There are innumerable little people in this world who are socially, economically and illiterally marginalized, subordinated and subjugated in a myriad ways. A dispossessed, an exile a migrant worker, a fruit picker, a farmer and an underdog stumoles as the road of life is uncertain and its prospects are bleak. A squalid reality is that there is no one to kindle a light in their world, no one to retrieve and no one who can set up blazing torches in the dark. Hence sometime these people feel that the power of their body is diminished and their life is surrounded by ignorance, hatred, greed, malignant villainy injustice and conceit. The veracities of life are really horrid for them and they loose the power to stir up strife. Instead of becoming a stormy petrel, they become insipid and are forced to accept the things as they are. They are evoked about their plight and their problem defies any solution. Their life becomes an ineluctable struggle. Though emotionally broken, they still cling tenaciously to life. The novels of Steinbeck are a rich brew of depth of emotion, comedy and adventure.

John Steinbeck has written all his novels in protest against such social injustice. His novels manifest depth of emotion and are beautifully wrought with a depth of insight and so has given him worldwide recognition. His fierce denunciation of the maltreatment has made his novels worthy of reading. The novels of John Steinbeck make him a writer who has a feeling for these little people. His novels which are located in communities of the fringe, outside the dominant upper class milieu become the centre of his novels. The bulk of his creative work realistically depict agonies endured by the urban fringe groups, the little class people and their ineluctable struggle.
He never penned his autobiography. Nevertheless he revealed himself in 16 novels, a short story collection, many personal letters, two screenplays, and several nonfiction works. Some may not think of Steinbeck as a "Western writer," but in his best novels and short stories, he gave definition and voice to his unique experience of living, working and traveling in the American West.

Born in the Salinas Valley of California, Steinbeck used his boyhood home in Salinas and the more upper class Monterey Peninsula area as settings for *Of Mice and Men*, *East of Eden*, *Cannery Row*, and others. This California landscape informed his best works and influenced his unique characters and themes. "It's place that writes your books," observed Frederick Manfred, another Western writer. And this was certainly true of Steinbeck.

His early dedication to writing of social protest may have come from his family's belief system. His county-treasurer father and schoolteacher mother narrated the lore of rural California to him. But if his mother's anecdotes and love of literature didn't inspire him enough. His own privileged circumstances may have. Steinbeck lived a life of middle-class comfort amidst the hard and often tragic lives of farmers, migrants, and ranchers in his native Salinas Valley.

Steinbeck was an eyewitness to poverty. He had real-life subjects for his attention and compassion. Steinbeck’s heart went out to these humble people but he didn’t pity them. He actually knew hard work. Boyhood jobs — fruit picker, ranch hand, bricklayer, and delivery boy — gave him a genuine appreciation for labor. As an adult, he traveled extensively through the West from Oklahoma to California, experiencing first-hand the sad and frightening conditions of migrant workers. He lived in their camps, listened to their authentic stories and collected material
for his writing. Steinbeck's social conscience — an awareness of the desperate plight of others — did not emerge in isolation. The author lived through the Great Depression of the 1930s. The economic collapse grew severest in the center of the country after a prolonged drought turned Oklahoma into a Dust Bowl. Images of starving farmers and migrant workers desperately searching for work were emblazoned in to the hearts of Americans. The poverty and desperation inspired an era of soul-searching that Steinbeck was happy to encourage. Against the setting of California, that symbol of infinite promise and dreams, Steinbeck contrasted the botched efforts of men and women to live in peace and dignity.

During the '30s, Steinbeck wrote what most consider his two enduring works *Of Mice and Men* (1937) and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). These novels are more than works of imagination. They are heartfelt revelations of the loneliness and desperation that many Americans felt. Steinbeck insisted that this pervasive hopelessness was a crime here that goes beyond denunciation. He meant for his fiction to sound the alarm and provoke action. His passionate defense was for the common man as authentic social conscience. "Like everyone," he said of his desire to write, "I want to be good and strong and virtuous and wide and loved". Still, he never wavered in his belief that literature should try to depict lives as they are really lived, regardless of politics or personal gain.

