CHAPTER III

THEME OF ‘GROUP BEHAVIOUR’

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Steinbeck’s individuals exhibit group behavior that exerts significant influence on others. They form foundation for the long span human survival. Steinbeck’s group behavior theory relates to the human psychological view on the cultural development of Charles Darwin’s concept. Steinbeck ultimately wished to convey a theory of human behavior grounded in a particular kind of biological naturalism. Steinbeck says there is a variation between group and individuals. He says that group works with an intent, motive and a strategy. In Tortilla Flat (1935), The Grapes of wrath(1939) and Of Mice and Men (1937), Steinbeck reveals some of his views on group and individual’s behavior. According to the author, group pattern is the action of individuals and also in the structure of the group. They contribute in both unitedly and form as a part of the development process..

3.2 THE PEARL (1947)

Steinbeck discovers the potential of both beneficial and harmful group behavior in ‘The Pearl’ (1947). Steinbeck says that the destructive group behavior has elements of which the individual man is sometimes incapable of
such as emotions of destruction, of war, of migration, of hatred, of fear. Steinbeck thus saw a powerful force standing above individual men that made them components of a bigger entity, even as it threatened or debased their existence by destroying their individuality and working in irrational ways they could not understand or control. Not all group behavior associated with the phalanx was judged negatively eg. *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). It carried potentially ominous, significance for human society.

The Pearl’s message is universal which identifies the danger of materialism in it. It tells about Kino and his family which is ruined because of greedy people. In the course of the story, Kino’s development is seen throughout the novel. It can be described as realization. He realizes the dark potential of the human beings. It also tells about the group behavior of the characters present in the Steinbeck’s novels who are completely involved in attaining their goal. Steinbeck’s Kino in The Pearl, is the protagonist of the novel whose behavior changes after finding a great pearl.

Kino, the pearl diver, is a poor but hard-working, honest person. He lives with his wife and son in a simple brush house. He is happy as a husband and a father and is happy with what he has. The poor pearl diver becomes ambitious after finding the pearl. he wants to break the bondage that ties them from entering the cultured society. He wishes his son to study in a school and marry his wife properly and finally to possess a rifle. His behavior changes
because of his wishes after getting the pearl where he becomes a murderer and kills his enemies to safeguard the pearl. His life is ruined in the end and his ambition is shattered fighting for a normal living. When the pearl opens his eyes for a larger world, he as a complete man wishes to become a good husband and a father. Heavelin (2000) observes,

“The distinguishing personal mark of practically all Steinbeck heroes is their leadership and complete involvement in a communal action.” (92)

Steinbeck portrays Kino as an innocent pearl diver who is content with his simple life in the beginning. Kino enters the civilized society after his son’s scorpion sting and his finding of the pearl. These two occurrences change the course of his life. The moment he starts being ambitious, his existence becomes complicated by several means. According to Burkhead (2002),

“Thus, Kino’s world can be compared to Eden, a place for contentment and innocence. His wife, his son, his canoe, and the energy taken from the rising sun fulfill Kino so that he appears to have no yearnings beyond his simple existence.” (110)
When Kino finds the pearl, his discovery travels quickly. The people of the town come to know about Kino’s pearl, even before he returns to his brush house. People of every group in the town speak about Kino’s pearl and him. The pearl is the dream of the beggar as well as a rich man like the doctor in the town. Kino and Juana ignorant of other’s jealousy, are happy with their new God’s gift. They invite their friends and family members to see their good fortune. Even the neighbours pour in and they all look at the pearl with the surprise. They do not want to leave the place and they stay even when the dusk approaches. The evil characters portrayed in the novel are the priest, the pearl dealers and the doctors. They are after the pearl and lose their knowledge and position. The pearl buyers too create their own system to cheat the innocent pearl divers. According to Fitzwater (1981),

“In general, the pearl affects the entire town and becomes everyone’s pearl or everyone’s dream of greatness.” (11)

Kino’s relief on seeing the pearl and the greed of the town people are the general reactions come out by the finding of the pearl. In spite of these general reactions Steinbeck also points out many individual reactions after the discovery of the pearl. The priest enters the brush house thinking about Kino’s contribution to the church. The doctor wishes for his past luxurious life with the help of the pearl. The beggars too expect Kino to be generous and give
sufficient alms to them. The pearl buyers dream of a fresh start in life with the pearl’s arrival. Thus the pearl brings hope to all the men in the country and town. The study explores the group behavior of the characters present in the novel as of constructive group behaviour and destructive group behavior. The neighbours and the beggars are analysed under constructive group behavior while the doctor, the unknown attackers, the pearl dealers and the trackers are observed under the study of destructive behavior.

The child’s cry brings in the neighbours to Kino’s brush house. Kino’s brother Juan Tomas, his wife Apolonia also come. Coyotito who was wailing enormously started moaning and this makes Juana to ask Kino to call for a doctor. This surprises the people around them as no doctor has visited their brush houses.

“The screams of the baby brought the neighbours. Out of their brush houses they poured. Kino’s brother Juan Tomas and his fat wife Apolonia and their four children crowded in the door and blocked the entrance, while behind them others tried to look in, and one small boy crawled among legs to have a look. And those in front passed the word back to those behind- Scorpion. The baby has been stung.” (7-8)
The doctor is a rich Spanish man who belongs to the class much above than that of the pearl divers. Juana wants to take Coyotito to the doctor when Kino tells about his doubt if he would come to the poor people. The neighbours and Kino’s family move to the town in finding the doctor. Their trip to town is processional accompanied by their helpful neighbours. When they reached the doctor’s house they allowed Juana to enter. Kino went along with her through the gate.

“The thing had become a neighbourhood affair. They made a quick soft-footed procession into the centre of the town, first Juana and Kino, and behind them Juan Tomas and Apolonia, her big stomach jiggling with the strenuous pace, then all the neighbours with the children trotting on the flanks.” (9)

According to Burkhead (2002),

“This trip to town is the first of two that Kino and his family will make. With each trip, they are accompanied by their neighbours, and with each, they return home without achieving their desired goal.” (102)

Steinbeck’s La Paz village is a place where most people mould their own destinies. They have their own wishes, find food for themselves, earn their
living and create their own future. They have to go down the ocean to find their fortune. Kino’s men are portrayed as good souls who are primitive but helpful. When Kino finds the pearl everyone comes to know about it very quickly. Steinbeck points out the individual responses in addition to the general responses kindled by the finding of the pearl. The priest who comes to visit Kino and Juana thinks if Kino will offer the pearl to the church for its expenses. The doctor who first refuses to treat Coyotito now recalls his luxurious life in Paris and now aspires for the pearl. The beggars also now look at Kino as he could provide them with more money. Even the pearl dealers want the pearl as they can have a better life. In general, the pearl has an impact in everyone’s dream and becomes the talk of the town. Kino’s brother Juan Thomas and all the neighbors gather in his house with immense happiness. According to Burkhead (2002),

“The effect on the town is presented in apparent contrast to the scene in Kino’s house where his brother, Juan Thomas, and the neighbors have gathered to celebrate his discovery.” (103)

The news now spread that Kino will sell the pearl in La Paz.

“Thus, in La Paz, it was known in the early morning through the whole town that Kino was going to sell his pearl that day. It was known among the neighbors in
the brush huts, among the pearl fishermen; it was known among the Chinese grocery-store owners; it was known in the church, for the altar boys whispered about it. Word of it crept in among the nuns; the beggars in front of the church spoke for it, for they would be there to take the tithe of the first fruits of the luck. The little boys knew about it with excitement ……” (41)

The local people in the town are excited and leave their work to see the selling process. As the other divers think it as their special day they all decide to go with Kino. the neighbourhood seemed to be in anxiety when Juana, Kino and Coyotito come out with their best clothes. As they start moving the neighbours too follow them.

