CHAPTER - IX

CONCLUSION
CHAPTER 9

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Though Conrad has also written about social, racial and gender discrimination, the focus in this study has been on the aspects of naturalism. A survey of Conrad's works from the point of view of naturalism in the earlier chapters establishes that Conrad is its advocate. The purpose of this chapter is to epitomize all the findings and put them in final form.

Naturalism denotes a tendency to believe that man is a higher animal governed by environment, circumstances, heredity, instincts and passions and therefore, his freewill is enslaved. The interaction between man and nature has three points of view – man and man, man and his inner nature, man and external nature. Naturalism represents intercommunication between man and natural elements. Through this interaction, a naturalist develops a magnificent picture of man, who fights the forces of nature with an indomitable spirit.

To be more specific, the work of Conrad and other naturalists is mainly characterized by an objective and detached (Scientific) method, accuracy of detail, closeness to facts and reality, portrayal of the extraordinary in the ordinary characters, subjects from the lower strata of society, a disposition to
look at human life and morals with indifference, absence of glamour in characterization and rejection of the supernatural.

If not for the rapid changes in modern life, the relationship between man and nature would have been healthier and more harmonious. The evils of industrialization, materialism, and consumerism have changed man’s attitude towards his natural surroundings. Man has started behaving unnaturally and has tried to segregate himself from nature with a view to control her for his material prosperity and comfort, which he tries to get from modern science. Man’s estrangement and isolation from his fellows and from nature is the consequence. This further leads to disruption of both familial and community life. Though living in society, man is alone and according to Conrad, in such solitude, man can face the world only if he draws from his inner resources something strong and stable. When his inherent strength is mustered, he can succeed in the quest for identity even in the face of glaring misfortunes.

Conrad’s naturalism is evident in his men and women who, when pitted against the odds of nature and society, succeed due to their solidarity with the human race. Conrad commands our attention because through his protagonists, he portrays a magnificent picture of man engaged in constant struggle, though in his pursuit of happiness he is governed by heredity, environment, and circumstances. The struggle of Conrad’s characters attains heroic stature as a
paradigm of human assertion, and they come forth as representations of the indomitability of the human spirit. For this, one could consider the examples of Winnie’s mother, Captain Mac Whirr, the crew of *The Narcissus*, Marlow, the crew of the *Nan Shan*, Nostromo, Dr. Monygham, Jim and many others.

With a view to evaluate Conrad’s contributions and his place among naturalists, a brief comparison is made here between Joseph Conrad and Somerset Maugham, as they are both representative writers of their age.

**A Comparison between Somerset Maugham and Conrad**

Though there are some dissimilarities between Maugham and Conrad, they are fewer than the similarities. The themes, plots, characters, subjects and technique in their individual novels may differ, but a deeper scrutiny reveals that their works have much in common when it comes to the essential features of literary naturalism. Before we go into the literary aspects, we can find a lot of similarities in the formative influences in their lives. Both had an unhappy childhood and adolescence as orphans, because their parents died before the age of eleven, and both were brought up under the care of their uncles. The emotional trauma suffered at an early stage of life seem to have been the main reason for their realistic attitude towards life. They both travelled a lot and gained rich experiences of life. Conrad as a sailor and Maugham as a medical
student, saw life in the 'raw' and they make use of these real experiences and characters in their writings. They depend much on the concrete data of life. Travel gave them new subjects and their strange surroundings fostered the development of amazing powers of description. As writers of the transition period, both of them are greatly influenced by the social, psychological and biological theories of their time. Darwin's Theory of Evolution and 'Survival of the Fittest' specially influenced their outlook on life. Another important influence that can be seen in their works is that of the ill effects of the industrial revolution. The misery, squalor, and sordidness of the life of the working class find expression repeatedly in their works. All these influences have given rise to the adoption of the 'Scientific Method' by Conrad and Maugham, making them study their subjects objectively and dispassionately just as any subject matter of science is studied. By presenting a character from different points of view, they try to portray both the inner and outer life of the character. They delve into the psychic springs of life and try to explore the nature of life. Their works have the ingredients of the diversity of human nature. Since the entire life in the form of the expression of human nature becomes the subject of their writing, their works record human nature.
Incidentally, another similarity between Maugham and Conrad is their habit of maintaining diaries which has later provided them with rich material for their writings. Maugham in his *A Writer's Note Book* jots down notes on people from various climes. As a student of human psychology he finds that people may differ in environmental habits but not in their essential human quality. Conrad also maintained his *Congo Diary Map* which he had used extensively while writing *Heart of Darkness*.

