CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION
A modest attempt has been made in the preceding chapters to bring out life's little glories as realized by the protagonists in the novels of Rama Sarma viz., The Stream, Bliss of Life, Pastures New and Height of Noon, Look Homeward, The Farewell Party. Each chapter presents a different kind of glories one comes across in life. Different glories are achieved by the different protagonist through their quest for perfection and fulfillment on different planes of human life and experience.

While the novels The Stream, The Bliss of Life and Height of Noon deal with the glorification of individual lives the novel Pastures New glorifies religious faith. In the first three novels, the different phases and different experiences in man's life are discussed at length. Whereas in the Pastures New, the common experiences of religious minded people and their beliefs are described. A synthesized study of all the novels reveals certain common features, the foremost of them being the total surrender of man to the will of God ultimately after undergoing tests, temptations, trials, and tribulations. It is the gradational elevation from protest to acceptance which may be noted as the main feature in all the protagonists of the novels. Research into the characterization makes this clear and evident.

In youth, man is always led by outward appearance. This is due to the immaturity of mind and lack of reason. This happens in the case of the
three protagonists, Gopalam in *The Stream*, Varada in *The Bliss of Life*, and Dr. Anand in *Height of Noon*.

In *The Stream* the protagonist Gopalam suffers because of his romantic idealism at first. His concept of love and beauty are illusory in nature. He lives in a utopian world where love of the purest kind becomes his goal. Platonic love with all its dreamlike unreality appealed to him. It is hoping to get this kind of idealism he marries an unadorned natural beauty, Suguna. But his idealistic vision is shattered when he finds that Suguna is matter of fact and prosaic. He is disappointed and frustrated. Naturally, the quest is for an ideal woman of his choice. At this juncture Swarna enters into his life. The superficial beauty and intelligence of Swarna satisfy him in every respect. Her interesting, intoxicating, and enlivening responses rejuvenate his spirits. He takes life again with zest. But, as Daisy Gunaseeli puts it,

The tragedy of Gopalam was his inability to distinguish between his inherited personality from his own acquired personality. He believes in the apparent externals, that too with the help of his wrong awareness of his association with the romantic poets.¹
The same Swarna, who is loyal to him, fails to stand the test of time, when separation comes. Her frailty comes out when Gopalam goes abroad for higher studies. Bullied by the threats of her well wisher Murthy, Swarna abandons him. A kind of darkness preoccupies his soul and he is left in darkness and self pity. It is at this juncture, he meets Joan in London. The intellectual companionship with Joan brings about a change in him. After facing the bitter experiences consequential of his romantic idealism, Gopalam finally realizes that there are other considerations in life and he feels that passion and idealism, can be found in his own domestic life in the form of love from his own wife. The irony of the entire drama is that Gopalam’s quest for an ideal life, love, and woman end at the point where it begins after a futile search elsewhere. He understands that the domestic glories are the real life’s little glories for him. Towards the end of the novel, we find Gopalam as a ‘complete and perfect man’. He has no regrets because his experiences have chastened and sublimated him. The Stream of Life goes on calmly towards the annihilation of all the animal instincts in him. The storm and stress in his life have come to an end. When he realizes his duty towards his wife, he gets back all the joy and peace he has lost during his unfruitful quest for illusory things in life. This transformation in him is aptly brought out through the concept of the Triple Force, which the novelist effectively presents. The skilful organization of characters around the vital concept of Beauty, Love, and Justice gives an allround fullness to the structure of the novel. Gopalam’s quest for
fulfillment thus comes to an end with his realization of the concept of the Triple Force.

Prakasam in The Farewell Party is a dedicated teacher is found reviewing his self-satisfying career when the novel opens. Prakasam being a loving and kind-hearted individual is often found worrying over the presence of ugliness, hatred, and injustice in the world. He is at a loss to understand why man, an image of God should be bestial. But being an optimist he fervently hopes for the nobler instincts in man to prevail over the basic elements in him. His is a quest for means to justify the ways of Gods. His love for humanity and his tolerance enable him to wait hopefully for happy days and transformed human beings in which regard he is not disappointed by God.

