CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The awareness of the everlasting conflict between good and evil has been the concern of writers right from the earliest times. The vast body of literature, from the Hebrew and Homer down to the present moment, is based on the vivid projections of human activities classified into two hemispheres--right and wrong in the universe. Of course, good and evil and their obvious nature has become the part of metaphysical understanding that engages every sentient human being. This is not surprising because, as Berkley tells us, "He who hath not meditated upon God, the human mind and the summum bonum, may make a thriving earthworm but a sorry statesman." Ancient cultures believe the cosmos to be infected with evil, their myths depict the struggle between the gods and their enemies. The ancient myths are also loaded with the conflict between good and evil. For instance, Babylonians observe an annual ritual celebrating the victory of Marduk over the marine monster Tiamat, whose body is dismembered for the creation of cosmos. Hinduism
speaks of the Goddess Kali destroying all evil forces of the world and of the victory of good over evil symbolized by Rama vanquishing Ravana. The Old Testament recalls the ancient legend of Yahweh's victory over the power of chaos. Even the culture of Egypt and the Hittites is the mirror of similar myths. Richard Pendergast says: "These ancient myths are naive expressions of man's implicit awareness of the nature of good and evil which are dynamic powers that struggle for mastery not only within the cosmos but also within man."  

Adam and Eve, defying God's commandment, become the prototype agents perceiving the difference between good and evil. Thus the knowledge of good implies the knowledge of evil as the one cannot exist without the other. As Martin Buber tells us, good and evil are not diametrically opposing forces: they are similar in nature, being "erstwhile sleeping companions in the womb of their origin."  

Good and evil may also be defined as "direction" or "lack of direction." He further says: "The direction is towards God" and "All that, under Satan, takes man away from this direction or hinders his progress towards God, is evil."  

Neither literature nor philosophy can avoid the dialectic conflict between good and evil. Heraclitus of Ephesus' enigmatic thought of the identity of opposites is remarkable for its richness of spontaneous dialectical notions. His mode of thinking is the untiring search for
opposites constituting the essence of every phenomenon. The Pythagoreans, according to Alexander's pupil, Aristoxenus, direct the way of life "based on the conviction which clears a picture of anarchy as the greatest evil" fighting against well-being of man. The nature of good and bad, in the Pythagoreans, is brought with the limited and the unlimited. This, in fact, is the central idea of their ethical theory rooted in the wisdom of the "Seven Sages" and their prescriptions to observe measure and limit. Commenting on this theory, Aristotle scries: "Evil belongs to the class of the unlimited, as the Pythagoreans conjectured, and good to that of the limited." Because "men are good in one way, but bad in many." This Pythagorean conception of opposites is very different from the Heraclitean one and is essentially metaphysical: "the opposites are not mutually repellent and do not make a unity of identity and difference, but rather a unity of mixture." 

Greek philosophy is a grand monument of human culture and the best source of illumination. It is a unique offertory to the developments of dialectics. The views of Socrates, who left a deep mark in the history of human thought on good and evil, run almost parallel to those of Protagoras and Spinoza who write that the terms "good and evil" are "nothing...else than modes of thought....One and the same thing may at the same time be both good and evil or
indifferent—according to the person who makes the judgment of it."^9 Socrates makes the similar argument. He says: "The same thing may be both good and evil; for I can easily suppose that which is good in the case of hunger may be evil in fever; since what would prove a cure for the one, will certainly increase the malignity of the other...."^10 In the Theaetetus, Protagoras is made to say that as "to the sick man his food appears to be bitter, and to the healthy man the opposite of bitter," so in general men estimate or judge all things according to their own condition and the way things affect them. This theory of good and evil necessarily denies the possibility of moral science. Socrates calls it "a high argument in which all things are said to be relative."^11

Socrates is convinced that "...one cannot be evil-minded if he knows the good. His delusion stems not only and so much from the sheer disregard of everyday human experience attesting to the opposite (which Aristotle was quick to note), as from the idealistic assumption that the ills of society could be cured by the spread of knowledge and the dissemination of the ideas of goodness and justice."^12 The Cynicism, the Socratic school founded by Antisthenes (c. 444-368 B.C.), also more or less is concerned with the light and dark aspects in human life. It sees its task in castigating vice and preaching virtue. The concepts of vice
and virtue, however, are always ambivalent "in a society where social classes have antagonistic interests." Theodorus, the atheist, for instance, teaches that "...the basis of moral behaviour is not the enjoyment of individual pleasures, but a stable feeling of gladness: the good and evil are not pleasure and suffering, but joy and sorrow. Joy is brought about by wisdom and sorrow by lack of judgment." The ideas, Socrates discussed with Glaucon in Dialogues of Plato, The Republic, exhibit the forms of good and evil. Socrates discerns: "the corrupting and destroying element is evil, and the saving and involving element the good." And it is universally approved.

