

Chapter-I

Symbiotic Relation between Land and Human Beings

Conceptual Framework

The destiny of human beings is intimately related to the destiny of land. The healthier the land community, the happier and more harmonious human survival is. The deterioration of land endangers the existence of human beings along with other species which inhabit the land. Association with the land makes human being feel sense of protection, security and safety for surety. Working with the land realizing its bio-rhythms energizes human beings. After spending a number of years in one place, it is very natural and human to become attached to the land. This is especially true with farmers. They spend their lives cultivating the land around them. The land becomes a friend to them, a subject of human value. People develop inseparable tie to their land, and that connection sustains their physical, social and emotional wellbeing.

Land is the first and foremost condition for survival and identification of people. Wendell Berry views "If you do not know where you are, you do not know who you are" (qtd. in Anderson, Slovic and O'Grady 163). The placeness, rootedness and belongingness to the land are the foundation of human identity. The very notion of human self is inseparable from the imprints the physical world presses upon human imagination. The concept of land or place is, therefore, associated with the physical and psychological experience of being in a specific location. Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has even defined place as "a centre of meaning constructed by experience" (163). Land or place is not merely a means of human survival; it is a determinant of human's holistic personality. Describing the correlation between place and shaping of human holistic personality Anderson, Slovic and O'Grady state: "place determines not only our external lives but also our inner selves our patterns of thought" (164). Human

beings' physical as well as internal personality is shaped, guided, sharpened, and developed as per the place where s/he was born, brought up and educated. Therefore, every human being struggles to find a particular place to ground the self physically, emotionally and intellectually. Humans need to know where they are, so that they may dwell in their place with a full heart, holding their heads high without any kind of fears.

Without the sense of being connected with a place or a particular location, no human being can feel and enjoy independent identity and dignity. Ramchandra Guha holds the opinion that the right to land is viewed as basic human and natural right (3307). This right to land suggests maintaining close connection with the land through sustainable agrarian farming but not by conquering the land and commodifying it to multiply wealth. Connection and belongingness to the land provides enfranchisement. Supporting Guha's argument, Adam Kuper opines " . . . true citizenship is a matter of ties of blood and soil" (395). Citizenship is regarded as the authentic document that guarantees human identity. Explaining the connectedness between land and human identity, David N. Cassuto argues "birthing and dying on the land created a blood right of succession that no financial transaction could negate . . . working the land formed the litmus test of possession . . . the laws of the country conflict with the laws of the land" (60-61). Laws of the country are mechanical and plutocratic guided by so called reason and rationality. They do not respect the physical and emotional proximity of the farmers with the land but just mechanically produced non-sentient evidences. The sweat, blood, toil and moil with the soil are the real, natural and sentient evidences for allowing rights of ecological possession over the land. These arguments substantiate that people who work and love the land should have natural right to own it and maintain its organicity and intrinsic value.

The agribusiness and modern mechanization of farming do not respect the true, natural, ecological connection between land and human identity. They regard land as commodity; manipulate land, and workers as modes of production and means of production for their sheer materialistic gains. Banks and corporations translate land into assets on a balance sheet. Reverence for the land becomes obsolete with the ascension of factory farming. The real possessors that are the workers on the land are enmeshed in a cycle of wage slavery. The large growers, factory farmers establish their right of ownership through displacing the real lovers of the land. They feel pride of conquering the land from the real and natural citizens of the land and objectify the land for accumulating property. Elaborating their cunning intention of grabbing the land from yeoman farmers as an instrument of their unrestricted use, Mahesh Chandra Regmi views:

Land has . . . represented the principal form of wealth, the principal symbol of social status and the principal source of economic and political power. Ownership of land has meant control over a vital factor of production and, therefore, a position of prestige, affluence, and power. (1)

Regmi's remark justifies the fact that the larger the areas of landownership, the richer, more powerful and more prestigious the landholders feel. The large landholders have control over the state mechanism. The politicians, bureaucrats, technocrats make policies and decisions as per the interests of the landlords. Therefore, they try their best to occupy more and more land, and hence make others landless.

Slaveholders, capitalists, bureaucrats, technocrats, and land monopolists try their best to make the workers landless and hence mobile wage laborers having no human identity. Adam Kuper argues, "Landlessness is a process of alienation from the

land by people who have been living there over the generations" (399). In a consumerist society a man, a labourer is alienated from himself. By exploitation, his individuality, as well as his sense of ownership is lost. He is dehumanized, fragmented, alienated, disenfranchised and frustrated mobile vagrant. The norms and values of democracy are not given due respect.

Political democracy can be democratic both in substance and form only with the sound foundation of agrarian democracy where every citizen has ownership over a certain piece of land. Individual have their land to till for sustenance with deep association with the land. Such association guarantees and confirms autonomy and stability of any particular identity as it claims to define and interpret a subject's existence. Nature's personhood is also realized and nonhuman agents of ecosphere are treated as bonafied members of the biotic community. Kinship and reciprocity between land and human beings is actualized. Highlighting the reciprocal relationship between land, human identity and political system of a country, George W. Julian notes:

Laws regulating the ownership and disposition of landed property not only affect the well being but frequently the destiny of a people. The land system, in fact, directly determined the political system of a country. Real political democracy depends on democratic landholdings. (qtd. in Roark 29)

Julian's remarks focuses on small farms, thrifty tillage, compact settlement, free schools and equality of political right help in strengthening democratic institutions. Large states, slovenly agriculture, widely-scattered settlement, lording over the land and people change democracy into plutocracy. People living in agrarian culture love and respect the unity of the biotic and abiotic worlds whereas industrial

urban anthropocentric civilization manipulates the land and ecosphere to satisfy immediate thirst for materialistic gain. Exposing the exploitation of the nature through the runaway technology, Barry Commoner writes, "The affluent society has become an effluent society" (7). Here, Commoner clarifies the fact that the rich people poison air, ravage soil, strip forest bare, and pollute water resources and corrupt human mind as well. Affluent people are ecologically poor and harmful whereas economically poor people are ecologically rich, friendly and sound.

Substantive Narratives

Different scientists, ecologists and creative geniuses have been warning about the burning global problems of environmental crisis, spiritual bankruptcy deterioration of the symbiotic relationship between land and human beings and hence loss of land dignity and human identity in their treatises and creations. Among them, I have concentrated my study upon John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* to analyze the reciprocal relation between land and human identity applying eco-critical perspective.

John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) and Willa Silbert Cather's *O Pioneers!* (1913) depict the consequences of landlessness as well as enjoying stability plus identity due to strong faith on the land, working with the land with patience respectively. Both these novels illustrate the fact that the life of the land and human life at their best are inseparable. Humanity is integrally tied to the land.

John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* is the saga of Joad family's migration from Oklahoma Dust Bowl after they were uprooted from the soil and robbed of their possession to the Promised Land of California with a dream – a dream for a better and prosperous life. But their hope changes into a nightmare since they experience hatred and violence of the large California landowners and destined to survive under the

most difficult circumstances. The novel divides clearly into three roughly equal sections: the Joads in Oklahoma, the Joads on the way to California and the Joads in California. The Joads, expropriated Oklahoma farmers, headed in a dilapidated truck towards California, which they believed was a land of plenty. But as they reached California, they entered not the expected land, but a new captivity. In California, they were exploited by sheriffs and labour contractors.

While they start their journey, there are thirteen members: Granpa, a foul-mouthed lusty old man who had a dream of eating grapes daily in California; Granma, a weary fanatically religious woman who tells "Praise Gowd for Vittory" time and again; Pa Joad, a hard working farmer, the head submissive to his wife; Ma Joad, Pa's wife, brave, strong, optimistic and patient woman who dreams and plans for the family and is accustomed to hardships and deprivations; Uncle John, a lonely fellow who is always complaining; Tom Joad, son of Pa and Ma Joad, just paroled from Oklahoma State Penitentiary, where he has served four years of a seven year sentence for homicide, and the central character; Noah, Tom's eldest brother, dull-witted; Rose of Sharon, a pregnant girl, madly in love with her weak husband and her unborn child; Connie Rivers, Sharon's day-dreamer husband; Al, a lonely teenager who lives for engines and girls; Ruthie and Winfield, youngest children of the Joad family and Jim Casy, the ex-preacher and rustic socialist.

With different hopes and aspirations, they have started their journey towards California. But as they step onto the migratory road – US Highway 66, the family starts to crumble. Granpa dies first almost as soon as the family leaves their house and Granma does not survive long either after that; she dies while crossing the Mojave Desert. Noah, after hearing the direful circumstances in California, deserts the family to live beside the river. Connie, after acknowledging that he cannot fulfill his dream

of a comfortable life, flees from the responsibility of Rose of Sharon's pregnancy. Al also leaves the family to take a wife. Jim Casy, while leading a strike for good and responsible wage is killed, and while avenging Casy's murder, Tom became a fugitive. Now, the family is almost cut into a half. They are homeless and jobless; they are left into utter dissolution. At the beginning of their journey, the family has US \$ 154.00, their household goods, two barrels of pork, a serviceable truck, and their good health. As the novel progresses, they become more and more impoverished until at the end, they are destitute and without food. They are sick, their truck and goods abandoned in the mud, without shelter and without hope of work. The Joads start off as a cheerful group full of hope and will power, although they have been evicted from their land, and by the end of the novel, they are economically as well as spiritually bankrupt. The miserable condition of the Joads is the product of landlessness and alienation imposed upon them by the capitalist agribusiness prevalent in the California society.

Due to their forced detachment from their homeland, the Joads became friendless, jobless, homeless and therefore voteless, with fewer rights than medieval serfs. They are mocked, shamed and starved by the Californians. The Joads are used as Californians' surplus labor forces. The Californians never offer them permanence and home. The Joads were unable to survive in Oklahoma and unwanted in California. They are pushed from Oklahoma, pulled to the throwaway ecotaging society of California due to the tempted orange-coloured handbills. The homeless and landless migrant workers are treated inferior to animals and as instruments to commodify the land for the large growers' sheer profit. The organicity and fertility of the land get smeared, seared and bleared which make humans physically incapacitated, spiritually barren, economically impoverished, emotionally split and

intellectually weak. The dignity of both the land and human being is ignored and manipulated for transient monetary profit.

Willa Cather's works deal with the reciprocal relationship between land and human identity. Her works revolve around the transformation of nature – particularly the prairie on the Great Divide in Nebraska – into an agricultural landscape. In *O Pioneers!* Alexandra Bergson approaches this process in an intuitive way, placing her faith in the land and tapping its wealth by gentle means rather than by conquest and domination. Her relationship to place is spiritual as well as economic and she views herself as collaborating with the land rather than imposing her will upon it, as virtually all her neighbors do. She is fully aware that her destiny and that of the land are inseparable.

O Pioneers! is a story of Alexandra Bergson, the strong and dedicated daughter of Swedish immigrants, John Bergson and Mrs. Bergson. She is left to carry on her father's struggle against the harsh prairie land of the West. She fights to keep her family together and sacrifices her youth and beauty to a life time of hard labour. It is a hard work, some fall before they can realize their goals, and some retreat in the face of difficulties. Victory belongs to those who persist and command confidence, will-power and wisdom. Alexandra toils and moils with soil and because of her labor, the desolate plains and hills become fertile. The pioneers finally create for themselves good homes and a good life and they also realize self-fulfillment in their struggle to survive maintaining the organicity of the land.

Alexandra, John Bergson's determined and far seeing daughter lived patiently with strong faith on the land, keeps on struggling against the hardship with confidence and become successful to maintain the destiny of the land as well as that of her family. Cather presents Alexandra Bergson as an earth mother for her deep love and

devotion to the Hanover land. She truly bears a sense of responsibility to the land and guardianship to her orphan brothers.

Carl Linstrum, having special bond with Alexandra from their early childhood, loses hope on the rural land, leaves Divide due to drought, goes to city to search fortune but fails, returns to Divide after thirteen years of dejected, frustrated vagabond life, decides to marry Alexandra and settle down in Divide. The frustrated wanderer Carl get his identity realized with his union with Alexandra Bergson, who is a symbol of tolerant land.

Both these novels *The Grapes of Wrath* and *O Pioneers!* illustrate the fact that land is the source of physical, spiritual, economic, emotional and intellectual force. It is home, the foundation of livelihood and human identity. If there is no connection with the land and no sense of placeness, no individual can freely feel and enjoy identity, dignity and sense of individuality. Association with the land guarantees and confirms stability of any particular identity as it defines a subject's existence.

Several scholars have studied these novels from different perspectives. Due to the powerful depiction of the manipulation of the land and migrant workers by industrial factory farmers of California, *The Grapes of Wrath* has drawn substantial amount of critical comments/interpretations which place stress on shocking degree of human misery of the beleaguered migrant workers in California's Promised Land. The land that should be an Eden of abundance, is forced by but the migrant workers in the grip of agribusiness, of corporations that plow crops back into the earth to drive up prices while working people starve to death. David N. Cassuto portrays the manipulation of the land and migrant workers by large growers in *The Grapes of Wrath*:

[P]eople whose humanity was once integrally tied to the land and the weather now care nothing for the growing season or the health of the earth. Their survival has come to depend on shelter from the elements rather than the elements themselves. They have become component of the factory-farming process, economically distant from their bourgeoisie oppressors but closely tied to the industrial ethos that rewards the subjugation of nature. . . . The growers-owners of the irrigation channels, centrifugal pumps, and watertight mansions . . . while the Okies, starving and drenched. (58)

Ecological realities had long ago proven the Okies (the Joads) lifestyle quixotic, but it took the formidable alliance of the Dust Bowl and corporate agribusiness to dislodge the Okies from their land and home.

Peter Valenti elaborates upon Steinbeck's huge success with *The Grapes of Wrath* in tapping the nation's need to understand the plight of the poor and dispossessed and making readers experience the working people's anguish in the migrants' camps. The factory farmers not only exploit the environment, Valenti argues Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* "shows how agricultural capitalism sucks the life out of its laboring poor" (104). Pointing to the plight of migrant workers in the so-called Edenic California, Florian Freitag explains, "In *The Grapes of Wrath*, the apple box that contains the dead body of Rose of Sharon's stillborn baby is floating down the river to the street, where it will "tell'em" about the sufferings of the migrant farm workers" (113).

Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* presents the plight and migration of the Joads, Morris Dickstein verbally picturizes the plight as, "*The Grapes of Wrath* begins the story of an eviction, continues with the account of a journey, the difficult passage

of a family from their old world to a new one, and concludes with the disillusioning calamities that beset them after they have reached promised land” (25). The loss of homeland becomes one loss and the golden time in the west proves to be a mirage and mere dream.

