

The Enigmatic Somerset Maugham

There is one thing about which I am certain, and this is that there is very little which one can be certain. (Chap. 16, *The Summing Up*)

Isamu Wakita

- I. Introductory Note
- II. Maugham's Status in English Literature
 - (1) Is He Really a Second-Rater?
 - (2) How Did Critics View Maugham?
- III. The Enigmatic Maugham
 - (1) Is He Enigmatic?
 - (2) Rosie in *Cakes and Ale*
- IV. Bibliography

I. Introductory Note

Quite recently I have had the opportunity of reading two prominent books about Maugham which I believe the scholars of this great writer should not miss. One is *Somerset Maugham: A Bibliography* compiled by Raymond Toole Stott and the other is *Somerset Maugham (A Biographical and Critical Study)* written by Richard Cordell. The former one, which was first published in 1956, includes the Supplement (1961) to *The writings of W. S. Maugham* (1956). The Times Literary Supplement comments, 'Its compiler is to be congratulated on producing of the first workman guide to the published output of the most widely collected of living English novelists.' The other seems to be tremendously abundant in various kinds of information about Maugham, but I find the greatest interest in the following points—namely, Cordell, having examined the autobiographical elements in his novels,

especially in *Cakes and Ale*, tells for the first time the real story behind that celebrated novel and another point is that in the chapter of 'The Enigmatic Maugham' a careful and realistic study is made of the personality and the philosophy which have aroused the curiosity of millions of readers. In this short essay—probably a memorandum of Maugham—following Cordell's analysis I want to set forth my views about this writer about whom the epithet 'enigmatic' crops up when he is discussed.

II. Maugham's Status in English Literature

(1) Is He Really a Second-Rater?

First of all I refer to some factors that contributed to the building up of his backbone as a great writer. With a tremendous linguistic ability he read and masticated Latin classics, the Medieval literature like Dante, the Spanish literature in the Renaissance, the French classic dramas in the 17th century, especially Racine and Molière, and Goethe and Russian novels. What he acquired from these books has become flesh and blood of his literature. Besides, his reading extended to books of philosophy, religion, and history, not to speak of those of medical science. As A. S. Collins tells us, it is to the French literature that he owed most and French literature meant in part an aggressively frank realism after the manner of Zola, but more importantly it meant greater attention to structure and expression.

In the next place we find him influenced by Oscar Wilde especially in his epigrammatic expressions and taking the attitude of a devotee of art-for-art school. But we must not forget that such English moralists as Fielding, Sterne, Austin, Dickens, Thackeray, and G. Eliot are those he estimated rather highly among the English writers.

During the half-century when he was active as a writer, numerous writers starting at George Meredith and ending in Graham Greene, appeared.

They are aestheticism of the *fin de siècle*, represented by Pater and Wilde : Bennet's realism : social criticism by Joyce, Huxley, Woolf in the 20th century : the movement of conformity of literature and politics advocated by the younger generation in the thirties : Orwell's confrontation with totalitarianism after the Second World War : Evelyn Waugh, Elizabeth Bowen, William Sanson, and so forth.

I am of opinion that Maugham is among the major writers in English literature, but I also agree to the view that his literature is outside the main current of English literature, which is the reason why many critics refused to pick him up or underestimated his works. John Galsworthy and H. G. Wells had an interest in a human being from a sociological standpoint, but on the contrary Maugham's observation was strictly limited to the individual folly of a human being. Those who were attracted by the elaborate technique adopted by Henry James and Joseph Conrad could not find much interest in his traditional story-telling style. In the world where such young writers as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence, who created utterly original types of literature, were welcomed warmly, his works written under the doctrine of lucidity and simplicity, were neglected.

No sooner had *The Moon and Sixpence* made a brilliant success in 1919 than the attention of the readers, who had been charmed by Lawrence till then, was turned to him and they began to reevaluate *Of Human Bondage* that had been published as early as 1915.

