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**Dr. Anuradha Singh**  
Associate Professor,  
English Department, Gokuldas  
Girls College, Moradabad,  
Uttar Pradesh, India

## **A Brief History of Short Story Writing: A Case Study of W.S. Maugham**

**Dr. Anuradha Singh**

### **Abstract**

William Somerset Maugham is regarded as one of the twentieth century's greatest short-story authors. He was dubbed "the finest" short-story writer by one of his admirers. With the short tale "Trembling of a Leaf," he became recognised as a short story writer, and he went on to produce more than 10 collections. When he divided his short tales into four volumes, he followed a specific plan. He categorised the stories based on their setting. The short stories that are set in a certain nation or region are all grouped together.

**Keywords:** History, Maugham, Writing

### **1. Introduction**

The first book contains thirty tales. The classic narrative of a prudish missionary and a prostitute is the first story in this volume's 'Rain.' The first Volume among other stories also contains 'The Three Fat Women of Antibes' which is a brilliantly ironic story of self-denial and gross greed.

The second volume includes stories set in Malaysia, the United States, and the United Kingdom. They include 'A Vessel of Wrath,' a well-known story about a drunken missionary, and 'The Man with the Sear,' a touching tale of honour and romance. The renowned series of stories of Ashenden, a British Secret Service Agent in the First World War, is collected in the third volume. Ashenden, who is based in Geneva, travels all throughout Europe on missions involving personalities like as traitors, the impassioned Giulia Lazzeri, and the unusual guy known as the 'hairless Mexican.'

Maugham included the rest of his stories, which were set in Malaya and South-East Asia, in Volume Four, which he said was his final volume. They were written long before World War II, and the reader should be aware that the type of life depicted in them no longer exists. The lifestyles of white men and their spouses in those areas when he first visited them altered little from what they had been twenty-five years before these accounts were published. They only got home leave once every five years and had to endure the misery of being separated from their family and fellow White Race people, as well as not receiving global news for a long period. These tales are incredibly evocative of the British Empire's last days. The majority of the stories in this collection are sad in nature. WS. Maugham wrote stories about people who had some singularity of character that suggested to him that they might be capable of behaving in such a way as to give him an idea that he could use, or about people who had been involved in unusual contingencies by some accident or another of temperament, accident of environment, but they were exceptions, he repeated. Maugham had recounted in 'A Writer's Notebook' how he had come to create a number of his renowned stories, including 'Rain,' his most popular piece. Maugham was travelling in the Pacific in 1916, exploring the South Sea islands. Pago-Pago had been reached by the ship. "It's quite hot and wet today." Heavy dark clouds will appear out of nowhere above the opening of the harbour, and rain will pour down in torrents"? The title idea is included in this note. "A missionary and his wife, as well as Miss Thompson, were among the passengers." Maugham had made notes on all these three and from these notes he wrote his Rain."

The guys and their situations on the South-Sea islands had also inspired the other stories in "The Trembling of a Leaf" to him when he was having fun there. Before the party, Maugham

**Correspondence**  
**Dr. Anuradha Singh**  
Associate Professor,  
English Department, Gokuldas  
Girls College, Moradabad,  
Uttar Pradesh, India

had crafted another wonderful narrative from his notes on a couple he had met while in Singapore. A King's stories, as well as those in 'The Casuerina Tree,' are based on his travels in the East. His story 'The Point of Honour' may have been inspired by a note he wrote about an Italian man in New York who suspects his wife of having incest with his nephew and murders the nephew first, then his wife, because her false confession in court was "as great a burden on his honour as if she had been."

This message might have inspired the story 'The Mother': "They were father and son.... The father admired his trim, intelligent, and attractive son and was shocked when he fell in love with a Burmese girl, but not just any Burmese lady..... The elder guy suspected the girl of casting a spell on the kid.... When she drowned one day, everyone assumed it was her father's fault. The youngster was heartbroken. He disintegrated, and the tremendous love he had for his father morphed into a lethal hatred. Put 'mother' in lieu of 'Father,' and you have the tale of "The Mother" in broad strokes. In this narrative, there is an attack on possessive love. The animosity that develops as a result of possessive love causes a sense of unease in the minds of the readers. They want to see a change in the current scenario, where possessive love is the source of tragedy and should be avoided. This modification, if implemented, will undoubtedly enrich one's life. This is true at all times and in all places.

Maugham's employment in the Intelligence Department during World War I provided him with material for a handful of his short stories, in addition to his travel adventures. If Ashenden is to be regarded a collection of short tales, then every story in the book is based on the author's experiences as a British Agent in the Intelligence Department during WWI. Apart from these experiences, there are some other experiences of Maugham that must be remembered here as they have given birth to quite a number of short stories. While staying in Europe Maugham happened to know one society of poets, painters, musicians, authors and other artist whom he met either at the great luncheons arranged by fashionable ladies of artistic leanings to which he had been invited, or at the cafes, restaurants and lodges in France, Germany, Italy and also the United States. Their lifestyles piqued his attention, and their personalities occasionally enthralled him. Some of his stories are based on his observations of these people and their daily lives.