Frederic I. Carpenter sees transcendentalism of Emerson reappeared into the novel in modern form. In his words, " Here mystical transcendentalism of Emerson reappears and Earthly democracy of Whitman and the pragmatic instrumentalism of William James and John Dewey" (81). Carpenter, focusing on the journey of Joads family, philosophizes the novel.

Similarly, *O Pioneers!* has been studied from different perspectives. John Ditsky views Willa Cather's use of the land to embody history or serve as witness to human activity. In his words, "In *O Pioneers!* Willa Cather was arguing the possibility of triumph in life by means of accepting Nature's truths as lesson guide" (398). David Laird analyses *O Pioneers!* from gender perspective and argues:

Alexandra's intense relationship with the land is projected in strong deliberately gendered images, sometimes feminine, sometimes masculine. She perceives the land in intimate even passionate terms, drawing strength from it and, in return, giving of her spirit and imagination. (244)

As Alexandra gives herself to the task of cultivating the land, understanding its rhythm and seasons and making it serve her purposes, David Stouck sees the epic vision of the land and its first people in *O Pioneer!*. In his article "*O Pioneers!:* Willa Cather and the Epic Imagination" he writes "in writing about the setting of the Midwest, Willa Cather in *O' Pioneers!* chose her subject , as Melville had earlier, from the classical matter for American epic – the struggle of man against nature" (26).

J. Russell Reaver opines that Cather's interest lay in the people who conquered the wild frontier and in the folk from the old world who brought their tradition with them.

In his words:

In *O Pioneers!* the mythic corn-god figure serves to dramatize Alexandra's evolving maturity and creates the rhythmic expansion of significance in the narrative climax. Grasping the emotional continuity of Alexandra's visions, Cather succeeded in creating a unified novel . . . (19)

Willa Cather found, perhaps inevitably, a means for a deeper understanding of Alexandra together with a way of organizing the novel through visions that curiously parallel certain fertility and resurrection myths and rites.

Claims

None of the aforementioned critics have explored the issue of land and human identity in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* applying ecopoetic paradigm. Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* depicts the exodus of small farmer family, the Joads, from the Oklahoma Dust Bowl due to environmental degradation, cruelties of agribusiness and corporate economy to the "Promised Land" of California. On the way to California and in California, the innocent migrants are helpless against the large growers and their minions, the police, the vigilantes who enforce their power upon these innocent mass whom corporate culture has rendered powerless. Due to the loss of their homeland, the migrants are deprived of human dignity, animal satisfaction and even the means of survival amid natural abundance and vast ocean of property. The agribusiness and corporate culture make the connectedness of human and natural worlds, collective survival of the members of biotic community, nature/land as organism get violated and everything is treated as

commodity and means of accumulating capital. All the state agencies are seen as merely managing the decline and disappearance of the organicity of the land in the pursuit of the multiple use doctrines of the large growers for piling up materialistic profit.

Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* depicts the fact that love and ethical responsibility to the land are the prerequisites for a reciprocal and sustainable relationship between land and humanity which leads to a shift from anthropocentrism to biocentrism. As Fritjof Capra notes, the new ecological worldview represents "a shift from self-assertion to integration" accompanied by a "shift from the rational to the intuitive, from analysis to synthesis, from reductionism to holism, from linear to non-linear thinking" (24). Alexandra Bergson represents this shift and becomes able to maintain land dignity and human dignity.

Theoretical Modality

This project intends to explore and analyze *The Grapes of Wrath* and *O Pioneers!* on the basis of how agribusiness and corporate economy treat the land as commodity, force people out of their home land and rob them off their dignity. I argue that agrarian culture treats the land as organic to human life strengthening the bonding between the humans and the land as one of respect and love. This research conceptualizes nature as organism, highlighting the ethics of respect for nature. This framework builds on land ethic, nature as organism and deep ecological approaches developed by A.N. Whitehead, Aldo Leopold, Arne Naess and explained by Paul W. Taylor, Edward W. Wilson, Dana Philips, John Hannigan and Robert D. Bullard who emphasize pervasive feeling, unconscious prehension, interdependence and co-participation among organisms of the ecosphere and environmentalism and social justice. This project offers a perspective that focuses on the role of attachment and

feeling of oneness with environment to appreciate the novels under discussion. It argues that readers' identification with nature is crucial to understanding *The Grapes of Wrath* and *O Pioneers!*. Given the nature of these texts only an eco-poetic approach can unravel the heart of the poetic imagination permeating them.

Eco-poetic paradigm is a literary and cultural criticism which analyses literary texts from an environmental view point and assesses texts and their overarching ideologies for their environmental implication. It is basically an earth-centered approach to literary studies. This research tries to analyze the symbiotic relationship between land and human identity depicted in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!*

Environment is sum total of biotic and abiotic factors affecting an organism. There is continuous interaction of each and every organism with biotic and abiotic factors. "Things" and "thingness", "substance" and "quality", "matter" and "mind" are inseparable entities. They do not have independent existence and ontological values in isolation. For Leopold land is the basis of "biotic pyramid" (42) which includes "soils, waters, plants and animals" (39). Land is regarded as fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants and animals. According to Aldo Leopold "A land ethic . . . reflects the existence of ecological conscience, a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land. Health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal" (45). Sound health of the land provides sound existence of ecological conscience. Things and human activities of the biosphere should be guided by the spirit of ecological conscience. Aldo Leopold concludes, "Thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community, it is wrong when it tends to do otherwise" (46).

So long as the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community is maintained, plants, animals and humans are to a large degree isolated from soil-borne infections. Barry Commoner elaborates that the pathogenic microorganisms actually cause disease only rarely. Due to human intrusion and encroachment into the balanced ecosystem, ecological degradation occurs which makes pathogenic microorganisms active and hence different diseases get emerged (227). Surface water has intimate contact with soil. People come into equally intimate contact with water – by swimming in it, drinking it, or inhaling spray. Commoner further explains:

Soil-borne diseases ordinarily remain rare in human because in natural conditions, surface waters are very effective biological barriers to the movement of pathogenic microorganisms from the soil to the human. Water ordinarily contains insufficient organic matter to support the growth of the pathogens. (227)

The snapping off the reciprocity between land and human beings due to anthropocentric civilization, the water pollutants make the natural biological barrier between soil and human beings break down and thereby intensify environmental hazards.

The anthropocentric attempt of establishing forceful, unnatural distinction between inseparable, indivisible, indestructible entities of biotic unity has deteriorated land community, and hence the usual fragmentation is going on in individual life and cosmos. A.N. Whitehead explaining "Nature as Organism" mentions, "Things are separated by space, and separated by time, but they are together in space, together in time, even if they be not contemporaneous. I will call these characters like "separative" and "prehensive" character of space-time" (401). The things of the biotic community are quite sensitive to the existence of others save human beings. All things

take account of each other. The “pervasive feeling” between and among things automatically creates natural sympathy for the whole. It is a general connectedness and unity of the universe which things reveal. According to Whitehead “Nature is conceived of prehensive unification. Space and time exhibit the general scheme of interlocked relations of this prehension” (401). By realizing and actualizing the “pervasive feeling” and “prehensive unity” of things, one can truly understand the placeness and thingness of thing in nature, and maintain land dignity and human dignity as well. Such issues of general connectedness among beings and things, sensitivity to each other as well as co-participation between land and human beings are also stressed by deep ecologists.

Deep ecology, as envisioned by Arne Naess, is in opposition to both advanced industrialism and shallow environmentalism. It goes beyond the so-called factual level to the level of self and earth wisdom. Deep ecologist, as Arne Naess pointed out, “Stresses a post-anthropocentric biospherical egalitarianism to create an awareness of the equal right of all things to live and blossom” (qtd. in Luke 5). It holds the idea that all things have an equal right to live and blossom and to reach their individual forms of unfolding and self-realization within the larger self-realization. It focuses on becoming a whole person rather than an isolated ego struggling to accumulate material possession. In course of cultivating ecological consciousness and protecting the ecological integrity of the place, deep ecologists advocate for spiritual growth, unfolding inner essence, identification beyond humanity to include non-human world, shifting of human satisfaction to appreciating the quality of life rather than adhering to higher material standard of living and human beings are part and parcel of the large community, the land community. Human identity and dignity is directly proportional to the identity and dignity of land community.

Similarly, in "The Ethics of Respect for Nature" Paul W. Taylor states "the interdependence of all living things in an organically unified order whose balance and stability are necessary conditions for the realization of the good of its constituent biota communities" (75). Taylor argues that the ethics of respect for nature is symmetrically with a theory of human ethics, which, he writes, is "grounded on respect for persons . . . conception of oneself and others as persons . . . respect for persons as persons . . . every person as having inherent worth or human dignity" (76). Taylor personifies nature and naturalizes the persons. In order to translate the ethics of respect for nature into practice, Taylor suggests the following four major components of biocentric outlook on nature:

- (1) Humans are thought of as members of the Earth's community of life, holding that membership on the same terms to apply to all non-human members,
- (2) the Earth's natural ecosystems as totality are seen as a complex web of interconnected elements, with the sound biological functioning of the others. . . .
- (3) Each individual organism is conceived of as a teleological centre of life, pursuing its own good in its own way.
- (4) . . . the claim that human by their very nature are superior to other species is groundless claim. . . . (76)

Once the groundless claim of human superiority is rejected, the doctrine of species impartiality is actualized and the dignity and identity of both human being and land community can be maintained. The more human beings claimed to be civilized and advanced due to modern science and technology, the notion of human supremacy over other species become stronger which gives birth to prideful consumerist prosthetic culture.

Modern science and technology is accelerating agribusiness and corporate economy ignoring “land ethic”, “nature as organism” and “human ethics”, and has given birth to, in the words of Edward O. Wilson, “prosthetic environment . . . terminus of the philosophy of exemptionalism” (157). This simulated ecosophical culture has introduced the era of plastic garden, the city of iron bars and cement , the chemical countryside and consumption of inorganic goods. It sees humanity is in a new order of life, let species die if they block progress, scientific and technological geniuses will find another way. It illustrates the intellectual failure of modern technocrats of being ignorant about the origin of species in the nature. In the words of Wilson, the root cause of human intellectual failure “is ignorance of our origins. We did not arrive on this planet as aliens. Humanity is part of nature, a species that evolved among other species” (157). Human being is the youngest member of biotic community.

In postmodern era, nature is tried to be replaced by commodified representation. Due to simulacra and simulated products, the natural world has been claimed to be substituted for artifice. In Dana Phillips words, “In the post modern world, nature no longer seems necessary” (215). In the anthropocentric and urbocentric postmodern world, need of green nature is supposed to be obsolete. But highlighting the necessity of green nature, Wendell Berry argues, “Nature is necessary . . . it is necessity itself . . . the use value of breathable air and drinkable water is not socially produced nor can either be “simulated” once they are all gone” (qtd. in Phillips 220-21). Explaining the importance of soil and keeping it healthy, Berry further says “the soil is our heritage, our history, that is the soil is also to be read, interpreted, taught, learned from, handed down to the next generation, and keep from becoming mere dirt . . .” (ibid 221). Berry strongly opposes the simulated

prosthetic culture and favours natural organicity of the land community. He suggests, instead of dirtifying the soil, we should preserve its organicity, beauty, purity and vitality through deep studies and hand down the nature's gift to our successors in intact form.

By the middle eighties, the environmental movement was an elitist movement. Robert D. Bullard states that the "poor and minority residents saw environmentalism as a disguise for oppression and as another 'elitist' movement" (328). There was no concern for lower class, down trodden and poor class people. Their dwellings were ghettos and slums. In Bullard's words, "Environmental eliticism has been grouped into three categories: compositional eliticism . . . ideological eliticism . . . and impact eliticism . . ." (329). The focus was primarily upper-middle class elites, rather than in social justice terms. Environmentalism in the 1980s and 1990s underwent another transformation that is Environmental Justice. Only then environmental movement started including the problems of grassroots level domestically and globally in "Gramscian perspective" (Hannigan 48) only after the establishment of Grassroots Environment Justice Organization in the U.S.

Hannigan states that the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit which was held in October, 1991 in Washington D.C. identified three strands of environmental equity: procedural equity, geographical equity and social equity (50). The delegates of this summit, guided and spirited by the ecocentric principles espoused by Aldo Leopold, John Muir, George Marsh, the pioneers of environmental movement ratified a document "Principles of Environmental Justice." In Hannigan's words "the principles also argue that the people have a right to clean air, land, water, and food and the right to work in a clean and safe environment" (50). This statement clarifies the fact human beings disregarding their race, gender, culture,

economic status; nationality has equal right to have clean air, land, water, food and right to work in a clean and safe environment. These rights are also included as basic civil rights.

I have taken the aforementioned theoretical concepts, comments and remarks so that their ideas interact with the narratives I have chosen for analysis. In an interaction between theory and narratives, they both can inter-animate each other. These theories propose anthro-bio-centric culture by which the human identity and dignity can be actualized only by maintaining the identity and dignity of the land community. Therefore, human identity and dignity is directly proportional to the identity and dignity of land community.

Chapters

In the first chapter, “The Symbiotic Relationship between Land and Human Beings,” I argue that the destiny of human beings is intimately related to the destiny of the land. The placeness, belongingness and rootedness to the soil encourages human beings to toil and moil for their sustenance along with maintaining harmonious relationship with the biota of land community. The dissociation from the soil brings pain, penury and pathos for human beings that causes placelessness, rootlessness and hence leads to be dispossessed, dehumanized, disenfranchised mobile vagrants. Such dissociation also introduces ruthless exploitation of the land. These arguments get substantiated by incorporating the critical analyses of two narratives – *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck and *O Pioneers!* by Willa Cather applying ecopoetic perspective. The major parameters of theoretical framework are Aldo Leopold’s “Land Ethics”, A. N. Whitehead’s “Nature as Organism” and Arne Naess’s “Deep Ecology” and other supportive concepts of these approaches have been precisely documented to justify my claim.

In the Second Chapter, “Steinbeck’s Ecological Imagination, Spatial Conjunction and Disjunction of Human Beings to the Land in *The Grapes of Wrath*,” I study John Steinbeck’s ecological imagination in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Like the interdependence and connectedness between biotic and abiotic worlds of the environment, the aesthetic integration of human centre narrative chapters and intercalary chapters constitutes Steinbeck’s ecological imagination. I argue that agrarianism maintains spatial conjunction of human beings to the land, whereas corporate agribusiness imposes spatial disjunction of human beings to the land. This argument is justified by presenting the description of the then California, agribusiness and the plight of the Dust Bowl migrant labourers.

