

**Tribhuvan University**

**Class Consciousness in John Steinbeck's *Cannery Row***

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**By**

**Krishna Prasad Adhikari**

**Central Department of English**

**Tribhuvan University**

**Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal**

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**Tribhuvan University**  
**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**Letter of Approval**

This thesis entitled **Class Consciousness in John Steinbeck's *Cannery Row*** submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by **Mr. Krishna Prasad Adhikari** has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

**Members of the Research Committee:**

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Internal Examiner

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External Examiner

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Head

Central Department of English

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Abstract**

John Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* is a brilliant representation of how people strive to maintain the integrity of both the individual and society. In the wake of the lingering effects of economic depression, the consciousness of belonging to a class saves people from countless number of evils and hardships. To show how class consciousness safeguards the victims of economic depression, the researcher adopts economic determinism as a variant of naturalism. Like the determining impact of naturalism, economic determinism does have a hold in the priorities and choices of characters.

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## **I. Representation of Class-consciousness in Steinbeck's *Cannery Row***

John Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* exhibits how people dwelling in certain locality are tied together by class consciousness. Almost all characters in this novel are engaged in their individual quest for material gain and socio-economic security. Yet in the wake of disastrous eventualities, they intermingle altruistically. They make a common cause with one another. In the dawn of dire crisis and confusion, they forget about their self-centric activities and come actively to the forefront of social welfare and altruistic activities. The aftermath of the Second World War and the destabilizing effect of economic turmoil adversely affects the lives of people. That is why they are seen actively fighting for economic security. In this regard it can be claimed that the lives of characters are subject to economic hardships and instability. However strong the effect of economic determinism, they are occasionally capable of altruistic acts. What motivates them for altruistic activities is the sense of belonging to a certain class. The soft and cooperative manner of characters show the underlying sense of class consciousness.

John Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* is set in Monterey, California. Cannery Row is a small place which is utopian and idealistic. It has had unique and uncorrupted charm. There is one character Lee Chong in this novel. He is a Chinese merchant. He has run a small grocery shop in which everything is available. He, being a Chinese by birth, is wary of the American display of honesty and sincerity. But it does not mean he is sceptical of the common values which have been guiding all the inhabitants of Cannery Row. Lee-Chong is heavily involved in money-making practice. He makes profit from his grocery shop. He is so preoccupied with the idea of making profit that he sets his grocery shop open till late night. He gives debts to all the needy people around Cannery Row. Everyone owed debt him. His life makes a dramatic show of

how economic concern determines life. The idea of profit and business has governed Lee Chong's choices and preferences. Similarly, other people like Abbeville and Mack and the boys were also economically dependent upon him. Mack and the boys were given a separate stall to do the commerce.

In Cannery Row the harmful effect of the economic depression lingered. The lingering effect of economic depression made hard the lives of people. Everyone around Cannery Row was compelled to borrow money from money lenders. A successful grocery shop runner, Lee Chong is the only one trustworthy provider of money. The economic hardship exerted lots of pressures in the lives of common people. Dora "Sells no hard liquor and permits no loud or vulgar talk in her house" (4). In the atmosphere of the pervasive lingering effect of economic slump, the economic hardships and challenges are of considerable importance.

If Dora Flood's life is carefully examined, the effect of economic naturalism can be clearly seen. Dora Flood, like Lee Chong, is also obsessed with money. She is bent upon earning money a lot. She has opened a brothel house. In the situation of dire economic crisis, how to earn money is the last choice of individual. Dora Flood employed some girls as the commercial sex traders. The pressures and power of economics is so strong in Dora Flood's life that morality and ethical values mattered little to her. Dora has ethical orientation. She was "painting her nails and messing them pretty" (6). Even the employees of Dora Flood in her brothel gave more value to money rather than to morality and dignity. Ethical values and self-esteem were not of overriding importance. What was of overriding importance is money. In this context the researcher notices lots of elements of naturalism, chiefly economic naturalism. Dora Flood's life turns out to be a paradigmatic example of economic naturalism.

Although Dora Flood works under the spell of economic pressures and parameters, she is not fully detached from the class to which she belongs. Class consciousness is not totally absent in her. Once many people were in a dire state of economic troubles, she demonstrated her kind-heartedness and social obligation in a spectacular way. This spectacular deed of her magnanimity exemplifies the fact that she is an integral part of a group of people who labour hard to climb the ladder of economic success. When economic crisis broke out, many people became unable to buy their daily necessary goods. At this disastrous time, Dora Flood paid the grocery bills of many customers of Cannery Row.

This magnanimous deed of Dora Flood brings her closer to the consciousness of a class. Dora consults him and "detailed the girls where he suggested. And the time the business at the Bear Flag was booming" (15).

Apart from Dora Flood and Lee Chong, there is another character. His name is Doc. He owns the western biological laboratory. He is thriving on his business. He has given employment to those loveless children like Frankie and Hazel whose parents died a natural death. The economic causes is linked to the untimely suicidal death of their parents. This novel alone shows that not only life even death is determined by economic compulsions.

Doc is jovial and aesthetically dedicated to his profession of collecting Marine Animals. He feels tied to the culture of a class. He introduced culture, art, music and cultivatedness. His residence seems to be the safe haven for those whose lives are tormented by the haphazard actualities and eventualities of life. Why does doc give music, culture and art to the people in Monterey ? Answer is obviously clear. It is growing sense of class consciousness that shapes his outlook and understanding.

A striking example of class consciousness can be observed in the way Doc is respected and revered by the local people. However cultured and cultivated, Doc is still melancholic. Doc is yet confident in "their collective well-being" (25).

There is hardly any coherence and consistency in the personality of the doctor. He too is a bundle of contradiction. Character study of Doc is the study of contradiction. He is loving and imitated, peaceable and violent, committed and confused. The contradictory life of Doc can best be understood by contextualization. The contradiction in the life of Doc is the reflection of socio-economic contradiction.

### **Projection of Class Consciousness in Major Characters**

The prominent sense of class consciousness is tangible in the interaction between Doc and other fellow-beings. The compassionate and complacent life of Doc was often affected by loneliness and inner dissatisfaction. Doc says "Oh ! I thought you was kidding" (57). Doc's fans and friends understood this plight of Doc. Therefore, they threw a big party in the name of Doc. This party becomes the sense of belonging to a close community. Moreover, it can also be a modular relationship between an individual and the class when Doc came emotionally to get tied to the rhyme and rhythm of community and class, all of his sense of estrangement and alienation dwindled down to nothing. In this context, the researcher hints at the healing and surviving power of class and class consciousness.

Mutual cooperation amidst the characters is a signal of how class consciousness drives the people. The same hardship, the same predicament and the same challenge have brought people together. Frankie, Mack and the boys, Doc, Lee Chong and Dora Flood come to the same footing in the event of any social disaster. Almost all the characters are seen actively involved in the practice of safeguarding the economic dimension of life. They show generosity. They do not "measure their joy in

goods sold, their egos in bank balance" (63). Doc seeks to safeguard the vulnerable aspect of his psychological life. Mack and the boys go far as to bargain with Lee Chong in order to safeguard their shelter. Dora Food aims at preserving her economic life by lowering herself into immoral act like running a brothel house. Characters are not only guided by the economic concern and complexities. They are capable of rising above it. The capacity to transcend the barrier of economic complexities lies within each character. That is why, they have apportioned significant portion of their time to the promotion and proliferation of social welfare and altruistic activities.

Having elaborated the hypothesis, the researcher dwells at length on the novelist John Steinbeck. John Steinbeck was born in 1902 and spent most of his life in the region of California where *Cannery Row* is set. He studied science briefly at Stanford University and worked at a variety of odd jobs as a young man. Finally, in the early 1930, he began to write seriously. *Tortilla Flat*, a novel about Mexican - American farm workers in the Salinas valley, was his first successful novel. Most of the Steinbeck's novels, including *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Of Mice and Men* are concerned with working class and lower class people, whose values Steinbeck found more authentic, if not always morally preferable, to those of the upper classes and intellectuals. Both his politics and his choice of material are closed by the second world war and even more significantly, the Great Depression.