Cakes and Ale (1930) is the masterpiece befitting the great writer who attained mellowness, but it is long after the publication of this book that critics began to pay attention to him as an unnegligible writer. *Razor's Edge* (1944) is situated on the extension line of *The Moon and Sixpence* and *Cakes and Ale* and sufficiently satisfied the then intellectual readers. Apparently he proceeded his way independently of the main current of English

literature, but moved skillfully along with the current keeping his own pace without opposing it.

That most of the writers in the 20th century have tried original experiments is presumed to be a historical necessity, but it is also undeniable that those intellectual writers forgot the enjoyable elements of literature. It is not an exaggeration to say that Maugham's attitude toward literature is in a sense a challenge to the original experiments of these writers who rather neglected to interest readers and were devoted only to their own principles. He says:

..... In the drama I have found myself at home in the traditional moulds. As a writer of fiction I go back, through innumerable generations, to the teller of tales round the fire in the cavern that sheltered neolithic men. I have had some sort of story to tell and it has interested me to tell it. To me it has been a sufficient object in itself. (Chap. 59, *The Summing Up*)

(2) How Did Critics View Maugham?

Maugham maintains that he is indifferent to criticism and he seldom reads reviews of his books and critiques of his works in periodicals and that he has, however, some of the books about him with great distaste. He has read enough to lead him to conclude that the intelligentsia thinks little of him and taken it for granted that the world of letters should have attached no great importance to his work. He was neglected thirty-five-years ago by many young devotees of H. James, Galsworthy, and Wells and later by admirers of Lawrence, Huxley, Woolf, Sartre, Kafka, and Camus, none of whom were content just to be story-tellers.

Actually he got considerable support from noted writers and critics, such as Frank Swinnerton, Cyril Connolly, Christopher Isherwood, Alec Waugh, Richard Aldington, and anonymous writers for *The Times Literary Supplement*. But generally speaking the intellectual people paid no attention to him for the reason that he introduced no noticeable innovations in the

structure or technique of the novel, and also he failed to show concern for isms and movements. Such contemporaries as Shaw, Wells, and Galsworthy were greatly interested in social and political problems — poverty, class distinction, exploitation of the underdog, defects in the legal system, war, and so on. They were more concerned with man's world than man himself. Cordell refers to the following episode in his book *Somerset Maugham*.

In an interview in 1958 with Philip Toynbee, Maugham said, 'What you have to remember about me is that I am a relic of the Edwardian era. It may seem very old-fashioned to you but I believe in story-telling.' When Toynbee reminded him that *Liza of Lambeth* was occasioned partly by the young medical student's attitude toward poverty and slums, Maugham replied that it was all a matter of the writer's conscious intention and he assured Toynbee that his was always a dramatic intention, not political or sociological.

(p. 213, Chap. 8, *Somerset Maugham* by R. Cordell)

In a recent analysis of the modern novel Walter Allen notes that Maugham has always been an admittedly professional writer whose strength has come from his knowledge of his own limitations as a writer. That is, says Allen, the reason why he has confined to a narrow range of subject and character. He himself answered to such harsh words of criticism by saying many deprecatory things about oneself, such as 'My own native gifts are not remarkable'; 'My writing is a harmless habit and happens to be profitable'; 'I know just where I stand; in the very front row of the second-raters.'

In spite of that, how do these critics explain the fact that nearly forty million copies of his books have been sold? Cordell tells how many adherents there are in the world, specially referring to the case of Japan.

