CHAPTER FOUR

REACHING THE PEAK IN SELF-REALIZATION:
THE GRAPES OF WRATH AND
THE SERPENT AND THE ROPE

In *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) by John Steinbeck and *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) by Raja Rao, the protagonists Tom Joad and Ramaswamy proceed along life as everyone else in the world with all the failings and trifles that lie at the center of human existence. As youths, they do not have control over their passions and give in to the ephemeral earthly pleasures. They begin with a purpose of their own soon after they have begun to realize the harsh truth about their existence, but initially they are more inclined to the physical and the material. The comparative analysis had better begin with a deeper analysis of the circumstances that force them into the predicament of human existence wrapped in numerous vicissitudes. Each of these two novels presents a series of odds and ends against which Tom and Ramaswamy, Rama in short, struggle to survive to succeed spiritually in the end.

Both in Tom and Rama, their progressive stages of action in life correspond with the different stages of human existence as enunciated in the Indian philosophical system. Both the
protagonists use the lower physical plane as a springboard to reach the higher spiritual plane. Their outward activities are symptomatic of a certain consciousness trying to elevate itself to the higher reaches of the Unknown. The physical means help them to go ahead progressively with their avowed missions and once the means have served the purpose of leading them to Self-Realization, the protagonists’ interest in the material society wanes and they set out on a more meaningful march towards the inevitable and inescapable reunion with the Absolute.

*The Grapes of Wrath* is the story of the experiences of the Joads from their eviction in Oklahoma during the Depression to their suffering caused by the floods in California. Tom Joad returns home to his father’s small farm after spending four years at McAlester Prison for homicide. On seeing a truck near a roadside cafe, Tom requests a lift and the truck driver tells him, “Didn’ you see the ‘No Riders’ sticker on the windshield?”(*TGW* 7). But Tom hopes for the best even in the worst of circumstances: “Sure – I seen it. But sometimes a guy’ll be a good guy even if some bastard makes him carry a sticker” (*TGW* 7). This conversation reveals that Tom is looking for some basic goodness in man. He has the seed of

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1 Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*. Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Company Ltd., 1939. Subsequent references to this source will be provided in the body of the text with an abbreviation of the title followed by page number.
goodness and naturally wishes to see a similar seed among people. It also provides an insight into some of Tom's basic characteristic traits. Tom then chances to meet the ex-preacher Jim Casy under a willow tree. It reminds one of the Buddha under the bodhi tree where he got spiritual enlightenment, 'nirvana'. It was Jim Casy who baptized Tom who as a little boy was always too busy pulling little girls' pigtails. This reference provides us with a chance to go back in time and study the beginnings of Tom's character. He loved fun and laughter when he was ignorant of the deeper meaning of human existence. From this humble beginning, Tom rises as a spiritual giant through his journey in life.

Only after Jim Casy has reminded Tom Joad of the latter's boyish pranks does he discover the identity of the preacher. Once Casy was Reverend Jim Casy - "a Burning Busher" who used to howl out the name of Jesus to glory. But now he is no more a preacher. Thus Casy discloses the fact that he has given up his role as a preacher, because he admits: "Here I got the spirit sometimes an' nothin' to preach about. I got the call to lead the people, an' no place to lead 'em" (TGW 21). As "a damned ol' hypocrite" (TGW 23), Casy had sexual intercourse with girls after he had preached to them. He felt that this sinful act was the devil's work. Casy's remorseful feelings do not seem to be any serious to Tom who is ignorant of the serious issues of life which genuinely
concern Casy - a Casy, completely different from the Casy, a hypocritical preacher.

Casy's confession opens the floodgates of Tom's quest for a better understanding of human existence. Even a preacher can be a hypocrite and disregard his avowed role of a spiritual guide to the uninitiated masses. Such hypocrisy of a man like Casy hastens Tom's thinking about the real meaning and purpose of human existence. If at all a man lives here, what should, Tom thinks, he attain at last. He begins to see nothingness at the center of all our prankish and avaricious activities in life as they are illusory, temporal manifestations of 'maya'. It is a good beginning and his spiritual quest starts from here. He has to go through life a little far to understand what Casy says but however, it serves as a springboard for Tom's spiritual plunge.

Tom is at the Bramacharya stage - the period of training for life here and hereafter. But at this stage, he is immature and so guilty of homicide. Instead of appreciating the ex-preacher's change for the better, Tom says, "Maybe I should have been a preacher. I been a long time without a girl" (TGW 23). When Casy is ashamed of his own immorality in the past, Tom wishes that he were a preacher to have sexual intercourse with many girls and that he had indulged in promiscuity. At the moral level Tom is now too weak to understand the former preacher's transformation.
Casy says: "There ain't no sin and there ain't no virtue. There's just stuff people do. It's all part of the same thing" (TGW 23). This reveals his mature understanding of human existence. Panini says that Casy has abandoned the rigid humanism of post-Reformation Christianity, [and] moves increasingly towards an Emersonian vision in which man and nature are aligned. He is a visionary who breaks through to an understanding of the cosmic whole, like Tolstoy and Gandhi, he also comes to believe in the practical working out of his faith in deeds. His allegiance with the downtrodden is just part of his greater commitment to the Emersonian Oversoul, 'Maybe all men got one big soul ever'body's a part of', he speculates. He knows this 'so deep down that it was true'. (273)

Casy's idea about sin and virtue can be likened to that of the Vedanta. As Swami Prabhavananda puts it, "The words sin and virtue are somewhat alien to the spirit of Vedanta philosophy because they merely foster a sense of possessiveness with regard to thought and action" (qtd. in Kallapur 24). So a man is not what he is but what he does. A person can aim high spiritually and become divine too. It all depends on the person's efforts to understand the purpose of life.
In Casy’s opinion, sin and virtue do not exist and that man only has the right to say that some actions are good and others are not. Perhaps the Holy Spirit is really the human spirit which he realizes as the love of all mankind. Feasibly, man has one Big Soul of which everyone is a part. Tom too realizes that neither the people nor the Church could accept this view. Even at this stage, Jim Casy plays the role of a Guru, a spiritual teacher. Casy, who has realized the self, transcends good and evil, for he believes that good and evil are relative terms. He is one that recognizes “the unchanging Brahman behind the changing phenomena”, to borrow the words of Swami Prabhavananda (qtd. in Kallapur 24).

Casy’s revelation is a kind of initiation for Tom, who at the stage of Brahmacharya, indulged too much in the early objects of life, kama and artha, which account for his karma. Tom was given seven years’ imprisonment for killing “a guy in a fight at a dance” (TGW 26). He admits that he is not ashamed of his criminal act and will do it again. Even a prison life for four years has not been able to reform Tom fully. He has been immature, rash and impulsive till now. It has all happened because of his failure to turn inward. External but ephemeral inducements have so far held him and he has not tried to extricate himself from such ‘meaningless acts’ which attracted him as a bait does to a fish. However, such thoughtless actions are bound to help people understand the other
side of human existence when they get rid of the vain shows of strength and wealth. Many people come in his way from now onwards and enable him to see things in a perspective different from what he has been familiar with before. People like Muley Graves teach the value of humanism and timely help. But his association with Jim Casy, though brief, brings about a remarkable change of attitude to look at life differently as the plot develops.

On return from prison, Tom learns that the Joads have left their traditional homestead for California. In spite of his penury and uncertain future, Muley Graves, a neighbor, shares his food, a rabbit toasted in open fire, with Tom and Casy. This simple but noble act of Muley shows the value of people helping one another, and throughout the novel Jim Casy keeps mentioning this.

Tom's family was enticed by the misleading assurance of abundance and secure employment in California. Being a parolee, Tom cannot leave Oklahoma, but he decides to join his family in their flight from Oklahoma, for "he is under no obligation to flee anywhere; it is only because his family is going, and because of his strong family identification, that he decides to go along with them" (Bluefarb 96).

