

**PERCEPTIONS OF RACIALITY Demonstrated
Through Whimsical Understatements
REFLECTED IN THE TEXTUALITY OF *HUCKLEBERRY
FINN*, THE TWAIN MASTERPIECE OF 1885;
AN OVERVIEW OF THE CLEMENSIAN AESTHETIC
POSITION IN RELATION TO THIS THEMATIC
SUBSTANCE**

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මෙම ලිපියෙහි අරමුණ වනුයේ 19 වන ශතවර්ෂයෙහි මැද සිට 20 වන ශතවර්ෂයේ මුල් අවධිය දක්වා වූ කාල පරාසය තුළ ජීවත් වූ ප්‍රබලතම ඇමරිකානු ගත්කරුවකු වන මාක් ටවේන් (1835-1910) විසින් රචිත 'ද ඇඩ්වෙන්චර්ස් ඔෆ් හකල්බරි ෆින්' (1885) නමැති කෘතිය තුළින් මැනවින් විදහා දැක්වෙන සමාජීය විෂමතා හා දුර්වලතා, දහ හතර වන වියේ පසුවන දුප්පත් සුදු දරුවකුගේ දෘෂ්ටිකෝණයෙන් පෙන්වා දී ඇති ආකාරය සියුම් හා පුළුල් ගවේෂණයකට ලක් කිරීමයි. අතිශයින් ම සංවේදී වූ මේ කලාත්මක නිර්මාණය වඩාත් ගැඹුරින් තේරුම් ගැනීමට පාඨකයාට අවකාශය ලබා දීම හුදෙක් ම මේ අධ්‍යයනයේ අරමුණයි.

The purpose of this paper is to acquire certain meaningful perceptions of raciality presented through the means of whimsical understatements found in the discourse of Mark Twain's fictional masterpiece of 1885 titled *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The aim is supported by an overview of the novelist's artistic position.

Mark Twain can be considered one of the most original and influential of American writers, who has an extensively substantial

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සංස්. ආචාර්ය පූජ්‍ය මිමුරේ ගුණානන්ද හිමි, මහාචාර්ය ඊශා හේවාබෝවල, මහාචාර්ය සුසන්ත මහඋල්පත, ජ්‍යෙෂ්ඨ කථිකාචාර්ය ප්‍රියංකර රත්නායක
මානවශාස්ත්‍ර පීඨ ශාස්ත්‍රීය සංග්‍රහය, 20 කලාපය, 2012/13, මානවශාස්ත්‍ර පීඨය, කැලණිය විශ්වවිද්‍යාලය

artistic reputation as the author of *Huckleberry Finn*. Ernest Hemingway believed that *All modern American Literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn*.

Twain was basically a humourist who was able to raise an interesting story to the level of literature by strengthening it with depth and richness through a profound understanding of character. Hence, his boisterous writing consequently produced a satirical social comment that was very serious. Most of his writings have an undercurrent of sadness which throws light on an inner pessimism. It is important that this negative perception, a dominating force in his thinking, has always disclosed a personal conviction that human life was a mere commodity hardly worth the price.

Twain always combines a comic style with grave criticism so his work has a coating of the greyness of real life. Therefore, he was able to portray the despondency entailed in life with admirable success. In his effort to reach this target, he gave his pessimistic point of view, a sense of purpose and a certain sharpness. Most Americans regard Mark Twain with a particular affection as a writer who is humorously perceptive with distinctive artistic characteristics. His realistic exposures of human corruption are full of compassion and irony reflecting a simple modesty or perhaps a visible humbleness. He once said that what any man sees in the human race *is merely himself in the deep and private honesty of his own heart*. Having emerged as a creator of tall tales and absurd stories, Twain became the best-known and the most successfully published author of his generation until 1910 with an international reputation as a humorist cum frontier-philosopher.

Born in 1835 in Florida as Samuel Langhorne Clemens, he was a mere four when his family moved to Hannibal where he was to live for a period of fourteen years prior to becoming a licensed river boat pilot at twenty-four and a professional writer at thirty. He died in Connecticut in 1910 at the age of seventy-five. Despite an

aesthetic position of fuller achievement based on an urge to make his fortune and a domestic life of felicity consequent to his marriage to Olivia Langdon of New York at thirty-five to be *respectable* with a family of ten children, his disenchantment with human nature and personal sense of pessimism gradually increased emerging from his apprehensions related to the values of 19th Century American society, which he was not in a position to endorse.

