CHAPTER - II

Mark Twain’s Mississippi
"I will spend 2 months on the river (Mississippi) & take notes, & I bet you I will make a standard work." Such is the faith that Mark Twain had on his river God which is a literary capital for him. The Mississippi river is the second largest river in the United States, with a length of 2,320 miles from Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico. The Mississippi River is a part of the Jefferson – Missouri – Mississippi river system, which is the largest river system in the North America and the largest in the world. The longest of the many long Mississippi tributaries is the Mississippi river with the Arkansas River as the second largest, measured by water volume; the largest of all Mississippi tributaries is the Ohio River. The river starts in Minnesota and then empties into the Gulf of Mexico. It means the river travels in the entire heart part of the Country. In the absence of rail road transportation, the river was the only means of communication and transport. The frontier men traded through the river, Steamboats, wigwams and rafts continued to sail up and down. The pioneer frontier men established their settlements on the shores of the Mississippi because they could easily irrigate their fields and transport their produce to the distant markets. Not only did it become as an important centre of social and economic activities but it also became the literary capital for a good number of American writers. This fact was well related by Fred W. Lorch, who interviewed Mark Twain in 1895 for a Canadian news paper when he wrote “Twain’s river experience became in a particular way literary capital to many American writers.” Thus the river was a literary source not only to Mark Twain but also to many American literary giants like Williams Faulkner, Herman Melville. The river was greatly immortalized in the songs of music maestros’ like Forde Grofe, Johnny Cash and Memphis Minnie McCoy and many others.

At first William Faulkner uses the Mississippi river and Deltas as the setting for many hunts throughout his novel. Herman Melville’s novel The Confidence Man portrayed a Canterbury tales – style group of steamboat passengers whose interlacing stories are told as they travel down the Mississippi River. The novel is written both as cultural satire and a metaphysical treatise. Like The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn of Mark
Twain, it uses the Mississippi River as a metaphor for the largest aspects of American and human identities that unify the otherwise disparate characters. The river's fluidity is reflected by the often shifting personalities and identifies Herman Melville's **Confidence Man**.

Don Rosa is another important author who wrote on the river Mississippi. The author has beautifully portrayed the river Mississippi in the comic book called *The Life and Times of Scrooge Mc Duck*. The entire story is set on the Mississippi. Scrooge works here for his uncle Angus "Pothole" Mc Duck on a wheel steamer and has his first encounter with the "Beagle Boys". Apart from these we have a number of articles authored by petty writers, poems penned by the most famous poets cum singers like Feeder Grofe and Johnny Cash. Many movies are set on this river and in many movies the River was sung jubilantly.

All the above authors, poets, singers and movie makers set their works on the river and thus they became famous but there was a literary soul on the American sacred land who immortalized the river Mississippi, the islands of it, the shores of it, the frontier people, their culture in particular and the American life style in general. That's why he was aptly called the *Lincoln of American literature* by Williams Dean Howell, when he praises Mark Twain by complementing, "Emerson, Long fellows, Lowell, Holmes, I know them all and the rest of our sages, poets, seers, critics, humorists, they were like one another and like other literary men, but Clemens (Mark Twain) was sole, incomparable, the Lincoln of our (American) Literature."³

Mark Twain loves and adores the river Mississippi like a demigod for it was there, on the river his life experience began and it was there, on the river his realization dawned upon and his literary career was moulded to the fine finish. He found the river not only as a bred winning source but also as his literary capital. At the age of four Mark Twain’s family moved to Hannibal with the hope of improving their material lot. Hannibal was Mississippi river side town though small, yet busy because of the humdrum life with which the steam boats coming down or going up streams created. In fact the most
impressionable period of Twain's life was spent here. Clemens was much impressed by the river Mississippi that he took up the new name Mark Twain (a political thread implement used to measure the depth of the water in the river) when he took up the profession of steamboat pilot, which he loved and enjoyed himself a lot.

Later on, when Mark Twain drifted to Journalism and writing, he located most of his major stories and plots against the backdrop of the great river Mississippi, with which he was thoroughly acquainted as a boy, and as a steam boat pilot. The choice of the Mississippi and of the society on its shores was really the master stroke of Clemens genius. He wanted to focus the world's eye at the vast espouse of the frontier life; and he knew that the Mississippi, it being the confluence of all roots of activity, would be the most appropriate subject matter. Moreover he had an absolute hold on the river. All these impressions and influence could be greatly and clearly seen in his three master pieces called *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Life on the Mississippi*, which are the select works for study in this particular chapter. In all these works the river is an important character. The author treated the river like a god. This fact was well appraised by T.S.Eliot when he puts about the river as, "I do not know much about gods, but I think that the river is a strong brown god..."4

So dominantly does it figure in the works and so captivating is its portrait that Mark Twain has given life to it. He has endowed this river with personality, making it vibrant, mysterious and powerful. Enchanted by the river Mississippi and the magic of the steam boats himself, Mark Twain has succeeded in conveying to his readers something of the strange appeal of the river. In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the river is an active participant in the events and also one of the vital characters through this novel and the other books. Mark Twain has made the Mississippi a great focus of the national mind. This fact was well said by L.Bettaman, and Van Wyck Brooks when they comment on the importance of the river in Mark Twain works as," a focus of national mind, as Washington earlier made the Hudson; on a scale incomparably larger and richer than Irving's. Through
him the second greatest of the American rivers became a dwelling place of light, one of the enchanted countries of the imagination, a world uncolonized hitherto, where the mind has never been at home and where henceforth it was always to rest.\textsuperscript{5}

Lionel Trilling also opines the same when he says about the river Mississippi as, "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is a great book, because it is about a God (Mississippi) about, that is, a power which seems to have a mind and will of its own and which, to men of moral imagination, appears to embody a great moral idea."\textsuperscript{6} The novel enacts the drama of great human gusto of Huck and Jim's journey to Free states, where they can enjoy themselves freedom. In their mad pursuit the two runaways use the river Mississippi as their only escape route. Thus the river plays an important role in this escapade.

Mark Twain had a queer charm about the river Mississippi. He loved and liked to that extent, in most of his works either the river or the river side life inadvertently occupied some space. This fact was accepted by him on one occasion when he says, "I confine myself to life with which I am familiar, when pretending to portray life. But I confine myself to the boy life on the Mississippi, because that had a peculiar charm for me..."\textsuperscript{7}

From the above statement we can easily make out that the world of \textit{The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn} is the world around the river Mississippi. This was the world of farms, with hundreds of slaves working in, river side towns, and the rafts and steamers going up and down the Mississippi. The river provided not only the general means of communication and transportation, but also helped the gangs of robbers and cut throats to escape into the woods and thieves in and around the river banks throughout of its length. Mark Twain has the enough experience of this because he worked on the river as a steam boat pilot for some time. Thus Twain knew the river thoroughly. The river Mississippi circulated, as it were, in his blood.