Of all the people, Casy influences Tom the most in terms of spirituality. At Uncle John's house, during the grace, he tells them that he sought to resolve his problems: "I been in the hills, thinkin'
almost you must say like Jesus went into the wilderness to think
His way out a mess of troubles. Sometimes I'd pray like I always
done. On'y I couln' figure what I was prayin' to or for. There was
the hills, an 'there was me, an' we wasn't separate no more. We
was one thing. An' that one thing was holy" (TGW 83). Thus Casy
identifies himself with the hills so that he and the hills are one
thing and that this one thing is holy. Casy concludes his sermon-
like grace by asserting that mankind is holy when everyone has a
sense of togetherness. Casy, however, has transformed himself as
a means of spiritual enlightenment and stands very close to the
goal of Self-Realization. He is "an obvious Christ-figure. He joins
the twelve Loads and becomes their moral leader. While he is with
them, he preaches a message of love and brotherhood. Casy
speaks of a New World and of a time when the spirit will prevail
over institutions" (Padovano 273).

As in The Grapes of Wrath, The Serpent and the Rope
unfolds with Ramaswamy narrating the events of his life as well as
the truth hidden behind them. The eldest son of a Professor of
Mathematics at Hyderabad, Rama was "born a Brahmin - that is
devoted to Truth and all that." He believes that a "Brahmin is one
who knows the Brahman" (TSR 5). He knows the Brahmasutras

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followed by page number's.
and read the *Upanishads* as a small boy. He traces his genealogy back to Vidyaranya (Madhavacharya) and still beyond to the sage Yagnavalkya of the *Upanishadic* age, defies convention but respects creed and establishes himself as a true *Advaitin* pursuing *Jnanayoga* for his salvation. Hence the story of Ramaswamy, essentially a spiritual biography "with its emphasis on getting at the Truth becomes the unfolding of a *Vedanta*-based vision of India and deals with the magnitude, mystery, complexity, philosophy and metaphysics of India from the point of view of one who seeks Brahman and whose sensibility and values are uncompromisingly Indian" (Verghese 147-148)

If natural forces play a role in the spiritual evolution of Joseph and Tom Joad, for Rama, it is the sociological and intellectual context that paves the way for his spiritual evolution. He also makes a journey away from home towards the West. It is a kind of 'Westering', perhaps, an Indian version. After his education in India, Rama, a post-graduate, goes across the seas on a scholarship to France with a view to quenching his intellectual and materialistic thirst and is engaged in research on the Theory of Albigensian Heresy, and more particularly the influence of *Vedanta* on Cathar philosophy. Thus he intends to establish a link between
the Eastern and Western metaphysical schools of thought. As Iyengar sees it, “Rama’s mind is a seething whirlpool of cultural currents and crosscurrents” (399). Rama, despite his young age, has a mission now. He is a Brahmachari and the Bramacharya stage has all its stirrings. His mission now is purely physical and worldly. His objective at this stage is to shine in studies and get settled in life, of course, amidst material comforts. The inner pressures are yet to surface in all their intensity. Since it can wait for some more time to ripe, Rama has to yield to the sensual pressures and fulfill the objective of the next stage - love, marriage and progeny.

At the University of Caen, Rama gets the acquaintance of Madeleine Rousselin, five years his senior in age. Madeleine, a French teacher in history, is interested in tracing the origin of the Holy Grail in the Cathars. Rama and Madeleine fall in love with each other and after three years, they get married on 10th February 1949. Madeleine has “a disinterested devotion to any cause.” She loved Rama partly “because she felt India had been wronged by the British, and because she would, in marrying [Rama], know and identify herself with a great people” (TSR 18). Rama, in turn, is fascinated by the European civilization. Their domestic life starts off on a happy note mainly due to Madeleine’s love for India and its rich cultural tradition.
While Rama is physically present in an alien land, he is away from that land in terms of his consciousness. His own personality is always permeated with a sense of attachment to India’s past heritage that has been firmly embedded in his being (Maini 72). India’s rich tradition stands out like a towering oak tree in the vastness of his consciousness. It is always a backdrop against which all his words and deeds are tested and executed. Rama’s original intention was to obtain his doctoral degree and then to return to India with his wife and become a Professor at an Indian University. But this proves to be a dream because events take a different course. A child is born to them whom they call Krishna and later Pierre. Hearing of his father’s illness, Rama returns to India in 1951. With his father’s death Rama feels wholly orphaned. Soon he receives the sad news about the death of his seven-month-old son Pierre of bronchial-pneumonia.

When things do not work out to our expectations, thoughts about the unknown crisscross our minds and questions of deeper thought arise menacingly. A Gruhastha has to face the challenges of existence concerning not only himself but also everybody else dependent on him. Such challenges prepare one like Rama to elevate spiritually when he passes the Gruhasthya stage.

The story has thus started the action of the novel and prepared the physical basis for the spiritual evolution of Rama. In
India, Rama accompanies his 'Little' Mother to Benares and other holy places on the Himalayas to perform his father's obsequies. His visit to the holy river has a metaphysical significance. "Going down the river [the Ganges] Rama feels a pagan and senses his kinship with all the aeons of the past, his participation in one totality of experience which involves the past, the present and perhaps the future as well" (Iyengar 399). Thus Rama's return to India has the effect of generating in him a deeper interest and keen awareness of his Indian roots. His realization that he is now the head of the family, combined with his reawakening of his Indian heritage, brings about a great transformation in his inner being.

Rama thinks aloud: "I had serious questions of my own and I could not name them. Something had just missed me in life, some deep absence grew in me that no love or learning could fulfill. I wondered where all this wandering would lead to. Life is a pilgrimage, I know, but a pilgrimage to where — and of what?" (TSR 26). Such incomprehensible questions are beyond the reach of Rama's ability. And so he tries to puzzle out those evasive enquiries for which he has to experience the means to reach the end. He feels that he wandered a major part of his life, and became "a holy vagabond" (TSR 9). In spite of his upbringing in an upper middle class family, higher academic qualification and Vedic background, Rama is unable to tide over his sufferings with
aplomb. At the stage of Bramacharya, he had been a successful student, winning a scholarship to go abroad for research. Now as a Gruhastha, he is full of inexpressible miseries. Even his knowledge of the Vedas and other scriptures offer him only fleeting solutions. He is groping in the dark like a myopic wayfarer in the wilderness with no hope or idea about his destination. The spiritual in him is yet to be activated and so remains dormant despite his Vedic footing. He has not been able to prevail over the physical in him because he has not started practicing what he has learnt from the Indian ethos.

As the head of the family, Rama has to shoulder all the familial responsibilities. He has to take care of his two unmarried half-sisters, and his “Little” Mother and her son Sridhara. Despite many hurdles, Rama thus performs the third object in life dharma to a fault. His migration to France for research and his marriage with Madeleine represent his indulgence in the first two objects of life, namely Kama and Artha. At home back in India, he performs his duty in a disinterested fashion and is more or less stoical in his approach to things. But he is on the verge of the third stage of life, namely Vanaprasthya and at a loss as to how to surmount this stage. No wonder, he always speaks in a melancholic strain. He has been smitten with ontological and teleological questions, which plunge him into philosophical musings: “Existence is a passage
between life and death and birth and death again, and what an accumulation of pain man has to bear" (TSR 135). Happiness often avoids him and death constantly colors his thoughts. He also holds that "Man is a stranger to this earth, he must go" (148). All these musings of Rama pull him in different directions and he begins to lose his equanimity gradually.

Many circumstances and issues successively aggravate his agony. For instance, the death of Pierre makes the agnostic Madeleine religious but not philosophical. She is not able to obtain the detachment that Rama has almost mastered. But Rama's approach is altogether different: it is of a man, what is more of an Indian, whose soul has its roots in immemorial memories of a philosophic past. According to Madeleine, "Pierre was never dead" for Rama. But she "could feel him in my loins" (TSR 41). Rama, deep in his heart, is not worried because death for him is not the end of life but the continuation of it. It is not so agonizing to him as it is to Madeleine, the Westerner. Rama's philosophical attitude towards life makes him take his son's death with an easy mind. It is very clear that Rama who has almost reached the Vanaprasthya stage cannot look back to console Madeleine.

