CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The growth of Indian fiction in English may be attributed to the fact that there are three generations of Indian writers in English who are still active today. Indian fiction in English has become recognized by westerners and has attained the place of frontier literature. The message of Indian Fiction in English is essentially Indian, but its appeal extends beyond the borders of India. The motif of Indian writings is the search for identity from alienation. Indian novelists in English are not inclined to western readers but want to present India and Indians in their true self and shape.

Novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao have achieved recognition before the Second World War and are still remembered as writers with an impulse for creation. These writers stand as an example of India's growth in fiction, where their works give ample evidence of vitality, variety, humanity and artistic integrity. There has been a steady critical assessment on writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Kamala Markandaya, who are considered the pioneers of Indian fiction in English. Indian fiction in English is today dominated by the second generation of writers like Arun Joshi, Bharathi Mukherjee, Chaman Nahal, Michael Chacko Daniels, Nergis Dalal, Ruskin Bond, Romen Basu, Raja Narasimhan, Sashi Brata and Veena
Paintal. Critics have failed to devote their critical attention to such fast growing novelists who deserve full-length critical studies.

These novelists show maturity in thematic and technical usage and also effectively expose the Indianess and Indian sensibility by highlighting our cultural heritage contrasting it with the western values. These novelists have shown a new significant depth to Indian fiction in English. The potentialities of these novelists have to be analyzed with equal critical fairness. Among these writers, Rama Sarma has placed his identity and has succeeded in establishing a place along with them. We find among this group of novelists a commendable contribution to Indian fiction in English.

We find in Rama Sarma’s works, the scholastic search for authentic selfhood and a quest for fulfillment. His works depict the rich Indian culture and tradition, how man’s passion leads him to liberation and at the end, the realization of self by the very act of living – thus establishing the affirmation of life.

Rama Sarma is a novelist, a playwright and a critic. He is well known as a Milton critic and later entered into fiction writing which asserts him as one among the fast growing novelists of the second-generation of writers. Rama Sarma is one among the few
who has not been identified and shown to the literary world of Indian Writing in English. He is a prolific writer and a versatile artist who has several publications to his credit. He is a novelist with a style that has uniqueness and themes establishing the greatness of Indian heritage and rich values. Here it is highly relevant to quote Dr. Nageswara Rao, who says:

*He (Rama Sarma) has been gaining recognition as a novelist and playwright for the last few years. In his four novels The Stream, The Farewell Party, Look Homeward and The Bliss of Life, he presents a comprehensive and exhilarating view of life, which invites a careful and systematic study.*

Born at Movva in the fertile Krishna valley of Andhra Pradesh, Rama Sarma was educated at Rajah's High School, Challapalli, Hindu College, Masulipatnam, Pithapuram Rajah's College, Kakinada, King's College University of London and University College Cardiff. After five years of teaching at the University of Delhi, he joined the Sri Venkateswara University and served the University for twenty five years as Professor, Dean, Principal, Senator, Member of the Syndicate Co-ordinator of General Education, University orator and chairman of various Associations, Committees, Councils and Boards. As an Indian Educator he visited several American Universities in 1958 for studying the General Education Programme as given in those universities.
He has been a committed teacher and is rightly honoured with the award of Meritorious Teacher by the government of Andra Pradesh for two consecutive years ever since it was instituted. His *Milton and the East*, which appeared in Milton Encyclopedia Volume II has attracted the attention of scholars and won their appreciation. His paper, *The Unsearchable Dispose of Highest Wisdom: Samson Agonistes* was very well received, when he presented it at a conference on 'Drama and Theology in the work of John Milton' organized by Le Moyne College Syracuse, New York.


Rama Sarma has not gained enough recognition for his works in India. Rama Sarma was honoured by the society of America and has identified his critical works on Milton and being a veteran teacher possessed a Miltonic sense of duty while creating his works. He has reached yet another milestone in his relentless academic
Rama Sarma, who is well known as an erudite Milton scholar, has produced so far six novels. The stream (1956), The Farewell Party (1971), Look Homeward (1978), The Bliss of life (1979), Pastures New (1985) and Height of Noon (1994) dealing with variety of themes and techniques. Eleven plays have been written over nearly four decades and brought out in a single volume as Collected Plays (1982). There are three, three-act plays and eight one-act plays to his credit.

A close study of Rama Sarma's fiction shows the steady evolution of man's preoccupation with his own development to the final realization of surrender to the supreme. His protagonists find a fulfillment in enlightening his fellow beings and serving the general cause of his motherland. A bare outline of his six novels will make it clear that his novels bear the autobiographical element, man's transformation from his fictitious world to his true sensible world and Man's quest for spiritual enlightenment — all these converging on the major theme, the affirmation of life. These three stages are true in every human's life where the search of his real life will transform him, mellow down his senses to attain a selfhood, with the help of spirituality. This multidimensional growth of man is shown very
clearly in his six novels. Three plays on marriages are brought into study to understand how man attains his spiritual end through his inner realization, which can only be synchronized and analyzed, through his marriage.

Indian system of marriages have an overpowering element in the transformation and spiritual attainment of man. The themes of marriages are clearly sorted out into three types in his one-act plays, Sakuntala, Towards Marriage and The Carnival. These three plays are needed in this study to show the three types of marriage present in the Hindu tradition. These types will evolve a true picture in understanding the basis of marriages in his six novels that stand as pillars in establishing every stage of growth in Man's inner self.

The Stream (1956) of Rama Sarma explores the concept of truth, beauty and justice. Gopalam, a boy slow to learn, grows up into a brilliant boy and later acquires higher education in England and returns a full-fledged man with an identity. We come across three women in this novel who shape Gopalam's character. The three women are Suguna, Swarna and Joan.