.....His complete works have been translated into Japanese, and he has a tremendous following in Japan—even among the intellectuals. In 1959 more than forty thousand people, mostly students and teachers crowded for ten days an exhibition of Maugham's works in Tokyo's leading bookstore. On his eightysixth birthday, 25 Jan. 1960, the

Maugham Society was inaugurated in Japan, with fifty scholars of English literature as founders. As soon as the announcement was made, more than two thousand applicants for membership were received; over two hundred of the applicants were university professors. Not only is Maugham the most widely read foreign author in Japan, he is also regarded as a major literary figure. In more than one Japanese editorial he has been ranked second to Shakespeare among English writers. (ibid., pp. 225—226)

He entertains his readers. He asks, 'Why are people so ashamed of being entertained?' He notes that great pictures were painted to give pleasure, that great plays, including those by Sophocles and Shakespeare, were written to entertain people and repeatedly declares that he has always found pleasure in writing and that may be the reason he has given the pleasure to readers. He says, 'Reading must be primarily a pleasure, not a chore…… All literature is escapism. That is its charm. The novel is a form of art and the purpose of art is to please…… There are pleasures of the spirit as of the senses…… There are intelligent and unintelligent pleasures, and the reading of a good novel is among the most intelligent pleasure a man can enjoy.'

Although he was refused the supreme honor bestowed by the New Criticism on Joyce, Proust, Faulkner, Kafka, Camus, and James, Maugham can be proud of his admirers: W. H. Auden, Frank Swinnerton, Theodore Dreiser, Max Beerbohm, Christopher Isherwood, Desmond MacCarthy, St. John Ervine, Carl and Mark Van Doren, Richard Aldington, Mary Colum, Cyril Connolly, Harold Nicolson, Glenway Wescott, William Rose Bennet, and S. N. Behrman.

Even if he is really a second-rater as he himself tells, there is no denying that he is a great writer and his name will certainly be remembered for ever in the history of English literature. To those critics who look upon him as a second-rater, he gives the following words.

……and that is about all the short story writer can do. He has not room to describe and develop a character; he can only give the salient traits that bring the

character to life and so make the story he has to tell plausible. Since the beginning of history men have gathered round the camp fire or in a group in the market place to listen to the telling of stories. The desire to listen to them appears to be as deeply rooted in the human animal as the sense of property. I have never pretended to be anything but a story teller. It has amused me to tell stories and I have told a great many..... It is a misfortune for me that the telling of a story just for the sake of the story is not an activity that is in favor with the intelligentsia. I endeavour to bear my misfortunes with fortitude. (The Author Excuses Himself, *Creatures of Circumstances*)

III. The Enigmatic Somerset Maugham

(1) Is He Enigmatic?

In the books of criticism concerning Maugham we find such epithets as 'inscrutable', 'enigma' 'mysterious', 'mask', 'secretiveness', 'puzzling', 'riddle', etc., so that most readers regard him as the personification of mystery and concealment. This observation is appropriate in some sense, but, when we abstract his ideas of life and a human being through his novels, short stories, especially *The Summing Up* and *A Writer's Notebook*, which are a candid confession of himself, we find ourselves obliged to admit that those epithets should be reconsidered.

Maugham is of course sound in his judgment that human behaviour is often incalculable. Early in life he became aware of ironic contradictions in character; he learned that human nature is complex, that divided loyalties often make man's motives perplexing or obscure to himself as well as to others. It is quite possible that a kind and devoted father can be dishonest in business matters, that a generous person can be notoriously self-centered, and that extreme piety and cruelty are often present in the same person. A man is jealous, vindictive, vulgar and vain, but, at the same time, he is charming, tasteful, generous, hospitable and sympathetic.

I think what has chiefly struck me in human beings is their lack of consistency. I

have never seen people all of a piece. It has amazed me that the most incongruous traits should exist in the same person and for all that a plausible harmony. I have often asked myself how characteristics, seemingly irreconcilable, can exist in the same person (Chap. 17, *The Summing Up*)

There is nothing more beautiful than goodness and it has pleased me very often to show how much of it there is in persons who by common standards would be relentlessly condemned. I have shown it because I have seen it. It has seemed to me sometimes to shine more brightly in them because it was surrounded by the darkness of sin. I take the goodness of the good for granted and I am amused when I discover their defects or their vices; I am touched when I see the goodness of the wicked and I am willing to shrug a tolerant shoulder at their wickedness..... My observation had led me to believe that, all in all, there is not so much difference between the good and the bad as the moralists would have us believe. (ibid., Chap. 17)