One of the Steinbeck's great strengths is his ability to capture dialect and a sense of place in his writing. This aligns him with many of the other regionalist writers of the early twentieth century. His ear for language and his fondness for landscape are derived from modernism. His work, though, particularly as he grew older, is often hampered by a political heavy handedness and an excess of sentimentality and pathos. *Cannery Row*, which appeared in 1945, is unique among

his writings for its ambiguity of message and emotion. In this work, Steinbeck seems to battle his own literary demons. Although *Cannery Row* was published at the end of the war, at a time when prosperity had returned to America, it depicts a group of people still trapped in Depression - era conditions and ways of thinking. They are nevertheless good people whose noble intentions and feelings for one another get them through the bad times. Their circumstances become almost an allegorical representation of the evil that inevitably disrupts all lives. Steinbeck was awarded the Nobel price in 1963. He died in 1968.

*Cannery Row* occupies a distinct position in the regional literature. *Cannery Row*, like many of Steinbeck's other works, has something in common with so-called local colour or regional writing. It seeks to capture the spirit of the rougher areas of Monterey, California, a port town south of San Francisco on the California coast. Like other local colour writing, this novel wants to preserve what it sees as a unique way of life distinct from the kind of everyman existence that most realist novels try to capture. Steinbeck is more idealistic and more sentimental about this than many of his fellow regionalist writers. Although it lacks the heavy handedness of *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Of Mice and Men*, *Cannery Row* still romanticizes its cast of misfits and never-do-wells to a significant degree.

In its way, "*Cannery Row* idealizes the values of the lower classes. The author insists that good fellowship and warm-heartedness are needed to create a paradise anywhere on earth (Reflection on Steinbeck, 32). even here on run-down Cannery Row. The characters in the novel are accordingly stereotyped at times. The gruff madam with Jim Isherwood the heart of gold, the grocer who is a tough and even extortionary businessman but who nevertheless keeps the Row going and is capable of

extreme generosity. The shiftless man who can't hold a job but will tenderly nurse a puppy back to health. These acts show their cooperative nature.

This novel is disrupted by subtle instances of violence and cruelty. Doc finds a "dead girl on the beach. Several men commit suicide. A gentle boy is sent away to an institution because he tried to steal a gift for the person he loves most in the world" (25, Edmund Hall, Steinbeck and American Voice). In this way, the utopian fantasy of *Cannery Row* is quietly but persistently questioned. The weight of current events sometimes breaks through. This novel is set immediately following the depression and world war II. Depression and hardships are twin turmoil brought not only by war but by the prejudice and predilection of society. In all these ways, the real world intrudes, to produce a strange hybrid of fantasy and reality. *Cannery Row* can perhaps be best characterized by what seems a contradiction in terms. It is a realistic utopian novel.

Steinbeck typically uses "scattered anecdotes and vignettes to hint at the shadow of life. Heterogeneous voices of suffering are included" (11). This structure (Isherwood) has several effects. First, it allows Steinbeck to keep his anti-utopian commentary subtle:

Stephen Hall's view regarding this book runs as follows. The book will still be able to end reasonably optimistically. Second, it provides him with a way to capture more of *Cannery Row*, to paint a broad portrait without being forced to construct an artificially enormous plot. He is able to use the collecting technique that Doc's work suggests as a model. Finally, it is an extension of Steinbeck's overall writing style which depends on small moments of aesthetic brilliance and occasional off-topic riffs. (36).

This style owes something to the modernists of the 1920s, particularly Fitzgerald and Faulkner. It also has something in common with techniques used by Beat writers of the 1950s, like Kerouac. Despite his commitment to provide a realistic description of a particular place, Steinbeck still allows himself movements of linguistic free-wheeling and cosmic speculation. Perhaps it is this connection with the aesthetic that allows *Cannery Row* to maintain its optimistic outlook and to conclude on a positive note despite the undeniable presence of sorrow and misfortune in the world.

A book having these features projects how class-consciousness acts as the dominating factor in the lives of the major characters. The coming together and class intermingling, which is occasioned by class belongingness, does not have political dimension. Characters are driven by class-consciousness not because they want to resist the gripping force of socio-economic structure but because they want to build up the culture of individual free-will, cooperation, understanding and compassion.

## **II. Naturalism and its Marxist Orientation**

The researcher adopts as the major theoretical tool. Naturalism is a viewpoint on the integral relationship between life and visible and invisible forces. Life is naturally affected by plenty of socio-economic and bio-political factors. In terms of scientific model of objectivity, naturalism dictates and defines life. Human life is simply defined as the effect of plenty of socio-economic and psychopathological factors. Free will and inner power to rise above the concrete consideration of life are denied by naturalism. The doctrine of naturalism is adopted as the major methodological base.

Naturalism is a school of thought which denies free will and selfless urge to perform free actions. The distinguishing feature of naturalism is that it gives a deterministic view. Naturalists argue that atmosphere, upbringing, heredity, bio-drive and psycho-sexual impulse determine us. This core idea of naturalistic assumption is related directly to the power of economic and commercial activities. In other words, it can be safely said that like the determining impact of naturalism, economic power has also power to determine. Most of the area of our life and priorities. In this regard it would be better to argue that the philosophy of determinism is undoubtedly a part of the school of naturalistic thought.

Apart from the economic aspect of naturalism, the researcher makes use of the Marxist concept of class consciousness. Marxism is also a "kind of deterministic philosophy. The core and crux of Marxism is its deterministic emphasis upon economics". Economic determinism pertaining to a class is a significant branch of naturalism. Economic determinism and the associated notion of class consciousness are equally important theoretical asset. The brand of economic determinism inherent in the doctrine of naturalism and class consciousness are two conceptual notions

which constitute the major theoretical foundation for the smooth conduct of this research work.

Naturalism is the word which deserves etymological scrutiny. In *Illustrated Dictionary of Literature*, Jack Richardson defines naturalism in the following way:

Naturalism is a literary movement of the late nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. The movement's major theorist, French novelist Emile Zola, envisioned a type of fiction that would examine human life with the objectivity of scientific inquiry. The Naturalists typically viewed human beings as either the products of biological determinism ruled by hereditary instincts and engaged in an endless struggle for survival, or as the products of socio-economic determinism ruled by social and economic forces beyond their control. In their works, the Naturalists generally ignored the highest levels of society and focused on degradation: Poverty, alcoholism, prostitution, insanity and disease.

(113)

The above cited extract emphasizes on the scientific status of naturalism. It furthermore hints at the variation in naturalism. Biological determinism and socio-economic determinism are two dominant school of naturalism. Naturalism denies free will to human being. There is a danger of the reducing of human beings into a machine or robotics. The distinguishing characteristic of naturalism is that life is a bare product.

Naturalism denies the power of human beings to transcend socio-economic-biological factors. It limits human life to the external circumstances and factors. It has not taken into consideration the loveliest beauty of inner life. To some extent

naturalism does not give the full-fledged and totalistic conception of life and its inherent relationship with the circumstantial factors.

Regarding to the connection between naturalism and economic determinism. Hens Ernst comments in the following way:

Economic determinism is a viewpoint on the vulnerability of human freedom and choice to the determining power of economic forces. As naturalism is determining in its approach, economic parameters care also equally determining. Like naturalism and its impact of determinacy, Marxism, which is deterministic in its emphasis on material force, has its own naturalistic version. (21)

Naturalism incorporates within itself the foundational thinking about determinism. Determinism is the belief that people are not free to choose what they are like or how they behave, because these things are decided by their surroundings and other things over which they have no control.