The virtue and reason, says Stoic, is the knowledge of what is good and what is bad, its vice is ignorance. The good, according to the Stoics, consists of four basic virtues: "prudence, temperance, justice and courage," whereas evil in their opposites—"imprudence, lack of restraint, injustice and cowardice." Epicurean philosophy is a philosophy of good and evil. The Epicurean views, which are tantamount to the views of John Locke, uphold that "...pleasure is the only ultimate good, and pain the only ultimate evil. Other things are good and bad only in relation to these." It must be noted that, in the second book of Of Ideas, John Locke costumes the skeleton of good and evil with nearly the same cloth. He accepts things as the
manifestations of good or evil, only in reference to pleasure or pain. He differentiates:

That we call good, which is apt to cause or increase pleasure, or diminish pain in us; or else to procure or preserve us the possession of any other good or absence of any evil. And on the contrary, we name that evil which is apt to produce or increase any pain, or diminish any pleasure in us; or else to procure us any evil, or deprive us of any good.18

He says "good and evil are the hinges on which our passions turn."19 As we see, it has been fairly characteristic of moral philosophers to think of an assumed dichotomy between good and evil. We will have a fairly clear idea of the conventional distinction between good and evil. The conventional distinction between good and evil, according to Kantian morality, is "tend to help and tend to injure."20

Immanuel Kant's concept of good and evil always implies "a reference to the will as determined by the law of reason, to make something its object....Good and evil therefore are properly referred to actions, not to the sensations of the person...."21

Plotinus' Ennead shows a new dimension of good and evil based on the concept of independent and dependent. He says: "The Good is that on which all else depends, towards which all Existences aspire as to their source and their need, while Itself is without need, sufficient to Itself."22 But "Evil [at least] takes order and grace from some principles
outside itself,\textsuperscript{23} whereas Good is "the object of all inspiration."\textsuperscript{24} The body of Dante's Purgatory and Paradise remains useless, if we separate the blood and bones of good and evil from it. The views, he has treasured in these books, are the vivid projections of the deathless dichotomy of good and evil. Milton's deepest commitment is to Christianity. He organizes his vast canvas through the use of cosmic contrasts--God and Satan; Heaven and Hell; Good and Evil. It is the essence of Pascal's reflection on good and evil. Pascal, in his \textit{Pensees}, openly advocates "the greatness and the wretchedness of man"\textsuperscript{25} which are so evident in man. He believes in the existence of God and tells us:

...to love Him [God]; that our true happiness is to be in Him, and our sole evil to be separated from him; it must recognize that we are full of darkness which hinders us from knowing and loving him, and thus, as our \textit{duties} compel us to love God, and our \textit{lusts} turn us away from him, we are full of unrighteousness.\textsuperscript{26}

Hegel, in his "Philosophy of Right", says: "Evil and good alike have their origin in the will and the will in its concept is both good and evil."\textsuperscript{27} The Good, in Hegel's \textit{Morality}, is "the unity of the concept of will which gives importance to the abstract right and welfare"\textsuperscript{28} And Evil is "the natural level of the will which comes into existence as a self-contradiction"\textsuperscript{29} begetting freedom of necessity. He recognizes evil as subjective responsibility. "Evil is most peculiarly individual's own since it is precisely his
subjectivity establishing itself, and for that reason it is purely and simply the individual's own responsibility...."  

But we, like Hume, are confused to perceive the eternal co-existence of good and evil because "...if God is perfectly benevolent and also omnipotent, why is there any evil in the world? Why does he permit it?"  

The tension of this problem can be eased with the ideas of a theist. Acknowledging the duality of good and evil in the samsara, they conclude that "God created only the good in the universe and some other power created the evil."  

Also Steinbeck, by the same token, recognizes the very doubleness of human experience and in his capacity as a novelist transforms this tension into art. His Nobel Prize Acceptance speech for Literature in 1962 traces "the release of explosive forces capable of creative good or destructive evil...."  

Even his remark in East of Eden reflects over this duality: "We have only one story. All novels, all poetry, are built on the never-ending contest in ourselves of good and evil."  

It is because he, like Robert Penn Warren, admits the fall of man and sees "...the humanly inescapable experience of evil and suffering to contain within itself certain redemptive possibilities."  

But even his portrayal of good and evil correspondingly constitutes the problem of evil because of the optimistic aptitude of his fictitious protagonists that constantly energizes their utmost desire
to sustain their survival drive.

The world does contain a great deal of evil. Father G.H. Joyce writes: "The existence of evil in the world must all times be the greatest of all problems which the mind encounters when it reflects on God and His relation to the world." Therefore, all great writers, sooner or later, concede the problem of evil as the axis on which the body of their thoughts revolves. It is an inescapable challenge to their power of comprehending the facts and imponderables of life. It affects the efforts of writers made to gloss antological, visionary, and imaginary centre of their writings.

