ABSTRACT

This thesis entitled "Nature and Purpose of Human Existence Fictional Realizations in John Steinbeck and Raja Rao" attempts to study analogically the theme of self-realization in select novels of John Steinbeck and Raja Rao, in the light of the four stages or Ashramas of life and the four objects of life or Purushartha as enunciated in the Indian Philosophical system.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the research problem with reference to the tenets of Indian philosophy and justifies the need for a comparative study of these seemingly dissimilar writers.

Chapter Two discusses how Joseph Wayne of To a God Unknown (1933) by John Steinbeck and Moorthy of Kanthapura (1938) by Raja Rao attain Self-Realization through Karma Yoga. Both the protagonists realize the oneness of all beings and from the beginning their words and deeds prove the truth of this Advaita principle. Joseph sacrifices himself not to perpetuate himself but to perpetuate life on earth by bringing down the life-giving water. The water of life. Likewise, Moorthy attains Self-Realization through his selfless service for the people of Kanthapura.

Chapter Three examines how Adam Trask of East of Eden (1952) by Steinbeck and Ramakrishna Pai of The Cat and Shakespeare (1965) attain Self-Realization through Bhakti Yoga. Bhakti Yoga is a method of attaining release through love and loyalty to God. Bhakti towards one's Sakti (wife) and Bhakti towards the Unknowable Sakti (the God Unknown) are complementary at one stage. The concept of Ananthanareswara accords a pre-eminent position to woman who is regarded as Sakti in Hindu theology. Hence, woman is holy, worshipful and worthy of
devotion. This chapter shows how the two husbands use their devotion to their wives as a path of Self-Realization.

Chapter Four traces the evolutionary stages of Tom Joad of *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) by Steinbeck and Ramaswamy of *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) by Raja Rao and how they attain Self-Realization through Gnana Yoga. Gnana Yoga is the knowledge of the true nature of the self and the world. Its aim is the Absolute Being. Its starting point and methods are much more like those of the scientific than the religious spirit of the West. Both the protagonists identify their individual souls with the Supreme Soul in their own unique ways, dictated by their domestic and social environments. Both Tom Joad and Ramaswamy 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.

Chapter Five: Conclusion summarizes the findings arrived at after a close scrutiny of and in consonance with the Indian philosophical tenets which provide an insight into the nature and purpose of human life.