CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
The novel, a long sustained piece of prose fiction and a genre of imaginative literature, came to India as an art form with the British. K.R. Srinivasa Iyangar observes “The Novel as a literary phenomenon is new to India”. Indo-Anglian novel came into existence long after the novel had become an established genre in other Indian languages. It was only in the later half of the nineteenth century the novel proper resulted because of the western impact. Even before this the Indo-Anglian novel appeared differently in the 1920s and established itself in the next two decades. And before the 1920s there were hardly half a dozen novels. The composition of some original works in the western model succeeded after the phase of translation of western classics.

Meenakshi Mukherji observes, the full development of the Indian novel as a whole may be divided into three large stages: (1) Historical romance (2) Social or political novels (3) Psychological novels, showing an introspective concern with the individuals psyche.

The first phase of the fiction of historical romances starts with Bankim Chandra Chattarjee’s Rajmohan’s Wife (1864), Toru Dutt’s Bianca or The Young Spanish Maiden (1978), Dutt’s The Slave Girl of Agra (1909) and S.K. Ghose’s The Prince of Destiny (1909). These are no more than of antiquarian or historical interest. The rise of the novel in
English in India was not only a literary phenomenon but also a social phenomenon as it was associated with social, political, and economic conditions. Right from the 1920s to 1940s, the historical romance was associated with the awakening of Indian nationalism and the novelist of the social reform novels shifted his subject to contemporary situation of battles and agitations. They, being influenced by politics, aimed at improving the lot of the desperate, hungry millions. The novelist's understanding of and love for Mother India made his writing transcend the local and controversial and attain vitality and dignity. The novel proper attained a definite art form around the thirties. This second phase in the development of the novel is seen from K.S. Venkata Ramani's Murugan the Tiller (1927) and Kandan the Patriot (1932) to Mulk Raj Anand's passionate progressivism in Untouchable, Coolie etc., and emotional zeal for Gandhian ideals in Raja Rao's works such as Kanthapura.

K.S. Venkata Ramani's Murugan the Tiller and Raja Rao's Kanthapura (1938) describe the tremors of Gandhiji's impact along with that of the Civil Disobedience Movement of the thirties. Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable (1935), Coolie (1936), and Two Leaves and a Bud (1937) were like packets of dynamism and they enraged the diehard and ruffled the bureaucracy, probing the hidden nucleus of exploitation. His Village (1939), Across the Block Waters (1940) and The Sword and the Sickle (1942) have the typical ingredients of the village life, landlord and
superstitions, mass conformity and mass hysteria, the cupidity and cruelty of some, and the apathy and helplessness of the many. The second world war period in India, the growing chasm between the Hindu and the Muslim and between India and Britain, the Bengal hungers, the Quit India Movement, and the monitory frustrations are covered in Bhavani Bhattacharya’s *So Many Hungers* (1947), R.K.Narayan’s *Waiting for Mahatma* (1955), and Kamala Markandeya’s *Some Inner Fury* (1959).

Of course there has been some overlapping of one phase over the other. But from the 1950s onwards, the Indian novel in English has become enriched with variety and vitality in respect of its multifaceted themes. There was a shift of emphasis from the public issues of the society to the private agonies of the individuals. K.B.Vaid commenting on the themes of the Indian novelist, says that his preoccupations are “portrayal of widespread social evils and tensions, examination of the survivals of the past, exploration of the hybrid culture of the dislocations and conflicts in a tradition-ridden society under the impact of an incipient, half hearted industrialization”.

