CHAPTER-VI

John Steinbeck is the most auspicious chronicler of the glory and the demise of the American dream, in one of the darkest and most depressed times America has seen. Most of his novels are classics in American literature. In his well documented works he creates and breathes life into working class people of depression era and post-war America. Born and raised in Salinas, California, in the heart of a region known as the Salad bowl of the world which today produces 80% of the country’s lettuce and artichokes. Steinbeck knew about the land which he wrote. From an early age he worked in and about the fields and factories of that sunny region, gaining first hand experience in American working class life. Through out his literary career he travelled and researched his subjects with an eye particularly tuned towards the general, universal human condition. He elevated the ordinary to the extraordinary and crafted timeless tales from the simplest of stories.

The novel, Cannery Row written after the War, published in 1945 is a satire, on contemporary American life with its commercial values, its ruthless creed of property and status and its relentlessly accelerating pace. It is one of the most unique of all of the Nobel Prize winning novels. It is set in a very poor area of California known as Monterey. It is a small port town south of San Francisco. The novel is about the dispossessed people with warm hearts, having the ability to create their own heaven on earth. First published in the United States of America by the Viking press in 1945, the novel is evocative, and beautifully rendered portraits of
outsiders struggling to understand their own unique places in the world. *Cannery Row* is the name of a strip of road through Monterey, California, bustling with the industry of canning sardines. It relates events in magical and allegorical version of the place. It takes place during the canning height, but the novel is neither about the canneries nor their workers. In fact, most of the story occurs in the later hours, when the machines are shut down for the day and the workers are at home or in the bars. The characters of this novel are the invisible inhabitants of the town, who hide in their simplicity during the day and live adventures in the evening and night.

The novel, *Cannery Row* is unique among Steinbeck’s works. It is the story of a group of poor hobo friends and their attempts to raise money to buy beer and throw their friend a party. It is an existential tale of human desire and of the relationships among a community of persons each lost in their own loneliness. None of them seek to rise above or beyond their position in life. No one possesses grand dreams in their heads. Each individual is bitterly aware of the limitations of his existence and the dependency he has on all the other individuals. It is a novel about the dispossessed, stray dogs, broken whisky bottles, drunken fights and the smell of the ocean. In short, it is about life. Its focus is on the acceptance of life as it is both the joy of the community and the loneliness of the individual. *Cannery Row*’s inhabitants are whores, pimps, gamblers and son of bitches.

The novel follows the adventures of Mack and the boys, a group of unemployed men who live in a shack in a vacant lot on *Cannery Row*. Successful men and women are not always the wealthiest and most powerful but live content and self sufficient lives. Mack and the boys are the perfect example of the being successful. Even though they are dirty poor, they are still very well liked. As Doc says:
“I think that Mack and the boys knows everything that has happened in the world and possibly everything that will happen. I think they survive in this particular world better then other people. In a time when people tear themselves to pieces with ambition and nervousness and covetousness, they are relaxed. All of our so-called successful men are sick men” (CR 14).

The novel *Cannery Row* is a mixture of humor and sadness about the lives of the residents of Cannery Row. The story opens in a messy grocery story run by a Chinese man, Lee Chong, a good man, who manages to be respected by the entire town, while most of the town is in his financial debt. Horace Abbeville whose summarized tale begins with debt shoots himself in the head leaving his wife and children sad and confused. Lee has not pressured him for payment. He has only suspended his credit. Lee feels badly about Horace’s suicide and always watches out for Horace’s family.

Mack and the boys are men, who do something with themselves, who sit around drinking too much getting into trouble whenever possible. They steal, cheat, work as little as possible yet are genuinely likable good guys. They try to throw a party for Doc, a man the town collectively loves. Doc runs the western biological laboratories and is the most responsible resident of *Cannery Row*. The boys get Lee Chong’s beat up old model T. Ford and go out to the ocean and try to score around one thousand frogs. By collecting frogs and getting paid by the lab, they are able to fund their party for Doc. The trip is successful yielding the boys one thousand frogs. They hustle a frog for food deal with Lee Chong and attempt to throw a party for Doc. Doc returns home after the party is over. Doc by virtue of his science, his detachment, gentleness and personal refusal is pushed into social importance or the role of social Judge. He does do anything
The simple story of the novel has depth, fascination, loneliness, sympathy and remuneration and allows the story to reach many areas in life. In the story *Cannery Row* loneliness in lives of the dispossessed is main:

“He was a dark and lonesome looking man, no one loved him. No one cared about him” (CR 6).

The severity of his solitude, the seclusion of this man can penetrate one’s innermost thoughts and leave with a sense of belonging after hearing Doc’s anguish. Inspite of his friendliness and his friends, Doc is lonely and set – apart man (CR 132).