The skilful organization of characters around the vital triple concept of beauty, love and justice gives fullness to the structure of the novel. As a stream that has its own colours of moods and
changes its course, so also we find in this novel a varied change in
the character of Gopalam. Even the women characters seem to
change from inexperience of life to a realization of life. The
transformation of the true self, undergoing changes and washed
along the stream of life, is true in everyone’s life. Rama Sarma does
not make his characters speak philosophy but analyses life that has
its own ups and downs.

In some places the inner conflicts of the hero to be a man of
virtue or to stoop down as a villain is brought out. We find the cross
– currents of the stream to be true in Gopalam’s life. During the
short span of a human being there are many associations and
relationship running along the stream of life. The title of this novel
so very aptly depicts how life is also a stream that takes into itself
and washes away the good and evils of life, as life does not stagnate
at any shore. It keeps flowing along with time. There is also a semi
– biographical mode of presentation along with the stream of
consciousness technique.

Gopalam the hero of this novel lives in a world of unreality
and wished for platonic love. He loves beauty and abhorred
ugliness that is around him. He behaves like a dictator to his wife.
He expects her to think of poetry of the highest level and wants her
to be a dreamer like himself. "The physical aspect of life was never
a strong attraction to Gopalam. Not that he shunned it, but somehow he felt that life was complete and full only when the partners had common aspirations and ideals."

Suguna his wife stands for truth, the truthfulness of a wife who stood along all the tribulations in life. Swarna, the woman who comes into Gopalam's life like a wisp of perfume, ensnares his thought and binds him and his senses toss itself in the whirlwind of beauty. It was Joan who stands for justice that makes Gopalam realize that beauty can never stand the test of time. Through justice he realizes the truth of life that is Suguna his wife. The transformation between his "inherited and acquired personalities---" is the making of this novel. "If men failed to distinguish between their inherited and acquired personalities, it was their own fault. He was thoroughly convinced of the prevalence of reason over bestiality of judgment over ignorance in man."3

Dr. Nageswara Rao compares the opening of The Stream to 'The History of Mr. Polly' of H.G.Wells. He brings into his criticism of The stream, the influence of four British writers.

The retrospective recollection of Well's Mr.Polly has influenced the opening section of Professor Sarma's novels. The realistic narrative technique and semi – biographical form of 'The Stream' reminds us of the art of Maugham, particularly his Of Human Bondage. The concept of the Triple force developed in the novel reminds one of the concept of 'life –
force' as presented by Shaw and the way in which Professor Sarma artistically unfolds it in the course of action of the novel reminds us of the art of Thomas Hardy. Like Sue in Jude the Obscure, Swarna is always in two minds.  

The Stream as 'The Myth of Ideal Love' by Daisy Gunaseeli puts Rama Sarma in the place of a "Myth-maker" among Indian writers in English. The myth shown in her critical study is the myth, which is external, or the pursuit of "the ideal love of man." She compares the love in The Stream to Kovalan's love in Silapathikaram written by Elangovadigal. "The love of Kovalan for Kannaki and Mathavi, the betrayal of the one for the other and finally the convergence of the triangle to this static point is what constitutes the story of The Stream too."  

Rama Sarma does not focus his character on love or beauty alone but concludes that the triumph of justice wins, in man's life stream. Rama Sarma sees his character to idealize himself as Antony and he could not find a Cleopatra in his wife Suguna. Gopalam has a deep love in poets like Keats, Shelley and Wordsworth. He is even known as "The Shelley of India", by his friends. "Platonic love with all the dream like unreality appealed to him." Gopalam builds around himself a wall and has wrong notions about himself, because of his involvement with Romantic poets. Gopalam's love for Swarna makes him realize his fault in loving a woman who makes him sin. He is compared to, Adam violating his
virtue by listening to Eve. "Adam violated the hierarchy of virtue through his excessive fondness for Eve. Gopalam found the comparison right with his own life. He had sinned. Now was the proper time for him to throw away lust. The right destination to reach was the love for Suguna."  

The cyclic transformation from good to evil and from evil to good is dealt with forceful characterization of characters. The undeniable faith of Suguna stands firm as the Hindu tradition of all ages. She resembles all that is good in Indian tradition and culture.

The Farewell Party (1971) is chronologically the second in the series of his works on fiction. The novel gives right answers, for a wide range of subtle and sensitive problems, a university teacher is likely to be confronted with. This novel is structured by the author in the form of a stream of consciousness narration of the musings of Prof. Prakasam, the main character, on the various episodes in his life as a teacher for over thirty years during the ninety minutes of time before leaving for the farewell party, on the eve of his retirement.

Prakasam sits unperturbed at the end of his long but busy career as a university teacher over three decades. This novel is engaged with the life of a university teacher, his trials and
tribulations, hopes and despair, successes and failures. Prakasam stands firm with unflinching faith in himself. His faith in God enables him to nurture a positive and optimistic view of life and an abiding faith that man, who has strayed from the right path is bound ultimately to return to his innate good nature.

The method of narration gives a semi-biographical rendering giving the reader, the feeling that Prakasam is none other than the author's surrogate self. We get the view of the dedicated teacher's successful struggle with himself and his pupils and winning their hearts at the end.

In his domestic life and in his academic and social life, he has attained the place of an honest soul, a sound scholar, a loving father, an understanding colleague, a friendly neighbour and a very good husband and a beloved professor. The novel presents a viewed picture of a faculty that is biased by notions of first class, second class and third class and also the divisions of Ph.D and non-Ph.D. It also pictures the student body eager to learn and co-operate when the teacher is friendly and shows warmth of feeling.

