



Complexities in Human States of Mind: Re-reading W. Somerset Maugham's Selected Short Stories

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ABSTRACT

This research paper analyses William Somerset Maugham's portrayal of 'Complexities in Human States of Mind' in his selected short fictions. The modern man as well as a renowned writer of short fiction uses exceptional narrative technique, universal settings, and exquisite mental insight. He is known for his articulate style and sensible understanding of human nature, delineates characters seized between responsibility and desire, morality and hypocrisy, affection and antagonism. The paper explores the stories to analyse how his characters assimilate the worries of marriage, friendship, love, family bindings, cultural conflict, and moral obscurity. Through several figures of speech and subtle portrayal of complexities, Maugham shows human relationships as crack, controversial, and often diminished by secret desires, defeated emotions, and social expectations. The research adopts to highlight how Maugham's fictions anticipate modernist concerns with alienation, disillusionment, and inner conflict. Findings show that his short stories disclose the inconsistency of human relations where explicit appearances often stalk deeper mental truths. Findings suggest that his stories reveal the instability of human connections, where outward appearances often mask deeper psychological truths. Eventually, Maugham emerges not only as a master storyteller but also as a keen observer of the contradictions and complexities that define human nature.

KEYWORDS: Complexity; human relationship; modernism; psychology; short fiction.

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I. INTRODUCTION

'Short Story' possesses the most popular and most attractive segment of all the genres of literature. Of all the authors of world literature, the short story writer William Somerset Maugham (1874–1965) is an ever-dominating figure. He is English and highly regarded as a great writer in Britain. He has enormously addressed 'Complexity in Human States of Mind' in his writings. The inclusion of the theme of modernism in 'Short Story' is a noted skill of an artist. Such a wondrous task is surprisingly anticipated by William Somerset Maugham during his service in various Continent. He published twenty novels, twenty-six plays, seven books of essays, three travel books, and more than 110 short stories, as well as commentaries, memoirs, and periodical contributions [1]. The short stories of Maugham are the major components of his patrimony of fiction. It is never easy to analyze a well-written short story, often because there is very little unfolded [2]. This is true for the short stories of Maugham for his autobiographical writings and plenty of variations. His techniques, in most of his short stories, quickly secure the reader's interest in him. He, then, prepares the reader for his tale. Most of his short stories are characterized by a clear, unadorned style, cosmopolitan settings and a shrewd understanding of human nature. They are character-focused, all integral and everything that the characters do is necessary.

During the First World War, he served with the Red Cross in the ambulance corps. In 1916, he was recruited into the British Secret Intelligence Service, and he worked in Switzerland and Russia till the October Revolution of 1917. During and after the war, he travelled in India and Southeast Asia; these experiences were reflected in later short stories and novels [3]. He is also remembered for his short stories, most of them dealing with the lives of the Western colonists, mostly British, in the Far East. The emotional toll that the colonists had to bear by their isolation was expressed in the stories that were set in Malaya and South-East Asia. They were written long before the Second World War and the reader should know that the sort of life which they dealt with no longer existed [4].

Many authors of fictional works in the 20th century are known as 'Painter of Human Mind' who tried to portray 'Complexity in Human Relationships and Inner States of Mind' in literature, especially in short stories. William Somerset Maugham, in his writings, has shown tremendous insight into the issue. There are many distinct themes of modern literature. The short stories of Maugham deal with those themes, and 'Complexity in Human Relationships and Inner States of Mind' is one of the major themes of modernism. If we take a close look at the short stories of our present author, we will be able to explore the chief elements of our current theme in his selected short stories.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To justify the undertaking of this research, it is very much necessary to evaluate the relevant works. A sound review of literature generally opens before a researcher the knowledge gap, if any, in a specific field the researcher intended to work. The present study attempts to clarify this matter. I have taken help from previous studies that are relevant and close to my study. The brief account of this introduction is unable to hold all the important writings and information of so many good critics on this issue. Still, I am presenting here some of the important ones. Colonialism is a very old issue of the world. But in literary discussion, it is one of the modern themes of literature.