Pirating along the river Mississippi was passion among the young people of those days. This was clearly shown by Mark Twain in his novel
The *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, where Tom says passionately, “You don’t have to get up, mornings, and you don’t have to go to school, and wash, and all that blame foolishness. You see a pirate don’t have to do anything.” Civilization and gentleness were nothing to those. Carefree and vagabond life and hooliganism were praised and followed by one and all. This influence was a lot on the children. It was clearly told by Mark Twain, when Huck says at the end of the novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* “But I reckon I got to light out of the territory ahead of the rest, because I got to light out for the territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she’s going to adopt me and civilize me, and I can’t stand it. I been there before.”

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, thus, gives us a panoramic view of the entire American social life, even though Mark Twain chose to delineate the society on the banks of social and historical grounds. Mark Twain enacts the drama of the growing American Conscience symbolized by Huck, and the great struggle of the Negro, being symbolized by Jim. The Negro, assisted in his flight by a white boy is a unique moment in American history. It is this violence and bloodshed prevalent on the frontier, which lifts the novel from its otherwise episodic simplicity to the heights of moral and philosophical complexity. That’s why Ernest Hemingway’s comment about this novel is befitting, when he lauds, “All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn..... It’s the best book we’ve had. All American writing comes from that there was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since.”

Mark Twain doesn’t like critics branding his work to particular themes. That’s why at the beginning of the novel, itself he warns all. “Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted, persons attempting to find moral in it will be banished, and persons to find a plot in it will be shot.” There are various reasons for giving that warning. Twain was unjustly criticized by the contemporary literary circles even at the release of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. When compared with *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* it was more controversial for telling the truth.
In Mark Twain's earlier novels, even in *Tom Sawyer*, there were quite a few stretches. There are reasons why he couldn't tell the tale truly. The fact was that, in those novels, the narrator was the author himself, brought up on the frontier he could not choose to openly debunk the society of which he himself was a member. In his major novels *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* however he had found the way out. He eliminates the author from the story and allows the principal character to narrate his experiences. Besides the narrator character chosen realistically than philosophically; his reactions and responses are more emotional than intellectual. His innocence and inexperience don't permit him to distort the truth that he has seen outside. This enhances the authenticity of the experience which is one of the principal features of a good narrative. He reports right or wrong, true of false, curtly.

For the above reasons, Mark Twain has to face vehement and pungent criticism as a number of critics challenged his literary career. But this cynical criticism is a benediction to Mark Twain, because it blazed his name and fame among the literary circles within no time, when his masterpiece, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, was withdrawn from the general circulation shelves. The reason was - the American folk believed that "Huck Finn" presented disappointing picture of the America Negros and also Twain had muddled English language with his barbaric usage. The concord Library Committee branded the novel as 'the variest trash'. Adding salt to the injury religion also joined this row and called Mark Twain, "This son of the devil, Mark Twain."¹²

But the surprising news about the novel is that by that time nearly a thousand copies have been already sold out. This did not help the book to come to lime light immediately. It took nearly three decades to the novel to come out of these critical clutches. Soon things turned topsy-turvy and all the petty fogging of the Americans were cleared by the new critics like, Devote, Hemingway, Lionel Trilling and T.S. Eliot. In this connection T.S. Eliot commented "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is the only one of Mark Twain's various books which can be called masterpiece."¹³
In this chapter, the mention of the river is at first heard when the gentry of St. Petersburg believed that Huck's father was drowned in the river. But Huck had his own doubts of the demise of his father. True to his fears, one day he saw his father's footprints in the snow, and he was terrified. At once, he rushes to Judge Thatcher, and signs away his deposited amount, (which he got at the end of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* as his share from the thieves treasure) for a consideration of one dollar. When Huck returns to his room, to his shock he finds his father waiting there for him. He rebukes Huck for his going to school and wearing clean clothes. He demands Huck's money, which Huck refuses to part with it, but his father snatches the one dollar and bully rags the Judge and Widow Douglas. He files a suit against them for possessing his son Huck unlawfully. When he feels law cannot do any justice to him, he kidnaps Huck to the other side of the river Mississippi. There he locks him up in a log cabin.

Here Mark Twain introduces the social set up and the behavior of the American society along the river Mississippi. Although Mark Twain was not a serious social critic yet he could not resist the inhumanities of the contemporary life. That's why Phillip Foner says, "Mark Twain was our greatest social critic, as such he speaks to us with an immediacy that surmounts the barriers of time."14 Huck's father belonged to the last class of the social ladder. It is his vulgar behavior and Widow Douglas too many restrictions that made Huck to run away and to take refuge on the river Mississippi. He had a special liking for the river, as it is clear from Huck's words: "Well, when Tom and me got to the edge of the hill top we looked away down into the village and could see three or four lights twinkling, where there was folks, may be; and the star over us was sparkling ever so fine; and down by the village was the river, a whole mile broad, and armful still and grand."15

One day, Huck's father tries to kill Huck in a drunken mood. But Huck escapes from his devilish father just in hair width. From that moment his desire to run away multiplies, and he waits for a chance, which he got very early. The next morning, Huck's father asked Huck to see whether there
were any fish on the lines; he thought that this was the best chance for him to make his preparations for the great expectation of getting something for his escapade. True to his predictions he got a beautiful canoe.

Huck thanked the river Mississippi for providing him with a beautiful canoe and he hid it in the nearby bushes, just before his father's arrival to the spot. Here one can understand that the river Mississippi is ready to host its little guest, that's why it supplied a canoe, in order to take him to the distant lands where he can enjoy himself freedom and liberty. Every time Huck was confronted with a danger, immediately he sought the help of the great river, which helped him magnanimously. When Huck's father shouted at him for being so sluggish he threw the blame on the Mississippi by saying that he fell into the river.

After their lunch, Huck's pap set out to the town to sell the logs that they collected from the floating wood on the river. Huck saw this as the best chance that he could use for his escape. It is again, the river Mississippi that made Huck's father to leave for his town by providing with some logs, and thus it instigated its little friend to avail the golden chance. Accepting the river's invitation Huck enacted a mock self murder and dropped his canoe into the river Mississippi with the required paraphernalia. Soon Huck reached his dreamland, Jackson Island. Thus in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn the most important character, the river Mississippi was brought into complete picture. Hence forth almost all the incidents in the novel take place either on the river or on its banks. Thus the Mississippi became the most significant character in the novel. Writing on the important role of the Mississippi Mrs. Marry, S. David comments: "One who peruses the novel feels that the Mississippi river is the central factor, the thread that ties the various parts of the novel holding it together, preventing it from falling to pieces."16

Early in the morning, when Huck woke up, he was baffled to find himself in thick woods of Jackson Island. Soon he hears some gun shots, and finds some people in a ferry boat are shooting and occasionally firing a
gun. In fact they are searching for the dead body of Huck. Quite a few loaves of bread with quicksilver on them are floated on the river to trace the dead body. One of those loaves reaches Huck, who was hiding in a bush. He catches it, removes the quick silver, and eats it. Huck munching the bread loaf says humorously. "Now I reckon the Widow or Parson or somebody prayed that this bread would find me, and here it has gone and done it."^{17}

Huck could recognize the people in the boat; they include Pap, Judge Thatcher, Tom Sawyer, and Aunt Polly. As the ferry boat moved towards the town, Huck comes back to his halting place and made a camp in the woods. During one of his wanderings he discovers Jim, the Widow's Negro slave. When Jim meets Huck, he cries and begs Huck not to harm him, for he considers Huck to be a ghost.