The conflicts and divergent thoughts of Prof. Prakasam's experiences in the East and West, the evils of caste and creed, the Indian struggle for freedom and the mishaps of the Second World
War are interwoven in this novel. The theme reflects India before and after Independence, the protagonist's love transcending communal and social barriers, Gandhian vision of the future, his admiration of western civilization, though not its social and moral norms and the unshakable faith in man's duty.

Prakasam who is about to leave home for a farewell party indulges in retrospection of his life as a teacher, lover, husband, father and a true friend. His stream of thought is prompted by his alter ego, that of his wife, until at the end his student Mohan comes to remind him of the party. Rama Sarma touches the vital area of Indian life surprisingly left unexplored by Indian novelists and the form is tight and the style is controlled. The stream of consciousness technique is an exploitation of the element of incoherence in our conscious process and Joseph Warren Beach explains that, "Our psyche is such an imperfectly integrated bundle of memories, sensations and impulses, that unless sternly controlled by some dominating motive is likely to be at the mercy of every stray wind of suggestion."^7

Rama Sarma's _The Farewell Party_ is compared to Virginia Woolf's _Mrs. Dalloway_ in its use of the stream of consciousness technique. Dr.G.Nageswara Rao emphasizes this critical outlook by presenting how "In _Mrs. Dalloway_, apart from the presentation of the
stream of thinking in Mrs. Dalloway and her former lover, there is the solid background of war neurosis.\textsuperscript{8} We are able to find the same stream of thought in \textit{The Farewell Party}, where the world of Prakasam's retrospective stream of thinking is given touches of solid reality by ample references to the struggle for the freedom of India.

\textit{The Farewell Party} may at first reading appear like a simple "'Campus novel': a 'Kaleidoscopic' reverie of reminiscences of a lovable professor on the day of his retirement."\textsuperscript{9} Further critical study into the novel shows this novel to resemble "James Hilton's 'Goodbye Mr. Chips' or E.R. Braithwaite's 'To Sir with Love'."\textsuperscript{10} These novels also present a teacher who struggles with himself and the winning heart of the teacher towards his students. This resembles Prakasam the teacher of \textit{The Farewell Party}.

Asoka Rani writing about 'A study of The Farewell Party – Just are the ways of God - - -' states that "As a critic, a novelist and a playwright, his achievement is such that he can legitimately lay claim to a pride of place among the contemporary Indian writers in English". \textsuperscript{11}

Prakasam faces his problems with a rare courage and unflinching faith in God. Asoka Rani finds in the teacher an urge to fight back and with the faith of God. "His simple faith almost naïve
faith in himself that he was destined for an eventful life — stood him in good stead. He waited patiently for something to happen". Three letters, one from his son, one from his daughter and one from principal Gupta, trigger Prakasam’s wave of thought. He believes that man’s bestial qualities are only temporary, and his goodness would ultimately relieve him to his good self. Prakasam affirms “God’s ways are just, though peculiar”. 

Look Homeward (1978) is Rama Sanma’s third novel having as its theme the vital issues of life and society. These aspects are projected in the form of the inner quest and the realization of the main character. The narration takes up a semi – biographical mode. Speaking about the theme and characters, Srinivasa Iyengar says, "----- tells a straightforward story with a pointed relevance for India. The characters have been delineated with a few bold strokes, and there is variety in character, scene and incident. The book has timely message too ".

The novel is set in an inter continental background linking American lake city with the village of Andra Pradesh having Delhi as the life link of these two varied cultures. The quest for thoughts, feelings, ideals, dreams, aspirations and love are brought out through young intellectuals like Ravi, Ramesh, Gupta, Babu, Sundaram and Ham. The quest for identity of these characters
transforms them into realization of the self within each of them. The
Indianness in them is torn between the wealth of the western
civilization, which allures them to go over to the western side of the
globe.

The title Look Homeward, a Milton expression from Lycidas,
"Look Homeward, Angel, now and melt with ruth." The title
suggests the "acceptance of the reality of the situation". The
characters in the novel have different views about their stay in a
foreign land and also their urge to come back to their homeland.
They wish their homeland to accept their potentialities and to retain
them with true acceptance for their potentialities. Material comforts
are secondary to them. They want India, their homeland to
recognize their research-oriented minds.

The novel brings to view the complex and vexing problems of
India. The unsolved brain drain that is going around in our country is
actually a blood suckling issue. India, after a long struggle with the
foreign rule is just budding into a new developing country. It needs
its young brains to pull along for the struggle of achievement.
Intellectuals who wish to go away to foreign lands are interested only
in their personal development. They are willing to stay back in their
own motherland, if their homeland gives them better opportunities.
There is a search by a group of post independent young intellectuals
for a way of life, which satisfies the complex modern demand for material comforts, intellectual aspirations and cultural identity. There is a transformation of the inner self for attaining its goal. This transformation of the internal and external self is what we find in *Look Homeward*. Rama Sarma explicitly brings out the ultimatum of this transformation after the experiences gained from a foreign land. This transformation is humanity's transformation. In the process of internal and external transformation we find the young intellectuals gather a new consciousness that de-centers them from their home country.

For a reader who wants a story with a plot, there is the love story of Ravi and Prem who meet at the beautiful surroundings of Estes Park and the Rocky Mountains. This story looks on the surface like a simple story of two youngsters who fall in love in an alien country. Ravi the protagonist is torn between his loyalty to his father and his loyalty to Prem. This story is depicted as a simple story with all the imagination and thrills of a common reader who expects a common story.

