

From Clutches to Freedom

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Abstract: In this literary review, "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" by Mark Twain, a commentary on the social institutions of Slavery and discrimination will be the main text to highlight my arguments regarding Racism and Marxist Theory. However, the primary focus will be on racial discrimination, which is recognized here as a problem and thus opposing it to find an explanation, which German Philosopher Hegel describes as "Dialectic". The essence of dialectic is, therefore, opposition. Being an American classical writer, Twain portrays racial discrimination in U.S. society, which is still a rolling feature. However, in this classic, Racism is analyzed in history and as a central aspect of the economic system according to the Base and Superstructure model of Marx, where the economic base determines the other social status. Examination of the Marxist theory that Racism serves the interest of the capitalist or employer class by dividing black and white workers reduces their potential unity and thus bargains their power.

Intellectual and Moral Education here become the basis of the whole idea of freeing Jim or Slavery, for that matter, in the novel. However, education also becomes a superstructure for Huck, which is seen to be privatized or limited only to the elite class. This also highlights the situation in the U.S. in the 1830s when education was restricted to the lower class, resulting from corruption by middle-class capitalists. The text also portrays the concept of Alienation as a result of the exploitation of one's social class, which was also evident in the European society as Charles Dickens talks about this phenomenon in his novels written chiefly during the Industrial Revolution. In this text, Slavery becomes the ideology followed by the society, mainly the whites, of exploiting the 'blacks'. The concept of wealth or lack is thereof is threaded throughout the novel and highlights the disparity between the rich and the poor. The king and the Duke represent capitalism by swindling people and taking advantage of the situation, thereby abusing their power.

The article's primary focus would be on the factors of the Marxist theories and bringing out the arguments on the theory. The novel, therefore, gives an insight into vivid explanations of the factors mentioned above, which forms the basis of the Marxist theory. Thus, Twain uses his knowledge of the Civil War outcome to influence his characters based on Marxism (adapted to the issue of race conflict in America). He explains the parallel between the working/capitalists and the slaves/whites and uses a Marxist perspective to give his protagonist Huck an essential sense of truth and correctness.

Keywords: Alienation, American society, Marxism, Racism, Slavery.

1. Introduction

Marxism, they say, is dead. Nevertheless, the classless society is nowhere in sight. Racism is also dead, or so they tell

us. But Caroline is still wrapped tightly around the world. Karl Marx says:

"Criticism has plucked the imagery flowers from the chain, not in order that man shall bear the chain without caprice or consolation but so that he shall cast off the chain and pluck the living flower". (Taylor, 2011)

Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, being set when Slavery was a prominent issue; the novel uncovers the author's anti-racist view and depicts Jim as a character superior to the white characters the novel and confirms the ideology of equality. In the novel, Mark introduces Racism as an ideology as well as a cultural construction, making Jim 'other' and different from others; Jim's character is stereotyped as inferior, inactive and dehumanized through the language used in the novel that categorizes Jim as 'other' or different compared to other characters of the novel. However, this review aims to critic the ideology of 'Racism' and 'Slavery' as portrayed in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* through Marxist criticisms of Race theory and other works about the theory. The review intends to argue that Marxism contains the analytical tools necessary to theorize and deepen our understanding of race and class studies. Therefore, critically analyze from the perspective of Marxist theory using the arguments for race and class studies offered by some of the leading proponents. Assessing their strengths and limitations and demonstrating, in the process, that Marxism is theoretically and politically necessary if the study of race and class is to achieve more than the endless documentation of variations in their relative salience and combined effects in particular contexts and experiences. However, here in this review main focus will be on the race, and the primary text for reference will be *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain.