Cordell notes that the reader's demand for credibility sometimes lets the novelist, and even more so the dramatist to oversimplify human nature—that is, readers and audience demand clear motivation which is rarely found in real life. Every one of us has had the experience of being astonished by the unexpected actions of some one we know very well; we have been puzzled even by our own conduct. Attempting to analyse himself when he was twenty-one, Maugham observed various points of his character with perplexity and noticed the existence of various personalities in himself. We cannot but ask ourselves 'Which is the real me? All of them or none?' just as he could not.

I believe that actually he is one of the least puzzling and enigmatic writers. For example, his prose, like that of Bernard Shaw, is clear and unequivocal, because he consciously aimed at lucidity, simplicity, and euphony.

On the other hand, I had an acute power of observation and it seemed to me that I could see a great many things that other people missed. I could put down in clear terms what I saw. I had a logical sense, and if no great feeling for the richness and strangeness of words, at all events a lively appreciation of their sound. I knew that I should never write as well as I could wish, but I thought with pains I could arrive at

writing as well as my natural defects allowed. On taking thought it seemed to me that I must aim at lucidity, simplicity and euphony. I have put these three qualities in the order of the importance I assigned to them. (ibid., Chap. 10)

There is little excuse for any reader being baffled by Maugham's religious beliefs, literary and aesthetic tastes and theories, attitude toward humanity, ethical judgments, concepts of the good life, attitude toward death, views on the meaning of life (he says life is meaningless), as well as his cynicism, misogyny, and hedonism.

There is nothing mysterious or ambiguous about his religious views. He has been an atheist since boyhood and Philip's casting off his religious beliefs in *Of Human Bondage* is probably autobiographical. A passage in *A Writer's Notebook* is suggestive of his idea of religion.

Perhaps all the benefits of religion are counterbalanced by its fundamental idea that life is miserable and vain. To treat life as a pilgrimage to a future and better existence is to disown its present value. (1904, *A Writer's Notebook*)

But why should man be humble when he comes face to face with God? Because God is better and wiser and more powerful than man? A poor reason. No better than my maid should humble herself before me because I'm white, have more money and am better educated than she is. I should have thought it was God who would have the cause to be humble when he reflects upon what an indifferent job he has made in the creation of a human being. (ibid., 1941)

He possesses no conventional religious beliefs or faith at all. As a reader of history he has found that faith is strongest during periods of diminished vitality. He praises the bravery of spirit that man can exhibit sometimes, and also man's ability to rebel against fetters that are difficult to break. Even if in the ordinary sense of the words he has no religious faith, he has long had a philosophy that gives him the *aex triplex* every human being should have all through his span of life.

Maugham maintains that idealism can only lead to hypocrisy and the

mainspring of most action is love of oneself ; since this is natural, we can suppose that it is necessary for self-preservation, but making a vice of self-interest, idealism has made men into hypocrites. He thinks that much of our nonsensical talk about idealism derives out of hypocrisy. In this sense he agrees with Mark Twain, who was a much more hopeless pessimist than Maugham, and goes as far as to say that all our altruistic acts arise from egoistic motives and every man expects a return for his usefulness.

He has the inclination to accept the universe as an enigma that the wisdom of man cannot solve. Despite that he is notorious for cynicism and misanthropy, he believes in an innate ability of man based on neither culture nor breeding, but deeply rooted in man's instincts. That man on occasion can act with splendour of spirit provides some refuge from despair.

Cordell explains that the core of his philosophy is in the nineteenth century and he received its expression in R. W. Emerson.