Ganesh in his critical study of this novel *Look Homeward* centralizes his critical angel around "Service to country." 16 "The novel *Look Homeward*, makes one realize the value of detachment and broadmindedness. If man adheres to the ethics of life naturally,
the love for his country will get deep rooted.”¹⁷ Freedom fighter’s love for his country and the intellectual’s demand from his country is very well brought out. “The freedom fighters were detached and broadminded. So they could sacrifice everything, even their life.”¹⁸ The youngster’s narrow thinking and demands are shown in every thought of Ravi’s friends. “But now the young scholars prefer to stay in a foreign country simply because the motherland does not offer all the amenities and affluence they want to enjoy. They are in the mad pursuit of these trifles.”¹⁹

The sense of responsibility towards one’s country is the central theme according to Ganesh. He shows how India has natural resources in plenty and politicians are not utilizing these resources for the development of our country. This has to be done by intellectuals and younger generation scholars who should dedicate themselves to the cause of his homeland. Look Homeward shows the semi-biographical tone of the author, prevalent within his creative work.

The Bliss of life (1979) presents the quest for spiritual enlightenment. The Bliss of Life begins with Varadaiah the hero and Mohanangi the heroine deeply in love with each other. They are of different castes and this keeps them away from marriage. The
dislike of the villagers and even their parents make both Varada and Mohana come closer together.

Varada needs Mohana not only as his friend but also to dance his padams. Varada's padams have a musical and heavenly touch for which the dances of Mohana gives the final touch of fulfillment. Varada is not able to say whether he is drawn towards Mohana. But his devotional love for Gopala overpowers his physical love for Mohana. Sometimes Varada is tempted to possess Mohana and this temptation hastens him to leave Muva village. He wants to be away from Mohana for at least a few months so as to conquer his bodily desires.

Varada sees Muva Gopala in a vision asking him to compose padams, visit several places and to spread the Lord's message all over the country. Varada's passion for Mohana expresses itself into passion for Muva Gopala. The devotee Varada, considering God as his protagonist or hero is seen in full form. Varada does not wish to run away from life. Promising to be faithful to Mohana he says:

I feel that sublimation of desires comes not only through participation in pleasures, I do not believe in renunciation. Through a gradual process of willing and subordinating our physical pleasures to a higher pursuit we achieve the bliss of life, the communion with God and identification with the Lord.
The Indian traditional art, literature and music are to attain the joy of spiritual attainment and realization. This is a tradition beginning with the rishis of the Vedas, who composed the deep philosophical and poetic passages of the Upanishads. This tradition was in turn, followed by medieval mystics, the song composers like Chaitanya and a number of others. We cannot afford to ignore saint composers as Dadu, Ravidas, Rajjab, Meerabai, Kabir, Chaitanya and Thyagaraja. Tagore remarked:

India has a spirit and tradition of her own, which have survived through all political upheavals. This spirit and this tradition do not obey the mandates of the holy books and are little influenced by scholars. In fact, neither has been incorporated in any theological or social code, and their roots are deep in the hearts of the masses themselves from the first they have set themselves against restrictions and dogmas and their prophets came from the commonest of the common people.

Varada comes from this tradition of composers and his Padams have a musical and literary value. The Padams are classified only for dances and it was particularly for Kuchipudi dance. This dance has its claim and origin from Bharata. Bharata is the union of Bhava, Raga and tala giving an ideal combination of literature, music and dance.

Kshetrayya belongs to the ruling Mijogi Brahmin caste and Mohanangi to the devadasi community, dedicated to the worship of
God in temples, through dance and music. Varada travels from Muvva village to Golconda where Kuchipudi dance and Telugu literature flourished. He then goes to Tirumalai Nayak court where he gets enlightened. From there he goes to Thanjavur where he detaches himself from worldly desires. He attains the status of the Kshetragna. This story is an evolution of the saint composer without ignoring the evolution of Mohanangi, from a simple village boy into a great artist devotee in Telugu Literature.

It is difficult for an author to take up a historical, legendary and mystical life as a theme for his work of writing. Sometimes it may become a chronological narrative. But this novel has been made into a living picture of Kshetrayya's life and with his imagination creates a literary work of art. This is a successful experiment in legendary historical fiction. We can find in the end a sublime union of music and dance. The quest for spiritual enlightenment is realized in every line of the novel. This spiritual enlightenment is understood through music and dance, in The Bliss of Life.

Syed Mukaram in ‘Bliss of Life and concept of devotional love’ in Laurel Bough, says that “the type of spiritual enlightenment Varadaiah acquires takes the form of devotional love, the Mathurabhava or Mathura –bhakhi.” Kshetrayya a born composer
and poet realizes "the tradition of Mathura bhakti, devotional love akin to bridal mysticism". The critical study of Syed Mukaram compares Varada's love to the love of Gopis towards Lord Krishna. Even great composers were conscious of the Krishna theme in their creations. He explains this concept of Mathura - bhava as "this concept of Mathura Bhava can amply be defined by the Prakrithi Purusha Bhava in Bhagavad Gita. The Lord, the Supreme Being the creator is the Purusha and all matter, all creation including masculine and feminine is prakrithi".

Instead of making the novel a "Concealed biography" of Kshetrayya, the author has made a picture of the bliss of life divine. He has given more stress on the divine love of Kshetrayya, through his devotional padams. "The author provides a convincing locale and topography for Kshetrayya's journey in the various stages of his career as a devotional composer, and the progress of his character from a life of passionate love to that of devotional love ultimately leading to the bliss of life."