Twain's father was a local magistrate who was also a small merchant in Hannibal, a town with a fairly small population situated on the banks of the *Mississippi River* with its gallant-looking river steamers. Beside this great river with its brown waters, young Samuel Clemens grew through boyhood much as his young male characters, Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry did, fascinated by this kind of life. As a boy, the writer had seen how men were maimed and killed in waterfront brawls and Negroes were chained like animals for transportation to richer slave markets. Brought up on the stringent teachings of Calvinism at home, he had nightmares and walked in his sleep as these contrary experiences had a greatly negative impact on his young mind. In point of fact, the crude ways of people and the terror concealed behind such incidents were profitably used by Twain in his eventual fictional writings. Away from its boisterous riverfront, he felt that the village was *a heavenly place for a boy* because it provided him with multiple opportunities for hunting, fishing, swimming and adventure similar to Huck Finn, his favourite character. Nevertheless, as a boy of twelve, he had to become an apprentice to a printer in Hannibal on his father's death. There is a deep seriousness in his work and therein lies its underlying power. Most of his aesthetic writings are created in the light of his own nostalgic, boyhood experiences as Samuel Clemens and the lost river piloting days of his early maturity in a professional capacity down the *majestic Mississippi* when he worked as a river steamer driver. Hence, varied influences and impressions of his life both negative and positive, have extensively

contributed to the texture of his later artistic productions. He, subsequently received an M.A. from the University of Yale at fifty-one and an honorary doctorate from Oxford University at sixty.

Huckleberry Finn is the abused child of mine who has so much mud flung at him.

Devoting an artistic period of seven years during his prosperous life in Southern New York, the forty-eight year old Twain produced his mature masterpiece, accepted as the greatest American novel of the 19th Century, the most inspiring achievement of his lifetime. Describing the effort as Huck Finn's Autobiography, the novelist, now advancing in years, resented the unfavourable criticism that the work was also obliged to receive.

The novel's content is about freedom and personal integrity of which the texture is critical, humorous and ironic. Written as a sequel to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in 1876, the text which is substantially autobiographical, portrays the Southern American Life near the Mississippi in the 1850's. Both books are accurate evocations of the author's Hannibal boyhood. Hence, the worth of their substance.

I confine myself to boy-life out on the Mississippi, because that had peculiar charm for me ... I ought to be well-equipped.

Huckleberry, the protagonist of the text is an example of the American hero of the period experiencing life fully according to a personal code of conduct including ethics and regulations without reference to the judgements of society. The discourse presents the story of a boy of fourteen who is not prepared to accept the kinds of freedom that the world is able to offer; thus, he flees from these, one after another. This is why when the narrative unfolds, we feel that Twain's adolescent hero is a symbol of man's inevitable, restless nature based on individual apprehensions. The primary theme of the work is the development of Huck's acceptance of

Jim, the runaway Negro slave as an equal and the secondary thematic strand is a white boy's willingness to be rejected by society, and risk condemnation and exile so his black friend may escape, *to steal Jim out of slavery again*. Both are outcasts without social roots and the raft that they use for transportation, appears to be symbolic of their freedom.

... While he built a fire in a grassy open place amongst the trees, I fetched meal and bacon and coffee, and coffee-pot and frying pan, and sugar and tin cups, ... I caught a good big cat fish, too and Jim cleaned him with his knife, and fried him. When breakfast was ready, we lolled on the grass and ate it smoking hot. - Huck

Their love of freedom is demonstrated here; it is a relaxed way of living. Hence, Huck travels socially downwards away from society as represented, for instance, by Miss Watson with her stern discipline and stringent rules to the company of a nigger to go on a journey down the river Mississippi on a raft with a view to gaining his spiritual education, moral growth and liberty. The character's solution to the problem of seeking freedom is rather direct and unsophisticated. Having tasted society, he decides against *civilization* since he feels that eventually, society makes culprits of all men. Huck is a simple boy with little education and great confidence in omens. His proneness to deceit though he is not a liar, is also visible in opposition to the tradition-grounded, more intelligent Tom Sawyer's imaginative deceptions; the vision of the later is blurred by boyish trickery. In fact, Tom's type of fantasy and make-believe are incomprehensible to Huck. The reader feels that Huckleberry and his negro companion are natural men who are enslaved with a consequent pursuit of liberty. It is interesting to see the way in which young Huck becomes something of a hero to the inhabitants of the little river village because of his help to Tom in tracking down Injun Joe, the American Indian. After Widow Douglas takes Huck under her care, he is washed, dressed in

clean clothes and sent to school with shoes and so on; yet, the reader can see that he is not happy as demonstrated in his apprehensive nature: *Becuz Aunt Sally she' going to çivilize me and I can't stand it.*