Rama remains unperturbed over the death of his son Pierre. Madeleine is aware of Rama's "masculine isolation" and "Indian alone-ness" (TSR 36). It is evident that like Pai of *The Cat and*
Shakespeare, Rama is naturally bent to find answers to some deeper questions about existence. She observes that Rama's "people [Indians] are sentimental about the invisible, we about the visible. And to me you were the invisible made concrete, so visible, incarnate, beside me - and my husband" (TSR 36-37). She implies that Rama, being an Indian, is concerned more with the invisible Madeleine is aware of Rama's "inner strength -- the wall, the stone wall that will never yield" (TSR 39).

Madeleine, as a Westerner steeped in materialistic philosophy, looks at life as a manifestation of one's temporal wishes. She is concerned with the visible, and the here and the immediate. At the same time, she does not fail to see the East and its impact on her husband Rama and that forces her to get estranged from him. Both Rama and Madeleine's points of view diverge beyond a certain point in living and are not likely to converge to effect a reciprocal and peaceful domestic life. This shows that Rama is all set to go to another higher level towards Self-Realization. One cannot blame Madeleine also because the mother in her pulls her down to the ground rather than allows her to get along with Rama in his spiritual quest. However, she too initiates herself into such a spiritual quest but, of course, it happens belatedly in her case. When she realizes that what she thought to be a source of real pleasure turned out to be a loss of
peace. So she is not mentally matured enough to understand Rama, who stands at the threshold of a life of detachment. Madeleine is more earthly whereas Rama is more philosophical.

The contents of Madeleine's letter expose the weakness and failings of Rama as a householder. It is not the Dharma of a Gruhastha to leave his wife in the lurch. But to compensate for this, Rama plays the traditional role of a Gruhastha as the first-born. In his native land, now he becomes the head of the family. Before he returns to France, Rama tells Saroja, one of his three half-sisters that "Little" Mother will be his representative, with the power of the baton and the bank account. To him, Saroja is an ideal Indian woman. Rama takes with him one of the saris of Saroja and "Little" Mother's ancestral toe-rings as gifts for Madeleine. It appears that he wishes Madeleine to be transformed into an ideal Indian woman. By way of fulfilling his filial duties, Rama happens to sojourn at Allahabad where he is persuaded by Prof Venktaraman, a former colleague of his father's, to prevail upon one Savithri to marry her fiancé Pratap Singh. An officer in the political service of the government, Pratap is "just officially" (TSR 30) engaged to Savithri, daughter of the Raja of Surajpur. But Savithri feels disinclined to marry the highly eligible Pratap Singh. Her dislike of the suitor is not personal, for she had "an
aversion to the British rule in India” and regards Pratap as a slave of the British (TSR 30).

As a dramatic turn of events, Savithri is enamored of Rama’s acumen and personality and the research he has been doing. About Savithri Rama feels elated. “Here is a clever person, but she never says anything that really matters. We had one thing in common: we both knew Sanskrit. Her presence never said anything, but her absence spoke” (TSR 31). Savithri invites Rama to meet her at Cambridge where she has been pursuing a course in English literature. Rama’s meeting with Savithri is a turning point, which blossoms into a spiritual love and which enables both to see their existence in each other’s soul. In the meantime, something untoward happens to Rama for the better.

Within the framework of a home, Rama distances himself from his wife in view of his philosophical leanings. As a husband, he has to go through the cycle of Gruhastha which is yet another step to measure the worth of the ultimate goal of understanding oneself. The Gruhasathyā stage is a part of our existential syndrome and a necessity to step on to the next stage of Vanaprasthya. While Rama achieves his competence by being a husband, Tom of The Grapes of Wrath achieves it also within the framework of a home. His home is all for him at a stage in his life and does all that his mother and other members of his family need.
Strictly speaking, he is not a Gruhastha but a family-head in all practical ways. He slowly distances himself from his home like Rama in his search for the ultimate truth. This is quite evident from his experience at this Gruhasthya-like stage of his life.

Similarly, we could trace a change of attitude among the Joads in The Grapes of Wrath. Such a change is marked by their preparations to go in search of better pastures, for working in the shade picking grapes, oranges, and peaches in the orchards of California. Tom is skeptical about the conditions as detailed in the handbills: "Don’t roust your faith bird-high an’ you won’t do no crawling with the worms" (TGW 92). What Tom says is stark reality which others understand only after landing in California. In spite of their poverty, the Joads are proud to take Jim Casy, the ex-preacher with them. Casy may be a burden to the Joads in terms of economics but he has to play the role of a spiritual Guru to them, especially for the protagonist Tom Joad. The presence of Jim Casy is warranted in their journey through life towards the hereafter and also he is a source of moral inspiration and spiritual comfort. In short, Jim Casy is Tom Joad’s conscience that has to guide and shape him into a man worthy of understanding his own self amidst several odds in this earthly life.

When the Joads reach the city of Oklahoma, Ma is afraid that Tom is going to get into trouble for crossing the state line. But Tom
is bold and his familial ties urge him to take a risk and accompany his own people. Soon they meet the Wilsons - Ivy Wilson and Sairy Wilson - a migrant family from Kansas whom Ma Joad takes into their fold. The Joads, despite their abject penury, perform their dharma quite selflessly when an opportunity is given to them during their journey, Grampa Joad is sick, tired and dies of a stroke in the Wilsons’ tent. The Joads are too impoverished even to cover the dead body with a cloth. They wrap him up in Wilson’s quilt. Wilson is a friend in need in the truest sense. This noble gesture restores some of the dignity of the migrants. When Casy says a few words over Grampa’s grave, he states his belief: “All that lives is holy” (TGW 148), echoing not only the Emersonian sense but also the Hindu concept of life. Sairy Wilson allows the Joads to tear the family page in their family Bible to be used for writing the note about Grampa (and buried along with his dead body).

Amidst such harsh realities of human existence, Tom is bold to face them, as his goal now is to help his poverty-stricken family. The dharma of a son is to do his ‘karma’ as a true and dutiful one. The Bramacharya spirit of physical adventure and rashness has dwindled in Tom and he has taken on himself the role of a help-provider. Though he is not married and a Gruhastha in the strictest sense, he does all that a family-head/husband does for his family.
The fellow-migrants, the Wilsons and the Joads are similar in many respects. But Rose of Sharon and her husband Connie live in a world of their own, thinking of their unborn baby, a house, and a car. They are willfully ignorant of the plight of the migrants and not concerned about what happens to the family unit. Rose of Sharon tells Ma Joad, that she and Connie plan to live in a town and that Connie will study at night and “may be later have his own store” (TGW 169) But Ma does not want them to go away from the family, for “It ain’t good for folks to break up” (TGW 170) Here, we get two pictures contrasting each other. While most of the Joads are humane and altruistic, Rose of Sharon and her husband Connie are self-centered and egoistic. The couple is concerned more with the immediate and temporal pleasures than the immanent ones. Tom Joad strikes a sharp contrast and his spiritual elevation is confirmed even in such a poverty-stricken circumstance.

In spite of their hardships, the Joads and other migrants are optimistic and hopeful of a bright future. They put the whole of their spirit into everything they do. They know the truth that man survives despite the obstacles that check his progress and cause misery to him. As Steinbeck asserts, “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" (TGW 155). Every struggle of man leads him further in his onward march, for "Manself will not suffer and die for a concept, for this one quality is the foundation of Manself, and this one quality is man, distinctive in the universe" (TGW 155). The migrants help one another in their difficulties. This is the change from "I" to "We." Necessity bears concept, leading man to action and thereby selfishness is replaced by selflessness. Tom is a shining example of this.

Tom has no illusions about the life in California for the migrants. But he is prepared to meet the challenges and proves to be one who takes the rough with the smooth as objectively as possible. This signals the spiritual spark in his character and a beginning in his onward progress towards Self-Realization.

