CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In the earlier chapters I tried to probe into the reasons for the greatness of both Twain and Heller. If Huck Finn is more loved and cherished than Yossarian, if readers love to identify themselves with Tom or Huck or Aunt Poly, and not with Yossarian, Doc Daneeka or Major Major Major Major Major, it is all due to the innate, genuine art of Mark Twain. He recreated the world with warmth, with love, nostalgia though he too was disgusted with the world around, whereas Heller retained his derision, his aversion throughout. Twain’s humor enlivens the spirits. If true humor is that which makes a person - a person who is civilized, kind, wise and sympathetic - to laugh, then Twain is a humorist in every sense. Moreover his humor does not leave any scar or wound in the minds of the readers. Heller’s leaves us with a sick, sinking feeling.
Twain had the needed, much desired talent as well as a unique distorted vision to look at things from different angles and to recreate them. He is very sensitive, precisely balanced and he knows the language thoroughly with all its nuances, slang, vigour, vitality. His poverty in earlier life, his oscillating fortune, his remarkable success, and the terrible failure in his business ventures, his rich experience - all these made him a potential writer. They made him look at the down-trodden, the sinners and the weaklings with affection, with understanding and with forbearance. He perceived that men are men, and they can be never totally good nor totally evil. He was enamoured by this baffling mixture of nobility and meanness, generosity and miserliness. This sympathetic touch is missing in Heller.

Mark Twain is like a painter recreating life-like images more beautiful, more appealing and colourful. His is a broad canvas with a microscopic vision. Heller's, on the other hand, is surfacial. He is like
a photographer. His novels are like drawings and his characters are like cartoons or caricatures. Twain's characters are more than life-like, robust, vivacious. To him characters are more important than incidents. He takes so much care in the creation of them where each word, selected so cautiously, sketches the character in great detail. Hence they become memorable, lovable.

Twain has excellent observation and perception. He writes with emotion, and he labours for naturality. He makes us introspective. But Heller scares us by depicting only the shocking world, much exaggerated.

Twain soars into the skies taking us to new realms of pleasure but still not losing the sight of reality. He is poetic, sensitive, emotional. He takes us to great heights but with a rouguish awareness of the world. In spite of the feeling that the human race is damned, he still loves it and when he recreates the world he makes us love it. Never does the reader
shudder though he comes across selfish villains in Twain's novels. But Heller is down to earth and later he drags us much below the earth scaring and sickening.

Laughter or humor in Twain's novels redeems us and heals the wound. The unjust, cruel world still has its own charm, men can still live here if they can be like Huck Finn. After all everything is still not lost. Heller fails to give this idea; may be because he doesn't want to. For him the world is doomed.

A comparison like this can be endless. But, for fear of repetition it is not prolonged. It suffices to say that while Twain is undoubtedly a great artist, a world-admired novelist. He is to America what Chaucer is to England. He is father of American fiction. Heller, though not on an equal footing, is also a great writer. Only the great Old Father Time can judge and decide his fate.