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# Research Innovator

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Editor-In-Chief  
Prof. K.N. Shelke

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A detailed still-life composition featuring a quill pen as the central element. The quill is positioned diagonally, with its tip resting on a scroll of aged parchment. The scroll is secured with a red wax seal and a red ribbon. In the background, a lit candle in a brass holder casts a warm glow. In the foreground, a glass inkwell with a quill inside sits on a wooden surface, alongside a red wax seal and a small wooden object. The overall scene evokes a sense of traditional scholarship and research.

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**Volume II Issue V: October – 2015**

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**The Pain and Struggle of Migration in John Steinbeck's*****Of Mice and Men*****S. Muhilan***Ph.D. Research Scholar, A.V.V.M. Sri Pushpam College, Poondi, Thanjavur, (T.N.) India***Dr. J. Uma Samundeeswari***Assistant Prof. of English, A.V.V.M. Sri Pushpam College, Poondi, Thanjavur, (T.N.) India***Abstract**

*Of Mice and Men* is popularly portrayed as a novel of social protest fighting for the basic conditions and problems of American workers, the migrants, and farm workers during the twentieth century, especially in the 1930's. In 1930's, America faced the great economic depression. Most banks collapsed, families sold their lands for solving their needs. Texas, Oklahoma and most of the famous cities began the trend of new industrializing movement and hence the capital owners occupied and bought the agricultural lands from small labours. Nearly two hundred families moved from their own land to farm fields (cities) especially to California. Most of the novels of Steinbeck deal with the contemporary view of social problems and migratory movements. He is one of the first famous novelists to have written about the migration movements. Natural experiences purify Steinbeck's mind to develop the nature problems and the causes of migration. *Of Mice and Men* is strongly nurtured with social and political view and it provides an exact detail in all dimensions and also it critically described an era of American history.

**Key Words:** Great Depression, Pain and Struggle, Migrants

The twentieth century has the rare breaks in world history. The problems of the fifth and the fifteenth centuries were faced again by the people of the twentieth century. The basic problem is civilization, because of the two main World Wars, civilization collapsed. Western countries dominated the Eastern culture and society, because of this impact great empires disappeared by civilization. With the advent of Modern civilization great Empires have been devastated.

The twentieth century has two phases. Between 1914 and 1945 two World Wars and a great depression, that gave the hierarchy of social classes for countries.

International economic depression dominated the 1930s. The main cause was the Industrial economy of Europe and America. The twentieth century's first depression started in October 1929 and by that New York stock market crashed. Unemployment began to grow in all states. Migration is an integral part of human psyche. There is a situation where animals migrate from one place to another for food and survival. Even animals are forced to do so to survive, now let us imagine the state of human beings to migrate from one place to other to satisfy their needs. Human beings may or may not be happy during this

migration. In history, humans hunted animals by migrating from one place to another. Later after satisfying their needs in terms of food, humans started migrating, under a compulsion to gather knowledge and to improve his intellect. The consequential effect of Migration on humans is always pain and struggle.

Humans were addressed as 'Neighbors' when they make their presence in nearby residences, in case of migrating from one place to another, humans were addressed even more badly. The migration from a nation to another causes much more pain – compared to the migration within a nation.

*Of Mice and Men* is one of the great novels in Steinbeck's series, and it holds good possible news and knowledge to the readers about realism. It makes by various ways, and it comes day by day on various titles finally 1936, Steinbeck called "Of Mice and Men", taking this title from Scottish poet Robert Burns's "To a Mouse". But initially *Of Mice and Men* was titled as *Something that Happened*. This work also mirrors the life of Steinbeck in his young age with his grandfather Samuel Hamilton's ranch in king city, California. Steinbeck also worked in Sugar Company at during his studies at Stanford University. The descriptions of his speaking characters coined, adapted from his friends like Lennie, Old man... Steinbeck's maximum works reflected the surrounding of Salinas Valley and California, as he is one of the Salinas thinking writers. Similarly how Thoreau took a symbolic reference to Walden Pond, Steinbeck takes Salinas Valley. We have more writers in American Literature like Tennessee Williams and William Faulkner. Most of them expressed their view in such a symbolic way. They

wrote their own creativity. Maximum writers wrote their works on the real spot, Steinbeck's "Once there was a war", Faulkner's "Light in August", Thoreau's "Walden" are a few examples.

Most of the works of John Steinbeck's reflect the motif of migration and its various causes. In "Of Mice and Men" Steinbeck writes about the real pain of industrial workers especially the basic level labors. The six chapters of the novel were divided only to express the dividing pain of labors due to migratory movement. Only two chapters had occupied major role in this novel, and the other working labors were abruptly mirrored the struggle of the owner and labor cause.

In the starting point of the novel, the two characters, George and Lennie come from their own lands to California sugar mill looking for a job, since America was under the Great economic Depression, and President Roosevelt gave more new opportunities to the field of Agriculture. Maximum people don't have awareness about the field of Agriculture, hence everyone worked behind the land owners. Land owners gave only the minimum opportunity and salary to the farm workers. The story's main characters, George and Lennie are introduced as they walk to the pool in the opening scene. The path they follow is heavily – here the travel identified, indicated what are the burdens faced by the migrants to face in the minimum travelling time. During the travel, Lennie, who is mentally challenged and George who is "sharp, strong features man", he displays characteristics of leadership and parental responsibility and they drank contaminated water from the river, this portrays how

migrants face the basic problems.

