Preface

"I love to think of the great and godlike Clemens"

So said Rudyard Kipling, the Nobel laureate about Mark Twain's literary greatness. Such is the indelible impression that Mark Twain cast on not only the common reading public but also on the literary greats. He is such an interesting author that in his own lifetime itself he enjoyed the legendary status; besides, he is luckier than the most popular writers who fall into oblivion immediately after their demise. But this novelist's name, fame and literary craftsmanship have not been forgotten by any reader under the sky. The world has from age to age looked on and applauded him while he through his work endeavored to dispel many illusions. Twain was the first American author of world rank to write of a genuinely colloquial and native American life. In this effort he frankly used the Southwestern dialect in all his works. Hope this fact may be observed in many quotations in the present work as the researcher has taken them as they were used in the select works, though the language is out of fashion and sick now-a-days. Regarding Life on the Mississippi, it is not a novel in literary terms, but it has all those features besides having the features of a travelogue and a biography. In this regard, it is stated that it is chosen for study as it has the thematic unity with the other select novels at least in some terms.

The aim of the present thesis is to bring out the unique and some untouched themes that have not been covered hitherto by the earlier researchers. Frankly speaking, some sort of research has been done on the present select themes, but Twain's literature is multi-dimensional and the effort of the researcher is at least to bring out one possible dimension and to make it useful to posterity.

The foremost reason for choosing The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Life on the Mississippi and The Prince and the Pauper is to focus on the juvenile life of Huckleberry Finn, Tom Sawyer, Tom Canty, Prince Edward and the author Mark Twain himself.
In Life on the Mississippi the main theme is purely a recollection of Twain's Juvenile life both on the river and on its banks. Through these heroes, Twain tried to enact the vaudeville of human drama in the Mississippi valley. So it is clear that the base for the select works except The Prince and the Pauper, is the river Mississippi itself. Hence the river theme is made a significant theme in the thesis. Based on this river culture and on its backdrop the remaining themes, humour, satire, slavery and ruffianism and the other select thematic techniques have been evolved. Even The Prince and the Pauper has all these themes but they are set in different place and time.

Humour satire and slavery and ruffianism could have been dealt under the title Twain and Technique (Chap VI), in which some thematic techniques are discussed in this thesis. But those themes are very prominent, noteworthy and too big to cover as a single theme or chapter. Hence these themes are discussed in separate chapters.

The entire thesis has been divided into seven chapters based on the select themes in the select works. The first chapter is an introductory chapter, which gives a bird’s eye view of Mark Twain’s evolution of mind and authorship. It also comprises the pithy outlines of the major works of Mark Twain and their social, religious and economic setting. The second chapter dwells upon the characteristic importance of the river Mississippi and its role in the select works of the author. The third chapter relates the unique features of Twain’s humour in the select works. In the fourth chapter satirical aspects are analysed. In the fifth chapter slavery and ruffianism have been discussed. In the sixth chapter divergent themes like search for freedom, sentiment, love, superstitions and portrayal of women characters are discussed. Finally the last chapter gives a general outline of Mark Twain’s literary career and the other untouched important aspects related to the author’s life. It also details the relevance of research on his works besides relating the perennial reputation of Mark Twain hitherto.

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