When Maugham says, 'Our business is right living. The problem of right living is complicated by the fact that there is no one code for everybody ; one's job is to find out what is right for oneself and follow it,' he might be summarizing in a sentence Emerson's 'Self-Reliance'. (p55, Chap. 2, *Somers Maugham* by Cordell)

The closing passage of *The Summing Up*, actually a quotation from the sixteenth-century mystic and lyric Fray Luis de Leon, are another expression of his credo : 'The beauty of life is nothing but this, that each should act in conformity with his nature and his business.'

He made strenuous efforts to shape a philosophy which could provide him with enough serenity and courage to face the inevitable of the universe. In his boyhood and youth he was tormented by his failure to find answers to his questions. The moving passage in *Of Human Bondage* in which young Philip, sitting before two-thousand-year-old gravestones in the British Museum, suddenly realises the meaning of life, might help us to trace his...

view of life. When we consider about his philosophy, we must not forget there are two keys to open the door of his closet. Both appear in *Of Human Bondage*—one is the story of Persian Rug and the other the episode of the Eastern King.

Thinking of Cronshaw, Philip remembered the Persian rug which he had given him, telling him that it offered an answer to his question upon the meaning of life; and suddenly the answer occurred to him; he chuckled: now that he had it, it was like one of the puzzles which you worry over till you are shown the solution and then cannot imagine how it could ever have escaped you. The answer was obvious. Life has no meaning..... Philip remembered the story of the Eastern King who, desiring to know the history of man, was brought by a sage five hundred volumes; busy with affairs of state, he bade him go and condense it; in twenty years the sage returned and his history now was in more than fifty volumes, but the King, too old then to read so many ponderous tomes, bade him go and shorten it once more; twenty years passed again and the sage, old and gray, brought a single book in which was the knowledge the King had sought; but the King lay on his death-bed he had no time to read even that; and then the sage gave him the story of man in a single line; it was this; he was born, he suffered, and he died. There was no meaning in life, and by living served no end. It was immaterial whether he was born or not born, whether he lived or ceased to live. Life was insignificant and death without consequence. Philip exulted, as he exulted in his boyhood when the weight of a belief in God was lifted from his shoulders: it seemed to him that the last burden of responsibility was taken from him; and for the last time he was utterly free. His insignificance was turned to power, and he felt himself suddenly equal with the cruel fate which had seemed to persecute him; for, if life was meanligness, the world was robbed of its cruelty..... (Chap. 106, *Of Human Bondage*)

Maugham has come to the same conclusions as those which he ascribes to Philip. He formed his philosophy of life not only from reading Plato, Spinoza, and Shopenhauer and from scientific studies at St. Thomas's Hospital as a medical student, but also from his realistic scrutiny of people and their behaviour, and finally from a deep belief in necessitarianism, or determinism. His study of science, although he declares that it was most primitive and rudimentary in the early 1890's, persuaded him of the

inevitability of cause and effect, with no mystical intention in the relationship. Moreover, he arrived at the scientific, non-religious certainty of the irreparableness.

I think many people shrink from the notion that the accidents of the body can have an effect on the constitution of the soul. There is nothing of which for my own part I am more assured. My soul would have been quite different if I had not stammered or if I had been four or five inches taller; I am slightly prognathous; in my childhood they did not know that this could be remedied by a gold band worn while the jaw is still malleable; if they had, my countenance would have borne a different cast, the reaction towards me of my fellows would have been different and therefore my disposition, my attitude to them, would have been different too. (1944, *A Writer's Notebook*)

He believes that freedom from physical want and distress can soften a man's disposition, and consequently his character. He has welcomed this mechanistic view of man, not only it harmonises with his concept of common sense, but also because it has protected him from the delusions suffered by the idealists.