Daniel Blackburn and Alexander Arsov analyzed Three "Lost Stories" of W. Somerset Maugham. They found several modern elements along with human psychology used by Maugham [5]. Nasrullah Mambrol analyzed three remarkable stories ('The Trembling of a Leaf', 'Rain' and 'The Human Element') of Maugham. These stories are mostly written in first-person perspective. Here he showed modern men's complexity in mind and psychological states of mind in an astounding way. He also showed the theme of Colonialism, alienation and disintegration of modern man [6].

Anuradha Singh mentioned Maugham as one of the 20th century's greatest short-story authors and 'the finest' short-story writer [7]. Maugham's 4th volume of short-story was set in Colonial Malaya and South-East Asia. In this volume, he portrayed a picture of psychological complexity of the people of the then society. Ashutosh analyzed some stories of Maugham including 'Rain' and 'Ashenden'. Here he found a number of modern elements including 'psychological states of minds' in the most renowned characters of Maugham [8] Isamu Wakita [9] and Francisca Sempere Linares [10] also analyzed Maugham's view of human being and philosophy of life respectively.

B. Sudha Sai analyzed Maugham's technique of story-telling and of the portrayal of characters. Mr. Sai showed that most of Maugham's short stories are characterized by a clear, unadorned style, a cosmopolitan setting and a shrewd understanding of human nature. Here he also explored a few modern elements of modern man by analyzing the characters of the stories [11]. Barabara Hardee Wiggins in his MA thesis analyzed some of Maugham's modern Characters in perspective of environmental change in their life and society [12].

Lavannya G. showed subjugation and antagonism in the colonized contemporary societies which is one of the major themes of modernism. This paper dealt with the contemporary issues and problems of the day, including social, economic, religious and intellectual subjects, troubles in relation to the industrial revolution. The British colonization has caused various physical and traumatic afflictions on them for centuries. The emergence of postcolonial literature considered the subjugated souls of the indigenous nations that were under the colonial rule. The people were associated with the subhuman qualities. Critics of the thirties believed that a writer must use grandiloquent words, mystifying ideas and a complicated style, to be considered as a serious writer. Whereas D H Lawrence and W Somerset Maugham were the simple story tellers, their style was vivid and direct. Both had an intuitive feeling and knowledge of the drifts and fashions in the contemporary literary society, they well fathom the emotional needs of their readers [13].

Mamta Chaudhary's *W. Somerset Maugham and the East: A Postcolonial Reading of the Implications of History, Culture and Text in the Work of a 'Popular' Writer* looks at Maugham's representations of 'white' men in the colonies, the 'natives', and the environment and landscape where the stories are set, and "demonstrates the extent to which his writing draws on Orientalist constructions of the East." Here the writer also tries to draw the psychological complexity or frictions of the two groups of people [14].

In Adeline Koh's *Inventing Malayanness: Race, Education and Englishness in Colonial Malaya*, the third chapter "The Great 'Yellow Peril': Reading Somerset Maugham" begins with the question of "how the figure of the exotic, mysterious and inscrutable Chinese plays a central ideological role within the topography of British colonialism", and argues that the "Sino-Malay" tension was constructed particularly in order to validate the British presence within Malaya. The author also portrays a complex relationship between the colonists, and the colonised people that is the cause of psychological complexity among the people of colonised contemporary society [15].

III. OBJECTIVE

The study of this research paper is intended to explore and aim at gleaning how Maugham has focused on 'Complexity in Human Relationships and Inner States of Mind' in English literary world with special reference to his selected short stories.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study based on the exegesis or content analysis method to explore the main texts of Maugham's selected short stories. Books on short stories, articles, dissertations, relevant essays and critical analysis published in journals and other media will be used as the sources of data for this study. A detailed analysis extracted from the sources has been the process of reaching to a conclusion. The data has been studied in three phases: preparation, organisation and reporting. In the first phase, the texts have been carefully pursued to understand in detail. In the second phase, data has been categorised and organised in detail. In the last phase, the research report is prepared on the basis of the data assembled from the sources.