### **Determinism as an Integral Aspect of Naturalism**

Determinism is the thesis that all events and states of affairs are determined by antecedent events and states of affairs. This claim can be made precise in several ways. It is advisable in reading discussions of determinism to take careful account of each author's definition. The thesis has at its core the idea that everything that happens is fully determined by what has gone before it. Every event has antecedent causes which were sufficient to ensure its occurrence. While many philosophers do admit the notion of a probabilistic cause - that is, a cause which renders it probable to a given degree that the effect will follow - a world in which some events had merely probabilistic causes would not be a deterministic world.

Determinism is scientific in its approach and emphasis. As to this dimension of determinism, Stuart Hampshire remarks:

Determinism seeks to study any phenomena or event in terms of cause and effect. It poses a belief that whatever happens happens because of a cause. Understanding the cause of the phenomenon enables us to understand the very phenomena. Moreover, it does not seek probable causes. On the contrary it seeks a concrete objective cause. (61)

For determinism to be true of a world, each and every event in that world must have a deterministic cause - a cause which ensures its occurrence.

Views about causation affect the formulation of the thesis of determinism. So, for example, those who adopt a regularity account of causation may typically formulate a basic thesis of determinism as the claim that for every event or state of affairs, there are antecedent events.

Regarding Determinism, Thomas Mautner Says:

Determinism is often expressed in terms of predictability in principle. This yields a distinct formulation of the thesis which is not entailed by the basic formulation just given. The idea is that if one were to know everything that is true about the universe at a particular instant of time, and also have complete knowledge of the laws of nature. If determinism is true, one would be able to derive from this knowledge a true and complete account of the state of the universe at any subsequent time. (104)

Determinism offers a trust in the law of nature. The law of nature enables us to seek cause and study the event. It does not abide by the divine law. It works according to the nature law.

The contemporary physical theory of quantum mechanics postulates that the most fundamental level of reality is indeterministic - that is, that events at this level do not have determining causes, and are understandable as falling under statistical laws only.

Hans Driesch wrote *The Science of the Super Normal*. In it he dwells upon the notion of predictability inherent in Newtonian theory. According to Hans Driesch:

Newtonian physics and theory discuss about the possibility of predicting the course of consequence by basing ourselves on the level of factual causes. The solid ground of objective evaluation provides trustworthy space to predict the course of future action. (29)

Newtonian physics remains, however, quite adequate for our practical dealings with the medium - sized objects of everyday experience. So everyone can do a lot of our ordinary explaining and predicting on the basis of the deterministic assumption which Newtonian physics makes.

Philosophical discussion of determinism has often been motivated by the question whether human freedom of action is possible if the universe behaves as a deterministic system. If everything I do has some prior events as its determining cause, how can any of it be a matter of my own free choice ? If my current behaviour is fixed by the way things were long before I was born, and by the eternal laws of nature, surely the idea that I am freely in control of my own actions must be some kind of illusion. Philosophers who agree that there can be no free action in a deterministic world are known as the incompatible. Those who go on to assert the existence of free action, and so to infer that the actual world is indeterministic, are known as libertarians, whereas those who affirm determinism and so conclude that freedom of action is illusory are known as hard determinists. Believes of determinism

maintain that freedom is possible under determinism, and their affirm action of determinism, make them soft determinists.

Determinism is the constituting frame work and fulcrum of naturalism. Naturalism is not only determinism, but a philosophical viewpoint based upon the nature of scientific objectivity. Naturalism needs elaboration here. Not only external factors determine life, internal factors also play a big part in determining the prominent choices and preferences of human beings. Biological drives, innate instinct and psychological urges also play prominent role in influencing the choices and thoughts of people. In this regard, both Marxism and Freud's model of psychoanalysis are deterministic philosophy. Once again the researcher prefers to dwell upon naturalism and goes on to throw spotlight upon the Marxist version of economic determinism, which is the sole theoretical foundation of this research work.

Regarding the close proximity between naturalistic exuberance and deterministic orientation, David Jary remarks in the following way:

Natural determinism is the less rigorous assumption that nothing occurs without is being caused. Social actors may either have uncertain or unstable preferences which may alter social outcomes, a conception of universal causation which includes preferences as causes can't automatically assume predictability, even in principle. Even with the physical sciences, predictability can't always be assumed. More straightforwardly even such superficially simple phenomena a leaf falling, although predictable in principal, can't in practice be predicted, given the large number of variables involved. (151)

Individuals are always trapped in the sovereign force of structured society. However radical and independent we become in our approach and understanding, we remain weak in front of the mighty force of nature.

Naturalism, both economic and biological, foregrounds causality and causal relationship. The relationship between two events, such that one brings about the other. Usually a causal relationship is claimed where a spatial and temporal contiguity exists between two events, one event (the cause) precedes the other, the second event appears unlikely to have happened without the first event having occurred. Where it also appears that particular type of event always or usually occurs in a particular way, a lawlike relationship, this is usually regarded as further reinforcing a claim that a causal relationship exists. It should be noted, however, that a lawlike association may exist between two events without this implying a causal relationship.

As to the notion of causality, David Hume opines in this way:

Causes are by nature elusive. We are generally enslaved by habit.

Hence, we miss the nature of causality. The proper understanding of causality requires serious observation and analysis. The analytical approach to the study of causality can turn out to be reductionistic. (23)

A distinction can also be drawn between an immediate cause and explanatory cause. The concepts are difficult to reconcile with conceptions of logical implication in classical logic. For example, if one refers to an increase in prices caused by increased taxation, the increase in taxation is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for an increase in prices. Furthermore, epistemologically, the provisional nature of scientific knowledge always means that claimed causal relationships can never be stated conclusively. Further issues concerning the phenomena are whether the sense in

which cause and causation arise in connection with purposive actions is compatible with conceptions of causality in physical science.

Marxism is also a kind of deterministic philosophy. Marx has categorically rejected the role of consciousness in determining the nature of phenomena. He utterly lays emphasis upon matter in determining the structure of human consciousness. His dialectical materialism is synonymous to the theory of economic determinism. Economic determinism means that economic factors restrain our thinking, action and choices. Regarding to the shaping power of matter, Marx says:

The production of ideas, of conceptions of consciousness is at directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct impact of their material. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life process. It all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside down as in a camera obscure, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical Process. (366)

Since Marx has placed so much importance on matter, chiefly money, his whole theoretical version is a paradigm. The Marxist version of economic determinism has served the base of this research.

In John Steinbeck's *Cannery Row's* economic determinism is obviously manifest. Most of the characters struggle single handily or jointly to safeguard themselves from the economic challenges and hardship. People facing similar

challenges come to stand in the same footing. It is this ideological conception that gives rise to notion of class and class consciousness.

Class consciousness is pertinent to class and class struggle. It carries within itself the sense of resistance. Apart from being the ideological base of resistance, class consciousness is a defence mechanism also. In the novel, *Doc, Dora Flood*. Lee Chong and Henri make use of their class consciousness as a defence mechanism. The protective nature of class consciousness rather than its aggressive nature is the primary methodological foundation.

The concept of class consciousness emanated primarily from the doctrine of Marxism later on the doctrine of Marxism has been transformed into the philosophical school, which is labelled western Marxism. In the direction and destination of resistance for emancipation, class consciousness is given with a prominent role. The core conception of Marxism is that if class consciousness is channelled properly, it paves the way for the start of emancipatory struggle for freedom and prosperity.