Next Sunday we all went to Church, ... The men took their guns along... and kept them between their knees or stood them handy against the wall ...It was pretty ornery preaching – all about brotherly love, and such like tiresomeness; but everybody said it was a good sermon, ...

Civilisation as represented by the Southern town of St. Petersburg with its church-going and middle-class manners, is shown as extremely restricted. In this outwardly *civilized society*, there is no spontaneous love in people for their fellow human-beings since class, money, race and decorum tend to corrupt their natural feelings. The Twain Critic, Richard Chase feels that *The falseness of conventional religion is burlesqued in a thousand ways ...* This is intelligently illustrated in the novel by slavery; the selling of human beings which is in contrast to the tolerance that the black Jim, the nigger and the white Huck feel towards everyone particularly, the King and the Duke: *All I say is Kings is Kings and you've got to make allowances.* This is a very mature statement coming from a boy of fourteen prompted by deep compassion. The reader is also presented with the cold-blooded killing between the Natural Aristocrats whose reverence for the code of honour is described as an absurdity: *They go to church with guns.* Here, the novelist has a good laugh at them and the laugh is full of irony. We also detect the untutored moral sense of Huck, his idea of what is right and wrong in the process : *Human beings can be awful cruel to one another.* We are confronted with Twain's central irony at this point where he examines the grim realities of life, human–evil and so forth. Huck wishes to escape from this type of habitual, conventional morality surrounding him. The writer suggests that there is no place in society for Huck and

his kind of moral innocence. Hence, we see him as a rebel with a cause who detests pretence and injustice; because he is true to himself, he is totally isolated and therefore, becomes a social outcast.

*Jim said it made him all over trembly and feverish
to be so close to freedom. - Huck*

The real inner thoughts of a nigger are accurately captured here. The most significant thematic point in the discourse is the conflict of the conscience to which I attach a specific value in this paper; a case in point is Huck's important question *Conscience sayst me what had poor Miss Watson done to you that you could see her nigger go off right under your eyes and never say one single word?* Here, the battle between the good and the bad angels within a human-being presented, also has a strong affinity with the 15th Century Morality Play, *Everyman*. Huck helps Jim escape from slavery based on his own code of ethics. The brief period that he spends at Widow Douglas' Southern home gives him a superficial coating of *Civilisation* with all its rules and manners. Consequently, when the issue of Jim confronts him, he is lost between the two worlds : his troubled guilty-conscience warns him that he is committing a crime but ultimately, his normal, primitive self triumphs over his *civilized* self and Jim escapes with Huckleberry's great willingness to help him. Totally exiled from the rest of the world, Jim and Huck achieve the most invaluable bond that humanity is capable of: *Lemme look at you chile, No, you ain dead, you back again – honey!* – Jim. These qualities of nobility in the Negro Jim, are very noteworthy. *He likes me bicuss I don't ever act as if I was above* – Huck. What is clearly reflected here is the gap between conventions and real goodness or true morality. The reader observes that there is no status, money, politics and formal worship on the raft and their relationship is, therefore, profoundly genuine as the values that they cherish are not darkened by actuality. Twain, thus, describes this important crisis of the

conscience in his Autobiography: *where a sound heart and a deformed conscience come into conflict*. Huck's final recognition of Jim as an equal is poignantly and perceptively evoked by the author: *I knowed he was white inside*. Twain's juvenile character is even ready to lick his boots for shame when he considers the serious consequences that are to follow for having turned a blind eye to the accepted guidelines related to behaviour. What his boy hero fails to understand was how Tom, a child coming from a respectable family could volunteer to work out an escape plan for a slave like the nigger Jim. Yet, Tom treats the imprisoned slave as a minstrel degrading him so the whole thing becomes a kind of parody or burlesque. Tom has the wrong values compared to the positive qualities or attributes of Huckleberry. This difference between the two adolescents, is a factor of substantial value. One has the sense that Tom is the typical urbanised boy having a deformed, flawed structure of values, for example, he is filled with romance-bred notions of how Jim might be freed and Huck joins in this laborious nonsense merely since he admires him.

