Chapter III

The Perspectives of Political Symbolism in
A Farewell to Arms

Hemingway’s A Farewell to Arms (1929) is published when the whole of Europe and the English Speaking World is in turmoil unable to assess the actual casualties and the damage done to the whole human race in so many ways after the World War I.

The common man is apprehensive of the possibility of a war again and the possibility of a total annihilation of the human race. The loss of confidence in religion on one side that turned many into sceptics and the conversion of an equal number of people to deeper faith in God and His mercy. The constant reminders of war that remained as powerful symbols are so many that Hemingway subtly mentions them in the novel wherever it is possible and leaves the rest to the imagination of the readers.

Hemingway is vary of the whole idea of war, as is never achieved any tangible benefit for the human race and left man more confused enhancing the loss of confidence in the scope of human relations and peaceful living that existed prior to the World War-I.
Europe as a continent is considered as the centre of civilization and the most progressive part of the world which ushered in the most advanced scientific progress to improve human living rapidly degenerated into a mass grave-yard because of the direction taken by the thinkers, writers administrators, political leaders of the early 20th century and the powers that be, the belief in the system of power to hegemonies and dominate the neighbour, the intention to colonies is emerging as symbols of progress.

It is in the Eighteenth Century and Nineteenth Centuries that the European powers began their spree of colonizing Asia and Africa in search of gold, diamonds and riches. The quest for money and power soon turned into a race for money and power which became the tragedy of the many human races that finally embarked on the idea of amassing powerful weaponry to colonies the other and enslave the weak and less privileged which continues to this day. European nations are the centres of knowledge the symbolic capital of human achievement.

The fall of the Byzantine civilization gave way to the colonization of the rest of world there is a scramble to establish one European power over the
other. The English, The French, The Dutch, the Portuguese, the Spanish, the Germans are all in the race of colonization. Their quest is the dominance of one race over the other races, the vulnerable tribal races in North America are already colonized and the Native American Red Indians wiped out. The refugees who landed in America from England became the rulers, exploiting black slave labour. The white races of Europe are clear with their agenda when they signed agreements and executed treaties all over the world as a mark of their civilization, entering into unholy contracts and violating the very human scope of torts by indulging in the most deplorable practice of slave trade.

The evolution and beginning of the war is traced to the regressive minds that framed and encouraged the energy that fuelled the vigour of those who went around the world under the guise of exploration - but began to amass money and power. Though this attitude is against the principles of Christianity, the value systems that existed then, clearly reflects the mind of the governments that used all their economic advancement to attempt to create a permanent power centre of their own which has been evasive till today, for reasons that the human
race is still unable to comprehend. The whole world fails to move towards permanent peace, by following the simple principles of the teachings of religious leaders who demonstrated the value of peace through non-violence and harmony. The colonial attitude is symbolic as the colonizer apart from using violent methods with weapons and armies physically colonized the space. They needed to colonies the minds of the captured which they succeeded in to a certain extent. The colonizers involved the whole world into the use of arms which destroys human lives to this day in all parts of the world.

The methods of destruction through violence has shifted from structured wars within the parameters of the Geneva Convention to a barbaric form of terrorism, the loss of innocent human life and the casualty and suffering is endless because of the inability of the human race to stop producing Arms and stop spending time knowledge, money and human resources in the development of sophisticated drones that are used to destroy targeted human groups, by the organizers of war.

The title of the Novel A Farewell to Arms by Hemingway is relevant to this day and great thinkers
and philosophers like Spangler recommended a world order to save human civilization. The modern apostle of non-violence Mahatma Gandhi demonstrated the power of non-violence and is, martyred for the propagation human brotherhood by his own countrymen.

The power of non-violence brought the British Government to its knees, while the whole world is in the midst of the most dreaded World War II. The non-violent movement made the most powerful colonizer of the world engaged in colonization from the fifteenth century to surrender silently and leave India and the sub-continent to self-rule.

The European continent engaged itself in a competitive hegemony to bring the world under its control and in the bargain divided the world into blocks of power that fell into the two broad divisions led by the two super powers turned rivals viz; America and U.S.S.R. who partnered to wipe out the dreaded Nazis under Hiller and Mussolini of Italy. The ideology driven powers, are engaged in a cold war and divided the world with their philosophy which generated an unhealthy world order that deteriorated into proxy wars between the nations that are supported by these two blocks of power through the 1960’s and 70’s that
resulted it is establishing neighbouring countries like India and Pakistan that are relieved from the yoke and burden of colonization just a decade ago. The colonial legacy left a trail of woes that has destabilized nation states in Asia and Africa to this day creating permanent mental obsessions of power structures that are hurdles of normal living among the common average citizens. They rarely understand the reunifications of war and its theory that is the fundamental cause for their miseries as human beings. Though Hemingway is not exposed to formal education at university, his grasp of the way in which society is moving is remarkable as he is able to relate and relive the misery of every section of society in his novels where tragedy runs as an undercurrent in a subtle fashion.

