

**MARK TWAIN'S SOCIAL SATIRE: A REFERENCE TO  
THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER AND HUCKLEBERRY FINN**

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Abstract:

Samuel Langhorne Clemens was known by his pen name as 'Mark Twain', is one of the significant analysts of his times. The humor enables Twain to view his age with a certain amount of affection while satirizing the economic and spiritual disorders. The American provincial exploitation provides for a comic effect in 'Innocents Abroad' and other travel books 'A Tramp Abroad' (1880) and the classic 'Life on the Mississippi' (1883) depicted his love for America and its people. The love for his people is intensified in his childhood memories evoked in his masterpieces 'The Adventures of Tom Sawyer' (1876) and 'Adventures of Huckleberry Finn' (1894) are the combined recollections of Twain's youth at Hannibal. This article deals the bitterness with gloomy acceptance and alarms provoked Mark Twain to adopt the critical weapons of the humorist, the inheritor of an indigenous tradition of humor compounded by Indian and Negro Legend.

Keywords: hypocrisy, mockery, slavery, satire, superstition.

Mark Twain's Social Satire:

The novel deals with many problems of society. Huck Finn can't stand hypocrisy, greed and civilization qualities that are still present today. One trait shown in Huck Finn is hypocrisy. In Twain's novels as 'The Adventures of Tom Sawyer' and Huck Finn, Twain is very critical of the hypocrisy of organized religion.

I judged I could see that there was two Providences, and a poor chap would stand considerable show with the widow's providence. (p.11)

Huck does not like Widow Douglas much either, but it is better than Miss Watson's providence. Huck Finn's conflict with social authority. it was according to the old saying 'give an (African American) an inch and he'll take on ell'----. Here was this (African-American) which I had as good as helped to run away coming right out flat-footed and saying even know; a man that hadn't ever done me no harm (pp.75,76)

One cannot help but realize the hypocrisy in this statement that Huck said to himself. It is hypocritical because what he is accusing Jim of stealing children from somebody he didn't even know that is the exact same thing slave owners did accept him. Twain writes through Huck why do people reject authority? People reject authority because of unfamiliarity. Huck reinforces the idea of rejecting it because he became more attentive to the reasons why people acted the way they do. Twain is implying that people in life reject many things that sometimes they are unfamiliar with. In addition, Huck becomes familiar with the idea that friendship is more important than social standards, Twain could also be saying that people are over impulsive, in the sense that they judge too soon, and do not become familiar with what they are judging. The overall mockery of the society of the old South serves as a method of conveying Mark Twain's opinion of society. He helped to expose the hypocrisies of the Southern society through this novel.

Widow Douglas had been trying to civilize him which he said he did not like it. For Huck feels that the ideals of civilization and society that is on the whole corrupt that forces Huck to get out of the territory and be free and satisfied. Underlying this is the conflict between the individual and society social pressures to become 'civilized' and his own urge to strike out and be free are in constant tension. Twain's concept of the restrictive rules of traditional religion makes Huck see Miss Watson's view of 'a pearly gate' concept of heaven as essentially boring and restrictive, he would prefer heaven to be somewhat appealing and a little freedom. Huck also feels that a society which required its property as slaves to become practicing Christians, was expecting a great deal from its former slaves and in any case, it was against the basic tenets of Christianity. The reference to slaves as 'baptized property' was not merely the height of cruelty but exposed the essential hypocrisy of Christianity. For Twain slavery and pious religious concepts of white southerners were an absurdity that required to be exposed. Twain continuous to draw a distinction between Widow Douglas and Miss Watson and their different views on religion. Widow Douglas could talk about religion

to make a boy's mouth water; on the contrary, Miss Watson would then 'take hold and knock it all down again. Thus Widow Douglas was more humanistic and genuine in her religion and probably that is the reason why she did not own a slave whereas Miss Watson did have a slave. Mark Twain's 'Adventures of Tom Sawyer' also forms mainly on the satire of religion and society. The Sunday means reading the Bible, going to church for Sunday schools is an important custom in the society. The important people regularly turn out in their best for the church more to be seen and socialize than for any religious favor. Twain also seems to suggest that most of the churchgoers were not truly religious, the minister who started his sermons 'fine' and 'brimstone' and turned his attention to more mundane matters the young boys gathered to play mischief. Twain also describes how teachers behaved when an important visitor was present and how subservient teachers became in his presence.

