CHAPTER IV

“SERVICE TO MOTHER LAND”
LOOK HOMeward
Prof. Rama Sarma's third novel, Look Homeward occupies a significant place among his novels in particular and the Indian Fiction in English in general. The awareness, tolerance, and detachment emerge in this novel, as a unifying force to root out all the evils of the nation. It takes the dimension of not only love for fellow beings but also the theme of nationalism grounded on the commitment for the country's progress.

Look Homeward depicts an artistic picture of a crucial issue, 'the brain drain' without ignoring the individual, domestic, and social aspects of the theme. Rama Sarma concentrates on the crucial issue of the immigration of Indian intellectuals to the west and the complex emotional, social, political, and economic factors inextricably connected with it. No other Indo-English novelist, though the problem has been touched upon by many in passing, has explicitly made it the main theme of a work as Prof. Rama Sarma has done.¹

Attachment and insularity are the root cause for the death of innate good nature. The freedom fighters were detached and broadminded. So, they could sacrifice everything, even their lives. 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 a mad pursuit of these trifles. Service to humanity and dedication to the
country have been things of the past. In the midst of this murky atmosphere, Rama Sarma’s *Look Homeward* serves as a lodestar to guide the misconceived Indian scholars. It also emphasizes the need of a mighty zest from young scholars to reform the country.

The title *Look Homeward*, a Miltonic expression from *Lycidas*, “*Look Homeward, Angel, now and melt with truth*” suggests the acceptance of the reality of the situation........ in the context of the novel it is indicative of the noble ideal that after one’s sojourn in foreign lands one has to think of developing one’s country with the rich knowledge and experience acquired during the stay abroad. The ultimate fulfillment of all knowledge is to make humanity share the benefits of developments.  

As Dr. Nageswara Rao opines, the novel “deals with the thoughts, feelings, ideals, dreams, aspirations ........ of a variety of young Indian intellectuals”.  

Rama Sarma portrays Ravi as a young scholar of India who goes abroad for higher studies and who looks homeward to serve his motherland however discouraging the circumstances may be. He is a rationalist and
puts more emphasis on human effort. Ravi being the son of Rameswaram, a staunch Gandhian and philanthropist, has an inherent desire to serve his country. On a Fullbright fellowship Ravi goes to the U.S. to study Mechanical Engineering. There he falls in love with Prem, who is specializing in drama, at Denver. One night Ravi and Prem are invited to a dinner by the local Drama Society. At the dinner Ravi espouses the cause of his motherland and supports everything that is Indian. He is not blind to the limitations of his country, yet he feels that he should not expose his country to the taunting remarks of others. When he returns to India he can be very critical but while he is abroad he is an unofficial ambassador of his country. Ravi besides being a lover of mankind, is a true patriot who approaches the problem of brain-drain and reveals to his friends their lack of social awareness. When all of them find fault with India's lack of scope for advanced scientific research. Ravi tries to instill the spirit of patriotism in them by saying:

But we cannot run away from the country. Will all its shortcomings, the country is lovable. If people, who have gone abroad, come back and serve the country, a new outlook may prevail (P.No.111)
The others at the party put searching questions about Gandhi’s philosophy of non-violence and Nehru’s political philosophy of neutrality. Ravi explains:

Gandhi’s creed of non-violence is positive. It does not mean that one should run away from fighting. But one should abhor violence. Applying that ethical idealism to practical politics, Nehru propounded the idea of dynamic neutrality. It is non-violence only so far as we are not interested joining power blocs. But our freedom is a great responsibility and in its defence we do not hesitate to fight’. (P.No.23)

After the holiday trip, Ravi is received by his friends Gupta, Sundaram, and Ramesh Babu. Gupta is all admiration for the American life. He identifies himself with the customs and manners of the Americans. There is Ham who shortens his name to sound like an American. They all like Ravi even though they do not very much appreciate his Indianism, some times they pity him for he can not enjoy life as they can.

