

**Chapter - II**

**LIZA - THE FADED FLOWER**

**I - Liza of Lambeth**

**II - Liza - The Faded Flower**

## I

Liza of Lambeth

Maugham published his first novel Liza of Lambeth in 1897. It brought him great success. It deals with a love theme. Liza and Jim who are slum dwellers, love each other.

Liza is the only daughter of Mrs. Kemp. Liza is eighteen years old and she works in a factory. Mrs. Kemp is a widow. Her husband was a soldier. She gets a pension and by charring and doing some odd jobs she earns a little extra. She is a rheumatics patient and spends a lot on drinks.

Jim Blakeston is a factory worker. He is a married man and has five children, with the sixth one on the way. In spite of this, he falls in love with Liza. She is also in love with him. People criticize them because Jim is a married man. Jim and Liza ignore the criticism of people.

Tom is another lover of Liza. He is a shy young man. He works in a bank. When he proposes to Liza, she denies his proposal. She wants him to be a good friend only.

Liza learns that Jim's wife wants to meet her. Knowing the danger in it Liza tries to avoid her. But one day Jim's

wife confronts Liza and attacks the helpless girl. There is a fight between the two. After some time Jim and Tom come there. They notice the incident. Tom takes Liza away from Jim's wife. Liza is badly bruised. Now she repents for her negative reply to Tom's earlier proposal. But even now Tom has tender feelings for her. He is so generous that even when Liza tells him about her pregnancy, he proposes to her again. But Liza gently refuses Tom's proposal.

Liza's mother is worried about her daughter's health. She advises Liza to take some liquor. Liza drinks it. But it worsens her condition. She suffers a lot. Next day she has a miscarriage. There is no improvement in her condition. At last she dies. Her death is a fatal blow to Jim and Tom.

Liza of Lambeth is the story of Liza, the girl and the woman. She experiences all kinds of criticism, she experiences the ecstasy of love and at last she dies in agony. She becomes the heroine of Lambeth.

The novel has a realistic base. Maugham refers here to his own experiences of the Lambeth slum area where he worked as an obstetric clerk.

Maugham has resorted to a very fine reportage and so the novel is acclaimed as :

"... a brilliant work of reportage, free of superflous detail and comment; it is an unvarnished account of the last year in the life of a young factory worker, her emergence from girl to woman, her brief but happy love affair, her pathetic death ..."<sup>1</sup>

## II

Liza

"They were delighted to have Liza among them,  
for where she was there was no dullness ..."<sup>2</sup>

Liza is the only daughter of Mrs. Kemp. Though she is not very beautiful she is certainly lively and attractive. Her face is very small and thin. But her complexion is clear and white, with a red tinge on the cheeks. Her eyes are big and dark and her hair is also dark. She is small and thin and she is eighteen years old.

Liza lives with her mother in the slum area of Lambeth. She is vivacious and she is liked by every dweller in Lambeth. She used to appreciate others and she used to be playful with others. With her playful, mischievous nature combined with a rare consideration for others, she wins the heart of every person in Lambeth :

"She asked after the aches and pains of all the old people, and delicately inquired after the babies, past and future, ..."<sup>3</sup>

Liza is a hardworking girl. She works in a factory and also does the household chores. She is conscious about her

duties. Her mother suffers from rheumatics. Liza takes care of her mother and by rubbing her with liniment, tries to relieve her of her pains. Liza knows that her mother is addicted to drinks and spends a lot on drinks. Naturally Liza keeps the charge of her money and keeps it hidden. Liza is, in that sense, very practical. She has to see to it that the money lasts till the week end :

"Mrs. Kemp's money always ran out on Tuesday, and Liza had to keep things going till the following Saturday."<sup>4</sup>

Liza is impulsive by nature. She declines Tom's invitation to go on an outing but then repents her refusal when she realises the fun the outing would offer. She then accepts Tom's renewed invitation.

Her playfulness makes her a great favourite among the children. They enjoy her company and want her to participate in their games. Liza becomes a part of them as she, too, enjoys their company :

"... the children hung on to her skirts and asked her to play with them, and she would hold one end of the rope while tiny little ragged girls skipped ...:"<sup>5</sup>

But the childlike traits in her distinctly contrast with the good sense that she has. She thinks it unfair to go out with Tom as she does not intend to marry him. She does not love Tom, so she cannot think of marrying him.

Liza loves Jim. He is a married man and has children. But Liza is concerned about his children. She would not have him leave his children for her sake. So when he suggests her to go with him, she denies his request. On the contrary, she makes him aware of his duty towards his children. At the same time, she does not want to leave her mother. Liza is not selfish in her love for Jim. Otherwise she would have enjoyed the company of Jim all by herself.

Liza knows that Jim cannot marry her. But she is not concerned with marriage. Though she does not approve of the idea to stay with him at some other place, she is carried off her feet in her love for him. She is optimistic and hopes that something good will turn out. Liza wants to be happy in Jim's company. But she does not want to bring him into trouble. She restrains him from fighting with his wife. Liza herself avoids to meet his wife. She knows his wife would treat her badly. But in spite of her precautions to avoid Jim's wife, they confront each other. Liza is at first reluctant to fight with her but later she gives her a tough fight.

But afterwards Liza repents for her fault of falling into a disgrace. She says to Tom :

"... I'd have done better if I'd tiken you when you ars't me; I shouldn't ~~be~~ where I am now, if I'd."<sup>6</sup>

Liza dies as a result of a miscarriage.

"... Maugham makes no attempt to whitewash Liza nor is there any Hardean cry of a "pure woman" over the fallen girl ..."<sup>7</sup>

Liza defies the conventions of the society she lives in by falling in love with a married man. But she is brave enough to face the consequences also. She could have avoided the disgrace by accepting Tom's renewed proposal of marriage which was honourable. But she does not accept this offer as she loves Jim genuinely.

The entire delineation of Liza gives a realistic portrayal. Indeed it is based on a real episode of which Maugham was a silent observer :

"... the slum doctor (Maugham) knew Liza, her gin-loving mother and Jim ... their interests, their language and manners, their human weaknesses."<sup>8</sup>



Through the different incidents in the novel, Liza emerges as a girl with liveliness, unselfishness, kindness and a maternal instinct. These attributes, peculiar to a woman, are present in her. Though she is in the wrong she is not amoral. Her love for Jim is not just an infatuation but it is true love based on trust, unselfishness, gentleness and a reciprocity from Jim. The different phases of her life show her progress from a girl to a beloved and a woman who meets a tragic death. Her life is like that of a faded flower that dies before it has fully bloomed.

Chapter - II

**LIZA OF LAMBETH**

**References**

1. Cordell, R.A. Somerset Maugham : A Biographical and Critical Study, 2nd ed., London : William Heinemann Ltd; 1962, p.113.
2. Maugham, W.S. Liza of Lambeth, 2nd ed., England : Penguin Books Ltd; 1967, p. 32-33.
3. Ibid., p.23
4. Ibid., p.20.
5. Ibid., p.23.
6. Ibid., p.103.
7. Naik, M.K. W.Somerset Maugham, Norman : University of Oklahoma Press, p. 31-32.
8. Cordell, R.A. Somerset Maugham : A Biographical and Critical Study, 2nd ed., London : William Heinemann Ltd., 1962, p.113.