Juan Thomas wants to accompany Kino as he thought the town will cheat Kino. He tells Kino the usual way of selling the pearl followed in the older days in which the pearl was given to the agents in capital for sale but due to the uncontrolled corruption the old system is no longer in existence. Juan Thomas tells Kino how their men were cheated by the pearl buyers. One man was sent to the town and when he failed to return, another man was sent. When he too did not turn up the collected pearls were given to the pearl buyers.
The second procession brought belief to the neighbours and Kino’s family. During the first day when they went to the doctor for the treatment of Coyotito they were turned away. The second day as Kino possessed the pearl, the people thought it would be a successful day for them. The response of the neighbours for Kino’s selling the pearl is important in the novel. They feel Kino’s anxiousness and awe as they all belong the same diver’s community. They prepare to accompany Kino to town in selling the pearl. they were eager to find out the price that would be offered and they wanted to know if he would be generous and give the money to the poor or he would get ruined by the new wealth.

Steinbeck uses his voice to present the beggars’ opinion of the doctor. The beggars know of the doctor’s ignorance, his cruelty, his greed for money. They also know about the doctor’s unsuccessful abortions and the very little money he gave the beggars. They have also seen his dead patients go the graveyard. The neighbours and the beggars were eager to join the procession when Kino was about to sell the pearl. Even his brother Juan Thomas with his wife Apolonia and children takes a great care for Kino and wants to protect him from the evil world whereas the pearl buyers wait to cheat Kino in their own way as they have done all these years to the other pearl divers.
The pearl buyers are all linked with one another as one buyer offers a low price the other too represents him and cheat Kino. He suddenly becomes an enemy of everyone in the town only because he possesses the pearl. the diver’s community is a disciplined place for them. They live an undisturbed life between their brush house and ocean. The more they are away from their homes, the more they are threatened by the civilized people. The town symbolizes power, money and a better living for the villagers. But actually it is an embodiment of evil thoughts where people cheat and abuse the innocent and weak ones. Kino and Juana were unaware of the evil present in the town and seek help and believe the doctor and the priest. It is only later that they realize the harm but it was no use for it cost them their son’s death for it. According to Burkhead (2002),

“As Kino and Juana move even further away from their home into the wild, uninhabited areas separating them from the Mexican capital, the evil takes off its mask and order breaks down altogether.” (102)

In the olden days there were many pearl buyers but now there was only one who had a connection with all the buyers so that the pearl divers will bring the pearl only to them.
“The news of the approach of the procession ran ahead of it, and in their little dark offices the pearl buyers stiffened and grew alert. They got out papers so that they could be at work when Kino appeared, and they put their pearls in the desks, for it is not good to let an inferior pearl be seen beside a beauty.” (47)

They are also nervous in their anticipation of Kino’s visit. The pearl will not make them wealthy, since they all work on salary for the same buyer, but they want to see Kino and his pearl from which they can start their new game. The pearl buyers want to get Kino’s pearl. There are not many pearl buyers. There is only one man who has other agents in separate offices. Thus, every pearl dealer bargains with the pearl diver trying to afford low price for it. They use the tactics to depreciate the value of the pearl. Their objective is to somehow get the pearl at a low price. Kino and Juana walk with their baby quietly followed by the gazes from the people.

The pearl buyers rush to put their offices in order to prepare themselves and their office for the day. The first pearl dealer who is a short man has a rolling coin in his hand. He after a thorough study of the pearl says that the pearl is of abnormal size and worthless. “You have heard of fool’s gold, the dealer said. This pearl is like fool’s gold. It is too large. Who would buy it? There is no market for such things. It is a curiosity only. I am sorry. You thought
it was a thing of value, and it is only a curiosity.” (p 49) He makes a very low offer for which Kino gets angry and demands a high price. The pearl buyer strongly says that his appraisal is correct and asks him to go to another pearl buyer for checking his pearl. Kino’s neighbours wonder how Kino can refuse such a huge amount. The neighbours say that it is not good to demand a huge price. Some more pearl buyers come and check the pearl. The first dealer rejects the pearl and says not to include him in the discussion as he cannot make an offer for the pearl. The second dealer inspects it under magnification and says that it has a strange looking surface which will make the pearl lose its colour soon. The last dealer offers a least amount. Kino who is completely upset by the treatment of the pearl buyers seizes the pearl from the dealer’s hand. He keeps it up in the cloth and leaves it safe inside his shirt. He announces that he wants to sell the pearl in the town’s capital. “Now the dealers glanced quickly at one another. They knew they had planned too hard; they knew they would be disciplined for their failure, and the man at the desk said quickly, I might go to fifteen hundred.” (52) Kino’s neighbours recall the day’s events. Some of them consider that the dealer’s appraisals were good while other neighbours think that Kino is the prey. Some of them feel that he should have accepted for the final amount while others appreciate his courage in not settling down for the low price.

The La Paz town has two different types of people living there. One of them is the old native who had settled for centuries and the other
type is the Christians who are new and the doctor is one such person whom Kino is going to approach for his son’s treatment. Kino reaches the doctor’s house with his wife but still is in anger with the doctor. The doctor belonged to the race that have cheated, robbed and exploited Kino’s men. The doctor’s servant belonged to Kino’s race but still he does not speak with Kino instead closed the gate fast and hurried to the doctor to inform about the scorpion bit baby.

The doctor belongs to the European life style living person and is in a dream of returning to his wealthy life. He represents the cruel, selfish and greedy cultured society. He is dressed in opulence in a silk robe and is lying in bed. He does not understand the suffering of the people but eats chocolate served on a silver plate when Kino meets him. He dreams about a woman in Paris with whom he lived a happy life. “The doctor had once for a short time been a part of the great world and his whole subsequent life was memory and longing for France.” (13) The cunning doctor sends his servant to Kino to find if he can pay the money for the treatment. “eight small misshapen seed pearls, as ugly and gray as little ulcers, flattened and almost valueless. “(14) The doctor is upset for the valueless pearls. The servant returns to Kino saying that the doctor is out. Kino in frustration hits the gate with his fist. Kino’s injured hand will remind him throughout his life about the false money-minded civilized society.
Kino and his men around him are represented as innocent and natural people, while the doctor is represented to that of an artificial man. The doctor who first rejects the idea of treating the baby later comes forward after knowing that Kino has the pearl. The doctor who broods over the past is isolated from the town so he does not feel for the baby when Kino could not offer money for its treatment. His silk gown and silver cups exhibit the doctor in contrast to Kino.

Kino can understand that Coyotito is alright now. Even then the doctor exploits Kino using his superstition that the scorpion’s poison will become a danger for the baby. “Sometimes, ....... the doctor went on in a liquid tone, ....... sometimes there will be a withered leg or a blind eye or a crumpled back. Oh, I know the sting of the scorpion, my friend, and I can cure it.” (31) Kino cannot take a chance. Though the doctor knows that the baby will get well soon he gives some kind of medicine skillfully to the baby and cheats Kino providing him false belief. Kino understands that the doctor has given the white powder to make the baby sick but could not help in preventing it. According to Zirakzadeh (2013),

.......... the doctor in The Pearl uses his knowledge and skills to exploit those with less education. Upon hearing that Kino has found the great pearl, the doctor visits Kino’s hut and claims that although
Coyotito looks almost well, sometimes babies stung by scorpions show apparent improvement before the toxins take effect. (107)

Kino is happy but he knows that the doctor is pretending. The doctor returns after an hour and administers the baby with another sort of treatment. When the doctor mentions about his fees Kino tells that he would give it the next day by selling his pearl. The doctor suggests that he would keep it safe. Kino refuses to do so and the doctor tries to know the hiding place of the pearl secretly. Through the quick glance of Kino the doctor finds out the buried place of the pearl. The music seems to foretell its events in the course of the life to Kino. When he is happy and contented he hears the Song of the Family. It sounds as evil when the civilized society try to seize the pearl from him. He is brutally injured by unknown people and is followed by trackers who kill his baby finally. Juana can predict the impending danger than Kino so she warns him to throw it away. According to Burkhead (2002),

“At this point, Kino begins to hear the music of evil that will continue to mix with the Song of the Family as long as he has the pearl. The sounds of evil grow stronger when the doctor visits and tricks Kino and Juana believing Coyotito is still in danger from the scorpion.” (103)
The doctor is portrayed a dreadful, greedy person with negative traits that harm a person. The villagers never have any respect for him and his service. So, when he comes to see Coyotito, Kino allows him to see his son with utmost suspicion. “But the trap was set. He couldn’t take the chance.” (32) He never cares about anyone and never indulges himself in anything about the welfare of others. He is so bad and cunning that he gives a medicine to the baby for he could be called in an hour. Juana applied the seaweed poultice before his arrival and had treated the scorpion bite in her method. So the actions of the doctor and his cunning activity are only pretence and acts of inhumanity which are completely against his professional ethics. He then tries to convince Kino in getting the pearl from him. This shows the doctor’s greed and his evil in its full extent.