The camp is the proverbial Byzantium for Tom to cleanse his soul. In the camp life of the migrants, every night relationships that make a world are established; and every morning, the world is torn down like a circus. At dawn the camping place is vacant, only some litter left by the people. It is ready for a New World in a new night. The migrants help each other quite fervently, and by sharing their experience of the journey, they combat their loneliness and perplexity. Their laws operate successfully because they understand what their instincts dictate. They have to survive and
they know that only the fittest can survive. They do their best in this regard out of existential compulsions.

At this stage, Noah, the eldest son of the Joads, causes a great blow to the family by deserting them. He proves to be selfish and is still in the grip of the first stage of life, and is unfit for the other stages. Noah’s selfishness has motivated him to desert the family and seek his own destruction. The biblical Noah was a protector whereas the Noah of *The Grapes of Wrath* is a deserter. Noah, Rose of Sharon, and Connie are unmindful of the plight and ordeal the family is experiencing. They have realized the first two objects of life, *Kama* and *Artha* and will fail to reach the other two objects of life - *Dharma* and *Moksha* without which there is no salvation for anyone.

In addition to their abject penury, Noah deserts the Joads, and Grampa and Granma die. In the face of all these hurdles, Ma Joad proves to be a mountain of strength and love. Tom supports her in all possible ways. Her faith in the need to maintain the family unit remains ever strong. After giving a free burial to Granma, the Joads camp in a Hooverville across a bridge, where they understand from one Floyd Knowles that people who organize the migrants are quickly arrested. Tom discusses the situation with Casy who hopes to find a job and repay the Joads for their kindness, for he feels it is not his *dharma* to be the
permanent guest of the Joads. However, Tom cannot afford to lose Casy's guidance in his quest for his efforts to find an answer to the nature and purpose of human existence.

Like Rose of Sharon and her husband Connie, Al Joad is also selfish and fails to be realistic. Even when a hand-to-mouth existence seems to be torturous, he is looking for girls. Al proves to be aimless in life. He is still like a toddler at the first stage of life experiencing and fulfilling the first two objects of life beyond which he will never go if he continues to be so. Ma Joad maintains the dignity of her family in spite of their starvation. Tom proves to be worthy of her son. He stands apart from the rest of the offspring, since he is inspired inwardly to aspire to spirituality.

Floyd tells Tom and Al of some work available about two hundred miles north at a place called Santa Clara Valley. A labor contractor offers them work and wants to take them to Tulare County. When Floyd asks for a contract with the wage specified, the contractor calls the deputy sheriff from car. Accusing Floyd of causing trouble, the deputy arrests him on a false charge. Tom speaks up for Floyd and the deputy threatens to arrest him as well. He warns that the camp will be burnt and the people attacked if they do not leave. When the deputy reaches for his gun, Floyd suddenly escapes and runs away. Tom trips up the deputy who fires at Floyd and shoots a woman in the hand. Casy kicks the
deputy in the back of the neck and knocks him unconscious. Then he asks Tom and Al to go away to avoid arrest. Casy saves both Tom and Al. Thus Casy serves, as a role model for Tom who learns from him that selfless service is one of the important approaches to understanding one's self. Marks avers that Casy already has the vision of dignity; now he is searching for the means to implement. He finds those means in the world of action as it is represented in the experiences he shares with the Joads, and his discovery provides him with a new gospel to preach - the gospel of an Oversoul and of the unity of all men Symbolically, Casy is separated from the Joads at a moment when his mission appears clear to him. (78)

When Casy is arrested, he is more worried about the condition of the woman whose hand has been severed in the firing than his own arrest. In order to save Tom, Casy takes upon him the blame. The two deputies sit on either side of Casy. "Between his guards Casy sat proudly, his head up and stringy muscles of his neck prominent. On his lips there was a faint smile and on his face a curious look of conquest" (TGW 277). The sacrifice of Jim Casy has given Tom a sense of fulfillment and incidentally initiated him into the process of Self-Realization, which he achieves in the end by following in the footsteps of Casy.
Tom, who has come out of his hideout, returns to the tent and alerts his family that they must leave the camp immediately. He fetches Uncle John who has gone for a drink. When the family is in the midst of innumerable hardships, Connie, an epicurean and embodiment of selfishness, deserts his pregnant wife, Rose of Sharon. His desertion is worse than that of Judas who betrayed Jesus Christ. Tom has so far been undergoing the experience of Bramacharya and of late mostly discharging his duties as the eldest and most responsible son within the fold of the Joad’s family as a Gruhastha also. Though he is not actually married, he is family-bound and takes care of the needs of everyone in his joint family in a very responsible way. This has been a long struggle for him and prepares him for facing the next higher stage of Self-Realization, the Vanaprasthya stage. A sense of detachment begins to develop and he begins to view things dispassionately. Like Tom, Rama too is moving into the Vanaprasthya stage in The Serpent and the Rope after his informal separation from his wife. Rama’s experience at this stage accounts for his preparation for the final goal of life.

These days Casy has been a source of inspiration for Tom to pace up to the next stage in life. He has read a message in the self-sacrifice of Casy and a kind of altruism propels him on to the next question - the question of realizing his presence in the
limelight of godhead. Rama too is inspired by an external force, that is not in the form of a human being, but in the form of a collective consciousness. India as a whole comes before him alive and all its philosophical heritage lights his path leading to the next stage. Whenever he gropes in the dark to solve certain perennial questions, the Indian ethos hands him out of the dark and the finality of human existence looms large before him. It spells doom for all the physical surrounding one and signals hope for the spiritual. Rama's experience through this stage throws light on this transformation.

Rama broods over the present - the toe-rings - from "Little" Mother for Madeleine. This along with his stay in India gives him a certain consciousness of some new continuity as he is on his way home in Aix. He often remembers that his roots are in India: "India has no history, for Truth cannot have history" (TSR 102). So he feels that writing "a thesis would also be an Indian attempt at a philosophy of history", for he wants to absorb more than to know (TSR 103). After reaching home in Aix, Rama gives Madeleine the sari Saroja has sent for her. He fails to give Madeleine the toe-rings meant for the eldest daughter-in-law in his family. This marks the beginning of his alienation from her. Wherever human beings are, they crave for peace of mind and spiritual upliftment.
Madeleine hopes to be a good match for, and find an alter ego in, Rama. Though she is a Christian by faith, she is emotionally inclined towards the Indian way of life. However, she experiences an emotional breakdown after marriage. Marriage with Madeleine soon proves to be a misadventure and Rama fails to see in her a companion at the soul-to-soul level. He recalls how he and Madeleine came across by sharing each other's superstitions. He remembers how all the barriers between them seemed to have vanished when Madeleine, chanting "Siva Siva, Hara Hara" in a quivering voice, poured water on the stone linga which he had installed in the miniature temple he had built. At that time, she assured Rama that even if marrying him had meant that she should wear nothing but a sari, she would still have married him. But now all those expectations are belied. He begins to realize the temporality of all such mundane happenings. They appear to be 'maya' or illusion of fleeting nature. There appears a gap between husband and wife resulting from spiritual incompatibility rather than physical incompatibility. Later, Savithri fills the gap enabling Rama to see his self in her being.

Rama, battling with his disease for seven years, has been bearing "the weight of the family" on his shoulders (TSR 91). His "affirmation of Indian values" finds an echo in Savithri's heart (TSR 106). His original intention was to go back to India with his
wife Madeleine after completing his research. In tune with the first object of his life artha, professorship is waiting for him at an Indian university, according to a letter from “Little” Mother, though Rama wants to continue his research with a higher aim. Moreover, “Little” Mother is ready to receive Madeleine in India. But for Rama’s affair with Savithri, his family life would have been quite normal but spiritually uninitiated. As a householder, he has failed to fulfill the needs of his wife and often feels that he is Madeleine’s guest (TSR 124) Before he proceeds to the Vanaprasthya stage, he is bound to complete his domestic and social obligations.