An individual can have many people around him but could still not have the one good friend that he need. *Cannery Row* is a novel where setting, atmosphere and most importantly character takes precedence. Steinbeck creates a colorful array of characters struggling to understand their own unique places in the world. The people in *Cannery Row* appear to be more than obscure storekeeper or drifter but them like humanity represent are far less than perfect. Neither their happiness nor their means of achieving is simply the good way compared to the bad way of the rest of the money grubbing world. Mack and the boys break when they wish to build hurt when they want to love and like the rest, their immediate appetites often distract them from
their deeper need to give of themselves. The people of Cannery Row, represent humanity, contains the mixture of good and evil which renders self righteous human judgment both irrelevant and absurd:

Lee Chong, the Chinese grocer is more than a Chinese grocer. He is evil balanced and held suspended by good – an Asiatic Planet held to its orbit by the pull of Lao Tze and held away from Lao Tze by the centrifugality of abacus and cash register. Lee Chong suspended, spinning, whirling among groceries and ghosts (Steinbeck 14)

The novel Cannery Row is a community of the dispossessed who often err, fumble are absurd, but somehow noble and touching even in the fact of their own lack of importance. The vast forces are at work in the chaos which is life and death. Human effort is both fragile and ludicrous, which creates the tragedy, the pride, the humility, the sadness, the comedy and the nobility of the mortal condition. This novel is more of a nostalgic piece of work about the depression than a serious one. Steinbeck’s views on society and the economy is approached with a more comical and laid back. It is a time where people are valued by not what they have in their possession but what they have in their hearts.

Steinbeck is against modern materialism and so rejects material success as evidence of personal achievement. Instead Steinbeck takes the approach of portraying the other side of the societal values, the impact they have on individuals. Respectability progress, possessions and responsibility all imply some sort of regulation that controls men and women. Steinbeck has a mellowed attitude towards people like Mack, who is forced to struggle on the fringes of society. He is sympathetic for the plight of human beings who are revealed through his people throughout
the novel. His strength lies mainly in describing simple people who he often took out of real life. The rural people are closely attached to the earth on which they live and work. He insists on using romantic and lyrical elements to make the contents of his novels more lively and realistic, having some dreams.

The ordinary people are ordinary people in extraordinary positions who usually are poor or working class and who struggle to survive on the fringes of society. John Steinbeck has deep feelings for their nature. His work and people are windows into the essential aspects of humanity, conflict, grief, fear and most importantly, the struggle of humanity has with itself. Cannery Row is a nostalgic portrayal of the lazy, shiftless good natured low- lives of a canning community who prefer drinking, fighting and indolence to work and earn a living. They are the lower middle class citizens who are not able to preserve their objection to societal values. They are the dispossessed, the people of the road.

Mack feels necessary to dress up his once abandoned home known as the palace flophouse. They want curtains for their boiler room despite the fact that it has no windows. Frankie, a teenaged boy feels essential to purchase an expensive gift to impress his love. In Cannery Row, Steinbeck exposes the dark side of today’s society as the American dream. He celebrates the hopes symbolized in these dream and demonstrates the greatness of the human heart and mind. He depicts a paradise once lost, while maintaining the hope of a paradise to be regained.

The novel Cannery Row is a microcosm of a modern sick society. There is a group of Mack and the boys, Lee Chong and his establishment, Dora and her virtuous club, a knotty pair such as Mr. and Mrs. Mallory, the captain and Mrs. Talbot, the group of retarded people like
Hazel and Frankie, and at the center Doc with his scientific lab. Dora and girls are very active women in helping others and do not need help from others to be successful in life. They have their own lives:

In addiction to the usual charities, Dora saw the hungry children of the *Cannery Row* and the jobless fathers and the worried women an some paid grocery bills right and left for two years and very nearly went brock in the process (CR 20-21).

The novel *Cannery Row* offers a wonderfully warm depiction of the colorful people who cluster around the small community around the time of the depression. Each an every person is cut off from society’s mainstream but retains idealistic vision which gives them strength. Steinbeck portrays each of them as a good person who clutches to the things they have rather than striving for more.

Doc, the owner and operator of the western biological laboratory, is deceptively small, who spends his days collecting specimens of ocean life to sell to universities and laboratory. He is wiry and very strong and when passionate anger comes on him he can be very fierce. He wears a beard, face half Christ and half satyr but tells the truth. He has helped many girls out of one trouble. He finds solace in the late hours in the arms of various women who never are able to keep him nor cure his loneliness. Doc has the hands of a brain surgeon, a cool and warm mind. He tips his hat to dogs as he drives by and the dogs look up and smile at him. He can kill any thing for need. He has one great fear of getting his head wet, so even in summer or winter he ordinarily wears a rain hat. He wades in a tide pool up to the chest without feeling damp, but a drop of rain water on had makes him panicky.
Over a period of years Doc has dug himself into *Cannery Row* and has become the fountain of philosophy, science and art. He listens to any kind of nonsense and change it to a kind of wisdom. His mind has no horizon and his sympathy has no warp. It is Doc from whom everyone in *Cannery Row* seeks knowledge and wisdom. He can talk to children, telling them very profound things so they understand. He lives in a world of wonders, excitement. Everyone who knows him is indebted to him and thinks, “I really must do something nice for Doc”. (CR 26). Inspite of his friendliness and his friends, he is a lonely and set apart man, even in group. He recognizes that life is a mix of both good and evil. Steinbeck’s sympathy also leads to such people drinking away their troubles.