Steinbeck portrays the characters of both priest and the doctor so unsympathetically in the pearl. The priest comes to deliver a benediction. He asks Kino to thank God for the pearl and also offers his blessing. He also asks Kino to think about the church in his new good fortune after being attracted by the beauty of the pearl. Juana tells their wish of their marriage in the church and the priest blesses them and leaves. The arrival of the priest brings Kino an intention to have the pearl for his family benefits. The neighbours leave their house and Juana begins to prepare a meal of baked beans.
The priest is not as wicked as the doctor but he is not a religious person who cares for the well being of his people. He does not act as a person who represents the church. He does not even know who Kino is in the beginning but now wants to spend money for the church if the pearl comes to him. The villagers know why he comes to visit Kino since he rarely visits the village unless there is a motive behind it.

Music plays a significant role in this novel. Musical notes are used to express Kino’s feelings throughout the book. For instance, when the priest comes the Song of the Evil is heard to Kino. this predicts that Kino is aware of the Evil thoughts of the priest and does not wish for his well being.

The priest tells him how the pearl divers in the olden days failed to return to the village in the process of selling their pearls. The priest warns Kino that the failure of the pearl divers was a kind of punishment who left the village. The priest says that God wants them to remain in their places and if someone wishes to go for fortune, life would be a disastrous one for them. This shows that the priest is not at all concerned about the welfare of the villagers but only speaks in favour of the pearl dealers.

Steinbeck describes both the village and the town in his own way. He says that they show a picture of the ancient and modern society and can never be merged into one. The natives does not believe the pearl
buyers as they know that they could not be trusted. This contrast between the innocent villagers and the wicked town people is shown through he brush houses and city buildings. Kino’s brush house is compared with that of the doctor’s building. The city buildings built of and plaster are isolated by big iron gates and fences from the natives. The town people live a life only like that of caged birds who are in contrast with the natives who live a natural life.

The attackers and the trackers in the story prevent Kino in achieving his dreams. A group of men assaults Kino when he makes his way up the beach. Kino struggles violently and drives his knife on his unknown attacker which makes the pearl fall down from his grip. Juana when trying to come back home sees the pearl on her way. She takes it from the shore and tries to throw it into the waters. At this moment, she sees two men lying on the road. She identifies one as Kino and comes to know that he has killed the attacker. She pulls the dead man into an hiding place and lifts Kino. Juana silences the moaning Kino by explaining that they have to flee from the place since he has committed a murder. When Kino argues that he did only as a self defense Juana tells him that people will not consider it as a reason but only punish him. finally he understands that she is right and flee from the place.

Juana arrives to the brush house and takes her son. Kino comes to the shore to arrange his canoe. He is only filled with anger when he sees a big hole in the bottom of the boat. Soon Kino’s house is set fire. He
meets Juana with Coyotito when he is about to run towards the fire. Juana confirms him that their house is burnt down completely. They hide in the shadows and reach Juan Thomas house. From there they watch the neighbours subduing the fire and they listen to them telling about the death of Kino and Juana in the fire.

Kino’s family starts on a clear, windy night. They take a road outside the town and walk carefully hiding their prints on the road. They travel whole night and make a camp to rest at sunrise. They rest until midday after their breakfast. Kino finds a cluster of ants that march in a line. Kino keeps his foot as preventing them in moving as an obstacle. But the ants climb over his foot and scale to the top. Juana arises and doubts if they are followed and asks him if the pearl is really worth. Kino reminds her price offered by the pearl buyers and their attempt to get the pearl from him. He continues that if the pearl is worthless the attackers would not have attacked him. He tells her that he could see their marriage, a rifle and their son’s school in the pearl. Now Kino slept and Juana is awake with Coyotito. Suddenly Kino rises and asks her to remain silent. He creeps few yards ahead and finds the trackers who were trying to find their footprints on the sand. Kino remains still with Juan and their son till the trackers move. He readies himself to pounce on them. but they leave their trail and move to some other place. They try to approach the shelter but they lose trail and move on. Kino realizes that they will return at any time
and hurries Juana to take all their things and leave the place soon and hide in the mountains.

Kino creates false trails on the mountain and deceives the unknown trackers. He takes his wife and baby to the cave and thinks that the trackers will go without noticing them and they can easily come down and be out of their sight. Kino warns Juana to keep the baby quiet and be safe inside the cave. In the evening the trackers come to the pool and camp there to eat. The baby grows restless and moans while Juana makes it quiet. Kino watches two men who have gone into deep sleep and the other man monitoring. Now Kino finds a chance to attack them. Juana stops him but he tells they have to do this to save them from being killed. He asks Juana to escape to the nearby town if anything happens to him.

Kino slowly crouches towards the watchman and springs forward while Juana prays for Kino quietly in the hiding place. He slowly goes near the pool and is now near the trackers. He crouches from the slope and hides behind a palm tree. He wanted to move but trembles to do so. He is aware that he had to act quickly before the light goes off. He slowly takes his knife from his shirt and gets ready to attack. Now the moon comes out and Kino loses his chance ans waits for some more time. Suddenly the baby cries and this makes one of the trackers to get up from his sleep. They listen keenly to find out if it is a cry of a baby or some creature in the mountain. As a
precautionary method they shoot in the direction from where the sound came. The baby dies and without knowing this, Kino attacks the trackers and stabs them. He seizes the rifle from him and knocks the other man fiercely. He murders the last man who tries to climb the cliff by shooting him with his rifle. Kino notices the strange silence around him and finally hears the cry of Juana mourning the death of Coyotito. The people who come to attack Kino in his house and who follow him in the mountains are quite unknown according to the text but it is certain that they are evil and have desire for riches whose behavior could even destroy others completely. According to Burkhead (2002),

They are the death and illness to which greed can lead. Yet, they are also formless. Steinbeck does not identify them by clear description or tell for whom they work because they do not represent any single person’s desire for riches, but the potential for all people’s desire for riches and the evil that results from such desire. (109)

The strangers who come at night to steal the pearl from the hiding place in the brush house and the trackers who follow Kino and Juana are wicked like the priest, the doctor and the pearl dealers. They are the sign of evil who only lead people to death. They pounce on the weak ones to grow rich. The doctor is portrayed as a person with no good characteristics at
all. His name creates only fear among the villagers. He never visits to attend a sick person in the village so when he later comes to attend Coyotito, Kino suspects and does not allow him to treat the baby. The doctor embodies the education, or knowledge, Kino wants for Coyotito, but his greed does not permit him to use his skill or knowledge for the poor in curing the sickness. The education has only given him power and status but refuses to treat people at the right time when needed. He does not care for anyone except acquiring wealth. His breakfast shows his attitude towards his lavishness. Juana’s sea weed treatment already begins curing and so the doctor’s treatment is only a pretending one against his professional ethics. The priest is also portrayed like the doctor not concerned about the society in spite of the designation they possess. The greedy priest denies baptism and marriage in the church and is thus not a representative of the church. According to Burkhead (2002),

“The doctor, the priest, and the pearl buyers represent the evil possibilities of the desire for wealth.” (109)