Another critical study, by Syed Mukaram in His Mind and Art captures the temptation of Kshetrayya in The Bliss of Life. "The life of Kshetrayya reveals a clear and convincingly gradual progression of an individual from a physical to a spiritual plane ultimately surrendering to the will of God." Kshetrayya realizes his mission
of life and goes away to spread the glory of God, through his padams that have attained a spiritual value of its own with the blessings of God and his unadulterated love of Mohanangi reaches a sublime state of life where all temptations that strike his way are washed away by his unwavering love towards Lord Gopala.

God will test man into temptation to make him a greater being. According to Narada Sutra, "A true devotee crosses Maya, the bondage to matter through sense attractions and selfishness. He should be freed from the opposites." Rama Sarma, talking of temptation in his Heroic Argument, makes a statement of how a man is blessed. "Blessed is the man who endures temptations, for when he is tried he receives the crown of life.".

Rama Sarma has successfully made his protagonist to progress from earthly to a spiritual plane. The physical bliss tempted by Kalyani and Kamala are earthly ones, whereas Kshetrayya attains a spiritual bliss much higher and unique. Dr. Nageswara Rao shows Kshetrayya as searching for spirituality: "the fundamental quest of Indian life, art literature and music is to attain the joy of spiritual realization, the nature divine." Kshetrayya is made to attain 'Mukti' and he is not on the plane of Moksha described by most modern Indian philosophers. "The concept of 'Moksha' and salvation are not there in Indian thought up
to the time of Kshetrayya. 'Mukti' as shown in The Bliss of Life, is the attainment of 'ananda' here and now. There can be bliss in this life only." 30

The next novel of Rama Sarma is Pastures New, the title taken from Milton's Lycidas. The story is centered on places like Kanyakumari, Rameswaram, Varanasi and Tirupathi. The description of places creates a socio-religious background where Indian tradition shapes the Indian outlook. The novelist chooses to make his chief characters to go from one place to another to understand the thrill of life and fellowship with people around them.

The holy places visited by characters have an influence on the Indians, irrespective of caste, creed or religion. This novel is a presentation of the individuals who belong to the privileged middle class. There are five pairs of characters who meet one another as the story develops from the starting point, which is Kanyakumari. The pairs are Dr.Madhu and Sarala, Ramu and Suguna, Dr.Raja Rao and Vimala, Mohan and Prem, and Kumar and Kamala.

In his earlier writings Rama Sarma presents only the problems and frustration of his characters. But in this novel he does not like to present the temperamental incompatibility, the despair of the social problems. He wishes to present only the harmonious side
of life; making his characters search new pastures to attain spirituality. No character is disturbed and not a single mind suffers from any conflict. The story is simple and though it appears to be a travelogue, we find the story of each couple to unfold a depth of vision and dream, of a new world order.

The places to which these characters go round are holy places, and these characters meet as friends and arrange to go to these holy places. The novel opens from the holy place, Kanyakumari, “the confluence of the three seas,” the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. This symbolizes the holy waters to cleanse the sins of people committed in this life itself. This belief is from the established doctrines that ablution in sacred waters will purify the body and soul.

The novelist hopes that men and women absolved of their sins will dream of a new world order where people will live a life of equality and justice. The novel is a search for self-realization and spiritual quest but the novelist tries to aspire for a new social order as a way out for all the ills of life and society. The first phase is purely of human experience at the individual, personal and social levels. The second phase of experience is at the holy feet of a very great sage, a Guru who shows the truth and gives out a message. There is a quest for godly love. God who is love can be realized
only through love. Love becomes universal transcending the narrow limits of physical love.

The third phase is purely a spiritual experience that has its basis in religious beliefs and convictions. They are of the belief that the unseen God can be seen in these holy places. Gopal a minor character in the novel echoes through his words stating, "I am on a pilgrimage to all the sacred spots; these religious centers may give me some solace. In moments of depression and desperation we can visit these holy places and get sustenance."  

The characters in this novel strive for the harmony of a world order through the quest of a spiritual searching, from the holy places of India. This is the main shift in this novel from a travelogue to a novel of spiritual sustenance. There is also a futuristic dream that India may lead other nations of the world in its quest for spiritual enlightenment.

Syed Mukharam in his critical study of Pastures New finds a new place for this novel. He explains, how the title is from Milton’s Lycidas, “tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new,” brings out the total outlook of the novel itself. "The novel may appear to be a search for the self or a spiritual quest. But the novelist with a social
consciousness and vision, aspires for a new society, a new social order as a way out for all the ills of life and society.”

The spiritual quest is seen in many places where they travel and this confirms the eternal harmony of men’s life in this world:

"It is God’s love and his benediction that ultimately give solace and sustenance to human existence. It is this inarticulate and in explicable individual experience which is purely divine that men at large feel in these holy places out growing the narrow prejudices of caste, colour, creed, race or religion."^35

Syed Mukaram quotes Srinivasa Iyengar as saying "the pastures ‘new’ are really the age long sacred spots that, as Gandhiji said in this Hind Swaraj 80 years ago, hold India together and preserve its inner purity."^34 The novel claims a motto from the critical study as “Sarve Janah Sukhino Bhavantu” (Let all people live in happiness)

William B.Hunter, after reading Pastures New writes to Rama Sarma, stating his supreme joy at seeing the Lord in the temple in Tirupathi, during his stay as visiting Professor in Sri Venkateswara University in 1983. He says, “Another part that meant a great deal to me was the worship of Divya Manohara Murti with the complex and profound meanings involved,” ^35 He continues by saying that,
"the most moving religious experience of my life - a peace, as our Bible says, that passes all understanding."^^

The Height of Noon, (1994) may look as a naive life tale of a teacher on the surface level. The teacher in this novel starts his career as a lecturer in a newly formed university but is finally elevated to the post of Vice-Chancellor of the same university. A careful reading of the novel will reveal that many themes have been carefully interwoven in this book. It can be taken as a study of the cultural assimilation of the East and West, as an autobiographical narration of the author's academic life, as an analysis of husband and wife relationship, and also as a depiction of Bhagavad - Gita's philosophy.