My native gifts are not remarkable, but I have a certain force of character which has enabled me in a measure to supplement my deficiencies. I have common-sense. Most people cannot see anything, but I can see what is in front of my nose with extreme clearness; the greatest writers can see through a brick wall. My vision is not so penetrating. For many years I have been described as a cynic; I told the truth. I wish no one to take me for other than I am, and on the other hand I have no need to accept others' pretences. (*ibid.*, 1917)

As to the charge of hedonism brought against him, he admits its truth and defends himself, declaring that all men choose to do that which is a pleasure to them. He adds that although he is an Epicurean, he is also abstemious when sense demands that he should be, for though all pleasures are good, some pleasures have harmful consequences and have to be avoided or enjoyed in moderation. Man is justified in whatever pleasures he can

obtain in the world indifferent to his welfare. So there is nothing enigmatic about his hedonism, his love and defence of the good life.

There is considerable justification concerning the bitter accusation brought against his misogyny. Was it caused by his stammering and poor health as a youth that made him unattractive to girls? Or was it the reaction of a man against the Victorian idealisation of women, which struck him as hypocritical? Or his 'mother-complex' may have forced him to set his sights too high.

Though this is a great annoyance to millions of women readers of his works, it is an undeniable truth that with a few exceptions in his fiction and plays he has treated women and the sexual affairs rather unromantically. Sally and Norah in *Of Human Bondage* and a few other women characters escape his unchivalrous treatment. Rosie Driffield in *Cakes and Ale* belongs to this group, who came directly from Maugham's experience. Notwithstanding her faithlessness and promiscuity he describes Rosie with affection and admiration. According to Mr. Cordell's explanation his affair with Nan (Rosie's original) came to an end after a period of eight years, but this incomparable experience probably contributed little to his failure to view women romantically.

People generalise a conclusion that Maugham is a misogynist, but we are surprised to find the seven important women characters in his most widely novel *Of Human Bondage*. Aunt Louisa and Fanny Price are treated with great sympathy. Miss Wilkinson is pitiable, lonely, and sexually frustrated and a bit ludicrous but not contemptible. Norah, Sally, and Mrs. Athelny are cheerful, likeable, and unselfish. Only Mildred is obnoxious. Indeed, it is an interesting theme to make a particular study of his view of women from these characters, but in this essay I have no space for that and only refer to Rosie Driffield in *Cakes and Ale* in the following section.

His views of literature and art not enigmatic whatever, for he has always expressed himself clearly about fiction and drama and also about his predilection for story-telling. He also allows us to share the experience of an intelligent reader of Balzac, Dickens, Tolstoy, Goethe, Eliot, Yeats, Dostoevsky, Flaubert, Melville and many other writers he has read with great relish.

If readers and critics of his works have some repulsive feeling toward his philosophy, including his views of life, a human being, art, and religion, it is probably because of their lack of comprehension of what is in the bottom of his heart and mind. It seems to me that at least he does not belong to any settled pattern of western writers and his philosophy rather has a strong resemblance to the oriental thought, especially to the doctrine of *Zen* Buddhism that emphasizes the vanity of life. In concluding this section I quote two passages that tell us his philosophic ripeness or so-called *satori* in Japanese.

I wanted to make a pattern of my life, in which writing would be an essential element, but which would include all the activities proper to man, and which death would in the end round off in complete fulfillment..... I have had to make the best of them (disadvantages). I have followed the pattern I made with persistence. I do not claim it was a perfect one. I think it was the best that I could hope for in the circumstances and with the limited powers that were granted to me by nature.

(Chap. 15., *The Summing Up*)

.....I am content to be assured that with my last breath my soul, with its aspirations and its weakness, will dissolve into nothingness. I have taken to heart what Epicurus wrote to Menoeceus: 'Become accustomed to the belief that death is nothing to us. For all good and evil consists in sensation, but death is deprivation of sensation. And therefore a right understanding that death is nothing to us makes the mortality of life enjoyable, not because it adds to it an infinite span of time, but because it takes away the craving for immortality. For there is nothing terrible in life for the man who has truly comprehended that there is nothing terrible in not living.' With these words and on this day I think it fitting to put an end to this book. (1949, *A Writer's*

Notebook)

(2) *Rosie in Cakes and Ale*

In the former section I have got to the conclusion that Maugham is not an enigmatic writer and, if there are any readers and critics who generalise him as enigmatic, it is surely because they lack the comprehension of his philosophy. I want to illustrate his view of life and man by giving an example taken from one of his best books—*Cakes and Ale*.