Marxist critics always put the concept of class consciousness in the centre of their reflection on art. They can go to the extent of giving art subservient or subordinate position. It can be used as a tool to propagate and disseminate realities pertaining to the consciousness of class. Both art and artists are assigned with a vigorous responsibility to enrich and enhance class conflict and class consciousness. One of the renowned critics George Lukacs, comments on the relation between art and society in the following way:

Progressive writers must give careful consideration to the approaches followed by Heinrich and Thomas Mann and many others, in this regard. The revolt of the leading realists is the most significant development in the art of the bourgeois world today. This revolt has

produced important art in a period most unfavourable to art, a period of a general decline in bourgeois culture. How aware each of the outstanding exponents of this genuine realism is in his association with the great humanist tradition is not decisive. What is decisive is the objective relationship to, the objective continuation of, the fundamental humanist view, a continuation adapted, of course, to the special conditions of the day, in opposition to capitalist culture, a culture which every artist of integrity must reject. (907)

Lukacs places recurrent emphasis upon the role of artist and art in the accentuation and upliftment of class consciousness. The representation of socio-politico-economic reality ought to be the primary preoccupation of both the artist and the art. Concern with the objectivity of truth and dialectics of the mode of representation are two constituent parts of Lukacs's mode of theorization.

Lukacs argues that the work of art reflects an objective reality but it does not do this by slavish copying. On the contrary, it succeeds by presentation of a concrete universal, and the formal integrity and objectivity of the work lies in that relation. The goal for all great art is to provide a picture of reality in which the contradiction between appearance and reality, the particular and the general, the immediate and the conceptual is so resolved that the two converge an inseparable integrity.

Lukacs is critical of the project of romantic idealists. This project comprises of creating harmonious integrity of life in art. Both idealism and realism were failures, though they were historically understandable and valuable responses to which loss. Both were unfortunately one sided. The idealists mounted a critique of the fragmentation of the individual in bourgeois society, but they maintained allegiance to an outworn version of the idea of progress. There grew up in their intellectual lives a

divorce between harmony and beauty on the one hand and life itself on the other, between the aesthetic activity that they privileged and life.

According to Lukacs, modern capitalist society is riven of contradictions by chasms between universal and particular, intelligible and sensible, part and whole. The realist artist expresses a vision of the possible totality embracing these contradictions, a totality achieved by embodying what is typical about various historical stages. Realists also identify the contradictions in human relationships, as well as their enabling conditions. Socialist realists, moreover, view reality from the viewpoint of the proletariat.

Associated with the concept of class consciousness is the notion of class polarization and hegemony. At first the researcher seeks to dwell upon the notion of class polarization.

According to Eagleton:

Class polarization precedes class consciousness. It is the class antagonism and hostility that give rise to the highly better level of class consciousness. The oppressive and exploitative purpose of capitalism is responsible for the dramatic emergence of the emancipatory sense of class consciousness. (61)

At the heart of Marxism lies the notion of class polarization. Class polarization means the tendency for the inherently conflicting interests of the two main classes within capitalism to result in increasing consciousness of these differences with the two classes eventually becoming opposing camps. According to Marx, this process comes about as the result of the tendency for the proletariat to experience immiseration under capitalism, which at the same time also being thrown together in situations which will encourage collective action.

As part of this polarization, classes which stand in various intermediate class locations within capitalism also tend to be drawn into one camp or the other, mostly into the ranks of the proletariat, as tendencies to crisis within capitalism intensify. But Marx was "Simply over consciousness of this phenomenon in 19<sup>th</sup> century". It is obvious that Marx's hypothesis has not been borne out, at least in any straight-forward way, partly because immiseration has not occurred on the scale Marx expected and also because class interests, and the foundations of class consciousness are far more complex than he anticipated. On the other hand, a broadly class-based form of politics has become the norm within most western liberal democracies, despite some suggestions that class dealignment had removed this and although the issue is much complicated by the continued existence of intermediate classes. Polarization, on a world scale, between rich and poor, is a further element of class polarization which can either be handled in terms of Marxian conceptions, or seen as involving a fundamental departure from his schemas.

According to Marx, ideology is the false consciousness and its extension assumes the hegemonic form. In the theoretical discussion of class consciousness and class polarization Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony becomes instrumental for the clarity of its idea.

Hegemony is an indirect way of exercising power over the subject and thereby ruling over them. Regarding to this concept of hegemony, M.A.R. Habib remarks:

Mention should also be made of the Italian Marxist theorist and political activist Antonio Gramsci, whose main contribution to Marxism is widely thought to lie in his elaboration of the notion of hegemony. Autonomous revolutionary potential on the part of the proletariat could only be realized, argued Gramsci, through political

and intellectual hegemony. A mass movement alone was insufficient. Initiated through a vanguard with working-class roots and sympathies, this class must train and educate itself in the management of society. The notion of hegemony is effectively a metonymic affirmation of the dialectical connection between economic and superstructural spheres.

(542)

Gramsci stresses the transformative role of human agency rather than relying on the inevitability of economic determinism. His literary criticism insists upon understanding literary production within its historical and political context.

Hegemony is the ideological or cultural domination of one class by another. This kind of domination is achieved by engineering consensus through controlling the content of cultural forms and major institutions. Gramsci used the term to criticize the narrowness of approaches which focus only on the repressive potential of the capitalist state. Gramsci argues that hegemony is the domination of ideas in the major institutions live, the legal system, the education system, the mass communications media, Gramsci compares civil society to a powerful system. As a result, the problem of cultural hegemony was crucial to understanding the survival of capitalism. Gramsci concludes that before winning power, the working class would have to undermine the hegemony of the ruling class by developing its own alternative hegemony. As well as exercising leadership, this requires "a cultural and ideological struggle in order to create a new socialist common sense".

According to Gramsci, the domination of a class depends not so much on the repressive machinery of the state, but on the fact that a prevailing mode of thought shields the existing social order, by persuasively defining for the whole of society what is to be regarded as natural and normal. A predominant ideology is not a mere

side effect of economic and political realities. Therefore, the struggle for cultural and intellectual hegemony for a position of influence on the public mind is a necessary step for making a new way of thinking.

Concept of class consciousness is inextricably linked with the notion of ideology. Marxist notion of ideology plays prime role in shaping the characteristic of class consciousness. Ideology is any system of ideas underlying and informing social and political action. Ideology is "false consciousness. It is oppressive and coercive" (17). Moreover it is any system of ideas which justifies or legitimates the subordination of one group by another. An all-embracing encyclopaedic knowledge, it is capable of breaking down prejudice and of use in social reform.

In the work of Marx and Engels, which has had most influence in the development of the theory of ideology, the term had several connotations. In "The German Ideology", Marx and Engels emphasized two points. The first was that ideologies presented a picture of the world from the point of view of a ruling class. The second was that this picture was necessarily a distorted one because the interests of the ruling class are partial. They do not represent the interests of humanity in general. "Ideology reflects the greater portion of the welfare of one class and it does have a small degree of prejudice and predilection" (21). In later criticisms and developments, ideology is presented in terms of a social class representing its particular sectional interests as natural and universal.

Marx observes that the class which is struggling for mastery must gain political power in order to represent its interest as the general interest. This is the germ of Marx's concept of ideology. He states that the class which is the ruling material force in society is also the ruling intellectual force. Having at its disposal the means of production, it is empowered to disseminate its ideas in the realms of law,

morality, religion and art as possessing universal verity. Therefore, ideology is what Marx says false consciousness (264). Thus, dominant ideas of the aristocracy such as honour and loyalty were replaced after bourgeois ascendancy by ideas of freedom and equality; whose infrastructure is class economic imperative. In Marx's notion of ideology is this the ruling class represent its own interests as the interests of the people as a whole. The modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.