The characters are like pupated stage actors who do not know why they are caught in the web of irretrievable tragic circumstances like the soldiers who form a sizable number of all societies today. The idea of one’s patriotism is linked to his place of birth, his nationality and he is hence bound to fight and die for his country when the call is given by the organizers of war to expand on war, the budget of nations spent on weapons. There is nuclear race among
nations. The threat that looms large and threatens is to wipe oil nations and the whole human race.

A Farewell to Arms is set in the background of the World War I, which is a product of the civilization of the twentieth Century in the heart of Europe, Italy, Germany and France that claimed to have reached the pinnacle of civilization which culminated in the manmade disaster of a war of unperceivable dimensions.

The discussion of the weather and the war alternate and the constant refrain is that the war is bad and everyone is suffering. The War strategy is discussed but the refrain remains the same. Frederic is the symbol of the soldier who has been mentally and physically fatigued by the War. He exchanges his views and hears the views of the major but the undercurrent is that no one is happy on the battle front:

"He smiled “You are very good to say so. I am very tired of this war. If I is away I do not believe” I would come back”. “Is it so bad?”

"Yes, it is so bad and worse. Go get cleaned up and find your friend Rinaldi. (A Farewell to Arms 211)
Frederic reiterates at every stage that the war is bad and he hints at the fact that if he leaves Europe we will not return. The psychological mind set of the average soldier is to be away from the War. The ideology of leaders who lead the country into a War based on certain ideological grounds normally does not percolate to the soldier on the battlefield. His mind set is to same himself and try to find a method to escape from the action which may result in death.

Frederic ruminates lying on his bed, the injury and convalescence gives him time to think and expose his thoughts. Hemingway brings out the emotional side of Frederic, to tell his audience that every soldier who symbolically represents the ideology of the War has a strong emotional side that is in constant conflicts with the ground reality. The First World War is also known as the Great War.

Hemingway is an ambulance driver in the War. He is wounded and recovered from an injury on his knee. Every aspect that includes weaponry, soldiers, vehicles aircraft, and ships, hospitals are gigantic and awesome. The first time in human history that such large scale preparations are made and the disaster, destruction and damage is in equal proportion. About
16 million soldiers died in the War, and millions are wounded and maimed. The War lasted for four years, and the records reveal that the War zone in Europe which is under the heaviest pressure experienced the maximum rain in the summer of 1917.

Frederic Henry returns to Italy after convalescing in a hospital. He describes the atmosphere the whole scene is a scene of uncertainty, the image of death and decay as powerful symbols reiterating the uncertainty that prevails on the roads. The rain in the mountains, the damaged houses and the gloom that made the place inhospitable which wakes him say. “It did not feel like a home coming” (183).

The minute details of the weather are indicated in the conversation of Frederic and the major of the Regiment. “It’s been a bad summer the major said.” (184) The weather is a symbol that is used to indicate the mood and the influence it has on individuals. The weather is not normal it induces sickness of the mind which results in a depression.

The narrative used by Hemingway is so powerful to the point, visually effective and brings out the desired
results among the readers. Frederic says, “There are many sick now. The fighting is over” (184).

Frederic says

I lay on the bed and thought about Catherine and waited for Rinaldi. I is going to try not to think about Catherine except at night before I went to sleep. But now I is tired and there is nothing to do, so I lay and thought about her. I am thinking about her when Rinaldi came in. (186)

Frederic’s commitment to the War and his emotional attachment to Catherine are in conflict. He is thinking about her and trying to move towards her to settle down in a calm and peaceful place. The natural desire of an average human male and female plays out. Frederic is not fired by the ideological inspiration of the cause of War to be more dedicated to it.

Frederic is an American who is detached from the European commitment to the War; he continues to discuss the reunifications of the War with Rinaldi who is a doctor, who is also tired of the War.

