CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The world we live in is undivided and everything in the world, every detail in it, even the smallest detail, speaks of the wholeness of the world. If a being, before it begins to exist, were in the position to describe our world, on the basis of one single detail at its disposal, it would, if it could do so logically, build up an adequate picture of the world. Man, with his myriad faculties, has a metaphysical urge to go deep into the question of existence, birth and death.

There is no physical kingdom without the spiritual kingdom; there is no human reason without the Divine Reason and there is no human soul without the Soul or Spirit of God. The purpose of man is the purpose of God. Therefore, to be one with Him is the destiny of man. The perfection of man is based upon self-conscious aspiration. The supreme ideal before man is the spiritual ideal and the sole object of man is to become a whole man.

The summum bonum or the ultimate destiny of man lies in the realization of the four ends or objects of human life. The pursuit of wealth (Artha) and happiness (Kama) is not an illegitimate human aspiration provided they are gained through the ways of righteousness. The spiritual freedom of man Moksha is
mainly based upon Dharma. Each of the states of Purushartha requires an ethical discipline. The purpose of life is to emerge from limitations and imperfection of ignorance to fullness and wisdom.

So Self-Realization is the ultimate purpose of human existence. Very few people realize it in the world through their earthly existence. The protagonists of Steinbeck and Raja Rao are such people who attain the ultimate purpose through the four stages of human existence as outlined in the Indian philosophical system. The thesis based its hypothesis on the tenets of Hindu philosophy and applied those tenets to the main characters of the two great novelists of the twentieth century, John Steinbeck and Raja Rao.

Many religions emphasize that Self-Realization is man's chief goal in life. That the individual soul is part of the Universal soul is the culmination of his spiritual life. All other beings live according to the physical laws of Nature. But man alone has to create his own laws in tune with the natural laws to perfect and harmonize his physical, social, moral, intellectual and spiritual life.

Hinduism is one such religion that directs one towards this purpose. Hinduism comprises five cardinal virtues and they are well exemplified in the ideal characters in Indian epics and puranas. Hinduism preaches four great paths or Yogas, which lead us to
Self-Realization: Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Gana Yoga and Raja Yoga.

One can choose any one of the yogic approaches or great paths to guide oneself to Self-Realization through the four stages or ashramas of life. According to the Vedic social system, the life of a Hindu has been broadly divided into four ashramas or stages: Brahmacharya, Gruhasthya, Vanaprasthya and Sanyasa.

Of all the four stages, the stage of sanyasa is the last and final stage. All the first three stages culminate in this most important stage for Self-Realization, since renunciation is the effacement of Self – a transformation from ‘I’ to ‘we’ and so a difficult task to carry out in life.

Ontological and teleological questions concerning the nature and purpose of being are raised and variously answered in speculative and religious philosophies of both the Eastern and Western tradition. Literature too is an area of human expression wherein man has often tried to find answers to the questions such as “who am I?” and “What is my destiny?” The way two writers belonging to different countries, cultures and ethos have tried to answer the above questions shows that though they belong to different ecological situations, their basic belief and Weltanschauung are surprisingly similar. In this thesis, this factor gave rise to a worthwhile comparative study of the two authors,
one from the East and the other from the West and of their philosophical bases and views on the nature and purpose of human existence.

In their novels, Steinbeck and Raja Rao are basically concerned with the relationship between man and his environment. The former writes his novels on the problems faced by man in his physical, social and economic environment in the particular context of Western California. Raja Rao shapes his fiction on man's struggles to fit himself in a suitable spiritual and physical environment. Both the novelists have been considerably influenced by Indian philosophical concepts such as the Advaita principle, which attempts to provide an answer to the perennial questions posed by man over the ages. The thematic affinity between them and their personal experience in the realm of the intangible call for a comparative study of their novels.

In the three novels by Steinbeck - *To a God Unknown* (1933), *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) and *East of Eden* (1952) and the three by Raja Rao - *Kanthapura* (1938) *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) and *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965), despite the East-West divide in terms of cultural and civilizational parameters, the authors share a common platform to delve deep into the nature and purpose of human existence through their fictional explorations of human experience.
The problem identified in the novels taken up for comparative study was approached through the four *ashramas* (stages) of life - *Brahmacharya, Gruhasthya, Vanaprasthya*, and *Sanyasa* and the four objects or *Purusarthas* of life - *Artha, Kama, Dharma* and *Moksha* laid down in the ancient Indian philosophical system.