One of the leading Frankfurt Marxist Critic Theodore Adorno has said different thing regarding to the politics of art. By being largely silent a work of art can become mostly political. Like Lukacs, Adorno does not insist on the status of objectivity pertaining to art. Adorno's own view on the deflative role of art becomes clear in the following extract:

Today, when empirical veracity has sunk to the level of superficial reportage, the relevance of technique has increased enormously. By structuring his work, the writer can hope to master the arbitrary and the individual against which Lukacs so passionately inveighs. He fails to follow the insight contained in his last chapter to its logical conclusion. The purely arbitrary can't be overcome simply by a determination to look at things in what purports to be a more objective manner. (263)

Unlike Lukacs's, Adorno's political agenda maintains to uphold the autonomy of art, of theory and the individual, only the anonymous subject, has the power to weather the violent storm unleashed by the authoritarian state.

Friedric Jameson has put forward a somewhat distinct view on the power of art to resist by dramatizing class consciousness. Jameson's engagement with Marxism becomes more complex than the traditional version of Marxism. Jameson has

described the core spirit of Marxism from a distinct angle. In his version of Marxism, the class difference has increasingly blurred. The spirit of Marxist resistance works through different agencies of ideological power. Nor do the conventional accounts of Jameson's Marxism usually do him justice. Jameson is of the opinion that literary and cultural studies are, from a Marxist perspective, implicated in the whole system of society too. By making the language of art highly complicated and problematical, an artist can orient his/her art towards resistance.

Dwelling on the nexus between art and resistance, Jameson says:

To evoke the fad for rapid reading and the habitual conscious or unconscious skimming of newspaper and advertising slogans, for us to understand the deeper social reasons for the stubborn insistence of modern poetry on the materiality and density of language, on words fest not as transparency but rather as things in themselves. So also in the realm of philosophy the bristling jargon of seemingly private language is to be evaluated against the advertising copybook recommendations of clarity as the essence of good writing whereas the latter seeks to hurry the reader past his own received ideas, difficulty is inscribed in the former as the sign of the effort which must be made to think real thoughts. (43)

Jameson goes on to point out that what holds true for musical art holds true for language as well. This prioritization of the complexity of language is a subtle instance of the justification for Jameson's own difficult writing state.

The philosophy of determinism, inherent in Marxism gives researcher a solid ground to analyze the text. Marxism embodies the body of economic determinism. Economic determinism sounds naturalistic because like naturalism it also involves

analyzing events and phenomena in terms of cause effect relationship. On the strength of all these ideas concerning the politics of art the present researcher aims at reinforcing the proposed topic by illustrating and enumerating pertinent textual evidences.

### III. Class Consciousness in John Steinbeck's *Cannery Row*

Economic determinism is the major tool to exposing the imprints of naturalism in the lives of some of the major characters. The central idea that governs the theory of economic determinism is that human choices, motives and priorities are often restricted by economic values and worths. Like naturalism, the theory of economic determinism explores the causal relationship between human lives and environment, one of the component of which is determinism. Even Jack Richardson asserts that "Life is simply an effect of socio-economic parameters and bio-drives" (113). The lines of characters in the novel exemplify the above mentioned issue.

John Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* captures the spirit of the post second world war developments in American. This novel is set in Monterey, California. The utopian and innocent world of Monterey is described with a considerable sense of nuance and tact. The fictional world of *Cannery Row* is inhabited by some characters. Some of the important characters in this novel develop class-consciousness. The sense of belonging to certain class has taken upperhand in their lives. Though these characters live different kinds of lives, the sense of belonging to a particular class has underscored their entire existence. Sense of belonging to a class motivates them. The feeling of being members of the same class gave them courage to fight with challenges and hardships.

The important character Lee Chong behaves as if his grocery shop is more dearer to him than his life. Doctor also behaves in the same way. Dora Flood's fate is no less than thesis. In terms of the similarity of their hardships, they are interrelated. They have been labouring hard for their common destiny. On the basis of their common destiny, they tend to be similar. No matter how much difference exist, they

"were in love with one another. They found the little puddles she left on the floor charming. ?They bore all their acquaintances" (63).

Lee Chong is the major character in this novel. He has set up a grocery shop in Cannery row, the name of a small place. He is not the native citizen of America. He is a Chinese immigrant who presently live in America. He has had a great deal of business mind. He has kept every thing for sale in his grocery shop. His primary preoccupation is to earn money. He is shrewd and subtle. He seems to be cunning enough to play with countless number of business tricks and targets. He opened his grocery shop till late night hoping that customers could come to buy. Most of the people in Cannery Row had borrowed money from him. He charged lots of interest from them. Careful and cautious, Lee Chong is a paradigmatic example of a man determined by an obsessive preoccupation with money and business. Economic preoccupation has underlined the entire spectrum of Lee Chong's life. Despite his self-centric and egoistic attitude, Lee-Chong is selfless and philanthropic. His philanthropic longing love illustrates the postulated statement that Lee Chong too has developed a sense of belonging to a class.

Dora Flood was displaced from her homeland because of economic depression. She was seeking an economic instability elsewhere in *Cannery Row*. Mack and other boys were also living economically insecure lives. They were almost like vagabond. Doctor's plight was a product of economic and emotional disaster. The following lines clarify the issue:

You got a five-frog profit there and nobody loses his shirt. No, said Lee. No money. Well, hell, Lee, all we need is a little groceries. I'll tell you what we want to give Doc a little party when he gets back. We got plenty of liquor but we'd like to get may be some steaks. (62)

Apart from Lee Chong, Doc is another character, who is doctor by his profession. He is the proprietor of western Biological, Laboratory a specimen supply house. Doc's life exemplifies a life under the grip of economic determinism.

He was successful in his research oriented business. Despite his success, his life has remained almost melancholic and lonely. Despite his pelf and prosperity he feels for those youths who are almost too helpless to live like vagrants. It is this positive light in Doc's personality that places him in the category of class-belongingness. It is Doc's sense of belonging to a class that saves him from the ultimate misery of life

Besides Lee Chong and Doc, there is another character, Dora flood. Her life is an excellent example of life under the grip of naturalistic factors. The pressures and parameters of the economic naturalism almost weakened her life. Her present life looms as the dramatic display of life influenced and affected by the ideology pertaining to class. Dora is the local madam. She is the proprietor of the Bear Flag Restaurant, which is a brothel house. Dora is a huge woman with bright orange hair and flamboyant clothes. She runs a tight shop--her girls are not allowed to drink or talk to men on the street-but she is kind-hearted and generous. She paid the grocery bills for many local families during the Depression and she organizes an aid effort during the influenza epidemic. She is always in danger of being shut down by the authorities. So she must watch her step and do twice as much charitable giving as anyone else.

Mach Ernest's idea of economic vulnerability of mankind becomes background in which the gradual decline in the freedom of the characters in novel can be explored. Frankie is one of the character whose homeless situation can be treated as the disastrous outcome of economic slump.

Frankie is another character. His mentally retarded life offers an example of how life is not free from the pervasive impact of naturalism. His miserable life offers a glimpse on the fragility of human sanity. Frankie is a mentally handicapped boy who is neglected by his mother and taken in by Doc. He is incapable of doing any work. He just seems to do everything a little bit wrong. He loves Doc, though and frequently tells him so. Frankie is institutionalized after breaking into a Jewelry store to steal a gift for Doc.

