

## HEROES OF ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S NOVELS VINDICATION OF ROMANTIC WORLD

**Dr. Rajiv Ranjan**

M.A., B.Ed., Ph.D., P.G. Dip in Human Rights

*Principal*

Simultala Awasiya Vidyalaya, Simultala (Jamui, Bihar)

*A Farewell to Arms* is Hemingway's *Romeo and Juliet*. Two persons meet; they fall in love intensely with each other against the backdrop of war. Since, tragedy is another name of life; they get separated by the death of the beloved. Though, according to the publication date, this novel falls after *The Sun Also Rises* but incidence wise it is a prequel to *The Sun Also Rises*. As most of the novels of Hemingway are an outcome of his personal life-incidences so we must consider the spiritual development of the hero on the basis of that. In fact, *A Farewell to Arms* falls before *The Sun Also Rises* if we go by the incidences happened in Hemingway's real life which later on took the shape of novels. N.S. Sahu, too, says,

*"The nihilism of 'The Sun Also Rises' and of 'A Farewell to Arms' seems a convincing statement of the mood of war and the post war years. The stunned nerves of the 1920s arouse our sympathy. One thing the latter does is to explain how the characters of 'The Sun Also Rises' and the hero, particularly got the way they are."*<sup>1</sup>

If *In Our Time* shows the vindication of an innocent teenage world, *A Farewell to Arms* reveals the vindication of a youthful romantic world. Frederick Henry, the hero of the novel, at the end realises his stupidity and immaturity. He bids adieu to the world of romance and chivalry and braces himself up for the tougher role in life. He, in the novel, lives in the Hobbs' world of eat, drink and be merry as if by escaping reality and living in the arms of the beloved he can escape his duty, responsibility and most importantly death. But somewhere in the corner of his heart he could feel the approach of time that would show him the truth of life i.e. death. Though the confrontation with truth was horrible but Henry faces it with great courage without collapsing. And here is the beginning of Hemmingway's hero on the path of spiritual journey. *In Our Time* tells the tales of Hemingway's teenage life where we find such incidences which are autobiographical like his father was a doctor, that he met a Negro woman whose delivery became possible only after the caesarean performed on her without anaesthesia. How the husband of the Negro woman slit his throat because he could not bear the unbearable pain her woman went through. It also highlights Hemingway's fascination for fishing and other adventures. Above all, his father's suicide and his participation in the First World War and its impact on his body and psyche together form the body or subject of the short-stories. When a youth passes through such ghastly incidences in his life naturally he will search for a place where he can find peace, solace and happiness. For a youth inclination towards beloved is but natural, but it becomes stronger when, in the given circumstances, he finds all these things there in the sweet embraces of the beloved. Thus, Nick Adams here grows into young Frederick Henry who desperately loves British nurse, Catherine Barkley. So, the next sequel in the series of novels should be *A Farewell*

*to Arms* where we find the hero, participating in war as an ambulance driver of Italian Army, without any serious reason. Even to Barkley he could not give a satisfactory reason as to why did he join the Italian Army? He is enrolled in the Italian army and detailed to serve the forces fighting on the Austro-Italian front. Despite of his being an American, he was selected because he could speak Italian fluently. He does not take war seriously. Infact, he treats it as a big fun but he is disillusioned at the end. He is beguiled by his romantic fancies that he will not be killed in war and everybody should participate in this war. But, once, he got seriously or fatally injured in the legs, all his romantic ideas vanishes and he finds himself face to face with the cruel realities of war. He realises that this war has no meaning and without motive. It is only an outcome of some mad people who has some hidden vested interests and they befool common man by boastful speeches.