Well, one thing was dead sure; and that was, that Tom Sawyer was in earnest and was actually going to help steal that nigger out of slavery. That was the thing that was too many for me. Here was a boy that was respectable and well bring up; ... I couldn't understand it, no way at all. - Huck

The juvenile's confusion reflects his untutored moral sense. The type of religion that Miss Watson teaches makes no sense at all to a boy like Huck who is, in fact, naturally bewildered by the process. The religion of love that is promoted by Widow Douglas is a better option. When his father carries Huck across the river to a secluded log house, he accepts the abduction with relief despite a fear of his father's drunken rages and beatings since he would feel free away from the restraints of tight clothing, school and regular hours of study as well as the preaching and the puzzling ideas that confuse village life for a simple child. Miserable, we see

him going down the river at night to *Jackson's Island* where he meets the negro Jim who had run away because his Christian owner, Miss Watson was planning to sell him for a very high price. In the island, they meet many kinds of men like cutthroats, murderers, cheats, liars, crooks, cowards, slave-hunters and hypocrites of every variety. They come to a position where they cannot even trust the movement of the great brown Mississippi as it carries Jim beyond freedom to be re-captured by the outwardly respectable, benevolent people whose conscience is untroubled by slavery; a fact, all the more aggravated by their religious fervour as Christians. Hence, the tremendous irony found in Twain's writing incorporating cynicism, pessimism and poignancy, becomes extensively significant. These characteristics are only partially concealed by his greatly enjoyable humour. This is why though he can be described as a humorist, beneath this humour, there lies an uneasy conscience and a tremendous guilt, which is social rather than moral or personal. The aspect of authorial social responsibility holds a place of predominant significance here. Finally, Miss Watson grants Jim his freedom and he is no longer a slave. The good people in the novel begin to pity the brave Huck and offer to look after him for life on his father's death. But, Huck's blunt rejection greets this offer as he *will not have it: I can't stand it* he said, *I been there before*. These are the last lines of his autobiography. Huck usually misspells and mispronounces words in a manner that could delight Twain's admiring readers and his language, at times, has an appealing quality because of this feature.

*I didn't want to go back to the widow's any more
and be cramped up and civilized, as they called it.*

The novelist's central argument is that all men should be treated alike irrespective of a natural barrier like colour or a man-made gap such as class or beliefs. This perception is highlighted and emphasised all the time in the discourse. The fact that man is despised by society simply for being in the wrong colour like the

negro Jim filled Twain with outrage having considered it an indignity. He found it extremely difficult to come to terms with this injustice of such enormity done to a human being. Considered in this light, the author makes a profoundly radical point through the juvenile Huck and the nigger Jim. In actual fact, the inborn virtues of these two fictional characters offer some hope for Southern Americans during the given period; they are not mere amusement providers but carry a very substantial message. The close of the discourse is the final insight or perception that Twain has to offer: the reader becomes positive that whatever happens to Huck when the long process of *civilizing* him begins afresh, he will be a good man. We get the impression that the writer's real interest lies in the seamy, less attractive side of life rather than its gentler, rosier aspects in spite of the ludicrous potential of the text that he has produced. This view helps us endorse that the novel exposes a darker view of the individual and his inevitable circumstances. As a creative artist, Twain seems to have perceived that Huck and Jim were two of nature's noblemen compared to the members of *civilized* society, accepted as honourable.

The aesthetic work of Mark Twain is a meaningful revelation of the problems brought about by the weaknesses and the corruption of individuals. It is clearly evident that his eyes rarely twinkle when he laughs at the behaviour of his characters. We, as readers can identify his uncomfortable social conscience as well as the moral sense concealed behind his burlesque. It is, therefore, not appropriate to see him merely as a creator of boyhood adventure stories or the voice of native eccentricities of the times. Much that is outstanding in American literature did begin with him. The Twain critic, Lionel Trilling who studies American life, is right in pointing out that

Almost every contemporary American writer who deals conscientiously - with the problems and possibilities of prose must feel ... the influence of

his style which escapes the fixity of the printed page, that sounds in our ears with the immediacy of the heard voice, the very voice of unpretentious truth.