When Huck convinced Jim that he is not a ghost, Jim reveals to him that he ran off, when Widow Douglas wanted to sell him away to Orleans. Huck assures Jim that he would help him in every manner. Thus the bond seized between them in the very presence of the river Mississippi. Thus the river provided Huck a guardian in the form of Jim who was a very good slave, who fondles and assists him in his interests. As Lionel Trilling rightly observes: "To Huck much of the charm of the river life is human: it is raft and wig warm and Jim. He (Jim) has run away from Miss Watson and the Widow Douglas and Huck from his brutal father, very much as Stephen Douglas in James Joyce's Ulysses finds his true father in Leopold Bloom."^{18}

Huck and Jim knew pretty well that they were in the lap of the river Mississippi with a common quest for freedom. Thus their common cause has been conditioned by forces outside their control. The river Mississippi aids and affects the escape of Huck and Jim, in achieving their common cause there develops an emotional intimacy between Huck and Jim. To put it in the words of Lionel Trilling "The boy (Huck) and the Negro(Jim), a slave form a family a primitive community, and it is a community of saints."^{19}

Huck Finn has sought the help of the river Mississippi and got refuge in Jackson's Island that stands out in the heart of the Mississippi. Later on
gave the company of a human being in the form of Jim. And throughout the story, the river looms large, befriending the fugitives, abetting them mostly. Now and then creating problems as and when the fog comes and Huck loses sight of Jim. When the two men in the canoe want to have a look at Huck’s raft or made to feel the river as a personage sympathizing with the runaways, and never entirely hostile. But for expansiveness, and the protectiveness of the river Huck and Jim would not have drifted freedom at lost.

The river Mississippi is ready to provide its guests with the needed things like a lumber raft, and wooden farm house. At the same time, the river was kind enough to provide a kind father in the form of him, the nigger. Thus the river with its otherwise geographical fixity doesn’t remain a fixed or static metaphor; it is functional; it is the idea itself. Huck’s quest for freedom to shape his own destiny according to his aims and ideals, and the notorious environment with its adult “odes and values” has to be shattered, sometimes broken through, to gain that freedom. Huck derives inspiration from the river Mississippi. To him the river controls the destiny of the people, rather than being controlled by others. In the river Mississippi he sees a comrade, an associate, and he establishes a sort of understanding with it.

Like the river’s, Huck’s Journey must continue like growing expanse and power of the river. There is the growing sense of moral wisdom in his mind, and the process of intensification in his struggle. The Mississippi seems to guide the destiny of the people, and direct their activities. It also lays bare the capaciousness of the invisible force that shapes and rules Man’s very being. Despite some mistakes on the part of Huck, Huck and Jim’s bond grew stronger and this intimacy was growing in the very presence of the river Mississippi.

Truly speaking Huck and Jim’s intimacy is a starting point towards an ideal community on the raft. At the same time, here one can see the river is found to be as a hood winker, which blurred its two guests by provisionally separating them, by creating a storm in it. But the significant thing to
remember is that the river has only separated them to see how they long for each other; when it was convinced that they could no longer be happy without each other's company, it again, reunited them on its shores.

In between all these happenings, a conflict started in Huck's mind. He did not know whether he had to save Jim or to leave him in the mid sea. Here, Gladys Carmen Bellamy's opinion is pertinent to quote, when he says about Huck's dilemma; "His tradition and environment pull him one way; what he feels in heart pulls him the other way."  

Finally his heart triumphs when he puts off the men from searching the raft. Peter Coveney says in this connection... "Positive assertion made through the painful triumph of Huck's sympathy for Jim and this balances and controls Twain's negative case against civilization." Here, Huck's Mississippi is already at the rescue of Jim, taking the poor nigger into its cool lap. Thus the river Mississippi is always at the beck and call of ideal guests.

At last Jim was set free and Huck was adopted by Aunt Sally. Thus the novel ends, where it starts. Coming to our river Mississippi it was endowed by Mark Twain with personality, making vibrant, mysterious and powerful in the novel. Mark Twain has succeeded in conveying to his reader something of the strange appeal of the Mississippi river; through him the greatest of American rivers became a dwelling place of light, one of the enchanted countries of the imagination, a world un-colonized hither to, where the mind has never been at home and where hence forth it was always happy to rest. According to Marry S. David, "It would not be quite wrong to say that the Mississippi river is one of the major characters of the novel, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn."  

In The Adventures of Tom Sawyer; the other select novel of our study in this particular chapter the river Mississippi is seen in the Chapter 13. Since then, it is a constant character in the novel till the end. In the novel the significance, the functions, and the constituent properties of the river Mississippi which flows across almost the entire United States from its North – East tributaries down to the Atlantic, have been discussed, analyzed and
evaluated literistically by Mark Twain. It is intertwined by Mark Twain with Tom Sawyer's action.

Tom Sawyer was a frontier child, he loves adventure, name and fame but he could not have any of those thrills either at home or at school. Besides that he was insulted everywhere. So he formed a gang with Joe Harper and Huckleberry Finn. All of them with the required and available ration went to Jackson Island for adventure. But it was thought by the villagers that the river Mississippi stomached them. For that the river was blamed by the St. Petersburg gentry. But the river Just simply laughed at them and maintained mum at their scolding. Thence here after the river is the stage for the enactment of the young heroes' adventures.

One could hardly imagine the novel without the river Mississippi. There is a peculiar, yet significant parallelism between the movement of the story and the flow of the river. Along the river and in between, wherever the river divided itself into two separate channels made an Island. Here the thick woods and shady dark islands, often served as a refuge for the runaways and criminals who frequented the river Mississippi.