*Self-Realization* through *Karma Yoga* and one may safely place Moorthy of Kanthapura in the Indian philosophical system and juxtapose him with the character Joseph Wayne in *To a God Unknown*. Like Moorthy, Joseph too exhibits the nature of his life and eventually reaches the point of looking ‘inward’. Two different settings, one from the East and the other from the West, have many parallels in terms of their aspirations, struggles and spiritual successes.

Joseph’s desire for land and a wife reveals that he passes through the first two objects of life - *artha* and *kama*. His isolation from his family marks his physical detachment or liberation and his real journey of life towards the ultimate spiritual liberation begins. Moorthy aspires to be a man of high position in life through his higher studies. He has his other material aspirations. But his spiritual contact with the Mahatma in his holy vision rids him of his interest in *Artha* and *Kama* and *Dharma* takes their place. He becomes a self-effacing personality and moves from the egocentric level to an altruistic level. He does not want to live for himself.
alone anymore and strives to uphold the *Dharma* of universal welfare. Both Joseph and Moorthy pass through the intermediary stages of *Kama*, *Artha* and *Dharma* before they reach the final and much coveted goal of *Self-Realization*.

Initially, both the protagonists, Joseph and Moorthy use the lower physical plane as a springboard to reach the higher spiritual plane. Their outward projection is always deep-rooted in a kind of consciousness trying to elevate itself to the higher reaches of the Unknown. The physical means help them to go ahead progressively on the path of duty (*Karma Yoga*) and once the means have served the purpose of leading them to *Self-Realization*, they lose their interest in the material society and start on a more meaningful quest towards the inevitable and inescapable reunion with the Absolute.

When his *Vanaparasthya* state comes into vogue, Moorthy, now matured in his outlook and perception of things, acquires all the requisite courage and confidence to brush aside all the tantalizing earthly baits that come in his way with a sense of detachment that befits a *Sanyasin*. He identifies himself with the rest of the people of Kanthapura, cutting across all man-made barriers like caste, religion, status and so on, since he is fully equipped as a *Sanyasin*. Likewise, Joseph takes the death of his wife with a sense of objectivity and parts from his only child by way
of giving away to his sister-in-law Rama. Now Joseph is all set to enter into the stage of Sanyasin, free from all ‘unreal’ encumbrances. The task that he sets for himself is not motivated by selfishness but motivated by a sense of self-sacrifice. His sacrifice is rewarded and in essence he has crucified himself for the farm and for its people at the micro level and symbolically the Universe at the macro level.

Both Joseph and Moorhty achieve their goal of Self-Realization heroically. In the four stages and four objects of life enunciated in the Indian philosophy, their struggles, their trials, the perils they encountered, the service rendered to their people, their sufferings and achievements have many parallels.

Joseph Wayne, as a married man, passes through all the four stages and objects of life. As a result, his approach to the last stage gets delayed. Moorhty, being a celibate, begins to comprehend the deepest mysteries of life early and so cuts short the Artha and Kama stages. However, his interest to pursue higher studies and plan to get married when his mother advises him to do so are certainly the two intermediary objects in life. But he is able to free himself from all these ephemeral attractions in favor of his exploration into the Unknowable.

Bhakti Yoga is equally a proper path for Self-Realization and many dedicated persons attain Self-Realization by following that
path, of whom Adam Trask of *East of Eden* and Ramakrishna Pai of *The Cat and Shakespeare* are remarkable examples.

At the first stage of life - *Brahmacharya*, Adam proves to be a pacifist as a soldier and an obedient son. He hates hurting anyone for any purpose. He leads a life of *Dharma* and plays down *Artha* and *Kama*. His counterpart, Ramakrishna, who is introduced at the *Gruhasthya* stage, is interested in, and inclined towards, the earlier objects of life - *Artha* and *Kama*.

Unmindful of Adam Trask’s lofty nature, his wife Cathy betrays and assaults him, but he never does anything to stain the marital sanctity. He regards the institution of marriage as holy and willingly becomes its *Bhakta* or devotee. Cathy’s nonchalance and treachery really enhance the character of Adam and elevate him spiritually to a god-like figure.