The process how he wrote this witty and humourous novel—one of his biographical novels—is told in the introduction of the same novel. He is asked by the widow of a lately dead writer to write a biography about his husband named Edward Driffield (whose original is said to be Thomas Hardy). There appear three novelists in this novel—Ashenden, Alroy Kear, and Edward Driffield. Alroy Kear (whose model is said to be Hugh Walpole) is a man rich in worldly wisdom and Driffield is a great author. The reason why Ashenden (Maugham himself) was asked to write a biography is that he was one of Driffield's acquaintances in his youth and the story goes on in the style of Ashenden's reminiscence. It is clearly written in the introduction how Maugham loves this work.

Though I have not read it since I corrected the proofs during the First World War I am willing enough to agree with common opinion that *Of Human Bondage* is my best work. It is the kind of book that an author can only write once. After all, he has only one life. But the book I like best is *Cakes and Ale*. It was an amusing book to write. I found it a pleasant task to surmount the difficulty of dealing with events that had taken place long ago and events that took place thirty years later without losing the sense of continuity which is necessary if you hold your reader's attention.....

(Introduction, *Cakes and Ale*)

The central character of this novel, 'the skelton in the closet' (subtitle of this novel), is Rosie, the original of whom Maugham knew and loved, as did too many of his friends and acquaintances. Her warm animality, her

mischievous smile, her incalculated goodness and kindness, her impertability, her great beauty, especially her gold-and-silver skin, her expertness at cards, her amorality and promiscuity are vividly portrayed in this work.

According to Cordell's description, in real life she was not a bar-maid in a provincial town, but the daughter of a prominent figure in public life, famous in London circles for her great beauty.

When the novel appeared, Rosie was still living and only about forty years of age. She was married twice, first to a theatrical producer, then to the younger son of a well-known nobleman. Her second husband became a distinguished political figure. A friend of Maugham and of the original of Rosie declared that Maugham still felt for her so much affection in 1929 that he made enough changes to conceal her identity completely. Because of his memory of Rosie, this novel is full of warmth and glow when compared with other works of unadorned style.

Cakes and Ale is superbly written with well drawn characters and skillfulness of the colloquial style, so unlike the austere manner of *Of Human Bondage*. But the reason it is the author's favourite book is that he is satisfied with his portrayal of Rosie. Among other reasons for concealing her identity was the fact that her second husband was still alive. Rosie lived in her last years in a beautiful country house, where she died soon after the end of the Second World War.

Here I quote two passages by which we are able to understand Rosie's character. Ashenden criticizes Rosie as follows.

"You don't understand," I said. "She was a very simple woman. Her instincts were healthy and ingenuous. She loved to make people happy. She loved love." "Do you call that love?" (asks Mrs. Driffield) "Well, then, the act of love. She was naturally affectionate. When she liked anyone it was quite natural for her to go to bed with him. She never thought twice about it. It was not vice; it wasn't lasciviousness; it was her nature. She gave herself naturally as the sun gives heat or the flowers their perfume. It was a

pleasure to her and She liked to give pleasure to others. It had no effect on her character; She remained sincere, unspoiled, and artless.".....

"I think I can tell you. You see, she wasn't a woman whoever, inspired love. Only affection. It was absurd to be jealous over her. She was like a clear deep pool in a forest glade into which it's heavenly to plunge, but it is neither less cool nor less crystalline because a tramp and a gipsy and a gamekeeper have plunged into it before you."..... (Chap. 25, *Cakes and Ale*)

In another passage Mary-Ann, maid of the vicarage at Blackstable, who took good care of her in her girlhood, but always observed her with harsh and critical eyes, received a surprise visit from Rosie Gann.