It is accepted that Maugham's *Liza of Lambeth* and *Of Human Bondage* are good specimens to determine the writer as a naturalist. Maugham has said that the former was written with Maupassant as its model and as for the latter, S. Diana Neill observes that the naturalism of the novel owes quite a lot to Samuel Butler and Emile Zola. (It is already acknowledged in Chapter 1 that naturalism originated from France, with Zola as its Chief exponent who has influenced the other naturalists including Conrad). Grant C. Knight is of the opinion that *Of Human Bondage* (1915) is one of the best representative works of twentieth century English naturalism and hence, it is felt appropriate to consider the same for comparison.

As hardcore naturalists, Maugham and Conrad ultimately deal with human nature in its various forms rejecting the supernatural elements. Maugham in his book *The Summing Up* narrates that he has taken an absorbing
interest in human nature and it seems to him that he can best communicate his observations on it by telling tales. According to Maugham, people are the creatures of circumstance and they are what they are, only because of environment, the happy accidents, chance encounters, trials, pains and pleasures, which they have experienced. This is one of the characteristic beliefs of naturalists.

Just as Conrad subjects his real experiences to the process of transmutation to give a naturalist picture, Mangham also tells us in *The Summing Up*, that he has used in his writings whatever has happened to him in the course of his life. He also says that sometimes he has used his experience as a theme and has invented a series of incidents to illustrate it. If in *The Secret Agent* Conrad transmutes the soul of London into literature, *Of Human Bondage* imbibes the whole universe of the environment into which Maugham moved. From the point of view of naturalism Desmond Mac Carthy considers this novel as ‘transposed experience’. With its strong autobiographical element, *Of Human Bondage* is comparable to Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. If Marlow is Conrad’s mouthpiece, Philip is a projection of Maugham himself.
Subject Matter, Setting and Atmosphere:

In *Of Human Bondage* the subjects are either from the lower class or the middle class and the action takes place in an urban setting, moving through London, Paris and Heidelberg. In this novel, Maugham treats the subject of human life, running to a span of three decades. Human growth in an uncongenial atmosphere has spiritual torment as its theme here. Though the protagonist Philip moves in society, the story is less about a social man and more about a natural organism speeding through various environments, each environment with its own peculiar problems: the problem to treat an orphan child carefully, to manage the right economy, to accommodate the chance love affair, schooling in adverse circumstances, the sex conflict, the pursuit of art as a hard job, the death of desire, the smouldering cinders of desire under the pile of ashes and the smooth running of a household. — all these subjects are handled by Maugham with artistic ardour. Technically speaking, the novel has an episodic setting because Philip moves through several episodes of life.

In choosing subjects from the lower strata of society, in using minute details to describe the saga and in taking great care to create an atmosphere that pervades the novel throughout, Maugham and Conrad are again, hard core naturalists. Of the six novels studied in the present thesis, *The Secret Agent* is more comparable here than the others because of its urban setting and
characters. In creating the atmosphere with the dark and dank streets of London, Conrad has captured the very spirit of London in his words. Even with a plain narrative Maugham attempts a similar feat in *Of Human Bondage.* The atmosphere at the Blackstable Vicarage with the clerical rituals, routine life, drudgery in the household, the little economies, the loneliness of aunt Louisa and the selfishness of the Vicar have been painted with a minuteness which makes it very naturalistic. If the picture is drab it is because life itself is drab here.