Henri is equally important character whose life dramatizes the unimaginable impact of naturalistic determinism. Henri is a painter. He paints in accordance with the current style of Parisian painting. However boastful he might be about his artistic capability, he has been facing public skepticism regarding his artistic power and potentiality. However creative, his life is subjected to serious socio-economic pressures. As a result, he was compelled to live an irrational and contradictory life. But there is no doubt that his life too is a microcosm of life-force ruled by economic determinism. Last but not the least, there are Mack and the boys who had fallen victims to the naturalistic hurdles. Mack and the boys are a group of down-and-out but always scheming men who live together in the run-down fish meal shock, owned by Lee Chong, which they call the palace Flophouse and Grill. Mack is their ringleader, a smart, charismatic man who can charm anyone into anything. As one of the boys says, Mack could be president of the united States if he wanted to be, but he would not want to do anything like that was not fun. Mack' attempts to do thing the easy way and to his advantage often get him into trouble. Eddie, another of the boys, is a substitute bartender at La Ida, the local bar. He brings home stolen bottles and a jug filled with remnants from customer's drinks. This makes him immensely popular all around. Hazel is perhaps the hardest-working of the boys. He often accompanies

Doc on collecting trips. Ironically, though, the narrative claims he was tooo lazy to pick up real criminal habits as a boy. He got his name because his wife beats him. He is often at the local bar or in jail as a result of brawls with his wife. Gay is a gifted mechanic who can make any vehicle run.

According to Mantner, "People pertaining to the same class and encountering the same problems happen to develop the same problem" (104). The feeling of commonality and collective conscience are what drove the characters to engage in altruistic activities.

These characters and their lives offer perspective on the relationship between life and class-consciousness. The nexus between life and the determinative power of economic foundation can be clearly seen in the lives and activities of the above-introduced characters. Once economic security and financial foundation are shattered, lives become what George Mead said "rolling stone" (26). All characters including Doc, Chong and Mrs. Flood are uprooted. They sometimes contemplate suicide also.

At first, the researcher chooses Lee Chong. He is a greedy and rapacious merchant. How to earn is the sole mainspring of his life. He has kept everything a customer likes to buy in a shop. He has achieved huge amount of pelf and prosperity. Almost all the people around Monterey borrow money from him. Economic concern and preoccupation have made him far more calculative. Gain is the only one term in which his thinking proceeds ahead. Any idea of thinking in terms of loss is foreign to him. Upon analysis, it turns out to be an important fact that the life of Lee Chong is determined by economic factors. The following lines cited from the chosen text highlight the issue raised above:

Shu, sid Lee Ching, well, get out the accounts and I'll make you a bill of sale on that plate Horace seemed in a hurry. No need papers, said

Lee. I make paid in full paper. They finished the deal with dignity and Lee Chong threw in a quarter paint of old Tennis shoes. And then Horace Abbeville walking every straight went across the lot and past the cypress tree and across the track and up the chicken walk and into the building that had been his, and he shot himself on a heap of fish meel. (2)

The above-mentioned extract clarifies the fact that thinking on business and commerce has gained an upperhand in the life of Lee Chong. In the utopian world of Cannery Row, Lee Chong is the only one merchant who regards business as the ultimate purpose of life. It seems the fibre of his existence lies in the series of business activities he performs.

Hans Driesch's version of stark naturalism is clearly noticeable in the sheer dramatization of "fervent yearning for economic security and stability" (29). Lee Chong is a fine example of this kind of conception.

Lee Chong's involvement in money-making practice can be understood by contextualizing the textual trope. The detrimental effect of the economic depression of 1929 had harmed the lives of people in the united states. The event called the great depression of 1929 weakened the foundation of American economy. The massive and mounting loss of jobs, cut in wage, decreasing consumption pattern and economic instability rocked the structure of American economy. Shortage and crisis, instability and insecurity, anxiety and agony troubled the people at large. The economic turmoil and tribulation brought social unrest. The outer lives of people in Cannery Row were adversely affected. By the same token, the inner psychological lives of characters were also equally affected.

Despite his increasing success, Lee Chong is inwardly restless. Inwardly he feels agonized. The sense of loneliness and melancholy has robbed the true happiness from his life. The following extract hints at the inner insecurity and isolation of Lee Chong.

Lee Chong stood in back of the cigar counter and his nice brown eyes were turned inward on a calm eternal Chinese sorrow. He knew he would not have helped it, but he wished he might have known and perhaps tried to help. It was deeply a part of Lee's kindness and understanding that man's right to kill himself is inviolable, but sometimes a friend can make it unnecessary. Lee had already underwritten the funeral and sent a wash basket of groceries to the stricken families. (6)

The inner restlessness and insecurity can be understood as an effect of depression and Lee Chong's dual existence. Though economic depression of 1929 had gradually come to an end, its aftermath continued to haunt the normal psychological make-up of people.

By placing emphasis upon the hunting aftermath of economic turmoil of 1929, John Steinbeck wants to show the sovereign role of naturalism in general and of economic determinism in particular. Cannery Row is a utopian place wherein virtues like innocence and cooperation operate. Even such an ideal place like Cannery Row was affected by the aftermath of the second world war. Little disturbance and social unrest appeared in Monterey due to the pervasive impact of economic crisis and the after math of the second world war.

Lee Chong's life shows the power of economic consideration and preoccupation. At the same he is capable of cultivating class consciousness. Though

Lee Chong is possessive and calculative he occasionally acts on the impulse of charity and good deeds. When a big influenza epidemic spreaded. Lee Chong did not keep himself at a distance. On the contrary, he involved actively in the social works. Social tie engaged himself in many welfare-promoting activities. This generosity was proverbial. He could not tolerate to see the degrading health of his customer-neighbour. How can he remain untouched and unaffected by the suffering of his brethren because like them, he also belongs to the same class and the same society. Though one face of Lee Chong is calculative and materialistic, other face of his seems to be compassionate and tender. Apparently, Lee Chong is a bundle of contradiction. The following extract illustrates the compassionate and cooperative characteristic of Lee Chong:

Lee Chong joined the party for a while but his stomach was notoriously weak and he got sick and had to go home. At eleven O'clock they fried the steaks and ate them. Someone digging through the records found an album of Count Basic and the great phonograph roared out. The noise could be heard from the boat works to La Ida. A group of customers from the Bear Flag mistook western Biological for a rival house and charged up the stairs whooping with joy. They were evicted by the outraged hosts but only after a long, happy and bloody battle that took out the front door and broke two window. (66)

This carousal and merry-making activities reflect the growing sense of class-consciousness on the part of Lee Chong. The final humanistic orientation of Lee Chong brings a sense of coherence and completion to Lee Chong. Hence, the researcher aims at affirming the fact that Lee Chong had to encounter the determining influence of politico-economic determinism.

According to David Jary:

The collective well being and collective conscience do not emerge from the situation of economic adversity. This idea is found to be perfectly applicable to Doc. His misery and melancholy is the effect of economic confusion. (15)

In addition to Lee Chong, there is another character who is doctor by his profession. Doc is the proprietor of the western Biological. The western Biological is the institute in which specimen for research and medical research are collected. Doc is professionally committed. He is dedicated to the ethics of professional research. The following paragraph frankly admits Doc's medical professionalism:

Doc was collecting marine animals in the Great Tide pool on the tip of the peninsula. It is a tabulations place. When the tide is in, a wave-churned basin, creamy with foam, whipped by the combers that roll in from whipped by the combers that roll in from the whistling buoy on the reef. But when the tide goes out the little water world becomes quiet and lovely. The sea is very clear and the bottom becomes fantastic with hurrying, fighting, feeding, breeding animals. Crabs rush from frond to frond of the waving algae. (13)

Doc's profession is to collect marine animals and species. He takes delight in this job of collecting marine animals and species. He had employed Mack and other boys in his work. Doc is fond of joviality and companionship. He aestheticizes his profession.