Pai too is devoted to his wife Saroja and wants to attain fulfillment through conjugal relationship. But Saroja distances herself from her husband by denying him spiritual companionship and goes close to materialism. This results in her failure to honor her commitment to her husband for life through the sacred marriage. Pai therefore is forced to search for a worthy soul mate found deficient in Saroja. Shantha comes to make up for the deficiency and Pai’s mind now becomes absolutely free and prepares itself to discard all the attachments. He does the
Samanya dharma to his satisfaction while preparing the groundwork for the Vishesh dharma with the help of his spiritual Guru, Govindan Nair and Shantha. He settles all his commitments and his mind is free. By following the path shown by his Guru, Nair and led by the “Mother Cat”, he realizes the ultimate goal of life – Self-Realization.

One could find a parallel to this in Adam also. Adam showers his love and affection on Cathy who fails to comprehend his innate goodness. As a husband bound by the ethics of a Gruhasthya, Adam adheres to his Dharma fervently. The exposure that Cathy is a whore rings the curtains down once for all for his interest in temporal human existence. He experiences the emptiness at the center of human existence in the absence of a spiritual light. Adam does full justice to this of the Samanya dharma and marriage to him is a kind of Bhakti or devotion and so sacred. Adherence to things or persons steadfast is also a path of Self-Realization in the Indian philosophical system. Adam precisely does this in the novel East of Eden and successfully finds himself on the path of Bhakti Yoga leading to Self-Realization.

Tom Joad in The Grapes of Wrath and Ramaswamy in The Serpent and the Rope, reach the peak in Self-Realization through Gnana Yoga by proceeding along life as everyone else in the world with all the failings and trivialities that lie at the center of human
existence. When the novel opens, Tom is a *Brahmachari* and Ramaswamy a *Gruhastha*.

Tom's meeting with Jim Casy, the ex-preacher, brings out the divine in Tom. He has been undergoing the experience of *Brahmacharya* and simultaneously discharging his duties as the eldest and most responsible son within the fold of the Joads' family as one would expect of a Gruhastha. 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*.

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. Rama as a *Gruhastha* is full of inexpressible miseries in the absence of a deeper compatibility with his spouse Madeleine. 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 of or idea about his destination. 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.
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 Gruhasthya, which is yet another step to measure the worth of the ultimate goal of understanding oneself.

Strictly speaking, Tom 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 stage of his life.

Casy has been a source of inspiration for Tom to pace up to the next stage in life. Tom 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. An external force that is not in the form of a human being, but in the form of a collective consciousness deeply immersed in the Indian ethos too inspires Rama.

Rama sees his half sister Saroja settled in life. He helps Madeleine's cousin Catherine get married. Thus, he strives to uphold dharma within his earthly ambience. At the same time, he is consistently inclined to the higher objects. As the head of the family, Rama has fulfilled his Dharma despite against teething problems. The process of Rama's Self-Realization is set in motion after his association with Savithri. 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*.

Tom’s identity with Casy is complete and marks his transformation from ‘I’ to ‘We’. He realizes that he is not a separate part but part of a Whole, that is, part of humanity, part of the Universal Soul. 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. He 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*.

Both Tom Joad and Rama 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. 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. They
insisted on raising questions about the deepest mysteries of human existence and solving them through *Self-Realizations*.

Of the six protagonists discussed in the thesis, Joseph Wayne of *To a God Unknown* and Adam Trask of *East of Eden* attain *Self-Realization* in death. All the other protagonists – Tom Joad of *The Grapes of Wrath*, Moorthy of *Kanthapura*, Ramaswamy of *The Serpent and the Rope* and Ramakrishna Pai of *The Cat and Shakespeare* – attain *Jivan-mukti*. In the words of Mahadevan, “The attainment of Brahman-bliss need not synchronize with the decease of the body. The *Jivan-mukta* is he who is released even while being embodied. There is for him the persistence of the body until the fruition of the residue of *prarabdha-karma*” (282).