Thus, if the river sustained the social and financial life of the people, it also helped and encouraged the murderers, cut-throats, robbers and frauds, who could easily find their victims on the river Mississippi. These criminals could easily escape into the dark woods during the day and report to their piratical activities as soon as the sun goes down. The river remained indifferent to all these happenings and that is why Tom Sawyer was tempted to become a pirate. It is made clear when the narrator says:" Why shouldn't they? What right had the friendless to complain? Yes, they had forced him to it at last; he would lead a life of crime. There was no choice."23

Mark Twain being pilot for sometime knew every minute detail about the river Mississippi and its criminal hosts. He watched everything at close quarters and presented his experience in his books either fully or partially. He saw himself in Tom and narrated every feeling of his heart through his characters, especially through Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn. He himself
narrates it when says; "Huck Finn is drawn from my life; Tom Sawyer also, but not from an individual -- he is a combination of characteristics of three boys whom I know." (ATS, P.1)

Tom and his two cronies who had been on the Jackson Island which had been nestled in the river Mississippi, built a fire against the side of a huge log, and they cooked some bacon and had sumptuous feast. They were thrilled to the core in the island and they were so fascinated by the virgin forest, for some time, they enjoyed long swimming in the river and played all over the beach. In the presence of the river Mississippi there were no bounds to their happiness for there was no one to wake them up early in the mornings. Tom was the happiest of all for there was no compulsion of going to school; they can enjoy good smoking, fishing and playing. Thus in the lap of the river Mississippi they were the most happy souls on the earth.

For Tom and his two friends, living on the river Mississippi was the way of life, the river Mississippi which tempted them to come there has provided them with all the entertainment that are desired by an adventurous boy. Besides that the boys were enthralled by the beauty and the hospitality of the river. That's why; they all preferred to be there in Jackson's Island rather to be the President of United States. Because, now on the island, no fret and fever haunt them, more ever there were no restrictions at all in their daily activities.

Tom and his friends, parents and villagers tried every kind of operation to fish out the boys dead bodies from the river Mississippi, for they believed that the river had swallowed them, but these poor souls didn't know that it was the river itself that gave them food, shelter, entertainment and above all liberty which lacked on the land. Tom was in no mood to leave his beloved river Mississippi, for it is here his spirit aglowes and enjoys itself every kind of enjoyment it desired; but on the land he was insulted everywhere. Even his girlfriend (Becky) estranged him. This pained him a lot. This was a blow to him, he couldn't stomach it. His little heart was severely wounded, so his eyes fell upon becoming a pirate.
The river Mississippi and Jackson Island gave Tom Sawyer, Huck Finn and Joe Harper a new life. The boys were the frontier boys, the frontier people that day were always after name and fame, when the young boys felt that they had nothing with them of that kind, they ventured at the river Mississippi and besought its help, which was warmly granted. The river Mississippi might have played a role in separating the young lads from their civilization but it worked like a bridge between the human civilization and uninhabited Jackson Island. After the missing of three boys, the villagers started their search operations thinking that the young lads were drowned in the river Mississippi. But they did not know that it was the river which fondled them with its dumb hospitality. Moreover, it worked like a messenger in conveying the matter to the young hero’s. This was the massage that had been much awaited by Tom Sawyer, because Tom always wanted to do something special and sensational to win the laurels from all the villagers. His main intention in leaving the village and sojourning in the Jackson Island is to win over Becky’s heart, and becoming a name among the young and the old. When he saw the ferry boat on the river Mississippi, his heart was glowed with ecstasy and his happiness knew no bounds.

Here the river Mississippi was responsible for the happiness of Tom Sawyer. It helped Tom Sawyer in two ways. The first one is it conveyed the message of his supposed death, and the second is it hid them in its lap when their security was threatened. Thus the role of the river is laudable and unforgettable. It made the young lads the heroes of the St. Petersburg.

The days rolled on and gradually the excitement faded, Tom and Joe could not keep back thoughts of certain persons at home, which were not enjoying this fine frolic as much as they were. Even Huckleberry Finn, who was used to be punished by his father, felt home sickness for his little hovel. Here he says to Tom, “I want to go too, Tom. It was lonesome any way, and now it will be worse. Let’s go, too, Tom.”(ATS.P.109) Even Becky who was angry with Tom for some reasons could not digest the separation from Tom’s Lovely Company. She wept bitterly for Tom’s return. This is the heart breaking repentance, which Tom exactly wanted from Becky, and now it is
done. All the Sunday school peers of Tom competed to share their experiences with Tom. They related their various experiences with Tom and Joe. They were so sad to miss such sweet friends. Perhaps, the river Mississippi, which is a link between the Jackson, Island and St. Petersburg, was so much moved with this heart moving situation and it might conveyed the message to its guests Tom, Huck and Joe.

On the Sunday all the villagers attended the prayers. Their countenances were pale and sad. In commemoration of the dead boys, many heart moving hymns were sung and the text followed. "I am the resurrection and life". Exactly at this moment the boys presented themselves before the villagers and everyone was transfixed, confused and finally celebrated their arrival. Aunt Polly and Mrs. Harper fretted their respective boys with kisses and all the gathering was after them, but nobody took care of Huck Finn. On the Mississippi and on the Island he was equal to Tom and Joe. Now this civilized society ill-treated him with their gross indifference. Unable to digest this Tom angrily and openly complained to his aunt by saying; "Aunt Polly, it isn't fair, some body's got to be glade (sic) to see Huck." (ATS,P.137)

What a hero Tom has become, now! He did not go skipping and prancing, but moved with a dignified swagger and like a pirate or bandit, who felt the public eye was on him. Smaller boys than himself flocked at his heels, as it would be a pride to be seen with Tom. Boys of his own size pretended not to know he had been away at all; but they were consuming with envy, nevertheless. At school he was respected in high esteem and grandeur. Tom and his friend Joe narrated some of their adventures to the hungry listeners. The very summit of glory was reached in case of Tom, for he always liked to imagine that he would become either a notorious pirate of medieval England like Captain Flinth or a famous bandit Robin Hood. It is true when L. Moffit Cecil says", Robin Hood did so in medieval England; and Tom Sawyer, in St. Petersburg, Missouri Toms triumph was especially happy one,...
Again the river Mississippi is seen when Tom and his party went on a picnic to the cave, where Tom was happy and hilarious. All these days he spent sleepless nights for testifying against Injun Joe. Now in the presence of his trusted guardian river Mississippi he forgot all the mundane encumbrances. Tom was always happy and hilarious, whenever he was on the river.

After enjoying themselves the beauty of the river god, they reached the devilish cave, which is a symbol of the underworld. River, wilderness, Island and cave have their own symbolic, significance in Twain's works. The first three of these traditional mythic landscapes are chiefly present in the Jackson Island episode. The name of the Island may suggest frontier democracy, just as the village name St. Petersburg, suggested despotism and slavery to the nineteenth century Americans. Tom especially who is an absolute liberty monger can't bear the suppression of the adults, teachers and others. So he took solace in romantic character like Robin Hood. In that process he subconsciously implemented too. This fact is well related by L. Moffitt when he says”, Tom's hero worship goes far beyond mere idle adulation, mere playacting, subconsciously, at least, he identifies with Robin Hood. He recognizes a correlation between the world of St. Petersburg and Robin Hood's England, and he takes the initiative, as Robin had done centuries before...

