

Elements of Idealism and Determination in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and S.K.Pottakkad's *Vishakanyaka*: A Comparative Study

C. RAMYA

Abstract. The paper attempts to focus on comparable traditions, scientific and humanistic disciplines. John Steinbeck and S.K. Pottakkad lived at a time when similar political and social problems prevailed in their countries. Both of them throw light on certain traits like behaviour and humanistic vision paying attention to the oppression of people. Both of them bring to light the universal truth that there is no end to the sufferings of human beings on the earth.

Keywords: Parallelism; depression; metamorphosis; Marxism; migration, starvation.

Comparative Literature is nothing but a systematic study of two or more national literatures through a scientific and scholarly application of the techniques of comparison. It is also a discipline comparable to traditional, scientific and humanistic disciplines. In the words of H.H.Remak, "Comparative Literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the arts (painting, sculpture, architecture, music), philosophy, history, social sciences like politics, economics, sociology, sciences, religion, etc. on the other"(1). According to Rene Wellek, Comparative Literature is a study of all literatures from an international perspective with a consciousness of the unity of all literary creations and experience. It is rooted in the belief that literature is one as art and humanity are one. Hence, a comparative study of two different literatures throws light on the vital truth that beyond geographical, religious and linguistic barriers, human minds think, feel and act alike.

The study of literary relations between two national cultures is an important branch of comparative literature. As Zhirmunsky has put it, similar social and political processes of two nations often give birth to similar literary works. In his words, "The comparative study of these two common trends of literary evolution leads to a comprehension of the general laws of literary development and of the social preconditions and at the same time to an understanding of the historical and natural peculiarity of each individual literature" (Prawer, 54). Different human races may be subject to the same type of growth or they may have to face the same problems. Hence, the human minds show a tendency to react to these common

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problems in an identical manner. When this mood is reflected in literary works, there may naturally occur parallelism in themes, visions and images between two writers. This chosen topic is just an attempt to go for a parallel analysis between John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and S.K.Pottakkad's *Vishakanyaka*, that too, in the light of Zhirmunsky's general theory.

Despite the fact that both John Steinbeck and S.K.Pottakkad lived at a time when similar political and social problems prevailed in their respective countries – America and South India, though being separated by a wide gap in space. That is why both the writers reacted in a similar way in portraying the lives of the poor peasantry who happened to be the victims of social disorder in the novels taken up for investigation. The two chosen novels have more or less a common theme picturizing how the two different societies – Okies in America and Travancore Christians in Kerala react to an almost similar situation of experience. Even though both appeared remote from each other in space and time, their common concern was focused on the same raw material – human nature. In spite of their belonging to different cultures, they do respond to the same human problems with a little bit difference in their experience due to their distinct geographical, cultural, and historical backgrounds.

American fiction had its roots in English fiction and the early American writers copies European models. The first novel in America is Richardson's *Pamela* published in 1744 by Benjamin Franklin. But Richardson's later novels and Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* did not appear for more than forty years. The Southern and middle colonies read more novels than New England, "Pope in poetry and Addison in prose long sufficed for models among the Americans and theological and political discussion processed with little reference to prevailing modes in imaginative literature" (Doren, 4). No doubt, until Scott had established a new mode of fiction for the world, the potent influence in American fiction was Richardson. Towards the end of the eighteenth century Charles Brockden Brown of Philadelphia contributed greatly to the development of fiction in America. After reading various French and English revolutionary philosophers, particularly William Godwin, Brown had an ambition to be a philosophical novelist. His major literary works include *Arthur Mervyn*, *Edgar Huntley* and *Weiland*.

Truly speaking, "before the Civil War, American novelists made little attempt to produce realistic portrayals of American society; there were no American equivalents of Dickens or Balzac" (Parkes, 277). The first twenty years of the Revolutionary period mostly adopted the standards of eighteenth century classicism. But the main European influence on the nineteenth century was Romanticism. Though prose fiction was predominant in the United States, the narratives were all romantic and repeated the processes of the romantic ages. James Fenimore Cooper, a romantic writer of the nineteenth century, became popular in the field of fiction by his three novels – *Precaution* (1820), *The Spy* (1821) and *The Pioneers* (1823).

Among the romancers, William Gilmore Simons held a superior position to Cooper. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the breaking of the civil war changed the pattern of the earlier novels. The romancers turned their pens from the past to the present without any chance in sensationalism, “The writers of the late nineteenth century, while describing the education of the American hero and his moral growth, also emphasized the need for artistic expression to strike closer to the basic springs of reality” (Rao, 5). Hence, realism became the touchstone of authentic literary merit in works of art.