In this novel John Steinbeck introduces Doc as a source of culture and cultivatedness. He becomes the standard of aesthetic culture and cultivatedness. It is through him that the light of culture and refinement spreaded. Moreover, he is benevolent to those who come close to him. He introduced Dora's girls and the boys

to opera, classical music and literature. He extends tender love and care to the helpless orphans and children. It appears that Doc is a quintessence of incomparable virtue called compassion and kind-heartedness. To substantiate the fact that Doc encapsulates the spirit and ethos of culture and cultivatedness, the following textual citation is enough:

He said he was doing it on a bet that he stood to win a hundred dollars. Everyone liked him then and believed him. They asked him into dinner and gave him bed and they put lunches up for him and wished him good luck and thought he was a hell of a fine fellow. Doc still loved true things but he knew it was not a general love and it could be a very dangerous mistress. Doc did not stop in Salinas for a hamburger. But he stopped in Gonzales, in King City, and in Paso Robles. He had hamburger and beer at Santa Maria. (56)

This extract displays how refined Doc is. It also shows a considerable degree of cultivatedness on the part of Doc. Doc is the pride and glory of Cannery Row. It is he who oriented the inhabitants of Monterey towards fine attitude, manners and thought. In short, it is undoubtedly true that Doc is the harbinger of the light of culture and cultivatedness.

Doc is portrayed as a representative character. In his life contradictory tempers and traits can be seen. However qualified and cultivated, Doc occasionally demonstrates violent disposition. Despite his violent disposition, his compassionate nature has gained a fresh momentum and motivation in his personality projection. He employed Hazel who was suffering from anonymity. Similarly, he employed Mack and Frankie. These boys assisted Doc in collecting marine animals and species. Why does Doc choose the philanthropic path of cooperation and compassion ?

Notwithstanding his cooperation and philanthropic profile, Doc involves in the group of helpless boys and loveless children. There are two serious reasons behind Doc's involvement in the art of companionship and fellow-felling. They are Doc's feeling of being a member of the same class. How can he remain aloof from the suffering of his own class. He feels that all the people dwelling in Monterey, Cannery Row are the member of the same society perceived as a big family. The defining sense of belonging to a class has brought Doc from the solipsism of his aesthetic world to the benevolent world of mutual cooperation and fellow-felling. The following extract best illustrates the case in point:

Doc ordered fifteen pounds of steaks, ten pounds of tomatoes, twelve heads of lettuce, six loaves of bread, a big jar of peanut butter and one of strawberry Jam, five gallons of wine and four quarts of a good substantial but not distinguished whiskey. He knew he would have trouble at the bank the first of the month three or four such parties, he thought and he would lose the laboratory. Doc was right, no one thought of food but there were odd pints and quarts put away all over.

(89)

Doc's choice of carousal and wild nomadic life is his attempt to gloss over the inherent loneliness of life. To cover the latent loneliness of life, Doc prefers to choose the rapturous and rowdy life. But even in this sort of rapturous and rowdy choice lies the saving grace of class belongings.

Except Lee Chong and Doc, there is another character who is no less important than Lee Chong and Doc. Her name is Dora Flood. She is the local madam. She also is the proprietor of the Bear Flag Restaurant, a brothel house. Dora is huge woman with bright orange hair and flamboyant clothes. She runs a tight ship-her girls

are not allowed to drink or talk to men on the street-but she is kindhearted and generous. She paid the grocery bills for many local families during the Depression. She organizes an aid effort during the influenza epidemic. She is always in danger of being shut down by the authorities, so she must watch her step and do twice as much charitable giving as anyone else. Dora Flood has fallen victims to the gripping force of economic determinism. She does not bother to know whether she has had higher will to rise above baser instinct and passion. She does not feel any sense of guilt over her business of commercializing sex. She has established a sex trade. In the ideal and utopian place named Cannery Row, it is an immoral venture of Dora Flood to set up a brothel house. It is morally inadmissible. But Dora Flood does not bother to know what is morally acceptable and unacceptable. What is the object of utmost importance for her is money. To make her wallet bulge she can go to the extent of committing immoral act also. Hence, she does not have any care and concern for morality and immorality.

It appears Dora Flood does not have an impulse for higher act. Her obsessive preoccupation with money making practice exemplifies the fact that her individual preferences and choices were largely under the grip of economic turmoil and disaster. Hit adversely by the great economic depression of 1929, Dora Flood was also labouring hard to climb the ladder of socio-economic success. The following extract cited from the text illustrates the case in point:

One of Dora's girls comes home from a call on a patron too wealthy or too sick to visit the Bear Flag. Her mane up is a little sticky and her feet are tired. Lee chong brings the garbage cans out and stands them on the curb. The old chairman comes out of the sea and flagpole cross the street and up past the palace. The cannery watchmen look out and

blink at the morning light. The bouncer at the Bear Flag steps out on the porch in his shirtsleeves and stretches and yawns and scratches his stomach. The snores of Mr. Malloy's tenants in the pipes have a deep tannelly quality. (41)

Wealth and prosperity are two things that matter most to Dora Flood. Moreover, she has exerted a great deal of control over her girls whom Dora employed as commercial sex traders. She is not only guided by economic pressure. On the contrary, she tries to put other on the same track. On the basis of all these textual clues, it can be concluded that the fierce force of economic determinism has controlled her.

The other aspects of life needs to be explored. It clarifies the proverb that every cloud has a silver lining. However enslaved by economic factors, Dora Flood never defines herself in isolation. She prefers to involve in the collective activities. Deep down in the corpus of her psyche lies the sense of belonging to a class. That is why Dora Flood comes from the prison house of her self-centrism and egoism to the free and open world of generosity and charity. Many customers, who were unable to pay their grocery bills during depression, were helped by Dora Flood. When influenza epidemic broke out throughout Cannery Row, Dora offered active help and assistance to the victims. Her performance of generous activities is a convincing evidence of the fact that she inwardly seeks to define in relation to fellow beings belonging to her own class. The following brief portion of the selected text offers a convincing evidence of her active awareness of class-consciousness:

Dora insisted that a skeleton crew remain on duty to take care of the regulars. The girls divided up into sifts, some to stay until they were relieved by others. They had to flip for who would go to the party first. The first ones would see Doc's face when they gave him the beautiful

quilt. They had it on a frame in the dining room and it was nearly finished. Mrs. Malloy had put aside her bedspread for a while. She was crocheting six doilies for Doc's beer glasses. The first excitement was gone from the Row now and its place was taken by a deadly cumulative earnestness. There were fifteen tom cats in a cage at the place Flophouse and their yowling made darling a little nervous at night. (89)

This extract means that philanthropic fever has infected even Dora Flood. A self-centric woman bent upon earning money by fair means or foul has started performing altruistic deeds. It can also be studied as a revelation of the miracle of the unknown part of human self.

Excluding all these characters whom the present researcher has focused upon, there is one more character who deserves serious attention. The name of this character is Henry. He is a painter. In his painting he has introduced a new kind of styles. His paintings are the product of his imitative inclinations. Apparently, he has earned certain standard of status. He wants to project himself as original artist. But the reality is drastically different. People around Cannery Row had a growing degree of skepticism concerning Henry's artistic capability. Despite the wavering faith of the public, Henry continues to smile upon his artistic caliber and capability. A new fashion and fervor is introduced in the domain of artistic painting. Henry's immersion is an escape from the bitter experiences created by the disastrous event recorded in the history of political economy as economic depression of 1929.

Henry's escapist fantasy is expressed in the following citation:

Henry was swarthy and morose. He wore a beret long after other people abandoned them. He smoked a calabash pipe. His dark hair fell about his face. Hanri had many friends whom he loosely daffited as

those who could feed him and those whom he had to feed. His boat had no name. (71)

Henry is not French and his given name is not Henri. He is an American who fantasizes about the avant-garde, and follows the artistic and political movements in Paris with an especially keen eye. Henri has gone through several artistic phases in which he has worked only in a certain medium, like chicken feathers or has worked under other strange principles, like not using the color red. While his paintings may be of questionable artistic value, there is no doubt that he is an excellent craftman. He has been working on his boat for quite some time and secretly intends never to finish it. The shape of the vessel keeps changing but it is always a masterpiece. The difficulties of living the boat have driven away two wives and numerous girlfriends. After each woman leaves him, Henri gets drunk and mourns. His latest girlfriend had just left, and Henri has just begin to get drunk when he sees devilish young man and a blonde little boy appear on the bench next to him. The young man slits the baby's throat with a razor. Henri flees the apparition and ends up at Doc's. Doc has invited a young woman over for the evening. Henri tells the story of the ghost to the young woman. She is intrigued and asks to go up to the boat to see if there is anything there. She becomes the next of Henri's girlfriends, to Doc's chagrin.