In many traditional legends the cave has a similar role. In it the hero often finds that long sleep which is not death; is often a place of temporary dropping out of life. But here in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Mark Twain shifted to the old order of symbolizing it to be an underworld. This fact was well attested by Robert Tracy when he says it; "Mark Twain chooses to use it (cave) rather differently, however in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer the cave suggests that visit to the underworld which is part of the adventures of Dante, Arenas, Odysseus, and other epic heroes an underworld, ruled over by a devil."
It is true for the word ‘labyrinth’ is often used in the novel to refer to devil. Besides that the cave echoes Tom’s cries for help into meaningless pleads of laughter, just as frontier’s Mara bar caves turn all sounds to a meaningless “boun oum”. The cave is dark, meaningless and unexplored. It is a place of horror and death. A new Tom emerges from the cave after his care for Becky makes him a true hero. Like Aladdin and Ali Baba he emerges rich, leaving the evil criminal tapped inside for this reformation of Tom’s character and for highlighting the kindness of the river Mississippi the cave was deliberately used in the novel.

Along with Becky, Tom ventured into the deep parts of the cave forgetting their whereabouts in that place, ultimately they lost their connection with the remaining picnic group and thus they were forcibly imprisoned in the devil’s home. For three days their whereabouts were not found. The village of St. Petersburg mourned bitterly for the return of Tom and Becky. Search parties worked relentlessly, but all their efforts ended in fiasco. Public prayers had been offered up for them Mrs. Thatcher, mother of Becky was very ill and for a great part of the time, delirious. Aunt Polly had dropped into a settled melancholy and her grey hair had grown almost white. The village went to its rest on Tuesday night sad and forlorn.

All of a sudden in the midnight there raised, a commotion, people ran hither – thither shouting “Turnout! Turnout! They’re found! They’re found! They’re found! The village was illuminated, nobody went to bed again, and it was the greatest night the little town had ever seen. Processions were organized, and they were smothered by kisses. How they came out of the cave was still a mystery to the villagers. Tom related his adventures to the hungry audience and his glory once again touched its highest watermark.

How was Tom elevated from a gory situation to glorious position? It is the river Mississippi that helped Tom to come out of the cave. Here Twain hilariously narrates Tom’s expedition, “.... He followed two avenues (in the cave) as far as his kite line would reach; house he followed a third fullest stretch of the kite line, and was about to turn back when he glimpsed a far off
speck that looked like day light: dropped the line and groped toward it, pushed his head and shoulders through a small hole and saw the broad Mississippi rolling by*27

This was really the second life that was given to Tom by the river Mississippi because he was disgusted and terrified after seeing Injun Joe in the cave. It would be damn sure that he would kill Tom instantly if he came across Tom and Becky. After escaping from Cardiff hill incident, Joe changed his shelter to this cave. At the same time Becky's condition was precarious. Tom's heart was melted at her suffering; when she complained that she was so hungry, Tom checked his pocket, there he got small slice of bread. He gave it her and coaxed her that everything would be alright. But his grief grew to the fullest when Becky pathetically asked him, to stay with her at the last moment of her death. Tears rolled down from the eye lids of Tom and innerly he too wept bitterly thinking his sad fate. He fondly remembered all his glorious days when he was in the company of the Old man River, as the Americans fondly call it. The Mighty Mississippi couldn't bear it for it has been observing the three dimensional suffering spectacle of its friend Tom.

At the Cardiff hill Huck was severely ill, he had been dreaming that his crony, Tom would come and help him. At St. Petersburg on the other side of the Mississippi Aunt Polly had been sorrowfully waiting for the Tom's arrival and here in the devilish cave, he had been battling for life. This was unbearable for the kind Mississippi. It gave Tom everything, name, fame, entertainment and enlightenment. Now its own friend and child are struck in clutches of the devilish cave.

Thinking it not to be fair, the mighty Mississippi made its appearance to Tom, which he saw through a narrow hole and his heart glanced with happiness; he ran diligently to his love and heralded the good news. The slow pulse of her heart rate raised high with that news, both of them came out of the cave and the 'Big River' looked like a 'Big Brother' welcoming them from the clutches of the death. After seeing the river Mississippi their
hopes did not become dupes. It transported them to a small house where they were served food and drink. From there it took them to St. Petersburg and it made Tom Sawyer the mythical hero of it, as Tom used to desire. Thus the role of the river Mississippi in the novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is unforgettable, and undeniable, but for its role surely the novel would have been barren, insipid and structureless.

The next work for our study in this chapter is "Life on the Mississippi". The author who would become famous as Mark Twain started is life as Samuel Clemens, born and raised along the river Mississippi, Clemens started the life of a steamboat pilot. Based on this information Mark Twain wrote a work called *Life on the Mississippi*. Mark Twain published the book after a lapse of many years, in 1883. The river Mississippi is in fact, the primary subject – matter of the book. The remarkable feature of this book is the vivid portrayal of the river Mississippi. Commenting on this book, Robert Keith Miller says "within its pages are to be found almost all aspects of that work as a whole. We find Twain as a novelist, autobiographer, and reporter offering to us a strange combination of memoir, travelogue, tall tale and literature manifesto, a potpourri into which indigestible hunks of raw statistics are haphazardly thrown in beside some of the most evocative passages in American literature."  

*Life on the Mississippi* is put together in a curious fashion. It was printed in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1875 under the title *Old Times on Mississippi*. Seven years later Twain set about extending this material into a full size book, and he revisited the Mississippi along with his publisher and a stenographer in order to get new material. This is clear from Robert Keith Miller's article where he writes, "Finally he decided to return to the Mississippi, hoping that the river journey – his first in twenty years – would provide him with the new material he required."  

*Old Times on Mississippi* Became chapters IV - XVII of *Life on the Mississippi*. Twain added to this nucleus three chapters which complete the account of his apprenticeship as a pilot, and introduced it by three says,
"I take back the remark that I can't write for Jan. number. For (The Reverend Joseph) Twichwell and I have had a long walk in the woods and I got to telling him about Old Mississippi days of steam boating glory and grandeur as I saw them (during 5 years) from the pilot house. He said 'what a virgin subject to hurl into a magazine!' I had not thought of that before. Would you like a series of papers to run through 3 months or 6 or 9? — or about 4 months, say? At once, Twain got a nod from his publisher and Twain started to pen down his favorite subject, the river Mississippi under the title Old Times on the Mississippi. But this life on the Mississippi has two parts. The first part deals with Twain's gusto with the river, as an apprentice in piloting; and the second part deals with his reaction to the changed river conditions. This is clear from Robert Keith Miller's essay, "Sailing a Shoreless Sea"; where he writes: "Life on the Mississippi can be divided into two parts: The river remembered and the river reencountered."

The first part of the book is dominated by the material that had already been published in the Atlantic, the second, which can be said to begin at chapter twenty two, tells the story of Twain's return to the river as a successful writer who is recognized and feted wherever he goes. As a result, the book lacks a unified point of view. The narrator shifts from a pilot to a tourist. For a tourist, the river may be good looking and interesting, but, if the tourist had already had some acquaintance with the river, then the change can be apparent. As rightly said by Robert Keith Miller "The River seen from the first class cabin is no longer the same as the river Twain remembered from his youth."