Yet some novels in the post-independence era concerned themselves with the country and its vagaries. Khushwanth Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* (1956) and Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* (1975) are imaginative records of the partition of 1947. B.Rajan’s *The Dark Dancer* (1959), Manohar Malgoankar’s *Distance Drum* (1960) and *Bend in the Ganges* (1964) explore the origin of the two nations’ theory.
In the 60s and 70s it was the women writers who came under the influence of Jane Austen, George Eliot, the Brontes, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf who had by then established a tradition of their own, started making their presence felt in the Indian English fictional scene. The notable names in this tradition are i) Kamala Markandeya – who takes us to the heart of South Indian village life characterized by fear of the dark future, hunger, and blackness of death through her novels, Nectar in a Sieve (1954), Some Inner Fury (1957), A Silence of Desire (1961), A Handful of Rice (1966) etc., ii) Rutn Prawer Jhabwala – who exercises her powers of observation on a milieu that changes chameleon-like from local to cosmopolitan, traditional to conventional, naïve to sophisticated in her novels like The Nature of Passion (1956), The Householder (1960), A Backward Place (1965) etc., iii) Anita Desai – who added a new dimension to the achievement of Indian women writers in fiction through her concern with exploration of sensibility, the inner world rather than the external world of action in novels like Cry, the Peacock (1963), Voices in the City (1965) etc., iv) Nayanatara Sahgal who successfully makes use of her political background in novels like Storm in Chandigarh (1969), The Day in Shadow (1971), A Situation in Delhi (1977) etc. These apart of the novels which appeared in 70s, Chaman Nahal's Azadi (1975), My True Faces (1973), Into Another Dawn (1975) are most outstanding.
Allan Sealy's *Trotternama* (1988) is a work about the inventive portrayal of Anglo-Indian life and its worth lies in its quirky and exuberant humour and its intense and eclectic prose. *Java Ganga* (1989) of Vijay Singh defies all levels of an autobiography, a diary, a travelogue, a reportage, for it is a criss-crossing of diverse characteristics of India – communal harmony, religion, fanaticism, hypocrisy, caste system, superstitions, and all that India breathes, but on the surface level it describes the pilgrimage of Nishant, the novelist's persona to Ganga. Set in the post-Mrs. Indira Gandhi assassination era and the 1984 General Elections, the days of terrific turmoil and feverish anxiety, the novel refers to the events of the last half of the decade. The other works of 'new writers' in 1980s include Geeta Mehta's *Karma Cola* (1980), and *Raj* (1989), Shashi Deshpande's *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980).

It is in the 1980s Prof. Rama Sarma started his fictional career by publishing his first novel, *The Stream* in 1983. Rama Sarma's novels seem to endorse George Lukac's view 'that it is as a social being that man can become a human individual and not a mere natural entity'. All his novels exhibit his social awareness which is not surprising given the trend set by Anand and Raja Rao and so on.
Rama Sarma hails from a family of scholars who were the descendents of Kshetrayya, a well known composer and singer of the seventeenth century. His father was a traditional scholar who enlightened the villagers of Muvva, a remote village in Andhra Pradesh. He was brought up in an environment of scholars whose ideas formed an integral part of his temperament. His collegiate education in Noble College, Machilipatnam, exposed him to the English language and to some extend freedom struggle. As a student of the Noble college, he never hesitated to express his free and frank views on society around him.

After obtaining a post graduate degree in English, Rama Sarma went abroad for higher studies. As a young man with reformatory zeal, Rama Sarma was naturally drawn towards Bernard Shaw, a great man of letters of those times. He very much liked to explore the inevitable interaction between man’s attitude to his own self and his attitude towards life. But he was asked to work on John Milton and bring out a comparison between John Milton’s Paradise Lost and Maha Bharatha. During his study in England he witnessed many literary trends the influence of which went into his work at a later stage.

After taking his Ph.D. from the University of Wales, United Kingdom, Rama Sarma joined Delhi University as a lecturer in English. During his five year stint in Delhi, Rama Sarma witnessed new currents of
violence that erupted in Delhi and its environs. He also saw a few discontented political groups which attempted to achieve their aims through force and intimidation and others through democratic procedure. He also observed the lack of attitude and objective among the students and incompetence among the teachers in India.

In 1955 Rama Sarma joined the Sri Venkateswara University where he served for about three decades. An eminent Milton scholar and creative writer, Rama Sarma distinguished himself as a great teacher and an academician held in high esteem. In recognition of his valuable contribution to higher education he was elevated to the position of the Vice-Chancellor of Sri Venkateswara University.