V. SELECTION OF SHORT STORIES

The short stories analyzed in the research work were all written in the English Modern Age (1901-1939/1945) and are set in different countries. The primary texts I will use in this research are- 'The Ant and the Grasshopper', 'Rain', 'The Fall of Edward Barnard', 'The Vessel of Wrath', 'The Force of Circumstance', 'Home', 'Appearance and Reality', 'The Letter', 'The Kite', and 'The Man with the Scar'. These short stories present the interposition of Human Relationship that is caught between the modern and tradition in the modern age.

VI. DISCUSSION

The complexity of the human relationships is one of the most discussed themes of Maugham's writings. At the same time, his view of life emphasizes universal impermanency or transiency. In 'Of Human Bondage', in which his meditation is mentioned, sets a good example of this inclination. It is in plain and common people that he felt a great interest. Like the novel, he delineates the complexity in human relationships of ordinary people and the chosen folk of the then societies. It was not such a sociological interest but it was merely interest in the human nature. The point that he found most interesting is that the human being is a collection of human natures which contradict with one another. In other words nothing is more attractive to him than the behaviour of ordinary people who incidentally go out of the usual track, what is called the common sense. Maugham portrayed the relationships of the ordinary people in a complex mood [16]. Psychological criticism of literature has traditionally consisted of either an analysis of the creative process, a psychological study of characters in fiction, or a personality study of an author. The methodology employed in psychological criticism of literature has, too often, merely superimposed psychological formulae upon literature, and as a result deified its conclusions and held them as dogmatic, absolute, and ultimate truth [17].

In 'The Ant and the Grasshopper', Maugham realigns Aesop's fable to expose the complexity of human relationships, particularly within the bond between siblings. George, the responsible and industrious brother, resents Tom, whose reckless and pleasure-seeking lifestyle contrasts sharply with his own values of duty and discipline. Yet, despite his irresponsibility, Tom ultimately achieves wealth and comfort by marrying advantageously, while George remains trapped in hard work and bitterness. This reversal ironically disrupts the moral and traditional framework of a story; revealing how petulance, obstruction, and jealousy shape the ties among family members. Through the story, Maugham points out those human relationships are not governed by simple moral lessons but are marked by irony, emotional conflict, and the unpredictable turns of fortune.

George is a hard-working, decent, respectable and straightforward man. On the other hand Tom is an idle, worthless, dissolute and dishonourable rogue. The author meets George when he (G) is in deep gloomy mood. The mood George bears when he hears that his brother Tom became engaged to a woman old enough to be his mother. The woman died and Tom belonged to her property- half a million pounds, a house in London and a house in the village. Though George has a small amount of savings, Tom is now a wealthy man. That is why George is in a complexity of gloom and despair. He said the author very angrily, "It's not fair, I tell you, it's not fair. Damn it, it's not fair." [18] The author uttered the following words regarding George's psychological state of mind, "He looked as though the burden of the whole world sat on his shoulders. I was sorry for him: I suspected at once that his unfortunate brother had been causing trouble again." [19]

Maugham's 'Rain' unfolds against the backdrop of a prolonged downpour on the island of Pago Pago, which forces a group of travellers- Dr. Macphail, his wife, Davidson the missionary, his wife, and Sadie Thompson- into close quarters. Here their compulsory detention makes a stage where controversial disposition of characters bring out the complexities of human interactivities. Modern literature, especially short fiction, discloses the complexity of human psychology, and in the story, both Davidson and Sadie are delineated with

conflicted inmost lives. Davidson's outer religious zeal disguises deep suppression and hypocrisy, while Sadie's insolence masks emotional vulnerability.

