CHAPTER IV

THEME OF ‘GOODNESS’

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the theme of goodness in John Steinbeck’s novels. Steinbeck has a unique style of writing, which has a lot of morals and lessons that are deep and are thought triggering. While the second chapter examines the sufferings of common people fighting against the odds of life, the third chapter present the struggle of the individuals as a part of a group and the group behavior of malignant and the dominating and demanding society which does not bother about the fulfillment of the quest for meaning of individuals. The present chapter evaluates Steinbeck’s concept of life as an evaluation from frustration to affirmation, which proceeds to examine and finally tries to establish that these struggles are not only peculiar to the individual but universal and eternal. Steinbeck’s novels expose the plight of everyday Americans who are victimized by the struggles of surviving in the rural American countryside. Though Steinbeck’s novels are depressing they teach good lessons about relationships and all have interesting characters. He uses characterization as a great quality of his writing that deals with poor people and gives insightful reading. California the place which is considered as a golden land of prosperity, happiness and growth as well as misery and
suffering is the dream of the migrants. People thronged to go to this place for a promising future and a peaceful life full of opportunities. But life was as imagined by them which only provided them less wages, poor living conditions and inhumane treatment. In spite of unemployment and hunger the characters in Steinbeck’s novels exhibit goodness and displayed enormous courage in withstanding their survival.

4.2. THE PEARL (1947)

Steinbeck’s The Pearl demonstrates the evil that the pearl Kino discovers in the sea. Usually a pearl represents purity and it symbolizes goodness for both the individual and the society. Steinbeck explains how the pearl that is going to change Kino’s life is formed. Kino while diving and collecting oysters finds an isolated pearl which is quite larger than others. A sudden glance of light tells him that there is a pearl lying inside the oyster. He takes it and hurries to Juana who waits for him on the boat. Seeing his excitement Juana understands that God has provided them what they wanted. Juana urges him to open the big oyster and Kino does and both surprises to see the large, clear and beautiful pearl inside it. Juana after admiring the pearl takes Coyotito in her hand and finds that the baby’s swelling has vanished. Kino screams out of joy for the pearl as well as his son’s recovery. This makes the other pearl divers hurry up to his boat. Kino believes that the goodness of
the pearl has made the baby’s wound to disappear. Charles (2002) in his Magazine Article ‘One Book, One Community’, appreciates the pearl.

The book, Steinbeck’s The Pearl, is a simple novel set in La Paz, Mexico. Themes of community relationships, greed and the beauty of nature revolve around a pearl, a traditional symbol for spiritual purity and the goodness of the world that young Coyotito’s wound has disappeared. (9)

Steinbeck describes how Juana is good and helpful to Kino so that he can remain morally good throughout the novel. Juana is more practical than Kino. She symbolizes the family’s domestic happiness. Juana’s seaweed poultice shows her presence of mind. According to her culture she is faithful to her husband and is with him in all the circumstances. But whenever he goes wrong she points it to him. when they find the pearl it was first Juana to see its evil side. She wants Kino to live according to the rules of the society but Kino sees the benefits he could get out of the pearl. she balances his dream and aspirations with her. She balances Kino’s eagerness with her intentions that money is dangerous. “Juana’s eyes were opened too. Kino could never remember seeing them closed when he awakened.” (p 3)
Juana emerges as a new and a different person when the baby is stung by a scorpion. Initially she prays to all the Gods when Coyotito is stung by a scorpion but she immediately springs to the baby and sucks the poison from his wound. Also, Juana gathers some brown seaweed and applies to Coyotito’s swollen shoulder. This shows that she is more practical and effective than Kino. Steinbeck here points out that the treatment given by the poor is better than that of a doctor in town. When Kino climbs the boat with his basket of oysters and eyes shining with excitement, Juana sensing his excitement pretends to look away. “It is not good to want a thing too much. It sometimes drives the luck away. You must want it just enough, and you must be very tactful with God or the gods.” (20) She holds her breath and controls her emotions.

Juana takes the situation in her control when she cries loudly for a doctor for the baby. “She could stand fatigue and hunger almost better than Kino himself. In the canoe she was like a strong man. And now she did a most surprising thing.” (p 8) The villagers are astonished to hear this as no doctor has visited their village so far. The priest appreciates Juana for having nice thoughts when she says they will marry first. The priest said, “It is pleasant to see that your first thoughts are good thoughts. God bless you, my children.” (29)

Kino gets angry when the pearl dealer tries to offer a low price. He tells that it is worth fifty times and he is cheating him. The dealer refuses
Kino’s statement and tells that his appraisal is accurate and tells Kino can never go for a second opinion. Kino’s neighbours wonder at his refusal and his demand of expecting more money for the pearl. “Kino was silent and watchful. He felt a little tugging at his back, and he turned and looked in Juana’s eyes, and when he looked away he had renewed strength.” (p 50) The charm of the pearl attracts Juana too like him in the beginning. She sees the pearl as an evil later. When she is certain about this she thinks about the rules and traditions of her society. Then she tries to change Kino saying that they can be peaceful only if things are the same. But Kino’s wishes hides his eyes and sees only the benefits he could get from it. Juana predicts the harm from the pearl and so wants to protect themselves rather than sacrifice everything they have with them. thus she plays a significant role in the novel as she tries to balance Kino’s dream and explains that money will make their life disturbed and complicated. When Kino plans to climb the mountains to divert the trackers he suggests this to Juana. She does not accept this and says she and the baby will be with him. They all then leave to the mountains. “He looked then for weakness in her face, for fear or irresolution, and there was none. Her eyes were very bright. He shrugged his shoulders helplessly then, but he had taken strength from her.” (p 76) She is always loyal and submissive to Kino and remains a strong support till the end.