The end of the nineteenth century witnessed a movement toward realism. It was William Dean Howells who by initiating this movement set out to deal realistically with the American society and said that the American novelists should concern themselves with the more smiling aspects of American life. In *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), Howells pictured the middle class Americans confronted by typical dilemmas. Following Howells, Theodore Dreiser who wrote *Jennie Gerhardt* (1911) as an attack on traditional moral beliefs, was at the head of American naturalism.

The period between 1919 and 1929 was the liveliest one in the history of American fiction. Following the world war, many such notable novelists as F.Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, John Doss Passos, Thomas Wolfe and William Faulkner attempted novels on the theme of war. During the period of ‘depression’, there had been deliberate attempts by writers to produce proletarian novels. The four major novels of the decade that were symptomatic were Pearl S. Buck’s *The Good Earth* (1931), Hervey Allen’s *Anthony Adverse* (1933), Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* (1936) and John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*. Either World War II or its aftermath succeeded in bringing about a change of trend in American fiction.

John Steinbeck was one such author influenced by this change in the American fictional world. He was born on 27th February in 1902 at Salinas, California. His father was Treasurer of Monterey County and his mother had taught in the County school. After graduating from school where science was his early interest, he worked for a year as assistant chemist in a sugar-beet factory near Salinas. From 1919 to 1925, he attended Stanford University, taking various courses of interest and he also worked as a common labourer at intervals. While he was at the University, he did contribute several parodies and burlesques to the University Magazine. His first published novel *Cup of Gold* appeared in August 1929. It is a fictionalized biography of Sir Henry Morgan, a seventeenth century buccaneer. It is noted for the foreshadowing of Steinbeck’s fondness for symbolic and poetic techniques. *Cup of Gold* was followed by *The Pastures of Heaven* (1932), a series of short stories about the folk of a California Valley. Next he published *To a God Unknown* (1933), a mystical novel about a man’s passion for the land which he was determined to make his permanent home. *The Pastures of Heaven* and *To a*

God Unknown went without much notice. Steinbeck got popularity with the publication of *Tortilla Flat*, published in 1935 and then *Of Mice and Men* (1937), a novelette and *The Long Valley* (1939), a collection of short stories. In 1939, he published *The Grapes of Wrath* which acquired wide popularity. It is nothing but the result of his own experiences as he drove through Oklahoma in 1937 and worked in the fields with the migrant workers who were forced off the land by the dust storms and depression of the 1930's.

The theme of the novel is the plight of the farmers who leave the familiar landscape of Oklahoma and migrate towards California where misfortune and terrors await them. It is narrated through the story of the Joad family. The Joads lose their land and are forced to journey toward California in a truck. When the truck leaves Oklahoma, there are thirteen people in it: Grampa and Granma, Pa Joad, Ma Joad, Uncle John, Tom, Al Rose of Sharon and her husband Connie Rivers, Noah, Ruthie, Winfield and the Priest Jim Casy. By the time Joad family arrives in California, Grampa and Granma are dead. Noah and Connie desert the family. They face a lot of mishaps on the way to California. At Hooverville, they face violent threats and Tom happens to kill a policeman. Reaching Hooper Ranch, they start their work as fruit pickers. Since the working conditions are quite unfavourable, they gradually become strike breakers. Jim Casy, who turns to be the leader of the strikers, is murdered, and Tom kills the assailant receiving a facial wound himself. The family immediately leaves Hooper Ranch and finds work in cotton fields. Tom hides himself till the wound is healed and later takes Casy's place among the workers. Rose of Sharon gives birth to a still-baby. The floods come in winter, and the family leaves the shelter of the box-car. Al gets married and stays back with his wife. Pa, Ma, Rose of Sharon, Uncle John, Ruthie and Winfield reach a barn and find a starving old man there. The novel ends with Rose of Sharon nursing the old man.

In Malayalam literature, novel is a new literary form developed during the modern age, "Like the short story, essay, literary criticism and biography, the novel also came into Malayalam as a result of our contact with English Literature" (George, 172). Malayalam has coined its own words for all the literary forms except the novel. The word 'novel' itself has been as such for that form of literature. The novel in Malayalam literature appeared towards the end of the nineteenth century. Printing was popularized in Kerala by the European Missionaries who came to spread the teachings of Christianity. It paved the way for the progress of prose literature. Consequently, the English language and literature influenced Malayalam a lot. The indebtedness which Malayalam literature owes to English literature is great. The impact of Western literature, particularly English, brought about a kind of metamorphosis in the literary trends of Malayalam during the Romantic Age.