That is why he often seems to lament the past, conveying the sense that it was more picturesque than the present. Having returned to the river after a lapse of twenty years, he is shocked by the way in which things have changed. Consider for example, the contrast that is drawn between two types of river men. Early in the book, Twain describes the men who guided barges down the river in his youth as "rough and hardy men; rude, uneducated, brave suffering terrific hardships with sailor like stoicism, heavy
drinkers, coarse frolickers in moral sties .... heavy fighters, reckless fellows, everyone, elephantine jolly, foul witted, profane; prodigal of their money, bankrupt at the main, honest, trustworthy, faithful to promises and duty, and often picturesquely magnanimous."

Despite the catalogue of negatives – "rough", "rude", "uneducated", "reckless" and "profane" – these men seem almost heroic. Everything they did was on a grand scale, be it lying, drinking or fighting. Common sense suggests that there must have been some men, in those days, who were lazy, timid, or just plain men. But we are dealing here with the archetypal, the American pioneers as sanctified by the warm glow of memory.

When Twain returns to the river, he is disappointed to find that modern crews are apt to be less colorful. "Up in this region we met massed acres of lumber rafts coming down – but not floating leisurely along, in the old-fashioned way, manned with joyous and reckless crews of fiddling, song-singing, whisky-drinking, break-down-dancing rascallions; no, the whole thing was shored swiftly along by a powerful stern – wheeler, modern fashion, and the small crews were quiet, orderly men of sedate business aspect, with not the least suggestion of romance about them anywhere." Similarly, although he recognizes that the Mississippi has been improved by the federal government, which has dredged out shallow channels and installed electric lamps at difficult crossings since he last traveled the river, Twain complains that life used to be much more interesting. Now the river is more navigable, but this has knocked the romance out of piloting and has deprived the status of pilots they used to enjoy. Mark Twain aptly puts it "verily we are being treated like a parcel of mates and engineers. The Government has taken away the romances of our calling; the company has taken away its state and dignity." In Twain's view, his old profession has now become a thing of the dead and pathetic past. Upon returning to the Mississippi, Twain is forced to relive that the great days of the steamboat are over. He is amazed by the tremendous changes. Often he thought that he couldn't complete his task of
writing a book disgusted him a lot. This disappointment resulted in the loose organization of the book and the author himself is obliged to concede this fact. Admitting this at one point, he says: “But I am wandering from what I was intending to do.”

Despite all these fluttering, Mark Twain knows admirably how to convey the special atmosphere of each characteristic environment. On the river, in the pilot’s cabin, we observe the struggle of men against the force of capricious and changing nature. The level of the waters the configuration of the bends, the location isles and harbors, these are the whole life of a pilot; the river is his whole horizon. In a small village we find various social forces at work; society shows a tendency to organize itself into rigid classes, spirits are blunted, the inhabitants submit to a dull conformity, religion grows narrow, public opinion is stern and restrictive; men have settled down, have lost the drive of pioneers. At this stage Mark Twain takes his heroes from the strange and motley world between the Mississippi and the Pacific to show to his fellow beings how life can be led happily with its entire splendor. He observed everything minutely and was able to perceive the eternal truths about America and to translate them into fiction, because he bore them within himself. According to Maurice Le Breton: “Through him we know the little Missouri town, asleep on the banks of the river, with its houses rising in to steps from the level, surrounded by its circle wooded hills terminating near the Mississippi in sheer cliffs pierced by caves.”

Twain has described for us the river itself, with its rapid and its half submerged logs feared by the navigators, the wooded isles and dismal cotton plantations to the South. Along with him we cross the desert, the emigrant wagon, along a trail marked by skeletons of animals; clumps of sagebrush scattered here and there, and at night coyotes roaming about the camp. We follow him into the Arkansas farm minutely described in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, with its clean rooms, its floors covered with rugs, the heath framed in well-scrubbed red brick, the naïve knickknacks on the mantelpiece, and the popular prints on the wall. Elsewhere, it is Washoe, the country of the prospector, the hut of the
lumberjack, the encampment in the saloon where the earnings of two
months are gambled in one night. The entire west files past us in a
succession of precise, faithful images. His realism may not be up to the
mark, but he has tried his level best to show the world what he has seen and
what he has been watching through this work. In this context it is pertinent
enough to quote Maurice Le Breton: "No doubt mark Twain fails to tell
everything. He is not conducting an investigation, he is evoking
memories."

As a writer, Mark Twain is very sincere. He describes everything
without any embellishment. That is why his contemporary hypercritic
Americans could not digest his too much frankness, for they thought he was
vitiating the American popularity. One of the American critics Maurice Le
Breton vehemently criticizing Mark Twain, writes, "an incarnation of the
better side of the ruffianism that is one result of the independence of
American."

His description of the river Mississippi is quite natural and attractive.
In the first three chapters he gives an account of the flora and fauna of the
river. From Chapter IV the real story of his boyhood ambitions, his becoming
of a pilot and other things are described. In the beginning of the IV Chapter
itself Twain makes it clear that he had a burning desire and jest for piloting.
When he reports: "When I was a boy, there was but one permanent ambition
among my comrades in my village on the west bank of the Mississippi River.
That was to be a steamboats man. We had transient ambitions of other
sorts, but they were only transient. When a circus came and went, it left us
all burning to become clowns: the first minstrel show that ever came to our
section left us all suffering to try that kind of life; now and then we had a
hope that, if we lived and were good, God would permit us to be pirates.
These ambitions faded out, each in its turn; but the ambition to be a
steamboat man always remained."

This passage indicates Twain's strong desire to become a pilot. He
had to wait until he got a chance of meeting a steamboat captain who was
not only quite famous in Hannibal but also in all the towns on the banks of the great river Mississippi. This chance meeting turned out to be a fortunate one and at once his childhood ambition was revived. The entire picture of Hannibal became alive and its vividness appealed to his mind to such an extent that he gave up the idea of going South in pursuit of wealth. Thus he says he was seduced by the bewitching beauty of the Mississippi into becoming a pilot on that river. "That was more than fifty years ago", he says: "In all that time my temperament has not changed by even a shade. I have been punished many and many a time, and bitterly, for doing things and reflecting afterwards, but these tortures have been of no value to me. I still do the thing commanded by circumstance and Temperament, and reflect afterward."  

In spite of all these intricacies Mark Twain never gave-up his heart, he felt that his piloting experience had a special value for him. We find him saying in the novel Life on the Mississippi: "I am going to this day profiting somewhat by that experience, for in that brief, sharp schooling. I got personally and familiarly acquainted with about all the different types of human nature that are to be found in fiction, biography, or history." Here, Fred W. Lorch has found it in an interview in a Canadian newspaper in 1895 in which Twain, so late in life, still seems to think of Old Times as his special achievement. Twain said to the reporter: "By a series of events – accidents – I was the only one who wrote about old times on the Mississippi. Wherever else I have been, some better have been there before and will come after, but the Mississippi was a virgin field. No one could write that life but a pilot, because no one else but a pilot entered into the spirit of it. But the pilots were the last men in the world to write its history."  