Doc listens to music played by old record player. He is concupiscent as a rabbit and gentle as hell. He is devoted to work and has a weakness for beer. He is a father figure with some bad habits. He has true joy for drinking but he does not come of as bad person because of it. He is portrayed as an incredibly intelligent man with strong view:

But Doc had one mental habit he could not get over. When anyone asked a question, Doc thought he wanted to know the answer. That was the way with Doc. He never asked unless he wanted to know and he could not conceive of the brain that would ask without wanting to know. (CR 30)

Lee Chong is round faced and he is full and benevolence. He is courteous. His flash of gold when he smiles is rich and warm. His fat delicate hands rest on the glass, the finger moving like small restless sausages. His kindness and understanding an inviolable. A broad golden wedding ring on the middle finger of his left hand is his only jewelry. He wears half glasses and has to tilt his head back, if he looks at everything through them. He speaks stately English
without ever using the letter R. Nobody knows what he does with his money. His wealth is entirely in unpaid bills. He lives well and has the respect of all his neighbors. He tests his clients until further trust becomes ridiculous.

Lee Chong is a shrewd businessman, who likes to take advantage of others. His grocery, while not a model of neatness is a miracle of supply. A small crowded shop, where a person can find everything wanted. It opens at dawn and closes until the last man has been served. He is greedy for money. His station in the grocery is behind the cigar counter. He is like a bank because everyone owes him money. If one wants to spend money he is available. He never presses his clients but when the bill becomes too large, he cuts off credit. Sometimes he makes business errors:

In Lee Chong’s grocery, he had was a little group of active and potential customers under wraps. But it went further than that. If a drunk caused trouble in the grocery, if the kids swarmed down from New Monterey intent on plunder, Lee Chong had only to call and his tenants rushed to his aid. The saving to Lee Chong in cans of beans and tomatoes and milk and watermelons more than paid the rent. And if there was a sudden and increased leakage among the groceries in New Monterey that was none of Lee Chong’s affair. (CR 11)

Mack and the boys live in flophouse. This group has one thing in common- no families, no money and no ambitions beyond food, drink and contentment. Mack, the leader of the boys has once tried marriage, giving as much as he could to his wife but things has gone from bad to worse for him. He is very strong man and a close friend to Doc and can do everything for him
and his little dog darling. They destroy themselves in searching their contentment but don’t achieve their targets. They (Eddie, Hughie, Jones, Hazel etc.) are simple and nice. Mack is smart, charismatic man who can charm anyone into anything. As one of the boys says, Mack can be president of the United States, if he wanted to be. Some of his colleagues are both good and bad. They are devious men who live together in the rundown fish meal shack, owned by Lee Chong, which they call the palace flophouse.

Mack wants to do things in easy way and to his advantage often get him into trouble. He is a man with more soul and kindness, than any other person in Cannery Row. He is not ashamed of his poverty or as a bum and he embraces who he is, for all of the good and bad. He goes to exhaustive lengths to give his friend Doc, a party. He sees what Doc does for the people of the community and he wishes to give him something in return, that kind of spirit and gentleness that cannot be bought with any amount of money. Mack and the boys are:

The virtues, the graces, the beauties of the hurried mangled craziness of Monterey, where men in fear and hunger destroy their stomachs in the fight to secure certain food, where men hungering for love destroy everything lovable about them. In the world ruled by tigers with ulcers, rutted by structured bulls, scavenge by blind jackals, they dine delicately with them, fondled the frantic heifers and wrap up the crumbs to feed the Seas gulls of Cannery Row. (CR 14)

Mack is the elder, leader, mentor and to a small extent, the exploiter of a little group of man who has in common, no families, no money and no ambitions beyond food, drinks and contentment.
Dora, the owner of a whorehouse is successful and well liked inspite of her moral and social woes. She is a decent, clean, honest, old fashioned sporting house. Dora, fifty years old, a hug lady is a great woman with flaming orange hair and a test for Nile green evening dresses:

She owns the Bear Flag Restaurant. She keeps an honest, one price house, sells no hard liquor and permits no loud or vulgar talk in her house. Some of the girls and women who stayed there, are fairly inactive due to age and infirmities but Dora never puts them aside (CR 15-16)

Dora is condemned for immorality by the people Monterey Row but praised by Steinbeck, for giving beck something to the community and adding to its economic prosperity. As for Dora herself:

Madam and girls for fifty years, she has through the exercise of special gifts of tact and honesty, charity and certain realism, made herself respected by the intelligent, the learned and the kind. She is a kind hearted saint who happens to run a brothel. She is helpful. (CR18)

Hazel is twenty six, dark haired, strong, pleasant, willing and loyal. In the pool, he works together with Doc. He is extremely good hearted man, hardest working of the boys. He often accompanies Doc in collecting trips.