2. Dialectical Marxism

Marx's philosophy is known as "Dialectical Materialism". There is no place given by him to the soul or the spirit because, according to him, religion is the opium of masses which keeps them in a world of material reality. Karl Marx adopted Hegel's idea of dialectic to give a materialistic account of social formations. His concept of class conflict is the fundamental point. Conflicts arise from the desire to control the means of production, which is true. He hit the laissez-faire policy, which lets the industrialists and capitalists exploit the working class without hindrance. Marx always supported communism, i.e.,

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power should be rested in the hands of community workers rather than of a few individuals in control of the entire wealth and its generating sources. The proletariat should rule a country jointly instead of a king or an elected parliament, which usually protects the interest of the masses throughout the world—a significant concern for the poor exploited masses without any overt projection of Marxist ideology. Even the non-Marxist writers in the 20th century started giving much attention to representing the working class in their works. For instance, in the novels by Arnold Bennett *The Card*, we have a working-class hero from the washerwoman's son who became the mayor of Bursley. As Terry Eagleton says:

"Marxist criticism is part of a larger body of theoretical analysis which aims to understand ideologies- the ideas, values and feelings by which men experience their societies at various times. Furthermore, certain of those ideas, values, and feelings are available to us only in literature. To understand ideologies is to understand both the past and the present more deeply and such understanding contributes to pour liberation." (Eagleton,17)

3. Racism and Slavery

Talking in terms of race and Slavery, Marxists argue that the capitalists and their system of capitalization is based on the exploitation of the many by the few; as it is based on gross inequality, it requires various means to divide the majority- Racism and all oppressions under capitalism serve this purpose. Oppression justifies the inequality prevailing in the society giving rise to unequal relationships where the relationship can be seen in both ways firstly, a black serving as a slave in the white-dominated household, and secondly, the blacks seen as minorities in the majority white society that enrich the minority that lives off the majority's labour. Thus, Racism emerged initially to justify Africans' enslavement as they were treated less humanly and deserved no liberty and freedom. However, the Marxists claim that Racism is the product of capitalism which had immense significance on the American society most prominently during and after the American civil war; thus, oppression is looked upon and often described as 'classism' referring to distinguish between elitism or snobbery and not the entire organization of society under capitalism.

Though Marx did not contribute much about 'slavery' and its racial influence on society, he did write about how European capitalism emerged because of its petty theft, rape and destruction as Marx write:

"The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black skins, signaled the rosy dawn of the era of Capitalist production." (Taylor, 2011)

Marx also recognized the extent to which Slavery was key to the world economy as he writes:

"Direct Slavery is just as much the pivot of bourgeois industry as machinery, credits, etc. without Slavery, you have no cotton; without cotton, you have no modern industry. It is Slavery that has given the colonies their value; it is the colonies

that have created world trade, and it is world trade that is the pre-condition of large-scale industry. Thus, Slavery is an economic category of the greatest importance." (Taylor, 2011)

Thus, Marx understood the dynamics of Racism in a modern as well a worker who had common interests with another worker could also become mortal enemies because of racist and nationalist ideas. Looking at the tension between Irish and English workers concerning America's position between Black and White workers, Marx writes:

"Every industrial and commercial centre in England possesses a working class divided into two hostile camps, English proletariat and Irish proletariats. The ordinary English workers hate Irish workers as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. Concerning the Irish worker, he feels himself a member of a ruling nation and turns himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists of his country against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself. His attitude is the same as that of the 'poor whites' to the 'Niggers' in the former slave states of the USA". (Taylor,2011)

Here, we see here that Marx is trying to highlight three things: firstly, economic capitalism promotes economic competition between workers; secondly, the ruling class uses racist ideology to divide workers against each other. Third, when one group of workers suffers oppression, it negatively impacts the entire class. Thus, Racism is an ideology, a belief, but it has concrete implications in the real world.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by mark twain shows the Marxist traits and beliefs throughout the novel, criticizing the societal norms and provoking an understanding of what was indeed right. Twain depicts South American society and conflict between individual and social morality, which is highlighted in the novel. This novel, however, was initially condemned by the elite. The Library Committee of Concord called *Huckleberry Finn* "trash", only suitable for slums." (Kaplan,269) The critics, especially the whites, hated the novel because the white protagonist escapes with a runaway slave, Jim, and develops a close friendship. In this essay, the central focus will be on racial discrimination, which is identified here as a problem, thus opposing it to find a solution described by German Philosopher Hegel as "Dialectic". Mark Twain is an American classical writer, portrays the racial discrimination in U.S. society which is still a concurrent feature. However, the theory examined in this classic is that Racism is analyzed historically and as a central aspect of the economic system according to the Base and Superstructure model of Marx, where the economic base determines the social status. Examination of the Marxist theory that Racism serves the interest of the capitalist or employer class by dividing black and white workers, reducing their potential unity and thus bargaining their power. Twain explains the correlation between the working/middle class and the slaves/whites and uses a Marxist perspective to give his protagonist Huck an underlying sense of truth and correctness.