In the third chapter, “Co-participation of Land and Human Beings in *O Pioneers!*,” I study how homesteading helps in transforming the prairie land on the Great Divide in Nebraska into an agricultural landscape, reciprocal and sustainable relationship between land and human beings and description of Crazy Ivar and Alexandra Bergson as memorable examples of ecological identity.

The last chapter, “Reflection on Proportionate Interdependence between Land Community and Human Beings,” I come to the conclusion that human identity and dignity is directly proportional to the identity and dignity of land community. Human beings are neither superior nor inferior nor conqueror to other members of land community but a part and parcel of it. The healthier the land community, the happier and more harmonious the human survival would be. The deterioration of land community endangers the existence of human beings along with other members of ecosphere. Seeing being in all biota of land community, internalizing unique intrinsic value of all beings and thing, and respecting equal existence of all is the only way to

assist in maintaining the ecological unified whole which helps to inter-animate the land and human and strengthens the bonding between them as one of respect and love.

Chapter II

Steinbeck's Ecological Imagination: Spatial Conjunction and Disjunction of

Human Beings in *The Grapes of Wrath*

Steinbeck's Ecological Imagination

John Steinbeck integrates his study of nature and the environment into his fiction and embodies his ecological imagination in his characters and settings. By incorporating his theories of holistic thought and environment into his writings, Steinbeck creates his own ecofiction – fiction with an environmental subtext. A prime example of Steinbeck's ecofiction is *The Grapes of Wrath*, specially exposing the reciprocity between land and human beings. The destiny of human being is intimately attached with the destiny of the land. Snapping off the reciprocity between land and human beings leads to the exploitations of the land and pain, penury and plight to human beings. When land is taken just as an object, people rape and commodify the land as a means of accumulating wealth; and when people are detached from the land, they become landless, homeless, mobile vagrants. The ecological theories, especially Whitehead's "Nature as Organism," Leopold's "Land Ethic" and Naess's "Deep Ecology" allow us to see symbiotic relation between land and human beings and the consequences of the reckless snapping off the reciprocity between land and human beings. This project tries to analyze Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* through these lenses.

Like Whitehead, Steinbeck in *The Grapes of Wrath* views land as "living organism" that can no longer be treated as in the "Lockean view of land as property," or land as an object. Like Leopold, he focuses on ecological concept in the biotic world, anticipating later theories of ecology and promoting notions of non-anthropocentrism and holism as part of an environmental philosophy; and like Naess, he believes the equal right of all living organism to blossom and flourish. The land and its compliments, plants and animals, make up a biotic community and are coequal, interdependent parts of a whole. Every being and thing of the biosphere, regardless of their shape, size and number, have or receive equal share and autonomous ontological value. Sueellen Campbell rightly argues, "Humans are neither better nor worse than other creatures . . . but simply equal to everything else in the natural world" (128).

Steinbeck loves human beings whom he considers to be living natural lives like of the Joads, the Oklahoman migrant family whose saga is described in *The Grapes of Wrath*. He has sensitiveness to the atmosphere of a piece of land, recognition of a mysterious spirit of place. This is the striking of his work. His love of the natural extends to naturalistic ethic; he loves natural behavior. Woodburn O. Ross writes, "Steinbeck has developed ideas about the unity of the cosmos which may fairly be called "mystical," ideas which, of course, ultimately go considerably beyond what his scientific naturalism would support mysterious significance of things- explicitly attests the holiness of nature – holiness in the unity of nature" (434). In the holiness of nature humans are assumed to be integrated into the natural world to develop harmonious living. The othering idea of wild nature as entirely separate from human culture is not entertained. Illustrating this holiness of nature, Steinbeck in *The Grapes of Wrath*, narrates, "There was the hills, an' there was me, an' we wasn't

separate no more. We was one thing. An' that one thing was holy" (85). While wandering into the wilderness, Jim Casy had identified himself with the hill and had felt "whole" –sense of oneness with the nature. The whole thing was holy. When human being realizes holiness of the nature, the insensitivity to the marvelous diversity of nature gets deleted. Soil, plants, animals, waters tend to be seen as all alike, as Tom Regan suggests that all natural objects “have inherent goodness” whether living or not (qtd. in Palmer 22). Human beings become holy when they respect all the members of the nature and work together.

Steinbeck virtually reduces men to animism and does not see through nature to a God beyond; he hears no intimations of immortality; for him there is no spirit which rolls through all things. There is only nature, ultimately mysterious, to which all things belong, bound together in a unity concerning whose stupendous grandeur he can barely hint. Supporting this argument, Morris Dickstein explains Steinbeck's "insistence on the animal basis of human life, as seen in our fundamental need for food, shelter, physical expression and above all, tenderness and companionship" (114). Dickstein further quotes an interview with Steinbeck in 1934 by a friend what he really wants out of life, Steinbeck provocatively answers in strict biological and physical terms:

As an organism I am so simple that I want to be comfortable and comfort consist in a place to sleep, dry and fairly soft, lack of hunger, almost any kind of food, occasional loss of semen in intercourse when it becomes troublesome, and a good deal of work. . . . I don't want to possess anything nor to be anything. I have no ambition because on inspection the ends of ambition achieved seem tiresome.

(qtd. in Dickstein 114)

Steinbeck's modesty of describing himself as a physical animal, a simple organism extends to his work. It seems to belong to the biorhythms of his nervous system rather than any higher goals as an artist. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck expresses his modesty as follows:

An' I got thinkin' on'y it wasn't thinkin', it was deeper down than thinkin'. I got thinkin' how we was holy when we was one thing, an' one mis'able little fella got the bit in his teeth an' run off his own way. Kickin' an' draggin' an' fightin'. Fella like that bust the holiness. But when they're all workin' together, not one fella for another fella, but one fella kind of harnessed to the whole shebang- that's right, that's holy. (85)

All creatures of the nature – plants, animals and humans – are coequal and interdependent parts of a whole. Each organism carries out its biological functions as per the laws of its species – specific nature. No creature of the nature is superior or inferior. Each has its uniqueness, identity and significance to keep the things whole. Emphasizing the natural world as an organic system, Taylor discusses the holistic view of Earth's ecological system as:

The ecological relationship between any community of living things and their environment from an organic whole of functionally interdependent parts. . . . This holistic view of the Earth's ecological system is a factual aspect of biological reality. It's significance for the humans is the same as its significance for non humans. (78)

Steinbeck internalizes human dignity only with co-existential coequal relationship with the land we inhabit. The need of the ecosphere is that human beings should learn

to live responsibly and holistically by changing human exploitation of nature into coparticipation with nature.

Anthropocentric approach envisions the non-human natural world in terms of its instrumental values to human beings. Animals, plants and natural formations are treated as instruments for hedonistic utilitarian consumption which makes human beings think superior or master all other members of biotic community. Susan Shillinglaw emphasizes the importance of Steinbeckian holism in the introduction to *Steinbeck and Environment: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, where she asserts, " 'the problem' of unity found focus in [Steinbeck's] stories about group man and the potential of the whole" (12). The interdependence of all living things in an organically unified order whose balance and stability are necessary conditions for the realization of the good of its constituent biotic communities. Steinbeck in *The Log from the Sea of Cortez* mentions that "all things are one thing and that one thing is all things" (218). The coequal relationship of living things to one another and to their inorganic environment helps keeping things whole as Leland S. Person states, "To live non hierarchically in nature should mean living nonhierarchically in other relationship" (7). Such nonhierarchical co-existence of biotic and abiotic worlds helps, as Glen A. Love argues "not only to the dealings of human individuals and human societies with one another, but also of their dealings with other living creatures and planet upon which all are travelling through space and time" (563). Showing the non hierarchical relationship among the members of biotic community, Steinbeck exemplifies:

The sun lay on the grass and warmed it, and in the shade under the grass the insects moved, ants and ant lions to set traps for them, grasshoppers to jump into the air and flick their yellow wings for a second, sow bugs like little armadillos, plodding restlessly in many

tender feet. And over the grass at the roadside a land turtle crawled, turning aside for nothing, dragging his high-domed shell over the grass. (16)

The members of biotic community do have non-hierarchical relationship. They do have their harmonious interactions with other organisms and manifold ways they adjust to the environment. The interdependence of all living things in an organically unified order whose balance and stability are necessary conditions for the realization of the good of its constituent biotic communities. Such realization makes human beings understand other living beings and things, their environmental conditions, and their ecological relationships in such a way to awake in them a deep sense of kinship with other creatures as fellow members of Earth's community of life. Humans and nonhumans alike are viewed together as integral parts of one unified whole in which all living beings and things are functionally interrelated. When human awareness focuses on the individual lives of plants and animals, each is seen to share with human beings the characteristics of being a teleological centre life striving to realize its own good in its own unique way. The groundlessness of the claim that humans are inherently superior to other species makes the earth's unified biotic community disturbed. Once it is realized and the notion of human superiority to other species gets rejected, the doctrine of species impartiality is actualized, and hence the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community tends to be preserved.

The land mothers all the creatures equally well. The land, as Leopold envisions, itself "is not really soil; it is a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants and animals" (43). This fountain of energy continuously flows in a cyclical manner throughout all the layers of the earth. In order for each member in the land pyramid to live, there must be an inter-reliance and balance of the overall whole.

Like the interdependence and connectedness between biotic and abiotic factors of the environment, the aesthetic integration of human centered narrative chapters and intercalary chapters make *The Grapes of Wrath* a whole. Praising Steinbeck's technique of combining narrative and intercalary chapters in *The Grapes of Wrath*, Peter Valenti argues, "When Steinbeck added the fictional story of the Joads to the documentary material of the interchapters, he achieved the unity of human and physical worlds that constitutes his ecological rhetoric" (93). Human centered narratives are microcosmic chapters which tell the story of the Joads' struggle as they travel to California in search of work and prosperity. Intercalary chapters that are macrocosmic chapters which illustrate the exposition and background pertinent to the miseries of the migrant. Valenti's insistence on Steinbeck's merging of Joads saga with documentary material suggests that human centric narratives are interlocked with ecocentric description. Describing the structural wholeness of *The Grapes of Wrath*, Love states: "In Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* the scientific inter-chapters and sections are alternately laced with the human-centred narrative" (562). The intercalary chapters which present general and panoramic survey, geographical and ecological description that represent abiotic factors, are ecocentric. In none of these chapters, do the Joads, Wilsons or Wainwrights appear. The human centred chapters, which call for some narration, are biotic, especially anthropocentric. Praising the structural wholeness of *The Grapes of Wrath*, Peter Lisca mentions that "Steinbeck worked from both sides to make the two kinds of chapters approach each other and fuse into a single impression" (300). Although these types of chapters are independent and autonomous, in absence of one, another is incomplete, and their coequal, co-existential interdependence makes the novel a unified whole.

Agrarianism: Spatial Conjunction of Human Beings to the Land

Agrarian farming respects interdependence and connectedness between land and humans. It is ecologically friendly and maintains balance between biotic and abiotic worlds. The land, plants, animals are treated equally as living organism, and essential members of land pyramid. The farmers do have close physical and emotional contact with the soil. George Henderson, emphasizing spatial proximity of a people to their land, views that Steinbeck in *The Grapes of Wrath* “was very keen on establishing the notion that an emotional relationship to land depends on close physical contact with soil” (218). The farmers put their hearts and souls in the land and their products. The land and each product are treated as their family members. Each product is a melodious song that emerges from the heart of producers. Highlighting the feeling of oneness between land and human beings, Steinbeck posits himself as anthro-bio-centric observer and states, “The man who is . . . walking in the earth, turning his plow point for a stone, dropping his handles to slide over an outcropping, kneeling in the earth to eat his lunch; that man who is more than his elements knows the land that is more than its analysis” (120). In self-sustaining agrarianism not only human beings but also animals feel oneness, lifelikeness, vitality and connectedness with the land. Working with the land they feel of being energized, but not tired. Picturizing the physical and emotional states of a horse when it returns to its barn after a day-long ploughing the field, Steinbeck exemplify the horse’s sense of oneness with the land and its vitality:

[W]hen a horse stops work and goes into the barn there is a life and a vitality left, there is a breathing and a warmth, and the feet shift on the straw, and the jaws champ on the hay, and the ears and the eyes are alive. There is a warmth of life in the barn, and the heat and smell of life. (120)

Steinbeck establishes the fundamental conflict between yeoman farmer and the land and then diagrams the imperialist maneuvering of corporate business. Agrarian cultures treat land as living organism not as commodity and means of production and accumulating property. Supporting agrarian farming, Marshall Hartranft, author of *Grapes of Gladness*, views, “To grow crops to sell is to speculate like hell. . . . But to grow crops to eat keeps you standing on both feet” (qtd. in Wartzman 187).

Sustainable farming respects land as the basis of the farmer’s survival. Better health of the land provides better production and better survival. For them, land is not only means of production but embodiment of their own beings and life. Seeing being in land helps them to understand as Palmer states “indeed, there are no “isolated” things but an interlocking web of relations in a constant state of flux. Individuals are “knots in a web” or “centers of interaction” constituted by their relationships” (30). The relationship between human and nature is holy and inviolable. Machines have no place in this sanctity of man’s relationship to the natural world. The land also undergoes a process of dehumanization when its link with the human is severed. It becomes barren and mechanical. Machines act as a barrier between human beings and land. Although the machines function with greater efficiency, they lack the emotional and spiritual proximity with the soil that make the land so valuable.