Finally, Davidson's suicide expresses the downfall of his morality that a modernist focuses on inner turmoil and human contradiction. Davidson's psychological distress over Sadie's sexuality and his eventual rape or their mutual intercourse parallels modern scandals involving exploitative religious leaders. His 'fall' reflects contemporary reckonings with suppressed desire and abuse of power:

"She gathered herself together. No one could describe the scorn of her expression or the contemptuous hatred she put into her answer. 'You men! You filthy, dirty pigs! You're all the same, all of you. Pigs! Pigs!' Dr. Macphail gasped. He understood." [20]

In the story, Maugham paints human relationships as complicate, controversial, and inconsistent. He also shapes the incident using hidden thirsts, moral clashes, and shifting power dynamics. The story suggests that beneath the surface of authority, respectability, and repentance lay repressed impulses and hypocrisies that complicate every human bond.

In the story 'The Fall of Edward Barnard', Maugham superbly knits the complexity of human relationships with the psychological states of mind that impact individual substitute and advantage. The story paints the conflict between Edward and Bateman where the former abandons material ambition for spiritual and emotional fulfilment in Tahiti, and the later one is a pragmatic by nature who views success strictly through the lens of social standing and wealth. This dispersion loosens their relationship, as Bateman cannot comprehend Edward's psychological transformation or his rejection of conventional success. Edward undergoes an inner transformation that reflects a modernist interest in psychological development rather than mere external action. His 'fall' is a spiritual awakening, deeply internal and personal. This mirrors modernist concerns with identity, meaning, and personal fulfilment over traditional plot-driven narratives. In Tahiti, he discovered the soul of things and he learned that there were more important things than making money. Here he gets peace which is absent in Chicago. Bateman observes a tremendous transformation in Edward's mind:

"What do you value in life then?"

"I'm afraid you'll laugh at me. Beauty, truth, and goodness."

"Don't you think you can have those in Chicago?"

"Some men can, perhaps, but not I." [21]

Somerset Maugham unfolds the 'complexity of human relationships' by exploring cultural displacement, marital confrontation, and the burden of repressed desires in the story 'Honolulu'. The story centres on a young Englishman who marries a native Hawaiian girl and soon finds himself entangled between the expectations of his own cultural teaching and the strange emotional world of his wife. Their relationship is drained by incompatibility, misunderstanding, and, jealousy; exposing how togetherness and love can break up under the influence of cultural and conceptual differences.

Maugham searches through the inward struggles of his characters, particularly the narrator and the Scotsman, rather than highlighting on outward action. The intellectual and passionate distinction traces a shift from the plot-driven narratives of the past to character-driven stories of modern literary creation. This deeper complexity reveals modern preoccupation of literature with the unconscious, personal trauma, and emotional uncertainty. There are some psychological gaps among the characters. The captain believes everything and the other two are doubtful: "That's obvious; but, you know, that's not the part that interests me most: whether it's true or not, and what it all means; the part that interests me is that such things should happen to such people." [22]

Maugham further puts 'the complexity of human relationships' into a dramatic form by presenting the incredible alliance between-Ginger Ted, a drunken loafer; and Miss Jones, a stern, pious missionary in the story 'The Vessel of Wrath'. Firstly, their reciprocal relationships are plotted by hostility, judgment, and mutual contempt, as Miss Jones regards Ginger as morally corrupted man. Yet, circumstances force them into close contact, and beneath their conflict emerges an unexpected bond that evolves into respect and eventually marriage. This transformation illustrates the unpredictable nature of human relationships, where attraction and connection can grow out of antagonism. Psychologically, the story reveals the hidden vulnerability of both characters- Ginger's capacity for change and Miss Jones's suppressed emotional-needs suggesting that beneath outward appearances lie complex inner states of desire, fear, and longing for companionship. Through irony and reversal, Maugham highlights how human bonds are shaped not only by social and moral conventions but also by the deeper psychological currents of the heart.