The literary career of Rama Sarma may be divided into two periods spanning into fifty years. The first period ranges from 1951 to 1980 and the second period from 1980 to 1999. During the first period he comes before us primarily as a critic. His book on Paradise Lost appeared in 1951. It is a slender volume that gives us an authentic Indian perspective on John Milton. It discusses the genre of literary epic and the practitioners of the epic tradition. He also discusses how Milton conscientiously upholds a life given to virtuous living and scrupulous adherence to moral righteousness. Virtue for him, is an active force and instinctive obedience to God and controlling of one's passion. It is in such a context that the author places
Milton's great work, which deals with the conflict between virtue and vice. The major theological problems in Paradise Lost are the justification of God's ways, the conflict between good and evil, and vindication of the ways of God to men.

The Eagle and the Phoenix is another critical work of Rama Sarma where the critic gives importance to ethical idealism and justification of God's ways to men. Rightly does he emphasize the theme of martyrdom in this work. Later Rama Sarma edited quite a few books for the Macmillan Co. of India. In his editorials he expresses his scholarly perceptions on these works.

Things attempted came out in 1982. It sums up widely, Rama Sarma's views on the life and work of Milton and also gives a well balanced account of Milton's aspirations and achievements. It also reflects the growing phenomenon of oriental approach to western literature in particular. In Milton and the Prophetic Strain, that appeared in 1991, Rama Sarma sums up Milton's age old concept of poet as a prophet. He also dwells on Milton's mind and thought that produced a body of work which reveals his prophetic vision of a perfect world governed by the principle of equity and justice. Harmony Restored appeared in 1991. It makes an objective evaluation of William Shakespeare in the light of certain renaissance intellectuals. Milton and Indian Epic Tradition, that came out
in 1995 shows that the Indian epics belonged to succeed literature and the Indian epic tradition upholds loftiness of theme, historicity of plot, sublimity of heroism, and delectable aesthetic appeal. His last critical work is on Bernard Shaw.


The central theme of The Stream is the much discussed problem of the eternal triangle of love. The novel is based on the quest or the pursuit of man for ideal love. The novel also depicts the painful quest of Gopalam who beginning as a boy slow to learn grows into a brilliant but somewhat highly sensitive young man. He becomes a fully evolved individual after a trip to England for higher education. He overcomes several obstacles and irons out all the conflicts through his encounter with reality and the inevitable tides and crosscurrents in the stream of life. His true being is shaped by three women – Suguna, Swarna, and Joan – his interactions with whom enable him to achieve a fullness of being liberated from passion not
merely by accepting the principle of triple force theoretically but by participating in a life of quest.

Prof. Sarma’s second novel, The Farewell Party presents a three dimensional picture of several aspects of life in its complexity and entirety. The novel revolves round the life and experiences of an ideal Professor, Prakasam who is shown as “a man thinking” than as “a mere thinker”. The Professor’s quest is shown in several aspects of his domestic life and eventful academic and social life. His quest for fulfillment in life is achieved through constant objective self criticism. The novel also depicts the three-fold dimensional picture of several aspects of life in their complexity. The novel also furnishes the three-fold aspect of the contemporary academic scene. The author employs the stream of consciousness mode of narration and a semi-autobiographical method of projecting expectations. The novel presents an important area of Indian life so far unexplored by any other Indian English novelist so far and a form and technique almost left untouched.

In Look Homeward also Rama Sarma makes use of the semi-autobiographical form which is elegantly spiced with retrospective narration and direct dramatic dialogue wherever necessary. The novel explores one of the urgent and demanding problems of India, that is, the irreparable brain drain sapping the life blood of a developing nation struggling to recover
from centuries of foreign exploitation. The novel puts forth the noble ideal that one’s sojourn to foreign lands must enable one to think of developing one’s own nation. The ultimate sense of fulfillment lies in making the humanity share the benefits of the progress.