Steinbeck was motivated to arouse sympathy for the little people. He saw that they were often suffering cruelly in their environment and that the causes for their misery were frequently beyond their control. Steinbeck saw and wrote the lives of innocent victims. His writing implies that these unfortunates could just as easily have been well off in the materialistic American society had external circumstances been just a little different. Steinbeck expected readers to hate this suggestion because it would rob them of their own security. He was gratified when many
agreed. When he accepted a Nobel Prize in 1962, Steinbeck declared optimistically that literature was "our greatest hazard and our only hope." He believed that the power of writing and communication was in uniting people and helping them to overcome their most enduring troubles. Steinbeck sought "to celebrate man's proven capacity for greatness of heart and spirit." Through the courage, glory, and dignity of all his suffering characters, Steinbeck delivered a message to America. Steinbeck words sums up his philosophy, "we got a job to do."

When *Tortilla flat* appeared in 1935 Steinbeck had already completed his next novel *In Dubious Battle*, published in 1936. It dealt not with mystical romance or exotic people in far away places but with pressing contemporary problems in American life. Together with *Of Mice and Men* (1937) and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), *In Dubious Battle* indicates Steinbeck’s bitter awareness of the social conflicts and individual tragedies and disappointments born of the turmoil and deprivation of the depression years. Devoid of the frivolity and light hearted warmth of *Tortilla Flat*, *In Dubious Battle* raw, harsh work, that Steinbeck himself called it, ‘a brutal book’. It is a novel which explored the biased motivations, ruthless methods and savage battles of strikes and labor disputes. Steinbeck predicted, the communists will hate it. As a novelist, he was less interested in political theory or ideological dogma as he was in human behavior. In *In Dubious Battle* attempted to articulate the beliefs, feelings, desires and fears of striking men and their radical leaders. Critics have known the novel more dispassionately. Steinbeck wrote neither to inspire, nor to provoke nor to condemn but to understand and portray honestly an aspect of life he found fascinating and perhaps bewildering. Another called it, a masterpiece of realistic and naturalistic fiction: realistic in its completely objective narrative and accurately reported dialogue, and naturalistic in its content.
Steinbeck is a realist and has deep understanding of human nature. As such he is a great psychologist too. He is aware that the migrant laborer suffers not only on account of poverty but also because they have lost their dignity. He understands their agony and deep pain and therefore he sympathizes with them and channelizes his feelings of sympathy in the right direction by converting it into an effective plan of action, to draw attention of America to this in human picture of man by his fellow being. Steinbeck emerges once again as a psychologist when he projects the lonely American of the 20th century in his novels. One of the most recurring themes in his novels is that of loneliness. Like Pat, in *In Dubious Battle*. He tells Jim, when I wasn’t working it made me unhappy and lonely. Pat takes up work with the conscious aim of overcoming loneliness. Dr. Burton on the other hand is an intellectual dedicated to his medical profession, in sympathy with the workers taking good medical care of them. But though busy and engrossed in his profession he feels lonely because like pat, he does not belong to any group. He is dedicated not to a cause but to receptivity.

Steinbeck’s books expressed the sprite of his tie, in particular, the Depression Decade of the 30s. It was a period of small disasters and large melodramas that lasted from the Stock market Crash of 29 until the outbreak of the European War, ten years later. It was John’s most creative and fortunate period. From the beginning of the Depression until his death in 1968, over a period of forty years, he published almost thirty books. His books were generally greeted with disdain by professional and academic critics, although he reached an enthusiastic reading audience around the world. His novels were translated into many languages, and his popularity was unequalled in the Scandinavian countries, in Japan, and in Russia. In the latter country, in the 1960s, his bellicose attitudes about Vietnam alienate the Kremlin, but the Russian people still loved his work.
The very act of writing about the great Depression was able to extricate himself from its grasp. Three of his outstanding novels of the Depression, in In Dubious Battle, *Of Mice and Men*, and *The Grapes of Wrath*, were deluging him with so much money that he was losing touch with the dispossessed people of the day, those very same ones who’d been the source of his inspiration and success. The mountains always carry large significance for Steinbeck, in the trance into the Promised Land for the Okies. In *East of Eden*, Steinbeck provides two mountain ranges, one dark and one light, which symbolically frame the struggle between good and evil in the Valley between the ranges.