According to Fitzwater (1981),
“She seems, at first, to be completely subservient to her husband and without any life of her own. She seems to be only the hardworking and loyal wife to a simple fisherman and she does not complain.” (20)

Kino is a simple, protagonist who has love for his family, respecting the customs of his community, treating his people with warmth and contended with what he had. He is a hardworking person with strong morals and is close with nature. Kino who leads a peaceful life is disturbed when his son is stung by a scorpion. The discovery of the pearl takes him outside his community. He moves towards material gains and schooling for his son which only makes his living complicated. Greed, conflict and violence destroy his peaceful life. He degrades from his innocent state to a corrupted one and disillusionment. His ambition and greed ruins his entire family.

Kino is unaware of the danger that can be caused by the pearl. He wishes to marry Juana in the church, to buy a rifle and giving a proper education to Coyotito. He believes that only his son could free his community from ignorance and selfish rich people of the town. Kino’s neighbours play an important role in Kino’s life. Their reaction is important especially on the day he sells the pearl. They feel the excitement like Kino and Juana and they prepare to follow them to town to sell it. Kino declares about what he will do when he sells the pearl. The neighbours set themselves apart
from Kino and his declarations and they proclaim he would give the money to charity and warn that wealth will destroy him. This might sound a little like their jealousy on Kino. But their part is continuously seen as a combined voice throughout the novel. The neighbours are concerned for Kino and present the truth that accumulation of wealth only ruins human and charity is good as this will help others also to rise. According to Burkhead (2002),

“Likewise, when Kino discovers the great pearl, the other divers initially celebrate his good fortune because it confirms the possibility of good fortune for themselves. This hope is further displayed in the neighbours accompanying Kino and his family to town to sell the pearl”. (P 110)

Kino hears the pearl as that of hearing a trumpet. He sees lovely visions on the surface of the pearl. When he wishes to have a rifle, the neighbours murmur to have it too. Kino thinks it is the rifle that breaks down the barriers and an electric strength comes to him over his wildest daydreaming. “The neighbors close pressed and silent in the house, nodded their heads at his wild imaginings.” (p 27) When Kino tells his dream Juana catches her breath sharply and with bright eyes she watches him. Kino’s eyes shine with prophecy when he see himself and Juana by the fire while their son reads a book, on his own. After telling his dream completely he is now afraid of his own speech for the first time with his ambition. He keeps the pearl safe close his heart.
The neighbours having observed a great wonder will talk about this for ages. They wished that this sudden prosperity should not change Kino and could not get caught in the hands of evil. They like Kino for his simplicity and kindness that they think the pearl should not destroy him. “That good wife Juana, they said, and the beautiful baby Coyotito, and the others to come. what a pity it would be if the pearl should destroy them all.” (p 43) As a sign of friendship, the neighbours join the historic moment of selling the pearl. As they watch his door through their brush houses they too are prepared to join their journey. “The gathering procession was solemn, for they sensed the importance of this day, and any children who showed a tendency to scuffle, to scream, to cry out, to steal hats and rumple hair, were hissed to silence by their elders.” (p 46) Their procession was towards the dark offices of the pearl buyers. Kino and Juana walk towards their La Paz. Juana carries Coyotito’s dead body without speaking a word with one another. The people who watch them can understand the pain that they had and come to the brush houses where the neighbours wait for them. They stand and watch them quietly allowing them to pass. “And those people who had rushed to see them crowded back and let them pass and did not speak to them.” (p 86) The people around them look at them speechless while Juan Thomas can only extend his hand as a sign of welcoming them back. They both cross the brush houses and reach the sea.
The doctor dreams of returning to a European style. The corrupt and well-organized La Paz pearl dealers exploit the pearl divers who come to them with hope. The trackers are corrupted men and they follow Kino and Juana to steal the pearl from them.

The beggars know about the doctor’s greed, harshness and his merciless attitude. They thought what this fat, lazy doctor will do to cure Coyotito. “They knew his clumsy abortions and the little brown pennies he gave sparingly for alms. They had seen his corpses go into the church.” (p 11)

Juan Thomas is the elder brother of Kino who is faithful and supportive to everyone. He stands by Kino’s side and encourages Kino’s endeavours and also warns him in possessing the pearl. He cares for Kino and Juana in all the situations and is sympathetic for them. “I will protect you, said Juan Thomas, and he called, Apolonia, close up the door. Do not even whisper that Kino is here.” (p 65) Juan Thomas went out of his brush house and every time he went out came back with things that were borrowed from his neighbours. He borrowed essential things like a small straw bag full of beans and rice, a cup of pepper, salt and a knife for their safety. Kino was happy to see the things especially the knife. Juan Thomas could not send them in such a circumstance but still he hugged Kino and sent him. He wished him to go with God emotionally. According to Fitzwater (1981),
“After Kino refuses to sell the pearl, his brother tells him: You have defied not the pearl buyers, but the whole structure, the whole way of life, and I am afraid for you.” (p 14)

This shows Juan Thomas’ strong affection for his brother and the well being of his community. Steinbeck says that a writer should depict the cruel and harmful sides of the human nature that threatens the survival of the innocent men. These negative desires hamper the progress of humanity. Steinbeck adds that the writer should also celebrate man’s goodness of heart and greatness in his courage, affection and compassion for his fellow beings. He should stress man’s ability to surpass the evil natures and pave a way for new discoveries that illuminate the mankind and free them from slavery by all means. This kind of action would collectively enhance the human race and serve the purpose.

4.3 TORTILLA FLAT (1935)

Steinbeck sympathizes with the common men throughout his career which is evident in, Tortilla Flat. Danny, the owner of the house is the leader of his friends’ group in Tortilla Flat. Danny makes a decision whenever there is need in the group. He returns from World war I and finds that his grandpa has left him two houses after his death. Danny shares his houses to
the group and this quality elevates him. Danny invites Pilon to live in his other house and he too is happy that he has risen in the social scale. He and Danny spend much time together. Since Pilon has no money he never pays the rent. Danny does not ask for it. After few months, Pilon does some work to pay Danny. He thinks of giving Danny two dollars but pays wine convincing that Danny will be happy with wine than money. He meets his friend Pablo, and takes him home. Pilon thinks of sharing the house with Pablo. He accepts and Pablo is happy that he would get fifteen dollars a month. He thought that if Danny asks for the rent he can tell him that when Pablo pays, he would pay Danny. “Poor Pilon would have paid the money if he ever had any, but he never did have- not long enough to locate Danny. Pilon was an honest man. It worried him sometimes to think of Danny’s goodness and his own poverty.” (p 19) Pilon, Pablo and Jesus Maria move into Danny’s house. As he has allowed them in his house they become his protectors. They feel a responsibility to do since he has taken good care of them by giving them a place to live. Danny wants his friends to have a good life no matter what struggle he overcomes.