Consequent on a psychic change at one point of time in life, generally late in their lives, all the protagonists withdraw from their physical life tempered with earthly pleasures and burdened with temporal attachments, into a world of serenity and quietness. The psychic change puts them in contact with the immanent Divine, the Divine who is at the centre of each being and of whom the psychic being (*Atma*) is the vesture and the expression. “By the psychic change,” the Mother says, “one passes from the individual Divine to the Universal Divine and finally to the Transcendent.”

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*Prarabdha-karma*: that part of the accumulated effect of past deeds which has begun to effect with the creation of the present body and which is responsible for the continuance of the body even after release is attained through knowledge; it is destroyed only when its force is spent by suffering.
(qtd. in Jauhar 8). The psychic change that the protagonists have undergone helps them to experience the spiritual change which puts them directly in contact with the Supreme. They have attained the requisite psychic change (Self-Realization) at the end of their journey of life. They have been successful in realizing the real nature and purpose of human existence and are heading towards the spiritual change.

At present, mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny. A stage has been reached in which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development, while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way.

Man has created a system of civilization, which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding. He has his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilize and manage a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites. Sri Aurobindo has provided a solution. He has rightly stressed that a perfected human world cannot be created by men who are themselves imperfect. With equal emphasis, he has declared the egocentric gospel of individual liberation.

In Sri Aurobindo's words, "To become ourselves is the one thing to be done; but the true 'ourSelf' is that which is within us, and to exceed our outer Self of body, life and mind is the condition
for this highest being, which is our true and divine being, to become Self-revealed and active” (qtd. in Diwakar XIII).

Man is busy expanding his knowledge of the physical world and trying to extend control over things external to himself. His adventures in many areas are exciting and intoxicating. The tragedy of the present age, however, lies elsewhere. It is in the partial, yet fatal, neglect of our inner selves. The research of modern science in that direction has been too recent and too inadequate. A far greater effort and spirit of adventure is necessary for utilizing the spiritual knowledge available here and to explore further avenues for the control and conquest of the inner power of consciousness.

Whether we realize it or not, it is out of the Vast Unknown, the Ananda (Bliss) of the Upanishads, that we all come. It is in that Supreme Ananda, we live, and move, and have our being, and into It again we eventually merge. “From Ananda all these beings are born, by Ananda they exist and grow, to Ananda they return” (Taittriya Upanishad 3.6). We have our all too brief spell of conscious life here but we know neither the many subtler folds of consciousness nor our beginning, nor our end. And yet, we have glimpses in fortunate moments of our intimacy and integration with the uncharted ocean of Being and Becoming – and of the
*Purushottam* – wherein both Being and Becoming find their synthesis and meaning.

At present, man has many comforts at his disposal. Instead of making use of them for refining his life style and elevating himself spiritually, he embraces willfully a demoniac state and intensifies his physical suffering, unsettles his mental harmony and deviates from the salubrious path of spirituality. Even legislators and parliamentarians in the law-making bodies conduct themselves in objectionable ways instead of maintaining decency and decorum. Violence, and violation of human rights have become the order of the age all over the world.

Education, which in the past uplifted the souls of our forefathers to greater heights, has not been taught properly to serve its purpose. If a value-based education had been imparted, the fourteen-year old Florida boy Nathaniel Brazill would not have killed his own teacher Barry Grunow on 26th May 2000, and got twenty-eight years’ prison term for homicide (The New Indian Express 28th July, 2001. p.11) The education of this age is bereft of spiritualism; it breeds only absolute materialism. True education builds the character of scholar and makes him a man in the truest sense of the word. What Tiruvalluvar (Bharati, Trans. 83 & 89) says on education and wisdom in two couplets may be apt to quote here:
Lore worth learning, learn flawlessly
Live by that learning thoroughly.

(couplet 391)

Wisdom’s weapon wards off all woes
It is a fort defying foes.

(couplet 421)

Many unpleasant and avoidable actions and happenings perpetuate our miseries, because the nature and purpose of our life is not spiritually oriented. We all should be truly religious and spiritual to be good. Gandhi is right, when he says: “A truly religious person becomes a citizen of the world, but the service of one’s own country is the stepping stone to the service of humanity. And where service is rendered to the country consistently with the welfare of the world, it finally leads to Self-Realization” (qtd. in Muthuraman 94).