“The War is terrible. “Rinaldi said “Come on Will both get drunk and be cheerful”. “Then
will go get the ashes dragged. The will feel time”. I have had the jaundice. “I said “and I can’t get drunk” Oh baby, how you have come back to me. You come back serious with a liver. I tell you this War is a bad thing. Why did we make it anyway”. (188)

The constant obsession with the War is bad and ruined their happiness. “Why did we make it anyway” is a confession that to some stage everyone is in favour of the War.

Hemingway makes one of his characters like Rinaldi pass this comment casually a kind of subdued acceptance that each and everyone in Europe is responsible for the War without knowing the scope and damage it will cause in the lives of ordinary men and women who are in favour of the War.

The Philosopher Frederic Nietzsche is quoted by Will Durant in his book “The Story of Philosophy” were he says:

Neitzsche is consoled to find so much evil and cruelty in the world; he takes a sadistic pleasure in reflecting on the extent to which he thinks “Cruelty constituted the great joy
and delight of ancient man”: and he believes that our pleasure in the tragic drama, or in anything sublime, is a refined and vicarious cruelty. “Man is the cruellest animal” says Zarathustra. “When gazing at tragedies, bull fights and crucifixions he hath hitherto felt happier than at any other time on earth (423)

Man enjoyed the crude sport of the tournament of the middle ages. King Arthur and his Round Table the knights who had to fight a gruesome tournament to win the hand of a lady in marriage. The test of a male is his power to fight and kill. The whole theory of chivalry has its beginnings in such thinking that gradually evolved with the growth of the economic status and scientific advancement that developed into an unhealthy competition that culminated in the Great War.

Hemingway makes his observations without commenting on the philosophic aspect of the evolution of man’s journey into the twentieth century. He chooses the title and alerts thinkers and the society as a whole that the only way out of this chaos is bid A Farewell to Arms.
There is a fond hope that the War would end. Hemingway narrates two events in chapter 29. One event is the killing of a sergeant, not from the enemy camp but one who travelled with them. The major is travelling with Frederic; the two scents are argumentative and refused to take orders from the officer.

"Let me go finish him" he said... He cocked it and fired twice. He took hold of the sergeant’s legs and pulled him to the side of the road so he lay beside the hedge. He came back and handed are the pistol. “The son of bitch”, he said, He looked toward the sergeant. “You see me shoot him, Tenente?” (226)

The Sergeant is killed for not obeying the order of the officer to pull out the car that is stuck in the mud. A trivial incident costs his life. This is the reality of War. One need not be an enemy to be killed. Even soldiers of the same regiment under one command can be killed for disobedience. War crimes are rarely probed and punished. Hemingway takes us to the core of the concept of War, in this Chapter of the novel elaborates the meaning of War, and the definition of enemy and ally.
The poets, novelists and thinkers of the Post-war period like Spangler, T.S. Eliot and international statesmen are trying hard to create a World order and establish peace. The other event that is important in the battle front, how women are treated. Two girls are accommodated in the ambulance, and taken for a distance and dropped. They are called ‘Barto’s Virgins’ by Bonello. The ambulance got stuck in the mud again and they left it and went on foot to Judies in Italy. The girls are obviously doing some kind of civil service for the soldiers, but are treated with scant respect because that is the trend that existed on the battle front. Every girl is looked at as if she is a prostitute. The officer and his team review the shouting of the sergeant and get into a discussion.

Hemingway makes war a symbol of immense and mindless destruction of human life. The conversation that breaks the monotony of War, after killing the sergeant by his own all soldiers and officers for a trivial reason strengthens the fact that war means anarchy and War is a symbol of anarchy. Bonello and Piani are proud to belong to the place where everyone is a socialist. The assurance that the War will end, and everything become normal is the hope that everyone
has keeps them alive. The war is pre meditated planned violence to establish the ideology or hegemony of one set of humans against another set.

Hemingway brings out the unpremeditated, unplanned violence by the authorities against their own fellow soldiers like the sergeant who is shot by the officer. The War becomes a symbol of mass destruction, unmindful of the consequences it will have on the future of the whole human race. The most organized and progressive countries are involved in the War. None of the leaders of those countries could stop the war that went on for four years. Human rights, is ignored by all. The attitude of Bunello to religion - and the necessity to get absolved through confession to a priest for having shot and killed the sergeant is raised. Any practicing catholic is bound to go to confession to get his sins absolved. Murder is a sin; it is against the fifth commandment of God in Christianity.

Hemingway hints at the failure of society, which is entirely Christian. The conversation between Bonello, Tenente and Piani is exposing their pseudo Christian practices like confession and their claim to be anarchist.
The confession of Bonello that he killed the Sergeant just because he wanted to kill a sergeant is a definite acceptance that there are no rules or laws in a War, it is only americium, and might is right.