Steinbeck says that though the paisanos drink wine and go behind women they possess strong goodness. The group has immense potential for goodness. Steinbeck himself had a profound impression on everyone he met. People sensed a depth of compassion, humour and dignity in him. As Doren (1940) observes ,
Tortilla Flat was like nobody but Steinbeck. The paisanos of Monterey— that is, the descendants of the original Mexican population – were for him good people of laughter and kindness, of honest lusts and direct eyes, of courtesy beyond politeness. (p 364)

Pilon who always aims to do what is right is a wonderful person and has a very strong conscience. He is filled with a sense of divine satisfaction whenever he does good. When he gets two dollars he first decides to get Candy but later buy two gallons of wine for him. Instead of taking it to Danny he visits his old friend. Pilon then realizing that it is not fair then drinks the wine with all his friends.

One of Danny’s house is burned when a candle falls and spreads to the entire building. Danny though is angry at this is also relieved from the responsibility of being the owner of two houses. Steinbeck writes, “He had thought over …… burdens was removed.” (50) Danny’s humanity is evident in his reaction to losing his house. He is not a strict owner but a kind friend. Money or power did not bring any change on him. Danny sentimentally reflects, “It is good to have …… How lonely ..... one’s grappa.” (54) “Danny in proof of his forgiveness, brought out a quart of grappa and shared its fire with his friends.” (p 54)
Danny and his friends’ goodness is seen in their handling of pirate’s treasure. The friends do anything for just one dollar but they united safeguard pirate’s money when it comes to friendship. They revolve around pirate’s money in the beginning but later help him to achieve his goal. Now the paisanos are diverted from their focus on drinking and casual life as the pirate joins the group. He is seen on the streets with his five dogs of various sizes. He chops wood everyday and sells it for a quarter in town. He then retires to an old chicken house where he and his five dogs sleep together. The dogs also follow him on his daily routine. Pilon notices pirate leaving somewhere in the night and concludes that he should definitely hide the money in some hiding place. He secretly follows him whenever he left the house. He also invites the pirate to stay in Danny’s house with his dogs to monitor him. Gradually, the paisanos feel sympathy for him. They tell him that they are concerned for his welfare. The Pirate overwhelmed at their concern and friendship also believes them and hands over the money to Danny trusting them. “The Pirate is mentally underdeveloped and Steinbeck describes him, The paisanos of ... rest of his body.” (57). Danny’s friends also protect the pirate from others in Tortilla Flat. The pirate who was alone all these days and always afraid of his treasure now feels happy and safe with the paisanos group. The responsibility is shared with Danny’s friends and they help him. Though the group has motives for their concern towards the pirate, they do have empathy for him.
The goodness that they possess is well brought out by John Steinbeck. The Pirate unifies the group’s virtuousness. The paisanos group help the pirate to enhance his standard of living by caring for him. When Pilon visited the Pirate he shared his food with him and his friends.

“The Pirate broke his cookie into seven pieces. The first he gave to Pilon, who was his guest. Now Enrique, he said. Now, Fluff. Now, Senor Alec Thompson. Each dog received his piece and gulped it and looked for more.

Last, the Pirate ate his and held up his hands to the dogs.” (p 64)

The splitting away of the sugar cookie into seven pieces and distributing it to Pilon and the dogs show how compassionate and good is the Pirate. Pilon explains the pirate that he has friends to care for him. he says it is unhealthy to stay in the chicken house. Also his friends could provide him nice clothes and good food in his house. When Pilon reveals about the Piirate to the rest of Danny’s group, they wish to invite him to their house. “Poor little lonely man, Danny added. If I had known, I would have asked him long ago, even if he had no treasure.” (p 69) The Pirate is overjoyed and though he does not involve in their chat, he enjoys the time immensely. “To think, he said, all those years I lay in that chicken house, and I did not know any pleasure. But now, he added, oh, now I am very happy.” (p 75) The paisanos continue to watch and follow the pirate. They make him scared that his money would be stolen. Finally the Pirate believes this and brings the money to them with extreme happiness. He
decides that only his new friends can ensure the safety of his hard earned money and gives the money to them. This trust brings about a conflict in the paisanos group. The pirate then tells them about the promise of buying a golden candlestick if the saint would heal his sick dog. The dog gets healed but sadly gets hit by a truck. However, the pirate must keep up his words and now is very pleased to have trusted his friends. In the beginning the paisanos lead a relaxed life. Their earlier thoughts about stealing the pirate’s money bring guilt to them and they are unable to steal his money. Steinbeck shares men’s greatness through his characters with his readers. Though the paisanos steal from the town people, after coming to know about the pirate and the cause for saving the money, they jointly protect it. Though they can steal the money easily they only help the pirate to buy the candlestick. Burkhead (2002) writes,

Helping Pirate protect his treasure is a sacred quest the paisanos cannot refuse. The paisano are shown to possess the goodness that attracted Steinbeck to such men and compelled him to share some of that goodness with his readers. (35)

Big Joe who comes to Monterey after the World War I tries to find his friends. Torelli directs him to them. He finds Pilon and tells him of saint Andrews Eve. They go to the forest to find the buried treasure. They spot the
phosphorescent glow and believe it to be treasure. Pilon says that he searches treasure with Big Joe only for Danny for he has given shelter to all the paisanos in the group. Big Joe did not expect this so gets disappointed but Pilon convinces him that it is only Danny who will help the friends when they need anything. Pilon explains Joe about the goodness of Danny and how it has benefitted the friends. The paisanos come back to Danny’s house and make up their mind to get off to the forest next day to dig the treasure. “Pilon had no speck of the bad Pilon in him this night. No, not one scrap of gold! Not one little brown penny! It is all for Danny, every bit.” (p 84) Pilon said if he gets the treasure he would give it to Danny. For they pay no rent. They get drunk, fight with Danny and are bad too.