Ravi, in Look Homeward is a potential young scholar who goes abroad for higher studies and who looks homeward to serve his motherland with greater knowledge updated in the west. Being a son of a staunch Gandhian he spares no efforts to glorify his mother-land in the eyes of the western people. He tries his best to drive home the message that the younger generation should cultivate love for the nation and devotion to serve it and bring regal glory to it. He tries to instill a sense of patriotic fervour in his fellow Indians.
Rama Sarma presents the glories of a devotee in a different form and from a different perspective in his novel *The Bliss of Life*. The novel is an imaginative reconstruction of the life of Kshetrayya, a seventeenth century poet-composer in Telugu. While *The Stream* deals with the domestic glories, *The Bliss of Life* describes about the glorification of the chosen soul through devotion. As V.V.N. Rajendra Prasad observes,

*The Bliss of Life* presents the journey — physical and symbolic of Varadaiah from Muvva, his native village to different places and back to Muvva, from the state of an innocent village lad to that of ‘Kshetrayya’. Both secular institutions, represented by the King's court and religious institutions represented by the temple, form the various milestones in Varadaiah's journey to the state of rapture divine.²

At the commencement of the novel Varada and Mohanangi are found to be deeply in love with each other. Like Gopalam in *The Stream*, Varada also suffers from physical passion in the beginning with a difference that Varada already has his beautiful woman with him. From childhood mates, they grow into young, passionate lovers. Though Varada appears to have got what he desired in life he continues to feel some dearth, he knows not exactly, what it is. There is some inner intuition in him that he is born to
fulfill some nobler end. At that time he does not realize that besides a
physical love for Mohanangi, his heart throbs for a devotional love for
Muvva Gopala, his family deity. There is a vague and inexplicable urge in
him to attain something ideal. Only at a later stage, this becomes clear
when he gets a revelation from God that he is destined to spread the
message of the God through his padams.

When his mission is clear, Varada immediately relinquishes all the
worldly pleasures to serve the Lord. He does not forsake Mohana. He
convinces her making it clear that his main concern is devotion to God and
the next immediate concern is his own love for her. He promises to get
back to her as soon as his mission is completed. It takes some time for
Mohana to understand him. Soon he launches his pilgrimage to glorify
Gopala by spreading the message of Madhura Bhakti.

His quest for spiritual fulfilment continues in the form of a
pilgrimage without any interruptions. He visits the courts of the Nawab of
Golconda, Raja Tirumala Nayak of Madurai and Raja Vijaya Raghava
Nayaka of Tanjaur. Each visit serves to unfold several rich experiences of
life. His glorification of the Lord continues. Surprisingly the more he
glorifies his Lord through his padams, the more glorification does he
receive for himself. The common trials, tests, and temptations which are
usually encountered by the other protagonists of Rama Sarma, haunt even
Varada. Yet his mellowed wisdom, his unswerving devotion for God, and especially his total surrender to his Lord save him from all those problems. His erudition, devotion, and composure win him the title ‘Kshetrayya’ which is conferred by King Vijaya Raghava of Tanjaur. A simple man, who becomes a greater being through a series of temptations he gets in different places, from different persons and in different forms. As Mukharam points out,

The novelist makes every creative use of Kshetrayya’s pilgrimage and visits to the centers of learning. The novel makes it a mode of expressing not only the evolution of the character of Kshetrayya but also the progression of his spiritual quest. Kshetrayya is exposed to a number of temptations of wealth, the luxury of court life and its joys. Presumably Rama Sarma, being a Miltonic scholar feels that his hero should be tempted and tested. Kshetrayya is unmoved and he takes all these temptations as fleeting incidents, irreverent to his central quest, the spreading of the message of love, the Madhura Bhakti.3

The court dancers, Kamala of Golkonda, and Kalyani of Tanjaur tempt him with alluring promises of physical pleasure. Similarly the
Nawab of Golkonda and the kings of Madhurai and Tanjaur tempt him with the glory of fame, wealth, and sensual pleasures. At one stage, his rivals even plot to ruin him by using black magic on him. Yet he overcomes all those with the help of divine dispensation. Finally he attains total spiritual fulfillment when he is identified with Lord Muvva Gopala himself.

In the novel *Height of Noon*, an individual’s personal and academic life is glorified. The protagonist of the novel Dr. Anand, as typical of the other protagonists passes through different ordeals of life to be honoured ultimately Anand, who was found as a school evading and careless boy during his childhood acquires such educational qualifications which bring him many honours, titles, accolades, and awards finally. In the beginning he feels proud of his own erudition, intelligence, and abilities. As Rajendra observes,

in the raw years of his life Anand has presumed too much on his intellect. His thinking in those days was that every man’s character was his destiny. He gave little allowance to the divine dispensation. Overpowered by intellectual snobbery he had looked down upon his wife Lakshmi and began to feel that he had done a great favour in marrying her.⁴
Such is the egoism in him. When he faces the ordeal of the real life, he realizes how man’s efforts alone can never fetch him success in life and that he needs God’s grace too. He comes to understand the value of the domestic peace also.