His worried mother got confused about his sex and she named the eighth child as Hazel and never bothered to change it. He was sure footed on the slippery rocks and loved the hunt. When he grew up, did four years in grammar school four years in reform school but didn’t learn anything in either place (CR 29).
Frankie, has very large eyes, dark hair, and wiry dirty shock. His hands are filthy. He is not dangerous, idiot but his parents do not pay for his admission in an institution. He learns everything about the sea, which is little bit difficult for Doc because he is mentally retarded. He often helps Doc, with serving drinks in Doc’s parties:

He is a nice, good kind of boy. His father is dead and mother stays an uncle, who beats her all the time. Frankie wants to stay with Doc as he loves him a lot and there is an atmosphere of parties all the time. (CR 53)

Henri, the painter, is French:

As a boat builder he is superb. He is a wonderful craftsman. He is swarthy and morose. He smoked a calabash pipe. His dark hair fall about his face. He has many friends, whom he had to feed. He has been married twice. But the young woman has left him as he promoted a number of semi-permanent liaisons. Each time he is left alone, he mourned formally for a while but actually felt sense of relief. He is glad to be free of the endless female biologic functions (CR 122-123).

On one hand he is afraid of the sea an on the other hand he hasn’t found a woman who wants to stay in that boat. Therefore he has never finished the boat.

Eddie, a brave and beautiful boy of ten, is a bartender at La Ida, a local bar. He becomes popular, bringing home stolen bottles and a jug filled with remnants from customers drinks.

Captain, owner of the frog-pond where the boys hunt for the frogs they want to give to Doc as a present. His Job is to take an eye on the land.
Gay, a local, whose wife keeps beating him up and then getting him to jail. He likes the jail so much that he is often found there. He is an export machine.

Eva Flanegan, has red hair is a spiritual girl with a big family of brothers and sisters but an unpredictable drunk.

Horace Abbeville is the owner of palace Flap house (a grocery). He is worried gentleman, with two wives and six children. He tries to build a grocery but fails and commits suicide, with its debts.

Old Chinaman, whom some people think as God, wears an ancient straw hat, blue jeans, coat and trousers and heavy shoes of which one sole is loose so that it slaps the ground he walks. He face is lean, brown and corded as jerky and his old eyes are brown, even the white portion also and is deep set so that they look out of holes. Very old people think he is death, and children think that he is very funny Old Chinaman because children always think that anything old and strange is funny but they never taunt or shout at him, as they are afraid of him. He is an unknown man who walks every morning to the sea. He is a symbol of loveliness of people who have hates and prejudices.

Mary (Mrs. Tom) Talbot is lovely, has red hair with green lights in it. Her skin is golden with a green under cast and her eyes are green with golden spots. Her face is triangular, with wide cheekbones, pointed wide set eyes. She has long dancer’s legs and feet, seem never to touch the ground when she walks. She is excited, face flushed with gold. Her great- great- great- great grandmother has been burned as a witch. She loves parties and to give parties. She tricks into giving them. She organizes costume, surprise holiday parties. She holds long detail conversation with the cat. A kind of satiric game she enjoys very much. She infects the house with gaiety. She
uses her weapon against despondency. She is successful in keeping the dark thing out of the house.

Men’s kindness and generosity, openness and honesty, understanding and feelings are admired and concomitants of failure in the system. It detests sharpness, greed, acquisitiveness, meanness, egotism and self-failure in the system. Doc realizes that although certain traits are considered superior, society thrives on those which are inferior. The vast majority of inhabiting the first qualities, this making them the dispossessed in society. The individual in tune with his or her inner self-recognizes his own duality and the inevitability of a life with both positives and negatives. In the novel, Steinbeck searches for the truth that can tie humanity to the pattern of all life and the relation of people.

Love is depicted as risky and fragile but nevertheless, the best possible way to become completely human and see as wholeness. Steinbeck is remembered for his humanity and for his nonjudgmental and sympathetic depictions of the dispossessed, the people of the road. The dispossessed who struggle to make a living for themselves despite their endless efforts, who are much more than victims of social and economic failure, which often leads to self destruction as suicide are found in many novel. Horace Abbeville shoots himself because he losses his property. William Dora’s bouncer stabs with an ice pick. The girl who drowns on the reef appears to have committed suicide, and Joey’s father eats rat poison because he loses his job.

The dispossessed can’t escape depression any easier way. They have to be open to new worlds to replace the world that is continually in the process of self destruction. They take much more drastic approach to conceal their poverty. Mary Talbot throws boundless parties and celebrations to conceal the fact that’s Talbot did not have very nice clothes or any money. She
has little to be happy, so she creates her own happiness with extravagant celebration which she can not afford. The celebrations are a large part of her life, to create an illusion of happiness, as lonely human beings sometimes despondent, set apart, find salvation in the festivity. Parties and celebration help many find something to be joyful about, momentarily. It is a solution to societal pressures, to strive to be the most perfect human possible in an imperfect universe. She strives for objectivity in *Cannery Row*. Her goal requires spontaneous painless contrary to human nature.