Steinbeck says that the paisanos live the way they do and are happy because they value friendship. Danny’s friendship with any other woman worries his friends. When they find no treasure, the friends sadly walk to the beach. They all thought in the beginning that money will make poor Danny happy which they thought wrong later. “Happiness is better than riches, said Pilon. If we try to make Danny happy, it will be a better thing than to give him money.” (p 92) The paisanos talked about everything during their leisure time and the range of topics they discuss tells how genuine and sensitive they are. As Burkhead (2002) writes,
The paisanos believe no woman can be trusted in their fraternity. They drink together on their first evening as guests in Danny’s home, and Jesus Maria swears for himself as well as Pilon and Pablo to ‘see that there is always food in the house for Danny’ (46). This is the oath the paisanos swear to their leader, just as Arthur’s knights swore an oath to their king. (34)

The paisanos are not only good among themselves but also to the Monterey community. Danny’s generosity and kindness spreads to his friends and it is visible in their extending of help to the corporal. Jesus Maria is always on the look out to do some kindness for someone. One day he sees a Spanish boy of about sixteen who is carrying a baby. The baby says he is a corporal and his baby, who is now sick, will grow up to be a general. Danny and his friends do everything they can and help the boy. “The friends arose with alacrity. The corporal threw back the gray blanket from the baby’s face.” (p 115) They become friends with the corporal. The corporal has run away from the Mexican army with his baby son. His wife has left them for his captain. The corporal comes to Monterey for job but could not find one. He has the baby to look after. This is when the humanitarian Jesus Maria comes along and helps the corporal. He takes him to Danny’s house and provides food and shelter. They also make the baby comfortable by laying it in a box paddled with grass and sheepskin. The corporal tells the baby that he would become a
general one day. He believes that the telling makes him so. The paisanos also believe this. They think that the baby would take grow up and revenge on the captain. When the baby dies, the paisanos cry. “In the corner all the dogs whined miserably. The Pirate buried his big head in the fur of Senor Alec Thompson.” (p 119) The paisanos ask the corporal to take revenge himself. The corporal tells that his intent was not for revenge. The friends admire the corporal for his values. They are proud to have known him.

Big Joe Portagee is the last paisano to join the group. His misbehavior has landed him in jail number of times. He continues this misbehavior in Danny’s house too. Big Joe steals the Pirate’s money. The friends beat him severely, hit his back and apply salt on it. When Big Joe moans in pain, Jesus Maria gives him some wine to drink. Then they all feel pity on him and wash the salt on him.

The paisanos’ friendship surpasses the entice of the pirate’s money. Though the amount is large for them they show their sincerity to the pirate instead of stealing it. They ensure that he wears nice clothes to go the church. They even beat their own friend Big Joe severely to find out the pirate’s money. But soon they forgive Big Joe. The friends wash off the salt out of his wounds after getting the money from the buried place.
Big Joe steals the bag of money from its hiding place in Danny’s bed. The other paisanos come to know about Big Joe’s guilt and beat him until he tells them the money’s location.

“The paisanos paid no attention to him until at last Jesus Maria, that prey to the humanities, untied Big Joe’s thumbs and gave him a jar of wine. Even the enemies of our Saviour gave him a little comfort, he excused himself. That action broke up the punishment. The friends gathered tenderly about Big Joe.” (p 133)

Later the friends count the money to verify it as Big Joe tells that he has taken no more than four quarters. They find that the pirate has met his goal of a thousand quarters for the candlestick with only seven left over. They resolve that the pirate must take the money to the priest and tell him the story of the sick dog and his promise to San Francisco. They also devise how to make pirate presentable for the church service that will dedicate the candle. They give pirate the extra money needed to buy new clothes. But the pirate spends the money on a colourful handkerchief and a glass studded belt. “At last he was ready; Pilon’s father’s hat rakishly on his head, Danny’s shirt, Big Joe’s pants, the huge handkerchief around his neck, and, at intervals, the flashing of the jeweled belt.” (p 139) (the pirate leaves to the Church of San Carlos) This makes the paisanos to loan him their clothes. This is a great sacrifice by
pirate’s friends who have given the pirate their shirts. Now they cannot attend the dedication service.

Pirate’s experience at the dedication service and what happens afterward strengthen the friendship of the group. Pirate goes to the church and sees his beautiful golden candlestick. The priest tells the people about St. Francis of Assisi. The service gets disturbed by the pirate’s dogs which have broken away from the other paisanos and have come to the church. “Do not be ashamed, Father Ramon said, It is no sin to be loved by your dogs, and no sin to love them.” (p 141) The pirate, embarrassed takes the dogs outside and after the service he takes them to the woods where he regenerates the service for them as they too can enjoy what the pirate experience during the priest’s sermon. This is the paisanos’ proud experience of the candlesticks.

The paisanos are not only good to their group but also extend help to Teresina Cortez. The family starves after the failure of the harvest. Their only diet is beans. Jesus Maria comes to know about the plight of the family and tells Danny their condition. The paisanos vow to make sure the children do not starve. The friends initially collect all types of food that the children are not used to eating. This makes the food spoil and the children starve. Then realizing their mistake, they steal beans in large quantities and deliver them in the night to Teresina’s house.
They help Senora Teresina Cortez and her large family from hunger when there is poor harvest. Teresina Cortez lives in a cottage with nine children. Teresina and her family are terrified when the bean crop fails. Jesus Maria comes about the terrible situation they are in. He comes home and asks his friends in helping the desperate family. “We shall give of our substance, Danny agreed. And if they needed a house, they could live here.” (p 151) They start stealing in their own house to help her. Teresina’s house overflows with vegetables as food begins to accumulate in her house. She tells Danny that beans is the best food for their children. The paisanos enter a warehouse and steal a stack of beans that night. Teresina and her mother thank God for saving their family. As Burkhead (2002) states,