George's voice became deeper. He repeated his words rhythmically as though he had said them many times before.

'Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don't belong no place. They come to a ranch an' work up a stake, and the first thing you know they're poundin' their tail on some other ranch. They ain't got nothing to look ahead to.

During night time George and Lennie were sleeping under the stars; George told Lennie to put out the dead mouse from his pocket, because it is old. Then George and Lennie imagine, speak about the future plan of constructing a new home and home full of money, pigs, cows, rabbits, and a big garden – these things, and symbolize the innocence of migrants, as they were sleeping under the stars in empty land and imagining sleeping in a big home.

A guy needs somebody—to be near him. A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody. Don't make no difference who the guy is, long's he's with you. I tell ya, I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick.

Next day George and Lennie arrived to the ranch and are taken to the bunkhouse by candy, lame maintenance old man who is followed by an even older, lamer dog. The unnamed ranch owner (boss) enters wearing “high heeled boots and spurs to prove he was not a laboring man”. The ranch owner, one of the authentic symbols of the rich, dominated the migrants. Here ranch owner was angry due to the pair’s late arrival.

George and Lennie stayed in the small home like an animal life. A man, named as Slim, coded about their arrival; “*Maybe ever 'body in the whole damn world is scared of each other.*” The point comments to a general condition of humanity but perhaps more specifically to a specific condition created by the circumstances of the twentieth century, especially in 1930s America, where jobs were scarce in California where, following toom promises, a large number migrants force fleeing the drought and descent of middle America has congregated in search of livelihood. Most of the workers tease the itinerant workers, the new man Carlson comes and speaks about George and Lennie’s life in this current migrant occasion. Carlson shoots Slim’s old dog – here the old dog symbolizes the old itinerant workers, because the land owners always treat migrants like animals, they simply avoid the old workers from their land.

The conflict continues to mount between the possibility of George and Lennie fulfilling the dream of their own home, on one hand, and the potential for trouble on the other. In California, migrants were treated badly. The ruled party or the land owners had much labors for the minimum salary; owners change their labors frequently. Candy’s activity, gives pain to Carlson, since he loved his dog so much but Candy unexpectedly shoots the dog. This activity is compared with the mother and child relationship.

The fulfillment of any plan requires some control by the land owners, and John Steinbeck suddenly points out that people like George and Lennie have little power to control their life and environment. In the



next occasion Curley's wife enters into the bunkhouse she is just a wife for namesake but Curley does not treat her as a wife. He always tortured her and hence she simply avoids him. No one speaks with her as she is so rich. The labors always adjust the extreme domination from land owners by that time Lennie – speaks with her. When Curley's wife asks Lennie why he thinks so much about rabbits, Steinbeck is able to provide an example with explanation for Lennie's obsession and to introduce the climactic action of the story. Lennie moves closer with Curley's wife and tells her he likes to "pet nice things" mostly rabbits, but mice when he cannot find rabbits. This action of Lennie mirrored about his low level knowledge and innocence. In Rich families Born and being an innocent is not considered a matter at all but quite contrary to that, in poor families – one has to be smarter and shrewder. He has to be competent enough to support his family financially and socially. Here Lennie's life symbolizes the same role. All his family members know Lennie's character but they don't bother about it. They only need money from him for spending daily life, so Lennie lives a migrant life.

Curley's wife invites Lennie to feel her hair, to feel how soft it is, but soon tells him to stop because he is messing it up. She wants to go out from him but he did not release her from his hand hold. She screams and he covers her mouth and nose with his hand. He gets Angry, "and then she was still, for Lennie had broken her neck". Lennie tries to cover her with hay; he killed her like ho he killed the puppy earlier. Lennie doesn't differentiate her death and puppy's death

because he can't identify what is right and what is wrong in life. He knows only about the pet life. When the action of the story continues to occur chronologically, Steinbeck imposes a modern treatment of time over the events. After describing Curley's dead wife, the migrants report a stoppage of time.

Curley finds his wife's body. He identifies who killed his wife. So he searches his gun but his gun was missing and suddenly calls George to hold Lennie, but he support to Lennie finally Candy and Curley identify that Lennie killed Curley's wife. George search Lennie and he find him then again they start go to the pool for a few moments George and Lennie return to normal, with George talking about their friendship and about how they are different from the other bindlestiffs who have nobody in the world. When George tells Lennie to take his hat off and look across the river, he tells him again about the house and the rabbits, creating for Lennie once again the impossible dream. The dream transforms into a description of afterlife as George prepares to shoot Lennie. He tells Lennie that everyone will be nice to him and there will be no more problems for him to face.

"Lennie begged, "Le's do it now. Le's get that place now."

"Sure right now. I gotta. We gotta."

Lennie begs to go to this place George is describing, George fires Carlson's gun, shooting Lennie in the head.

"Just like heaven. Ever'budy wants a little piece of lan'. I read plenty of books out here. Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land. It's

just in their head. They're all the time talkin' about it, but it's jus' in their head."

Thus, Steinbeck brilliantly displayed the real

life of migrants, He intends to show that the migrants dream remains only as dream till the end. Their happiness is only "imagined" not real.

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