The conversation may appear light-hearted and vain among Bonello and his accomplices, but in reality Hemingway suggests that the War is a symbol of anarchy. The soldiers who survived the War on both sides are the lucky ones who remained to realize the unmindful deeds that made the War in human and destructive.

Hemingway wanted the minute details of the battle front to be read by those who wanted to know how the war inflicted the minds of the people in the most visual form. The conscious effort by Hemingway to dispel untruths and concocted legends makes the reading of his novels and short stories written on the World War I - real and informative. He deals with the Core issues of human sympathy and love, which is always at the centre of life for any human being.

The tragic loss of lives in the war emerges as the most powerful symbol that reveals man's desire to destroy his enemy and his life. The irony is that man becomes his own enemy, but does not understand the core
of living and life. Violence and death in War dominates the thematic narrative of the novel. Man seems to have become the insignificant victim of his own creation the War. The realization that the purpose of life has become futile becomes a striking reality when Catherine dies of Child birth in a hospital. The medical knowledge available is unable to save her and the child in Switzerland.

Frederic and Catherine symbolically escape from the dangerous War zone to have the delivery of the baby in the calm peaceful atmosphere of a hospital in Switzerland. Medical facilities in Switzerland are advanced and reliable at all times which is the best possible place they could think of escaping to have the baby delivered.

The death of Catherine and the baby suggests that death is imminent and the loss to Frederic is symbolic that even though he seeks peace in Switzerland, he could not secure life. The cycle of life and death is symbolic and inevitable. Man has to learn to live with life and endure it.

Rain is a very poignant symbol that surfaces from the beginning of the novel. It is a symbol indicating
disaster. The image of rain as a symbol that makes the trees look desolate after the fall of the leaves in autumn is the dominant image in the first chapter of the novel:

   There is fighting for that mountain too, but it is not successful, and in the fall when the rains came the leaves all fell from the chestnut trees and the branches are bare and the trunks black with rain. (10)

   At the end of the same Chapter he says 'The permanent rain' – which is an indication of disaster and destruction.

   At the start of the winter came the permanent rain and with the rain came the Cholera. But it is checked and in the end only seven thousand died of it is the army.

   The movement of the troops, the weather, and the atmosphere of dead leaves all around symbolizes the movement from life towards death. While the fall of dead leaves is a cyclic event of season’s gains relevance as the desolate troops march along the roads of the Italian Countryside. Normally, Italy, known for its scenic beauty is always portrayed by the artists and
writers as extremely beautiful. The truth of nature keeps changing with the seasons bringing joy and happiness to the people who are sustained by agricultural farming.

Rain is a sequential event, giving water and life to man on this pelmet, it is the elixir of life and the source of all food produced for human consumption. Hemingway uses rain as a recurrent symbol indicating fear and disaster. Frederic and Catherine are in a conversation where she reveals her fear of rain. Catherine keeps on crying because of the fear of rain. Hemingway emphasizes the psychosis of Catherine, the phobia that dominates her mind when she says that it’s all nonsense.

Hemingway’s rendering of the effect of rain and the psychological impact it has created on Catherine in the novel is a master stroke. Catherine says she’s not afraid of the rain but she is crying. These short utterances of Catherine make the scene sound like a dialogue in a movie. Rain as a threat to her life and as an indicator of death is a symbol that is constantly reiterated till the end of the novel.
Frederic and Catherine are escaping into Switzerland across the lake in a boat, they have bid farewell to the War. Their journey is symbolic escaping from the clutches of death into a free zone, where life is secure and safe. Their fragile boat transporting them across a huge lake into Swiss territory is lashed by rains, and they are again confronted with a natural disaster which creates a doubt in their minds whether would reach their destination of safety and be secured. Their movements are constantly challenged by rain, and this time they are not sure of the direction they are taking.

What time is it? Catherine asked

It’s only eleven O’clock, I said

If you row all the time, you ought to be there by seven o’clock in the morning

Is it that far?

Its thirty five Kilometres.

How should we go? In this rain we need a compass (295)

Hemingway’s builds the symbol of rain that evolves and emerges as definite obstacle to Frederic and Catherine at every stage. They will not be able to
find their way in the lake on the boat because it is night and raining heavily. Their movement is compared and their escape becomes a doubt. They may go in the wrong direction and get caught by the authorities whom they are disserting. The punishment for disserting the army is more stringent. It will only end in an order of death by shooting for desertion Frederic and Catherine are aware of all these consequences, but they proceeded boldly and reached Switzerland. The novel ends with the word rain. Frederic walks back to his hotel, leaving Catherine behind at the hospital, dead and lifeless.