Chapter 13 illustrates the growing altruism that follows from the proud experience of the candlestick. In this chapter, the paisanos expand their goodness beyond the group to feed the family of Teresina Cortez after the bean harvest fails, threatening to starve the family whose sole diet is beans. Jesus Maria learns of the family’s plight and returns to Danny’s house to tell his friends. They vow to make sure the children do not starve. (p 37)
Danny is happy having helped the distressed lady with the food. The paisanos sleep happily that night. “At Danny’s house four friends were lying happily in their blankets. What pillow can one have like a good conscience? They slept well into the afternoon, for their work was done.” (p 153)

Leadership means responsibility and the property ownership is quite a heavy responsibility for Danny. He cannot bear the responsibility and feels tedious of the monotony in the life. He wishes to be free and have the same life he had before going to the army. He was never attracted by the luxuries and lived a simple life. Danny cannot enjoy the pleasures when he got the ownership of the house. One fine day he vanishes from his house and commits small crimes.

Torelli shows Pilon a document and says that Danny has signed a contract which mentions that Danny has sold his house for twenty five dollars to Torelli. He also asks Danny’s friends to leave the house for which Pilon does not show much interest. He comes to know that it was the only document and no one other than his friends know about the sale. “But Pilon’s joy was so great that it encompassed the world, and even the evil things of the world. We must do something nice sometime for Torelli, he said.” (p 184) In a flash, Pilon seizes Danny’s signed paper from Torelli and he goes wild at this. The paisanos thus manage to retrieve the house by stealing the bill of sale from the wine dealer. Danny eventually returns to the house with two heavy bags of three chickens.
and bread. The paisanos are happy to have Danny home but they are upset to see him depressed and exhausted looking forward to old age and death.

“So great was Pilon’s pleasure and relief that he stood up and made a little speech. Where is there a friend like our friend? He exclaimed. He takes us into his house out of the cold. He shares his good food with us, and his wine. Ohee, the good man, the dear friend,” (p 184)

Pilon plans to give Danny a party. This draws all of Monterey into the paisano’s drive to bring Danny out of his depression. The paisanos get ready for the celebration. The other citizens prepare food and wear their fancy clothes. While the whole town plans, Danny wanders in the town. He realizes that his life has come to an end. Pilon hunts Danny and brings him to the party and Danny joins the celebration. When Danny dies at the party and the funeral is made. Pilon retires to the house, drinks and recollects Danny’s goodness. “They told little stories of Danny, of his goodness, his courage, his piety.” (p 204) They brush aside Danny’s faults and faithfully remember his goodness. They stand outside the church and cry for Danny. Jesus Maria cries and other paisanos follow him and watch the funeral at the cemetery. When Pilon tries to light a match it slips and ignites a newspaper on the floor. They do not want some stranger or some joyless relative of Danny’s to own the house. They sit and smile and honour him by burning his house down. “Better that this symbol of
holy friendship, this good house of parties and fights, of love and comfort, should die as Danny died, in one last glorious, hopeless assault on the gods.” (p 206)

4.4 OF MICE AND MEN (1937)

*Of Mice and Men* (1937) is a story about two men who comes across hardships and sufferings that hamper their normal life. Though their dream seems to be dull and full of hurdles on its ways they struggle to relive their hope in all possible ways. The novel begins with a pond in a forest which says that life is going to be happy and positive for the protagonists. But later they enter a place that is filled with cruelty, harshness, broken dreams and anger. George a small man with sharp features dreams of saving money to own a place and be a master. His life is dedicated to take care of Lennie who only prevents him achieving his goal. George instructs to come back to the pool when there is any trouble. According to Burkhead (2002),

The pool and its surrounding area are secluded and motionless, creating a scene of security reinforced by George telling Lennie, in Chapter 1, that if there is any trouble at the new job to which they are travelling, Lennie is to make his way back to this pool where George will find him. These instructions foreshadow the final scene of the novel. (48)
The major defining traits of Lennie are his loyalty and trust for George, his innocence and his habit of having pets. George too has constant love and protects his friend, Lennie. When Lennie drinks water from the pond hurriedly, George warns him to be careful with the water and check before he drinks. “Tha’s good, he said. You drink some, George. You take a good big drink. He smiled happily.” (5) Infact, he acts as a parent toward Lennie. The guidance for Lennie is necessary as he could not visualize the hidden dangers behind every action. As Burkhead (2002) states,

The path they follow is heavily travelled. Lennie drops to his knees to drink from the pool is quickly chastised by George, who warns him that the stagnant water may be bad. This immediately establishes George’s paternal relationship with Lennie, who is mentally challenged. (p 49)

George has to repeat even the simple instructions to Lennie, as he forgets fast. George finds a dead mouse in Lennie’s pocket and asks him to throw it out. When Lennie gets the mouse again George again throws it and advises him to be careful with creatures. “He heard Lennie’s whimpering cry and wheeled about. Blubberin’ like a baby! Jesus Christ! A big guy like you. Lennie’s lip quivered and tears started in his eyes.” (11) George consoles the
weeping Lennie by putting his hand around his shoulders. He advises Lennie to be well behaved as they have to work in a new place. He tells him not to land in any other trouble like that of Weed and keep away from people.