The atmosphere at the Tercanbury School has an air of coldness and officialism. The mischiefs of the young pupils who take morbid pleasure in teasing the club-footed hero, their low thinking and drabness of the environment have been carefully depicted. Equally realistic is the portrayal of the environment at Frau Erlin’s place at Heidelberg. The love affair of Cacile and the Chinaman gives a romantic tone to the whole episode which radiates the reality of life, with the ferments of youth seeking a natural outlet in things related to sex. Maugham’s artistic maturity is at a peak in his creation of atmosphere in Paris. The life of an artist’s struggle for a destiny in Paris, the nude model, the romantic life of Cronshaw, Fanny price’s suicide, the uninhibited life of Ruth Chalice; the typical aspects of Lawson and Flanagan, and Foinet’s task mastership add to the naturalistic environment of this
particular episode. It forms the background of the frustrations and disillusionments of the art students. The draper’s shop where Philip works as a shop-walker, the offices and business establishments have the typicalities of the specific atmospheres where small jealousies, petty-mindedness and dull routine are to be seen.

Method:

Just like Conrad, Maugham is also a shrewd observer of life and a keen student of nature. He presents life in an ironically detached manner and puts characters on a dissection table as a surgeon would, and reveals their innermost being. John Brophy actually calls him ‘a pathologist of human behaviour’. By viewing characters in a disinterested manner Maugham limits himself to the clinical practice of describing the case. He never suggests a cure or even that a cure might be desirable. This is similar to Conrad who doesn’t offer any recipe for the redemption of society. Even when the bleak atmosphere is rendered visible by Maugham by using the smallest details, his method resembles that of Conrad who enables to visualize the scenes and feel the atmosphere in all its fullness.
Plot and Character:

Plot:

The story of Philip is a chronicle of a human organism in many vicissitudes of life with all its misery, squalor, sufferings, disappointments and wretchedness. For D.H. Lawrence the body is a prison but for Maugham, the entire human life itself is bondage. He tries to substantiate this idea through the life of the protagonist Philip. Right from birth till death man is in bondage, but there is no help to the human bondage. Human life is a struggle for existence where the mightier forces exploit the weaker ones. There is body bondage, environmental bondage, economic bondage, ritual bondage, emotional bondage, religious bondage, professional bondage, domestic bondage, sexual bondage and moral bondage.

The two major factors determining characters in this novel are sex and money bondage. Philip's story is fraught with the adverse forces which are focused on a human organism.

Philip is born with a club foot for which nature is responsible. After being orphaned, he is brought-up and educated by his uncle who is a Vicar. He pursues higher studies at Heidelberg and tries to become a painter in Paris. Unsuccessful in that, he finally studies medicine and becomes a doctor. All the trials, tribulations and adventures in his life are related to money and sex. The
story ends when Philip is thirty years old and on the verge of settling down in life with a simple girl. The plot is episodic, with one episode following another in a logical order that corresponds to the progression of the protagonist’s life. The plot is not only simple but also devoid of suspense. The thread of the narrative runs straight through till the end and the plot develops as life develops. This is unlike Conrad who is well known for his odd or broken time sequences, flashbacks and flash forwards as we have seen in *Nostromo* and *The Secret Agent*. However, from the point of view of form, *Of Human Bondage* is a seemingly formless, sprawling chronicle in which the rambling panorama of life has been packed in an order. In this respect, Conrad’s *Nostromo* and *Lord Jim* are similar because of their long, rambling narratives that intermittently offer a panoramic slice of human drama. If the critics say that Maugham’s novel has a negative quality because it ends in an anti-climax, then *Lord Jim* has a striking similarity.

**Characters:**

Characters in Maugham are governed by their natural instinct to an extent that their lives follow a natural flow. Similar to Conrad, Maugham’s works contain a rich variety of characters based on his wide experience of people he had known in various climes. Maugham believed that a novelist should depict
characters that are living and freshly observed. Just as Conrad chose ordinary people from the lower strata of society, Maugham was also more interested in the obscure than with the famous people. He says that he would more readily spend a month on a desert island with a veterinary surgeon than with a prime minister. He is of the opinion that the high people in society often wear a mask and are not as useful as the ordinary ones.

As Maugham makes use of characters he knows, he is as much a naturalist as Conrad is. He studies characters scientifically from within and uses minute details in delineating them. This technique of verisimilitude is common to him and Conrad. The physical appearance of Verloc, the Professor, Michealis and the others described in *The Secret Agent* is just one example of this technique.