But after I had got them out and shut the door and turned off the light it isn’t any good. It is like saying good-bye to a statue. After a while I went out and left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain. (363)

The romance of Frederic Henry and Catherine Barkley is the essential of human endeavour to keep society same at the level of individuals whatever be the impact of the war. The joint mono urged by natural circumstances that forced them to quit the war zone and enter the zone of neutrality is a symbol of man’s
desire to live in peace as destined by the Creator. It is the failure of living in constant fear of being annihilated. It is this state of mind that T.S. Eliot portrays in his poem “The Wasteland” – where peace has become a question mark. The quest for peace is well established in the lines “Shanthi! Shanthi! Shanthi!” It is the note on which Eliot wishes his readers to embark on. He suggests that the whole world to move towards peace which is abundantly available in the Eastern part of the world.

A Farewell to Arms is remarkable for the circumstances amidst the War that help Frederic and Catherine romance in spite of the unfavourable conditions. Hemingway’s delectation where every object in the hospital where Frederic is admitted being wounded in his legs, he is immobile and needs the hospital staff to assist him even for his little natural calls of nature which is most tragic for a soldier who loves to be in constant action defending the cause of his nation and its ideology. Hemingway stresses the role of journalism and the news that is a very crucial part of the war machine.

Civilization and scientific advancement that cause chaos in the minds of individuals and the quest
for a peaceful existence that lies at the bottom of Hemingway’s writings which has a very well planned out structure in *A Farewell to Arms*. The war demolished the very formulations of human existence and shattered the ideals of civilization that promised a paradise on earth. The novel is divided into five books and rolls out like a Shakespearian tragedy. *A Farewell to Arms* introduces the readers to all important characters, and the background of war the social milieu the reaction of the common man and woman. The movement of troops along the roads the control of the army over the civil population is symbolic of the supremacy established by the power of the gun over the common unarmed civilian.

Frederic is in bed, because of his wounds he is convalescing, but is most eager to know the news and developments on the war front. The way in which Frederic meets Catherine in the hospital and the way their love blossoms is an exclusive narrative technique that throws up a series of images. The Book III begins with the situation from Caporetto in Italy. Where Frederic takes a bold decision to subvert the collective consciousness of patriotism and escape from the War into neutral territory. Book IV presents Frederic and Catherine in Switzerland – neutral
territory they feel safe and the horror of war does not haunt them.

The novel unravels the tragic death of Catherine during childbirth. The purpose for which she wanted to live, to get her child and enjoy the bliss of motherhood in a country excluded from the war is defeated. Every move and object chosen by Hemingway to enhance the narrative and make his readers feel the intensity of the war is symbolically represented; the images and scenes are dramatic and packed with action in short (stuccato) sentences that make every event dramatically memorable to the reader. The symbols and images being very subtle need to be analysed in detail to bring out the essence of Hemingway’s technique of the narrative and his tragic vision of life.

The title of the novel A Farewell to Arms is symbolic and ambiguous. The reader is lured to explore the symbolic nature of the title as the context of the age created a permanent element of fear and dread of war that ruined the fabric of human living with the development of science. The ambiguity and doubt created by the title of the contemporary readers is compelling as the mood of the post World War I period is a mood of trying to find a solution to put an end
to war that would annihilate the human race. The title evoked a number of responses, through reviews and interviews, which made Hemingway instantaneously popular for the very thought that he whole world should bid a farewell to arms which implied that the whole human race should embrace peace and non-violence. Though he does not directly plead or instruct the human race, his subtle suggestion that the human race can survive only through love.

The theme of war and the love story of Frederic Henry and Catherine Barkley interwoven simultaneously unravel the truth of the purpose of human existence which Hemingway believed to be the essence of life. He does not indulge in didacticism and homilies that the religious and serve political leaders made at public meetings and on festive occasions, but he drove home the message advocating peace to allow the average human being enjoy the bliss of human love while fulfilling their earthly desires as in the case of Catherine Barkley. He does not passionately appeal directly but Catherine’s feelings, emotions body language explained in the most expressive brevity of words is far more appealing and dramatic that every reader is
appreciative of Catherine’s zest for a peaceful life with her partner Frederic.

Hemingway underplays the role of matrimony and presents the hero and his heroine in a wonderful conjugal relationship, because of Matrimony though made Holy by the Church, is prevented to those engaged in War as per the law.