‘Justification of the ways of God to men’ is one of the striking features of the novel. Only when Anand surrenders himself to the will of God, his glorification begins. Even if his efforts are not properly rewarded at times, he feels that there are better things God has in store for him. This belief is confirmed at every stage of his life right from the time of his getting Ph.D. degree to his selection as the Vice-Chancellor of a University. More and more glories come to him one after the other, both in his personal career and professional life. In his academic life he begins to ascend the steps of success by becoming a lecturer in a new University college first and then a professor, next, the principal of the University college, and finally the highest position in the same University, the Vice-Chancellor. In the process of gradational elevation, he has to overcome many hurdles. He comes out successfully. He enjoys this success and contentment equally in his domestic life as well where he is blessed with an amicable wife who remains a sustaining force throughout his life, a beautiful house constructed at the feet of the Lord of the Seven Hills, and a lucky daughter who fetches him professorship.
He is blessed with more than what he aspires for in life. The glorification reaches its zenith when Anand is blessed with the Vice-Chancellorship of the University where he had served for full twenty-five years. His faith in God is reaffirmed with this offer. He takes it as a gift from God, given as a mark of recognition for his total faith in him.

He said repeatedly that it was a covenant between him and God he had to fulfill his duty in the name of God.

He took it as a holy mission.5

The holy mission is successfully accomplished. By the time he finishes his tenure as the Vice-Chancellor he is a happy and contented man. The glorification is complete and full.

A systematic and comparative study of the protagonists of Rama Sarma makes it clear that his protagonists accept the challenges of life, encounter the challenges of existence, overcome surmounting temptations, face tests of patience and endurance, and ultimately emerge victorious with the establishment of a glorious sense of accomplishment in life. They feel chastened and sublimated. A wonderful combination of platonic idealism, Miltonic concept, and Shakespearean heroism is found in them. All these portraits border on intellectualism over physical attraction of activity.
With regard to the women characters of Rama Sarma, they are always emancipated and there are echoes from Shakespeare to show. Outwardly most of his women characters appear to be quite simple, docile and domestic. But there is an all-pervading effect of the women in almost all his novels. There are weak minded and frail eves and Ophelias like Swarna in *The Stream*, tempting and bewitching Dallas and Lady Macbeths like Kamala and Kalyani in *The Bliss of Life*, tender, artless, and devoted Desdemonas and Mirandas like Mohana and Suguna in *The Bliss of Life* and *The stream* respectively and patient reforming, refining and theistic Joans like Suguna and Lakshmi in *The Stream* and *Height of Noon* respectively.

While talking about his characters in an oral interview with the researcher, the novelist disclosed,

The way in which Shakespeare and Shaw created women characters, fascinated me and so there is certainly that influence on me and on my women characters. 

Like Shakespeare and Shaw, Rama Sarma created a variety of woman characters with all their strengths and weaknesses. They show their
influence on the other male characters, especially on the protagonists throughout, sometimes overtly and sometime covertly.

Gopalam’s life in The Stream is influenced from the beginning to the end by the three women Suguna, Swarna, and Joan. His concept of the Triple force emerges from his experiences with all these three women. He is taken by the external beauty of Suguna and marries her. Then he has misconceived Swarna’s love as a substitute for romantic idealism and is jilted by her. Finally it is only through Joan that he understands, the real value of life with its emphasis on justice and reason. In all these contexts it is only the women who fascinate and finally chasten and sublimate him.

In The Bliss of life though the protagonist Varada’s life is totally dedicated to the service of his Lord. A close and deep study of the relation between them makes it clear that Varada devotes himself not only to Muvva Gopala, but also to Mohanangi equally. There is no life for him without her. What he says to her as a young robust lover stays valid till the end of his life.

‘I look at you as my companion, as an indispensable guide for my lifelong compositions. I see in you the fulfillment of a dream, of my love for Gopala. I adore you. To love you is to love Gopala’.