The vitality of the American Vernacular or native dialect is a dominant feature in his language as reflected in this discourse, for example, regional idioms or expressions, the poor grammar, the spelling mistakes, even the vernacular jargon and so forth. Twain has written for adults through the eyes of children. In *Huckleberry Finn*, in particular, he uses a highly adorable, colloquial style which is casual and informal. Through this boy's story, he gives the reader a comprehensive lesson in honesty, justice, mercy and forgiveness. It is a richer, textual discourse compared to his sequel titled *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Although the boyish Tom remained his favourite, through Huck, he exploits the true colour of the Vernacular Southern American speech in a manner that is splendidly memorable. *Tom Sawyer* was an optimistic novel about golden youth with slight touches of tragedy. In *Huckleberry Finn*, the author's pessimistic patterns of thinking are very visible throughout the text. He emphasises that human action is not free because of the external forces acting on an individual's will. Pessimism, eventually, became a predominant force in his fictional productions. Though we can define the Twain philosophy as pessimistic, his temperament or spirit was always sanguine or full-blooded. We get the same feeling in Leo Tolstoy.

*Spose a man was to come to you and say Polly –
voo – franzy – what do you think? - Huck*

Huck's attempt at French is very funny and at the sametime, adorable. In Huck's story, there is an allegorical picture of freedom flowing through its substance where its meaning is symbolically presented. Twain brings out several important contrasts to show, first, a person's conscience against his heart, secondly, society or social restrictions against his freedom and thirdly, the concept of

home against a floating structure of timber called a raft. Hence, we encounter a very serious theme in an apparently humorous tale. The writer's gift for description is exceedingly imaginative, for instance, the exciting adventures of the romantic outcast, Huck and his faithful Jim. Nevertheless, he displays the institution of slavery in its actual light very accurately and factually. Despite all these attributes and motives, there are flaws in the narrative, for example, due to the immaturity of Huck's vision, Twain cannot imagine a future for him. There is also a total lack of resolution on Huck's part in the sense that he does not grow up. But, such minor flaws should be overlooked when considering an artistic production of such indisputable merit demonstrating a harsh, grim kind of realism put forward through the intermediary of subtle humour. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* offers a deeper perception into the 19th Century Southern American Society through a precise, profound fictional portrayal.

*Pooty soon I'll be a – shout'n for joy, en I'll say,
it's all on accounts o'Huck, I's a free man, en I
couldn't ever ben free ef it hadn' ben for Huck;
Huck done it. Jim won't ever forgit you, Huck; you's
de bes' fren' Jim's ever had; en you's de only fren'
old Jim's got now!*

This is Jim's perception of his eventual freedom; a black reaction to this predicament. Mark Twain was determined to fight against the view of a universe controlled by an impulsive, playful kind of unfair deity. He continually saw the human race as the basic evidence of God's failure; the idea forced him to say, *I suspect that there is still dignity in human life and that Man is not a poor joke – the poorest joke that was ever contrived, an April fool Joke played by a malicious creator, with nothing better to waste his time upon.* – Twain. His philosophical outlook is simply an extension of his humanitarian struggles against diverse injustices.

We caught fish, and talked, and we took a swim now and then to keep off sleepiness. It was kind of solemn, drifting down the big still river, laying on our backs looking up at the stars, and we didn't ever feel like talking loud, and it worn't often that we laughed, only a little kind of a low chuckle. - Huck

Their free life on the island is accurately reflected in these lines. At the time that he wrote, there was a transformation in the American literary taste since the writers of the 20th Century all over the world, were rebelling against traditional thought. As pointed out earlier, Twain's prose is very colloquial and therefore, appealing. His greatest difficulty was to accept the conventional attitudes of his own society which were at variance with his innermost impulses. He is, in actual fact, very greatly indebted to the tradition of native American humour with its subversive character; his earlier rebellion was, in a way, strengthened by this particular type of American prose taken largely from colloquial speech. In his best humour, there is a fusion of the Western and the Eastern cultures in America the latter having elements of the native Red Indian culture. The Westerners opposed the traditional values that the Eastern segments symbolised. Throughout his work, he was extremely critical of slavery as exemplified in his study of the decent, noble Jim, the major black male presence in the text. What we are presented in the process, is a glaring opposition between his own anti-slavery ideas and the established views held by his contemporary Americans. He was determined to reject points of view that were narrow and egocentric. Though tradition and customs were very popular in the country at that point, his countrymen also wanted to discard the concepts to which Twain was attaching value fictionally. In a way, their attitude though not exactly a ready willingness, prompted him to renounce these old-fashioned assumptions through the use of humour; here, we see that humour was gradually being used as a weapon to reveal the greyness of life to which most Americans were blind at that stage.