The novel *Cannery Row* is a poetic statement of human surrounded by a chaotic and essentially indifferent universe and hence they are the dispossessed, who are the mysterious oriental who thread their way through other life without any purpose but to remind of the emptiness and loneliness they all share. The poor carefree loafers do nothing for their living but are fundamentally good hearted. Doc feels like he is unloved but is surprised to discover that he is a man loved by everyone in the town.

Steinbeck is very omniscient and reserved which emphasize the loneliness and the tragedy of the story. He has lived there for several years and knows the set perfectly so he can better express the truth of the story. A subjective narrator falsifies the story. He strangely uses no inner monologues in *Cannery Row*. It is the gathered and scattered, tin iron rust and splintered wood, chipped pavement and weedy lots and junk heaps, sardine canneries of corrugated iron, nonky tonks, restaurants whoresouses, little crowded groceries laboratories and Flophouses. Its inhabitants are, as the man once said:

"Whores, pimps, gamblers and sons of bitches," by which he meant

Everybody. Had the man looked through another peephole he might have
said, “Saints and angels and martyrs and holy men, “and he would have meant the same thing. (CR 1)

Depressed by World War II, Steinbeck fortunately withdrew from solving society’s immediate problems and turned in *Cannery Row* to the timeless world of the cosmic Monterey. Through his portrayal of Doc, modeled on his friend Ed. Rickettes, he created the comedy of the human spirit that consciously accepts the natural limitations placed upon man as a physical being. *Cannery Row* works at the precise line between comedy and epic at which the principal actor is more than an ordinary man without becoming a superman. *Cannery Row* is Steinbeck’s triumph even though its gentle message is hard to hear the thunderous affirmation of *The Grapes of Wrath* because it is the only work in which he successfully embodies the conception that the contemplation of art can free man from the petty frustrations of the workaday world.

The novel *Cannery Row* is judged from the perspective of the depression novels. Its totally panoramic structure is an extreme development, complementary to the play-novelette form. The theory of nonteological or “is” thinking relates significantly to *Cannery Row*. The purely objective events in an untouched sequence of apprehension enthrone an extreme variety of panoramic structure, for the theory is a means of arriving at literary form. “Is” thinking exaggerates a number of Steinbeck’s deeply rooted tendencies. *The Pastures of Heaven* and *Tortilla Flat* is read as objective studies of small groups; *In Dubious Battle* and *The Grapes of Wrath* affects masses of people, the play novelettes is an effort to achieve a total objectivity in use presentation of a leading idea. Doc Burton’s studies of group- man is considered similar in its objective method to Jim Casy’s pragmatic study of the migrant people in flight from death to life. Steinbeck is concerned with a definition of good life. He aims more frankly at entertainment:
"I saw a piece of war as correspondent, and following, that wrote Cannery Row. This was a kind of nostalgic thing, written for a group of soldiers who had said to me “write something funny that isn’t about the war. Write something for us to read- we’re sick of war”. (CR 49)

"Is" thinking insist that to see is better than to be told. Doc, lovable intellectual, is a curious, individualistic living as a marine biologist. He is a fuller, less tortured version of Doc Burton. Lee Chong, Dora and Doc are the three pillars of Cannery Row society. At the center of the society, at the hub of its universe, Steinbeck places the extreme eccentrics. Mack and the boys, the true the philosophers:

"I think they survive in this particular world better than other people. In a time when people tear themselves to pieces with ambition and nervousness and covetousness, they are relaxed. All our so called successful men are sick men, with bad stomach, bad souls, but Mack and the boys are healthy and curiously clean. They can do what they want. They can satisfy their appetites without calling them something else” (CR 15).

There is some minimal sense in the efforts of Mack and the boys to organize a party worthy of Doc. The effective structure is the interaction of panoramic scene and thematic motif. The important inhabitants of the Row scanned are Lee Chong’s ‘kindness and understanding’, establish the humane quality of life in Cannery Row. Dora provides women or womanly affection, a decent sexuality for hire at the Bear Flag Restaurant. Doc supplies his exotic bearded, completely natural self, casual medical care, occasional wages, the glamour of the arts
and the science through his female visitors, his books and music, his operation of western biological, a firm that deals in strange and beautiful wares the lovely animals of the sea (CR 25).

Three people cover most of the hungers and needs that love involve. Mack and the boys contain and absolutely unworldly, unselfish love that is odd at times even in Cannery Row. The brilliance is persuasive. It is functional not decorative or merely whimsical. Horace Abbeville kills himself because he thinks he is a failure after he sells his property to Lee Chong to pay off a huge grocery debt and Dora’s watchman, William, kills himself because he accepts the disgrace of being a pimp. His gloomy nature sets him apart and forces him to drive an ice pick into his heart in a desperate effort to elicit the cook’s interest. Mack and the boys survive. There is an analogue of the seeming anarchy of life.

