing tendencies and an attempt to harbour a social change by creating awareness.

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