However, we must avoid seeing Twain merely as a spokesman of the frontiersmen confronted with varied injustices.

Oral story-telling was also a cultural tradition during that time and as a fiction writer, having mastered the existing techniques, he has made a profitable use of these in his prose which captured this discernible lack of fairness in *Huckleberry Finn*. Generally, a humorist heightens the contrast between illusion and reality to a certain point where it becomes so ludicrous that the reader is able to laugh at the difference. It is basically through irony that this discrepancy is presented. Yet, when Mark Twain presents his fictional amusements, we can, perhaps, identify the face of a man revealing no emotion. He, thus, confirmed,

The humorous writer pretends to absolute seriousness

He clarified his position by saying that

There are those who say that a novel should be a work of Art solely and you should not preach in it and you should not teach in it. Humour must not teach and it must not preach – but it must do both if it were to live forever.

Throughout his writing career, he maintained that a writer should pay sufficient attention to his technique; his splendid style is illustrative of this conviction. He amused his countrymen by explaining what they were; their continued laughter measures the estimable texture of the prose of Samuel Clemens, the legendary figure of American Literature who wrote under the pseudonym of Mark Twain.

As a humorist, narrator and social observer, Mark Twain is unsurpassed in American Literature. What he said has enormous social and critical value apart from the quantities of aesthetic worth that his substance contains. *Huck Finn*, a masterpiece of humour, brilliant characterization and invaluable realism, has been called

the First Modern American novel. It is important to remember that Twain had been a Mississippi River pilot and in fact, his pen name of *Mark Twain*, was the measuring term in river navigation jargon for a depth of water of two fathoms; twelve feet, used to denote the safety of the river boat in the waters in terms of depth and navigability. His blend of humour with realistic social criticism is a lasting contribution towards the texture of American aesthetic productions. The Twainian satirical overtones in this narrative, reflect a profound gravity. His literary reputation rests, most particularly, on *Huck Finn* and in its hero, a resourceful, unconventional adolescent with an innate sense of human values, he created one of the most memorable characters in fiction. The narrative device of a raft, a mere collection of logs fastened together for transportation as a substitute for a boat, carrying Huck and the slave down the Mississippi, enabled him to achieve a realistic portrait of American life in the 19th Century. Through the means of using authentic vernacular speech, he revolutionised the language of American fiction having greatly influenced many subsequent American writers in the process.

My heart jumped up amongst my lungs – Huck

This is an example of Huck's spoken language. As Twain Scholar, Bernard De Voto has rightly observed, *Mark's humour is as much style as joke and is more personality than style*. As an artist of immense potential, he was unhappy that his fame rested entirely on humorous writings but his fellow Americans attached a very substantial value to him. *I am demeaning myself. I am allowing myself to be a mere buffoon. I can't endure it any longer*. He said since he wished to be taken seriously. It was his strongest attribute and it is this admirable, perceptive humour that brought him recognition and fame.

... Couldn't I put on some of them old things and dress up like a girl? That was a good notion, too. So we shortened up one of the calico gowns and I

turned up my trouser legs to my knees and got into it. ... I put on the sun – bonnet tied it under my chin, ... Jim said nobody would know me, even in the daytime, hardly. I practiced around all day, to get the hang of things, and by – and – by I could do pretty well in them, only Jim said I didn't walk like a girl; and he said I must quit pulling up my gown to get at my pocket. I took notice, and done better. ... so I made up my mind. I wouldn't forget I was a girl.” - Huck

This hilarious episode is a thrilling experience for Huck when he pretends to be a girl dressed up as Sarah Mary Williams. Huck's language contributes enormously to his popularity, for instance, his often replacing of adverbs with adjectives. His partialities including an obsession with clocks and a familiarity with dead animals particularly dead cats as well as omens augment his appeal. What is of central importance, however, is Twain's attitude towards the blacks since he, by way of satire, makes a very genuine attempt to expose his fellow Americans to their own racial hypocrisy. Hence, the racial overtones and implications or suggestions in the *Huckleberry Finn* discourse, are greatly significant and full of worth.