"It was a surprisement to me. When I 'eard a knock at the side door and opened it and saw Rosie standing there, you could 'ave kocked me down with a feather. 'Mary-Ann,' she says, an' before I knew what she was always up to she was kissing me all over me face. I couldn't but ask 'er in and when she was in I couldn't but ask her to 'ave a nice cup of tea."..... "I don't 'ardly know what it is, but there's somethin' you can't 'elp likin' about her. She was 'ere the best part of an hour and I will say that for 'er, she never once give 'erself airs. And she told me with 'er own lips the material of the dress she 'ad on cost thirteen and eleven a yard and I believe it. She remembers everything, how I used to brush her 'air for her when she was a tiny tot and how I used to make ner wash her little 'ands before tea. You see, sometimes her mother used to send 'er in to 'ave her tea with us. She was as pretty as a picture in them days." "Oh, well," she said after a pause, "I dare say she's been no worse than plenty of others if the truth was only known. She 'ad more temptation than most, and I dare say a lot of them as blame her would 'ave been no better than what she was if they'd 'ad the opportunity." (ibid., Chap.7)

It is quite true *Cakes and Ale* aroused tremendous excitement in literary circles because Edward Driffeld was seized upon as an uncharitable if not malicious portrait of Thomas Hardy, and Alroy Kear as a venomous caricature of Hugh Walpole, but what is the most fascinating element of this novel exists in the vivid description of Rosie Gann who used to be Maugham's love. Her generous character stands in sharp contrast to those

of many intellectuals, such as Alroy Kear, Mrs. Driffield, leisured women of the upper class, who are thinking of only appearances. His philosophy of life and a human being, which emphasizes the harmony in discord, is completely symbolized in Rosie's character.

It is needless to say that Maugham is not the only writer who took up the complexity of life and a human being as an important theme of creative activity. In case of the psychological novel, whose aim lies in the analysis and description of man's intellectual life, this certainly becomes a great factor. The writers in the 20th century do not classify human beings into two definite groups—a good man and a wicked one—as the Victorians did. Influenced by the new trend of psychology, they have the inclination to observe a human being not as the accumulation of individual qualities but as the mass that is changing momentarily. It is a commonplace thing among those writers that one who can perform a heroic deed has the possibility to behave vulgarly at a different moment. But we must admit a great difference between Maugham and those writers who pursue all of the internal life for their own sake. As for Maugham, the complex elements of a human being appealed to his sense of humour and his sense of drama. In the good quality of a certain person who apparently seems untrustworthy, he detects the drama of life and feels satisfied with its dramatic effect. We frequently come across the expression 'shrug a shoulder', or 'shrug a tolerant shoulder, but it seems to me that in this hackneyed phrase is best expressed Maugham's attitude as a writer toward life and a human being.

The reason why he found the greatest charm in Strickland of *The Moon and Sixpence* is probably that Strickland made a pattern of his life, giving up all the relations of his personal life, even his family and neglecting and even sacrificing others. Maugham himself has continued weaving his own pattern with persistence.

When we come near Maugham's view of life and a human being, we come to realize how such epithets as 'enigmatic', 'inscrutable', 'puzzling', etc. are inappropriate. His philosophy based on the affirmation of various contradictory elements existing in this world and human beings cannot be admired too highly.

IV. Bibliography

Texts : (Texts used are all of Heinemann Collected Edition)
Of Human Bondage
The Moon and Sixpence
Cakes and Ale
Creatures of Circumstances
The Summing Up
A Writer's Notebook

Reference books ;

Cordell, Richard : Somerset Maugham
(a biographical and critical study)
London, Heinemann, 1961
Stott, R. Toole : Somerset Maugham (a bibliography)
London, Nicholas vane, 1961
Ward, R. Heron : W. Somerset Maugham
London, Bles, 1937
Maugham-Kenkyu compiled by Goto & Masuno
(Shinchosha Maugham-Zenshu vol. 31)
1959