Steinbeck says that this is the way of life of the poor pearl divers of the La Paz village. The simplicity and the hardship of the life of the fishing village is exploited by the group behavior of the civilized people. The village community though aware of the evil doctor, the priest, and the well organized and corrupt pearl divers accepts them as their lives are restricted within the coastal region.
3.3 TORTILLA FLAT (1935)

Steinbeck exposes the intrinsic beauty of Danny’s friendship and their behavior in *Tortilla Flat* (1935). Danny is related to every person who resides in the Tortilla Flat and is the representative of his entire locality. The paisanos that live in Monterey’s Tortilla Flat are drunkards but good. Danny, Pablo, Jesus Maria, Pilon and Big Joe Portagee are the paisanos who live in the Tortilla Flat. These paisanos return to Monterey after the World war. Danny got two houses through his grandfather. Pilon finds Danny after war and Danny rents him the other house. Pilon brings the other friends and makes them stay in it when they gradually turn up. Danny is the leader of the paisanos while Pilon is the next close friend of Danny who is a logician and has the ability to see through the wine. Pablo is portrayed as a philosopher who interprets the existence of their meaning in the paisanos experience. Jesus Maria is the humanitarian. Big Joe constantly troubles the group. All of these are qualities that are evident within the group. Each paisano is portrayed as a different individual in the beginning chapters. They wander lonely and do not have any commitment in life. But after seeing Danny they all become one. They move into Danny’s house and become his friends. The beginning chapter states that they are Danny’s friends and the story explains how they all become one. Thus it is a foreshadowing which tells about the friendship of Danny and his friends. Coers writes (1995),
“The book is not about drunken sots, but as many critics have noted, it is about Steinbeck’s theoretical concerns with group man: how a unit functions as a whole and how the identity of that whole is distinct from that of individuals composing the group.” (52)

Danny arrives to the big house with Pilon. It is full of weeds in the yard and Pilon is delighted to be there. As there is no water, Danny goes to the town and arranges for a water company who provides water for a three dollar deposit. They both do not have money and even if they have they would only buy wine with it. Pilon who goes out to buy some food for dinner brings a chicken from the woods. Danny gets some wood and they build fire for cooking the chicken. “And then Pilon pitched his voice to sweetness. He spoke with reverence of the joy of living in a little house.” (35) They drink wine and spend the evening and finally fall asleep. They do not want water by paying three dollars to the utility company but like to drink wine and have a merry life. Pilon thinks that cash will not tell the depth of the friendship but the wine as a gift will actually say. They behave in such a way that they are interested in the welfare of the other friends. As Steinbeck presents their friendship in a comical way, we cannot condemn the characters for their baseless logic.
One night, the house burns down after their consumption of wine. Danny gets angry at first and scolds his friends but then permits them to move with him in his house. “Danny forgot everything then. He sat down on the porch and his friends sat down, and the packages came open. They ate to a point of discomfort.” (P 53) Steinbeck compares the friends’ group at Danny’s house to that of the Knights of the Round Table. The friends enjoy the companionship of one another and live their life to its fullest. “It is good to have friends, said Danny. How lonely it is in the world if there are no friends to sit with one and to share one’s grappa.” (54)

Danny is not upset for the loss of his house, but is only pleased for it has lessened his responsibility. After the burning of the house into ashes, Pilon, Pablo, and Jesus Maria decide to go back to Danny’s house to apologize for their carelessness. They wake up from the pine forest and get some oranges and eggs. Danny forgets and forgives his friends and once again they all are happy. They all agree to live in Danny’s house together. Pilon is happy for the fact that he need not pay rent. Jesus Maria then makes a promise on seeing Danny’s strong friendship. He makes up his mind saying that he will check if Danny gets his food and wishes to keep him happy.

“We swear it Danny! he said. They sat about the stove with tears in their eyes, and their love for one another was almost unbearable. Pablo wiped his wet eyes with
the back of his hand, and he echoed Pilon’s remark. We shall be very happy living here, he said.” (56)

During St. Andrew’s eve, Joe and Pilon find treasure but soon they find it to be a sign post. The companionship within the group gets much stronger though there are affairs with women. In Chapter 12 we find the help rendered by Danny and his friends to the pirate and also how the pirate’s dogs witnessed a holy vision. The help given to the lady and her children is seen in the chapter 13. Burkhead (2002) writes,

“Chapters 12 and 13 most fully illustrate the group’s potential for goodness, and it is important to understand that each episode, each good deed carried out, would not be possible for any of the paisanos individually.” (36)

Steinbeck introduces the fifth member to the paisanos group, the Pirate. Though the motive of Danny and his friends in giving place for the pirate in their house had motive, the friendship they extend to him in genuine. They exhibit that there is honour among thieves. The Pirate had the mind of a child but looked gigantic. He lived with his five dogs in a house and scrounges from hotels and eats the food with his dogs every day. Then he goes into the woods with his tools and cuts woods. Then he sells them in the town. He
buries the money in the woods without spending them. The pirate brings his money to Danny to share with them the reason for not spending it. After this they never think about owning the treasure. They are bound by their own code of honour. Pirate being innocent brings purity to the group with the touching innocence and sincerity. He is reluctant to speak with everyone in the city, but finds comfort in the companionship of his five dogs. He loves the dogs so much that he gives the best time to the dogs and has the modest morsel to himself. They warn him against concealed danger becoming his sixth sense. Pilon finds that the Pirate must have accumulated a large stash of money from his daily wood cutting. He guesses that the pirate should have more than hundred dollars as savings. Pilon thinks that the Pirate cannot take care of himself properly. He wants to help him but he has no money. So he decides to take the pirate’s money and help him with it. Pilon visits him with a big cookie. He presents it to the Pirate and he gives it to his dogs and has it. Pilon slowly tells pirate that he is worried to see him dressed in rags and eating the garbage. He convinces the pirate to leave the chicken house as it worries all his friends. He tells the pirate that his friends wanted to help him but as are penniless. He advises pirate to bring the hidden money but the pirate refuses this. The Pirate denies the fact that he has money.

Pilon follows the pirate into the forest but cannot find. He consults with his friends and come up with a plan. They invite the pirate to come and live in their as they wanted to help him. They think it is the easy way
to monitor him and his money and thus can find out the secret of his hidden money. The pirate falls into their trap when they all visit him and tell that they are worried to see him living in the stinking place. The pirate agrees but still continues his daily routine as before. He is happy that his new friends love him and enjoy the food he brings for them. But he is unaware that he is always watched and followed by one of their friends. The pirate is terrified when they tell a false tale about one of their relative who lost his stolen money. The pirate goes out on the same night with his dogs but Pilon misses him. The paisanos group fails in their attempt another time. One fine day they find a large canvas bag on the living room table. The Pirate hands it over the group and tells it will be safe with his friends. He says it will be safe with his friends and they will help him in buying the golden candlestick for St.Francis of Assisi as his prayers were answered in curing his sick dog.

The friends are so touched by the Pirate’s simplicity and sincerity when he explains the reason for his savings. The Pirate becomes one of them and finds comfort in their companionship. He becomes another important member in the group and in return for their affection he brings food from rounds of the corner every day. “His packages grew larger. The paisanos received his bounty and made use of it: fresh fish, half pies, untouched loaves of stale bread, meat that required only a little soda to take the green out. They began really to live.” (69)
The group gets wine or food, but there is always pleasure in the group and they receive the company of one another. Finally the Pirate saves his money and buys the candlestick. The friends bring hamburger meat and wine and have a small party for this occasion. They spend their days in town gossiping and enjoying the sun on their front porch when there is nothing for them to do. The pirate instead of taking the friends to the money, brings and handles it over to them saying that it would be safer with his friends. At first, Danny and his friends tried to steal the money. But after hearing the story of his sick dog and his prayer they change their mind. They now wanted to help him in reaching his goal.