When Miss Jones was returning to Baru after a surgery in Maputiti, she was very frightened to see Ginger Ted at the same steamer in the story 'The Vessel of Wrath'. She hated him because he was a drunkard man of Baru and then accused of criminal offenses. While the boat fell in an accident she was in dilemma whether she should talk to Ginger or not. Ginger Ted got down from the top to know the matter and returned at top. But Miss Jones' psychological dilemma and dignity forbade her: "When he reappeared she would have liked to ask him what had happened, but her dignity prevented her. She sat still and occupied herself with her thoughts." [23]

Though Ginger Ted is a drunkard and criminal man on Baru Island, the controller thinks Ted as his drinks partner because Ted is one of the White men on that island. The controller is complex after hearing the news of the marriage between Ted and Miss Jones. The controller repeatedly discourages Ginger not to marrying Miss Jones. He also threatens Ted that she will make Ted a missionary. Then Ted also expressed Miss Jones's love and weakness to Ted. This is also an instance of complexity in relationships. Ted said, "She wanted it. She fell for me that night we spent on the island when the propeller broke." [24]

In 'The Force of Circumstance', Maugham explores the fragility of human relationships when confronted with the weight of hidden pasts and psychological conflict. The story depicts Guy, a colonial officer, whose marriage to Doris collapses after she learns of his former relationship with a native woman and the existence of his mixed-race children. The complexity of their relationship lies in the clash between affection and social conventions, as Doris's psychological turmoil- oscillating between compassion, repulsion, and despair- ultimately prevents reconciliation. Guy's sense of guilt and helplessness further deepens the tragedy, revealing how human connections are shaped not only by personal emotions but also by the external forces of society and circumstance

Modern men's psychological depth and their in-depth character study are surprisingly decorated by Maugham in the story. After hearing the tone of hollowness from Guy regarding the half-caste children in the East we have the following complexity in her character:

"'You can't expect me to think it's a very good system.'

'You mustn't be too hard,' he smiled back.

"I'm not hard. But I'm thankful you never had a Malay wife. I should have hated it. Just think if those two little brats were yours.'" [25]

Psychological complexity enclosed the soul of Doris. After six months of fighting with her mind, she didn't come to a conclusion about whether she should live with Guy or not. But she pronounced the words to Guy, "Everything in this house; when I think of that bed I slept in it gives me goose-flesh.... You don't know what I've endured." [26]

In 'Home', Maugham presents the complexity of human relationships through the disillusionment of Captain George Barnsley, who returns to England after years abroad only to discover the profound estrangement between himself and his family. Expecting warmth and belonging, he is instead met with indifference and discomfort, realizing that time and distance have eroded the emotional ties that once bound them. The psychological depth of the story lies in George's inner conflict—his yearning for affection and recognition clashes with the cold reality of familial detachment.

Captain Meadows left home after the marriage of Mrs. Meadows with his brother Tom. He earned and spent; and led a happy life. Here he wanted to make understand that he had no family. Though he had a family or wife and children he would save money. He is a peculiar character at all. His psychological consciousness is shown through the words, "I'm not one to save money. Make it and spend it; that's my motto. But one thing I can say for myself: if I had the chance of going through my life again I'd take it. And there's not many as'll say that." [27]

There is a complexity in relationship in the story 'Home'. Mrs Meadows knows that both the brothers Tom and George love her, but she doesn't marry George only for lack of steadiness. She wants a stable man and so she chooses Tom. But why George left home and why he didn't marry, that is the complexity like human beings. As the author mentioned, "...both courted Mrs. Meadows when she was Emily Green, fifty years and more ago, and when she married Tom, George had gone away to sea." [28]

