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Mark Twain and His Immortal Creations

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Abstract: Mark Twain, the versatile and prolific writer who belongs to the 19th Century American Literature, is one of the best admired writers. With his artistic skill of creating memorable characters like Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer, he makes invaluable contribution in the field of literature. Though less in number his creations are all unique figures and they all are model characters. In this paper an attempt is made to disclose the very art of Mark Twain as creator of beautiful and magnified characters. An effort is made just to analyse the value of Mark Twain as a perfect writer in relations to his notable characters.

Keywords: characterisation, representative, calibre, psychology, epicentre, miscegenation, mulatto, personalities.

A very unique art of characterisation is needed for a writer who tries to prove himself as one of the best known writers in the field of the world literature. A character in a play or in any form of literary work is the best medium by which the writer expresses the main ideology of his work. Without a perfect character, a writer cannot communicate the real purpose of his writing. Obviously, characters play a very important role

in expressing the wholesome thought process of the writers which they want to put before the eyes of the readers. Characters may be human being or even non-human beings. But without a well created character, a writer fails to do justice to his work. So, the art of characterisation is what a writer should give greater emphasis on. No doubt, most of the well-known and successful writers have the skill of creating characters suited for their works and Mark Twain too is one among them.

The place Mark Twain earned in the history of American literature is just because of his skill in producing well framed stories, long or short. He is ever regarded as a pioneer of Realism, humorous writing and also of travel writings in the history of American Literature. No doubt, he is revered more as a humourist rather than anything else. But what is the use of all these elements without desirable characters by which Mark Twain shows his real talent being a humorous writer of the west. In-fact, his creations are his sharp weapons through which he shows every section, every situation and every stage of life's journey as a whole. They all are indeed personified thought. In Mark Twain's hands, they all become real and lively. Every single character created by this great writer is really a surprise package for each and every reader.

This is none other than Mark Twain who creates immortal character. Huckleberry Finn, Tom Sawyer, the nigger slave Jim, the mulatto slave Roxana the Yankee, Tom Cauty and Edward are some of the unforgettable characters created by Mark Twain with his skilful art of characterisation. In-fact, each character contributes his or her best part in his works. All these characters mentioned above are all representative characters and they represent different sections of our social beings. In-short, they can be considered as personified mental condition of human psychology. Mark Twain has the calibre to transform the psychological conditions or abstract feelings of mind into concrete forms just through his best creations. This Artistic quality in him makes his works very much appreciated and analysed in a very positive ways.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884) is undoubtedly one of the best masterpieces ever produced in the history of the American Literature. Huckleberry Finn, who is the title character of the novel, is

just a boy and he is the central figure of the story of the novel. Very skillfully, Mark Twain framed this little hero with a gigantic mind. In fact, he is the mirror reflection of the central, moral and thematic ideologies of the novel. This character is designed in such a way that from all angles, the boy seems to be the perfect medium through which Mark Twain delineates the ever changing journey of human life and human psychology. Inside the boy, there is a real man's spirit and psyche. The epicentre of the story lies in the actions and the thought process of the boy-hero. The story of the novel is shaped by the journey of Huckleberry Finn along the Mississippi river to solve the riddle of life and to find out the place or horizon where he would be free from all the bondage of life. Huck's journey symbolizes man's real journey of life and in this novel Huck represents each and every man in the whole universe. What he shows in the story is quite similar with the man's life journey in reality. Human beings do not know the meaning and the nature of life just after their entrance into the huge world. They learn all these rules of life as they grow up and like them. Huck is portrayed in the novel as an outcast, a vagabond who does not know the real meaning of life. But as he starts his journey along the river, he learns many things related to life and thus becomes a morally matured person which helps him to protect Jim, the nigger slave from the jaws of the evil system of slavery. He saves the slave from slavery. In this regard, Huck represents Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of United States who struggled and sacrificed his life only to abolish the system of slavery and he succeeded in doing so. Like Lincoln, Huck Finn stands by the side of slave community. In spite of having much fear and conflicts in his mind, Huck Finn boldly discards the rules of the society and helps the nigger, thus helping him to reach his destination. Regarding this boy hero, T.S. Eliot comments:

Huck is passive and impassive apparently always the victim of events; and yet in his acceptance of his world and of what it does to him and others he is more powerful than this world because he is more aware than any other person in it. (Eliot 1984, 106)

So, Huck Finn is a real man in the guise of an outcast boy who seems to be very immature but really acts like a very conspicuous person. Another boy- hero who stands just opposite Huck Finn is his playmate Tom Sawyer. Unlike Huck Finn, Tom is really what he looks to be. He represents a real boy in the real world. Like every boy in the world he is romantic, and over ambitious who thinks about something which is impossible to do or to complete. In fact, he is the dummy of all the ordinary boys all over the world. Whatever characteristics found in childhood or boyhood stage are seen in the nature of Tom Sawyer too. He is in reality the personified figure of childhood or boyhood. His adventures and dreams are quite different from that of Huck Finn. If Tom is a real boy, no doubt, Huck Finn is a real man. If Tom is romantic then Huck is obviously realistic. Tom is dominated by the overwhelming thoughts of boyhood and Huck by the ever changing journey of life. These two representative boyhood characters are always placed side by side by Mark Twain just to show the very important stages of life's journey namely childhood and adulthood in a very descriptive and concrete way. Moreover, the romantic boy Tom Sawyer is again the mirror reflection of the novelist himself. How the novelist experiences his childhood days is expressed through the mischievous nature of Tom Sawyer. Whatever pranks done by this boy is just similar with what Mark Twain had done during his boyhood days. In this sense the novel can be considered as an autobiographical novel and what it makes a little bit different from an autobiography is the art of Mark Twain to create such a creation called Tom Sawyer and his ability to show his own childhood through the story of this fictional hero. The affinity between Mark Twain and his little hero Tom Sawyer is expressed by John Seelye with the following lines:

Tom Sawyer is clearly an active agent of the author what is prank for Tom is craft for Mark Twain both being consummate artists at playing upon the emotions of their audiences which for Tom is the town and for Twain his reader.
(Seelye1986, viii)

John Lauber, a biographer of Mark Twain, even states that *Tom Sawyer* (1976) is autobiographical fiction, drawn from memory of

course but memory shaped by imagination and desire” (Lauber1985, 19). Thus, the protagonist who is just a boy in reality represents multiplied personalities which consist of the Twain in person, an American boy generally an uncontaminated boy who does not know the adulterated adult life and again the very paradise of life called childhood etc.

Apart from the two very popular heroes of Mark Twain mentioned above, there are two other creations. They are a nigger slave Jim and a mulatto slave Roxana. Mark Twain is wise enough to create such wonderful characters that represent the victims of the evil system of slavery. He very skillfully portrays the real critical and horrifying situations faced by those helpless slaves under slavery system. This evil system is actually a stigma in the history of America. It will stick to it forever. Such episode is again portrayed by Mark Twain with his own created slave characters and among them the two slaves mentioned above are the best creations. From the character and life of Jim, the hardship and fear of a slave can definitely be known by any reader. In him all those characteristics of a slave are found. In fact, in *Huckleberry Finn*, it is Jim who brings forth the main stream of the novel. Mark Twain succeeds in delineating the realistic picture of a slave’s life only because of this lively character. He is not only the representative character of slaves under the evil system but also each and every slave’s life in times past and future. Minutely speaking, Jim is also an artistic presentation of a slave whom Mark Twain called as Uncle Dan’l. He was a friend, an advisor, even a father like figure for him. And in Jim he puts all the qualities in a very artistic and realistic manner. Twain even creates such creation even as an apology to all the slave classes for his earlier thought of considering the Slavery System as natural as life. He had been brought up in such a family where he could see the system very well for his father also kept slaves in his family. How little Sam (Twain) experienced the evil system can be seen from the following few lines.

As a young boy, Sam saw his father administer a beating Jennie, the Clemenses only slave, for talking back to his mistress; later the boy wept when she was sold down the river. His father sold

other slaves as well once exchanging a man remembered only as “Charley” for ten barrels of tar, to be delivered on or before the following Christmas. (Ward, Duncan & Burns 2001, 11)

So, the life of a slave was something more than a curse. Slaves were considered as commodities which were sold and bought by the upper section of the American society. In *Huckleberry Finn*, Jim also ran away from his master’s house in fear of selling him down the river. Such fate was always faced by slave community under the slavery system. The fear in Jim, the superstitious behaviour in him and also his thought of running away from the system were always in the minds of the real slaves. Through the story of Jim, Mark Twain vividly and very realistically visualises the sorrows and bitter life of slave community with a sense of apology.

In *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, Mark Twain makes a female slave called Roxana as the central character of the novel. She is portrayed as a mulatto slave and as a victim of miscegenation and discrimination. The novel is considered as Mark Twain’s “outcry against the American South” (Pettit 1974, 143). She is created as the revolting agent against evil system of slavery. She is again represented as a struggling psyche of a slave who is ruined by various inhumane acts of the society. A female slave’s mind is personified by Mark Twain in the form of Roxana. She is a slave who has been totally ruined by the system of slavery and miscegenation.

She is made an evil character just because of the evil system. She became so powerful in a negative sense that she even switched her body of to that of her master’s baby just as a thought of giving all the bliss of a master’s life to her child. In this case she did injustice to her master’s innocent baby. At the end nothing good happened. Because of one wrong deed done by her in the state of a fear of separation, a fear of selling her child down the river and a fear of her mind that one day her child would experience the form of life she experienced, she knowingly or unknowingly committed a very big crime by switching of the babies. But that was not her fault. All the unwanted things happened just

because of the evil system having in the life of slaves. So, Roxana is the visible form of the unbalanced psyche of a slave.

Whether Huck Finn, Tom Sawyer, Jim or Roxana, each character is portrayed by Mark Twain in such a way that each character becomes immortal. The art of characterisation in him is so strong that all these characters along with their names will always be in the history of American Literature and in the history of world Literature. Mark Twain draws memories from his own experiences of life and that help him to create beautiful and realistic creations for his works. He can breathe the breath of life into his memorable characters. One of Mark Twain's successes as a novelist lies in his art of characterisation. So, even if his memorable characters are less in number, each performs a gigantic function in his work. For such rare and remarkable quality of Mark Twain, he is always in the good book of every reader.

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