For Grampa, grapes represent the possible dream of the Promised Land, imaged land is fallen land, riddled by greed, and as the prophecy and a the prophecy of the sweet grapes is replaced by the reality of thin stew, *The Grapes of Wrath* take root in their place. The turtle functions as symbol of the migrants, carries its house on its back as the migrant carry their households on the backs of ancients vehicles. The turtle’s horny beak and fierce, humorous eyes resemble both the grim determination and the quick capacity for joy in the migrants. All the oppressions that are done under the sun behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter and on the side of their oppressors there was power but they had no comforter.

Throughout Steinbeck’s work blood lust of the perverse run like a thread that dominates the pattern and again fades into the tranquility of exhaustion and acceptance, dissolve in the soft snare for sentimentality. Only in *The Grapes of Wrath* do they merge in such away as to remove the taint of degeneration and become an altogether praiseworthy demand for a self-fulfillment in which action ceases to be associated with brutality and the ideal with helplessness. American life will develop the potentialities that made possible *The Grapes of Wrath*. For Steinbeck, like his own characters, will pursue the weak side of his talent unless the forces that play upon him are
imperative to rally the strong. He can produce pages of beauty and impact, preceded and followed by pages of sheer trash, the emptiness of which is only accentuated by the pseudo grandeur or primitivism. He was acutely sensitive, penetrating analysis of human feeling. For him life is worth living, flagellant and baffling.

Steinbeck viewed the world he shared with the character, of neither the contending party that exploited him nor the one that curtly rejected him, but rather an entire society that had wandered into a dehumanized wasteland by insisting on mindless conformity. Steinbeck refused to take side in provincial conflicts, but he was passionately partisan in individuals’ struggles for self-determination. Steinbeck presents an unfeeling world where any sign of human caring is exploited as a weakness. Slim in Of Mice and Men can understand the situation and momentarily ameliorate them, but he cannot cure them. George has been forced to destroy by his own hand a dream that cannot be revived. His best works remain those in which self-conscious characters transcend the frustration of the environment—The Red Pony, The Grapes of Wrath, and Cannery Row—for these are the only novels in which Steinbeck becomes a timeless artist rather than an American seer. His next best works are those early ones form. The pastures of Heaven to Of Mice and Men, in which he present the pathetic defeats of Naturalistic characters. The Wayward Bus, Burning bright, and The Winter of Our Discontent are those which were spurred by a moralistic impulse to lecture suggest that when Steinbeck became two concerned with peoples consciences, touch with his consciousness. The pasture of Heaven, Tortilla Flat, In Dubious Battle, and Of Mice and Men, The Red Pony, The Grapes of Wrath, Cannery Row and a dozen distinguished short stories can not fail to occupy a high place among contemporary American writers.
Though man in a group loses his individual self yet this group prevents him from feeling lonely. According to Coleman, loneliness arises from the inability to find meanings in one’s life. Becker a psychologist also points “let it be stressed emphatically that the most difficult realization for man is the possibility that life has no meaning”. Jim by joining the party overcomes his loneliness. He tells Burton, “I used to be lonely and I’m not any more”. Joining the party makes alive.

Doc, the hero of *The Cannery Row*, is a lonely and set apart man, because like Dr. Burton and Jim in *In Dubious Battle*, he is not a part of any group. In a group, he seemed always alone, even in the close contact. He is seen listening to the music all alone and repeating verses from Black Marigold. Dr. Burton’s loneliness also arises from his bachelorhood. He neither eats nor sleeps. Mac says, “He needs woman that would like him for a night, someone to feel near him” (IDB, 49). Having no love or spouse is the major reason for the feeling of loneliness. According to Sigmund Fraud, “the individual feels incomplete, if he is alone”.

In *Of Mice and Men*, Steinbeck makes clear that the migrant worker feels lonely, which arises from landlessness. The landless people are nearly crazy for land. Deprivation from a sense of belonging makes one suffer from loneliness. Like the migrant in *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Of Mice and Men*. The okies feels lonely as they are isolated from their own countrymen who exploit. Candy and Crooks *Of Mice and Men have* a temporary break from their loneliness, when they share Lennie’s dream buying a piece of land. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Muley is doomed to loneliness, as he does not leave the land to which he once belonged while everybody in his family has left California.
Curley’s wife, in *Of Mice and Men* represents the loneliness of ranch life, no means of entertainment. She roams all over the ranch, looking for human contact. Racial prejudice makes Crooks, the negro lonely character, who is treated as outcast. He lives in a small bunk house where no one visits him. His loneliness forced on him, takes aggressive form. He longs for companionship, as it becomes very difficult for him to conceal his pleasure.