Hemingway’s treatment of man-woman relationship is the law of nature, while matrimony is an institution of the church with a number of limitations. The progress of society and evolution of civilization creates institutions for better living and happiness, like the institution of Matrimony. The sacred institution is prohibited to the women working in the War.

Catherine is prevented from marrying Frederic because she is serving in the War. The banning of institution to a section of women is a vital question that arises and makes Catherine a powerful symbol of womanhood when she decides to have her baby out of Wedlock with the man of her choice. In the present context she becomes a perfect symbol of woman’s liberation and would be crowned an activist for the feminist movement. She asserts her right as a woman by
circumventing the rules of the War and escaping into neutral territory in Switzerland.

Frederic is the true symbol of male during the early 20th century where he is in the war, but leaves the battle front to escape into Switzerland; he falls in love with Catherine but is not ready to face the responsibilities and obligations of a relationship of the woman who is bearing his child. He is the male chauvinist – imposing himself on Catherine, he promises so many things to her and she is the symbol of the naïve woman who is frail and accepts all his promises for truth.

As in most of the man-woman relationship where the woman however educated or liberated, lends herself into a willing suspension of disbelief and surrenders to the overwhelming personality of the man she loves. Catherine is so gentle she is the symbol of a perfect female in love with the man she adores. Her human instinct to beget her baby is so strong that she deserts her job, she leaves the war zone, she moves into a place where she is sure of enjoying peace. She evolves as a symbol from being an ordinary nurse in the army to a symbol of ultimate motherhood and takes the risk to protect her progeny. She faces the constraints of bearing a child
through an illegal relationship which raises the fundamental question what should be a legal for a woman to experience her biological desire of becoming a mother.

Frederic’s gender advantage makes him a soldier, but in fact he is mentally weaker than Catherine in all his dealings. Hemingway’s skill of characters station is exemplary as he portrays Frederic as the man involved in War, just as a profession without any commitment, the futility of War broke the faith one had in bravery which is more theoretic than practical. Mans choice for a normal life is the psyche of the average male and bravery is disproved as an empty virtue that falsely accompanied the slogans of patriotism in eloquent speeches made by leaders to enthuse the rank and file of the army that reflects the strength, prestige and capacity of nation – which is the fundamental aspect that triggered countries to list the virality of their armies through wars which landed the whole world in a crisis.

Hemingway exposes the mindset of the average soldier in a number of places in the novel to make his point clear that war is fright to establish the pride of opportunities leaders who never cared for their
countrymen in times of peace. The effort of Frederic who symbolizes the average soldier of the First World War who escapes from the war front, to lead a life of peace, faces the greater tragedy in the loss of Catherine who dies of child birth.

Hemingway’s master stroke is suggestive of the title *A Farewell to Arms* where Frederic symbolically bids farewell to Arms – by deserting the army but at the end he has to bid farewell to the Arms of Catherine, which leads the readers to contemplate on the achievement of Frederic and Catherine which is short lived temporary and tentative.

Hemingway’s art and craft as a novelist forces the reader to contemplate on the capacity of an individual like Frederic who may escape from the war but not escape from the tragedy of life which he has to endure. The pursuit and quest for peace is the eternal question that each one has to come to terms with. Hemingway thus subtly suggests that peace can be achieved by an individual only with himself by coming to terms with life and the challenges that one faces around him in war or in times or places unaffected by War.
Hemingway’s concern with the world that is undergoing rapid changes is visible in his short stories which he wrote before he embarked on writing *A Farewell to Arms*. He found the undercurrent of the mainstream society that has lost its direction. Hemingway’s short stories are symbolic of the behaviour of mankind.

The relationship between man and woman is so strained due to extraneous forces beyond their control, like the war which had rained the natural mutual respect between the genders. Human love and affection is sullied, strained, and completely ruined by the commercial attitude promoted in personal relationships with the coming of the war. By representing the truth he portrayed the evil which idealists denied in their writings.

The need to reflect on the current deterioration of human values had to be expressed in symbols which the characters in the short stories or novels represented.

Hemingway’s tragic vision is reflected not only in his major novels through the use of symbols, but also in his short stories, where one can discern a pattern
which unfolds touching upon all the basic aspects of living, birth, sex and death. The Nick Adam’s stories portrays Nick as an innocent young man curious to know the meaning and process of birth which he witnesses in ‘Indian Camp’ when his father performs a caesarean section on a woman.