“The bag of money had become the symbolic centre of the friendship, the point of trust about which the fraternity evolved. They were proud of the money, proud that they had never tampered with it. About the guardianship of the Pirate’s money there had grown a structure of self-respect and not a little complacency. It is a fine thing for a man to be trusted.” (129-130)

The Pirate dresses up with a belt and a handkerchief. His friends also lends him some clothes and the pirate carries the treasure to the Father. Father Roman listens his story and accepts to buy the candlestick with the money. The paisanos are happy when they come back home and celebrate it by arranging a party at night. “That night when the fire was lighted and two
candles burned on the table, the friends feasted themselves to repletion. It was a party in the pirate’s honour.” (136) Danny and his friends were happy that they have done a good deed in helping the pirate.

In the church when Father Ramon tells about the God and the saint’s holy vision the pirate feels it. The pirate is excited to see the beautiful golden candlestick. Father Ramon speaks about it and tells about the pirate’s dog’s story. Suddenly the dogs enter the church and there is a chaos. Father first looks strict but he later understands and smiles. He asks him to take the dogs outside the church. The Pirate takes the dogs to the woods when the service is over and makes them listen everything about the sermon. The dogs hear a sound behind the pirate and they all look up. The pirate understands that the dogs have witnessed St.Thomas vision. Burkhead (2002) writes,

“Although the other paisanos do not get to experience this miraculous day, Pirate’s experience at the dedication service and what happens afterward strengthen the idea that what this group has done is special.” (37)

Teresina’s starving condition moves Jesus Maria and he wanted to help them. He returns to Danny’s house and tells the moving tale to
them. “And so telling was his speech that the fire in his heart ignited the hearts of his friends. They leaped up. Their eyes glowed.” (150) The paisanos accepted that the children will not go hungry without beans when Jesus Maria talked to them about Teresina’s trouble. “The children shall not starve,” they cried. “It shall be our trust!” (151) Danny and his friends did not want the children to starve and then began the crime incidents in Monterey. The flame of charity burned in the friends. They stole and brought food to Teresina’s house.

“If you could see the complaint book at the Monterey Police Department, you could notice that during this time there was a minor crime wave in Monterey. The police car hurried from place to place. Here a chicken was taken, there a whole patch of pumpkins. Paladini Company reported the loss of two one-hundred-pound cases of abalone streaks.” (151)

Danny and his friends provided better food for the children which they had never tasted before.

Danny is not interested in moving up in society like a lot of other people in his neighbourhood. The social status does not affect him much as he already belongs to the upper class of Tortilla Flat. He only wishes to be in woods where he can live himself without any codes. He never wanted to be rich and never wanted to live a normal life. He could not bear the
responsibility of the houses but wished to run back and live in the woods. It might be feeling good to own two houses but for Danny it was not that way. He preferred to live free of worries and responsibilities. Life was the same for the others including Danny’s friends, but not for Danny. He began to think about freedom. He liked to sleep in the woods and steal food. This thought grew in his mind and one fine day he disappeared into the woods. Danny’s friends did not notice this for a week and thought that he should be with some woman. When they went out to look for him and came back they were surprised to see that their food and blankets were missing in the house. People in the Tortilla Flat started talking about Danny and his acts of theft in the town and whenever Danny’s friends went out, some story or other about Danny cropped up from a house. As Burkhead (2002) observes,

“The friends’ observation that, is running away, Danny was ‘running to his death’ (146), supports the idea that the group is powerful, whereas the individual is weak. Danny discovers this; he becomes old before his friends’ eyes and is no longer able to feel either pleasure or pain.”

(42)

Danny signed a contract to Torelli and he brings it to Pilon which said that Danny has sold his house to him for twenty five dollars. Pilon and his friends were shocked to see the document and could not do anything when
Torelli commanded them to leave the house. Torelli threatened them to go soon and says that he will soon tell this to everyone in the town. Pilon comes to know that he does not have a copy of it and was the only proof to say that he is the present owner of the house. “Thieves, he screamed. The blood pressed up his neck and into his face. Thieves, oh, rats and dogs, give me my paper!” (182) Suddenly the paper vanished and again found in the stove which was found lying on the ground. The friends hit Torelli with the stove lid and stole Danny’s signed paper from him.

The actions of the friends had a genuine and sensible reason. Danny was found tired when he came back. His behavior was changed. Danny’s friends tried to bring him back to his normal nature but in vain. Pilon felt sad that he is changed and old. He offered two glasses of wine to Danny in the house. Danny was happy and Pilon observed this. Now the friends knew what to do. They shouted to earn money to arrange a party for Danny. They got to work and this news spreads quickly through Tortilla Flat. The town people come to know that Danny’s friends are going to throw a party. They also join in it, make arrangements and buy wine. In the early morning, when Danny wakes up for his walk, the neighbours swarm on the house and decorate it. His friends put all their effort and come home with their fourteen gallons of wine. They try to search for him and begin their party. Pablo and Pilon go in search of Danny in every part of Monterey town. They find him at last and inform him
about it. Danny who was happy to hear about the party arrives to the house with them.

Danny drinks three gallons of wine by himself and the party becomes great for Danny. The people of the town gather and dance merrily. They consume almost thirty gallons of wine and a huge keg of potato whiskey. The huge party finally ends in a tragedy. Danny picks up a table leg and challenges everyone present there to a fight. Danny then falls from a forty feet height to the bottom near his house sadly. “The people scattered. Within fifteen minutes four doctors were awakened, dragged from their beds by frantic paisanos.” (197) Pilon who sees him shrieks to call for a doctor and Father Ramon. First the doctors arrived and then the doctor. The pirate with his dogs and all of Danny’s friends were present there as Danny’s family friends. “But in the big room, crowded to suffocation with the people of Tortilla Flat, there was tenseness and a waiting silence.” (198)

The people of the town wanted to make the Danny’s funeral a public one. People gather with their fine clothes and the funeral was arranged with military finery as Danny served in the army. As the paisanos were dressed in poor clothes they do not want to attend the funeral. They thought that it would be a dishonor for Danny if they attend with the rags. So they decide to watch the funeral from a distance. They could not see that for longer and in sorrow cry helplessly.
“The drums thundered their heartbreaking, slow rhythm. The band played its sodden march. The caisson moved. The people walked majestically behind, men straight and stern, women daintily holding their skirts up out of the indelible trail of the cavalry.” (204)

When all the people entered the church, the paisanos pulled themselves behind as they were dressed poorly.

That night they consume more wine and talk fondly about Danny. They recalled the beautiful moments with him and sing songs and smoke cigars that Danny liked to have when Pilon tries to light a cigar the match falls from his hand and a newspaper lying in the corner catches fire. Danny’s friends suddenly get up and try to put out the fire but later stop it. They watch the house die like Danny in its blaze. The ashes are only left and the paisanos leave the house each going in a different path.

Coers writes (1995),

In fact, Steinbeck’s paisanos are defined more precisely by the codes they develop as comrades, codes of survival. Together the paisanos exhibit endurance, pluck, and skill; together they are generous to Pirate; together they listen solemnly to the corporal’s story together they are loyal and respect the rhythms of nature and the privacy of friends. (52)
3.4 OF MICE AND MEN (1937)

Steinbeck’s protagonists aspire to own a land which shows their freedom and respect. Both George and Lennie live a struggling life to hold on to their dreams. George is a single man with unemployment. He displays characteristics of leadership and responsibility. Lennie is a childlike migrant worker who needs George’s help and support in all his activities. They walk to the pool in the opening scene. Both of them behave in a different manner in the pond. Lennie goes deep into the water and drinks fast. He dips his hat in the water and wears it allowing the water to drip on his head and neck. While Lennie is playful George checks the water if it is consumable. He is more cautious than Lennie and drinks a little to test it. George dreams of having a place of their own so that they can get separated from the unjust society. Candy and Crooks also get involved in their dream. The dream farm will be suitable for Candy and Crooks too for their isolation in the society. As Durst Johnson observes (1997),