Doc, Dora and Lee Chong are realistic. Cannery Row is quite real to its inhabitants, like love. It is a fantasy only in relation to the world. It is a creation of its inhabitants, the people of the road. They choose to live there and make their lives, the creation of love in any form. “Is” thinking provides a realistic narrative surface—a context in which fantasy is most likely to flourish. It promotes narrative objectivity. Sentimentality, pleasure and violence, beauty and horror, comprise a range of human possibility. The duality of human experience and motive, is of prime concern in Cannery Row. Mack is fond of Doc. His fondness is expressed by insisting a party to Doc, Doc is a fine fellow to Mack:

His face is half Christ and half satyr and his face tells the truth. His mind had no horizon and his sympathy had no warp-------- he lived in world of wonders, as of excitement. He was concupiscent as rabbit and gentle as hell. Every who knew him was indebted to him (CR 25-26).
Doc is detached—socially, economically and intellectually. He is essentially a lovely observer of the good life. Human affection is broader and more extensive, ranging from the accommodations of friendship to the simplicities of lust. The love, goodness, the strange, communal unity of *Cannery Row* can be seen. Without blinking the incidental negations of love, goodness and community are imbedded.

The positive virtue of joyfulness, the enchantment of style, the praise of whimsical or eccentric behavior do not deny the more somber aspects of reality. “Is” thinking includes the puritanical woman, the drowned girl, the failed party, the heartless intellectual curiosity, destructive hypocrisy and the impermanence of any apparent victory over the human isolation and twisted ness which are overt symptoms of negative realities.

The novel *Cannery Row* is a small, restrained fictive universe, delights and persuades more thoroughly, more profoundly that utilizes external devices and techniques to formulate a simulacrum of aesthetic unity. “Is” thinking insists on an organic presentation of materials without allegory, authorial comment. The material of great depression bring the exhilaration of a relative freedom in the virtual absence of any need to strive, to want to possess thinks, to be competitive. The emphasis is on the self containment of happiness, of simply being, of doing one’s thing. The mood is evoked and celebrated in *Cannery Row* with the honesty, the objectivity, the creative depth and force of Steinbeck’s fictive power at their best. It has the germinal seeds of fast life, commercial connection, and lustful pursuits and strained over taxed life patterns. The activity of aimless, wandering youth are depicted in *Cannery Row*, the sickness and disease eating into the vitals of human society without the onslaught of violent and destructive war. Human beings on earth are subjected to the negative forces both from the external and internal world. Modern society has its values, the decay of civilization, the moral
depravity of the people and their ability to cover the inherent sins of lust, greed and loved of superficiality. Steinbeck is too cultured to unmask the rogueries of the rogues and the criminalities of the criminals. He has sufficient love for them because they are human beings though they may be the dispossessed, the people of the road. The human element is most sacred to him. All of them constitute independent though inter-dependent units of Cannery Row society. They are part of the superficial social setting, for they are separated from each other on account of the absence of natural bonds.

Mack and the boys have no filial roots. They have no money. They work to fill their stomachs and have practically liberated themselves from all kind responsibilities including the social responsibility. In irresponsibility they have found their freedom.’ Lee Chong has succeeded in converting a parasite into a commercial relationship’. (Lisca, the Wide World of John Steinbeck 202). He has the ability to cope with the irresponsible section of society. His relationship with Mack and the boys are harmonious and he is able to get money from them by virtue of his highly modified business ethics and wisdom:

Mack and the boys avoid the trap, walk around the poison step over the noose while a generation of trapped, poisoned trussed-up men screen at them no-goods, come to bad-ends. They over stepped their dead conventions, their new gained freedom have escaped the evil of the highly contagious and infectious disease of society (CR 39).

Doc’s character is very significant. Even in his loneliness, he is singularly glorious and larger than life in the novel. He has attained true freedom which can be gained by the expansion of consciousness and understanding of the world around. He is above the dangers of infection of
the diseased society, drawn into loneliness, as a means to gain the right perspective. He is totally free from selfishness and egoism and embraces the whole of the society with all its drawbacks and moral and spiritual sickness.

The novel is Steinbeck’s plea for sanity, mutual love, relinquishment of lust greed and possessiveness and compassion for the psychologically retarded, socially outcast and economically dispossessed. It is very similar to the fast and chaotic life in modern society of a commercial, fashionable, crowded and unorganized metropolitan city. Benson expresses particular regard for Cannery Row:

What is life, what is death and what do they mean----. The answer is simple: life is a process; death is a part of life; neither life nor death means anything—they simply are; and the important things in life are love and beauty, which bring joy to the process of living(CR 82).

Casy in The Grapes of Wrath and Doc in Cannery Row are solitaries who take frequent flight into wilderness but who live among people who rely upon them for guidance. Both understand others with a prophetic insight and are accorded special status as counselors and wise men. Both are educated but has rejected the professional institutional credentials and live as a maverick, moving easily among circle of people. They are not conventionally religious but are linked with images of Jesus.