However, Savithri wakes up the philosopher in him. She arrives as expected and is accorded a warm welcome by Madeleine. She stays with the family for a few days, but something is worrying his mind. Rama finds her to be highly intelligent and Madeleine is greatly impressed by her. Leaving Madeleine in the villa, Rama goes out with Savithri several times. During Savithri’s stay with them, Madeleine is in some way unhappy because of Rama’s misplaced enthusiasm in Savithri now. As for Rama, he has already begun his search for a soul mate and is looking forward to a time when he turns inward and prepares for his journey to eternity through Self-Realization. In Dissanayake’s opinion, Rama’s “relationship with Savithri serves to make him fully aware of his
spiritual heritage; it hastens his desire to search for the Absolute, for the Truth” (599).

Always in a pensive mood, Rama thinks: “Existence is a passage between life and death, and birth and death again, and what an accumulation of pain man has to bear” (TSR 135). And that is why he has been in search of “a Guru to end the cycle of birth and death” (TSR 125). Knowing that Rama is gradually drifting away from her, Madeleine tells him, “I want to run away from you one day, perhaps, I shall run away” (TSR 136). Madeleine has now regarded herself as mismatch for Rama. Lunching with Madeleine and Savithri, Rama says: “I may still be a yogi, some day I shall follow Sri Aurobindo, and abolish death” (TSR 139). This statement of Rama confirms Madeleine’s belief that Rama has been bored with her. Unfortunately, she fails to know that Rama’s “sadness was intellectual, abstract; it took refuge in his history and metaphysics” (TSR 139). Rama’s firm belief is that “Man is a stranger to this earth he must go” (TSR 148). He regrets being a Brahmin and his marriage with a foreigner. Because of these reasons, he has not been successful in the second and third objects and stages of life. But these failures prepare the ground for the most important stage - self-introspection.
As a Gruhastha, he tries to bring conjugal bliss to his wife, but it is a misplaced enthusiasm. He gives in to his "Indian instincts" (TSR 155), and it is vindicated when he advises Catherine in connection with her marriage with Georges: "Death and life are not opposite things but alternate events, like spring and winter, heat and monsoon" (TSR 155-56) For no fault of his own, he is not able to ingrain himself into the western culture totally. The schism between the sensibilities of Rama and Madeleine widens further because of his clinging to the real nature and purpose of life in the light of Indian philosophy. By playing the role of an elder brother, he conducts Catherine’s marriage and tries to uphold Dharma within his earthly ambience. At the same time, he is consistently inclined to the higher objects in life.

Before leaving for India to conduct the marriage of Saroja and to set things right on the home front, Rama writes to Uncle Charles to send Catherine to stay with the pregnant Madeleine during his absence and Uncle Charles obliges to do so. Thus Rama does not fully shirk his responsibility as a householder. He leaves for India, promising to be back soon but inwardly feeling that things will never be the same again. As soon as he lands in India, he feels so much at home again that automatically he begins to recite the Gayatri mantra – which he used to chant every day ever since he was initiated into the Vedas. According to Radhakrishnan,
“The Hindu *Gayatri* prayer is a perpetual quest for illumination” (*Present Crisis* 72). Rama recites it now because he wants to see the India of his inner being. He feels India to be continuity not only in space but also in time. Before the marriage ceremony commences, Rama feels ill and coughs a lot of blood. However, the marriage is conducted in a grand manner. As the head of the family, Rama has fulfilled his *Dharma* despite many slips.

During his stay in London, as usual, Rama’s words reveal his oscillation between worldly attachments and detachment. “I felt what I always know I am a pilgrim” (*TSR* 166). Like a pilgrim on a pilgrimage, Rama is passing through the earthly hurdles, ups and downs before he arrives at the shrine where his soul conquers the body. Slowly but steadily Rama seems to get oriented towards the third stage of life to understand his own self through Savithri: “Saint I had to become if I would know, not a saint of ochre and bone-bowl, but one which had known the extinction of the ego to know Savithri was to wake into the truth of life, to be remembered – unto God” (*TSR* 166). He realizes through Savithri that “I could be I.” In support of this, he recalls the famous saying of Yagnavalkya to his wife: “The husband does not love the wife for the wife’s sake, the husband loves the wife for the sake of the Self in her” (*TSR* 171).
What Rama has failed to see in Madeleine, he finds in abundance in Savithri. As Venkatachari points out, "Rama's association with Savithri gives him an integral vision and feeling" (155). She tells Rama that she is going to marry a person quite against her wishes. In her opinion, her fiancé is nice as a person but not suitable as a life partner. Dhawan says that Madeleine "is ready to be Rama's wife but not a member of his family. Marriage for Rama is much more than a personal bond between a man and a woman. He therefore does not give Madeleine the toe-rings" (188). The critic further says "A woman for a Vedantist is the temporal manifestation of the 'Brahman'" (188). She becomes important because it is through her that he can move towards a realization of the 'Self'. Madeleine finds it preposterous that a wife should have to submerge her own identity in order that her husband may achieve salvation. Hence, Rama presents the toe-rings to Savithri, and it is a symbolic union of their souls, which is rather a spiritual marriage. The union between Rama and Savithri that culminates ultimately in a fantastic ritual wedding "symbolizes the marriage of Being and Power to become the Divine" (Venkatachari 156). In spite of his love and affection for Madeleine, Rama often feels guilty because his mind is filled with thoughts about Savithri.
As Naik says:

It is his encounter with Savithri that makes Rama fully and truly conscious of his true spiritual heritage and his love for her becomes a steppingstone to his quest for the ultimate realization of Truth. Savithri, in this sense, becomes a Guru to him, before he set out to seek his Guru proper in the end. But Savithri's teachings do not take root in Rama's mind easily or effortlessly (Raja Rao 172)

In the heat of passion, both Rama and Madeleine hoped to draw spiritual inspiration from each other but their efforts prove to be futile later because their individual selves do not converge at the same point. Narasimhaiah observes that she fails to "participate in his life. In fact they [Rama and Madeleine] touched each other tangentially evading the deeper levels of being. Just when she was getting nearer to him she seemed 'so far that nearness was further than any smell or touch' " (Swan 182)

During his stay in India, Rama learns that Madeleine gave birth to a male child after a Caesarian operation and the baby died soon after. The sad news seems to cause neither pain nor relief to him, for he has achieved a mental poise that helps him to see things in a mood of detachment. Savithri, now in India, through a letter asks Rama whether he will marry her, for she feels that
marrying Pratap is like marrying a Turk, and every Hindu woman will prefer death to such a fate. Rama realizes that one can marry only after conquering one’s ego and he is not yet ripe for a marriage of souls. In his reply, Rama states that all brides should be Benares born, knowing that Savithri will grasp his meaning.

A few days later, Rama receives from Savithri another letter which informs that she has married Pratap to whom she will be a good wife and seeks his blessings. Now Savithri has realized that she has been married, as Bhalla says, “to the eternal in him and there Rama’s and Pratap’s truth become one ‘Absolute’ and all contradictions are resolved” (104) She came in his way and he utilized her company to experience a spiritual harmony amidst the pressures of his Gruhasthya stage. Pallan considers their symbolic marriage in London “a fusion of two souls achieving the Ultimate Truth which shows that both are servants of a higher ideal to which their individual inclinations are to be subordinated. Sensual love is sublimated into self-forgetful devotion” (48).

When Savithri revealed her intention to push him into another wedlock, Rama had made up his mind by then to release himself from such attachments. Before his departure for France, he spends a week in Bombay. Often his immaturity and lack of inconsistency impede his spiritual progress. He appears not to have mastered the art of freeing himself from temporal pleasures. He
lapses again into secular pleasures and his spiritual credo slides down in when he commits adultery with Lakshmi, wife of Captain Sham Sunder. At the moral level, Rama has not yet conquered the body Srivastava finds in Ramaswamy "a combination of the ordinary man and the extraordinary man. As an ordinary man, he is involved in sensual urges and emotional experiences, but his extraordinary mind enables him to maintain an attitude of philosophic idealism and psychological detachment" (60). This ambivalence often impedes his journey to the destination of Self-Realization.