Rama Sarma’s *Collected Plays* consisting of twelve plays appeared in 1982. As he himself observes in the preface to his plays, he is influenced by George Bernard Shaw. Just as Shaw’s plays deal with the burning problems of the British society Rama Sarma’s plays concern themselves with the problems of contemporary Indian society. Mostly the playwright in these plays is so interested in social criticism.

Rama Sarma’s next work, *The Pastures New* appeared in 1985. Here the novelist presents the life of the individuals who belong to the privileged middle class. He presents the harmonious side of life. Lalita shows her equanimity of mind and she is prepared to accept life with understanding. The happy pair Dr. Madhu and Sarala have their fruitful pride. They are happy at the individual level and establish good relations with Rama and Suguna, another good pair with domestic bliss. The ideal pairs lead a happy and a contented life. In the words of K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, “The Pastures New holds India together and preserve its inner purity”. Thus the novelist shows in this novel his firm faith in exploring fresh woods and pastures new.
that may ultimately lead human beings to a new world order transcending the limitation of caste, creed, race and religion.

*Pastures New* reads like a prophetic vision in which India is seen as a leading country in the world. When the West is satiated with its material progress it looks to the East especially, India, for spiritual illumination. And India is ready to offer sustenance and ennoble mankind. The novel is an exploration into new paths and fresh woods in order to arrive at a new world order and citizenship based on equity and justice.

*Height of Noon* presents the protagonist Anand’s father in the background who is a Gandhian idealist who had serious involvement in the freedom movement. Against this background – rural, simple, and idealistic, quips Anand with equanimity and detachment necessary to encounter failures, successes, joys, sufferings, official problems, professional rivalries with a philosophical calm. The novel is a comprehensive study of human relationships with faith in the life of Anand from stage of a careless and school-evading young boy till he graces the position of the Vice-Chancellor of a university. The novel is about the glorification of personal as well as professional life of an ideal teacher, administrator. The vast panorama of life with its ebbs and flows, pains and pleasures, disappointments and hope, failures and success is presented here. Gradually the protagonist Dr. Anand is made to learn the efficacy of willing submission to God’s will. The study
of the novel becomes more appealing because of the use of an autobiographical narration of the personal and academic life of the writer himself.

The novels of Rama Sarma come before us as the novels of ideas pertaining to human values and traditions. The concept of triple force of beauty, love, and justice in The Stream, the plea for good teaching in The Farewell Party, the brain drain and the call for the exhilarating love for country in Look Homeward, man's willing submission to God's will as a desirable goal in The Bliss of Life, the glory of India as a leading country in the world in Pastures New, and finally the imperishable significance of one's own duty as an act of faith in God in Height of Noon – all these compress the social, religious, political, and educational conditions of the present day. These novels can rightly be called the "novels of India".

Marpessa was written during his stay in England. It is based on a Greek myth that depicts the conflict between mortal and immortal love and the precedence of the former over the latter. This Busy World is a satire on the new-fanged ideas of life and happiness. Ignorance and Idiocy dramatizes the conflict between materialism and spiritualism. Sakuntala is a full-length play modeled on Kalidas's Sakuntala. It is concerned with sublimation of love. In the words of the playwright himself:
The growth of Sakuntala from a purely physical plane to that of a spiritual exaltation, through a process of suffering, is brought out in this play. I have concentrated mostly on the chastening aspect of physical love into a spiritual one. 

Each of the novels, viz., *The Stream*, *The Farewell Party*, *Look Homeward* presents different kinds of glories one comes across in life whereas in the fourth novel, *The Bliss of Life* the common experiences of religious minded people and their beliefs are described. A synthesized study of the last novels *Pastures New*, and *Height of Noon* regards 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 novelist which alone makes them come to terms with their destinies and achieve a sense of fulfillment in their lives.

Thus a quest for fulfillment and wholeness in life becomes all pervasive in the novels of M.V.Rama Sarma. An attempt has been made to study the theme of "quest for fulfillment" in all his novels – one each in every chapter – in the succeeding chapters.
REFERENCES


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