Conrad studies his characters from within, and draws them with a calm, unwavering and surgical precision. He tries to render their psyche and expose their innermost fibre. We can say that this is a precursor of the psychological novels about to come later. Similarly, Maugham's treatment of character is often pitiless. He exposes their foibles with the least regard to their respectability (Much like Conrad's treatment of the anarchist characters in *The Secret Agent*). Maugham treats characters without any notion of remedying them of their stupidity or idiosyncrasy. He does not condemn sinners and
criminals. According to him they are just creatures of circumstance. In both Maugham and Conrad, idealized heroes are not found. The mixed traits of good and bad make a character more human than ideal. Because of the contradictory traits in characters, they are seen to move between the pull of nature and the pull of society.

Themes:

Though there is a multiplicity of themes in *Of Human Bondage*, all of them merge into one prominent theme of human life embroiled in various bondages – natural, emotional and economic. This theme also points to the general insignificance of life because though life is important to oneself, it is not so to the mass of population and nature. The same can be seen in the case of Stevie’s death, or Winnie’s death (in *The Secret Agent*), which is of no consequence to the apathetic populace of a metropolitan city. This also reminds us of nature as an indifferent force in all Conrad’s novels where, depending on the circumstances, it is hostile to one and helpful to another. Man may constantly try to conquer internal and external nature, but often he is helpless, as in the case of Philip who is helpless in matters of sex.
According to Maugham, sex is fairly beyond the human will. In this novel the themes apparently revolve around the forces of sexual and economic bondage. The interpersonal relationship in sex is a tragic fact because it involves emotional bondage and has dire consequences when thwarted. In the case of Mildred it is seen that female fury is aroused when the desire is flouted by the male.

A human body is a confined thing under the operating laws of nature. A body is not a free agent on our planet and no living being can escape the fact of body bondage. According to Maugham the tragedy is not death, but the expression of spirit through the body and this is illustrated by him through several instances of human lust which seeks a violent expression in routine life. Of Human Bondage provides a wonderful insight into the pains of poverty, the ache of desolation, bitterness of humiliation and the bewilderment of passions to which the mind does not consent. The natural effect of the novel is glorified when Maugham sternly suppresses sentiments to present an unadulterated picture of life with special emphasis on the forces that lead to the frustration of the individual. Whether these forces originate from human passions or from the working of society, they definitely determine the lives of the characters. In Conrad’s The Secret Agent the character of the ‘Professor’ is frustrated by the workings of society because he fails in earning wealth and status on the basis of
merit (because of a corrupt social system). In Maugham's novel Philip faces humiliation by his schoolmates who tease him because of his clubfoot. When he tries to become an artist in Paris, he sees poverty driving Fanny Price into committing suicide to avoid starvation. As a result, he gets disillusioned with the life and work of artists there. He comes to know that art was a luxury and men attached importance only to self preservation and propagation of their species. It was only when these instincts were satisfied that they consented to occupy themselves with the entertainment provided for them by writers, painters and poets. As a medical student, the protagonist sees poverty from close quarters. Philip sees the dingy life of the poor for whom loss of work was a tragedy. In the slums, he saw that babies were not welcome and the man received them with surly anger, hoping that the boy might be born dead or might die at birth.

In addition to the main theme of economic and sexual bondage, some other supplementary aspects of that time are also brought into light. They are: clergymen's blind beliefs and rituals, life in the public schools in England with all its defects, the bleak offices like that of a solicitor's, social living of the artists and their aspirations, the factors that lead to prostitution and social economy. All these occurrences are based upon economy and sex.
It is already seen in an earlier chapter that Conrad was lonely and seeking independence and that like him, many of his heroes are also lonely. Old Singleton is lonely, Captain Mac Whirr is alienated from his family and crew, Jim is lonely, Nostromo is lonely and so are Charles and Emilia Gould. Loneliness as a recurrent theme can be seen in Maugham too. Even in Maugham’s life, his unhappy childhood, adolescence as an orphan and the later ill-luck in love marriage gave him a feeling of loneliness and rootlessness in life. This is expressed in Maugham’s liking for travel.