“Crooks says that all the men dream of owning a little land. For George and Lennie it has become an obsession. Steinbeck also breaches the idea of California as a perceived Eden with peaceful scenes of the young Jody on the ranch and the initial description
Thus the characters in Of Mice and Men dream for land and a lucrative career. The climate and farming opportunities of California made the workers to dream for their own piece of land. George is a rational man who thinks thorough and analyses things. He finds out ways to reach his goals and works hard for it. He predicts certain things and warns Lennie. He also advises Lennie and helps him to carry out work. He is thoughtful in guiding Lennie but also gets annoyed when Lennie is unable to control himself. His anger disappears when he sees Lennie’s incorruptibility to do thing properly like others do. George understands that Lennie is both innocent and dangerous and he has to help him in times of danger. Though Lennie could not keep things in his mind, he knows their dream by heart. George often tells Lennie that he would be free if there is no Lennie but still he loves to take care and be with him. As Durst Johnson observes (1997),

“Of all the characters in the novel, only George and Lennie have a human bond that could be classified as being in the spirit of a family. They alone travel together, share a history, have responsibility and commitment to each other, and need each other.” (17)
Slim who gives Lennie a pup observes him and says that Lennie can do hard work but he is not intelligent. Slim expresses suspicion and questions why both of them are always found together while people in the ranch are seemed alone always. “You guys travel around together? His tone was friendly. It invited confidence without demanding it. (35-36)” (after this George says Lennie isn’t bright but is a good worker) Slim’s comment tells that it is rather friendly than questioning George. George admits that Lennie isn’t bright but is a good worker. Slim’s reaction shows that he is compassionate and understands that travelling with another person will keep away from isolation. “……… they just come in and get their bunk and work a month, and then they quit and go out alone.” (40)

George’s conversation with Slim tells George’s relationship with Lennie and how he is intimate with Lennie. George finding Slim to be a good friend explains how he is close with Lennie. He tells about Lennie’s aunt and his nature. “George looked over at Slim and saw the calm, Godlike eyes fastened on him.” (41) He tells that after the death of Aunt Clara Lennie started staying with George and followed after his aunt’s death. Initially George liked to be with Lennie as he was so playful. Later he realized not to have fun of him after the river incident. Once when George told Lennie to jump into the river Lennie immediately did. As he did not know to swim he nearly drowned and George had to pull him out. After this he never played jokes on him. “I was
feelin pretty smart. I turns to Lennie and says, ;Jump in. An he jumps. Could not swim a stroke. He damn near drowned before we could get him.” (41)

George says Lennie is not harmful and he never hurts anyone with intention. As George is very closer to Lennie he does not understand the enormous strength of Lennie which is evident when he breaks Curley’s hand in extreme anger. George shares with Slim about Lennie’s problem that happened in Weed. He told that he innocently touched a girl’s dress for which she shouted and made the people to gather. “Slim’s eyes were level and unwinking. He nodded very slowly. So what happens?” (42) Lennie scared her and she told every one that she has been raped. Lennie and George had to hide in an irrigation ditch whole night and then flee from the ranch.

The stinking smell of Candy’s dog makes people in the bunk house to complain Carlson. They want to shoot the dog and put an end to it. Candy helplessly looks at others if there would be any change in their discussion. Slim along with Carlson accepts for the shooting of the dog and so Candy unwillingly allows Carlson to do it.

“A shot sounded in the distance. The men looked quickly at the old man. Every head turned toward him. For a moment he continued to stare at the ceiling. Then he rolled slowly over and faced the wall and lay silent.” (50)
Candy now loses his dog and is alone like others in the ranch. The cruelty is seen in the action of Carlson in shooting the dog and in Curley showing his hatred towards Lennie. Steinbeck through Candy discusses social discrimination based on age and handicaps. The novel gives a picture of people who are unable to control their emotions and situations. Lennie with the help of George somehow plans for future but still their pursuit is completely unknown to them. The kindhearted Lennie becomes a prey of his own might. He finds it difficult to control his thoughts and feelings and others see it as a danger. George who protects him also finally cannot save him and gives Lennie a place of extreme peace and justice. Many of Steinbeck’s characters suffer from a marginal income. George and Lennie have a dream for their own farm in spite of their little pay. Lennie and George knew that they do not have a family. But Lennie says that he has got George and George has got Lennie and this would be a great thing for them. Thus the characters are common man who display innocence and are satisfied amidst avarice people. As Kimmel observes (2006),

“......... but Lennie’s death is the highest expression of George’s sacrifice and love. .......
In most of Steinbeck’s novels, we also find a fanfare for the common man.” (143-144)
Lennie and George are not strong characters but small guys who become a victim of circumstances. They are common men who aspire to live a fearless, decent life with freedom, respect, dignity, stable work and their dream home. Of Mice and Men was published during the Great Depression period. The migrants were jobless and had a dull future. The socio economic problems of the California gave enough material for Steinbeck to write his novels on migrants. When Of Mice and Men was published, the machines were replacing men and their life became worse. Steinbeck’s novels depict the lives of the workers pragmatically and carries his message to the people.

3.5 THE GRAPES OF WRATH (1939)

The Joads family lived the idea of one huge family and this is represented by Steinbeck in his novel from the beginning till the end as a group man theory. According to Zirakzadeh (2013),

Steinbeck’s group-men theory rested on what one might call a bifurcated (or perhaps a two-story) view of human psychology and on a Darwinian understanding of cultural evolution. Both components reflected Steinbeck’s exposure to currents of European thought that had arrived in the United States around the turn of the century. (29)
The importance of The Grapes of Wrath lies in its group rather than the individual. In the novel there is no one single protagonist but many who contribute to the success of the novel. Tom Joad plays a major role in the whole novel whose development is more apparent. So he is identified as the novel’s protagonist. Tom’s goals are personal and selfish in the beginning of the novel. He meets Casey after the parole from the prison. He does not intend to help the family in their journey. He helps the Men to keep the government camp safe from the infiltrators. Casy was the one who first realizes that all are part of a global community and are to be considered as one soul. He never had a family but he understood the group man theory and also fights for the common workers. Tom later reaches this realization and begins his life like Casy. Tom’s altruistic behavior is seen at the end of the novel. Tom understands that fighting against the unjust people is the greatest type of justice. His lines say that. According to Vicek (2000),

“Likewise, Tom reaches this understanding when he is permanently isolated from his family. He tells Ma that even if he cannot regain contact with his own family, he will survive because he is now part of the large family of humanity.” (80)

Casey’s development demonstrates a shift from thought to action. He transforms from a preacher to a man of action. He focuses his thoughts on
action on the welfare of his fellow humans. He organizes the workers to protest
the abuse of migrants. The Joads decide to take Casy to California with them.
when they pack their things Casy helps them. He tries in salting the meat for
which ma Joad comments that it is woman’s work to do such things. Casy
convinces ma Joad that it is just a work and need not be split as men or
women’s work. “It’s all work, the preacher replied. They s too much of it to split
it up to men’s or women’s work. You got stuff to do. Leave me salt the meat.”
(112) Tom and Casy together establish that as a group they can survive and
can face problems with respect and confidence. They preach that life is one and
sacred and it only a part of one big soul. According to Heavelin (2000),

The Joads’ intense feelings of family
loyalty have been transcended; they have expanded to
embrace all men. Another image could have symbolized
this universality, but, for Steinbeck, perhaps no other
could have done it so efficiently. (73)

The Joads search a place to fill the radiator and take rest. There
they meet Wilsons who also pull to the other side of the road. As they had
overload, they wanted the Wilsons to share few stuff in their trucks. The
Wilson’s immediately accept and extend their help.