Gupta decides to settles down in the U.S.A., and he gets married to Rose, a foreigner. His other friends also desire to settle down in U.S.A. They wish to convert Ravi to this way of thinking but in vain.
Unfortunately India does not offer the facilities for advanced research work. "The universities are yet to develop," points out Sundaram. He is genuinely interested in research work and is a dedicated worker in space research. He is afraid that if he were to come to India all that work will come to a close. Everywhere in India there is corruption. It is sickening. The Government offices, the business concerns, the educational institutions, all seem to be seething in the pool of corruption. There is a lot of nepolism. Ramesh babu vehemently pleads and justifies his plan for not returning to India.

‘In India very often there is no right place of opening for the type of research work we wish to do. For instance, the training we receive here in Food Technology, Aeronautical Engineering or other branches of advanced knowledge has no relevance to the employment opportunities in India. We have to depend mostly on the Government. We are kept as pool officers or pensioners, or some times we have a good pull we become administrators and all this research work will be a waste, a colossal waste’.

Arulandram rightly responds on the migration of Indians, “My own feeling is that once we get expertise in our own fields of specialization. We
should come back and serve our country however discouraging the scene may be".4

As K.R. Srinivas Iyengar rightly comments, ‘the novel tells a straightforward story with appointed 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 a timely message too’.5

Ham argues that even though he loves to be in his own country, it is mean to stay in India. Only Gupta insists on money and the material comforts wealth gives. All others have different views on these matters. Their motivation is mostly based on research and the opportunities that are denied in India. Ravi listens to them with patience and sympathy. He starts slowly but deliberately. He pleads that we are all responsible for all this and have to blame ourselves. He hails the young intellectuals to launch a war against these foes.

“We have to fight it out what is the use of running away from reality? We become escapists, scientific research should be useful to society. It should have an applied bias. A developing country can not afford to spend much on pure research”.(P.No.13)
Ravi emphasizes on the need for a change in the educational system. He points out that everyone has an obligation to his country, to his people. The work and service of an individual will stimulate others and open new horizons and new vistas of knowledge. At least it will shake people out of their complacency. Ravi agrees with his friends that there are several difficulties and one may not get what one deserves. But he points out that an Indian is an outsider and alien in the U.S.A. He has a right place only in the country. Ravi says, "These were glorious days. Congress men of those days stood for sacrifice. Most of them lost everything they had. They did not mind".6

All of them want to return to India but they are not sure of their future and often they are doubtful of the opportunities that India may offer them. But Ravi alone has a greater sense of commitment to his country. We should work for our country however discouraging the circumstances may be. One day through our efforts a greater India will be created. Ravi unfolds his desire to extend service to the country and he seems to echo Swami Vivekananda's views. When he says, 'Let us perfect the means: the end will take care of itself'.7

A great sense of responsibility towards one's motherland has been created in this novel very effectively by Rama Sarma through the protagonist Ravi. He longs to be back in India as soon as he finishes his
academic work in the U.S.A. Even while staying in U.S.A. he is every inch in India. Apart from his love and affection for his parents, he has a commitment and duty towards his country. He feels that every Indian who goes abroad for higher studies should come back and serve his country. His national sentiments as well as personal interest and anxiety to return to India are made clear throughout the novel. But the novelist expresses this in an impartial manner. Unfortunately India does not offer the facilities for advanced research work. The Universities have yet to develop as Sundaram puts.

Ravi and Prem go to Berkeley to meet Suguna who is working for her Ph.D. They are received warmly and affectionately. Suguna is nostalgic and she wants to go back to India. There is Raghu studying in Berkeley and is bent upon settling down in the U.S.A. He has no intention of returning to India. He has already developed a curious attitude towards India. Suguna is in love with him. She came to wriggle herself out of the complicated situation. Ravi does not like Raghu’s repeated references to poverty in India. Raghu is thoroughly disgusted with the Indian conditions. Ravi can understand the deep agony in his heart. Raghu too has tender feelings for his country but only out of sheer desperation he is talking like that. But Ravi also cannot understand why these people, who are at heart willing to go back to India, pretended to be settling down in the states.
Ravi thinks that a certain type of bravado, a recklessness, and an abandon, all mixed together perhaps worked on them.