Mr. Walters fell to 'showing off' with all sorts of official bustling and activities, giving orders, delivering judgments discharging directions here and there. The librarian 'showed off' running hither and thither... The young Lady teachers 'showed off' bending sweetly over pupils that were lately being boxed, lifting pretty warning fingers at bad little boys and patting good ones lovingly (p.33) (Tom Sawyer)

In Sunday school scene Twain gently satirizes the tradition of making children memorize Bible verses. His intention is to point out universal human weaknesses through the characters of Judge Thatches, the superintendent, the teachers, boys, and girls try to attract the attention of the local celebrity.

Twain's satire is accused of being irreligious or wicked for falling asleep during the service. Rather Twain exposes the comic and sometimes ridicules elements of tradition, such as church-going that however binds the community together. Mark Twain also ridicules the concept of superstitions and blind belief which prevailed in the American Society. Huck and Tom's earnest enthusiasm for superstitions in their conventions about the 'causes of warts' is noteworthy in the book 'Adventures of Tom Sawyer'.

Twain's other book Huckleberry Finn, he tries to point out the blind beliefs of a Negro slave named Jim who is more superstitious and every now and then he attributes his misfortunes to bad luck. This is typical of the American Negro nature to believe in superstitions.

Some young birds come along, flying a yard or two at a time and lighting, Jim said it was a sign, it was going to rain (p. 39) (Huckleberry Finn)

Twain through Huck continues to express his view's against religion. Huck's attempt to pray is a satire against blind faith in religion as seen in the American society.

Jim's adherence to superstitions particularly about witches and devils is a reflection in some ways of the poor man's beliefs who cannot understand why some people are more fortunate than others. Throughout the novel, Jim will attribute misfortunes to same bad luck sign

especially the incident of snake bite. That all comes of my being such a fool as to not remember that whenever you leave a dead snake its mate always comes there and curls around it. (p. 46)

The opening of a coffin in the book Huckleberry Finn: Twain tries to satirize the point of sentiment as an opening of the coffin is a sin. But Twain ridicules the long process of burial customs and if the coffin is opened to prove something good it is right rather than hiding the truth in the grave.

Gentlemen – gentlemen? there is one way yet – let's go and dig up the corpse and look (p.170) (Huckleberry Finn)

In their shame at having stolen the bacon, they refer to the Ten Commandments and to their own conscience. Such simple stealing has a command against that in the Bible. With all their mental maturity even the adults of the town cannot justify the regret they have for not appreciating the boys more during their lives. Ironically Tom possesses greater knowledge of human psychology than the town members themselves.

Here was a gorgeous triangle, they were missed, they were mourned, hearts were breaking on their account, tears were shed, accusing memories of unkindness to these poor lands. (p.100) (Tom Sawyer)

Twain's closing words warp up matters for Tom and Huck and usher them into adult society without actually showing them as adults. The gold which has been pursued without the adult's knowledge as a kind of game is no longer a game. The gold has become a business, so serious that Judge Thatcher, the most significant and authoritative figure in the adult hierarchy, assumes of it. The novel 'The Adventures of Tom Sawyer' which mixes nostalgia for the carefree days of youth with illuminating criticism of adult society, cannot but regret the conclusion of childhood. Tom always tries to enable Huck to recognize the importance of moving toward maturity and sophistication.

Twain tries to point out it is possible to stay from the cruel ideas and views of the society by doing what is morally right. Although one cannot escape the values and beliefs taught in the early years these ideas and values through old still relate to modern society, teach us that only being civilized is not always the best thing. The true values will always depend on our treatment of others and their feelings and the recognition of their humanity in spite of racial discrimination which exists in the society. There is also a constant stream of irony in the narrative. These two facts show the reader that sometimes it is a right to go against society if one feels it is right in one's heart.

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