A writer attains the age of understanding when he confronts the massed power of evil in its different manifestations, various forms and aspects, and knows that the time has come for him to grapple with this monster at the utmost of his spiritual and mental powers. Similarly Steinbeck attains the age of understanding when he observes the distorted panorama of modern humanity with abounding atrocities, greed, totalitarianism, materialism and the flow of human behaviour against social norms and values as well. He likes to hold out objectively the inexplicable design of these evil intricacies to the entire universe around him.

Steinbeck believes that "all books [including Bible] are concerned primarily with the conflict of good and
evil." His *East of Eden* is the Bible to know his sensorium preoccupied with good and evil. If anybody questions him:

"What is the world story about?" he answers:

...there is one story in the world, and only one, that has frightened and inspired us, so that we live in a Pearl White serial of continuing thought and wonder. Humans are caught in their lives, in their thoughts, in their hungers and ambitions, in their avarice and cruelty, and in their kindness and generosity too—in a net of good and evil. I think this is the only story we have and that it occurs on all levels of feeling and intelligence.

However, Steinbeck seems to be baffled with the problem of evil when he recollects: "There is no other story. A man, after he has brushed off the dust and chips of his life, will have left only the hard, clean questions: was it good or was it evil? Have I done well—or ill?" So, he finds himself unable to scan the nature of evil exactly. In his historical novel, *The Cup of Gold*, he has already voiced his query, "who can tell the limit of the power of evil?" Yet he attempts to single out it to fathom the problem of evil in his fictional purlieus.

Steinbeck, like the American novelists of the late nineteenth century: Edward Bellany; William Howells; Stephen Crane; Frank Norris; and Jack London, is intolerant of the human misery. He finds it arising out of modern exploitative economic system. It is the main target of Steinbeck's criticism structured in Joads' westering odyssey, *The Grapes*.
of Wrath. The Joads, the archetypes of an avarage family enacting the eternal drama of humanity, and struggling to survive in a hostile world, throw some light on the victimized migrants in the world of economic devastation. Here the frame of reference for determining the problem of evil is delivered from a materialistic philosophy that measures man's worth in terms of his materialistic gains. Of Mice and Men mirrors a human search for safe place hindered by the economic mismanagement of landowners. This is the recurring theme in his writing that concentrates on the distinguishing mark of capitalism as the divorce between economics and ethics.

Steinbeck, being a fearless champion of democracy, believes that the free exploring individualistic mind is the most valuable thing in the world. But he visualizes that modern age is scarcely in a happy state because of the rise of vicious forces like totalitarianism constituting the problem of evil on the political ground. It cripples the genuine democratic spirit and dislodges human life that Steinbeck presents in his book of wars of treachery, In Dubious Battle and The Moon is Down.

No sooner does Steinbeck meet evil in socio-economic and political frame of life than he happens to face the new vicious problem of evil in socio-cultural and traditional trends in modern age which strikingly appears in his post-war
trilogy, The Wayward Bus, The Pearl, and Burning Bright. In the course of evaluating the plight of his heroes, he periodically refers to growing mass of materialistic, self-directed men who are blind to the truths of human nature due to their unremitting possessiveness. His growing concern over the selfish breed of Americans leads him to fashion the detailed allegory of modern life, The Wayward Bus, in which the characters eventually shed their evil ways. A very important theme in his writing is the problem of evil. Therefore, in The Pearl, we see Juana as the source and sustainer of virtue to constantly persuade her husband to free him from the clutch of evil. The harbourage of universal fatherhood is one of the most important connections touched upon by Steinbeck. He denies both physical and spiritual fatherhood to remove the darkness of ignorance and unfetter beings from the narrow concept of the culmination of generations through one's own blood and species. Because it may construct a road to evil in socio-cultural complex he peruses in Burning Bright.

The society giving importance to materialistic values also draws Steinbeck's attention to pose the problem of evil in metaphysical sense. He perceives evil in women like Cathy (East of Eden) and Mary Hawley (The Winter of Our Discontent). As Cathy is an incarnation of evil in Edenic garden of Adam, Mary Hawley, like Lady Macbeth, is a prime
source of evil in the microcosmic world of Ethan of The Winter of Our Discontent. The Winter of Our Discontent presents the most unpleasant variation of Steinbeck's recurring theme of evil in our society. The main point in this novel is this belief that men, being merely the creatures of their drives and needs are determined by their environment, are set helplessly adrift upon the tides of circumstances. Ethan represents modern American Adam with all his biases, desires, and conflicts. He is not only "surrounded by moral and political corruption" but also confused by his "situation and society which is chaotic and fast-changing." Thus the problem of evil runs through the novels of Steinbeck and gives them a great coherence. Each work is predominantly concerned with a single human aspect i.e. evil.