The life of the land and human life at their best are inseparable. Human identity is integrally tied to the land. Attachment with the land makes people feel of being independent citizen having human identity and dignity. Describing the right of sustainable agrarian ownership over the land and human dignity, David N. Cassuto argues, “Birthing and dying on the land created a blood right of succession that no financial transactions could negate . . . working the land formed the litmus test of

possession . . . the laws of country conflict with the laws of land” (60-61). Laws of the country are mechanical and plutocratic guided by so called reason and rationality. They do not respect the emotional and physical proximity of the farmers with the land but just mechanically produced non-sentient evidences. The sweat, blood, toil and moil with the soil are the real, natural and sentient evidences for allowing rights of possession over the land. Exemplifying Cassuto’s argument, Steinbeck writes:

Grampa took up the land, and he had to kill the Indians and drive them away. And Pa was born here, and he killed weeds and snakes. Then a bad year came and he had to borrow a little money. An’ we was born here . . . our children born here. An’ Pa had to borrow money. The bank owned the land then . . . Sure cried the tenant men, but it’s our land. We measured it and broke it up. We were even born on it, and we got killed on it, died on it. Even if it’s no good, it’s still ours. . . . That makes ownership, not a paper with number on it. (35)

The yeoman farmers worked on the land, struggled against the hardships and obstacles, and in intense circumstances died for the land not for accumulating property but just for their survival, identity, security and safety for surety. In the words of Cornel West, identity is:

[F]undamentally desire and death. How you construct your identity is predicted on how you construct desire, and how you conceive of death; desire for recognition; . . . a deep desire for assimilation . . . transact with an environment. . . . And then there is a profound desire for protection, for security, for safety for surety. (15-16)

The sharecroppers’ identity is closely assimilated with the identity of the land. For them land is vital part of their very existence, and everything to their life is tied to it,

including birth, employment, protection, security, safety for surety and death. The tenants follow the idea of Jeffersonian agrarianism. Thomas Jefferson asserted in 1787 that “those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue” (qtd. in Smith 92). Thomas Jefferson believes that all people should have the opportunity to own landed property. Jefferson argues that even if people do not own land legally, they have a natural right to claim ownership if they live on it and cultivate it. Nobody can be free and independent citizen until and unless they have some acres of land to till. People having ownership over the land can be declared as enfranchised. Throughout long years of public service, Jefferson was motivated by the conviction that a firm foundation of agrarian democracy was the only basis upon which a political democracy could be sustained. In the political democracy, established on a firm foundation of agrarian democracy, people can enjoy freedom, independence and sovereignty holding their heads high without any fear.

Corporate Agribusiness: Spatial Disjunction of People to the Land

With the onset of industrial farming and supremacy of corporate capitalism, the agrarian culture was displaced. The reciprocity between land dignity and human dignity was snapped. Land was no more considered as living organism but as commodity and means of multiplying property. The sharecroppers’ struggle to tame the wild land as cultivable land, and their traces of their sweat, blood, toil, and moil to the soil is ruthlessly denied. They are treated as inessential objects. They are judged not as an independent being or culture but as an illegitimate and refractory foil to the soil. Soil, plants, animals tend to be seen as all alike in their lack of consciousness. Land is conceived in terms of interchangeable and replaceable units. The organicity, vitality and marvelous diversity of the land are heedlessly ignored. Industrial

farming, as Trent Keough argues “is as assertion of individual corporate rights over those established by settled communities in the previous era” (40). In the US industrial farming techniques coupled with drought and debt helped to displace thousands of small tenant farmers from their land in 1930s. The exodus had been underway for nearly a decade, with as many as four hundred thousand folks from Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri, and other states flocking to California in search of better life. An army made up of penniless, unemployed migrants was marching into California desperately seeking utopia. Rick Wartzman picturizes the then grotesque agribusiness of California as follows:

The state’s giant landowners had made a travesty of the Jeffersonian ideal of 160 acres, assembling dominions that ballooned to one thousand times or more that size ‘we no longer raise wheat here’, said one grower, ‘we manufacture it’. This wasn’t family farming; it was agribusiness. And with it came a caste system in which relatively few got rich while many remained mired in the worst sort of property . . . big farmers regarded their hands as expendable – ‘beasts of the field.

(5)

Steinbeck takes on the Californian leviathan land holders cunningly rape the land and exploit the migrant labors ruthlessly. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck’s story of the Joad family offers a moving depiction of the plight of the US’s Dust Bowl refugees. Tim Kappel argues, “Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* was not merely a sympathetic rendering of one family’s trials but a conscious portrayal of the harsh daily conditions experienced by migrants laborers” (211). The fertile soil of California seems to be available for unrestricted large growers’ use. The then US first lady Eleanor Roosevelt had called her reading of *The Grapes of Wrath* “an unforgettable

experience” (qtd. in Wartzman 5). After reading the Joads’ journey from the bone-dry plains of Oklahoma to the bountiful lands of California, where they and others toiled away for a pittance and found themselves wishing “them big farmers wouldn’ plague us so”, “There are 500,000 Americans” the President said, “ that live in the covers of that book” (ibid.6). Brent Bellamy views “in *The Grapes of Wrath*, California is depicted as a land of potential hopes, and dreams but, instead, offers only exploitative work and an alienated way of life” (225). Thus, the remarks made by Keough about *The Grapes of Wrath* precisely present Steinbeck’s vision of writing this novel.

Keough argues, “John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) . . . documents the spiritual disintegration and ideological failure of industrial societies driven by Jeremy Bentham’s *Utilitarianism* and Adam Smith’s *Laissez faire economics*” (38). Industrial farming which encourages corporate capitalist consumerist culture that helps snap the reciprocal relationship between land and human identity for their headlong thirst for ownership and profit. They were free to do anything for their betterment. The state and police authority were for managing their agribusiness.

Corporate agribusiness coupled with drought and debt compelled the share croppers to be detached from their land. Once they are detached from the land, they become dispossessed, mobile vagabonds. They lose sense of placeness, belongingness and shelter, stability, and comfort. Describing the compulsion and plight of the evicted farmers, Henderson explains:

Oklahoma banks extended their domain to foreclose on small or mid-size farms, while California towns resisted the onslaught of the displaced migrants. Migrant families were thus pushed from two directions: away from their homelands and away from the small-town sanctuary of farmers and merchants. (214)

The sharecroppers neither could earn their survival in their homelands nor in California. After being dissociated from their homeland, they felt to neither here nor there, unable to indulge in sentiments of belonging to either place. They do have pain of loss and of not being firmly rooted in a secure place.

When truculent Tom Joad hitchhiking home after a stint in prison for homicide, the truck driver hints of the hardship of poor sharecroppers in Oklahoma. The truck driver says to Tom Joad, "A forty-acre cropper and he ain't been dusted out he ain't been tractored out? . . . Croppers going fast now. . . . One cat takes and shoves ten families out. Cat's all over hell now. Tear in and shove the croppers out. How's your old man hold on?" (10-11). The truck driver's astonishment clarifies the compulsion of eviction and the imposition of mechanical farming for sheer profit. Machinery has separated sharecroppers from land owners; it has robbed the sharecroppers' the sustaining delights. Work has become less and less pleasant to do and leads to the loss of the organic community. The loss of the organic community is the root cause of the loss of human naturalness.

Industrial farming not only destroys the natural fertility of the land but also displaces animals and introduces machines in farming. Tractors have been used to plough the land. Regarding tractor farming as one of the root causes for the small farmers' fall, George Henderson argues "tractor farming became the small landholder's nemesis. The small farmer could no longer make the land support a crop. Under a system of modernized production extensive monocropping engulfed the Joads' farm" (218). Industrial farming, represented by images of machine technology, provides the counterforce of the archetype of the pastoral design. This mechanical farming is associated with fire, speed, iron and harsh noise. It destroys the

harmonious, nonhierarchical primitive dwelling, in which as F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson mention:

[V]illagers express their human nature, they satisfied their human needs, in terms of the natural environment; and the things they made – cottages, barns, ricks and waggons – together with their relations with one another constituted a human environment, and a subtlety of adjustment and adaptation . . . their ways of life reflected the rhythm of the seasons, and they were in close touch with the sources of their sustenance in the neighbouring soil. (74)

In non-hierarchical agrarian dwelling villagers express their nature and try to satisfy their human needs without damaging natural environment. Their products maintain reciprocity between human and nonhuman worlds. Their ways of life follow the rhythms of season and soil for simply their simple, natural sustenance without having headlong thirst of satisfying materialistic greed.

Tom Joad, after being released from the Oklahoma State penitentiary, where he has served four years of a seven-year sentence for homicide, coming home with Jim Casy, stands on the hill and looks down on the Joads place. The following passage presents Tom Joad's observation of the destruction of agrarianism and ecological harmony of his native place by tractor farming:

The small unpainted house was mashed at one corner, and it had been pushed off its foundation so that it slumped at an angle, its blind front windows pointing at a spot of sky well above the horizon. The fences were gone and cotton grew in the door yard and up against the house, and the cotton grew close against it. . . . They walked toward the

concrete well-cap, walked through cotton plants to get to it, and the bolls were farming on the cotton, and the land was cultivated. (42)

The mechanized industrial farming “tractors out” the sharecroppers. The new large cotton farm annihilates all former distinctions between the various micro places of the Joads farm: no more fences, no door yard, no clear path to shed, out house, or trough. There were no places even for proper weeds that should grow under a trough.

The mechanization of farming damages the organicity of the land. The tractor crushes the soft land mercilessly. *The Grapes of Wrath* is rich with examples. Consider, for example, this passage on human exploitation of the land, the destruction of prairie sod by mechanized plowing:

Behind the tractor rolled the shining disks, cutting the earth with blades – not plowing but surgery, pushing the cut earth to the right where the second row of disks cut it and pushed it to the left; slicing blades shining, polished by the cut earth. And pulled behind the disks, the harrows combing with iron teeth so that the little clods broke up and the earth lay smooth. (38)

The instrumental knowledge and mechanization “surgery”, “slicing blades” and metonymical representation of “tractor”, “shining disks”, “cutting blades” etc. makes the machine driver like senseless and lifeless machine and smear, sear and blear the land. This makes the Dust bowl dwellers be displaced from their homeland. They see the destruction of their habitat, and smell the hot smoke of the tractor. They watch all these destructive scenes with their heavy hearts. Steinbeck picturizes the horrible scene as follows:

The people came out of their houses and smelled the hot stinging

air and covered their noses from it. And the children came out of the houses, but they did not run or shout as they would have done after a rain. Men stood by their fences and looked at the ruined corn, drying fast now, only a little green showing through the film of dust. The men were silent and they did not move often. And the women came out of the houses to stand beside their men – to feel whether this time the men would break. (5)

The new kind of mechanical farming destroys the sense of oneness between land and human beings. The new kind is technically easy and efficient, but, in the words of Steinbeck, it lacks emotional and physical proximity with the land and vanishes wonders of working with the land: “So easy is that the wonder goes out of work, so efficient that the wonder goes out of land and the working of it, and with the wonder the deep understanding and the relation” (120). There is spatial disjunction of a people to the land in mechanized farming.

The machine man that is the tractor driver does not feel spiritual and emotional relationship with the land. Steinbeck seems very critical of the corporate capitalist mechanized farming which imposes the disjunction between land and farmers. He takes on bank and capitalist portraying them as “monstrous” and exploitative”. He expresses “the monster that built the tractor, the monster that sent the tractor out, had somehow got into the driver’s hands, into his brain and muscle, had goggled him and muzzled him – goggled his mind, muzzled his speech, goggled his perception, muzzled his protest” (37). The tractor functions as a symbol of technological age, and the unfeeling tractor driver, like a robot, has lost contact with the earth. The tractor is indifferent to the weather and unaffected by drought or

rainfall. Under its mechanical precision, crops can be grown without spending human labour.

The tractor driver after sitting in his iron seat feels proud of the tractor. He cannot see the land as it is, he cannot smell the land as it smells. His feet do not stamp the clods or feel the warmth and power of the earth. He becomes slaves of tractor. He is just concerned with the assigned work and the wages he receives for his labour. He neither has fellow feeling with his class nor with the land. The dehumanization of the driver is externalized in the form of a rubber dust- mask and goggles which hide his features. He has also lost his human will and the capacity to think and act independently. He mechanically fulfills the role of carrying out the orders of the machine and the capitalist economy. He has been conditioned to merely act without thinking.

For the leviathan landlords land is simply a means of earning sizable profit. Land is nothing more to them than a financial investment. The bank, representative of corporate finance made up of capitalists, becomes the owners of thousands of acres of land. It hires tractor and senseless machine man to evict the sharecroppers and destroys the organicity of the land. Steinbeck calls the bank a monster and writes:

The Bank – or the company – needs – wants – insists – must have – as though the Bank or company were a monster . . . machines and masters all at the same time . . . a bank or company . . . don't breathe air, don't eat side-meat. They breathe profits, they eat interest on money. If they don't get it, they die the way you die, without air, without side meat. . . . (33-34)

The industrial farming and the accompanying supremacy of corporate capitalism was only for profit not for maintaining connection and interdependence between land and

human beings. The bank physically is not men but it can make men do what it wants. Reverence for the reciprocity between land and human became obsolete with the ascension of corporate agribusiness. Timothy W. Luke rightly says “corporate reckless consumption has transformed organic order of nature into the inorganic anarchy of capital” (130). This leads to the reckless consumption of the land and ruthless exploitation of the migrant labors and hence irreversible effects of environmental degradations and loss of human identity.

The exploitation of evicted Okies is symbolized by the grossly unfair price paid a share-cropper for the matched pair of bay horses he is forced to sell. In this purchase of bays, the exploiters are buying a part of the croppers’ history, their loves and labours; and a swelling bitterness is part of the bargain as Steinbeck states in *The Grapes of Wrath*: “you’re buying years of work, toil in the sun; you’re buying a sorrow that can’t talk. But watch it, mister” (91). Mechanization and factory farming provided the major impetus that drove families like the Joads from their homes. The Okies’ choices, in Steinbeck’s view, were either to drive a tractor through their neighbours’ homes while raping the land with machinery and cash crops or to leave.

Bankers, big-farmers, and town dwellers alike wanted to dissociate the sharecroppers’ attachment with the land and make them mobile migrant wage laborers having no place in which to belong. Ursula K. Heise views “rootedness in place has long been valued as an ideal counterweight to the mobility, restlessness, rootlessness and nomadism” (9). Belongingness to a place affirms and guarantees fixity, peace of mind, rootedness and of having certain identity and dignity. Though penniless, living in the homeland, makes people feel closely attached with the land and hence having human identity. Muley Graves, unable to relinquish his ties to the land, cannot go

with his families when they move west. Rootedness to the place where he was born, Muley rages against the dual inequality of bad land and evil bankers:

Cause what'd they take when they tractored the folks off the lan'?
 What'd they get so their margin profit was safe? . . . God knows the
 lan' ain't no good. . . . But them sons – a – bitches at their desks, they
 just chopped folks in two. . . . Place where folks live is them folks.
 They ain't whole, out lonely on the road in a piled-up car. Them sons –
 a – bitches killed them. (54)

Muley accuses the large land-holders and corporate capitalism of dispossessing the sharecroppers from their homeland for satisfying their hunger for profit and accumulating wealth. They have made the real possessors of the land wander in the road aimlessly.