Nick’s father is a doctor; he takes him to an Indian hut to visit a sick woman. Her invalid husband is in the bunk alone. The doctor tells Nick that the lady is going to have a baby. It being a difficult case the lady screams to deliver her baby. Nick watches the entire scene. To their dismay, the husband who is invalid commits suicide by silting his throat. Nick witnesses the woman’s tragic pain to deliver her baby and also the tragic event of the death of her husband. Though his father, the doctor wishes to keep him away from the scene, Nick witnesses every minute detail and asks very far reaching questions that enhance the subtle use of symbols to explain the tragedy that every man undergoes without any reason. Nick asks his father “Do ladies always have such a hard time having babies? (95)

The Young Nick Adams tries to comes into grips with the pertinent questions of life on witnessing, the
birth of a child, the death of the mother and the suicide of the father which Hemingway very candidly states in the most candid manner by Nick’s desperate questions and his father who is a doctor tries to allay his fears of death and violence. Nick’s confrontation with the reality of life and his first encounter with the way in which women give birth and die in the process is a complex paradox that Hemingway portrays in Catherine’s death at the end of the novel *A Farewell to Arms*.

The constant obsession with the way humans lose their lives in a strong symbol of life. This complex symbol of death and life which presents itself in a cyclic movement becomes incomprehensible when women decide to have babies to fulfil their feminine desire of procreation which is natural and biological risking their own lives. Matador who risks his life in the ring with the bull rises to fame or is mercilessly killed.

Hemingway’s use of symbols in *A Farewell to Arms* has its origin in his short stories where he uses the symbols of death, life and violence together with rain. In the first chapter of novel,
To the north we could look across a valley and see a forest of chestnut trees and behind it another maintain on the side of the river. There is fighting for that mountain too, but it is not successful and in the fall when the rains came and the leaves fell from the chestnut trees and the branches bare and the truants black with rain. (10)

Frederic is impatient, when he is among the retreating troops, being an American he may be suspected to be an agent of the enemy he is not an Italian and he can’t speak the language, which puts great apprehensions in him, he wants to desperately meet Catherine and spend the rest of his life with her. He wants to escape and become free from the horror of war, where death and human life is trivialized by the war machine. He jumps into the river and stays under water though it is very cold, swims for safety and feels free. He feels rid of a sinister experience on the battle field. He feels relieved. Malcolm Cowley has compared Frederic’s plunge into the river to escape execution as a baptism - a symbol of Frederic’s entering the world of the initiated, but his is true
only in so far as it refers to his decision (his
rebirth) concerning the war.

But after I had got them out and shut the
door and turned off the light it is not any
good. It is like saying good-bye to a
statue. After a while I went out and left
the hospital and walked back to the hotel in
the rain. (363)

The chapters proceeding, where Frederic returns to
the front and meets his old comrades, indicate both how
much he had learned through his stay at the hospital
(the baptism of love) and how much the members of this
company have learned through the difficult fighting of
the summer (their baptism of fire), but the final
consecration does not come until later when Frederic is
confronted by love and death at the same time.

Frederic’s movement is also symbolic because he
moves out of War and violence into the world of love,
his only hope is to be in the company of Catherine and
bask in her love. The inevitable pregnancy and the
traumatized experiences that Catherine faces in the
battle field. Though she is not a soldier she is a
nurse who is in a military hospital.
Hemingway does not specifically point out the service rules of nurses who serve in the army, it is statutory that nurses serving the army or defence forces are not permitted to marry or have children; that’s the reason she has to escape into neutral territory to safeguard herself and the child which she has to deliver. The horror of war coupled with the anxiety to succeed in her love for Frederic and get out of the battle front, and the biological human urge to have her baby delivered without any hassle. The urge to, of perpetuate life in the midst of a war is symbolic of the common collective consciousness to strive to love, which when proceeds to a larger canvass, becomes the motive of war. The pages of History are filled with events that have engaged peoples, communities, tribes, countries and nations in war, to protect their identity and their space on this universe which is primitive and barbaric, because war has not achieved any tangible benefit till date. The misery and squalor, destruction, caused is inhuman and merciless.

The critic Richard Lehan in *Camus and Hemingway* have compared Camus and Hemingway, where they negates any direct influence but accepts the method in which
organized his philosophy dramatically. Camus saw in Hemingway’s fiction the possible means to dramatic ideological beliefs, the techniques to objectify character emotions and sentiments and stylistic devices to reinforce and supplement the world view of the novel itself.