Henri too had fallen victims to the indescribable loneliness and melancholy. Death, suicide and murder are the recurrent events which were not new to Henry. His artistic choice is his attempt to gloss over the killing loneliness of his life. The following extract highlights the defensive nature of Henry's artistic choice.

Henri was swarthy and morose. He wore a beret long after other people abandoned them, he smoked a calabash pipe and his dark hair fell about his face. Henri had many friends whom he loosely daffified as

those who could feed him and those whom he had to feed. His boat had no name. Henri said he would name it when it was finished. Henri had been living in and building his boat for ten years. During that time he had been married twice and had promoted a number of semi permanent liaisons. (71)

What is clear from the above cited extract is the fact that Henri was prone to the problem of anonymity. The pauses and gaps, disorders and asymmetry in his painting are the natural reflection of his own disordered and disjointed life. Despite his agony of anonymity, he has painted about the idealistic world of Cannery Row. The sense of belonging to a utopian community occasionally haunted by painful events dominates the entire pageant of his painting.

In Henri's painting and in his life both the consciousness of being a member has gained a ground. That is why he is fond of depicting the usual world of Cannery Row. Almost half of dozen of characters represent the impact of economic determinism and class consciousness. In the last part of the novel John Steinbeck mentions a party organized jointly by all the people who had had great respect for Doc. Doc's party is a strange mixture of violent revelry and high culture. Everyone is equally involved in the fight that breaks out; everyone is equally moved by the poetry reading and the music. The end result is a democratizing of culture and life styles that is representative of Cannery Row at its best. This book ends on a strange and uncomfortable note, though. The tale of gopher seems to be cautionary little fable about the way that even the best-laid plans can go wrong for reasons completely outside one's control. This is a strange message, though, coming after the successful party. Mack and the boy's careful plans have not gone wrong. The gopher's tale also speaks to the difficulty of finding a soul mate in the world. It is perhaps this aspect of

the anecdote that is most applicable to the book's ending. Doc is still alone at the end of the book, perhaps more alone than ever, despite the party. Perhaps Steinbeck is suggesting that Doc, like the gopher, may be looking in the wrong place for happiness, that people like him do not normally live on *Cannery Row* with people like Mack and Lee Chong. The novel remains fairly ambivalent in its ending. It neither excessively condemns nor celebrates the Row.

Probably the most disturbing aspect of *Cannery Row's* conclusion is the final image of the book: the creatures suggest a certain inescapable malevolence about the world, while their cages suggest a lack of control or free will that keeps the characters in this book from ever really changing their status. This reinforces the image of Doc, hung over, dealing with the aftermath of a party that was meant to be a gift to him. The situation is fundamentally unfair and yet entirely unavoidable. Despite it all, there is still beauty explicitly stated. Perhaps beauty is more easily perceived when it is surrounded by disappointment and human fallibility. The ultimate part of the novel reveals how life is hindered and highlighted by the saving grace of a sense of belonging to a certain class.

#### IV. Conclusion

John Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* dramatizes how people belonging to different professional and occupational sectors happen to be driven by class consciousness. People, no matter where they are and what they do, are tied together by the similarity and sameness of the problems and challenges. The common experiences and ethos can bring people together. Ultimately, they are capable of standing in the same horizon of class consciousness. In Steinbeck's *Cannery Row*. Most of the characters are representative. Apparently they are seen obsessively involved in their individualistic self-Centri Selfishness and personal gain drive them forward. But in the event of disaster and unprecedented suffering they make a common cause. They help their fellow beings. In the wake of dire crisis, they are more interested in the well-being of their class rather than their personal, benefit.

Characters' shift from their selfish preoccupation to the altruistic performance is a good indicator of a transformation from individual consciousness to the collective conscience when society and its existence are more important than a person's advantage, collective consciousness or class consciousness become the dominating factor. In *Cannery Row* Lee Chong and Dora Flood are two major characters whose lives nicely dramatize the crucial significance of society. Dora Flood runs a brothel house. She is extremely attached to the idea of earning money. Nothing pulls her back from the idea of earning money from running a brothel house. Her life is fully under the influence of economic factors. Similarly, Lee Chong is also equally seduced by the glamour and gorgeousness of money. His grocery shop is very, very important to him. From morning to till late night he works in his grocery shop. His hardwork brought heavy profit to him.

Both Lee Chong and Dora Flood reveal the hidden force of the economic dimension of life. Their determination to earn money can be interpreted as their effort to safeguard their existence from the vicious lingering effect of economic crisis. The fibre and fabric of society was also torn by the second world war. To certain degree social instability pervaded the *Cannery Row*. The immediate chance of prosperity was almost unimaginable job loss, increasing debts, social insecurity and unrest crippled the growing chance of life. The probability of life for further expansion and growth was nearly finished by the vicious effect of economic depression. That is why many youths committed suicide. The growing loneliness and melancholy on the part of these people were the natural result of the fatal effect of the lingering economic turmoil. Economic struggle of these people is their heroic endeavour to bring their shipwrecked life to the anchor of hope and stability.

Despite their economically shipwrecked life, Dora Food and Lee Chong are capable of compassion. They are not locked in self-centric and self-complacent world. They are guided by collective conscience and class consciousness. However self-interested, they have not forgotten that they are members of the society.

Once many customers were unable to pay their grocery bills because of the detrimental effect of economic depression. People around Monterey were unable to earn their daily basic necessities. In such circumstance Dora Flood freely paid the grocery bills of the victims of economic depression. It is this generous act of Dora Flood that brings her humanity to the forefront of social obligation. Her generous act is not only an execution of her social obligation and responsibility. On the contrary, it is an act motivated by class consciousness. Lee Chong is no less than Dora Flood in demonstrating generosity at a right time. Like Dora Flood, he too performed several deeds of charity. Because he performed several deeds of charity, people in Monterey

had high opinion of him. When the suffering of his fellow customers touched him, he gave up his mercantile mentality, and actively catapulted himself as the leading figure in the promotion and proliferation of social welfare and collective well-being. Lee Chong's projection in the forefront of social progress and humanistic orientation is a convincing indicator of how the well-being of class becomes a matter of overriding importance. In this aspect the novel acquires a socialistic dimension.

Excluding all these characters, there is one more character Doc, Doc's life betrays a subtle fact that a sense of having the same culture sometimes brings class awakening. Doc is depicted as an embodiment of cultural ethos. Prior to Doc's arrival in Cannery Row, there was a little dose of cultural consciousness. Doc came and introduced music, song, art and sports. Doc gave cultural touch and artistic twist to Cannery Row. Culture and art as the shaping and sustaining force of society became proverbial. That is one of the reasons why people had so much respect for Doc. Doc's introducing of cultural practices brought into light his own consciousness of belonging to a class. What forces Doc to orient people towards cultural practice is none other than the consciousness of class.

Hence the researcher has arrived at the conclusion that almost all the characters in *Cannery Row* are driven by class consciousness, no matter what they do and think. The sense of belonging to a class has taken an upper hand in the wake of disaster. To sum up, class consciousness has become the shaping and safeguarding force in the destiny of the characters.

The characters were victimized. They fell victims to the lingering effects of economic depression. To fight against the vicious effects of economic depression, class solidarity is a must. Only a sense of natural cooperation and conviction becomes a saving grace in lives rocked by disaster of any kind whether economic or naturalistic.

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