“We got a overload, but Mr. an Mis Wilson ain’t. If some
of us folks could ride with them an take some a their
light stuff in the truck, we wouldn’t break no strings an
we could git up hills. An me an Al both knows about a car, so we could keep that car a rollin. We’d keep together on the road an it’d be good for ever’body. Wilson jumped up. Why sure. Why, we’d be proud. We certain’y would. You hear that, Sairy?” (154)

Sairy Wilson gave the mattress to Grandpa Joad. It is the Wilsons who after his death help in preparing his body. When Sairy assists Ma Joad all the other members of the family wait outside and decide about the dead body. Joads’ problem becomes Wilsons’ too after the death of Grandpa. “The family became a unit. Pa squatted down on the ground, and Uncle John, beside him. Pa was the head of the family now. Ma stood behind him. Noah and Tom and Al squatted, and the preacher sat down, and then reclined his elbow.” (144) According to Vicek (2000),

Granpa’s death and the ‘adoption’ of the Wilsons in this chapter reveals a change in the family structure that supports the theme of social unity. The concept of the individual family is being replaced by a larger concept of a world family. Granpa’s death is the first loss the family endures, and it is instrumental in drawing the family together as a unit. (43)
Steinbeck depicts beautifully the food sharing concept of Ma Joad in The Grapes of Wrath as group formation concept. Ma Joad shares her food with the children in the camp which highlights on coordination and unity. Sharing the food always had a deeper meaning in any society. When Ma Joad cooks in the government camp, the local children gather around her pot. She also leaves some leftovers for the starving children. The people of The Grapes of Wrath do not belong to some high class but are common working people who live in poor working conditions. The novel conveys its message that the strength of the man lies in the unity of the group and it is their duty to help others during distress. According to Johnson (1997)

The Grapes of Wrath is not first and foremost the story of Tom Joad; it is the story of the Joad family and all the people they draw into their family circle .... And she is the one who realizes important truths of the novel: that ‘we’ are one people and that the more a person suffers, the greater must be his effort to help others. (5)

Ma Joad directs the family when they are puzzled. She attends the sick person and provides food and treatment for the family that they are hale and healthy. She does not want the family to separate. She even shows her
strength to Pa Joad by taking a jack handle in her hand. Majority of the incidents in the novel happens in open places. Joads were compelled to move out of their homes. Thus they become migrants like all others and live in trucks or cars. They meet other people in camps and thus joins the group in their community. “In the evening a strange thing happened: the twenty families became one family, the children were the children of all. The loss of home became one loss, and the golden time in the West was one dream.” (202) They have come from different places having lived in worries and disappointments and are going to a new unknown land. So they find a unity among themselves and talked and shared their lives in the camps. According to Vicek (2000),

As the cars of the migrant families travel west, they begin to create their own communities with rules, laws, punishments and social expectations. A community begins with one family camping alongside the road. Eventually, one family turns into twenty families. (52)

The conditions that threaten the success of human labour, thought and activity provide opportunities for realizing the social aspects of human existence. Human beings even though suffer from injustices in the initial stages later it only builds solidarity among them. we all the migrants join
together and lament on their circumstances instead of ‘I lost my hand’ they say ‘We lost our land’. This unity comes in their group formation.

Steinbeck through the show says that a group can protect itself from outside. Tom and other men have been warned that there will be infiltrators at the camp’s Saturday night dance. The sheriffs can enter the camp only if laws are broken inside the camp. As a result few laws were broken. Tom Joad with other infiltrators organize, plan and identify the infiltrators. They put them out before any trouble occurs. Man can be effective only when he is in the group. The fight in the dance camp is a good example for this in The Grapes of Wrath. When people are treated with dignity they organize well and contribute effectively. The cruel land owners are scared of the migrants for they can work hard and earn well. That is why they are afraid of the migrants as a group. They are looked down as Okies. But they can prove to be active and powerful people when given an opportunity. As the landowners understand this very well they wanted to crush them. According to Vicek (2000),

“They are proud, productive and potentially powerful group of people, and for this reason, the landowners would like to destroy any camps that promote any kind of organization.”(68)
Steinbeck worries about the ways in which the new forms of wealth are simply destructive and corrupts the social and political life. They impose havoc and hardships on common citizens and affect the authentic individual lives and social relationships. The landowners are incapable to see, hear and understand the needs or wants of migrants or the most fundamental qualities of human beings. In the conflict between the sheriff and the labour contractor the Hoverville camp is set to fire. When the rain continues to fall, Pa Joad urge the men who live with them to build a temporary dam to prevent water entering their place.

“And beside him the other men ranged themselves. They heaped the mud up in a long embankment, and those who had no shovels cut live willow whips and wove them in a mat and kicked them into the bank. Over the men came a fury of work, a fury of battle. When one man dropped his shovel, another took it up.”

Even nature is against the migrants as an uprooted tree destroys the dam. The nature also becomes their enemy, forces them to leave the boxcar camp when the floods rise. The novel ends with a flood which is a natural disaster that threatens human survival. The flood only leads to group struggle and not to surrender. The rising water reinforces creativity, determination and generosity as human beings come to the aid of one another, even in desperate times.
A natural act of the group is established in The Grapes of Wrath. Joads’ family join Casy in their travel to California and then they join with the Wilsons by sharing their stuff with them. Later they join with the Wainwrights and share their boxcar with them. They all share their material goods with each other thereby providing both physical and psychological support. This is certainly a natural act of the group. The concept of family is differently portrayed in the novel. The family which is defined with its boundaries becomes an older one and the migrant lifestyle creates it with another meaning. Their life on the camp on the road gives them new links and new people to survive. This is evident when the Joads meet the Wilsons and the Wainwrights. In a very short span of time the all unite as one by sharing their sufferings, food and help one another. According to Zirakzadeh (2013),

“As Richard Astro notes, Ma likewise shifts her reference orientation from the family unit to the larger migrant community as a whole.” (139)

The migrants form groups and then a community whenever they see others similar to them. They become one family on the roadside as they have a common suffering. Tom gets this transformation on seeing Casy and ma Joad also joins them and understands the necessity for the unity in the group. The potential for the harmony lies in the adversity. Tom tells Ma Joad that he is
worried to see his people working and living like pigs in the farms. This makes Ma Joad also to feel the need for the group for a collective struggle. As stated the collective struggle paves way for the larger migrant community as a whole. When Muley Graves sees Tom and Casy, he shares his food with them and they all join together. Seeing grandpa in the deathbed, Sairy Wilson helps the Joads family. The Joads even stop their journey too repair Wilson’s car. Later, while staying in the boxcar the Joads share with the Wainwrights and they in turn help Rose of Sharon during the delivery of her stillborn child. The group concept is clearly seen in the Weedpatch Government camp. Everything is available in the camp equally for all the residents though everyone has his aspirations beyond his needs, there is light for a better life. The Weedpatch camp becomes a constructive group by providing equality to all community people. The people in the camp strive to protect their dignity and work hard to be an example for others. Steinbeck says that this ability of being flexible and treating others equally is a characteristic of poor people. According to Heavelin (2000),

“The Joad family is a democratic, cooperative organism; it is a cohesive group, and yet no member loses his individual character in the group.” (75)

The Joads family exhibit equality and unity who have improved from their family interests to a coordination with poor. The downward
movements of the family are balanced by the upward movements by the end of the story. While the Joads family suffers from fortunes and moral values it also undergoes the loss of its members. But in the longer run, the family merges with the society, which brings family confidence, friends and hope to survive. Steinbeck’s messages are actually solutions and are universal. He says that those who are supple can change to new environment and they are the ones who survive and gain flexibility through the collective action. People who are self centered are isolated and those are integral in nature form their own constructive group.

The farm families spontaneously evolve into such a community, becoming "one family" in the roadside camps and through their common suffering and resilience as farm workers. Not just Tom but also Ma embraces Casy’s social-gospel message of the need for group unity and collective struggle against the corporate order. Their communal action along with sympathy and concern makes the groupman theory successful and significant.

3.6. IN DUBIOUS BATTLE (1936)

Steinbeck in ‘In Dubious Battle’ (1936) explores that the groups are greater and independent than the individuals. In the novel, from the initial encounter between the apple pickers and the Communist organizers through
the impending defeat of the strike at the end of the novel, workers organize collectively and react without thinking due to the pressure exerted by the politicians thinking due to the pressure exerted by the politicians and authorities. The Communists only think about their profits and brush aside common man’s emotion and feelings. They control the mob to do the strike.

Steinbeck’s ‘Argument of the Phalanx’ explains his concept of group man theory. Steinbeck explores both the constructive and destructive group theory in his novel. This concept arises from the industrial, social and economical aspects of the people. In ‘In Dubious Battle’, the characters either exploit or get affected and make us sympathize for them.