In Maugham’s view, the human soul is lonely as it moves in the wilderness of society. He portrays very skillfully the sense of loneliness and desolation that haunts Philip in his early days at school. His clubfoot creates in him a sense of unbridgeable difference from other boys and as a result he grows into a brooding, lonely, and morbid adolescent. Broadly speaking, Philip’s career is a depressing record of the failure of a morbid mind to adjust itself to the world and to life. However, in spite of this, it is interesting to note that throughout this long story Philip never loses the readers’ sympathy, for the utter sincerity with which Maugham depicts his career, without any excuses. Philip emerges from the Mildred episodes as an ineffectual, weak, irresolute and drifting young man, but still retains our sympathy. This sincerity in the depiction of characters gives greater verisimilitude to the whole novel and is a
distinctive part of Maugham's creed as a naturalist. The personal is not excluded in weaving the plot.

The Autobiographical Element and Verisimilitude:

The atmosphere and setting in *Of Human Bondage* are realistic. The reality of social and domestic circumstances such as family, school, career, youth on the axis of sex, poverty, exploitation etc. are plentifully found. The main force of realism in the novel thrives on several factors like biographical, social, psychological, and scientific truth. The biographical realism in the book is to be seen in certain phases of Philip's life:

1. In being an orphan
2. An unhappy life at the Vicarage under the care of his uncle
3. Difficulties undergone due to the club foot (Maugham's Stammer)
4. Academic life and
5. Medical Career.

The novel ends when the hero is thirty and this coincides with Maugham's age at that time. The realism sought by Maugham pertains to the reality of the human spirit emerging from certain biological conditions at a
particular age. Maugham’s uncle was also a Vicar and his descriptions of the Vicarage at Blackstable are based on his personal experience at Whitstable. This adds to the realism of the atmosphere at the Vicarage drawn in the novel. The phase of the Medical Career of Philip is based on Maugham’s own experiences. The reality of the misery of the patients, squalor, wretchedness, diseases and unhealthy living was perceived by him during his medical studies, especially during his confinements (internship) at the Lambeth slums in London. Maugham’s environmental reality can be seen in his rendering of Heidelberg, Paris, London, the Public School, the Draper’s establishment and the Solicitor’s Office. In the sex affairs Maugham does not seek the romantic note, but seeks the psychological reality.

The autobiographical element is common to both Maugham’s and Conrad’s fiction and it cannot be denied of its contribution to the realistic effect. Many readers consider Of Human Bondage as a cathartic expression of the writer who is trying to purge himself of certain feelings. Maugham himself says that he was writing to free himself from an intolerable obsession. In The Summing Up, he admits that he wrote this book to disemarrass his soul of certain notions that had hovered about. When the teeming memories of his past life became too much of an obsession and a burden, Maugham decided that he could only regain his peace by writing it all down in the form of a novel. Thus,
Of Human Bondage shows the death of Maugham’s emotional ferments and in its own way turns out to be an epic of human life, in bondages.

Though it is not an actual autobiography, Theodore Dreiser says that it is a faithful spiritual autobiography. Crozal is of the opinion that Philip’s progress from human bondage to a jubilant and exhilarating nihilism is in fact, Somerset Maugham’s. Maugham wrote this novel for the purgation of self-torturing thoughts, and for pointing out the predicaments of a human organism struggling through various environments, and for manifesting the play of the dark energy of sex resulting in the spiritual conflicts.

A similar, if not the same kind of cathartic effort can be seen in Conrad’s Lord Jim. Conrad can be said to have deserted his homeland Poland when it most needed him. At the age of sixteen he went to Marseilles in France and against the family tradition, chose a sailor’s life. (This is comparable to captain Mac Whirr of Typhoon who creates wonder as to “what under heaven could have induced that perfectly satisfactory son of a petty grocer in Belfast to run away to sea. And yet he had done that very thing at the age of fifteen”). ¹ In Lord Jim, Jim deserts the pilgrim ship Patna with its eight hundred sleeping pilgrims who trusted of their lives with the crew. This cowardly act of desertion haunts Jim throughout his life and makes him seek redemption, even
at the cost of sacrificing his life. It is suggested that Conrad had suffered similar feelings of guilt and loneliness for moving out of Poland when it was fighting for Independence from Russia.