Like the events in India that have moulded Rama and tempered his attitude as that of passivity and equanimity, the events that unfold themselves around Tom in *The Grapes of Wrath* season him and pave the way for his entry into the Vanaprasthya stage and the consequent exit from it into the final domain of his realization of his own self. While Rama falls a victim to his fleshly demands despite his spiritual foresightedness, Tom lapses into the wilderness, away from humanity for a time but his stay in the wilderness gives him a chance for some soul-searching and ethical introspection.

The Joads as a unit become smaller as a result of Connie's desertion and Casy's extraordinary sacrifice. Now, they confront the reality of migrant life in California. Tom, unable to control his
anger, feels like killing the deputies for their injustice and arrogance for they are trying "to make us cringe and crawl like a whipped bitch" (TGW 290). Ma Joad advocates patience: "Why, Tom - us people will go on livin' when all them people is gone. Why, Tom, we're people that live" (TGW 291). These words of Ma reveal her thorough understanding of life, her self-confidence, and optimism. Even adverse conditions and hostile natives cannot unsettle her faith and cause any harm to her inner strength and dynamism. In the absence of Jim Casy's spiritual guidance, Tom swerves from the chosen path momentarily but his mother who has now reaffirmed the role of his spiritual teacher more explicitly, and filled the vacuum left behind by Jim's arrest, alerts him appropriately.

Through the Wallaces, Tom understands that the Californians fear that the migrants will organize themselves and they define "red" as people who want higher wages. Hearing this, Tom decides that he must be a red (TGW 298), for he has already stepped into the shoes of Casy who has been in prison now. During the Saturday dance in the camp, Tom and Jule Vitela are posted at the gate to pick out the troublemakers. The deputy sheriffs are waiting in the cars outside the camp with guns. When the troublemakers try to provoke a fight, someone blows a whistle to alert the deputy sheriffs. However, the troublemakers are taken out before the
arrival of the deputies. They cannot harass the migrants because of the orderliness in the camp (TGW 356). Tom and others realize the truth that unity is strength – and that they succeed in driving the deputy sheriffs away. The tact of the migrants against the provocations of their enemies proves the efficacy of their organization.

Like Casey, Tom wants to take up public causes to get justice rendered to the underdogs. As Britch and Lewis say, "The Joad who talks the most, and whose thoughts are directed toward putting into action the 'I to We' principle is Tom" (103). The oppression inflicted by the natives and the deputies fail to subdue his spirit. The Californians, he says, make him feel more a 'man' and arouse his spirit. But he is different: "An' now I ain't ashamed. These folks is our folks" (TGW 319). Thus he regards the camp people as his 'folks'.

Since the Weedpatch Camp has ushered in the people's dignity, there is no room for antagonistic egocentricity there. Here, the group exerts more power than the individual. Tom's fight against injustice that is adharma, is part of his preparedness to elevate himself spiritually. Peaceful coexistence in life leads to speedy spiritual realization since the mind is free from cares and temporal concerns. Tom, as a yogi-novitiate maintains his balance of mind and tries to establish peace and harmony in the camp. It
reflects his inner peace and harmony, the benchmark of true understanding of one’s own self. Tom is shown as going ahead to the ultimate goal of life through his meaningful and purposeful existence.

After spending a month without any regular job or income in the Weedpatch Camp, the Joads move away towards Bakersfield. They earn picking peaches for five cents a box and feel slightly better. Their switch-over from Highway 66 to Highway 99 marks a turning point not only in their material life but also in their spiritual quest since such transitions are bound to steel the human spirit to face the realities in life and obtain composure in the process.

On the night of their arrival in the new camp, Tom goes out to find out the cause of the trouble that he has chanced to encounter in the morning. There, he meets Casy and some other men. Casy narrates the experiences that he has undergone in jail. When the prisoners were given bad food, they all protested in unison under the leadership of Casy and were successful in achieving their demands. According to Casy, fighting against injustice is "jus' as natural as rain. You didn’t do it for fun no way. Doin’ it 'cause you have to, 'cause it’s you“ (TGW 400). He recalls the consequences of the French Revolution and what happened to Abraham Lincoln and lays emphasis on human dignity and the importance of protecting it at any cost.
The leaders in the forefront of a struggle against injustice often sacrifice their lives for the fellow beings rallying behind them. So Casy is no exception to this age-old pragmatism. The deputy sheriffs ambush Casy and others and Casy's skull is crushed with a pick handle. He stares blindly at the light and breathes heavily, muttering. "Listen you fellas don' know what you're doin' You're helpin' starve the kids" (TGW 401). At this moment, a short heavy man quiet unexpectedly steps into the light and swings with the pick handle. In the words of Timmerman, Casy "dies with the echo of Christ on his lips His transformation is complete and extends beyond his death. He has changed his loyalty to the spirit of man and that spirit will endure, as is exemplified by Tom's picking up the bloody banner of the cause" (119). Tom takes a weapon and kills a deputy sheriff named George. Another man badly wounds Tom's face but Tom escapes back to the camp. Fontenrose comments on this aspect that Tom kills the vigilante and "becomes the new Moses who will lead the oppressed people, succeeding Jim Casy, who had found One Big Soul in the hills, as Moses had found the Lord on Mount Horeb" (Grapes of Wrath 792-93). Ziolkowski says that Jim Casy "is a good and moral man who suffers, a misguided idealist in a materialistic world, a servant of humanity" (27).
People who try to uphold dharma in life are fated to experience humiliation and physical torture. This dictum is applicable to Tom also since it has been so before and after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. When certain people don’t listen to reason and enact the roles of messengers of evil they should be resisted in all possible ways. The Indian epics The Mahabharata and The Ramayana enunciate this aspect of Indian philosophy that truth and dharma ultimately triumph. So in the novel The Grapes of Wrath, Tom is placed in a series of predicaments that shape him up into a vigorous searcher of the ultimate truth in life rather than bog him down. In fact, according to Kallapur, Casy’s death “is the physical death of one person and the spiritual birth of another” (207). The comment means that Tom takes Casy’s place.

Next morning, after having narrated what happened the previous night, Tom proposes to leave for an unknown destination rather than cause danger to the family, thus forcing himself into the Vanaprasthya stage. Since his first meeting with Jim Casy, Tom has considered Casy a Christ-figure. As Padovano observes that Casy’s initials J.C stands for Jesus Christ also, identify him with Christ, and his death completes the symbolism. He further states that “Casy dies as a martyr for his cause, leaving Tom Joad in his place as a disciple” (273).
Casy is a Guru who lit the path of spiritual illumination in the midst of suffering. In the death of Casy, Tom finds the death of his own interest in living for himself. When Tom avenges Casy’s death, the events subsequent to his escape have a salutary effect on him. He identifies himself with Casy so immensely that he avenges the killing of his spiritual Guru by killing the deputy who was responsible for the killing of a noble soul unjustly. Ziołkowski asserts

Jim Casy is a transfigured Jesus whose message of human solidarity and agrarian socialism discovered in the wilderness and perfected in a California jail, leads him to a violent death at the hands of the political and economic establishment whose interest he threatens. Among his followers he wins a Peter-like disciple in the person of Tom Joad, who strikes down his assailant, hears cocks crow, and for a time must deny his teacher before he too sets out to preach his message across the land (187).

Tom goes into hiding against his own will, as Bluefarb says, for “his flight now has a purpose larger than the flight itself. For, paradoxically, escape leads him directly back into the larger society of the social soul (as distinct from the oversoul)” (273). His mother
persuades him to get away as early as possible but he is reluctant to flee the expectant danger.