In his textuality, the remarks made by the whites are underlined by racism and as a perceptive author, he deals predominantly with this crucially cogent issue of extensive value. The resultant flavour of richness renders his slave material more point, sophistication and a greater significance. Certain remarks and ideas put forward by the text are apparently mild but contain a very meaningful value. The racial extensions of the book are, therefore, very important. As a work of fiction representing America of the 1850's, we see the content as a poignant social satire and a mordant piece of criticism laced with humour used for an enhancing effect. On the one hand, it contains a straightforward social documentation and on the other hand, from the aim of the textual substance, emerges a tremendous sense of social responsibility to which I have referred

at the beginning of this paper. What is offered is a fuller dramatisation of the racial issues of the day; the contemporary value of the work is, therefore, predominant. One of the most attractive examples of this is provided by Widow Douglas who has no guilt about selling a human being for 800 dollars to a slave trader failing to recognise that the blacks are indeed people with equal rights though they do not voice any dissent through a humble acceptance of their destiny with a merely helpless resignation. The episode under analysis brings into sharper focus, the manner in which the sense of dignity of the blacks, is affected. Here, the widow believes in the correctness of her decision and choice. There is a lot of feeling in Mark Twain's handling of the treatment given to slaves of his day by these outwardly respectable ladies and gentlemen who follow the traditions and the accepted norms of an enormously selfish, somewhat private culture.

In this Clemensian (to use the author's original name) picaresque, a novelistic achievement incorporating adventure and comedy, examining topical, racial prejudice, we also find a host of regional, riverbank expressions covering the dialect spoken in the banks of the Mississippi employed by the writer in an effort to get his urgent and sincere message across with greater effect. It is a brilliant personal point of view of an era of slavery, slave trade and rich absorbing slave markets related to the working of cotton and sugar plantations. Twain, in his pertinent role of social critic, presents a comprehensive analysis of the subordinate position of the blacks in his society with extreme pathos, empathy and humour; the subservient projection of the black slave. It looks as if he has been extensively critical of his people who were well-stocked with the outwardly cultured beliefs and values; men & women of good stock with a strong sense of religion and tradition though blind to their own acts of injustice drifting away from God and Christianity through a ready willingness. This lack of concern for the innocent slaves who are mere operatives in this large process, is contrary

to the simple, juvenile ideology of Huck. Backed by this type of thinking, a beautifully meaningful friendship blossoms between Huckleberry and Jim, a father himself, painfully separated from his wife and family, a circumstance which exemplifies the manner in which a slave family is shattered in the process leading to severe pain of mind mingled with misery. Despite his youth, Huckleberry believes in having a solid personal morality as the base for his dealings with others. In point of fact, he is prepared to go any length for Jim because he knows what is ethically right and therefore, devoid of any form of racial predisposition in his dealings with him. He has a remarkable understanding of the adult world of his day with its empty etiquette. Faithful to his own rules, he emerges clear-sighted and sensible compared to the rest of the whites with their strict formality lacking in meaning. Though conditioned as a white, Huck is able to overcome his prejudices and this innate ability is greatly beneficial to him towards the end. The views that Twain upholds, blend with those of young Huck; full of irony, their statements are tainted with extensive racism portraying the racist attitudes of his day which enable his contemporaries to look upon the blacks as objects without life. It is a very human voice that we hear through Jim, the nigger slave who is entitled to freedom as a human-being though considered a commodity. The fact that the writer sees things from a child's perspective, makes his criticism of racism all the more urgent and immediate. The author's racial arguments are put forward convincingly and he is clearly working towards an equality of the races against a late 19th Century Southern American backdrop, which he believes could be achieved only through an exposure of the foibles of his fellowmen. Thus, Clemensian writing has several layers of intelligent meaning and his humour is always presented with the aim of serving a particular purpose. The priggish mainstream society was his clear target comprising the well-to-do who would not look at a nigger unless for financial gain triggered by pragmatic reasons; as a social observer, he looks at their economical management of frugality

with a fund of empathy which sustains his writing. The soul of the slave was crushed during this procedure with no expectations of recovery. The result of all these positions, contributed towards a squarely critical picture in the novelist's mind. I detect a Baudelairean affinity with his manner of implementing this primary objective:

The comic is imitation, not creation.

Charles Baudelaire

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