Slim, is the kindly leader in the ranch with good characteristics. Slim wonders George and Lennie’s friendship and appreciates it saying that it is good to see a person helping a mentally disabled friend. Slim gives one of the puppies to Lennie. George thanks Slim for his kindness. “Sure he’s jes like a kid. There ain’t no more harm in him than a kid neither, except he’s so strong.” (44)

When Crooks is alone in the bunkhouse Lennie visits him. Crooks tries to send him away in the beginning but later converses with him. Lennie admires the pup in Crooks’ room and he tells him not to take the pups often in his hand. Lennie’s innocent smile charms Crooks and chats with him for a long time. “Crooks scowled, but Lennie’s disarming smile defeated him. Come on in and set a while, Crooks said. Long as you won’t get out and leave me alone, you might as well set down. His tone was a little more friendly.” (69) Lennie tells about their secret dream to Crooks. He at first does not believe Lennie but later asks Lennie to join him also in their venture. He says that he is a hardworking person and need not pay for his work.
Steinbeck presents Curley’s wife sympathetically in the chapter where she dies. As Lennie talks to himself in the barn, she comes and sits next to Lennie. He hides the pup from her and tells that he will not speak with her as per George’s advice. She assures him that nothing would happen to him and he can speak with her. Curley’s wife notices the puppy in Lennie’s hand and enquires him about it. “Curley’s wife laughed at him. You’re nuts, she said. But yours a kinda nice fella. Jus like a big baby.” (89) As Curley’s wife understands he is innocent and can be trusted she tells him about her unhappy marriage, her loneliness and unfulfilled aspirations. Without knowing the danger found in Lennie, she allows him to strike her hair which results in her tragic end.

When George returns he realizes what Lennie has done in spite of several warnings. “George still glared at Curley’s wife. Lennie never done it in meanness, he said. All the time he done bad things, but he never done one of em mean.” (93) George understands that he has a choice of watching Lennie killed by Curley or he can take things in his hand. Lennie waits for George near the pond. He is scared that George will become mad when he comes to know what Lennie has done. He tells himself that he has done a bad thing for which George would never forgive him. He imagines speaking with Aunt Clara who scolds him for not obeying George even after so many instructions. Now Aunt Clara vanishes from his mind and a rabbit appears and scolds him. It tells him not to have pets and if he does so George would punish him. Lennie tells the rabbit that George is so good that he never beats him. “George wont do nothing like that. I ve knew George since- I forget when – and he ain’t never raised his
han’ to me with a stick. He’s nice to me. He ain’t gona be mean.” (101) When the rabbit continues Lennie closes his ears with his hands and shouts by calling George. As Burkhead (2002) states,

“With his final act of shooting Lennie, George becomes a man without dreams. He is a realist, not only about the world, but also about his own life.” (p 56)

George takes law in his hands by shooting Lennie. He understands that Lennie who has killed Curley’s wife will be treated severely. Curley would surely kill Lennie if he sees him. He would not allow Lennie to go to jail too. George feels that Lennie could not live in jail too and finally does his own act of righteousness. He did not want Lennie to escape for he could not survive without George’s protection. The dream and owning a farm and the life after that vanishes for George now. Candy asks George if there is still any possibility of owning a farm and George replies him in a realistic and insightful way that no dream is possible for them in such a horrible world and they are not capable for it.

The men who see the dead man are convinced that he with such a disability makes no difference in dying. It is only Slim who can understand the loss of George. As he is a wise man in the bunkhouse he
knows that George could not be consoled for the immeasurable loss happened to him. Slim leads George away from the riverbank and the story states that migrants can never have dreams. Slim is described as a master craftsman with respect and kindness who is a rationalist and adored by the people in the bunkhouse. George tells about Lennie in his first meet with Slim as he know that Slim is sympathetic and would not make fun of Lennie. In fact Slim is the only worker in the ranch who understands the problems of Lennie and accepts him. It is Slim who finally suggests that George did what Lennie needed. Slim’s presence in the novel is essential as he justifies Lennie and takes side with George’s mercy killing. He always assists the workers and does what is right for them positively. As Burkhead (2002) states,

He is important because he is the voice of the author. His understanding and approval of the relationship between George and Lennie creates further sympathy for their circumstances. ...... What he sees is what Steinbeck would like the readers to see – his kindness is Steinbeck’s hope for a world where the reality is harsh. (58)

4.5 THE GRAPES OF WRATH (1939)

The Grapes of Wrath (1939) is a novel that portrays unity, love and cooperation during the difficult times and celebrates humanity in all its
aspects. It tells about the journey of Tom Joad and his family who got to California in search of better life and good fortune. They are compelled to leave their farm and set out for a journey like all other workers. The novel explores themes of poverty, discrimination, social justice, and sacrifice. The novel provides the real struggle of the migrants during the time when it was published. Steinbeck collected records from Tom Collins who was the director of a camp in California and from photographs, interviews and his own writings on the migrants and their life. According to Robert in *Steinbeck’s Typewriter: Essays on His Art* (1997),

“Steinbeck worked day and night for nearly two weeks, sometimes dropping in the mud from exhaustion, to help relieve the people’s misery, though of course no aid seemed adequate (Sheaves, 221-22).” (167)

Steinbeck details the ways people rely on one another during the hardest of times, when they are pushed to the brink of survival by an economic system that imposes widespread misery for the comfort of a few. Steinbeck writes the plight of the migrant workers when they were abandoned by their own society. The Grapes of Wrath is a novel that offers a certain respectable dream for every soul and it gives confidence that it can be achieved through endurance of patience and hard work. Thus the novel proves to be strong which brings awareness to the other dispossessed people. It demonstrates
frustrated desires and inexpressible suffering with an array of hope, integrity and unity. According to DeMott (1997),

As a tale of dashed illusions, thwarted desires, unconscionable suffering, and betrayed promises – all strung on a gossamer thread of hope- The Grapes of Wrath not only added immeasurably to the Depression era’s socially conscious art but, beyond that- for honesty, integrity, emotional urgency, sustained drama, and evocative power- has few peers in American fiction. (194)

Steinbeck says about human helplessness before the relentlessness of nature in the beginning of The Grapes of Wrath. He describes how nature made life so hard in Oklahoma during the early Dust Bowl era. Seasonal changes initially offered hope of a bountiful harvest early in the spring. Then the sun withered and wilted crops and weeds alike. A sprinkling of rain cannot moisten the ground or the leaves of the corn that promised economic subsistence. Then conditions worsened. Dust storms followed the drought and ended any hope of salvaging the crops. But calamities also renew determination. People stood near their fences and watched their corn that was covered with dust. They were silent and did not show their feelings. The women stood next to their men and shared their sorrow. They had sad faces which became perplexed and then became hard. They knew that their men could bear
the difficulty if they stand as a whole and face boldly. “Women and children knew deep in themselves that no misfortune was too great to bear if their men were whole.” (p 6)