The characters and incidents in the novel are based on the real strike organizers and apple pickers. The main characters are Mac, a seasoned labour organizer, and Jim, a fervent young disciple. Jim follows Mac, who teaches all the techniques of organizing the workers. Doc Burton, the character based on Ed Rikets, uses his medical knowledge in helping the people.

Through the endless hunger, their ailment because of improper insanitary conditions and the violence against them by the authorities Steinbeck conveys the enormous suffering of the strikers to the readers. This only shows the economic imbalance that existed during that period. The
characters lose everything from their side as misery is not an individual but universal problem.

Jim’s starvation and the cruelty against him in his youth makes him a member of the communist party. He works with Mac, the organizer of the party and at first become fruit pickers in the field. Later, Jim and Mac plan to hurry up the strike, when the fruit growers cut the wage. Jim and Mac comes to know that the daughter in law of London, the leader of the group, is in labour. Mac comes forward saying that he has medical training to treat the girl. He commands his men to find all the things and materials needed to help with the birth. He wants the men feel part of a movement and ensures the environment is clean. “A change was in the air. The apathy was gone from the men. Sleepers were awakened and told, and added themselves to the group. A current of excitement filled the jungle, but a kind of joyful excitement.” (46) London could not believe Mac and as he trusts Mac helps the girl in delivering the baby.

Mac asks Jim to burn the unused clothes got for the delivery. Those were indeed cleaned and given by the men in the camp. Jim could not understand why the clothes were asked to burn for which Mac explains that as the men who all contributed clothes for the delivery they should feel that they too had a part in the birth of the child. Mac says this will create a bondage with men. “Men always like to work together. There’s a hunger in men to work
together. ....... It only takes a little spark to get them going.” (49) We also come to know that Mac has not worked in a hospital. But he is shrewd enough to manage with the fact that the place around a mother and an infant has to be clean. Mac takes the chance of helping Lisa so that they could be heroes among the workers. “With one night’s work we’ve got the confidence of the men and the confidence of London. And more than that, we made the men work for themselves, in their own defense, as a group.” (48) After helping London’s daughter in law, Mac and Jim have a good understanding with the workers and gain their trust. Mac is happy with the workers’ cooperation and appreciates Jim for assisting him in the work. Mac’s appreciation travels around the workers. Now as they have gained the trust of the workers Mac and Jim also have become friends with London. They now urge the leader of the camp and the workers to organize a strike for better wages and for an enhancement in their lifestyle. But Mac and Jim join to organize their workers as there was a constant trouble from the strike bearers and their troops. The camp did not have proper sanitation maintenance and so the workers feared that the camp might be anytime shut down by the authorities. They also did not have food to meet their basic amenities. So they badly needed work to earn money. According to Zirakzadeh (2013),

“In Dubious Battle therefore conveys a deep fear over the substance and consequences of mob behavior, including working-class struggles. To be
sure, Steinbeck gives Mac and his comrades plenty of opportunities to denounce oppression by the owners and their own vigilante mob.” (127)

Anderson’s 5 acres of plow land was surrounded by big, dark apple trees. The men get to the farm and manage to pick Anderson’s entire crop of apples by the end of the day. Tents go up, provisions come to the new camp and the workers make a little city out of the five-acre field.

“All Anderson walked out and watched with worried eyes while his five acres was transformed into a camp. By noon it was ready; and nine hundred men went to work in the orchard, picking apples into their cooking kettles, into their hats, into gunny sacks.” (107)

There were ancient Fords, paintless Chevrolets and Dodges, and worn-out HUDs around the camp.

Despite the difficulties given by the vigilantes, a strike is called at last. Mac and Jim arrive at the railroad station to warn the strike bearers not to fight against their own workers. During the encounter, Joy is shot. The strike bearers hide behind the windows and shoot at Joy from the buildings. Joy after being badly hit dies after sometime. The workers come around Joy’s body and take his body to the camp. Joy is picked up by Mac, London and Jim and taken towards their vehicle. “London bent over wearily and lifted Joy in his
arms again. A crowd of men followed him, and stood clustered about the big troop tent.” (132) Here the strikers are illustrations of ‘group-man’, a mob driver by animal instincts and acting violently and independently of individual consciousness. According to what Steinbeck calls his ‘Argument of Phalanx’, such groups have emerged throughout history and can explain invasions, mass migrations, and other mysteries of human life.

Jim though wounded and still weak, intends to walk in the funeral procession through the town. Jim moves through the camp and tries to talk with the men. He meets a group of guys and starts talking about Joy’s funeral. Jim tries to encourage the other men by saying that they need to stick together not just for themselves, but for all the workers in the country. Joy’s coffin is brought out of London’s tent and set up on a little platform.

“Jim looked down the street. The news had traveled. Out of the tents men and women came. They moved slowly in together and converged on the platform. And as their group became more and more compact, the sound of their many voices blended into one voice, and the sound of their footsteps became a great restlessness.” (175)

London gives a brief speech on Joy. Mac then takes over and reminds the gathered men that Joy was called a radical man as he believed that every worker deserved to eat. He also addresses the crowd about Joy’s sufferings and
tells them that Joy suffered for them and not for him. It seems to work among the workers as they file behind the coffin for the long walk through town and up to the cemetery. According to Connery (1992),

   Throughout the stories we encounter familiar Steinbeck motifs: men’s instinctive will to survive (as an individual as well as a faceless component of the mass); the theme of ‘group men’ engaged in coordinated effort to serve a common cause; the workings of the dark, irrational unconscious in shaping human behavior. (226)

   In *In Dubious Battle* (1936), we ought to recognize that Steinbeck’s anxieties over the dangers of group man shared his sympathies for workers and the downtrodden and that this orientation persists in his later writing. Steinbeck says that the phalanx reduces humans to an animal or even insect level. In his words, ‘As individual humans we are far superior in our functions to anything the world had born – in our groups we are not only not superior but in fact are remarkably like those most perfect groups, the ants and bees’.
3.7. CONCLUSION

The chapter thus examines the group behavior in John Steinbeck’s selected works. The novels present the powerful characters to strive towards a perfect end and to reach out to enhance the spirit of humanity for love and equality creates a peaceful place for all to live. Steinbeck tells a simple tale with the poor, illiterate migrants. As he was as environmentalist he know that the earth and its resources should be shared by all the human beings and not dominate the weak ones. From mid 1930s Steinbeck got obsessed with the group man theory. Indeed his realistic portrayal of migrants’ life in The Grapes of Wrath brought the La Follette Committee to California to help in improving the condition of the migrants. He was a shrewd behavior of American literature throughout his forty years of professional career.

The characters of Steinbeck’s novels demonstrate both constructive as well as destructive group behavior. While studying the difference between constructive and destructive group behavior, the constructive group behavior overshadows the destructive group behavior which pales to insignificance. Though the doctor in The Pearl, Danny as a womanizer in Tortilla Flat and Curley in Of Mice and Men is portrayed as destructive group behavior, the poor and honest migrants emerge successful in the end as constructive group behaviors. The self centered people are finally cut off and those who are connected and sympathetic in nature survive in the long run.
The primitive people of La Paz still sustain their priceless qualities even when they come across the valuable pearl. Steinbeck’s celebrated friendship and Danny’s friends exhibited loyalty and respect for one another in their group behaviour. The odd couple George and Lennie remains unforgettable through their novel. George’s guidance for Lennie and his faithful love for George is splendid. Jim is helped by Mac in learning the strategy for strike and organising the workers. Mac makes Jim like him and he meets his tragic end in the hands of cruel authorities. The Grapes of Wrath portrays the altruistic behavior and collective action of the characters which displays courage and compassion even in the toughest times. Steinbeck wants readers to sympathize for the migrants who are poor but have honesty, integrity and kindness and determination to fight till the end. The effective portrayal of group-man is seen in his novels which carries Steinbeck’s masterful messages though decades.