*Heart of Darkness* is another novel of Conrad with a considerable autobiographical element. Here Conrad transmutes into literature, his experiences as a Captain of a steamer going to the Belgian Congo. If Philip in Maugham’s work is a projection of Maugham himself, Captain Marlow is to a great extent Conrad himself. *Heart of Darkness* represents Conrad’s expression of abhorrence at the white man’s atrocities on the blacks, in the name of civilization.

**General Similarities between Maugham and Conrad**

Towards the end of the story in *Lord Jim* there is reference to a letter from Jim’s father that was treasured by Jim till he died. In the letter, Jim’s father who was a pastor, hopes that his “dear James” will never forget that “who once gives way to temptation, in the very instant hazards his total depravity and everlasting ruin.” This letter conveys the sad irony of Jim’s predicament because this letter is the last one he ever received in life (just before he joined the ship *Patna*). The whole tragedy of guilt that ensues later is a result of Jim’s
inability to overcome the temptation to save his own life by deserting the eight hundred sleeping pilgrims on board the leaking ship.

Even in Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* Philip comes across his late mother's letter to his uncle in which she hopes that Philip would serve God by serving his fellow men and become a useful citizen in society. A touch of irony in this scene can also be noticed. In *Of Human Bondage* when Fanny Price commits suicide to avoid starvation, Philip concludes that people do not die for love, but die for want of money. His view is no doubt justified in that particular context but when Conrad's Winnie commits suicide in *The Secret Agent*, it is because of utter loneliness and desolation on being deserted by Alexander Ossipon at a time when she was all alone and despondent. In Conrad's *Nostromo* Martin Decould commits suicide because he is overwhelmed by solitude after spending seven days on the desert island. In all these cases, a part of Philip's conclusion holds true – (That people do not die for love). Regarding the other part of Philip's conclusion it is very interesting to remember that Conrad himself had attempted suicide by shooting himself in the chest but survived because the bullet missed his heart. More interesting is the fact that he tried suicide because of financial trouble (he was in huge gambling debts).
Maugham's Vision of Man and Philosophy.

It is because of the emotional shocks suffered at an early stage of life that Maugham has developed a realistic attitude towards life. He eschewed the superstitious and ritualistic conceptions in which people usually believe. He doesn't believe much in human will but he believes in pleasure. He supposes that the base and selfish thoughts dwelt in one's mind against the person's will. His thesis in *Liza of Lambeth* is that sex is fairly beyond the human will. In Maugham's view, love is of two kinds:

(i) Pure love (heavenly/platonic/Christian love) and
(ii) Simple, sexual love (physical)

He takes the realistic view and says that love depends on certain secretions of the sexual glands. Maugham loses faith in the conventional and ritualistic religion and experienced freedom in the process. Maugham had some personal handicaps and he developed his personality through self efforts. (He was small in size and shy. He had poor health, stammered badly and had no facility for games).
Art is a freedom for him and he feels that it is only the artist or the criminal who can make his own. Maugham has no faith in the ethical norm. According to him one can follow one's inclination and do anything, but with an eye on the police constable round the corner. One can go on living under the compulsion of the life force, but the exploitation of the weak by the strong will continue as long as one lives under the compulsions of the possessive instinct. Man must bear all his sorrows calmly. For Maugham there is no explanation for the evil in life and it must be looked upon as an essential part of the order of the universe. To ignore it would be childish and to bewail it, senseless. For Maugham, life is resistance against death and the nihilism of life is a fact. The blind concordance of nature leads him to this idea. When death ends all life (including human life), life no longer has any meaning. In Maugham's view, the human organism is a negligible thing on this planet and it is only the self assertion and self expression which lends it the significance that is relative in essence. This is very similar to Conrad's vision of man as a creature who struggles against the forces of evil and nature, whereby the struggle gives a sublime nobility to human courage and endurance. As per Conrad's vision, though human beings live in vain hope and constant endeavour, they can assert their indomitable spirit when they fall back on their own innate strength. The human soul emerges unbroken even after ceaseless struggle.
W.S. Maugham says that life is a school of philosophy which resembles the modern kindergartens in which children are left to their own devices and work only at the subjects that interest them. However, man remains in a maze because all the alleys in the world are blind. Similar to this is Conrad’s vision where man is the only atom of consciousness, unique and lonely in a hostile and insurmountable universe, continuing his struggle to assert the innate nobility of the soul and save himself.