For Muley, the link with the land still stained with his father's blood is stronger than his ties to his wife and family. He cannot leave even as he acknowledges that he is a living anachronism. Granpa, who was dreaming of going to California and eating bunches of grapes all the time, when he hears Muley Grave's sense of placeness and belongingness to the land, he suddenly feels physical, emotional, social and spiritual bonds with the soil and bursts out:

This here's my country. I b'long here. An' I don't give a goddamn if
 they's oranges an' grapes crowdin' a fella out a bed even. I ain't a –
 goin'. This country ain't no good, but it's my country. No, you all go
 ahead. I'll jus' stay right here where I b'long . . . ya ain't taking me,
 an' that's the end of it. (116)

Muley's staunch feeling of placeness and belongingness to the land arouses strong sense of rootedness with the land in Grampa. He renounces his dream of California

and firmly resolves his attachment with the land. He feels flowing of the soil in his body and decides sticking with the land where he was born, grown up and struggled hard to cultivate it. The Joads have to give him a cup of black coffee mixing with soothing syrup to carry him into the truck heading to California, about 2000 miles to the west from Oklahoma.

Describing the importance of placeness and predicament of placelessness, Henderson argues, “Fixity translated into power, whereas uprooted was the best assurance of continued disenfranchisement” (214). Fixity guarantees enfranchisement whereas uprootedness makes people disenfranchised. While the Joads were about to leave their place, they felt pain and pathos. Picturing their feeling of pain for being dissociated with their land, goods, of the past and memories, Steinbeck writes:

How can we leave without our lives? How will we know it's us without our past? . . . How'll it be not to know what land's outside the door? How if you wake up in the night and know – and know the willow tree's not there? Can you live without the willow tree? . . . Suddenly they were nervous . . . and then frantically they loaded up the cars and drove away, drove in the dust. (92-93)

Steinbeck artistically presented the profit oriented monstrous banks', cruel capitalists' and shrewd salesmen' cheating and exploitation of the innocent sharecroppers without any iota of morality and humanity. The formidable alliance of the Dust Bowl and corporate agribusiness dislodged the Okies from their land and homes. They were evicted from their soil forever. The 'dust' symbolizes their uncertain pathetic journey for their mirage of owning a place in California and leading a prosperous life as Pa Joad replies Al, his youngest adolescent son who is crazy about girls and engines, if he is glad going to California: “we had hard time here.

Course it'll be different out there – plenty work, an' ever' thing nice an' green, an' little white houses an' oranges growin' aroun'" (114). The Joads have been making the equation between the visible and possible, between reality and representation. The notions of "here" and "there", as points of a map, or as elements of the field of vision that can be identified and reached, are continually obscured because the Joads are lured in the first place by the spectacle of California.

California, Agribusiness and Migrant Labors

The Joads and their contemporaries had just been dislodged from their homelands when they became dispossessed, disenfranchised, powerless mobile workers to multiply the profit of the large growers and pain, penury and starvation to their folks. Rick Wartzman, pointing to the mirage of the migrants, states "the single biggest lure for the migrants were those handbills distributed by the big California growers, who were conniving to bring in a surplus labor" (160). The poor, innocent, dispossessed migrants believe the handbills advertising job opportunities. This made them dream of earning fortune in California. Describing the Garden of Eden myth of California, Wartzman further writes "California was the last frontier, the edge of the continent, the end of the line. It was often a person's last stop-his last hope – and the place had naturally assumed a kind of mythical status in the American psyche" (160-61). Showing the orange-coloured handbills which were spread by the agents of Californian growers, the migrants dream:

Why, I seen han'bills how need folks to pick fruit, an' good wages.
 Why, jus' think how it's gonna be, under them shady trees a – pickin'
 fruit an' takin' a bite ever' once in a while. Why, hell. They don't care
 how much you eat 'cause they got so much. An' with them good wages,
 maybe a fella can get hisself a little piece a land an' work out for extra

cash. Why, hell, in a couple of years I bet a fella could have a place of his own (154).

The Dust Bowl migrants dream California of being a Garden of Eden where they could enjoy eating fruits freely, would get job opportunities with handsome wages and salaries, could able to own a piece of land in a couple of years and feel placeness and belongingness to the soil that would guarantee their enfranchisement.

With the dream of work, space, welfare and prosperity the Joads, leaving their houses and land vacant and their culture – their history, their legends of Indian fighting, their songs and jokes, their religious practices, their habits of works and courtship – on a broken down truck started westward on US Highway 66. Malcolm Cowley describes the migrants journey on US Highway 66 picturesquely, "They are part of an endless caravan trucks, trailers, battered sedans, touring cars rescued from the junkyard, all of them overloaded with children and household plunder, all wheezing, pounding and screeching toward California" (54). The US Highway 66 is the mother road into which all the tributary roads pour and thousands of migrants travel on it.

After being evicted from their homelands, the mobile migrants become like machines. Alienation and mechanization are tied together in the struggle for survival during the exodus along the road. Brent Bellamy argues, "*The Grapes of Wrath* imagines alienation through a figurative connection between men and machines. The highway takes its toll on the Joads and on their personified vehicles in a way that binds them to their machines" (225). The dissociation from the land compels the migrants depend upon the machines for their mobility as well as survival. Machines become their only source of hopefulness and dream. The biological and seasonal

rhythms with the land get replaced by the artificial harsh rhythm produced by machines. Steinbeck describes this bond between men and machines as follows:

Listen to the motor. Listen to the wheels. Listen with your ears and with your hands on the steering wheel; listen with the palm of your hand on the gear-shift lever; listen with your feet on the floor boards. Listen to the pounding old jalopy with all your senses for a change of tone, a variation of rhythm. (124)

The connection of the Joads to their car is forged over their journey. The body functions as the faculties of the automobiles, cars and men work together. Cars are to enhance men's mobility; men are to care for car. Describing the integration and correlation between bodies and machines, Steinbeck compares limping movement of the migrants with the limping of the cars along the US highway 66 and writes "cars limping along 66 like wounded things, panting and struggling. Too hot, loose connection, loose bearings, rattling bodies" (127). Like the cars, the Joads and their contemporaries are compelled to limp on the road with their heavy hearts and broken identity slowly and gradually losing their family integrity and physical health and human dignity.

The Joads encountered with a ragged stranger who was coming back to his homeland after the death of his two children and wife due to starvation in California. The ragged stranger told the Joads about the pathetic condition of the migrant workers in California and ploy behind the distribution of orange-colored handbills. He said to the Joads: "It don't make no sense. This fella wants to eight hundred men. So he prints up five thousand' of them things an' maybe twenty thousand' people sees 'em. An' maybe two-three thousand' folks gets movin' account a this here han'bill" (198). It clearly shows the fact that when a landowner requires eight hundred hands, he prints

five thousand handbills and twenty-thousand people come for the job. This results pitifully low wages, for the supply is far in excess of the demand.

A critical juncture in the book arrives as the Joads were astride the top of the Tehachapi Mountain, looking out over the Central Valley toward Bakersfield. They had just endured the disappointment of Needles, gateway to California, a funeral procession of Granma through the Mojave Desert, and agricultural inspection station at Dagget. The spectacle of California amuses them. Steinbeck presents their transitory amusement as follows:

Al jammed on the brake and stopped in the middle of the road, and, "Jesus Christ! Look!" he said. The vineyards, the orchards, the great flat valley; green and beautiful, the trees set in rows, and the farm houses. . . . The distant cities, the little towns in the orchard land, and morning sun, golden on the valley. . . . The grain fields golden in the morning, and the willow lines, the eucalyptus trees in rows

Pa sighed, "I never knowed they was anything like her. (237-38)

Describing the Joads' astonishment with the fascinating panorama of California, Steinbeck further writes, "Ruthie and Winfield scrambled down from the car, and then they stood, silent and awestruck, embarrassed before the great valley . . . and Ruthie whispered, "It's California" (238).

This moment, when they faced with the spectacle of California, was foreshadowed in the novel when the Joads took a respite outside Needles. Tom Joad wondered then whether the image of California would pan out in reality: Pa said, "Wait till we get to California. You'll see nice country then". Tom admonished, "Jesus Christ, Pa! This here is California" (213). Moments later Tom talked with a man versed in the subtler aspects of the California landscape. He told Tom what to expect,

and although he preferred starving with his folks he knows to living in California, he encouraged Tom to go and see for himself:

She's a nice country. But she was stole a long time ago. You git across the desert an' come into the country aroun' Bakersfield. An' you never seen such purty country – all orchards an' grapes, purtiest country you ever seen. An' you'll pass lan' flat an' fine with water thirty feet down, and that lan's layin' fallow. But you can't have none of that lan'. That's a Lan' and Cattle Company. An' if they don't want ta work her, she ain't gonna git worked. You go in there an' plant you a little corn, an' you'll go to jail. (214)

The Californian large growers snatched the land from sharecroppers as well as small farmers and either manufacture crops or let it remain fallow under their strict possession. If any poor tenants are found secretly cropping these fallow plots, they deploy police to destroy the crops and the poor workers are sent to jail. Agrarian farmers view that fallow field is a sin and the unused land is a crime against the starving children. In the scenes depicted above the Joads are brought to confront and question that image. But even when the visible landscape seemed to fit the pictorial myth, the social and economic reality had brutal implication. Exposing the irony of California, George Henderson argues, “The landscape, a spectacle, as presented to the observer from the crest of the Tehachapi, concealed the enveloping contradiction between the subsistence potential of the soil and the monopolistic tendencies of the large land owning companies” (216). The landscape ambiguously revealed and concealed Californian's content.

The Joads asserted their blind, almost masochistic fortitude of going to California with strong dream and aspiration in spite of being warned about the

deplorable conditions of migrants workers by the ragged stranger and an old man who were well versed about the subtler aspects of California landscape. They were distrustful of "words" and "talk". After hearing the irony of California, Uncle John scowled:

I don't think nothin' about it. We're a – goin' there, ain't we? None of this here talk gonna keep us from goin' there. When we get there, we'll get there. When we get a job we'll work, an' when we don't get a job we'll set on our tail. This here talk ain't gonna do no good no way.

(217)

Deluded by handbills for workers, driven by screaming necessity, the Dust Bowl migrants dreaming earning fortune, being prosperous and having a respectable space in California left their homeland. They came face-to-face with California agricultural system. In California, the Promised Land, they meet hatred, scorn and above all fear. The Californian police, when knew the Joads from Oklahoma, warned rudely, "Well, you ain't in your country now. You 're in California, an' we don't want you goddamn Okies settlin' down" (223). Ma Joad felt touched by their misanthropic attitude towards them. The derogatory term "Okies" hurt her very much.

When the Okies attempted to settle in California, they found themselves wage slaves on a privatized corporate fiefdom. The Okies suffered from primitive, dehumanizing conditions while attempting to exercise their supposedly inalienable human rights. Describing the Okies' deplorable condition in California, David N. Cassuto states, "The growers' cartel . . . had disenfranchised them ever before they arrived, forcing them into a nomadic existence. . . . (63). The large owners cut wages of the labour, put guards with guns to guard their land, but they do not allow the

homeless hungry men to farm on the fallow land. They intently wanted the migrants roam from place to place in search of their livelihood.

The present landowners of California, in the past were squatters. They grabbed the California's land which belonged to Mexicans who were innocent and weak.

Describing the history of California and Californians, Steinbeck mentions:

[T]he squatters were no longer squatters, but owners; and their children grew up and had children on the land. And the hunger was gone from them, the feral hunger, the gnawing, tearing for land . . . crops were reckoned in dollars, and land was valued by principal plus interest, and crops were bought and sold before they were planted . . . all their love was thinned with money . . . all the time the farms grew larger and the owners fewer. (243-43)

They regarded land as commodity, means for earning profit, forgot land ethics and human ethics. They thought the migrants were threaten to them because they were wild, strong and hungry for land as their forefathers had been while evading weak, soft, innocent Mexicans. Therefore, the Californian large growers neither allowed the migrants to cultivate on the fallow land nor wanted them to fix in one place. Fixity may develop sense of placeness and belongingness and they may claim ownership over the place, and then they would be enfranchised. The powerful growers' cartel enslaved the migrants. They controlled the ownership of the land and the entire regional economy as well as state mechanism.

Migrants felt of being used and abused in California by the large growers. The big farmers were found to be eager to have the migrant labor around when they needed the labor and swift to shove them aside when they did not need anymore.

"They treated them good when they had cotton to pick", said Eual Stone, who arrived

in Kern county from Sulphur Springs, Oklahoma, at the onset of Depression. "When they didn't, they throwed 'em over a row" – sometime bodily. "I have seen them kick 'em out of boxcar and tents when the cotton was over" (qtd. in Wartzman 158-59).

This passage presents the primary evidences of the large growers' cunningness and cruelty towards migrant workers. It also justifies Steinbeck's claim that the migrant labours receive shocking degree of human misery due to the most flagrant and violent infringement of civil liberties by large growers and corporate houses in California.

The mobile migrant vagrants are treated inferior to animals. They could not get a healthy and hygienic place to live and respectable space in social, cultural and financial networks of California. They could not get a shelter to save them from sun and shower. They are compelled to set their temporary camps in ghetto and slum areas. Illustrating the migrant camps, set in ghettos and slums, Peter Lisca views:

When the Joads enter their first Hooverville they catch a glimpse of the deterioration which lies ahead of them. They see filthy tin and rug shacks littered with trash, the children dirty and diseased, the heads of the family "bull-simple" from being roughed-up too often, all spirit gone and in its place a whinny, passive resistance to authority. (306)

Hooverville is a realistic representation of the numerous scatter camps established throughout California during the migration. Keough argues, "Hooverville represents a surplus of labour which converts itself into an alienated community devoted to physical survival. Each individual, or more significantly each family unit, is set against its neighbor" (45). Picturing such situation in *The Grapes of Wrath* Steinbeck writes, "If that fella'll work for thirty cents, I'll work for twenty-five. . . . I'll work for food. The kids . . . (264). The survival mentality governing the minds of migrant workers in Hooverville. They are trapped to do any type of work just for satisfying the

hunger of their children. Question of human identity and dignity seems to be beyond of their imagination.

California's large growers dehumanized the workers, degrading them as they did the land so that their acts of subjugation could be perpetrated on object beneath contempt. Describing the cunningness of the Californian large growers' organization that is The Associated Farmers against migrant workers, Rick Wartzman writes:

[T]heir self-reverential declaration of do-gooding, their propensity to see a Red conspiracy lurking here, there, and everywhere – it can seem like nothing more than an attempt to shift the spotlight off of themselves so that, once back in the shadows, they could continue to subjugate their workers and tamp down their wages. As one farm worker said, "Anyone asking for a nickel raise was a Communist". (28)

The migrant workers were strictly supervised in every step of their lives. They were deprived of enjoying their basic civil rights – right to speech, right to association, right to publication. If they raised their voice against the tortures and exploitation of their sweat and toil, they were charged of being communist and fired from their work.