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Even after getting his divine mission fulfilled and getting identified with his Lord, he continues to be with her. But for her, Varada would not have become 'Kshetrayya'. She has her own share in the glory that comes to him. Such is the impact of Mohanangi on Varada. It is all because of her devotion for him. If Muvva Gopala is Varada's Lord, Varada is her Lord. If Varada develops Madhura Bhakti for Gopala, she cherishes the same devotion for Varada from her childhood to the end of her life. Kshetrayya’s musical composition of padams would have been incomplete without her excellent dance performance for them. Their love, their devotion, their skills, and their very lives – thus become complementary to each other.

In the next novel, _Height of Noon_, the chief focus appears to be on the character of Anand, the protagonist and the other characters do not gain much importance. However, the character of Lakshmi, Anand’s wife, emerges quite distinctly. She is sketched mostly from Anand’s recapitulations. She was just thirteen when she was marries to Anand. But as Somnath points out,

-------- emotionally she was more matured than Anand; who was seventeen. She bore Anand’s egotism patiently like Griselda. She has unshaken faith in Anand. So, she encourages him to go abroad for Ph.D., with out any
wavering-----. It is again due to her total faith in Anand that Lakshmi never feels jealous of Latha even after knowing that the latter has been nursing a secret love for Anand.  

Anand also acknowledges her role in every success and glory that she gets. Though her presence is not all pervading, it is felt at every momentous stage in his life. He attributes his every success to her. Even when he goes abroad he feels her presence at all times and in all places. That is the sustenance she gives to him. Surprisingly some times it is her quietness and silence that give him more support and moral strength rather than her physical deeds or words. Thus, she has her influence on him not directly but like an undercurrent. Anand himself admits that it is only because of her that he gets all the glories in his academic career. This is made explicit when he is overpowered by a spiritual vacuum after her death.

Even in the novel, Pastures New, there is a religious faith glorified and little importance is given to individuals. Rama Sarma designates his women characters have their due roles in shaping the lives of the men. The eternal glory and harmony men get in their lives largely depend upon the women. Though the novel is a travelogue and deals with the religious faiths and feelings of the Hindu pilgrims in general, it also presents the spicy variety of domestic life. The romantic life, connubial facility, domestic
bliss, filial bonds, separation, reunion – all these become parts of the sub-plot of the novel.

Even in this limited scope for characterization, the women characters dominate the scene. Dr. Madhu, the protagonist and the omniscient narrator himself admits the influence and impact his wife Sarala has on him. He says,

‘Sarada, was married to me more than thirty years ago and like mellowed fruitfulness, our life has now come to its autumnal glory when one look from her or one smile from me would make us understand each other. She had been always ambitious for me all the time supporting me as my friend, guide and companion..... Our hearts very often beat in union and often I am reminded of Browning’s poem By The Fireside summing up domestic bliss and connubial felicity’.

Similarly the life of Ramu, another major character of the novel is influenced by two women. First he is loved and jilted by Latha, when the world becomes dreary, flat, and unprofitable for him, he gets his compensation in the form of an amiable and amicable wife, Suguna. While
one woman causes frustration in him, the other woman shapes his successful career and gives him a contented life.

Next, through Kumar's episode the novelist presents yet another example of how women shape the destiny of men. Kumar is deprived of the domestic happiness because of his mother, who tortures his wife for dowry and other silly reasons. Frustrated by his mother behaviour Kumars runs away from home and reaches Varanasi without any idea of reunion. But his providential meeting with his wife there revives him and in the joyful company of his wife he settles down there itself in Varanasi developing faith in God and love for life.

Thus the women characters are presented effectively by Rama Sarma. They do not become just show-pieces as in most of the novels of other writers. They emerge as the quintessence of Indian womanhood. They always play a pivotal role in shaping the lives of men. The beauty of the women characters of Rama Sarma is more about their intellectualism and simplicity.