In the evening, Ravi and Prem go out shopping and they have a ride in the cable car. They go towards the bay area. They observe the heavy traffic on the bridge. They think that the Golden Gate Bridge is a marvelous engineering feat. Especially to Ravi all these are of great interest. As an engineering student he feels he should build highly bridges and dams, tame the Indian rivers, control the floods, and bring prosperity to the teeming millions of the country. Such noble thoughts fill his mind.

Gupta marries Rose, breaking the Indian social tradition. He advises Ravi and other friends to get married to foreigners, so that international relationships and world citizenship may be established. Gupta's life with Rose is alright for a few months. Being an Indian, Gupta naturally longs for a few peaceful moments in life with Rose. But she never allows him that moment of peace. She hurries him all the time through the vast panoramas of life as though she has lost something and is trying to find it. It soon occurs to him that she is not happy with him. Gradually Gupta realizes the mistake of marrying a foreigner. Rose is disloyal to him, suits him in the court for divorce for ill-treating her. Gupta has to spend all the money he has saved so far to come out of it gracefully. Everything between him and Rose is over. He comes back to India penniless and
broken-hearted. He sets up practice in Delhi and wishes to create himself afresh and live a new life. Gupta takes his marriage with Rose as a lesson:

We have to accept life in its totality, come what may. We cannot shun the tide. We are on it or we are downed. It does not matter whether we go up or come down. But we learn it through experiences in life. ‘The novel is a remarkable one not only because of its fascinating theme and the vital issue of life and society involved in it, but also for the way in which they are presented.

The novel obviously shows how young men like Gupta are fascinated by the West and its ways of life and think of their motherland as “What is there in India except grinding poverty, squalor and misery”. (P.No.92) Eventually the motherland alone gives the desire of life to those who are betrayed in a foreign country. The stream of life can be smooth and sweet only in the motherland, this truth is portrayed very effectively.

The writer unravels the sad experience of Gupta with Rose, ‘It opened his eyes to a sense of obligation he had for his country. The commitment and involvement he had for his country was clear to him.
Ramesh Babu even after completing his Ph.D. in Food Technology, has his own serious doubts about a job opportunity for experts in a subject like Food Technology in India. However, he is prepared to return to India and try his luck. Ravi feels sure that people like Ramesh Babu would be of great help to the mother country.

Sundaram’s return to India is uncertain. He is a dedicated scientist and he wants to win international renown. That will not be possible if he comes back to India. So, he decides to stay on. Sundaram is committed to scientific research and it is not like the emotional entanglement of Gupta with Rose that binds him to America. He is an Indian in all respects. He is neither crazy about western life nor is he too much sophisticated. Yet his love of research and his aspiration to win fame leaves him with no alternative. He has to stay on. He will be a loss to India. Ravi hopes that one day Sundaram will come back as he is not a slave to western life. So there is hope. Ravi presumes that Ham will return to India as he has no definite commitment to stay on. Sundaram confides in Ravi and expresses his nostalgic reminiscences of India on the eve of Ravi’s departure to India. Sundaram longs for the warm climate, the sunshine, the moonlit nights which have their own sweetness.
Ravi reaches his village which is situated on the banks of river, Krishna. Rama Sarma vividly shows the contrast between the calm placid life as tranquil as the waters of the river and the busy, sophisticated life in the U.S.A. The portrayal of Ravi's innate simplicity, his essential good nature, and his typical Indianism despite his stay in a foreign country for three years, is very illuminating. Rama Sarma hints that all young men who go abroad should cultivate such innate simplicity, essential good nature, and Indianism to build a prosperous and wholesome India.

Ravi leaves for Hyderabad and meets Ramesh Babu who is already there. Ravi admires Ramesh Babu's pluck and courage in sticking to his motherland in spite of unemployment.

Ravi goes to Delhi for an interview and stays in a hotel. He does not like to go and see Prem. He luckily meets Gupta. Gupta having failed in his attempts at establishing peace for himself, wants others to be happy in marital life. Hence Gupta brings Ravi and Prem together. His mind is given to such noble thoughts of doing good to others.