The novel is just an attempt to narrate a story, which should be entertaining. A story involves an incident, a flow of events from one point to another. The central

element of a story is an important event formed by the thinking of relatively smaller and smaller events. Generally realism is an important aspect that should be taken care of in the writing of novels. The events of a novel should be worldly and they should be related to the characters also. Malayalam novelists follow different trends in their techniques of narration. Most of them follow the technique of direct narration. A novelist portrays characters drawn from the lessons of his own experience of life. The origins of the Malayalam novel are traced to *Ghattakavadham* written by Mrs. Collins in English with the Kerala milieu and life as its content. *Pulleli Kunju* by Archdeacon Koshy appeared as the second novel in Malayalam literature. “Chronologically, “*Kundalatha*, published in 1887, has to be recognized as the first novel proper in Malayalam” (Chaithanya, 259). Its author was one Appu Nedungadi, who was a keen student of Shakespeare and Walter Scott. The story of Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* is the theme of this novel. In the words of K.M. Tharakan, “By its attractive narration, the beauty of language and humour of the story, *Kundalatha* won the appreciation of all lovers of literature” (21).

Following *Kundalatha*, O. Chandu Menon’s *Indulekha* (1889) acquired a position of repute in the history of Malayalam novel, which is nothing but a social novel depicting the evil practices of Nambudiris towards Nayars, the two predominating communities in Kerala. C.V. Raman Pillai, the contemporary of Chandu Menon, composed his novels with historical themes. Such notable three of his novels as *Marthanda Varma*, *Dharma Raja* and *Ramaraja Bahadur* won him the title of the Walter Scott of Malayalam, “While Chandu Menon caricatured and laughed at the foibles of contemporary society, Raman Pillai praised and glorified the past and recreated history emphasizing the brighter side of life” (George, 174). Then the Malayalam writers got introduced to Maupassant, Flaubert, Ibsen and Chekhov and the so-called Marxism view of life captured the imagination of younger generations. M.P. Paul openly declared, “Literature should be written in such a way as to touch the human emotions” (103). The delineation of a more comprehensive view of life required a wider canvas and that it could be better provided only by the novel form. Only by 1940, the trend of novel writing reached its climax at the instance of S.K. Pottakkad and P.C. Kuttykrishnan, who did steer the novel form to its golden age. While other such novelists as K.M. Kovoor, G. Vivekanandan, M.T. Vasudevan Nair and Parappurathu contributed rather richly to the development of the Malayalam novel, writers like P.C. Kuttykrishnan and S.K. Pottakkad dealt with social realism in their fictional world.

Sankaran Kutty, later known as S.K. Pottakkad was born on 14 March 1913 at Thattoorippadam near Calicut. He had his school education in a local High School. He passed the S.S.L.C. Examination in 1929 and completed the Intermediate course in 1934. From 1936 to 1939, he worked as a teacher in the Gujarati School at Calicut. After his active participation in the Congress meeting,

he went to Bombay and worked there as a typist for one year. In 1940, he left the job and returned home. Again in 1943, he sought employment in the Textile Commissioner's Office, Bombay. But after two years, he gave up his job and toured all over North India. From 1945 onwards, Pottakkad devoted his time fully to literary endeavours.

S.K.Pottakkad started his literary career by writing a few poems. His poetical collections are *Prabhathakanthi* (1936), *Sanchariyude Geethangal* (1947) and *Premasilpi* (1958). There are about fifty eight literary works to his credit. As he travelled all over the world by covering Africa, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, France, England, Ceylon, Malaya, Singapore and Indonesia, his travelogues are said to be valuable contributions to Malayalam literature. Some of his travelogues are *Kappirikalude Nattil* (1951), *Nile Diary* (1954), *Soviet Diary* (1955), *Indonesian Diary* (1955), *Bohemian Chithrangal* (1960) and *Himalayan Samrajyangal* (1967). Along with this appeared his novels which also reflect his varied experiences of travel. He had to his credit publication of ten novels. They are 1. *Vallikadevi* (1937), 2. *Nadan Premam* (1942), 3. *Premasiksha* (1945), 4. *Moodupadam* (1948), 5. *Vishakanyaka* (1948), 6. *Karrampu* (1959), 7. *Oru Theruvinte Katha* (1960), 8. *Oru Desathinte Katha* (1970), 9. *Kurumulaku* (1976) and 10. *Kabeena* (1979). In 1981, Pottakkad was honoured with the Jnanpeeth Award for the best novel of 1949. Pottakkad ranks among the first great writers of fiction in Malayalam literature. As a novelist he is found painting the village life of Kerala with all its simplicity and splendour of beauty. In Malayalam literature, there are quite a number of novelists who tell the stories of village life in their works. But they have made the village only a background. Pottakkad was among those who wrote the stories consciously depicting realistic scenes of village life, "The Central theme of his novels is the never-ending splendor of the nation and he tells the message of life of this nation" (Asokan, 106).