In 'Appearance and Reality', Maugham examines the tension between outward social masks and inner psychological truths, exposing the complexity of human relationships built on illusion. The story portrays characters who construct façades of respectability, charm, or moral uprightness, only for these appearances to collapse under the pressure of hidden motives and suppressed desires. Relationships are shown to be fragile, shaped not by genuine understanding but by the projections and expectations individuals impose on one another. Psychologically, the narrative reveals how self-deception and denial influence human behavior, as characters struggle to reconcile their inner realities with the roles society demands of them. Maugham successfully draws a complexity of human relationships in the story 'Appearance and Reality'. Monsieur Le Sueur, the minister of internal affairs, was a busy and industrious man. The wrath of Monsieur Le Sueur represents the psychological complexity of human mind. Though he was very kind to Lisette, he couldn't control his anger seeing a lover of her in their house. So 'he went straight up to Lisette and smacked her hard on her right cheek with his left hand and then smacked her hard on the left cheek with his right hand.' [29]

In 'The Letter', Maugham portrays the complexity of human relationships through the destructive interplay of love, jealousy, and deceit. The story follows Leslie Crosbie, who murders her lover Geoffrey Hammond and attempts to justify her actions by claiming self-defence, while secretly concealing the truth of her passion and betrayal. Her relationship with her husband, Robert, becomes tainted by dishonesty, as his trust and devotion blind him to her duplicity. Psychologically, Leslie embodies the conflict between outward composure

and inner turmoil- her desperate need to preserve social respectability contrasts with the hidden intensity of her emotions and moral weakness.

There are a number of elements in the story that are directly related to complexity among human beings. Robert Crosbie and Leslie have been married for twelve years. Mr. Crosbie loves her very much and he has trust to her. He also thinks her an innocent and cowardly female. She gave a same statement to all who are related to the jurisdiction of Hammond's murder. Complexity arises when the clerk of Mr. Joyce, the lawyer of Leslie's case, informs about the letter written by Leslie. Mr. Joyce said to Crosbie, "It appears that your wife sent a letter to Hammond asking him to come to the bungalow on the night he was killed." [30]

She told Mr. Joyce that she wrote the letter to buy a gun for his husband as a gift. As Hammond knew about guns, so, she wrote to him. The complexity of the husband-wife relationship reaches its peak when Mr. Crosbie told the following words to Mr. Joyce after receiving the letter from the native woman: "I went to Singapore on the night of Hammond's death partly to buy a new gun that a man I knew wanted to dispose of. Good-night." [31]

After the trial, Mrs. Joyce brought Leslie and Mr. Crosbie to their house and called Mr. Crosbie to stay few days there to relieve them from trauma. But it seemed that Mr. Crosbie was not willing to stay with Leslie. Giving the letter to Leslie's hand, suddenly he left Mr. Joyce's house at once. Then Leslie disclosed the truth to Mr. Joyce: "He'd been my lover for years. He became my lover almost immediately after he came back from the war." [32]

Robert Crosbie is a wonder character drawn by Maugham. He loves his wife, Leslie very much. He believes her wholeheartedly and his love has no pretence. Here the readers get a psychological depth of love in the couple: "Leslie's the best woman in the world. She wouldn't hurt a fly." [33] But after a while, Mr. Crosbie is in obsessed fear of the letter. He can't believe the matter of the letter without seeing himself. He is agitated and distracted. This time the reader can't imagine the psychological change of Robert at all.

"This is the right document, sir," he said, and was about to give it to Mr. Joyce when Crosbie took it from him.

'Let me look at it,' he said.

Mr. Joyce watched him read and then held out his hand for it." [34]

In 'The Kite', Maugham explores the complexity of marital relationships through the conflict between personal obsession and domestic expectation. The story centres on Herbert, whose passion for flying kites becomes a symbol of independence and inner fulfilment, but also a source of tension with his wife, Betty, who sees it as childish and absurd. Their relationship deteriorates when Betty attempts to control and suppress Herbert's psychological need for freedom and emotional attachment to his hobby, leading him to assert his individuality by ultimately choosing the kite over his marriage. The story highlights the fragile balance between love, compromise, and self-expression in human relationships, showing how suppressed desires and incompatible values can result in estrangement.