Steinbeck depicts many characters and renders each family member as distinguishing characteristics. Their desires are simple and are portrayed as heroic and boldly drawn figures that embody universal suffering. Steinbeck displays the characters of an epic in the novel. Amidst their poverty they stand up exhibiting honesty, unity and moral behavior. Ma Joad becomes the centre of the novel who demonstrates strength, determination and love whatever circumstances it might be. She faces every hurdle boldly and keeps her family members intact in every challenging moment. When granma dies, Ma suffers the pain privately quiet next to her corpse till the family reaches its destination. “Her full face was not soft; it was controlled, kindly. Her hazel eyes seemed to have experienced all possible tragedy and to have mounted pain and suffering like steps into a high calm and a superhuman understanding.” (77)

According to Vicek (2000),

Although she is considered a symbol of human love, it is a love of family above all others that she practices. As the family’s economic plight worsens, Ma can do nothing to keep them together. She will be forced to replace her
immediate family with a world family, one that includes the entire community. (55)

Granma’s death makes Ma Joad to think about the dream of other family members. They have travelled all these way in pursuit of their own land. She even threatens the officer in the camp. When Casy learns this incident, he admires her determination and courage. She is exhibited as a woman with both courage and love. Only because of the love of her family she endures all difficulties and stands with them selflessly till the end. Ma Joad is the novel’s strongest person throughout the novel. She keeps the grief to herself and builds confidence to others. Ma Joad’s indomitable nature proves that even a terrible situation can be faced with elegance and respect. Ma neither wants her man nor her family to break. She was careful in her every step especially with the immature Rose of Sharon. As Pa Joad could not leave the family, Ma thinks about the family’s survival. At every point of time she builds confidence in them, encourages them to move forward and attends to the sick. Whatever little food she had, she ensured that it is shared by all the other members and did not leave anyone to starve. According to Burkhead (2002),

“In this role it becomes necessary for Ma to evolve from the traditional female/mother, one who follows the leadership of her man, to a leader itself.” (72)
Tom comes home with Casy and listens to Ma about their worries and about California. Casy asks if even he can join with them. Tom and Ma Joad accepts and welcomes it.

“He said, Ma, there’s a couple fellas jus’ come along the road, an’ they wonder if we could spare a bite. To heard his mother’s voice, the remembered cool, calm drawl, friendly and humble. Let ‘em come, she said. We got a’ plenty. Tell ‘em they got to wash their hans. The bread is done. I’m jus’ takin’ up the side-meat now.” (p 77)

Her kindness is also seen in the camp as she could not send them hungry. The Joads seem to be bewildered in the Hooverville camp. Ma shares the remaining food with the poor children in the camp. “She smiled up at the children. Look, she said, you little fellas go an’ get you each a flat stick an’ I’ll put what’s lef’ for you. But they ain’t to be no fightin’. The group broke up with a deadly, silent swiftness. Children ran to find sticks, they ran to their own tents and brought spoons.” (p 269) Uncle John startled by the children’s hunger attempts to give his own food to them but is stopped by Tom. This makes Uncle Joad feel guilty and go to have drinks. Connie unable to be with the family leaves his wife and abandons the camp. He wants to pursue his dream of repairing radios and a comfortable home. Though the family members at times prove to be selfish and
hopeless, Ma Joad functions to unite it with her might. “......... Jus’ come in outa the wet. We got a sick girl. You got a dry blanket we could use an’ get her wet clothes off? The boy went back to the corner and brought a dirty comfort and held it out to Ma.” (p 474) (in the rain-soaked barn Ma joad sees a father and a son. ) Throughout the novel Ma Joad constantly keeps her family unbroken. She accepts every one with their faults and does not hurt them. She is next to Casy and Jim as she thinks that everyone deserves love and all belong to one greater soul. She unknowingly functions as a great person who offers a profound love and care to others. According to Vicek (2000),

“Ma is always the first in the family to offer comfort and nourishment to others, just one indication of her subconscious, unconditional love.” (32)

Casy emphasizes that he when an individual person can only make little impact on others whereas if he devotes his entire life to the well being of others can achieve wholeness. Both Casy and Tom organize the migrant workers in the strike for their rights. Tom witnesses Casy’s death and kills the attacker in the strike. “Yeah! Pa. You see? Casy was still a – good man. Goddamn it, I can’t get that pitcher outa my head. Him layin’ there – head jus’ crushed flat an’ oozin’. Jesus! He covered his eyes with his hand.” (p 409) Casy loses his life in the struggle and Tom decides to follow Casy’s footsteps and
fight for the cause for humanity. Joad’s family who at first thought to be only a preacher now live up to Casy’s opinion, philosophy of life and services to poor. Jim Casy’s death transforms Tom Joad into a responsible man. Tom’s transformation from selfishness stage to selflessness is a major progress in the novel. In the beginning he goes to prison for himself but later he fights for the strikers and follows Casy’s footsteps. He admits that living for others is a great cause for it is a service to the homeless and poor. According to Burkhead (2002),

> As the novel progresses, however, Tom’s actions are in defense of others, first when he hits the sheriff at the Hooverville camp, and later when he kills Jim Casey’s murderer …… he comes to understand that fighting against unjust oppressors is the greatest type of justice. (71)

Casy represents Steinbeck’s views on moral aspects and delivers significant themes such as purity needed for human life and unity in human beings. Ma Joad fears if Tom also would die like Casy in the strike. But Tom says that her fear is meaningless. He wants to live a life in which he boldly behave like a human and even after his death his spirit will live for the cause of the common man. His words are real which reflects a profound connection that can withstand any pain.
Steinbeck prepares Rose of Sharon to a fight for the family in the end of the story. She transforms from a highly energetic girl to a quiet girl in the end. Ma leads the family members to a dry barn to get safety from the floods. There they find a man and his son who were taking shelter in the barn. The man had not eaten for days and has provided his son everything he had. Ma understanding the situation lets Rose of Sharon to nurse him.