*“I did not say anything. I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious and sacrifice and the expression in vein. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot, so that only the shouted words came through, and had read them, on proclamations that were slapped up by billposters over other proclamations, now for a long time, and I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it. There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of the places had dignity. Certain numbers were the same way and certain dates and these with the names of the places were all you could say and have them mean anything. Abstract words such as glory, honour, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates.”<sup>2</sup>*

Henry realised how high morals are transformed from empty talks to bloody, cruel reality of war. The zealot's words are hollow and vein. He starts hating war and ultimately escapes it by jumping into the cold water of the river. His immediate decision was to run back to Catherine to find peace and happiness in her arms. He realised that there is nothing glorious about war and regards love as the only way out. But very soon his, this, illusion was also going to be proved futile when Catherine will die during labour pain. At that point Henry learns life's first great lesson that death is the ultimate reality. One cannot dodge death and life's problems either by war or love. It will catch hold of you and turn you into dust. So, the real way is to except challenges and fight or struggle like a man which the successor heroes do. One must discharge one's duty without getting attached to its results or bothering about its consequences. This is also the basic theme running throughout *Gita*.

Relinquishing the arms and ammunition of war he comes in the peaceful, sweet and cosy embraces of his beloved. With Catherine life becomes heaven and Henry wishes to pass his life in the romantic world with Catherine ignoring realities of life. Similar is the case with Catherine who does not want to lead a married life. Henry believes that it is not his duty to think about God and life rather he is made to eat, drink and love Catherine.

*“I was not made to think. I was made to eat. My God, yes. Eat and drink and sleep with Catherine.”<sup>3</sup>*

These lines are clearly revealing the shallowness of a youth's knowledge about life and it also underlines the fancies and day-dreaming of Henry. It shows that Henry is far away from reality i.e. life is not all romance and bed of roses; and when calamities befall upon him, he fails to take it positively and develops a negative attitude that God is another name of cruelty, callousness and insensitive workings of the unseen force.

In Henry we can see the image of those lovers who lack maturity and show their backs to the realities of life and their duties. His love is as passionate as that of Donne's or Tulsidas's. Like an ideal lover or as Shakespeare's Romeo, he is completely submerged in the love-life with his beloved and we do not see him doing any meaningful work than just roaming, eating and sleeping. One good thing that this love does is to mitigate the horrible experiences of war. S.C.Mundhra says:

*"Love transforms Henry's life radically. The life of sensuality indulged in by him as an antidote to the feeling of boredom and meaninglessness is not enough. When he cannot meet Catherine Barkley, he feels lonely and indifferent."*<sup>4</sup>

Though Henry's love for Catherine is different from the physical love in brothels yet he is not able to completely come out of the sensual world. His love is not metaphysical rather temporal. He is still lost in the world of senses where he deems the world of physical and sensual pleasures or this physical world of senses as the solution to problems. He cannot feel the metaphysical experiences with Catherine as Robert Jordan could feel. S.C. Mundra while comparing the 'forever' kind of love relationship dealt in Hemingway's two major novels, *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* says:

*"However, we must not think that the love experience in 'For Whom the Bell Tolls' is the same as in 'A Farewell to Arms'. Frederick Henry could hardly have been capable of Robert Jordan's sense of metaphysical union with Maria, even through separation and death. And for Jordan there is no conflict between love and duty, for both he and Maria are completely devoted to the Loyalist cause."*<sup>5</sup>

Henry has still not realised the meaning of love as Priest has told him even though he wishes to sacrifice and do things for Catherine. It is because, after her death he is submerged in pain which true love does not do. It seems that he dwindle between Rinaldi's meaning of love and Priest's concept of love. Though he is more closer to latter's notion of love. But he is still to expand his love to every forms of nature as the old fisherman, Santiago does. This is a kind of love, in its broader sense that Jordan feels when he says to Maria that I love you as I love my duty, comrades and humanity. In such love parting does not pain so much. The difference of love is elucidated well in the following passage.