In the story, Mrs. Sunbury is very proud of her son Herbert. Once she told her husband that though he is twenty-one, he has no mismatch. But after hearing the relationship of Herbert with a girl Betty Bevan, she radically changes her mind about him. She is now feeling jealous of Miss Bevan. Mrs. Sunbury repeatedly discourages Herbert not to carrying relation with Bevan. Reading the story, some readers can find a Freudian complexity of relationships. A fortnight later Herbert was married. Mrs. Sunbury refused to go to the wedding and wouldn't let Samuel go either [35].

Though Herbert, in 'The Kite', is a very young man, he has the psychological consciousness to handle a situation. His wit doesn't satisfy his mother. But Herbert argued that if Dad hadn't married you, I shouldn't be here now, should I? [36] Though Mrs. Sunbury departed from her son a few months ago. She is a devoted mother. She can't ignore her son. Her character is a character of a true mother. At the time of their kite flying, she wants to neglect him but her mother-like attitude gets her to her loving son:

"Like to have a try, Herbert?"

He caught his breath.

"Yes, Mum, I should." [37]

W. Somerset Maugham's short fictions repeatedly demonstrate how human relationships are rarely simple or stable but are instead shaped by hidden emotions, social conventions, and the psychological struggles of individuals. These stories present the clash among the characters, sibling rivalry, psychological transformation of characters, the strains of cultural difference, emotional incompatibility in marriage, unexpected affection between two-pole characters, the collapse of marriage under the burden of hidden pasts, alienation from family life, fragile relationships, hidden desires, the psychological strain of deceit, and conflict between individuality. Taken together, these stories also reveal Maugham's acute awareness of the instability of human relationships, where love, duty, morality, and desire intersect with inner conflicts and social pressures. His characters are caught between outward appearances and inner realities, showing that the true drama of human connection lies not in harmony but in the contradictions and psychological complexities that define the human condition.

VII. CONCLUSION

This is true for the short stories of William Somerset Maugham that his well-written stories are never easy to analyze because there is very little unfolded, there are often autobiographical elements, and plenty of variations. He is one of the world's greatest exemplary storytellers who told stories because he had been blessed with a narrative quality for concentrated story-telling. As one turns the pages of his short stories, automatically enters a magical world of fabulous characters. One feels as if he is curled up listening to the delicious tales of an old, dear and rather wicked friend. One is also transported to the very place, the villa, the street, the bar, the forest, the smells and tastes are almost tangible. Among his huge collection of short stories, the above-selected stories attempt to convey that every single story deals with modern elements along with plenty of 'complexity in human relationships and psychological states of mind'.

Maugham's short stories collectively suggest that human relationships are never straightforward but are marked by conflict, irony, and psychological depth. Whether through love, marriage, friendship, or family bonds, his characters grapple with suppressed desires, moral contradictions, cultural tensions, and the unpredictable turns of fate. What appears stable- respectability, affection, or duty often unravels under the pressure of inner conflicts and hidden truths. By exposing the fragile line between appearance and reality, and by revealing how a psychological state of mind shape human connections, Maugham portrays relationships as profoundly complex, unstable, and deeply human.

In the present research work, I analysed ten short stories by William Somerset Maugham to explore the elements of 'human relationships and psychological states of mind'. Maugham's characters- whether missionaries, planters, government officials, or local inhabitants become vehicles for exploring themes of human relationships and psychological states of mind. In doing so, he anticipates many concerns of the current issue, challenging the romanticized image of empire by showing the human costs.

The analysis of these narratives affirms that Maugham was not only a master storyteller of the Modern Age but also a keen observer of the psychological and cultural tensions inherent in contemporary societies. His works remain significant for his ability to blend literary artistry with a critical portrayal of human relationships and psychological states of mind.

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