When Maugham says that man must bear all his woes calmly, we are reminded of Conrad’s words spoken to Marguerite Poradowsky: “Man must drag the ball and chain of his individuality up to the end. It is what we pay for the infernal and divine privilege of thought.”

Where Conrad’s philosophy rests on fidelity and sacrifice among human beings, Maugham’s rests on goodness. It does not require much analysis to see that these philosophies are strongly complementary. Maugham was fascinated by beauty for quite a long time but was ultimately disillusioned. He realized that beauty is not permanent because it has no absolute value in itself, but is relative to a particular period. With regard to truth, Maugham says that it is not an ultimate value because man believes only in that type of truth which he wishes to believe in. For him, goodness is the only value that can be an end in
itself. Virtue is its own reward and goodness is shown in right action. Maugham has reverence for goodness. In *Of Human Bondage*, Philip discovers real goodness unalloyed by motive, with the Athelny family and therefore settles down with Sally. Truth and beauty have been laid low by Maugham in this novel and it is goodness that triumphs over other things – just as Conrad’s characters and their human spirit triumphs over the forces of nature because they have fidelity to their fellows and are ready to sacrifice for them. Does this not translate to ‘goodness’?

Maugham’s philosophy in *Of Human Bondage* is depicted through the character of Philip, who undergoes spiritual struggle that represents a silent effort to know the truth and develop an ultimate understanding of life. This process of knowing the things releases him from the fetters of human bondage. At a subtler level, the story of thirty years of Philip’s life is a saga of his spiritual evolution and maturity. Life teaches him that goodness and happiness are transient and are therefore, undoubtedly, precious. Finally, Philip becomes happy when he stops craving for happiness and accepts life on its terms. This concept has some remote resemblance to the Indian Vedic Philosophy in which the body bondage (Dehadasya) is the final obstacle that a spiritual aspirant (Yogi) has to get rid of, in order to attain liberation. Since desires are the root cause of all sorrows, a Yogi has to achieve a state of cessation of all desires
(including desire for happiness) irrespective of good or bad circumstances in life. When successful, he achieves the state of ‘Sat-Chit-Ananda’ or existence - consciousness (knowledge) – Bliss absolute.

The gist of the philosophy of the Bhagavadgita is that man must perform his duty without expecting any reward in turn. Maugham’s philosophy definitely echoes the same idea (though faintly).

As naturalists, Conrad has been called as the ‘Laureate of the Sea’, and Maugham has been called as a ‘Pathologist of Human Behaviour’. If Maugham deals with sexual relationships of his characters extensively, Conrad never treats this subject in depth. The realists who wrote before them were over sentimental but Maugham and Conrad are not. Both of them draw characters and events from real life experiences and both have presented psychological analysis of characters. In both their works, the problems of society, politics and industry are skillfully presented through human relationships but not directly. They both laid stress on the form of the novel. Conrad especially, gives great importance to his narrative structure, broken time sequences and to making the readers feel, see, hear, taste and smell the scenes and incidents.

In his Heart of Darkness Conrad invents a new narrative technique where a third person omniscient narrator (called Marlow) is introduced. Similarly, in The Moon and Six Pence, Maugham develops a special technique of presenting
his material through the eyes of a detached observer whom he called the First Person Singular.

Whatever their dissimilarities, one has to ultimately agree that from a literary stand point, their works strongly adhere to the spirit of naturalism. To sum up, the foregoing comparison makes it clear that from the point of view of naturalism as a literary school, both Maugham and Conrad have places among the most important writers of this creed.