“The principles of Environmental Justice” were beyond their imagination. In John Hannigan’s words “the principles . . . argue that the people have a right to clean air, land, water and food and the right to work in a clean and safe environment” (50).

They were used and abused for the interest of the large growers and corporate capitalist. By using such cunning trick the large growers forced the migrant workers to work ever harder and faster in order to eke out subsistence, yet each hour worked and each piece of fruit harvested bring them that much closer to unemployment and starvation but multiplying the capital of the growers.

The migrant workers were not allowed to inquire about the types of works, working places, terms and conditions, their wages and written contract about their works to the agents of the large growers who visited migrant camps in cars guarded by police searching for transient labor force that would be paid very little. Steinbeck, in *The Grapes of Wrath*, picturizes this situation clearly. When an agent of the large growers guarded by deputy comes to Hooverville to search surplus labor for Santa Clara Valley in Tulare County about two hundred miles north from Hooverville Camp, Floyd Knowles, one migrant labor, inquires, "I'll go, mister. You're a contractor, an' you got a license. You jus' show your license, an' then you give us an order to go to work, an' where, an' when, an' how much we'll get, an' you sign that, an' we'll all go" (274). The contractor took it seriously and blamed Floyd as communist, "He's talkin' red, agitathin' trouble" (275). Then the contractor turned back to other migrants and said, "You fellas don't want ta listen to these goddamn reds. Troublemakers – they'll get you in trouble. Now I can use all of you in Tulare County" (276). Hooverville, which collected fragmented migrant society into a place, seems to have been the labor pool from which corporate capitalism drew its economic force in meagre wages.

The migrant workers, shunted from job to job, from county to county, kept on the move lest they organize or to try to settle, they live in filth, and are shamelessly exploited. In California, the land of plenty, they starve, are foully housed, go insufficiently clothed. Explaining the Okies deplorable condition in California, Claude E. Jones precisely mentions, "The dazed Okies hurry from will – o – the – wisp job to mirage job, picking up a dollar or two here and there during harvest time. Sometimes they can even eat meat, buy milk for babies; but usually this is impossible" (455). They are made keep on moving county to county, camp to camp in

search of their mere survival. The large growers' vested interest was keeping them mobile, dissociating them from the ownership over the land, making them dispossessed and disenfranchised.

The Associated Farmers treated migrant workers inferior to animals. Before the Joads leaving the Weedpatch camp, in the words of Keough, "spiritually – wealthy community of financially impoverished migrants" (45), a government operated camp without the means of economic self-sufficiency which depends on charity, Willie Wallace, a migrant worker tells Tom Joad, "If a fella owns a team of horses, he don't raise no hell if he got to feed 'em when they ain't workin' . But if a fella got men workin' for him, he jus' don't give a damn. Horses is a hell of a lot more worth than men" (374). This passage illustrates the deplorable condition of the mobile migrant workers. They are treated as utilitarian object, inferior to animals. The animals are carefully fed even if they are not working for their masters, but the migrant workers are not given any subsidies, allowance wages, food or anything else if they do not have to work for the large growers.

Bankers, big farmers and town – dwellers alike fear that itinerant workers would find a place in which to belong. Fixity translated into power, whereas uprootedness was the best assurance of continued disenfranchisement. Describing the then shocking degree of human miseries due to the most flagrant and violent infringement of civil liberties to the exodusters, Jackson J. Benson and John Steinbeck exemplify the then situation as follows:

Positive governmental response to migrant distress was meager. Since the growers held political power both locally and state wide until 1939 . . . , law enforcement, relief agencies, and employment bureaus all tended to take a hard line toward the migrants, cooperating with

growers demands, and even in several instances cooperating with vigilante actions directed against the "Red threat" of union organizing. (159)

According to Benson and Steinbeck the then government was a committee to manage the affairs of large growers. The government and its mechanism was unfriendly toward the migrants. Their policies, decisions, law enforcement were to facilitate the big farmers and provide more pain to the workers. When the workers were found being organized to raise their joint voice against the state mechanism's indifference and large growers' exploitation, they are accused of being communist and either fired from the job or killed by the police.

The poor, innocent, hardworking migrants were hated and shooed away from every walk of life. Benson and Steinbeck mirror the situation:

Local government efforts to "solve" the problem ranged from turning the migrants back from California at the state line, to evicting them from areas where they were no longer needed either by force or by gifts of gasoline, to a policy of constant harassment in the hope that the migrants would somehow disappear . . . (159)

The agents of the large growers used to collect surplus labour for harvesting period by distributing handbills. When they are not needed, the itinerant workers were constantly tortured, harassed and forced to leave the farm and camp by using gasoline as well. They were cunningly used and after the work done they are mercilessly thrown or forced to disappear. Describing the hostility of the then Californians toward migrant workers, Steinbeck writes:

The land fell into fewer hands, the number of disposed increased, and every effort of the great owners was directed at repression. The money

was spent for arms, for gas to protect the great holdings, and spies were sent to catch the murmuring of revolt so that it might be stamped out. (249)

The intense situation outside the Hooper Ranch which in the words of Keough is "a place of moral and social corruption" (43), clarifies Californians' institutional, public and private sectors' misanthropic attitude and behavior toward itinerant workers.

Elaborating this demonic behavior to mobile migrants, Wartzman argues, "How dare Steinbeck characterize the big growers as a gang of bandits – men who treated their workers, said Pruett, "like dogs and hogs and put them on the farms to pick this stuff and then cut their wages" (179).

Not only big growers, local and state governments, residents of Californian Valley but the media too demonized the migrants. Wartzman quotes a media survey report of more than one hundred junior college students in Modesto about their impressions toward migrant workers. To read their remarks is to absorb a steady drumbeat of revulsion: the migrants, they said:

[L]ive indecently. Take jobs. Are ignorant. Are lazy. Many think the world owes them a living. The kids are thieves. Are drones, not workers. Are moochers. Are shiftless. Are degenerate. Have no pride or hope. All their women are whores. Drag down the morals of California. Better of dead. (qtd. in Wartzman 156)

The college students' openly disgusting expressions with such derogatory words show the Californians attitude towards laborious migrant workers. They were not given any human value, but regarded as a burden for them and wished their death for the sake of California.

Steinbeck mirrors such demonizing practice of common people toward migrants in *The Grapes of Wrath* powerfully. He writes the revulsive remarks of a station-boy, "Them goddamn Okies got no sense and no feeling. They ain't human. A human being wouldn't live like they do. A human being couldn't stand it to be so dirty and miserable. They ain't a hell of a lot better than gorilla" (231). The station-boy could not understand their compulsion as well as their inner honesty, discipline, righteousness, but just on the basis of their tired appearances, poor clothing draws fallacious conclusion that they are unfeeling, brutal and uncivilized like gorillas. But in reality, the exodusters were highly humane, moral, upright, helpful and decent.

Benson and Steinbeck view:

In fact the exact opposite of the stereotype was nearer the truth. The Dust Bowl migrant as a whole tended to be extremely moral, upright and church – going with a deep – seated work ethic which made it difficult for them to accept any kind of "charity" even in desperate circumstances. (160)

Inwardly they were clean, co-operative, and honest but externally they lacked education, urban wisdom, speech, dress and mannerism.

The dispossessed, disenfranchised and dehumanized powerless class, the migrant workers could not gain ownership over any piece of land and consequently could not be included in the dominant discourse. The large growers were aware of the fact that if the Okies were to gain actual ownership over any piece of land, the large growers' cartel would collapse. Therefore, they deployed many cunning tricks to dissociate them from the land and become themselves immensely wealthy and powerful. Morris Dickstein argues, "The fruit of American plenty on the California trees and vines exactly the fruit that the beleaguered migrants cannot have, the dream

that will never be realized. It hangs on the trees all around them, but they cannot enjoy it" (116).

Steinbeck presents the cunning, inhumane state mechanism controlled by big farmers in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Huge quantities of fruits rot on the ground or were dumped; men sprayed kerosene on the dumped fruit to prevent the migrants from taking them. At the same time, children were dying of malnutrition and starvation. The migrant crossed the thin line between hunger and anger. Steinbeck mirrors the horrible situation as follows:

[T]hey stand still and watch the potatoes float by, listen to the screaming pigs being killed in the ditch and covered with quicklime, watch the mountain of oranges slop down to a putrefying ooze; and in the eyes of the people there is the failure; and in the eyes of the hungry there is growing wrath. In the souls of the people The Grapes of Wrath are filling and growing heavy, growing heavy for the vintage. (365)

Millions of people die of starvation, millions of children suffer from malnutrition and at the same time under the strict command of the large growers million tons of potatoes are swept away in the sea, oranges are burnt with kerosene and pigs are dumped. Claude E. Jones argues, "The Grapes of Wrath – sown in Oklahoma, budded on the westward journey, and ripened in California" (455). The migrants' wrath was made silent through oppression and repression. Once the Okies were dispossessed from their homeland, they lost their human identity and dignity forever. It is symbolically presented the floating down of the still born child of Rose of Sharon onto the flooded water. As the flood waters force the Joads to flee, Uncle John is assigned the task of burying the stillborn child. Instead of burying it, Uncle John co-opts the water, using it and the dead child to spread his message of despair

and defiance. After setting the box in the stream, Uncle John said fiercely, "Go down an' tell' em. Go down in the street an' rot an' tell 'em that way. That's the way you can talk. Don' even know if you was a boy or a girl. Ain't gonna find out. Go on down now, an' lay in the street. May be they'll know then" (468).

Due to the incessant pouring rainfall, the migrant workers were engulfed in water and mud, hopeless and despair. Florian Freitag argues, "In *The Grapes of Wrath*, the apple box that contains the dead body of Rose of Sharon's stillborn baby is floating down the river to the street, where it will "tell 'em" about the sufferings of the migrant farm workers" (113). Rose of Sharon's baby floating in water symbolizes the shocking human miseries within corporate capitalist agribusiness.

The Grapes of Wrath begins with the story of an eviction, continues with the account of a journey, the difficult passage of a family from their homeland to California with strong dream and aspiration, and concludes with the disillusioning calamities that beset them after they have reached the Promised Land. The farming practices of agribusiness, the big tractors sent in by the banks, destroy the fertility of Oklahoma – and when the surviving Joads finally reach California's promised land, land that should be an Eden of abundance, they find it also in the grip of agribusiness, of corporations that plough crops back into the earth to drive up prices while people starve for death. Heartless bank, shady-used car salesmen, power-hungry big farmers, masochistic sheriff's deputies, and fruit ranch foremen disposed to cheat pickers in the scales as argued by Wartzman (202-03). The land and migrant workers were used as "cog in the production process" (Henderson 223). Agricultural capitalism sucks the life out of land and its laboring force. Migrant workers were used merely as a means of production rather than inheritor of the rewards of an agrarian tradition and the land

as commodity not as living organism. The reciprocal relationship between land dignity and human dignity gets ruthlessly snapped.

The anthropo-urbo-techno-centric domination over the land is the overriding problem illustrated in *The Grapes of Wrath*. It's high time for human beings to realize the consequences of such domination to the land as well as large ecofriendly masses, acknowledge of human place within the biotic community and need to live heedfully within it. Lording oneself as superior to all the members of nature has dragged human beings too at peril their very survival. Survival depends upon harmony, co-operation and co-participation not only among human beings, but also among all beings and things. The deep internalization and wise practical implementation of this thought helps in maintaining reciprocity between land and human beings.

Chapter – III

Co-participation of Land and Human Beings in *O Pioneers!*

Great Divide and Homesteading

Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* revolves around the transformation of wild nature, particularly the prairie land on the Great Divide in Nebraska, the region between the rocky mountains and the Missouri – Mississippi river, was one of the last places in the United States to be settled, into an agricultural landscape. In the beginning, the land seems to have been disappointing and hopeless. When the homesteaders gradually internalized the rhythms of the land and method of cultivation, it appears as the sources of recognition and realization of hopes and dreams. Describing the pre-agricultural landscape of Nebraska, Gray W. Frasier and E. Belle Sims Frasier write:

There were few trees and little water, Rivers were widely spaced and shallow with wide flood plains. The upland areas between the rivers, frequently 20 to 50 miles wide, were monotonous flat surfaces broken with shallow depressions or "buffalo wallows". . . . This treeless shortgrass prairie region . . . was believed to be unsuited for human habitation, fit only for the vast buffalo herds roaming the area. (293)

Before the American Civil War Nebraska was considered a vast wasteland to be crossed while going "west". It is possible to argue that the great American urge to settle and form the western prairies gained its greatest momentum in the years immediately following the Civil War. It was during these years that Walt Whitman was writing poems such as "Pioneers! O Pioneers!" dedicated to American "Youthful, sinewy races", Western youths" drawn to the wide prairies. Against this backdrop, Willa Cather was born who wrote some of America's first great chronicles of the Westward settlement shortening the name of Whitman's poem to take as the title of her own book – through novel *O Pioneers!* (1913)

Cather's family moved from the thickly settled east coast to Nebraska, where homesteads and farms were beginning to raise against the unruly, windswept emptiness of the prairies. She got her first sense of small – town Nebraska life when her family moved to Red Cloud, the settlement which appear in *O Pioneers!* as Hanover. Thus, *O Pioneers!* grew out of her familiarity with homesteading and communities with settlers, her conversation with immigrant farmers from Sweden, France, Bohemia and other places and the visceral power of the prairie itself.

Explaining westward expansion in *An Outline of American History* (1994), Howard Cincotta argues, "Government land . . . after the 1862 Homestead Act, could be calmed by merely occupying and improving it . . . young man could "go west and

grow with the country" (141). Elaborating the rhetoric of Homestead Act of 1862, John Logie views "the act allowed" any person who is the head of a family, or who has arrived at the age of twenty- one years, and is a citizen of the United States or who shall have filed his declaration of his intention to become such" and "who has never borne arms against United States government or given aid and comfort to its enemies "to file for up to 160 acres of "free" land from the Federal government" (35). Under the terms of the Act, homesteaders were expected to occupy the land, tame it honestly and make certain improvements. Logie further clarifies the purpose of the Homestead Act and writes, "At the end of five years the land would be deeded to those homesteaders who built a house, dug a well, plowed 10 acres, fence a portion of the property, and paid a not – insignificant \$15 filing fee" (35). In this way, the homesteaders who had satisfied the terms of the Act had been awarded ownership of their homestead plots.