Having established himself as a noted short story writer at the first instance, Pottakkad entered his fictional field with his two short novels *Nadan Premam* and *Prema Sikha*. Simplicity and humour are predominant features in his literary creations. *Vishakanyaka* was written by him in the prime of his youth. Then, he completed *Oru Theruvinte Katha* in 1960 and *Oru Desathinte Katha* in 1971. These three novels secured him the title 'Desathinte Kathikan' (Novelist of the country). In *Vishakanyaka* and *Oru Desathinte Katha*, the main characters are not human beings. The damsel portrayed in *Vishakanyaka* is not a human lady but the virgin Earth of Wynad. *Vishakanyaka* narrates the exodus of a batch of Christians from Travancore to Malabar in search of new pastures. The political situation of the early forties of this century was primarily responsible for their migration. They braved the vigours of the climate, the dread of the forest and the ruggedness of the soil. Inspite of their heroic endeavours, malaria claimed many of them as victims and wild boars destroyed the crops. Their numbers decreased and the survivors either committed suicide or returned broken -hearted.

Both John Steinbeck and S.K. Pottakkad, though brought up in lower-middle class families, acquired a vast store of knowledge through reading and wide travel. The novels namely *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck and *Vishakanyaka* by Pottakkad throw light on certain traits of like behaviour possessed by both, for both of them paid attention to the social and political events that took place in their country and had unbound sympathy for the poor and the oppressed. Steinbeck went to California, lived with the migrants from Oklahoma and worked with them. Similarly, Pottakkad went to Malabar, stayed there and studied the conditions of migrants from central Travancore. Hence, the two novelists could succeed in presenting a realistic portrayal of the miserable lives of the peasantry, in America as well as in Kerala respectively, during the early half of the present century.

Both the novelists had serious concern for the social evils, then prevalent in their country, thereby making the life of the peasantry difficult. Both of them deal with social problems striking a similarity in treatment of themes. Ramachandra Rao remarks:

The major theme in Steinbeck's fiction is the discovery of a protagonist embodying the artist's vision of the human condition as it progresses from the actual to the ideal. (71)

Steinbeck believed that man functions in two ways, as a group animal and as an individual, and that, without fulfilling the first, he cannot successfully be the second. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck delves deep into social malaises and seeks remedies for them. In this novel, Steinbeck exhibits a warm and sympathetic understanding of the downtrodden which is the result of his non-teleological evaluation of human life. The theme of *The Grapes of Wrath* is the plight of the poor people of Oklahoma, desperately looking for a living in California, their dreamland. There was a mass exodus of working class families towards California during the Depression years. These people, nicknamed Okies, replaced the Mexicans and the Orientals in the California farms. They were evicted from lands in their possession by banks and agricultural corporation which gave them loans. They migrated Westward, misled by notices assuring full employment. Steinbeck joined these uprooted men and travelled over the route from Oklahoma, studying the problems of the migrants. Thus, when he started narrating this tale, he had a rich store of authentic experience to draw upon. He also understood the truth that no people in possession of good lands ever welcomed migratory tribes pouring in thousands upon them. The plight of the share-croppers, as migrants, is narrated through the story of the Joad family. There were twelve people in the family roster including Connie Rivers, Rose of Sharon's husband. Tom, who was under Parole from gaol, reached home just in time to join the group. A renegade preacher, Jim Casy also accompanied them. Their journey was made possible only after all their

possessions had been liquidated to buy an old Hudson Sedan, which they converted into a truck. The family took several days to reach California. Before reaching the promised land, symbolically their link with the past was cut off by the deaths of Grampa and Granma. At the Colorado river, Noah, Tom's brother chose to leave the group.