In *East of Eden*, rejection by a dear one leads to loneliness in case of many characters. Charles feels rejected by his father Cyrus Trask. He feels his father loves his step brother Adam more. Charles loves his father more than Adam. He is jealous of Adam to the extent of attempting to kill him, which separates him from his father and brother, making him lonely. He tries to keep himself occupied in work to overcome loneliness. Adam feels lonely when his wife Cathy leaves him. Cyrus Trask lives and dies, ‘lonely and alone’ in Washington because he rejects one of his sons and remains rejected by the other. The story is repeated in the next generation.

Steinbeck has deep understanding of human nature and he actually made a psychological study of his character, gripped by loneliness for various reasons such old age, disability, sexual flaw and racial prejudice. He wrote many of his novels and short stories based on social problems like the ‘haves’ verses ‘have not’ and made the readers want to encourage the underdog. His background and concern for the common man made him one of the best writers for human rights. He raises his novels for the rights of the dispossessed migrant laborers. He draws the attention of the Americans to their plight, agony and miserable in human conditions. Steinbeck’s battle for them however does not end here, as, in *In Dubious Battle, Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath* he focuses attention once again on the poor laborers, who of course are victim of circumstances, nature and mechanization, but are also a helpless deliberately
exploited, miserable human being. Steinbeck draws attention to the fact that the haves exploit the have nots. This naturally leads to class conflict, a major themes of his novels.

Ever since society was divided into classes, the exploiters and the exploited who engaged in a irreconcilable struggle. Class relationship grew more active during the 30’s and class consciousness more pronounced. The 30’s not only brought depression but also an era of largescale labor struggle against the land owners. Most of the trouble was in the docks and in the packing sheds and fields. The battle between the land owners and the migrant laborers made a profound impact on Steinbeck. The capitalist class consist of the big land owners, the ‘land monopolists ‘ who made profit from the sale of agricultural goods whose prices sky rocketed, but the laborers had no share in the profit and was unpaid. The agricultural scene in California in 1930’s, particularly in Salinas Valley differed from that of the rural areas elsewhere because California farms were like large farm factories, owned by big operators and banks employing hundreds of workers, many of them, migrants.

The apple orchards in Torgas Valley in *In Dubious Battle* are owned by a few man and so are the farms in California in *The Grapes of Wrath*, where the land owners are “ No longer farmers at all, but little shopkeepers of crops, manufactures who must sell before they can make”. The haves in Steinbeck’s novels are well organized. They have association like the growers association as in *In Dubious Battle* and the California farmers association as in *The Grapes of Wrath*. The capitalists have pretty well organized the Torgas Valley. The haves have behind them all the power that money confers. All the members of the association are loyal to it and the sympathies of the have nots like Mr. Anderson are mercilessly tortured. While the haves are well organized and powerful as the officials, the banks, the stock holders etc are members of the associates; the have not are the aware of their plights. The haves always intervene and
prevent them from forming any kind of organization. In *The Grapes of Wrath* the haves keep the
have nots moving so that they may not organized, if they do so, they may grab their land. The
land owners fear that if they are allowed to organize, they can refuse to work and may wipe out
the season’s crop. Casy, In *The Grapes of Wrath* takes up the task of organizing the workers to
stand against in justice of the land owners, he is brutally murdered.

The demand as the time and the situation was, an organized labor union which was
possible only through communist leadership. Steinbeck has exposed the inhuman tactics of the
communist in the novel through Mac and Jim. The condition prevailing in the American society
interpreted from the Marxists point of view are to be overcome through communism. The
demand of situation can not be altered through discussions but action and communism. He also
up held communism as means to better society, through change for the weaker section. He
believes that the communist is an human, subject to the weakness and greatness of the humans.