The Colonel's Lady, a short narrative from this source, is based on the following note: "They were talking about VP. whom they'd all known." She released a collection of fervent love poems that were clearly not dedicated to her spouse. It made them giggle to think she'd been having an affair beneath his nose for so long, and they'd give everything to know how he felt when he finally read them."" The Colonel's visit to his concubine and his wife's publishing of his love poetry are sure to make the readers giggle. This is a parody on the colonel's and his wife's undignified personalities, as well as their masks that hide their true selves.

Maugham's works are realistic fiction. In 'A Man with a Conscience,' the character-narrator says, "I am by way of being a realist, and in the stories, I write I seek verisimilitude." I avoid the odd with the same zeal that I shun the whimsical." There is such a high level of realism in the stories that it gives the impression that Maugham is just telling what he has seen. Perhaps this is why; the stories have the virtue of appearing to have occurred, resulting in

exceptional verisimilitude, a quality that any writer should be proud of. This is one of Maugham's accomplishments. His stories are works of fiction in which he has used his imagination. It's also worth noting that Maugham remarked that he had a very good imagination and that he told a lot of stories since he had a high innovative capacity. The character Ashenden is a highly favourable self-portrait of Maugham, and the novella 'Sanatorium' is based on his actual experience. He based much of the novel on his experiences in a sanatorium in the north of Scotland, where he spent a couple of years regaining his health."

In all of his creative work, whether play and fiction, Maugham's knack for satire is visible. In 'Loaves and Fishes,' Maugham's second play (later novelized as 'The Bishop's Apron,' Maugham antagonised himself severely in the eyes of smugly complacent English theatre-goers. Maugham holds to ridicule the hypocrisy and venality of the clergymen; in 'Far Services Rendered which is Maugham's last but one play Maugham attacks the romantic patriotism and thoughtless glorification of war; and even 'Sheppy' with which Maugham rounded off his career as dramatist is full of trenchant satire.

Maugham's stories are typically melodramatic, and he also has the professional skill of making his stories appetising. The melodrama in "Rain" is abundant. From a technical standpoint, his highly appreciated stories "The Letter" and "Before the Party" revolve around theatrical occurrences. The tale 'Footprints in the Jungle' is about a detective. Maugham worked hard to make his stories credible and even engaging, and he succeeded admirably. This can be regarded a singular feat, and it is possible that this is one of the reasons for the stories' widespread success.

Maugham's short work encompasses a wide range of issues. Even the most casual reader will observe that a half-dozen themes repeat and become prominent—these are Love, Lust, Marriage, and Life, among many other minor themes and a few amusing ones—in Maugham's short works. Love tales may be found in many of Maugham's works. He began his writing career with a novel (Liza of Lambeth) about a young girl's promiscuous love for a middle-aged family man, and he went on to produce a number of novels and short tales after that. Maugham's love stories are usually centred around love. There are less than a dozen pure love stories in his collection of approximately a hundred stories.

Lust is another subject that appears to have a personal attraction to the readers. Even though it is not the major focus of the novel, he has not hesitated to weave a thread of irregular sexual relations into the web of the plot. In such stories, lust is attacked. Marriage was a life concern that Maugham was particularly interested in. Despite the fact that he remained unmarried until he was in his forties, he has been a vocal opponent of marriage since he was a child. "She's single," he scribbled in his notepad before he turned 20. She informed me that in her perspective, if a woman could only have one spouse at a time, marriage would be doomed to fail." Maugham's focus in Mrs. Craddock is Bertha and Edward's matrimonial infidelities, but the book's main attraction is the figure of Miss Lay, whom Maugham constructed as his voice to express his own views on marriage.

Maugham has more than a half-dozen stories based on dreams, hallucinations, magic, and witchcraft, as well as a full-length novel titled "The Magician." A Russian woman has a dream that her husband has attempted to murder her

by tossing her out of their apartment. She dreams about it again and over until it becomes a reality. There are still a few stories on various occurrences or topics. The most notable of these tales is "The Verger." In this narrative, Mr. Foreman is illiterate and unable to sign his name. As a result, he is fired from his position as verger of St. Peter's. He amasses fortune as a tobacconist. When the bank manager learns of his good fortune, he complements him, saying, "What would you be if you could read and write?" On hearing these words, Mr. Foreman says, "I'd be verger of St. Peter's", which gives a dramatic finish to the story.

Maugham has given his books and stories grandeur via his choice of stories and novels, giving them a wide human touch. As a result, his stories are engaging. He carefully eschewed everything that might have a limited appeal or sectarian value or topical interest only.

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