With regard to the setting of his novels, it is the Indian setting which again is more, traditional and mythological. Since the novelist himself hails from a small village, the rural background becomes the main setting in his novels. Almost all his protagonists hail from the rural areas. In his novels
an account of the beautiful and picturesque descriptions of the rural background is found. For instance, in the novel *The Bliss of Life*, as Nageswara Rao points out,

The idyllic rural background of the Kshetrayya valley, its colourful green fields, mango groves, golden paddy fields, innumerable flowering trees, the brimful tanks, covered with lotus flowers and the rural life brightened by the Yakshagana performances and musical narratives full of sound movements, colour and melody.¹⁰

The novel *Pastures New* begins with the splendid rising of the Sun at Kanya Kumari the lands end, with all its glory, followed by the traditional and mythological locals of certain other holy places like Rameswaram, Varanasi, Prasanthinilayam at Puttaparthi, and Tirupathi. The description of these places creates in the readers feelings of awe and reverence. In the novel, *The Stream*, the protagonist, Gopalam always appears to be in his own microcosmic and world dreamland, almost akin to that of a pleasant rural background. It is only in the novel *Height of Noon*, besides a picture of rural life, the novelist gives an account of the Christian gaiety in London. Even that is just contextual and done with some nostalgic attachment to his own native land. In all, it is a social, religious, traditional, and mythological settings that he presents in his novels.
As for the diction and style of the novelist basically, his language is quite simple, easy, and lucid. Though a Miltonic scholar, Rama Sarma never adopts Milton’s rhetoric or grand epic style. Neither does he expose himself to be verbose. His written style is as lucid as his conversational style.

Regarding his diction and style, there is a beautiful blend of classical as well as modern influences – Platonic idealism, Aristotelian heroism, traditional concepts of Catharsis, and Hamartia, Miltonic concept of justification of God’s ways, Shakespearean and Shavian friends in women characterization, Hardy’s style of presenting the angularity of life, the narrative techniques of Dickens, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Scott, Jane Austen and Henry James, Maugham’s autobiographical style are some of the unique features of his style.

Occasionally, Rama Sarma uses the ‘telling method’ rather than ‘showing method’ in his narrative technique. The third person point of view is employed often. Sometimes he intersperses the telling method with the showing method by probing into the characters’ thoughts, feelings, and motives with apt comments. This intrusion of the novelist may appear undramatic. Still, the spontaneous comments and explanations make the reader have a clear and vivid understanding of the characters.
Certain features of post-modern fiction like the revival of popular cultural forms, preferring open endings that make the narrative circular rather than theological use multiple narrative stances in place of a single point of view, violation, to some extent of the agenne and decorum find place in is writing.

A judicious mixture of all these in Rama Sarma’s style makes it unique and attractive leaving an indelible impression on his readers. As Nageswara Rao summarises,

While his plays indicate the various aspects of life and thought Prof. Rama Sarma’s novels reveal his response to life and his artistic realization of the evolution from passion to liberation more fully and convincingly.11

Rama Sarma prefers the novel form to the other genres because he feels that the novel is a ‘protected form of autobiography’. He himself says in an interview with the researcher, that it is a protected form of ‘autobiography’, where there is better scope for the novelist to present his felt experiences. Moreover, unlike in poetry or drama, where only certain aspects of life can be expressed in a novel, every aspect of life can be expressed. He adopts a psychological approach and the stream of
consciousness technique in the delineation of characters and incidents. On the whole, his novels present a comprehensive picture of life, in an appealing and convincing manner.

With regard to the influence of the novels of Rama Sarma on the society, especially on the present younger generation, it can unhesitantly be said that their impact is so great on the present generation, as they provide apt solutions to most of the problems people are facing now-a-days. In this present age of science and technology when writers of literature are becoming rare, Rama Sarma emerges as a promising novelist bringing back the classical values of true literature through his writing. In this age of materialism, his novels kindle a spirit of selflessness and philanthropic outlook. To the youth, who are aping the west in blind imitation of its cultures Rama Sarma makes a sincere and earnest appeal to them all to look homeward and serve his motherland. Through his writings he preaches the moral values and ethical idealism, which have become rare and which have become the need of the day. His writings may not aim at starting a revolution to seek a new order in the society, but they certainly present a comprehensive picture of human life with all its oddities in order to provide solutions to most of them. His writings and teachings promote the ideal of ‘service to all humanity’.
On the whole, his writings kindle an optimistic zeal in all those frustrated and puzzled souls by presenting them the life’s little glories. Service to humanity, devotion to one’s own work, and surrender to the will of God are the main characteristic features of his writings. He feels that human life is bound to become glorious through these three ideas. This is the message he conveys through his protagonists who after conducting painful and arduous quests for perfection and fulfillment realize their glories of life.
REFERENCES


6. “Interview with Rama Sarma” by the researcher on 19-4-1999.


11. Ibid., p. 233.