*"The ideal expounded by the Priest is entirely different from that of Rinaldi. In his view the love defined by Rinaldi was no better than a mere passion or lust. The Priest holds and says, 'when you love, you wish to do things for. You wish to sacrifice for. You wish to serve.' Rinaldi advocates profane love, while the Priest propounds spiritual love. Henry advances from the sphere of profane love towards the domain of spiritual love. At the end of the book Henry seems to become aware that loving the body is like loving a statue. An individual is an amalgam of spirit and body. Such complete individual can only be loved and adored."*

*"Such transformation occurs in the case of Henry when Catherine bestows her sincere love on him. She has told him that marriage is at best a mere formality, for love is her religion. 'you're my religion, you're all I've got,' She avows. This sentiment of unflinching and exclusive love is a new and thrilling experience for Henry and his former uncaring attitude turns into one of caring and cherishing. He discards the position taken by Rinaldi and expounds the one held by the priest."*<sup>6</sup>

Rinaldi has been placed in the novel as a counterfoil to the priest. Priest stands for the spirituality whereas Rinaldi is not at all a religious character. His attitude is highly materialistic and worldly. He is surgeon by profession, hence carries a scientific brain. He, like a scientific

modern man, regards union of two persons as a mere physical thing and nothing emotional. Sex and alcohol are the pleasures of life. He has no desire to enter into any serious emotional love affairs. Rinaldi is the ‘snake of reason’<sup>7</sup>, living in a carnal world untouched by faith. The illusion of his being ‘snake of reason’ is suggestive of Biblical parallel. He represents the section of modern world which has turned totally scientific in approach towards life. Love word does not exist in their dictionary. They regard man-woman relationship as only a demand of the body and nothing more than that. This section of society has totally lost faith and love from their life quite similar to the T.S. Eliot’s ‘Waste Land’. But Rinaldi is not Satan but a good scientific man who shares a warm friendship with Fredrick Henry and cares for wounded soldiers/humanity. He is the healer - an efficient surgeon who, ironically, is morbidly sick himself. He also becomes disillusioned with war but can think of nothing else except drinking and becoming cheerful. He is incapable of communicating at the psychic-spiritual level and intolerant of the Priest. Priest, on the other hand, represents the pious figure who wishes to serve God and spread the message of love and peace. He exemplifies the orthodoxly religious ideal of service. The Priest advises Henry, because he finds in him traits of religion.

*“You should love Him.”*

*“I don’t love much.”*

*“Yes”, he said. “you do. What you tell me about in the nights. That is not love. That is only passion and lust. When you love you wish to do things for. You wish to sacrifice for. You wish to serve.”*

*“I don’t love.”*

*“You will. I know you will. Then you will be happy.”<sup>8</sup>*

But both Priest and Rinaldi fail in their philosophy. Priest’s ideals of service prove of no avail. He is baffled in his hopes. War depresses him because he could not stop them from fighting and killing. He had believed in some kind of miracle which would intercede and cause men to lay down their lethal weapons, but it did not happen. Just as Henry’s heart rending prayer to grant the life of Catherine is not accepted by God. Rinaldi, on the other side, gets pleasure in alleviating human misery, but in the end he also fails because he is not able to alleviate human suffering on the scale which is caused by war.

*“ ‘This war is killing me’, Rinaldi said. ‘I am very depressed by it’. He folded his hand over his knee.*

*‘Oh’, I said.*

*‘What is the matter? Can’t I even have human impulses?’<sup>9</sup>*

Rinaldi’s mind is so distracted that he can either be at the operation table or drunk so that he does not think of the terrible war.

Thus, neither science nor religion provides the true solution for the miseries related with life. Henry in the beginning likes Rinaldi and believes in the world of senses. He does not love God but he is afraid of Him (which can be interpreted as death or nada) at night. Before falling in love with Catherine, Priest always sounded mysterious to him.