A critical study of American fiction is a significant aspect of Indian response to American Literature. Indian response to American literature has grown in volume and importance in the recent decades. American fiction, in particular, is widely studied and discussed in Indian Universities for its narrative power, gusto, and pure exteriority. Steinbeck is one of those American novelists who are getting increasing attention from perceptive critics. He is a notable writer of this century. But his novels have not been subjected to a deep scrutiny that it
deserves. Many American critics tend to regard Steinbeck primarily as a realist or a leberalist or as a mixed up writer, and finding faults in him on these counts conclude that he is a flawed artist. Steinbeck, as one of the victims of the Great Depression period, shows more and more compassion towards have nots. Dr. M.R. Satyanarayana deals with *The Elements of Compassion in the Works of John Steinbeck*. To him compassion is the most characteristic element of Steinbeck's writings. *Steinbeck's Concept of Man* is the point of study for Sunita Jain who traces the double role of man—as a group animal and as an individual because a man cannot successfully be the second until he has fulfilled the first. The study of "Dream and Disillusionment" made by Prof. S.S.Prabhakar Rao highlights the predominance of the twin motifs of dream and attendant disillusionment in a majority of Steinbeck's novels and short stories. Dr. Samir Kumar Bose appraises the thought and message of Steinbeck given in the form of his creative writings. By a dual process of elimination and inclusion, Steinbeck visualizes the image of the full man as K. Sreenivasan does thesis in *The Novels of John Steinbeck: A Study of His Image of Man*. The theme of 'ambition' has been discussed by K.P.Sharma who analyses Steinbeck's novels under 'description', 'narration', and dialogue. Dr. Shalini Jacob has studied Steinbeckian themes from the point of view of technique. Steinbeck's
sustained use of the allegorical mode and his contrast technique to, for building his fabulous world, has been portrayed by Dr. P. Balaswamy in his doctoral dissertation, Allegory in John Steinbeck's Novels, whereas Correlation of Themes and Fictional Modes in the Major Novels of John Steinbeck has recently been traced by Ashok Misra. Indian response to Steinbeck, says R.K. Sharma, is fully representative of Indian scholarship on Steinbeck. But no thorough study of his work from the point of view of evil has so far been made.

The concept of Good and Evil is, however, brushed past by John Clark Pratt in his study, John Steinbeck: A Critical Essay. He says: "Steinbeck's attitude toward evil is not really incompatible with what he believes to be the fundamental meaning of scripture." He confines his thought of good and evil to the room of divinity. "Nevertheless, Steinbeck does present an interestingly Christian philosophy." From alpha to omega of Steinbeck's fictional range, Pratt employs the biblical origin of sin as the core to his dialectical thoughts. He sees an exaltation of sin in The Cup of Gold and attempts to find a solution to it in The Winter of Our Discontent to sustain a hope for surviving even in the quagmire of corrupted modernity. Pratt chronicizes evil through the way of religious impulse and maintains a gap between evil and Christian sin, as well
as economic and political sin. Though Christianity is the
ground whereupon Pratt engraves the effigy of evil, it is
conceived in the present study that the distorted panorama
and complexity of modern age is the main stand to support the
portrait of evil in the novels of Steinbeck. It may,
therefore, be claimed that mainly due to the complexity of
modern age and distorted socio-cultural environment the
dragon of evil has permeated almost every sphere of human
life, both physical and psychic. And Steinbeck vividly and
graphically presents it in his fictional premises. Pratt's
vision of evil can be single out as the projection of God;
Christianity; man and sin, whereas the vision of evil to be
projected in the present study is multidimensional and
multicoloured as human life faces plethora of problems in
modern civilization. Hence it could be claimed that the
present study proposes to present a broader vision of the
problem of evil perceived in the novels of Steinbeck who
unfolds his non-teleological mind to concern "primarily not
with what should be, or could be, or might be, but rather
with what actually 'is'." Therefore it is more apt to
study the fictional world of Steinbeck in the context of the
present age fabulously fractured by the ferocious forces of
evil.
END-NOTES


3^Ibid., pp. 140-41.


6^Ibid., p. 67.


8^History of Ancient Philosophy*, p. 72.


10^History of Ancient Philosophy*, p. 131.


12^History of Ancient Philosophy*, pp. 134-35.

13^Ibid., p. 138.

14^Ibid., p. 148.


16^History of Ancient Philosophy*, p. 292.

19 Ibid., p. 176.
20 Good and Evil, p. 104.
23 Ibid., p. 32.
26 Ibid., p. 245.
27 Ibid., p. XLVI, p. 130.
28 Ibid., p. 45.
29 Ibid., p. 49.
30 Ibid., p. 50.

38 East of Eden, p. 391.

39 Ibid., p. 391.


42 John Steinbeck: A Critical Essay, p. 44.

43 Ibid., p. 33.