Steinbeck gives work a definition of prophecy and the importance of the prophet in modern life. As Robinson Jeffers, Steinbeck’s contemporary and fellow Californian called, the great humaneness at the heart of things, a visionary trying to find a language for the ultimate interconnectedness of all creation as a means for understanding what as humans we can do. The
source of wisdom and virtue appears to lie in communion with nature, assumes the status and roll of prophet in his community and the death of emotion can also be easily perceived.

Casy’s cosmic perspective on human affairs, in his involvement in the immediacies of human needs, and his deep attention to the natural world as a source of wisdom all reiterate in a new key in Doc, the wise man of *Cannery Row*. Robert Benton points that the, ecological cast of Steinbeck’s thinking is reflected in his characterization of Doc—his way of thinking that causes him to see man as an organism related to a vast and complex ecosystem. When Doc paints the colorful local scene, he sees Lee Chong the grocer, Mack and the boys, spinning in their orbits” end with a prayer:

“ Our father who art in nature, who has given the gift of survival to the coyote, the common brown rat, the English sparrow, the house fly and the moth, must have a great and overwhelming love for no goods and blots-on – the town and bums, and Mack and the boys. Virtues and graces and laziness and zest. Our father who art in nature” (CR 14).

Doc is manifestation of virtue. Doc’s patience in observing and collecting specimens for study, his steady commitment to objectivity and curiosity is seen as forms of compassion. The simplicity and straightforwardness of his scientific habit of mind appear as an almost child like innocence, a quality of guilelessness that wins him universal trust among the dispossessed who surround him. His steadiness related to wider spiritual vision. He brings together observation, research, deductive and inductive reasoning, contemplation and a gentle humor that seen to proceed out of a detachment from the entangled human perspective, few man achieve. The characters are embedded into the natural environment, philosophy about the right relation
between earth and its creature. Small exchanges draw attention to the minute designs of the natural world, shapes vision character, a place is known intimately a farm, a field, a tide pool, is a way of thinking (Casy, *The Grapes of Wrath*) he is neither a medical doctor nor a veterinarian nor a psychiatrist.

Doc of the western biological laboratory has no right to practice medicine. It is not his fault that everyone in row come to him for medical advice. Before he knows it he found himself running from shanty to shanty to taking temperature, giving physics, borrowing and delivering blankets and even taking food from house to house where mother looks at him with inflamed eyes from their beds and thank him to put the full responsibility for their children’s recovery on him. When a case gets really out of hand he phones a local doctor and sometimes one come if it seemed to be an emergency. But to families it is all emergency. Doc doesn’t get much sleep. He lives on beer and canned sardines. (CR 89-90)

Doc maintains his own spiritual and mental health by means of frequent retreats into music, poetry and nature. His scrupulously scientific habit of mind is a counterpart to Casy’s broadly intuitive epistemology. He expresses the same deep reverence for learning from the natural world.

Doc has to keep up his collecting. He tries to get to the good tides along the coast. The sea rocks and the beaches are his stock pile. He knows where everything is when he wants. All the articles of his trade are filed a way on the coast, sea cradles here, octopi here, and tube worms in another place, sea pansies in another. He knows where to get them but he goes for them exactly when he wants. For nature he locks up the items and only releases them occasionally. Doc has to know not only the tides but when a particular low tide occur, he packs his collecting
tools in his car, his jars, bottles, plates and preservatives and he goes to the beach or reef or rock ledge where the animals he needs are stored (CR 92-93). His knowledge has penetrated to his very body and bones. This kind of this knowledge depends on humility, attentiveness and long fidelity to the habit of patient contemplation, the basis of his legendary compassion. He is truth telling though he knows, people doesn’t like this, because he loves true things he tries to explain. He says he is nervous and besides he wants to see the country. People doesn’t like him for telling the truth. They scowl or shake and tap their heads, they laugh as though they know it is a lie and they appreciate a liar. And some, afraid for their daughters, pigs, tell him to move on, to get going, not to stop near their place.

Doc does not want to tell the truth. He says he is doing it on a bet- he stands to win a hundred dollars. Everyone like him and believe him. They ask him for dinner and give him a bed, put lunches for him and wish him good luck and always think he is a fine fellow. Doc still love true things but he knows it can be dangerous. *Cannery Row* is a kind of pastoral subterfuge. Like Casy, Doc is a shrewd assessor of human nature and calculates his demands and concessions. He serves as a hub that draws people together in a way that makes community possible. He understands the wide web of interdependency that binds the things of this world and makes a mockery of short sighted ideas of ownership. His generosity has a matter of fact, commonsense, simply the way of nature. Through the character of Doc the depth of emotion can be felt and Steinbeck has shown that in this hostile world, there are some people who are rational and emotional.

The novel *Cannery Row* serves as a parable to describe Doc’s solitary, industrious life in the face of the social changes and chances that defeat his human ambitions. Doc is, the gopher in the dahlia garden. He adapts to an environment diminished in natural richness, unsympathetic to
his higher ends but livable. He is a prophet unhonored by a mechanized, commercialized, secular
culture, stubbornly cherishing ideals that a culture has begun to threaten.