In Steinbeck’s novels exploitation is in chain. In Dust bowl area of *The Grapes of Wrath*,
it is the bank of the finance company which forces the tenant farmers to evict from their land
through owners because they breathe profits they eat the interest on money. The bank has to have
profit all the time. The owners are helpless, because all of them are caught in a system which is
larger than themselves. He writes about the agony and helplessness of the small farmers the
ordinary people, how their freedom is curtailed as they are totally dependent on the banks and
the finance companies for crop loan. The have nots have no means of conveying a true picture of
their distressed situation. They are unable to raise their voice from any forum. Their feelings are
never conveyed to the government of the public. It is only the voice of the haves that reaches
government. The mass media only projects the news of the land owners and not the migrant
laborers.
The haves exploit the have not in a pre planned way. The means of exploitation in *In Dubious Battle* and *The Grapes of Wrath* are almost similar. The capitalists always exploit the proletariat through wage cut. Marx a critic writes in this connection, “the general tendency of the capitalist production is not to rise but to sink the average standard of wages and the will is certainly to take as much as possible”. As a part of their program of exploitation, the owners of the apple orchards of Torgas Valley in *In Dubious Battle* announce wage cut because they know that by then the workers would have spent most of their money in reaching Torgas Valley and they would have to work in the orchard to make up for the loss. Steinbeck, in his article, writes about the helplessness of the migrants, who are forced to work on low wages.

Besides wage cut, the exploiters have other means of exploitation. The owners pay the men and sell them food and thus make money back. They give food on credit. He writes in *The Grapes of Wrath*, “A man might work and feed himself and when the work was done, might find that he owed money to the company. In *The Grapes of Wrath* too, the land owners exploit the migrants by wage cut. They advertised for the large number of worker than the actual number requirement, when there is surplus of workers, they declare wage cut. The migrants struggled hard against hunger. Even the medical facility is not provided to the have nots. Country hospitals are closed the have not only dump fruits into the river but also use cruel methods to prevent the poor from fishing them out, give rise to wrath in the hearts of have nots. Thousand of people like the Joads in *The Grapes of Wrath* are forced to sell their household goods and equipment which they could not load in their truck. They are miserable, poor, oppressed as hunger is the mother of all crime. Rosasharn gives birth to a still born child because she did not have nourishing food. At the end of the novel, she breast feeds a stranger who is close to death. Hunger has left them weak and prone to diseases. Steinbeck highlights the misery of the migrants by showing them in
contrast with the wealthy tourists who are also travelling on Highway 66. The migrants are moving west in search of food, bread, while the capitalist go to throw the money in pleasure trips.

It is this fury which is seen bubbling in the form of small outburst and complains in the novels of Steinbeck. This fury is not suppressed but forces laborers to unit and fight against the exploiters. That is what they attempt in *In Dubious Battle* and *The Grapes of Wrath*. The hatred is the outcome of the vicious, evil system created by the capitalists. Beside the land owners, the storekeeper in the town, hate them because they have no money to spend. Capitalists hate and consider every person protesting against profit system, they say a red is any son of bitch that wants 30 cents an hour when we’re paying 25.

The strike in *In Dubious Battle* and *The Grapes of Wrath* is for similar reason. The haves bring different methods such as bribery, threat to crush strike. Strikers are blamed for every single incident or violence by the capitalist which is pointed out as a serious public menace. A parallel can be drawn between Paradise Lost and *In Dubious Battle*. Mac is of the opinion that *In Dubious Battle* is a process for filing hatred in the hearts of the exploited against exploiters, a revolution against hungers and cold. In Paradise Lost Satan arouses the will, the courage of his follower to fight against God, an evil fighting to over throw good. In novel it is reverse, fight is for the right, courage to overthrow Satanic power- the Capitalist.

The class struggle may vary between passive resistance to a hostile class conflicts. It may be open and concealed, spontaneous and conscious. Focus is primarily on the misery of migrant workers in *The Grapes of Wrath*. In *In Dubious Battle* focus is on strike and reasons for strike
of the dispossessed. As Lenin says, unity is infinitely precious and important to the working class. Disunited, the workers are nothing, united they are everything.

The stark and passionate verismo is that the world is still being ruled by some powerful people who by their treacherous trickery try to make the life of powerless people somber and sad. Such people make the paradigm of irresponsibility and there is no end of it. But it is also true that a time will come when the powerless people would not pass into oblivion but would rise again fresh to face the atrocities of life vigorously and with courage and determination.