The engineers of the Homestead Act might have dreamt of men living with their families under the same roof, working for themselves on their farms but not raping or commodifying the land, depending neither on capital nor slaves nor machines, developing harmonies relation between land, plants, animals and human being. It was against speculation of the land but in favour of squatterism. Homestead measure was a great humanitarian effort which fulfilled George W. Juvilian's dream that every family would have the opportunity to earn a home on the public domain. Homes kept men from crimes and almshouses . . . give them a surrounding conducive to "virtue", to the prosperity of the country, and loyalty to its government and laws. (qtd. in Roark 30). It seems to have aided not only the poorer but all classes by strengthening national integration and enhancing national production. Roark states a nation will be powerful, prosperous and happy, in proportion to the number of

independent cultivators of its soil" (38). No man could be truly free as long as he had to till another man's soil. Thus, homestead would draw off from urban centres surplus laborers, chop land monopoly and the old slaveholding aristocracy. It helps developing sense of placeness, rootedness and optimism to the land and life through enfranchisement.

Reciprocal and Sustainable Relationship between Land and Human Beings.

O Pioneers! begins with Swedish homesteader John Bergson's initial settlement of the land and continues with the history of Bergson's family from one generation into the next. Struggling to tame the wild land for eleven years, the Swedish homesteader John Bergson dies leaving his only daughter, Alexandra, to manage a 640-acre farm and a family that includes her mother and three brothers. In the process of transforming wild prairie land into agricultural landscape, Alexandra Bergson approaches this process in an intuitive way, placing her faith in the land and tapping its wealth by gentle means rather than by conquest and domination. Her relationship to place is spiritual as well as economic, and she views herself as collaborating with the land rather than imposing her will upon it, as virtually all her neighbours do. Moreover, she is fully aware that her destiny and that of the land are inseparable. As deep ecological vision, she respects the land as her companion, puts strong faith on it and presents herself as a co-participation with the land in the biotic community. Alexandra represents the basic tenets of deep ecology.

Deep ecology purposes new norms of human responsibility to change human exploitation of land into co-participation with the land. Deep ecological thinking, as Fritjof Capra noted, represents "shift from self-assertion to integration" accompanied by a "shift from rational to the intuitive, from analysis to synthesis, from reduction to holism, from linear to non-linear thinking" (24). Alexander Bergson, the protagonist

in *O Pioneer!* promises her father on his death bed that she will never lose the land (14). R. Thacker opines "Alexandra, whose name hails from Greek word meaning to "defend insists on keeping the farm-stead when her brothers want to leave it . . . understands the strength of the land and adapt to the prairie to preserve it, not to conquer it"(qtd. in Rundstrom 220). She maintains close connection with the land through farming. She loves, manages, daydreams about, and defends her property. During the three years of drought, her garden continues producing "sweet potatoes, rhubarb feathery, asparagus, with red berries . . . a row of gooseberry and currant bushes . . . tough zenias and marigolds and row of scarlet sage" (27). While her neighbouring farmers sell out their homestead plots and move away.

There is no defeat for Alexandra because there never was competition. She treats her land as herself because she feels herself as a part of it and will one day return to it. She adjusts to and lives by the rhythms of nature as Tadashi Suzuki argues "the ground and human body are inseparable . . . the latter is . . . a part of the farmer" (158). Consciousness of the body's communication with the land leads to a great awareness of all the physical junction of the body which stresses, as Naess argues "a post anthropocentric biospherical egalitarianism to create an awareness of the equal rights of all things to live and blossom" (qtd. in Luke 5).

The sacredness of landscapes is evoked with spiritual intensity. Leslie Mormon Silko justifies that a rock has being or spirit, although we may not understand it. The spirit may differ from the spirit we know in animals or plants or in ourselves. In the end we all originate from the depth of the earth (265). The physically dead beings become dust, and in this becoming they are once more joined with the land, the mother creator of all things. Deep ecology, as Greg Garrard mentions "demands a return to monistic, primal identification of humans and the ecosphere"

(21). It introduces a shift from human-centred ego-consciousness to nature-centred ecoconscious system of values. It is a nondominating ecological consciousness through self-realization and biocentric equality. Beth Rundstrom states that Cather created descriptive landscape wherein the humans and the environment interact. House and home invariably join earth to sky, human to earth, human to human . . . earth, and creatures meet with humans (225).

All species which inhabit the land do have equal share over it. No species is superior or inferior or conqueror or loser in the lap of the land. Every being and thing has unique intrinsic value and significance to make the land community run smoothly. There are no hierarchies and boundaries between human and non-human worlds. They meet and exist mutually.

Alexandra's homestead looks like a tiny village, with sheds and buildings grouped about the main house. The physical proximity and relatedness of the buildings mimic the social cohesiveness of human beings. The relationship between Alexandra and three pretty young Swedish girls who work in her kitchen not as madam and servants but as intimate friends and companions. Cather writes "Alexandra had pointedly told her sisters-in-law, it was to hear them giggle that that she kept three young things in her kitchen . . . company for her" (46). She mothers her workers friendly and frankly as family members and companions without any trace of hegemonic domination. Alexandra does not recognize her self-sufficiency and self-identity. She respects interrelationship and interdependence not only with human beings but also non-human world. As she interacts with prairie environment, she learns that relationship with the land is a source of strength. Open plains open her sail; she becomes self-aware. Nature's rhythms become her physical and spiritual rhythms.

The pioneers could not understand the rhythms of the prairie land, and therefore they could not grow good crops and blamed the land saying "the country was never meant for men to live in" (26), and hence gave up their homestead plots and started their journey to cities dreaming of leading well-facilitated urban life. Aware of the primacy of nature, Alexandra respects and loves the land, knowing full well how fragile the pioneer farming communities are in the face of nature's adversity. "[The Land] was still a wild thing that had ugly moods; and no one knew when they were likely to come, or why. Its Genius was unfriendly to man" (11). The homesteaders during their early years in Great Divide, due to their lack of knowledge of farming as well as unfamiliarity with the soil, could not understand the richness and fertility of the soil. But unlike her pioneer settlers, brothers and neighbours, Alexandra keeps her staunch faith on the land and never relinquishes her enjoyment of it. She reiterates her faith on the land "some day the land itself will be worth more than all we can raise on it" (31).

Alexandra feels one with the land she plows, as if her heart were hidden down in the long grasses with the insects and plovers. Her talk with her brothers had not taken away the feeling that had overwhelmed her when she drove to the Divide after her five days observation of down river bank farms. Reflecting upon the great operations of nature, Alexandra internalizes:

She had never known before how much the country meant to her. The chirping of the insects down in the long grass had been like the sweetest music. She had felt as if her heart were hiding down there, somewhere, with the quail and the plover and all the little wild things that crooned or buzzed in the sun. Under the long shaggy ridges, she felt the future stirring. (38-39)

The chirping of the insects, greenery of the long grass, rustling of the leaves, the twittering of the quail and plover, humming and murmuring of the little wild things, the fascinating scenery of the shaggy ridges bewitch her very much. She closely and deeply internalizes the beauty, purity, and grandeur of the country. The internalization of deep attachment with the land makes Alexandra feel profound sense of protection, security and safety for surety. After spending five days down among the river farms, driving up and down the valley, Alexandra has a vision of doing something big, and the landscape and she herself merge in identification and purpose. She implements her faith, vision of the land honestly into practice and hence she becomes successful. She tells her struggle with the land to Carl:

We hadn't any of us much to do with it, Carl. The land did it. It had its little joke. It pretended to be poor because no-body knew how to work it right, and then, all at once, it worked itself. It woke up out of its sleep and stretched itself, and it was so big, so rich that we suddenly found we were rich, just from sitting still. (63)

The sense of connectedness and faith with the land make Alexandra have faith on the land, toil and moil the soil honestly and hence she has had her identity and dignity. Carl Linstrum, lured by so called materialistic urban life, loses faith on the land, detaches himself from the soil, goes to city in search of fortune and consequently becomes a man of nowhere. He compares his life with Alexandra and says "measured by your standards here, I'm failure. I could not buy even one of your cornfields. I've enjoyed a great many things, but I've got nothing to show for it all" (66). Leaving the place, he feels placelessness, rootlessness, homelessness, hopelessness, alienation in New York. He further exemplifies his pitiable New York life:

Here you are an individual, you have a background of your own, you would be missed. But off there in the cities there are thousands of rolling stones like me. We are all alike; we have no ties, we know nobody, we own nothing. When one of us dies, they scarcely know where to bury him. . . . We have no house, no place, no people of our own. We live in the streets, in the parks, in the theatres. We sit in restaurants and concert halls and look about at the hundreds of our own kind and shudder. (66)

Carl creates two worlds of “here” and “there”. “Here” symbolizes “rural life”, “nearness”, “association” and “attachment” whereas “there” symbolizes “urban life”, “distance”, “dissociation” and “detachment”. Urban life is mechanized, routinized, artificial, simulated having no fellow feeling, intimacy, understanding; no joy, no happiness and no help in pain and penury.

The beauties, pleasures, ecstasies one can see, hear, feel and enjoy in the close company of nature. One forgets his individual presence but gets merged with the beauty of biotic community. Carl, while staying with Alexandra in Great Divide after thirteen years, goes for observing the landscape early in the morning. Cather writes his perception of the nature:

Carl sat musing until the sun leaped above the prairie, and in the grass about him all the small creatures of the day began to tune their tiny instrument. Birds and insects without number began to chirp, to twitter, to snap and whistle, to make all manner of fresh shrill noises. The pasture was flooded with the light, every clump of ironweed and snow-on-the mountain threw a long shadow and the golden light seemed to be rippling through the curly grass like the tide racing in. (69)

The wandering vagabond, dejected, dissatisfied Carl gets his identity realized with his staying with Alexandra who is the symbol of tolerant land. The panoramic beauty of the morning mesmerizes him.

Love and ethical responsibility to the land are the prerequisites for a reciprocal and sustainable relationship between land and human beings. It exemplifies a shift from anthropocentrism to biocentrism. Aldo Leopold's "Land Ethic" and Arne Naess's philosophy of "Deep Ecology" elaborated this shift. In his famous essay "The Land Ethic", Leopold argues that land use cannot be based on economic expediency alone, but must involve ethical and aesthetic considerations. "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biocentric community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (46). This and the following observation on human place in nature are also at the centre in *O Pioneers!*

A land ethic of course cannot prevent the alteration, management and use of these "resources" but it does affirm their right to continued existence, and, at last in spots, their continued existence in a natural state. In short, a land ethic changes the role of homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members and also respect for the community as such. (39)

Leopold regards human beings as a biota of land community. There is coequal relationship between humanity and natural world which is based on unity in diversity, spontaneity, and non-hierarchical relationship. Human being should seek to achieve in their minds the respiration of the natural world.

In her treatment of Crazy Ivar's wildlife refuge in *O Pioneers!*, Willa Cather asserts that the conservation of natural sites is imperative. The wanton destruction of

natural habitats is symptomatic of modern, rapacious consumerist capitalist world that considers nature as disposable resource. The growing moral and emotional distance between land and those who make their livelihood on it is reflected in mechanical farming. Corporate industrial agribusiness threatens the solidarity of rural communities, the independence of individual farmers, and the health of the large ecological community. Alexander Bergson defines herself in terms of the land, relates to it on an intuitive level and understands that the health of the land is inextricably linked to the future of her successors. Alexandra, in *O Pioneers!* protests the health of the land at the expense of her own, ensuring the success of the alfalfa harvest despite the winter drought. She ensures the psychological link to her homestead land.

Ivar and Alexandra: Memorable examples of Ecological Identity

Crazy Ivar and Alexandra Bergson represent ecological identity of environmentally conscious characters. Ivar, one of the most memorable characters in Cather's canon, is the eccentric hermit in *O Pioneers!* He lives remote from the consumerist material world in a cave which "he thought . . . a very superior house" (23). Ivar, a herbalist and vegetarian, preaches non-violence. He serves as a veterinarian and maintains a wild life refuge on the Divide while everyone else is busy plowing up the land around him.

Crazy Ivar, who walks barefoot and allegedly howls at night, who suffers spells and experiences visions, who fasts and does penance, is the most obvious spokesperson for Cather's ecosophical ideas, Ivar protects life by banning guns from his refuge and caring for birds and animals. In doing so, he lives one of the central tenets of Deep Ecology. Ivar represents Naess's description of the basic norms of deep ecology:

One of the basic norms of deep ecology is that every life form has in principal a right to live and blossom. As the world is made of course, we have to kill in order to eat, but there is a basic intuition in deep ecology that we have no right to destroy other living beings without sufficient reason. (qtd. in Bodian 28-29)

To instill an understanding of God's benevolence toward all life into the young boys of the town, Ivar preaches restraint and ecological responsibility, though with little success. His insistence on his rule "no guns, no guns!" (20) represents a prophetic plea for non-violence both within the human community and in the interaction between humans and other life forms.

Ivar relates to animals intuitively as if he is one of them. As Alexandra Bergson observes, "He understands animals" (18), and Ivar himself remarks in his story about the lost seagull that he could not understand her, suggesting that this was an unusual occurrence. His close relationship with animals allows him to heal them, as in the cases of Berquists' panicked Cow, the Crow Indians' horses, or the local farmers' livestock (18). Relating one story of Ivar's horse doctoring to Emil, Carl notes Ivar's abilities as a Shaman or horse whisperer, "He kept patting [the mare] and groaning as if he had the pain himself, and saying, 'there sister, that's easier, that's better' (18). Ivar's love of the suffering mare is so profound that he becomes that creature as John H. Rudy argues, "To come into light of things, one must become the things themselves, must see through things as things" (qtd. in Coupe 1). Ivar relinquishes the idea of separateness. He seems to feel the pain of the mare as if he is the diseased mare himself and could heal her. This empathy extends the idea of kinship to include all forms of life. Another example of his keenly developed animal sense is his assertion that "hogs don't like to be filthy" (24), which is met with

disbelief by everyone except Alexandra who immediately takes Ivar's advice and reorganizes her hog operation.

Even a cursory look at Ivar's domicile and his service to the creatures around him shows that he sees himself as one facet of the local ecosystem. Ivar's "door and a single window were set into the hillside" (20), located just above the earthen dam which created Ivar's pond, the centre of his animal refuge. Cather portrays her reclusive character as completely integrated into the lay of the land:

But for the piece of the rusty store pipe sticking up through the sod, you could have walked over the roof of Ivar's dwelling without dreaming that you were near a human habitation. Ivar had lived for three years in the clay bank, without defiling the face of nature any more than the Coyote that had lived there before him had done. (20)

Even when Ivar is later forced to abandon his homestead because his single-minded conservation of the wilderness threatens his survival, he moves to Alexandra's farm where he opts to reside in the barn with the animals, an arrangement that further illustrates his allegiance to both human and animal communities. Cather sums up Ivar's protective desire and maneuver to keep the land ecologically sound and spiritually pure:

Ivar found contentment in the solitude he had sought out for himself. He disliked the litter of human dwellings; the broken food, the bits of broken china, the old wash boilers and tea-kettles thrown into the sunflower patch. He preferred the cleanliness and tidiness of the wild sod. . . . He best expressed his preference for his wild homestead by saying that his Bible seemed truerer to him there. If one stood in the doorway of his cave, and looked off at the rough land, the smiling sky,

the curly grass white in the hot sunlight; if one is listened to the rapturous song of the lark, the drumming of the quail, the burr of the locust against that vast silence, one understood what Ivar meant.