The main thread of his novel is devotion to work. The protagonist Dr. Anand is a 'Karma Yogi' in the truest sense of the term, "--- in fact (Dr. Anand) was a Karma Yogi who believes in doing everything with detachment and as a service to God." Anand's life as a 'Karma Yogi' can be better analysed in three phases, in respect of various posts he is holding. The first phase of his life and career is as a young teacher who works as a lecturer in a college and then migrates to a university as a lecturer and finally rises to the status of Professor and Head, in the same university department.
The second phase is the period of his involvement in the administration as the principal of the university college for a period of six long years. The third phase in the novel has an autobiographical element, which is the same as the author's life. The portrayal of Dr. Anand's birth and early life in the Gandhian family, his British education and above all an innate outlook towards his fellow human beings, stand true to the life of Rama Sarma.

We find egoism in the character of Anand who presumes too much on his intellect. His thinking is that everyman's character is his destiny. He gives little allowance to the divine dispensation. He is ego centered, and he looks down on his wife Lakshmi. In due course of his life, his views change. He realizes that man's efforts alone can never give him success in life. He needs the grace of God too.

In a critical study on *Height of Noon*, Deva Rajendra brings out his view of the novel as, "Justification of the ways of God to men, is one of the striking aspects of the novel *Height of Noon*". This realistic novel sketches the academic scene in independent India. The aspirations of students, the jealousies among the teachers, favouritism in the universities, the fall of the standard of research in India are discussed in length in this novel.
Dr. Arulandram, depicting Dr. Anand as a 'Karma Yogi' says, "he was very successful. He avoided groupism in the college and he was always fair and just to everyone". We find the critical study of *Height of Noon* to picture the philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita through the understanding of a teacher to attain unimaginable heights where the protagonist attains the Vice Chancellorship of the university in which he is working. "Just five days before his retirement from the university service, he was appointed the Vice-Chancellor of the same university. It was an irony that the farewell parties were turned into welcome parties". Dr. Anand proved to explicate the Gita Philosophy of "detached attachment to work," as a Karma Yogi.

Deva Rajendra in his critical analysis tries to prove Rama Sarma as being "thinly - veiled" in the character of Dr. Anand, the protagonist of this novel *Height of Noon*. The critical angle with which Dr. Anand is exposed to the readers, shows the under current of the novelist life acting its role along with the story of the protagonist, picturing Anand as saying, "He loves humanity with all its good, bad and indifferent people."

There is an idealization of the character Anand, and to justify his artistic creation, the novelist, brings into the novel the drawbacks of the protagonist. Anand is too ego centered and he even thinks
highly of his education and profession. Later, his misguided thoughts get into the path of God's will that prevails in man's every action. Deva Rajendra in his critical outlook on this novel concludes by showing that the novel holds two parallel lines. "Parallel to the academic world, Rama Sarma also presents in *Height of Noon* the domestic world with a lot of warmth and understanding. The reader is transported to an ideal world of marital felicity in which wife and husband play complementary and not contradictory roles."^42

There is another study on *Height of Noon* by Dr. Santhanam who depicts this novel as a campus novel that depicts the life of an academic personality. It brings out the teacher and administrator whose hopes, disappointments and struggles finally reach the point of willing submission to God's will. We find a strange irony in the title of the novel. The author himself says that man is taken to the height of success and dropped down in the same way. The hard realization of spiritual illumination within man's life is understood throughout the novel. The form of dialogues and flashback techniques show many details of Anand's life. There is also a revealing semi biographical nature in this novel of Rama Sarma. Dr. Santhanam after critical study says that, "*Height of Noon* is a campus novel that portrays the academic life of the universities in India with all its attendant problems like teacher's rivalry and their petty politics."^43
Somnath another critic of *Height of Noon* says that, M.V.Rama Sarma’s sixth and latest novel, *Height of Noon*, chiefly presents the “unfolding of awareness of the meaning of life and the subtleties of divine dispensation”\(^{44}\).

His statement of this novel is that this novel “has a single theme, namely the ‘gradational process of understanding God’s ways’ woven round the growth and development of Dr.Anand’s personality”.\(^{45}\) In every step of Anand’s life he has too much faith in himself and his intellect but later incidents prove to him that man cannot live his own destination without God’s grace. The understanding of God’s ways are understood when Anand wishes to dedicate himself “to serve mankind, but in what manner, he himself did not know. He had to wait, like the scholar gypsy, for the God given moment, whenever that might be.”\(^{46}\) The title suggests that “one should accept God’s will and then accept his life as it is, and this wisdom lies in such affirmation of life.”\(^{47}\)

In his plays *Sakuntala*, *Towards Marriage* and *The Carnival* (1982), the themes of marriages are brought into focus. *Sakunthala* is a play that brings forth the traits of gandarva marriage following a mythical strain. *Towards marriage* is a play that deals on arranged marriage. *The Carnival* is a play evolving love marriage of Indian society.
Marriage in India is considered necessary for men and women to attain 'Moksha'. It is considered essential because of traditional and culture based belief that women are dependent on men. The old traditional system of being wholly dependent on men has got its new dimension of a concept of 'soul mate' in marriage.

Indian writing in English is comparatively poor in drama. The scope for Indian English dramas to be on stage is quite rare. When compared to other genre, dramas did not have a prestigious place as novels or short stories.