Casy and Doc, a complex vision of wisdom, the best of human virtue- compassion,
forgiveness, clarity, and flexibility-comes from the habit of attention. Nature teaches what one
needs to know as the best teachers are those who have learned her lessons. Steinbeck infuses a
group characters with a dignity and nobility, readers like them inspite of their irresponsible ways.
The heroes of the novels are admirable in Steinbeck’s eyes because they live according to the
principles revealed to the scientist by the immanent Deity. Doc, tips his hat to the dogs he passes
on the street and this gesture is respectful tenderness towards living things. As preacher Casy
puts it, all that lives is holy.

Steinbeck is novelist interested in social reform. The actual locale is described literally
and minutely- Canneries, old pipes and boilers, tumbledown shacks. All characters in his work
represents the person he has know. His heroes first and foremost are strongly aware of their
identities and armed with biological virtues necessary to protect their individualities. They are
humorous, strong, lecherous and versatile. He adopted art for art’s sake attitude in Cannery Row
to create a hero with engagingly human failings, based on his friend Ed.Rickett, portraying him
transcending the squalid view of the real Monterey in the cosmic ambience of Gregorian choral
music and Hindu love poetry. He is astonishingly successful in delivering the soldiers he has
met in the war front.

The novel Cannery Row is a memory book. The world needed a good dose of moralizing,
generally abandoned Howellsiasn tradition of the writer with a sacred duty to society. The war
experience left Steinbeck so depressed that in less then two months he produces Cannery Row.
The material and technique explores some reaction toward a world whose basic values had plunged it from eleven years of severe economic depression into the massive aggression and destruction of a world war. *Cannery Row* brings into being a new world to replace the one that is the process of self destruction. It is written on those conditions, presented a system of human values devoid of all the quality that has brought on the war. It is a poem, a stink, a grating noise, a quality of light, a tone, a habit, a nostalgic, a dream.

The novel’s people, the dispossessed, the road people effectively arrange themselves and escape from western material values- the necessity to succeed in the world, the necessity to impose order or direction. They are a conscientious pimp, bouncer, nurse for a brothel called the Bear Flag Dora’s girls, a troubled artist who makes beautiful boats that don’t ever sail, and artwork out of peanut shells. There is a retarded, depressed and eager boy, Frankie who loves Doc, a man who stands or balances on poles for sports and record.

The story is difficult. It is like random snapshots of the many different characters at different stages of their lives. Steinbeck masterfully captures the lives of the people, animals and palaces of *Cannery Row*. His images is a very complex string of stories. He allows to see how people live and work. Mack and the boys are very significant filled with opportunities like making a success of a marriage, to accomplish something with life. Mack’s future does not hold more promise than his past. The story runs like a highway. People from all walks of life and all different classes get along in a very refreshing an interesting manner.

The final paradox is the fact that virtues like honesty, spontaneity and kindness are always associated with failure, in the world machine, while the traits of success include greed, sharpness, suspicion, hypocrisy, envy, disaffection and meanness- Dostoevsky called it
toothache of the soul. Steinbeck examines with emotion the paradox, lightly, lovingly and
sardonically, where human freedom and virtue are obsolete with the result an absurdity. The
result of these examinations is a lightness which contain bitterness not of a revolutionary but of a
moralist.

The story is set in early 20th century, following the depression and World War II.
Steinbeck has the uncanny ability to combine his everyday problems with the twist of the utopian
style of living. The end is strange, mixture of fantasy and reality, which insist the good
fellowship and warm heartedness which is needed to create a paradise anywhere on earth, even
in the rundown Cannery Row. Steinbeck has renewed interest in the comic portrayal of the basic,
uncomplicated lifestyle of the dispossessed. He incorporates a few descriptions such as failure
and the depression era. The book is overall optimistic. The time is of the industrialist revolution.
The novel has no prologue and epilogue. Steinbeck uses no fore shadowing and flashbacks. It is
a complex story with a straight forward description. The end is surprising, as the party doesn’t
fail, like the first one.

The scrap metal, laying around in Cannery Row expresses that the dispossessed don’t
care about their environment. It is important, for them, to be good hearted, to help others and to
have a strong charity, rather than cleanliness. They live in old dilapidated houses but they want to
help everyone. They prepare a new party after the failure of the first one, which turn out better. It
is a real success. Benson, a critic suggests that his work attracts our special attention and
affection because he was lover of life, rather than a hater of life.

Thus Cannery Row is a story of how the dispossessed living in pathetic condition can
make their life happy (ecstatic) by helping other and living in their own way. They are
dispossessed of their basic necessities but still they survive and try to prove there existence in this world. They do not use disreputable method to get going. Their behavior may not be strictly ethical but they don’t cross their boundaries. They don’t want to wallow in luxury by spiteful means. They are not worn down by poverty or squalor. They have trust in divine providence. They are dispossessed, the people of the road but they don’t loose their dignity.