An unpleasant welcome was awaiting the Joad family in California. On the second day of their stay in California, they had a foretaste of what was to come. They camped in a make shift Hooverville, near Bakersfield. There the Deputy Sheriff attacked the defenceless destitutes. Connie Rivers ran away from his pregnant wife. Jim Casy was arrested. The Joads left the place before the vigilantes came to burn their tents. Then, for a month they sought shelter in a Government Camp at Weedpatch, but no work was available in that area. So they were forced to move in response to advertisements for work as fruit pickers. When the Joads arrived at Hooper Ranch, the promised opportunity for work did not materialise because the rate of pay was determined by the number of workers available. Still, they agreed to work and unknowingly became strike-breakers. Tom found that Casy was leading the strike. One day when Tom was talking to Casy, the vigilantes made a surprising attack. In the fight, a man killed Casy with a pick handle. Tom seized the weapon and killed the attacker. So at night the Joads sneaked out of the ranch and found work in cotton fields. Tom remained in hiding and later left his mask to take up Casy's place among the workers. For the next three months the Joads had no work. Winter came with rain, cold and starvation. Their camps were flooded by the rising water. During a rainy night, Rose of Sharon gave birth to a still-baby. The Joads took refuge in a barn and found a starving old man there. Rose of Sharon fed him from her breast. With this, the narrative ends abruptly.

Steinbeck's group-man theory is illustrated clearly in *The Grapes of Wrath*. He views man as a triple thing – an individual, part of an identifiable group and as a link in the chain of a macrocosmic humanity. The plight of the migrant families is depicted by Steinbeck not as an isolated occurrence, but as something congenital to the whole world of being. So the theme of *The Grapes of Wrath* is universal—the attempt of man to regain paradise. In life, there is always change and growth. The survival of humanity depends on man's ability to struggle and adapt. These conceptual notions are given concrete illustrations in this novel. The perpetual struggle of the people is implied in Ma Joad's assurance to her son:

Why, Tom – us people will go on livin' when all
the people is gone. Why, Tom we're the people that
live. They ain't gonna wipe us out. Why, we're the
people we go on (*The Grapes of Wrath*, 310).

Ma has no doubt about winning over the exploiting classes. The novelist attributes to the people an inclination to move towards betterment and creative change. Steinbeck's non-teleological perspective enables him to conceive man and human society as an evolving organism. In the beginning of *The Grapes of Wrath*, Tom Joad is presented as an ordinary Okie. His experiences and lonely life in prison set him apart from others. Gradually he realizes that the plight of his family and that of other migrants are the same. At the end, he accepts the common bond of suffering and starvation that brings people together. Similarly, Jim Casy also realises that he is only when he is with the rest of the people. The change that comes to the Joad family through their endless sufferings is visualised by Steinbeck:

And in the night one family camps in a ditch and
another family pulls in and the tent come out. The
two men squat on their hams and the women and
children. Here is the node, you who hate change
and fear revolution . . .
For here, "I lost my hand" is changed; a cell is
split and from its splitting grows the thing you hate
— "We lost our land" . . . (310)

The Joads and Wilsons illustrate this change. The two families met on the road and Joads shared everything with the other family. A sense of brotherhood develops in them, which embraces all the struggling people. This vision of merging with the macrocosm is clearly understood in the behaviour of Ma Joad towards the end of the novel. Rose of Sharon gives her breast to a dying man. It is a symbolic representation of merging the family unit with the group of all exploited people. The Biblical parallel helps the novelist to support his concept of man. Sunita Jain rightly observes:

The vision of life and the humanity that the Joads
have acquired at the end of the novel has its roots
in the Bible . . . (67)

In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck stresses the importance of unity. Only by united action can the underdogs ever hope to improve their status.

S.K. Pottakkad also draws a Biblical parallel in presenting the theme of *Vishakanyaka*. Its theme is universal – the attempt of man to regain the lost paradise. It is a universal phenomenon that all human efforts even today point towards the regaining of paradise. The theme of *Vishakanyaka* is the plight of the poor people of Travancore desperately looking for a better living in Malabar, their dreamland. During the early half of the present century, there was a mass exodus of farmers from Travancore to Malabar. Pottakkad went to Malabar and studied the conditions

of the migrants there. He also learned the truth that the native people never welcomed the migratory tribes pouring in thousands upon them.