At the hideout, Tom is facilitated by his solitude and consequent introspection. He does a lot of thinking about Casy and to him Casy ever appears as a man of vision and a mission. Charles Doughtery says aptly, "Tom teaches in parables. [He] hidden in the cave and being ministered to by his mother is Christ in the Tomb. It is from there that Tom promises to be with us always. He disappears, but he does not die" (qtd in Martin 71). His thinking has already been inseparably merged with that of Casy and so he considers himself an extension of Casy's spirit. Great souls are always unselfish and fight for dharma. Casy has proved to be such a great soul and, no doubt, he has inspired Tom remarkably well.

Like Moses and others who escape by water before him, as Bluefarb observes, Tom "emerges from the "baptismal" immersion a new born man, who now realizes that he must take up the struggle where Casy had fallen" (99). As a result, he resolves to carry on the unfinished task of Casy even as his mother earnestly requests him to go to a big city like Los Angeles. Going to a big city implies melting into the crowds and also losing one's individuality. Tom is not afraid of losing his corporal frame since the soul, as he knows, is imperishable. Casy is very much mixed with Tom's being
and Tom's feelings and thoughts are oriented towards Casy's words:

Guess who I been thinking about? Casy! He talked a lot. Used to bother me. But now I been thinkin' what he said, an' I can remember - all of it. Says one time he went out in the wilderness to find his own soul that was his 'n. Says he foun' he jus' got a little piece of a great big soul. Says a wilderness ain't no good, 'cause his little piece of a soul wasn't no good, 'less it was with the rest, an' was whole. Funny, how I remember Didn't think I was even listenin'. (TGW 434)

As Tom's own soul is guided by Casy's, Tom envisages his joining Casy soon. The Hindu Scriptures say that the soul is Jivatma, which is part of the Great Soul, the Paramatma. Thus, merging into the Paramatma is the ultimate purpose in life. If the merger is expected to come about in a predictable way, one should be selfless, dedicated to the general welfare and willing to surrender to the Paramatma. One should rise above all the earthly encumbrances and inducements and allow one's soul to gravitate itself to the Whole. When one has come to understand what he considers his is not his, it serves as a first step into the transformation process of Self-Realization. So death, to such people, doesn't mean the end of all but rather the beginning of a
greater existence in the presence of the Almighty. This is evident from the words of Tom at the close of the novel:

Well, maybe, like Casy says, a fella ain't got a soul of his own, but on' y a piece of a big one — an' then —. Then I'll be aroun' in the dark. I'll be ever'where — wherever you look. Whenever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever they's cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there. See? God, I'm talkin' like Casy. Comes of thinkin' about him so much. Seems like I can see him sometimes” (TGW 436).

So Tom Joad has taken a well-marked course of action and he doesn't want to flinch from that. What is done is done as per the grand design of God. Tom has conducted himself through all the stages in tune with the objects and purpose of life, as enunciated in the Indian philosophical system. However, most of the human beings die faceless and nameless without realizing the Ultimate Truth, and they regard death as the end of all and do not know how to arrive back safely and creditably at the place from where they came. Only people like Tom, a Mahatma, can take the Jivatma all along the trials in life to get at the destination where the real purpose of life materializes. Tom has undergone the progressive stages and paved the way for the smooth transformation from the
world of realities into the world of divinity. His life has made a full circle and been rounded off with *Self-Realization*.

_Lutwack is of the opinion:_

Tom Joad's "death" brings an end to his ordinary existence as one of thousands of Okies; he is reborn into the life of the epic hero, who dooms himself to an early death as soon as he elects a heroic course of action. His consecration is affirmed by his discipleship to Casy and the ritual release performed by his mother. If there is a resurrection, it is the resurrection of Casy in Tom. (58-9)

In the midst of people like Al Joad with shortsighted earthly goals, Tom presents a sharp contrast and stands apart from his own siblings. That makes Tom the most cherished of all the characters in the novel and the best suited for quicker *Self-Realization*. As Kallapur says, even as they have been losing their material possessions and physical hardships, "the Joads have been evolving spiritually" (207). Starting as a parolee, Tom ends as a fugitive. Materially he has been reduced to the condition of an animal. "Ideologically, however, he has learned through suffering - his own, Casy's, that of his family, that of their kind at large. He too must live now for something like the Emersonian Oversoul" (Martin 71).
Towards the end of the novel, when Ma thanks Mrs. Wainright for her help, she also expresses her realization that in their present predicament the people must help not only their own family, but everyone: "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" (TGW 470). In this respect, her thoughts are analogous to those of Jim Casy and Tom Joad. Also we find a kind of transformation in Rose of Sharon who displays a spark of selflessness and general concern for people when she breast-feeds the starving man. According to Martin Shockley, her act represents the "resurrective aspect of Christ" (701). This view is supported by Kiernan who says that the final scene of the book was designed to "reflect their awakening awareness of the fact that their survival depended on their willingness to shed their selfish insularity and become integrated into the much larger human family of which all people are a part" (237). This compassionate act of Rose of Sharon affirms the continuity of life and the people. Her noble action marks the revival of life and as Kiernan observes "the completion of their education," that is, their attainment of Self-Realization. McCarthy compares Rose of Sharon's sacrifice to Tom's going forth to lead and preach. He further says, "Casy's gospel, the vision of Tom Joad, the strength and sacrifice of the women, and Steinbeck's essential humanity, all gain some realization in this final scene" (86).
Tom radiates selflessness and people around him are also influenced by selflessness. As the proverb goes, one lighted candle lights many more candles. While Tom is going ahead of the rest, his selfless service takes a visible shape and thereby equips himself to confront the last and most challenging task of understanding the innermost truth of human existence. Like Tom, who has already gained entry into the Vanaprasthya stage, circumstances around Rama too force him to seek refuge in the realm of divinity which is almost unapproachable to most of the people in the world. Tom and Rama are spiritually adventurous and there is a backdrop behind both of them to guide and mould them to vanquish the material in favor of the spiritual.

Like Tom, Rama in *The Serpent and the Rope* makes full preparations for his final exit from the ephemeral. Madeleine is a Catholic, but plays the role of a dutiful Hindu wife. However, her newly developed fondness for an alien, Rama whom she has married, and his background slowly gives way to Buddhism and it is largely effected by Rama's sense of disillusionment on account of his different style of living apparently uprooted from the one which he holds dear to his heart. The initial façade of their matrimonial happiness is marred by the cracks that develop between the two different types of thinking manifold in Rama and Madeleine. Rama tries to find his own self in Madeleine but it results in a miserable
failure. His visits to his motherland pull him away from the earthly, especially his visits to some holy places in India and his meetings with Savithri. Many critics regard Savithri as a symbol of Indian womanhood representing Sakthi on the one hand and the mythological Savithri of Satyavan on the other. In the words of Iyengar, Rama finds in Savithri “a spiritual affinity”, though she finds in him the same, in addition to a physical match (401). The process of Rama’s Self-Realization is set in motion after his association with Savithri.

Rama exhibits a sense of detachment and objectivity in his role as the head of his family. Ravenscroft puts it in a nutshell:

Rama’s marriage to Madeleine breaks down, but through his ideal, ‘platonic’ love of Savithri, which endures even her real marriage to another [Pratap Singh], he begins to realize himself and his Indian heritage and goes on to seek out a guru who can vouchsafe the vision of Truth the novel maps this spiritual quest of Rama’s. (232)

Likewise, Tom is not upset over deaths and desertions in his family; Rama too is not perturbed by the death of his father and his two infants successively. As Jim Casy and his message are the media for Tom Joad to ascend towards the Unknown, Rama’s
Indian roots and his association with Savithri serve as the media to enable him to elevate himself up to *Self-Realization*.