Mark Twain promised to pay five hundred dollars to his preceptor, Horace Bixby, after getting his first wages. Thus the contract was settled and Bixby started teaching the piloting skills. But Twain was neither a skilled fellow nor a courageous chap. Bixby encouraged him telling that a pilot should have complete faith in himself and must not be baffled at a simple crux. The pilot has to read the waters and understand them and has to
predict the very snake in the grass. Even, during the night times also he can
tell the place where they are sailing and can land the boat at the exact spot
without the help of any light. He can predict and foresee the forthcoming
danger within no time. Even at the worst times also he does not lose his
 temper. He could take the bull by horns by facing any type of music that
challenges him. Bixby teaches every minute detail to Twain, but Twain
forgets everything because of this poor memory. He then advises Twain,
“My boy, you must get a little memorandum-book; and every time I tell you a
 thing, put it down right away. There is only one way to be a pilot, and that is
to get this entire river by heart. You have to know it just like
ABC.”(LMP,P.31), Mark Twain felt piloting was not so easy as he thought.
No teacher or school can teach piloting without having the first hand
experience on the memory of Horace Bixby.

In addition to courage and memory, a pilot has to learn some other
things. Often gazing at the water, the pilot should pretend as if he was
reading them like a book. But to Twain it was a blank book, he could not
make-out either the head or the tail. After his teacher taught him how to
read the water, Twain became a well-versed man in reading the water. After
mastering himself in reading the river Mississippi water, he has lost all the
fancy that had for the beautiful river. We see this, most clearly in Twain's
account of the two ways of looking at river: "Now when I had mastered the
language of this water and had come to know every trifling feature that
bordered the great river as familiarly as I know the letters of the alphabet, I
had made a valuable acquisition. But I had lost something, too, I had lost
something which could be never restored to me while I lived. All the grace,
the beauty, the poetry had gone out of the majestic river.”(LMP,P.48)

Now, when he has witnessed his bewitching beauty at close quarters,
all the romance and beauty; are gone, and he is forced to see the harsh
realities of the river Mississippi. Since his boyhood days he had been
dreaming of becoming a steamboat man, for he believed that he could get
wide opportunity to witness the river's nook and corner. Now it is done, and
all his time honoured, romantic and fanciful dreams turned topsy-turvy. This
too much reality becomes unbearable for him. His sense of professionalism has killed his sense of beauty. At this juncture he expresses his agony: "This sun means that we are going to have wind tomorrow; the floating log means that river is rising ... that slanting mark on the water refers to a bluff reef which is going to kill some bodies steamboat one of these nights ... those tumbling "boils" show a dissolving sand bar and changing channel there, the lines and circles in the slick water over yonder are a warning that the troublesome place is shoaling up dangerously; that silver streak in the shadow is the "break" from a new snag, and he has located himself in the very best place he could have found to fish for steamboats...."(LMP,P.48-49)

Twain draws these observations and compares himself to a doctor and the river Mississippi to a beauty. Here he says: "Since those days I have pitied doctors from my heart. What does the lovely flush in a beauty's cheek mean to a doctor------? And doesn't he sometimes wonder whether he has gained most or lost most by learning his trade?"(LMP, P.49) Here it is inevitable to overlook the melancholy that permeates these reflections; what is less obvious is the way Twain has substituted one form of romance for another. There is absolutely no reason to assume, as he does, that every young woman with a rosy complexion is necessarily suffering from consumption. But Twain's sense is that, to him the river Mississippi is a beauty, when he examined the river like a doctor, he is astonished of the deadly disease. All the days he was under the notion that all that glitters is gold. After becoming a pilot he came to know the gross realities of the river, before that he was an outward observer, who just enjoyed the beauty of the river without taking all the hidden dangers to his heart. But now he has been in constant touch with it, he knows every minute thing about it, so that all this distant lands turned to the enchantments to him. To every poet the dense woods are 'lovely', whereas to every hunter they are 'dark and deep'. Here one must not forget that Twain was formerly a typical writer, later on only he took the profession of a pilot.

Twain states that piloting is a wonderful science; but he also opines that learning it is verily a difficult task. He justifies in writing about piloting,
because it was never before written by anyone who had an experience of it. Having learnt the name and position of every visible feature of the river and had mastered the shape of the river that he could shut his eyes and trace the river from St. Louis to New Orleans. With this he judged himself that he had completed his education and had an air of confidence when he was at the wheel. But he could not answer some of the questions of Mr. Bixby. Then he realized that learning the nature of the river means learning the life itself, it is not complete forever, it starts in the cradle and ends in the cradle and ends in the grave. Now and then he was not only bluffed by the river but also by his fellow mates. Once he averted the collision of a steamboat by his ability and skill. Thus his career of piloting was eventually moulded remarkably, in the hands of the finest pilots on the river Mississippi, including Horace Bixby, Sobiepki Jolly, Zed Leavenworth, George Ealer, Storthner Wiley, Bart Bowen, and J. Ed Montgomery. Twain became a licensed pilot in 1859 and continued his profession up to 1861, and he was forced to leave this job, when the Civil War broke out in 1861. Thus the first part of the novel ends.

The second part of the book is only his reaction to the river Mississippi. It was too dragging and loosely connected. Twain undertook the work, thinking that the things would be as they were at his times. He was disappointed and despaired at the unbelievable changes that were brought upon the river. Twain found it difficult to finish the book. He filled up many pages by quoting other travel writers to the extent of some eleven thousand words. It is clear from Robert Keith Miller's article, 'Sailing a Shoreless Sea', that when he finally finished the manuscript, he wrote to this business manager that he never wanted anything more to do with "This wretched God damned books." In all the chapters (pre. From chapter XXII to LX ) Twain narrates the changes that have been brought upon the river Mississippi, which was claimed both by the Mississippi and Arkansas states claimed that the island would come under their jurisdiction. But this island 74 was now melted and shifted by the currents of the river so that neither state had the right to levy tax on it. There are so many instances of this kind,
on his journey, Twain wanted to alight at Napoleon; when he asked the captain to stop there he laughed and said; "Why, hang it, don't you know? There isn't any Napoleon any more. Hasn't been for years and years. The Arkansas River burst through it tore it all to rags, and emptied it into the Mississippi."(LMP,P.169)

Twain wondered at that news and asked whether the whole town, along with churches, banks, jails, newspaper offices, court-house, theatre, fire department and livery stable had been washed away. It was incredible news for him to see the Mississippi rolling between unpeopled shores and straight over the spot where Twain used to see a good big self-compliment town twenty years ago. It was the town of a great importance. There was a marine hospital; moreover Twain had seen here the prettiest girl in the whole of the Mississippi valley. Such tragic instances are numerous to count along the shores of the river Mississippi. At Vicksburg town stopping they did not find the town, for the river formed a small hillock in front of the town. Vicksburg was an important town during the Civil War. The caves of Vicksburg were very useful to non combatants in saving their lives from bombardment. Such a great town was once, now thrown aside by the river Mississippi.