“Ma’s eyes passed Rose of Sharon’s eyes, and then came back to them. And the two women looked deep into each other. The girl’s breath came short and gasping. She said, Yes. Ma smiled, I knewed you would. I knewed!” (p 475)

Rose of becomes a divine person when sees the starving man. Though she has undergone huge suffering and her child is dead she finds a ray of light and helps a man. As Burkhead (2002) observes,

Rose of Sharon does mature during the course of the novel, perhaps as a result of focusing on the welfare her unborn child, and this maturing shows a development from a selfish nature to an altruistic nature. By the time the Joads migrate to the peach farm for work,
Rose of Sharon has stopped whining and begins to contribute to the family goal of survival and protecting Tom from the law. (73)

The Joads are strong and determined in facing any obstacle against them. Steinbeck displays their honesty and integrity in every aspect of their life and maintains a balanced emotional state to their fellow beings too. Though they suffered innumerable losses like three men abandoning the family and Rose of Sharon’s giving birth to a dead baby, the family endures lot of perseverance and succeeds till the end. They manage to rise above all suffering exhibiting that they can hold moral values even in desperate situations.

4.6 IN DUBIOUS BATTLE (1936)

In Dubious Battle (1936) is Steinbeck’s first of his labour novels. He portrays the plight of the migrants during the Depression period, their exploitation by the cruel land owners, authorities and the strike by the owners. Mac, the leader of the strike does anything for his benefit. In Dubious Battle is a well crafted fiction. Steinbeck wrote it not to just inform about the strike he witnessed while working but reveals the exact situation of the common workers. According to Hayashi (1993),
Steinbeck did not intend to write a journalistic account of a strike, and he did not intend for millions of readers around the world to accept his fiction as a mirror held up to proletarian reality. But he crafted so well and so convincingly that this is precisely what has happened. (p 93)

Jim Nolan joins the Communist party so that he can lead a contended life for himself. Jim’s deceased father was constantly harassed by anti labor police, his despondent mother has recently died, and Jim himself has only just been released from jail after being clubbed and arrested for vagrancy at a political rally he was merely observing on his way home from the movies. His life has soured, but seeing the party activists in jail he wanted to live a real life for others. He wishes to work toward something. He gets his chance when he accompanies the veteran organizer McLeod to the (fictional) Torgas Valley to foster a strike by apple pickers who have suffered a pay cut.14

He starts his work with Mac who is an organizer and both becomes fruit pickers in the beginning stage. When the workers’ wages are cut by the fruit growers Mac and Jim plan to hurry up the strike. Mac after coming to the camp gives the impression to the workers that he is a doctor. When Jim asks Mac if he had worked in a hospital Mac refuses and says he has never seen one
before. “I never learned till now. I never saw one before. The only thing I knew was that it was a good idea to be clean.” (p 48) Mac says that he is a doctor and helps Lisa, London’s daughter-in-law to give birth. He suggests burning all the white, unused clothes and he explains that everyone should feel responsible to be a part of it. “Every man who gave part of his clothes felt that the work was his own. They all feel responsible for that baby. It’s theirs, because something from them went to it. To give back the cloth would cut them out.” (p 49) According to Zirakzadeh (2013),

When Jim and Mac arrive, they find the migrant labourers willing to accept the low wages. Mac, however, quickly befriends the pickers’ natural leader, London, whose daughter-in-law is about to give birth. Mac lies about working in hospitals so he can oversee the delivery. By convincing the crop tramps to contribute their own clothes and labour to the delivery, he makes the men feel part of a movement. (p 124)

Everyone comes to know about Mac’s help. Jim, Mac and London become friends. As London is the leader of the camp and workers, it becomes easy for them to urge the workers to indulge in strike for higher wages
and good living conditions. They did not find this easy at the initial stage. The poor migrants need work to fulfill their basic necessities. They have the problem of money and food. The owners have men, troops and strikebreakers. The authorities have the power to shut down the camp at any time stating that it does not have proper sanitation facilities and it creates health problems. In spite all these difficulties the strike is called. Jim and Mac are trapped by the strike breakers. Somehow they both escape from them but Jim is hit in the arm. They suspect that someone has leaked out their next day plan. But they march out to meet the strikebreakers. Joy an old man is shot in the strike. Jim Nolan loses his family and his work into a cause that is greater than him. The respect for the migrants increases as the novel progresses.

In Steinbeck’s fiction even the quiet and unobtrusive characters attain a position of thematic significance in a work. Lisa is London’s daughter-in-law and described as a simple girl though her character is richer than the casual reader might perceive. Her presence in the novel as a supposedly minor character gives us a new insight and enables to sharpen and deepen our understanding of the work as a whole. The humanity of other characters of Mac, Jim and Doc is determined by their relationship with Lisa, and how the quiet power of the woman functions throughout the novel.

Steinbeck makes many characters to sacrifice their lives to simplify the problem of the migrants. The characters have the spirit of sacrifice to
develop the story to achieve its idea. Jim who is an embodiment of dedication and self sacrifice makes the migrants to understand any complicated circumstance. Jim urges his friends into action by showing his courage in spite his wounds. He says to Mac “This pain in the shoulder is kind of pleasant to me; and I bet before he died Joy was gad for a moment just in that moment I bet he was gad.” (p 347) According to Coers in an interview with Mrs.Steinbeck (1995)

“You see, John believed in man. That’s what his Nobel Prize speech says. He said,”You believe in the perfectibility of man. Man will never be perfect, but he has to strive for it.” That’s the whole point. That was his whole point about life”. (p 271)

4.7 CONCLUSION

Thus, John Steinbeck’s novels exhibit goodness that sustain the humanity and teach moral though victimized by struggles. They stand out from the crowd by exhibiting genuine qualities which are forgotten among men in general. The interesting characters portrayed by Steinbeck give us and insight into the understanding for the migrant workers and the poor who in spite of broken dreams emerge successful displaying courage and perseverance. The next chapter, sums up the details of all these chapters and, following
traditions, makes suggestions for future research possibilities in the novels of this legend of American literature.

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