The colonization of America began in the 15th century with the discovery of the continent by Christopher Columbus. Tracing America's history, which was originally inhabited by Red Indians, the natives of America, but this discovery later

bought European migrants to the continent, which sparked the discrimination between the blacks and the whites, culminating in Slavery. African slaves were used as a source of labour by the colonies that turned their interests to Africa to develop their colonies in America; thus, Slavery became an everyday fact of people's lives in America. The American Revolution in 1775 against the British provided the slaves to escape by joining the army as rightly said by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, "All men are created equal". Slavery during the Antebellum Era, where Slavery in the northern states of America could be easily abolished as the white working-class did not want slaves as competition for their jobs. However, in the southern states, the scenario was opposite the African American slaves were toiled by the white race, thus leading to a division between "free states" in the north and "slave states" in the South. A race between anti-slavery and pro-slavery began during the Civil War. The Republican Party emerged in 1850's by anti-slavery activists, and the role of Abraham Lincoln, as he states in his Proclamation "...not only set the Black slaves free but set the White man free also" (Foner,200), played a pivotal role to stop the expansion of Slavery in America. The civil war survived the blacks and whites in making the relation between them; however, the blacks became an object for racial oppression by the whites, but they constantly struggled for their rights, lives, free men and women to create an interracial society.

Mark Twain is the pseudonym of Samuel Langhorne Clemens, an American writer born on November 30, 1835, in Florida is famous for his youthful adventures *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). Lived nearby Hannibal, on the west bank of the river Mississippi, an ideal place for a boy to grow up, this serves as an inspiration for setting the classic *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Twain initially worked in the printing trades before selling articles to newspapers. Moving town to town, he learned to pilot a riverboat. He travelled west and later abroad writing humorous sketches which he signed "Mark Twain", a riverboat term meaning two fathoms deep. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is Twain's significant achievement that talks about American literature's history, making him a potent symbol of the American dream, the frontier and Westward expansion spirit. Twain was a contradictory figure continuing to identify with the poor and oppressed and became increasingly critical of the social system, but he has also led a life that was unrecognizable to ordinary Americans. Thus, Twain's talent for humour, satire and storytelling and his hatred of oppression and inequality enabled him to encapsulate the contradictions of the era and offer a vision of a better world.

In the novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, we see that Twain explains to the viewers the realism of the society and two facets of the society and social class, which is divided between the 'haves' and the 'haves-not' i.e., rich and poor where money is an important aspect to classify them. As Huck in chapter 11 says:

"well, the woman fell to talking about how hard times was, and how poor they had to live, and how the rats were as free as

if they owned the place, and so forth, and so on, and then I got easy again." (Twain, 21)

This quote tells us how tough the life was of the poor people, especially the people leading a life of slave; even though they worked day in and day out, they got little money which was not sufficient to make their ends meet. Critic Rene Wellek observes, "All art in the past aimed at reality even if it spoke of a higher reality" Wellek asserts truth because literature is always influenced by the culture that is followed in the society; it reflects the pros and cons, the upheavals of the society and the mindset of the masses. Also, the short story by Maupassant, a French writer '*The Diamond Necklace*' tells us that economic condition defines the class and status of the people and conflict between the proletariat and bourgeoisie, which is the underlying theme of the story and the characterization of Mathilde is portrayed as a character who wants to fit in the society of the upper strata. Thus, the couple becomes a victim of aesthetics, values, and social norms put by society that determines the materialistic conditions favouring the economically wealthy class. Again, in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark starts his novel with Huck having a good amount of wealth to his name as he says, "We got six thousand dollars each." (Twain, AHF,1), presenting a relaxed attitude towards the wealth he possesses and does not view it as a necessity but as a luxury which Twain presents a contrast between Jim for whom money is equivalent to freedom out of Slavery. Moreover, probably this wealth would have been his elite identity which might raise his status in society. Thus, Jim is on a constant search for wealth as Huck chooses to remain impassive. The aspect of wealth or lack of it is threaded throughout the novel, emphasizing the disparity between the rich and the poor.