During one of his wanderings Twain came across a man in the street, whom he had not seen for six to seven years. He was astonished to see him in the best robes, for when Twain saw him last he was a pauper. Curiosity made Twain to probe into the matter. The man replied, "That's what's the matter! It is used to be rough times with me.....When you knew me .... insurance .... agency business, you know; mighty irregular.... Five years ago, lodged in an attic', live in a swell house now, with a masard roof, and all the modern inconveniences."(LMP,P.204) Such were the windfall profits the riverside people got used to. With the modern development of railways and communication system, every business raised to the sky and the people had a wider opportunity to trade with different people from different corners. Here one can observe that the importance of the river transportation was a
little mitigated. Transport through the river meant a type of juggling or
gambling in those days, but now they have other options, so they prospered
at once.

Mark Twain comes across some southern sports also on his trip. In
his times those all were unknown to the people but now even in the sports
and games also new changes have taken place. Twain witnessed a cock-
fight and he wondered at the brutality of the people who were enjoying that
lethal sport even without attending to their prayers. Twain could not digest
this brutal development among the masses, that is why he says:” I did not
see the end of battle. I forced myself to endure it as long as I could, but it
was too pitiful a sight so I made frank confession to that effect, and we
retired.”(LMP.P.214) One day, on the street, Twain met the man whom, of all
men, he most wished to see .... He, Mr. Horace Bixby; formerly pilot and
now the captain of the great steamer City of Baton Rouge. He is the man
who taught piloting to Twain. Twain was, so pleased to meet his preceptor
and says. “The same slender figure, the same light curls, the same spring
step, the same alertness, the same decision of eye and answering decision
of hand, the same erect military bearing; not an inch gained or lost in girth,
not an ounce gained or lost in weight, nor a hair turned. It is a curious thing,
to leave a man thirty five years old and come back at the end of twenty-one
years and fond him still only thirty five.”(LMP.P.225)

Twain’s description of his master shows his affection, admiration and
keen observation towards Bixby. These are the two men who traveled
through thick and thin, on the Mississippi; these are the men who showed
their emotional and sentimental feelings for quite some time, in the very
presence of the huge river Mississippi. In the company of Mr. Horace Bixby,
Twain learnt so many lessons, but it was the river Mississippi, which taught
him the crucial lessons. That is way Twain held both the river and Bixby in
high esteem.

On their journey down the river, Twain had a long discussion with his
teacher. He got interesting information about his fellow – pilots and enjoyed
the journey in the company of his old master. In their daily conversation they discussed the great pilots like captain Isaiah Sellers who at the cost of their own lives performed their duties. Taking leave from his beloved teachers Horace Bixby, Twain left for his boyhood home, Hannibal. The visit to Hannibal that inspired this particular memory seems to have heightened Twain's sense of dislocation. Confronted with a town that differs from his memory of it, he is unable to believe what he sees: "I stepped ashore with the feeling of one who returns out of a dead-and-gone generation. I had a sort of realizing sense of what the Bastille prisoners must have felt when they used to come out and look upon Paris after years of captivity, and note how curiously the familiar and strange were mixed together before them. I saw the new houses saw them plainly enough but they did not affect the older picture in my mind, for through their solid bricks and mortar I saw the vanished houses, which had formerly stood there, with perfect distinctness"(LMP,P.249)

The comparison he draws between himself and prisoners leaving the Bastille is worth considering. From what we must ask ourselves, does Twain see himself escaping? The past seems to have more meaningful for him than the present, and he is anxious to withdraw from the present in which he is ill at ease. There are a number of disturbing elements in his own town. The apparent serenity of the town is almost frightening. The streets are empty, and everyone is asleep. And as this white town drowses in the sun, even the great Mississippi is perceived to be "lonely" like the freight piled on the levee. This is a vision of death rather than sleep. The sense of loneliness afflicted Twain throughout the book, but it is the most remarkable in the material devoted to piloting. To him once, piloting was a passion but now, it is hardly surprising to find Twain subsequently observing that his position as a pilot brought along with it a haunting sense of loneliness, isolation, and remoteness. He tries to convince us that the tranquility is profound and infinitely satisfying, the worry and bustle of the world. But this is hard to believe. It is world, remote from outside concern, and this frees him, to an extent, from many of the anxieties that afflict men along the shore.
His mind is entirely occupied by his work. But the responsibility this work entails is so great that the pilot always suffers from what Twain beautifully calls the exquisite misery of uncertainty. In spite of all these complications, according to Robert Keith Miller, "Life on the Mississippi marks Twain's emergence as a great modern writer."45

Contemporary readers are apt to be struck by the other works of Twain than The River Mississippi, because of its critical cruxes and raw material to be a literary masterpiece. But it is precisely this lack of certainty that makes the work so interesting to the modern reader. And in the years that lay ahead, Twain would continue to struggle with the dilemmas outlined in this, his first great work. One of the famous American reviewers wrote about this book: "it has more novel in its character, and even more American than anything else Twain had yet written."46

To sum up, the role of the river Mississippi is undeniable on Mark Twain. Since his boyhood days he had a strong desire to sail on it and to see its nook and corner. Like his fellow mates he too wanted to become a steamboat-man, not for his livelihood, but for enjoying the ensnaring beauty of his 'Brown God', river Mississippi. Though he reluctantly took up some provisional jobs yet all his thought was with the river. The jest of becoming a pilot burned him; the desire was irresistible; that is why, when he got an opportunity of meeting Horace Bixby, he at once confronted him and joined as an apprentice. At first he was very proud to be on the deck of a boat. He sympathized with the boys and girls of his age. But as time rolled away, he came to know the difficulties of a pilot. Even then, the liking for the river over shadowed all these intricacies. After becoming, a remarkable steersman, he felt pangs for he lost the charm of the river. Thus the first part of the work completely deals with the 'making of a pilot.'

In the second part of the book we see Twain's reaction to the river and to the riverside life. He accepted this assignment on the request of one of his friends. Before that he declined to write anything about the river; when he was requested by his publisher. When he came to know through his
friends that, there was a good demand for such a virgin field, he accepted the idea. With a view of collecting fresh material he came to the river along with his publisher. But he was completely disappointed at the changes that had been brought upon the river. This disappointment is clear from the loose structure of the second part of the book.

Twain learnt so many lessons from the river. It was source of inspiration for him. In the book Life on the Mississippi two things can be observed. In boyhood days, to every boy and girl his teacher is always a role model, but when they grow up and measure great heights, then their teacher is not more than a scarecrow to them. Likewise, the river Mississippi was a role model to Mark Twain in his boyhood days; thereafter it turned to be a scarecrow, for he had already measured great heights in his life.
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