PREFACE

Even as a schoolboy the *Tirukkural*, an ancient Tamil work of the first century A.D. and its all-embracing philosophy permeating every aspect of human existence fascinated me. The wisdom I gained from the great Tamil work has been a guiding spirit in my life. Later, as a teacher of English and American literatures, I had my contact with the works of Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Tagore, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Sri Aurobindo, and Raja Rao from the Indian side, and Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau from the United States of America. When doing my M Phil., I was surprisingly struck by the echo of Indian philosophy in the works of an American writer John Steinbeck. That sparked off a great deal of interest in Steinbeck, and in the process, I found scope for a comparative study between Steinbeck and Raja Rao.

My first reading of their novels served my long-felt need to do research regarding the deepest mysteries of life. All this resulted in the choice of the topic *Nature and Purpose of Human Existence: Fictional Realizations in John Steinbeck and Raja Rao*.

The urge to go ahead with my research was now and then stimulated and sustained by a host of well-wishers. Among them are the following whose unstinted help need to be acknowledged in the first instant.

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