Except for one short essay on these three plays of Rama Sarma, no critical study has been attempted on them. The three plays of Rama Sarma, *Sakunthala*, *Towards Marriage* and *The Carnival* deal with different aspects of the theme of marriage. Protest and conflict of minds will never give solution to any problems faced by man. A compromise is essential for a proper approach to life. It is a man who with his views of life can make his life or destroy it. The grind of man's life has to teach him the ways of life. In his preface to *The Carnival*, Rama Sarma remarks,

*Man is often interested in knowing himself and the peculiar atmosphere that prevails over him during his stay in this world. At times he feels that there is no possible explanations for the enigma of life. But surely life is not undefinable. In the earlier formative years man is drawn towards beautiful objects, but as he grows into youth and manhood he gets entangled in the strong current of love.*
This is a stage of passionate longings, but gradually the storm and stress is over come.  

In *Sakuntala* we find a love that transcends the earthly love of the other two plays. In *Sakuntala*, paradise lost is paradise regained. The step from protest, conflict, enquiry and acceptance shown in his plays shows an interesting development of the playwright's growth from every step to that of maturity in life.

The problem of incompatibility of temperaments in marriage is for the first time taken up in *Towards Marriage* a play in three acts. Here Prakash is the idealist – artist hero and his wife Lalitha is a simple imaginative woman. There is a gap between them in their emotional and intellectual aspects. Jaya - a young girl with modern thoughts, bridges the gulf between the husband and wife. We find a compromise, acceptance and reconciliation of human life that attains deeper philosophical implications.

In *The carnival*, the playwright shows how life understood in the proper perspective, is found to be exciting, interesting and ever glorious. There is an interrogation imbedded in the title of the play. Is life a carnival? In life the triple force that of truth, beauty and justice is seen to predominate the play.
Dr. Nageswara Rao in *Laurel Bough* speaks about the sympathetic understanding between husband and wife, to attain harmony in domestic life. *Sakuntala* and *Towards Marriage* portray the evolution of love from the physical to the spiritual plane. There is a process of transformation from the protest of youth to the understanding adult in the dramatist. *The Carnival* presents the cosmopolitan city life of Delhi, "its gaiety, colour and sophistication provoking the dramatist to the question whether life is a fiesta, a carnival or a merry-go-round." 

In the preface to *Sakuntala*, Rama Sarma describes the presentation of his play by saying that, "the three acts in this play refer to three aspects of Sakuntala's life – as the maiden, the castaway and the woman, perfect and dignified, chastened and sublimated through patient suffering." The story is taken from Kalidasa's *Sakuntala* and written in three acts. The love of earthly stature attains sublime stature where the love attains a spiritual quality.

Vijaya Rani in *His Mind and Art* discusses *Towards Marriage* on the theme of marriage. The arranged marriage of Indian tradition has its own temperamental differences that gets adjusted and exaggerated in course of time. Prakash, the protagonist is a dreamer and a poet. He expects his wife to attain such heights as
he wishes her to be. Prakash, failing to convince his wife, into understanding his superiority, curses the Indian marriage system. He pours out his thought by saying, "I think it is a defect of our marriage system that men and women of totally different tastes and temperaments are joined together in wedlock."  

The Bible says that, 'the first woman was made to be a complement of her husband.' Husband and wife relationship should be on the plane of total acceptance and not expecting something in return. Wedlock built on genuine love will stand the test of time. This statement is well defined from the song of Solomon of the Bible, "Love is as strong as death is — Many waters themselves are not able to extinguish love, nor can rivers themselves wash it away,"  

Another key to family success is shown from another view. A husband should shower his love on his wife, as he loves himself. In Ephesians 5: 28, 29 it says: "Husbands ought to be loving their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. No man ever hated his own flesh but he feeds and cherishes it."  

Obula Reddy in his critical study 'The Carnival: A plea for Harmony', angles his views on the play as being a play based on love and marriage.
The play has a complex plot involving several types of love and marriage. The ideal love is presented through Suresh and Prem Manohar and Asha seem to exist in a world of marriage of convenience. Shoba's acceptance of Ravinder conditionally, is like an arranged marriage.54

The characters in The Carnival, as in Eliot's The Cocktail Party, make the best of a bad bargain. The critical angle of the play suggested by Obula Reddy, seems to resemble, As You Like It of Shakespeare, "--- may find it disturbing and unpleasant to see so many lovers on the stage making the best of life."55

The three plays of Rama Sarma deal with the theme of marriage in one form or the other to lay stress on the Indian culture of marriage. A detailed reference to the existing critical exposure of his works has been given. This will help understand the existing place of Rama Sarma and his creative works. There are only a few critical essays on Rama Sarma's works. Dr. G.Nageswara Rao and a few of them have given their views on him. A collection of these critical essays are found in M.V.Rama Sarma – His Mind and Art, edited by K.Venkata Reddy. Dr.G.Nageswara Rao edited another collection The Laurel Bough, in honour of Rama Sarma. Apart from these two editions, there is no in-depth critical study on this writer who has gained fame and name as a critic of Milton. He is well known as an Indian Educator in several American Universities. He has to be recognized by the Indian world of critics as one among the Indian writers of his time.
Rama Sarma's novels are well known among readers, than his plays. The three plays taken for study, exposes the types of marriages prevalent in India and its positive and negative aspect due to the influence of western culture. Rama Sarma's view on marriages is that, any type of marriage may prevail, but it should be sacred, for a man's lifetime. There is more sympathy and understanding in his plays and novels.