In *Vishakanyaka*, the plight of the Christians as migrants is narrated through the story of a group of families—of Mathan, Anthony, Varki, Paul, etc. Just as Adam could not safeguard the garden of Eden, the migrants from Travancore could not hold their feet firm on the virgin Earth of Malabar. Adam was deceived by Eve and similarly the migrants were deceived by *Vishakanyaka*, the Virgin Earth of Malabar. They could not reach the God – given land because they did not live in a truthful way. They lack moral strength and are not mentally equipped for achieving their goal. Pottakkad views that a primitive force defeats human beings in all their endeavours. They fail to regain the renaissance spirit. Through this novel, Pottakkad does emphasize the universal truth that those who follow the path of truth, justice, love and holiness only will succeed to fulfil great tasks in life.

The characters in *Vishakanyaka*, including the priest, show – primitive behaviour in their attitude towards Christianity. So they are cursed by God before they achieve their dreams. On reaching Malabar, Mathan and Mariam became the undisputed masters of man than twenty acres of land. Mathan, a lazy fellow, shows a sub-human nature. On the other hand, hard work and blind faith in God were characteristic of Mariam. She planned to make their jungle land into a beautiful estate within one year. She approached the virgin Earth with the precision of a soldier marching towards the parade ground. She devoted her energy and time to grow gold in the hard soil. But she could not attain her goal. The curse of God fell on her. The wild mimosa plants and wild boars completely destroyed her crops seeing the unforeseen calamity. Mariam put her hands on her head and cried out,

Oh! my God, the devil has
Cheated me. (21)

Mariam could not recover from this shock and later she died without fulfilling any of her hopes. Anthony, who was moulded by Christian ideals and rigid moral doctrines, came to Malabar with his uncle. He only could resist human instincts which others failed to do. So she was saved from the curse of God. He lives as a pure Christian. Madhavi, a young and beautiful lady, but equally poisonous as the Virgin Earth of Malabar, tried her best to court Anthony. One night he fell a victim to Madhavi's lust. But from that very moment, he repented and thus held aloft one of the great Christian values. So he could escape the curse of God. Even the poison which Madhavi applied could do no harm to him, though it killed Varki, who might be punished by God for his immoral ways of life. Towards the end of the novel, Anthony is found to be quite happy to leave Malabar because he believed that only God had saved him from the clutches of two poisonous virgins – Madhavi and the earth of Malabar.

The motives of the migrants from Travancore to attain the God – given land and their weaknesses owing to the new surroundings, are symbolically represented through a serpent. Anthony saw a cobra winding its way across the root of the papaya tree from which Madhavi picked up the fruit. Since this Cobra is symbolic of the serpent in the Bible, the papaya which Madhavi gave to Anthony holds a similarity to the forbidden fruit that Eve tempted Adam to eat. Anthony wished to say that he did not want the fruit. But his tongue could not articulate the words. He accepted the fruit. He was a coward and Madhavi's smile was an invitation to sin. The same life force affects the migrants and they fail to mould a better life on the Virgin Earth. Pottakkad's optimistic view of human life is seen at the end of the novel. It ends thus:

Anthony was firmly convinced that he had been delivered from the clutches of the two virgins full of poison, by the grace of Jesus Christ, the Savior, Devotedly he opened the Bible and began reading from it...
(*Vishakanyaka*, 79)

Thus, the end of the novel holds a powerful symbol of human life – the will of God that all of us may grow spiritually before him.

To conclude, both John Steinbeck and S.K. Pottakkad bring to life the universal truth that there is no end to the sufferings of human beings on earth. The themes of both the novels *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Vishakanyaka* hold a striking similarity to the Biblical story. Right from the beginning of the world, people do not follow the ways of God. Mankind is by nature sinful and needs the righteousness of God. The curse of God on Adam and Eve still permeates over human beings even today. All human efforts to regain the lost paradise end in failure because people do not follow the paths of God. The human craving for luxury and pleasure tempts them to forget the path of truth, love and holiness. Through *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck unfolds his sympathetic understanding of the down-trodden Pottakkad's non-teleological evaluation of human life is also brought out in his *Vishakanyaka*. Like Steinbeck, Pottakkad views man as a group animal and as an individual. Both the novelists illustrate this theme through the plight of a group of people who migrate to their dreamlands. In short, it may be said that both the novels *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Vishakanyaka* present a similar theme, a theme which is familiar to all humanity—the exodus of the Jews from Egypt.

C. Ramya

Assistant Professor

Department of English

E.M.G. Yadava College for Women

Madurai (Tamil Nadu)

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