People, who are highly evolved, attain a blissful state towards the end of their spiritual journey. But most ordinary people do not know that attainment of the blissful condition is the essential nature of man. We accept joys and sorrows but try to attain a state in which sorrows cease without realizing that our true nature is blissful. Joy is the intrinsic nature of the Self (Atman) and it is sorrow, which is alien to it and comes from outside the Self. So the
whole object of spiritual exercise is to gain the knowledge of the Self as a result of which sufferings of the material world will not afflict any more. Self-knowledge and bliss are one and the same, and are the two sides of the same coin. Most of our problems arise due to the transient nature of the source of our happiness. Even the knowledge of a state in which it is possible to experience eternal joy, gives a sense of peace within, when one embarks upon the spiritual quest. Such a spiritual quest is evident in the fictional writings of John Steinbeck and Raja Rao.

Several material barriers separate Steinbeck and Raja Rao. Besides them, their cultural mores are also dissimilar but they have transcended all the material and cultural barriers to think about a universal problem of creating heaven on earth.

Man is complete when he understands himself and his Self. Man's never-ending quest for Self-Realization figures in the works of both the writers. Their narration and characterization agree with the essentials of Indian philosophy. Their characters hail from different cultural and social backgrounds but share the common goal.

Raja Rao, being brought up on Indian cultural heritage and philosophies, had no difficulty in imbibing the truths of nature and human existence. But Steinbeck had no such opportunity to strike root in the Indian ethos. However, in their fictional writings
Steinbeck and Raja Rao have addressed certain basic questions regarding the nature and purpose of human existence. The Vedic concepts and the Vedanta philosophy echo in their works explicitly and implicitly.

Man can afford to buy material comforts everywhere. Stress on materialism is obviously more in the Western context. Based on the physical aspects of life, humanity is divided into classes. But man's psychological states and attitudes towards the bigger issues revolve on birth, growth and death. Man has to face challenges from 'within' and 'without' and fight natural forces in different contexts and geographical variations. But every one comes to discuss peace and harmony.

People share certain basic aspects of life, which remain unchanged forever. The fear of death and meaninglessness to avoid death are part of man's consciousness and he is at a loss to solve the deepest mysteries of life.

In the novels of John Steinbeck and Raja Rao, we come across various characters placed in various situations and weighed down by their own religious and moral problems, adopting a common goal in the evening of their lives. They insist on trying to understand the nature and purpose of human existence through Self-Realization. Their protagonists represent all those who try to look beyond the physical and the superficial. They have aspirations,
likes and dislikes and limitations. They grow by way of refining themselves through the four stages or Ashramas. When looking at them from the angle of the Indian philosophical system, they suffer, realize certain things and leave certain things unfinished. Their successes and failures help them to see life in its entirety and finally get driven towards the source of Ultimate Truth. They overcome social, economic and religious compulsions and at last share a common platform on which their selfishness is transferred into selflessness, since they offer scope not only for similarities at the physical level but also at the spiritual level.

The research problem of this thesis tried to get certain insights from the fictional writings of the two great novelists from a particular angle. The Indian philosophical system, especially the Vedanta philosophy was taken as a backdrop against which the theme of Self-Realization was superimposed. The Indian philosophical system was not addressed to the fictional writings in question in its totality. Since nobody has attempted a comparative study of these novelists and looked at their works from this point of view, this thesis augurs a fresh comparative study or studies involving both the novelists. Research in future may be undertaken to make further explorations into the novels. It is believed that this thesis will initiate further openings to approach John Steinbeck and Raja Rao in terms of some other aspects of Indian thoughts. For
instance, both the writers being philosophically rooted, the question of what concept of the Self has been evolved by Steinbeck, with his Greako-Roman background and interest in the Eastern philosophical system, and by Raja Rao, with his Vedantic background but getting thoroughly exposed to Western philosophical system, and what kinds of parallels and contrasts can be drawn further between these two. All these musings may help resurrect the words of ancient wisdom from one of the Upanishads

Yadv sarve pramuchyantē kama ēayas khrudī srītāha
Atha martyrāmrutō bhavatyastra Bramha samasnutē
When all desires clinging to one’s heart fall off, then a mortal becomes immortal (and he) attains Brahman here

(Katha Upanishad II III.14)