This research is to critically look into a new angle, which shows Rama Sarma's affirmation of life dominating his works of art. The critical analysis on Rama Sarma's works on various angles has already been done and thus gives the readers an ample view of his works. The same critical angle of approach may seem a repetition to his views and thoughts. There is a need for a new and different approach on Rama Sarma's works of art. He is a versatile writer, who needs a new approach and angling only on a particular side of his thought, will not suffice. To look deeper and to analyze within his mind as a creative writer, who has more depth and vision, is needed for a writer of Independent India. The already critical studies have given a wide outlook on his works and this new approach will need to make it still wider for a man who has contributed into Indian writing in English. The need for a new approach will help every reader of Rama Sarma; feel happy to turn a new page on his already collected criticism. The need to re-search his 'mind and art' for a
newer perspective is the main aim of this comprehensive study on Rama Sarma, the critic, the novelist and dramatist.

Rama Sarma's creative works are based on the semi biographical element that takes one into the myth of ideal love, justifying the ways of God, service rendered to ones country, temptations of the protagonist, eternal harmony within married couples, a Karma Yogi as a protagonist and linking every one of these into the theme of marriage that in turn links all these elements in a man's life, from birth to death. These elements are the basic theme that substantiates him as a writer of life. Life of man is an evolution, where man's life is understood and rendered in poetry, prose and drama, by creative writers alone.

Writers render service to mankind by picturing man's growth from his birth, to the higher state of development into a man. Only a writer who has the strength of mind to predict whatever runs within his mind brings out his inner thoughts and emotions. In Man's life there is joy, fear, anguish, spiritual attainment and realization within his span of living in this world. Life forms the basic ground for many thoughts and themes that can be picked out for writing any work of art.
Meredith talks about novel as "a summary of actual life," where both "the within and the without of us," is brought out. A "novel directly concerns with life, with men and women their joys and sorrows." A novelist has to select only from life and he may be impressed by the joys or may take up the sorrows, which ever appeals to his mind and experience, "-- every story will yield the novelist a conception of the moral values of life, his view of the world and a general philosophy of life."

Novelists' duty is to interpret life in two ways:

1. Like the dramatist, the novelist interprets life by his mere presentation of it and the conduct of his plot may indicate his view of the moral balance. 2. The novelist may supplement his representation by direct personal commentary and explanation. Then he becomes the interpreter of the world of his characters and therefore of life at large.

The under current of the affirmation of life is totally seen in the works of Rama Sarma. This affirmation of life is predominant in every line of his work. Rama Sarma can write nothing but about life alone. This thought is fully engaged with the events of his experience that become the truth of his theme in his novels.

The term affirmation means to declare or state positively, assert and maintain, to be true: aver. The act of affirming, or that, which is affirmed. A declaration; statement; predication. This affirmation with life works as an anchor for deep discussion in his creative work that will prove to bring out a new view on Rama
Sarma's works. A work of art can never go away from his own understanding of life. Rama Sarma in his novels and drama has more of semi - biographical note that remains as a proof for his affirmation of life in his works.

The affirmation of life, as brought out by Rama Sarma, has its ground on the personal angle, social perspective of his period, stabilizing it on his professional attainment and as a novelist within himself. Though we find in all his works the experience of the novelist to emerge frequently, the novelist's mind enters but stands apart from his characters. That is why we find the tempo of the novel not missing in his works. They move the reader in many ways when the under current of life touches the heart of the reader.

The writer Rama Sarma, being a fine thinker, is able to present his characters as true beings and these characters live forever at any period of time. The society, in which the author lives, moulds his thinking and perception of ideals. For an artistic creation, as George Lukacs says, "depend upon the degree to which the writers are bound up with the life of the community to the extent they take part in the struggles going on around them or their merely passive observation of the events."
There are reflections of his analytical mind, observations, experiences and impacts of his society as a whole. His characters are the persons he has come across in his life, the happiness, sorrows, pathos; ecstasies are all part of his emotional back ground. There is an influence from the six novels of Rama Sarma on the younger generation of readers to revolt against old and outdated norms and values, which no longer suit the existing social order.

Every novel of Rama Sarma will need an in-depth study for a better finding of the affirmation of life that runs as an under current in all his works of art. An overall outline has been given to show the current of thought of the writer, to enable readers to catch the main strain that forms the theme adopted for research in this thesis. The theme of affirmation of life that spins every man’s life and that forms the theme within Rama Sarma’s works will give this thesis on Rama Sarma a fitting enquiry into his works. Every chapter is divided according to the uniformity of the stream of thought within each novel and each chapter will give an enlarged view of the affirmation of life as seen by Rama Sarma, in a new perspective of mind, and vision.


3. Ibid, P.110


5. Ibid, P.57

6. Ibid, P.61


9. Ibid, P.103

10. Ibid, P.103

11. Ibid, P.63

12. Ibid, P.107

13. Ibid, P.83


15. Ibid, P.110


17. Ibid, P.68

18. Ibid, P.69

19. Ibid, P.68
23. Ibid P. 221
24. Ibid, P.225
25. Ibid, P.225
30. Ibid, P.114
33. Ibid, P.91
34. Ibid, P.92
35. Ibid, P.91
36. Ibid, P.91
39. Ibid, P. 95
40. Ibid, P. 95
41. Ibid, P. 97
42. Ibid, P. 99
43. Ibid, P. 103
44. Ibid, P. 105
45. Ibid, P. 105
46. Ibid, P. 136
47. Ibid, P. 111
49. Ibid, Introduction, P. ii
50. Ibid, P. 59
54. K. Venkata Reddy, ed., *M.V. Rama Sarma: His Mind And Art*, P. 139
55. Ibid, P.139

56. B. Prasad, ed., *A Background to the Study of English Literature*, (New Delhi, Macmillian India Ltd., 1999), P.193

57. Ibid, P.32


59. Ibid, P.32