*“He (Priest) had always known what I did not know, and what, when I learned it, I was always able to forget. But I did not know that then, although I learned it later.”<sup>10</sup>*

Henry moves from the scientific to the religious mode, but at the end both ways do not provide him solution. He could not save Catherine, though he prayed a lot. It was due to the attachment with body, his heart rends. But after the death of Catherine, a new insight opened up in him. He realised that death is the ultimate reality. No matter what, where and how a man is, death will

succumb him. His romantic world shatters completely and he finds himself coming down to the world of reality where the way is not to escape but to struggle. Henry understands that the words sacred, glorious and sacrifice related with war are hollow and love is at best a transitory experience and poor consolation. As war is meaningless, so is love, and the ultimate reality is that of death whether it overtakes on in an encounter in the war or by disease unexpectedly, as in the case of Catherine. Catherine, after the death of his former lover in war, wishes to lead a life with Henry full of love and nothing else. She always tries to be good, pleasant and lovable to Henry because she develops a philosophy may be death can be won by love. Actually, Catherine had begun to love Henry long before love kindled in latter's heart. Her devotion and selfless love generated in Henry's heart feelings and sentiments of genuine love. He now wants to serve her, do things and sacrifices for her. Henry realises that love is a valuable experience having substance and meaning. Now, life is meaningful and worth living. He finds spiritual peace and tranquility in the relationship with Catherine. But certainly he has not come above the level of physical love hence the separation causes pain to him. The world turns to him futile and meaningless without love. He is now in an affix as to what an individual should do when every means of consolation and comfort has been snatched away from him by the cruel hands of fate. Nothingness looms large. Similar theme of nothingness or nada has been carried forward in his novel, *The Sun Also Rises*. In it, Hemingway has shown that the world is circular so, the action of the characters leads them to the same point where they have begun. Similarly, Henry's flight from the responsibilities is carried forward in the flight of Jake, Brett and other characters except Pedro Romero from work, duty and responsibility. They are evading responsibility and emotion by taking refuge in simple primary sensation of drinking alcohol, bull-fight and sex. Catherine, too, is found evading responsibility as she does not want to go back to her mother country or get stuck in marriage. She, too, does not want to face problems and try to live in an imaginary romantic world which is not possible. Life is not all dreams and romance, it is meant for discharging duty. This realisation comes after the death of Catherine. His dream world of romance is suddenly broken into pieces." *Catherine, too, has an intuitive feeling that she may die. But in the end her philosophy proves wrong as death separates them. Hemingway seems to celebrate the religion of death in this novel. "It is", says Frederick Henry, "in defeat that we become Christian".*"<sup>11</sup>

From here begins the spiritual journey of Hemingway hero. Now, the real world is before him. His romantic fancies fade away. He, now, knows that neither sticking to religion nor fully submerging oneself in the world of senses, a man's welfare is hidden. Death is the reality. Who that is born has to die. God, in one way or another, kills everyone. So, war or love alone is not the right way to live life. Man's welfare lies in imparting one's duty well. In the path of duty one has to take challenges and bear pain. But one cannot afford to lose one's nerve and commit suicide, which is a reflection of extreme cowardliness. As Krishna asks Arjuna to come out of all Mohas and Mayas which are misleading elements of our life causing illusions and restrict us from attaining true knowledge. Those whom you are not willing to kill are mortals and are already killed by me. May be not you but another would kill them. Their death is predestined and imperative. So, Arjuna, shed the clouds of ignorance and focus over your duty, for which you have taken birth on this earth. Your betterment lies in the fulfilment of your duty. Similarly, Henry comes out of the world of senses and emotions. He decides to face problems and take challenges that life throws at him rather than showing back to it. He returns with determination to develop certain qualities of fortitude, stoic endurance of pain and suffering and grace under pressure. We meet a completely transformed man at the end of the novel.



**Conclusion :**

To conclude we can say that Hemingway's series of heroes should not be divided into two categories rather they are the developed forms of one personality. The basic traits of an adventures spirit are there in all the heroes; they differ only in their spiritual development. The one personality that resides in all the heroes can be called the personality of Hemingway himself because most of the incidences and qualities of heroes match with those of Hemingway. Hemingway's mastery lies in the fact that he remained successful in delineating personal stories in such a way that they no longer remain personal stories but bear universal touch, reflecting the predicament of the modern man and at the same time showing them way to lead life perfectly. In this sense his stories and philosophy have a touch of morality, hope and positivity which often been misinterpreted as pessimistic and immoral.

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