Racism and Slavery are the most important and underlying concern in Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, but we need to note that though Mark attacks Racism and Slavery in the novel, he does not address the issue openly. Mark Twain wrote this novel after Slavery was abolished, but even after the abolishment, Slavery still exists in American society, particularly in the South. The racism issue in the South, less institutionalized and monolithic, was also more challenging to combat. In the novel, Mark Twain portrays Racism and Slavery as an allegorical representation of blacks' conditions in the United States. Just as Slavery places the noble and moral Jim under the rule of the white society, no matter how worthless the white society may be, they always oppressed the black men for illogical and unethical reasons. However, the white society who seems to be "good" globally, such as Miss Watson and Sally Phelps in the novel, expresses their most minor concern about the injustice of Slavery towards Jim. In a dialogue where Jim tells Huck:

"...Miss Watson treated me roughly but always said she wouldn't sell me down to Orleans. But then I noticed a nigger trader coming there regularly and began to get uneasy. One night I heard Miss Watson tell the widow that she was going to sell me down to Orleans... she would get eight hundred dollars for me, and it was a lot of money that she couldn't resist." (Twain, AHF, 16)

The most dehumanized concern is fixing a reward to get hold of the runaway nigger as if it is a commodity that can be sold

and bought; unfortunately, Twain's realism in the novel. "So there's a reward out for him, of three hundred dollars." (Twain, 21) [9] "Oliver C. Cox (1948) in his study of "Caste, Class and Race", which is widely considered as the Marxist analysis of the question, utilized concepts such as class and exploitation in order to explain the role of race and Racism in capitalist societies and in similar fashion critiques the limitation of Marxist reductionism." Also, the essence of Marxism is a stateless society where the power is in the proletariat's hands rather than the bourgeoisie. However, when we talk about Racism and Marxism, we see that Racism serves the interest of the capitalist, which leads to the division of labour between black and workers, reducing the potential unity and thus bargaining their power. In this novel, Jim depicts the complexity of human emotions and struggles with his life path, which encourages the readers to feel sympathetic towards Jim and the offensive society that has enslaved him and threatened his life. Towards the end of the novel, we see Twain developing central conflict concerning Slavery; whether Huck should free Jim and then be convicted to hell? This decision, difficult for Huck because it forces him to reject everything that civilization has taught him, but Huck chooses to free Jim from the clutches of Slavery based on his personal experience (when he was forced to live with his drunkard father) rather than social norms. Racism does not end with financial status or Slavery, but people facing Racism are tortured by the influential people here the white society; for instance, Tom Robinson character in the novel *"To Kill a Mockingbird"* by Harper Lee is accused here of raping a white woman. Moreover, the evidence is firm in his favour, that race is the single apparent factor in the jury's decision in the trial.

4. Education: A Superstructure

Intellectual and Moral education here becomes the basis of the whole idea of freeing Jim or Slavery for that matter because, in the beginning, we see that Mrs Douglas the widow is trying to civilize Huck and teaching him about the Bible as Huck say", "...she got out her book and about Moses to "me." (Twain,1) Also he talks about Miss.Watson teaching spellings to him. However, this education is limited for Huck, as his father takes him away; thus, the factor of education here becomes a superstructure for Huck, which is seen to be privatized or limited only to the elite class; this also focuses on the situation in the U.S 1830s when education was restricted to the lower class which is a result of corruption by middle-class capitalists. However, moral education plays a significant role in Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* because moral knowledge helps us to distinguish between right and wrong, which is seen in the character of Huck, who receives formal education from Mrs Douglas and Miss. Watson. However, it is the moral or informal education that instincts Huck to free Jim from Slavery as he knew that keeping people in a cage tied with chain is inhuman, and most of the decisions that Huck's decisions throughout the novel are based on his experiences. When Huck leaves his house and sailing down the Mississippi River, he seems to be relaxed and away from civilization, i.e. the society which decided do's and don't's for us. However,