(20-21)

Connectedness, interdependence, harmonious relation, pleasure, happiness, wholeness, peace and contemplation can be experienced in simple, natural and ecologically sound plus spiritually pure dwelling place of crazy Ivar.

Alexandra Bergson in *O Pioneers!* is a keen observer of her natural environment. Cather surrounds her with flora and fauna that are drawn with scientific accuracy. Mrs. Bergson, Alexandra's mother, utilizes the native plants for food, such as "fox grapes, goose plums and ground-cherries" (16). Among the other native plants and animals that inhabit the novel are "coreopsis" (19), "Osage orange hedges, scrub willow, mulberry hedges, walnut, wild rose, bunch grass" (49); and "lark, quail, locust" (29), "ducks, snipe, and crane" (22). While these particularities of place are important to illustrate her sense of rootedness, she transcends her immediate sphere on several occasions and embraces nature on a cosmic scale as explained by Arne Naess:

Most people in deep ecology have had the feeling – usually, but not always, in nature – that they are connected with something greater than their ego, greater than their family, their special attributes as an individual – a feeling that is often called oceanic because many have had this feeling on the Ocean. (30)

For Alexandra, in *O Pioneers!*, it is the prairie and the big sky of the Great Divide that take the place of the Ocean. In the scene that is described below, Alexandra experiences an epiphany as she extends her self into the cosmic realm:

Alexandra drew her shawl closer about her and stood leaning against the frame of the mill, looking at the stars which glittered so keenly through the frosty autumn air. She always loved to watch them, to think of their vastness and distance, and of their ordered march. It fortified her to reflect upon the great operations of nature, and when she thought of the law that lay behind them, she felt a sense of personal security. That night she had a new consciousness of the country, felt almost a new relation to it. (38)

Her deep observation of the starry night leaning against the frame of the mill makes her contemplate the vastness and great operations of nature. This reflection makes her realize the connectedness, oneness with the country.

Patience and faith characterize this new relationship. Alexandra intuits that the land cannot be conquered, can only be coaxed into yielding its plenty voluntarily. Yet subsistence on the land also requires being in tune with its spiritual presence. In the following quotes from *O Pioneers!* Alexandra displays the necessary communion with the natural world which is at the heart of deep ecological thinking:

For the first time, perhaps, since that land emerged from the waters of geologic ages, a human face was set toward it with love and yearning. It seemed beautiful to her, rich and strong and glorious. Her eyes drank in the breadth of it, until her tears blinded her. The Genius of the Divide, the great free spirit which breathes across it, must have bent lower than it ever bent to a human will before. The history of every country begins in the heart of a man or a woman. (35-36)

The land is a living thing and in its sphere there is no death rather metamorphoses and rebirth. Explaining the immortality and vitality of the land, Leopold argues:

Land . . . a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals. Food chains are living channels which conduct energy upward, death and decay return it to the soil. The circuit is not closed; some energy is dissipated in decay, some is added by absorption from the air, some is stored in soils, peats and long-lived forest . . . a sustained circuit, like a slowly augmented revolving fund of life. (43)

Human beings and all the other creatures come from the soil, get brought up in the lap of the land, work, live and survive on the land, and finally mix with the land. This cycle keeps on continuing without any hindrances. Land is always warm, productive, receptive and immortal.

In *O Pioneers!*, Alexandra's young brother, Emil, falls in love with a neighbour's wife, Marie Shabata, and both he and the girl are killed by the enraged husband – Frank Shabata – but we are made to see that the ill-fated lovers are ultimately reabsorbed into the weave of creation. David Stouck, supporting the idea of reabsorption, argues, “The staining of the white mulberries with the lovers' blood suggests an Ovidian love story, and accordingly, when they die, Cather's lovers are metamorphosed into two white butterflies that flutter over the bodies in the orchard” (138 – 39). They are added in the biotic community by absorption.

The idea of death as an individual's connection to nature's transformational forces also strengthens Alexandra in her mature years. Twice Alexandra fancies that she is being carried off by a young man who:

[C]arried her, but he was like no man she knew, he was much larger and stronger and swifter, and he carried her as easily as if she were a sheaf of wheat. She never saw him, but, with eyes closed, she could feel that he was yellow like the sunlight, and there was the smell of ripe cornfields about him. (113)

Her flight with this nature spirit connotes a sexual repression. This strong courtier pays her another imaginary visit while she was lying with her eyes closed in her homestead house after her visit to the graveyard in the stormy rainy winter morning. It is clear that he is both lover and death, or as Alexandra has it “the mightiest of all lovers. She knew at last for whom it was she had waited, and where he would carry her. That she told herself was very well” (155).

This intimation of death, immortality and desire of being absorbed with the land is reinforced by the narrator. At the novel’s close she consents to marry Carl whom Alexandra envisions as incarnation of land, and it is the land which still has possession over her. Carl agrees that they must come back to Divide after they are married: “you belong to the land”, Carl murmured, “as you have always said. Now more than ever” (169). Alexandra, looking out over the great plains under an Autumn sunset, concedes that in their struggle with the land there has been only a truce, that it is she who will ultimately be the one possessed: “we come and gone, but the land is always here. And the people who love it and understand it are the people who own it – for a little while” (169).

Alexandra’s perception of the land in intimate even passionate terms, drawing strength from it and, in return, giving of her spirit and imagination to it, and her desire to return into nature’s endless flow is precisely illustrated in the narrator’s final comment that bring the novel to its close: “Fortunate country, that is one day to

receive hearts like Alexandra's into its bosom, to give them out again in the yellow wheat, in the rustling corn, in the shining eyes of the youth" (170). This remark clarifies that the identity of the man who carries off Alexandra on her flights of fancy is the genius of the land, the mythic figure that balances life and death, fertility and decomposition, youth and age. Alexandra is at peace in the knowledge that her individual self is not only formed by the spirit of place, but that her return into nature's endless flow will give new strength to the land she loves. This extended definition of identity, with the celebration of the self's interconnectedness to all creation as its central feature, is a memorable example of Cather's belief in an ecological identity.

O Pioneers! pleads the necessity of living nonhierarchical, naturalistic simple life as an organism, like Alexandra and Ivar – simple in means rich in ends – regarding all living beings and things as biota of environment. It emphasizes love of the land and concern for the well-being and dignity of fellow creatures of the nature. It is better to integrate human beings into natural world and develop harmonious living than to work with an “othering” idea of wild nature as entirely separate from human culture. Harmonious nexus between human culture and nature helps in maintaining integrity, stability and beauty of land community that strengthens reciprocity between land and human beings.

Chapter – IV

Reflection on Proportionate Interdependence between Land Community and Human Beings

The present dissertation examines *The Grapes of Wrath* and *O Pioneers!*, two American novels of which the former exemplifies that agrarianism maintains spatial conjunction of human beings to the land whereas corporate agribusiness imposes spatial disjunction of human beings to the land which dispossesses, alienates, dehumanizes and disenfranchises the poor migrant workers as mobile vagrants, while the latter one illustrates homesteading role in transforming the prairie land into an agricultural landscape maintaining its organicity through co-participation of land and human beings, in terms of reciprocity between land and human beings applying ecopoetic paradigm. After a meticulous study on both the novels in the light of various ecocritics on the reciprocity between land and human beings, it becomes clear that the destiny of human beings is intimately related to the destiny of land. The healthier the land community, the happier and more harmonious human survival is. The deterioration of land endangers the existence of human beings along with other species which inhabit the land. Association with the land makes human beings feel sense of protection, security and safety for surety. Working with the land, realizing its bio-rhythms energizes human beings. Seeing being in all biota of land community, internalizing unique intrinsic value of all beings and things, and respecting equal existence of all is the only way to assist in maintaining the ecological unified whole which helps to inter-animate the land and human beings and strengthens the bonding between them as one of respect and love. This research concludes that the dignity and identity of human beings is directly proportional to the dignity and identity of land community.

The Grapes of Wrath and *O Pioneers!* illustrate the fact that land is the first and foremost condition for survival and identification of human beings. The placeness, rootedness, and belongingness to the land are the foundation of human

identity. The very notion of human self is inseparable from the imprints the physical world presses upon human imagination. The concept of land or place, therefore, is associated with the physical and psychological experience of being in specific location. The land is not merely a means of human survival but also a determinant of human's holistic personality. Therefore, every human being struggles to find a particular place to ground the self physically, emotionally and intellectually. Humans need to know where they are so that they may dwell in their place with a full heart holding their heads high without any kinds of fears.

The right to land is like an inalienable right to all human beings. This right to land suggests maintaining close connection with the land through sustainable agrarian farming but not by conquering the land and commodifying it to multiply wealth. The sweat, blood, toil and moil with the soil are the real, natural and sentient evidences for allowing rights of ecological possession over the land. These arguments substantiate that people who work and love the land should have natural right to own it and maintain its organicity and intrinsic value.

The Grapes of Wrath exposes the consequences of the snapping off the reciprocity between land and human beings. The textual analysis makes it evident that the agribusiness and modern mechanization of farming do not respect the true, natural, ecological reciprocity between land and human beings. They regard land as commodity; manipulate land and workers as modes of production and means of production for their sheer materialistic gains. Banks and corporations translate land into assets on a balance sheet. The real possessors that are the workers on the land are enmeshed in a cycle of wage slavery. The large growers feel pride of conquering the land from the real and natural citizens of the land and objectify it for accumulating property. The politicians, bureaucrats, technocrats make policies and decisions as per

the interests of the landlords. They try their best to occupy more and more land, and hence make others landless.

The Grapes of Wrath depicts the exodus of small farmer family, the Joads, from the Oklahoma Dust Bowl due to environmental hazards and cruelties of agribusiness and corporate economy to the “Promised Land” of California. They dream California of being a garden of Eden where they could enjoy eating fruits freely, would get job opportunities with handsome wages and salaries, could able to own a piece of land in a couple of years and feel placeness and belongingness to the soil that would guarantee their enfranchisement. But on the way to California and in California, the innocent migrants are helpless against the large growers and their minions, the police, the vigilantes who enforce their power upon these innocent mass whom corporate culture has rendered powerless. Due to being dissociated from their homeland, the migrants are deprived of human dignity, animal satisfaction and even the means of survival amid natural abundance and vast ocean of property. All the state agencies are seen as merely managing the decline and disappearance of the organicity of the land in the pursuit of the multiple use doctrines of the large growers for piling up materialistic profit. They find themselves wage slaves on a privatized corporate fiefdom.

The California large growers neither allow the migrants to cultivate on the fallow land nor want them to fix in one place. Fixity may develop sense of placeness and belongingness and they may claim ownership over the place and then they would be enfranchised. The powerful growers’ cartel enslaves the migrants. They control over the ownership of the land and entire regional economy as well as state mechanism.

The migrant workers feel of being used and abused in California by the large growers. They receive shocking degree of human misery due to the most flagrant and violent infringement of civil liberties by large growers and corporate houses. The dazed migrants hurry from will-o-the-wisp job to mirage job, picking up a dollar or two here and there during harvest time. Sometimes they can even eat meat, buy milk for babies, but usually this is impossible. They are made keep on moving county to county, camp to camp in search of their mere survival. The large growers' vested interest was keeping them mobile, dissociating them from the ownership over the land making them dispossessed and disenfranchised so that they could be helplessly dehumanized, alienated, fragmented and frustrated. The large growers are also always in fear that their cartel would be broken down at any moment and their cunningness, cruelties and exploitation of the migrant workers and land be disclosed. Due to the violation of the unity among the biota of land community, neither the land nor the migrant workers nor the large growers can enjoy their natural, spiritual and mutual co-equal existence in the ecosphere.

Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* depicts the fact that love and ethical responsibility to the land are the prerequisites for a reciprocal and sustainable relationship between land and human beings. It illustrates a new ecological world view that represents a shift from self-assertion to integration, rational to the intuitive, analysis to synthesis, reductionism to holism and from linear to non-linear thinking. Alexandra Bergson approaches this process in an intuitive way, placing her faith in the land and tapping its wealth by gentle means rather than by conquest and domination. Her relationship to the land is spiritual and economic and she views herself as collaboration with the land rather than imposing her will upon it, as virtually all her neighbours do. She is fully aware that her destiny and that of the land are inseparable.

Alexandra maintains close connection with the land through farming. She loves, manages, daydreams about, and defends her property. During three years of drought, her garden continues producing vegetables, flowers and fruits while her neighbouring farmers sell out their homestead plots and move away. She adjusts to and lives by the rhythms of nature. She interacts with the prairie environment. Open plains open her soul; she becomes self-aware. Nature's rhythms become her physical and spiritual rhythms.

The internalization of deep attachment with the land makes Alexandra feel profound sense of protection, security and safety for surety. She toils and moils the soils honestly, convinces her brothers to believe on the land, advises her neighbours to cultivate the land, respects Crazy Ivar who loves biocentric equality and implements it into his dress, food habits, dwelling place and manner. She follows his advice sincerely. The wandering vagabond, dejected, dissatisfied Carl Linstrum, while staying with Alexandra after thirteen years since he left Great Divide, understands the richness and tolerance of the land and realizes his identity of being attached to the land. Alexandra, who is the symbol of tolerant land, makes Carl internalizes human beings and all the other creatures come from the soil, get brought up in the lap of the land, and finally mix with the land. This cycle keeps on continuing without any hinderances. Land is always warm, productive, receptive and alive.

Land and human beings are inseparable entities of biotic community. In absence of one another's meaningful existence is impossible. It is better to integrate humans into the natural world and develop harmonious living than to work with an idea of "othering" wild nature as entirely separate from human culture. Harmonious nexus between nature and human culture helps in maintaining integrity, stability and beauty of land community that strengthens reciprocity between land and human

beings. Survival depends upon harmony, co-operation and co-participation not only among human beings but also among all beings and things. All beings and things originate from the depth of the land, bring up on the warm lap of the land and ultimately mix with the lan

d. As human being is one of the members of biotic community there is proportionate interdependence between land and human beings. The dignity and identity of human beings is directly proportional to the dignity and identity of land community.

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