In a developing country like India there are plenty of opportunities for people like Gupta to settle down as a practicing doctor and serve the
people. The country needs generous, humane, tender, and charitable persons. Gupta is a changed man and begins a new chapter in his life.

Rama Sarma points out that it is not enough that Indians are politically independent. He emphasizes that Indians must cultivate love for their country and develop a spirit of nationalism in the people. ‘The day we all feel that in our humble manner we serve the country to the best of our abilities we march towards prosperity’. (P.No.100)

The novelist feels that a superman’s effort on the part of young intellectuals alone can set up a healthy and prosperous nation. Rama Sarma thus not only diagnoses the malady that ails India but also suggests a possible cure of it.

We have private morality but lack public morality. We are puritans at home. God fearing and religious minded. But the moment we come out into the public sector activities, we have no scruples. We shirk work. We have a general grouse against humanity. We don’t mind subverting public good and negating to fellowmen what should belong to them.
The novelist insists that everyone should put in maximum effort in the developmental programmes. Young men who receive education and training in foreign countries should come back to India. Belief in creating a greater India, optimism, faith and love for the nation should be deeply rooted.

Rama Sarma optimistically observes ‘If young men and women took it on themselves, they could metamorphose the sick social order into something dynamic. They had the energy and the will power’.\(^9\)

No doubt our country has all the natural resources. It needs proper utilization of human energy and natural resources. The politicians who merely garland the statues of the great patriots will never do this noble service. The young scholars alone could do this noble, mighty service to develop the motherland. They could bring real glory to this nation. The novelist exhorts them to make our nation self-reliant, advanced in science and technology, free of poverty, and clean an administration.

About the artistic structure of the novel, G.Nageswara Rao opines,

We see the clever manipulation of the personal story of Ravi and Prem and the public story of the Indian youth in America. They problems and prospects are so will
mingled that they work in unison to support the artistic structure of the novel... It is this artistic connection which lends a mythical expansion to the whole frame work.  

The novel explores in a compelling fashion one of the complex and vexing problems of India. The irreparable brain drain sapping the life blood of a developing nation struggling to recover from centuries of foreign exploitations.  

At the same time it suggests solutions and sees hope for the future. The problem of brain drain can be solved provided the intellectuals develop love for their country. Ravi’s social consciousness stems from the love for his country. For the betterment of the society he has cultivated the spirit of oneness. Man as an individual should love to work for the sake of the country, so as to rebuild not only the objective would but also to rediscover the truth of self-perfection which is nothing but rendering service to mankind. Service to mankind is service to God. Thus Ravi’s intellectual existence in the novel is shown to make an honest attempt to reach the cherished goal of man’s ultimate “upward progress” or inner revolution attaining non-involvement through involvement. This absolute blissful stage of spiritualism is nothing but the attainment of inaction through action itself, which is superior to asceticism.
With regards characterization as well Rama Sarma employs in *Look Homeward*, a subtle technique in the sense that each character is built from an unchangeable inner core..... Even no so major characters like Ravi’s father, a simple village gentleman and Prem’s father, a highly placed citizen, are portrayed in an unforgettable manner.\(^{12}\)

Arulandram thinks that the novel *Look Homeward* works on different planes, personal, national, international, and cosmic. A closer and in-depth reading of the novel posits the view that ‘these planes are interrelated through the myth of man’s fall and redemption’.\(^{21}\)

Prof. Rama Sarma being a Miltonic scholar has fully assimilated the central significance of the Christian myth in this novel and by solving has shown that old myths are still relevant in clarifying what appears to be atypical modern problem.(P.No.20)

It can also be said that Prof. Rama Sarma’s novel, *Look Homeward* is in the tradition of Forster’s novels which tell a story with a directness
concentrating on events and characters without getting caught up in the coils of narrative. The novel is written with a person and the timely message is well brought out through the artistic blending of two cultures of the East and the West.
REFERENCES


2. Ibid., p.107.