**Findings:**

In the introduction to this work, there were some suppositions raised and throughout this study an attempt has been made to prove and justify them on the basis of illustrative texts of Conrad. Our study reveals that in Conrad’s novels all characters are the products of the interaction between the external and the internal nature. Conrad’s naturalism brings out the hidden potentialities of man and in his works, he presents wonderful insights into the depths of human nature. He is true to life and the surroundings, with no idealized heroes but ordinary men who live in an actual world facing the problems of real life. The purpose of Conrad’s art is to convey to his readers his own vision of mankind sincerely. Conrad displays remarkable kinship with those naturalist writers, whose grand vision is unmistakably tragic but without pessimistic shades. It is
a vision in which nature or fate may seem to have had the best of it, but man struggles on to assert his indomitable spirit and show that the human soul is nobler and more sublime than fate. As per Conrad’s philosophy, when man is faced with adversities from all sides, he must fall back on his own innate strength and capacity for faithfulness and sacrifice. Conrad is not just a seaman spinning after-dinner yarns, but a serious artist aiming at truth and naturalism. It is in the interest of naturalism that he uses his personal experiences as the matter to make up his stories. In all of Conrad’s novels there is a broad canvas though the plots are based on factual experiences.

The natural background in Conrad is suffused and coloured with human emotions and moods, and in turn, nature acts and reacts on these moods, thus intensifying them. The nature as a background of a great artist like Conrad is inseparable from his work. It is an integral part of his novels and imparts to each one of them an underlying emotional unity. The nature background to many of his novels is provided by the wilds of the tropics or by the sea. The tropical jungles of Congo or Malaya and other eastern countries, their mighty rivers, their wildernesses, their dense, sky touching trees, their unbroken silences, the vast expanses of the ocean in both calm and stormy weather were very familiar to Conrad and his descriptions of these elements derive their verisimilitude from his personal experiences of these remote places. He
describes these with such meticulous accuracy that many people who visited these remote places have vouched for the accuracy of his descriptions. These descriptions sometimes heighten the sense of beauty and sometimes the sense of corruption or decay.

Critics have levelled the charge of pessimism at Conrad and this study rebuts it. Conrad can be called a romantic naturalist. He is a romantic because he uses exotic settings and narrates tales of adventure and heroism in the wildest of surroundings. At the same time he is a naturalist because he describes these settings with meticulous accuracy and his plots are largely fact-based. He uses the material of reality and subjects it to the transmuting process of a rich imagination.

Conrad wrote of the conflict between man and nature and the mysteries of the human soul. The characters in Conrad’s novels repeatedly undergo suffering but heroically fight the elements of their natural environment and the forces of external and internal nature. Though all of Conrad’s novels are tragedies, the defeat of the characters is not a defeat in the true sense because even in such defeat we see that the human spirit ultimately triumphs. In Conrad, the conflict of man with hostile nature and circumstance is a test of character and manhood. The conflict may end in tragedy but tragedy in Conrad, as in Shakespeare, brings out the innate nobility and grandeur of the human soul.
and therefore, it may be befittingly called the apotheosis of the human spirit. Hence, contrary to popular opinion, he cannot be called a pessimist, but is a naturalist.

Some contradictions may be seen in Conrad’s vision of mankind, perhaps because he is an artist and not a philosopher. However, one thing is certain. He has profound faith in the spirituality of man and this is his religion. According to Conrad man is the only atom of consciousness in the whole cosmos, he is unique and lonely in a hostile and insurmountable universe. Even then, man can face this hostile universe if he has courage, endurance and loyalty to his fellow men. There is a ceaseless heroic struggle with the forces of evil and yet, the soul emerges unbroken. The human soul craves for perfection, and the heroic aspiring creatures of Conrad’s fiction are engaged in a ceaseless struggle to gain such perfection. Each one of Conrad’s books shows that he has full faith in the ability of the human soul to assert and save itself. In the higher regions of creative art, the tragic tone of his novels does not harm the true greatness of his work because its rich human appeal and insight into life are very precious qualities in comparison with the pessimistic tone or any such deficiencies pointed out by the critics. Consequently, he cannot be called a pessimist, but it can be confidently concluded that Conrad is a naturalist who has a special niche in naturalist literature.
"All a man can betray is his conscience"

-Joseph Conrad
NOTES