with his deep introspection, he arrives at his conclusions, unaffected by the accepted and often hypocritical rules and values of Southern cultures, hence drawing parallel for the argument between a short story *"Mason-Dixon Memory"* by Clifton Davis and Huckleberry Finn on the issue of moral education. Dondre Green, a black, tells his story of how he was not allowed to play golf in Columbia", "...the Caldwell parish country club is reserved for whites only" whom his friends supported then as they said "Let's get out of here" this outraged the whole state of Louisiana. However, in this story, the author Davis who was also a negro, in 1959 was not allowed to enter the 'Glen Echo Amusement Park' in Maryland because of its historical boundary between Maryland and Pennsylvania; the dividing line between slaves and free-states before the Civil war. Still, there are atrocities and an invisible Mason-Dixon line exists; even here, the author's friend Frank, a white boy, stood by him and said, "I won't go either". (Jack, CSTS, 35). Thus, Dondre Green says at last of his speech", "The kind of love they showed me that day will conquer hatred every time." (Jack, 36)

On the other hand, we have Scout, the protagonist of *"Kill the Mockingbird"* by Harper Lee, whose teacher in the school does not encourage moral education the Scout's father Atticus has taught her and little her father and her when her teacher "says, "Your father does not know how to teach. You can have a seat n "w." (Lee, TKMB, 17); thus, we see two contrasting ideas in different works. In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, we have one instance where education is discouraged. Huck's father says, "You're educated too, and further he added", "Your mother couldn't read, or write before she died" (Twain, AHF,7). Here I would cite critic Mary Wollstonecraft who stressed women's education and how education can benefit her family by supporting the family earning a livelihood as Wollstonecraft say", "It would be true partnership". I would also agree with Wollstonecraft because only Huck's mother would have been educated, there would not have been a situation of poverty in the family and neglect towards Huck, and probably Huck would also be as educated as his mother.

5. Jim's Alienation from the Cage of White Society

The text *Huckleberry Finn* also portrays Alienation's phenomenon in the novel as the powerless entity is alien to the influential people in society. However, Alienation was primarily famous in Europe because of the Industrial Revolution, which led to disparities among the masses, thus widening the gap between the haves and the capitalists and the proletariat or the working class. The working class underwent the feeling of Alienation because their potential was not used to the fullest. Though being skilled in labour, they were exploited, and their demands were never fulfilled, which led to the exploitation of their social class, feeling lost and lonely. Many authors like Charles Dickens have used this aspect to depict the reality and the ill effects of society on a particular class.

Moreover, talking about Alienation's effect on American society, which was a by-product of the Industrial Revolution, many Americans were left with a sense of loss and lack of connection with the world. In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Jim faces intense discrimination and Alienation, which was

patent for the Black community in mid to late 1800's simply because of their skin colour. Jim is seen alienated because of the fear of getting caught and turned in by someone he faces, either being enslaved again or dead. Also, Huck feels alienated in some ways because of civilized ethics and morals that were forced on him as Huck says, "Tried to civilize "me" (Twain, AHF,1) and always found a way to escape the forceful civilization. As Karl Marx says"

"the worker not only feels outside his work and, feels outside himself...as a result, he no longer feels to be freely active in any but his animal functions- eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling or in dressing "up" (Siddharth, 2014)

As a result, people start developing a gap between themselves and the people around them.

6. Conclusion

The novel, therefore, gives an insight into a variety of explanations of the aspects analyzed. Also, it forms the basis of the Marxist Theory. Thus, Twain uses his knowledge of the American Civil War's horrifying outcome to pursue his characters based on Marxism by adapting the issue of race conflict in American society, which still subtly exists. As Abraham Lincoln says, "...We here highly resolve...that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom".." (Jack, CSTS,35) in these words, Lincoln makes it clear that freedom is not free. Marx's view of communism was a great idea which eliminates the differences. However, probably the world is not broad enough to inculcate this idea of indifference and to achieve peaceful co-existing communities and devoid of the scope of exploitation. As the Economics Nobel Laureate (2005) Robert Aumann remarks about communism and Marxist theory, "It's great to say- to each according to need, from each according to the ability. All this is fine. But there's just one problem- it doesn't work." (Siddharth, 2014).

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