When Rama and Madeleine were shortsighted and looking for thoughtless satiety of physical union, they were blinded by lust not by love. On his arrival in France, as Sharma observes, Rama “tries hard to enter into a sacred relationship with his wife, Madeleine, but their relationship fails at all three levels: sacred, kinship and passion” (97). Very soon both of them realize that the true purpose of life is not to fulfill just the physical and temporal aspects but go beyond them to realize the real purpose of life -- attainment of *Self-Realization*. Rama says that one does not love another person for himself or for herself, but for the Self in him or her. As Harrex puts it aptly, his “search for the meaning of self and existence (which results in the equation existence = ‘I’) culminates not in the isolation of love (Paradise) but in the isolation of ascetic meditation (Truth)” (167).

Madeleine leads a stoically ascetic life. In a way, her voluntary aloofness helps Rama to quicken his steps towards *Self-Realization*. Rama turns to the other side of his personality with undivided attention. Now the path is clear and there is a glimmer of light in the presence of Savithri all along the way that is generally enshrouded in the darkness of human ignorance and illusions. To him, Savithri appears as a spiritual companion and one who has
enthused his spiritual awakening that was dormant in him for a long time. The ancient Hindu Scriptures expound that man and woman are complementary and one can realize one’s self in the other’s. Savithri the torchbearer of Rama’s spiritual pilgrimage, having initiated the process in him, goes on to enter a married life with Pratap Singh, as advised by Rama. But Rama does not want to turn back and makes quick paces to accelerate the spiritual growth in him for his ultimate release from the maya.

The rift between Rama and Madeleine keeps on widening steadily. Now both husband and wife having gone through the impulsive necessities of married life, look forward to getting spiritual enlightenment in two different ideological religious modes. Wealth, domestic intimacy, and progeny take a backseat at a certain point in their married life. They have thus understood the essence of life and gone out of their material confinement towards spiritual elevation. Modes may be different to reach the goal but both of them try to get at the ineffable truth of human life. In short, they are all set to initiate themselves into the process of *Self-Realization*.

Rama attempts to explain his meaning to Madeleine with an analogy, that of the serpent and the rope. In the dark it is possible to take a rope for a serpent. The rope stands for reality while the serpent does not exist. It is the Guru who brings the light of
knowledge with which one can see that the rope is only a rope. It is this illusion of one's eyes which makes one see the serpent, and the truth is that there neither is nor ever was a serpent.

In spite of the strong call of the holy Ganges and of the Himalayan trees, Rama does not feel like going to India, for Rama is at a decisive end: "I must leave this world, I must leave, leave this world. But Lord, where shall I go, where? How can one go anywhere? How can one go from oneself?" (TSR 399). So the spirit of enquiry has set in him.

Madeleine too has chosen her path leading to the ultimate goal of life. She says that her body is only an illusion made of the eighteen aggregates. "Brother", she says, almost begging Rama, "do not worry over this sorry moss of flesh" (TSR 313). Moreover, she says as if it were a prayer, "I am a sadhaka – my Buddhism is very serious. Be a good Brahmin, Rama" (TSR 314).

When Madeleine has a wound in her foot, Rama cleans it with boric acid. She has become so shy of exposing any part of her body that even getting her to stretch out her leg is difficult. She covers the whole of her leg and allows him just to touch her foot. Madeleine addresses her husband as brother and it marks the beginning of her Self-Realization. Simultaneously Rama's Vanaprasthya stage comes to an end and the final goal of Self-Realization is now within his reach.
After this strange meeting, Rama returns to Paris where he lives alone in a seventh floor room, which commands a view of the entire city of Paris. Hinduism talks of a maximum of seven rebirths during which a human soul must plan its earliest opportunity to rejoin the Paramatma. One need not wait for any successive rebirths and try to realize the Ultimate Truth as early as possible. From this point of view, we may assume that Rama has come to the extreme end of the secular world planned and has to design his merger into the Great Soul – the part into the Whole. His stay on the seventh floor may symbolically suggest his expediency towards Self-Realization. Rama heeds to Madeleine’s advice and completes the legal formalities of a divorce.

Meanwhile, he has completed his thesis, which is being translated into French before submitting it to the university. Now his mind is full of inquisitive ideas. His external participation in the earthly affairs has come to a dead end at which his inner voyage commences. Impelled by an awareness of the Absolute beckoning him back, Rama chooses Travancore, his real Benares as the spot of his spiritual Guru. The unidentified Guru symbolizes the Absolute. Rama hopes to burn his physical attachments in the Guru’s spiritual flame and merge into the Unknown. He realizes that it is not the God whom he is longing for: “No, not God, but a Guru is what I need. Oh, Lord, my Guru, my Lord” (TSR 402). He
cries, "Lord, Lord, my Guru, come to me, tell me; give me thy touch, vouchsafe." Rama sees his Guru in his vision as "the light of the sun" sitting "as the formless form of Truth" and "reveals what is known. To such a Truth was I taken, and I became its servant. I kissed the perfume of its Holy Feet, and called myself a disciple." (TSR 403) Naik observes

The end of Rama's quest at the feet of his Guru is in keeping with the spiritual tradition of India which gives the Guru the highest place in man's quest for truth. "The Guru is Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesa; he is the Ultimate Reality Itself", declares a Sanskrit verse. "If you would know the Eternal, humbly approach a Guru devoted to Brahman," says the Mundaka Upanishad (I II 12) (Raja Rao 91-2)

Rama has acquired a picture of his Guru and the books written by him and feels a new exaltation. Travancore, the abode of his Guru, now appears to him to be far above the Ganges and the Jamuna. When Georges and Catherine say that they want to go to Benares, Rama replies that they should rather go to Travancore which has no crocodiles or funeral pyres, unlike Benares. Towards the end of the novel To a God Unknown Joseph is said to be "happy" according to Father Angelo (TGU 181). Similarly Rama
hopes to taste the "chocolate" (TSR 406) of Self-Realization in the end.

Both the protagonists have made a full circle. They have gone through the various stages in life and experienced all the conflicts, both outer and inner, in quite unambiguous terms. Their graph of existence presents a clear and steady progress in their quest for understanding the real purpose and meaning of life. Like an ore processed and purified by adopting stringent and strenuous standards, their souls encased in their physical frames are often subjected to the ills of human existence. Human existence is concrete and explicitly experienceable while spiritual pre-eminence is felt and implicitly understood in terms of higher thinking.

The life-situations of Rama and Tom are radically different. There is a marked and guarded growth of their personalities. They live for their own selves in the initial stages and go through the vicissitudes of life in a subjective and indulgent manner. But once a certain level of spiritual progress is made, the subjectivity and involvement in the objects of material life disappear. Since Tom's material life mired in a struggle for survival, his transformation from subjectivity to objectivity and his journey through Artha, Kama and Dharma appear to be dramatic. In fact, some critics have pointed out that his sudden transformation from complete materialism to selfless spirituality is rather unconvincing. But one
can argue that such changes in Tom's attitude and character are in consonance with his impulsive personality. Moreover, Tom begins to come under the influence of Jim Casy only when they are landed in California. So Casy's influence has been working as an undercurrent and at a critical moment, it emerges ebulliently making some readers feel that Tom's transformation from 'I' to 'We' is rather sudden. On the other hand, Rama has in his soul ingrained the common pilgrimage that every Indian makes at the inner level. So in his case, the transformation from 'I' to 'We' is quite smooth and organic. One can say that both the protagonists identify their individual souls with the Supreme Soul in their own unique ways, conditioned by their domestic and social environments. Both Rama and Tom are clearly portrayed as reaching the peak of Self-Realization with a neat framework of stages and objectives they acted out within the parameters of discernible realities.

In conclusion, both the protagonists Tom and Rama rise from humble beginnings and have all the human foibles and follies. However, they are not without any direction and a certain thinking about a voyage into one's own self has been dominating all their actions and movements. Like every one of us on the earth, they too face problems and taste of pleasures with their concomitant necessary evils. Now and then the evil in them distracts their divine
orientation but they get through all of the happenings with immense courage and abiding faith in the Paramatma— the Absolute. The stages of life mark their progressive stages of sophistication and gradual detachment. When the detachment is decisive and complete, they see light at the end of the tunnel— Self-Realization, the ultimate goal in one’s life.