The need for Hemingway to dramatize the events that unfolded on battle field and the reactions of Frederic and Catherine are best enacted symbolically which enhanced the effect to the reader. Frederic is the dislocated hero who trying his best to come to terms with the sordid reality of war. Though he feels alienated and dejected on the battle front he evolves as a human being in his love for Catherine and the urge to return to a normal life where he reappraises his values and tries to adapt practical living but fails because of the disastrous death of Catherine at the end. Where death is inevitable and the many solutions that men seek to be happy and stable while on this earth ends in a kind of futility which sets the trend for writers who began writing at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The futility of life is very subtly linked with the religious beliefs where religion emerges as a
symbol in the novel. Frederic and Catherine who represent the average individual male and female in the battle front do not have very strong religious beliefs which make them symbolic of the century in the background of the War.

The religious consciousness of the Century is what Hemingway is trying to portray. The meaning of religion to every section of society is his prime concern which he succeeds in. The priest’s religion is trying to secure an inner peace for the soldiers as their Chaplin on the battle field which is a contradiction in terms as Rinaldi is keen on satisfying his sexual desires by visiting the whorehouse. The doctor understands the physical needs and places them over the spiritual needs where he succeeds. Frederic and Catherine are so deeply in love and that is their religion, Catherine tells Frederic: “You are my religion. You’re all give got” (254).

Frederic’s religiosity is symbolic to the extent that he invokes the mercy of God only when Catherine is dying in the hospital, he becomes emotional at the moment of crisis and weeps and then turns to God:
Don’t let her die. Oh God, please don’t let her die. I’ll do anything for you if you won’t let her die. Please, please, dear God, don’t let her die. Dear God don’t let her die. Please, please, please, don’t let her die. God, please make her not die. I’ll do anything you say if you don’t let her die... Please, dear God, don’t let her die.” (254)

Frederic’s outburst when Catherine is dying and his unconditional surrender to God is symbolic, of the twentieth century attitude to spiritualize linked with the materialistic world, when he prays, “I’ll do anything for you if you won’t let her die” (254).

Hemingway is not critical of Frederic’s attitude to God at the moment of a crisis in his life. He is unable to accept the will of God which is the essence of spirituality but tries to barter a deal with god. The words symbolize the commercial spirit of the age where society has lost its direction, and the average man and woman recognize God only for a human solution at the moment of death which makes Hemingway’s understanding of life much more complex. It is in Catherine’s death that Frederic’s awareness of the
Almighty is on Frederic’s faith is conditional and shallow.

Catherine’s death is so dramatically picturized at the end of the novel that Hemingway leaves it to the imagination and understanding of the reader. The futility of life being enacted on the battlefield when soldiers are dying like flies, forced Frederic and Catherine to escape from the War, but Hemingway stresses that death is imminent and it will come to the baby that is in the womb or the mother who is eager to beget her baby.

Frederic is on leave because of the wound he had in the war. He is convalescing at Milan in Italy. He wants to forget the war and is discussing so many things with Catherine in a hotel at supper. They are in a very light hearted mood and enjoying each other’s company. Another nurse Ferguson is also in their company. She chides Catherine for falling pregnant out of marriage in the presence of Fredric. Hemingway brings out the moral aspects that are getting eroded in the war. Matrimony is no more sacred or made in Heaven as claimed by the conservation British Society. It became a matter of convenience during the war to have
not only pre-marital sex but also children out of the sphere of marriage.

It is an assertion of the rights of a woman to have her child at the time she wanted to and with the man she desired. Frederic slips into an explanation after the discussion and dialogue between Catherine, Ferguson on and Frederic to dinner in the hotel in Milan. He is amazed at the coverage Catherine displays when Ferguson break down into tears for the pregnancy of Catherine. Frederic Says:

If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course kills them. The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kill them. It kills the very good and very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be special hurry. (275)

Frederic’s compliment to Catherine, as a woman of great courage is analysed and she becomes the symbol of courage in the novel. Hemingway hints at his
philosophy of life, that courage cannot overcome death. Catherine may be remembered for her courage. She may be the personification of courage. She dies on the labour table due to Child birth.

Hemingway carefully handles the progress of the novel when the two of them Frederic and Catherine escape from the War zone, to neutral territory to further their own personal ends succeed temporarily but fail ultimately as Catherine dies of childbirth. The symbol of coverage is shattered, defeated and permanently destroyed.

Hemingway carefully crafted his philosophy with the narrative technique that is misunderstood by some critics who became his detractors. Carlos Baker in his book The writer as Artist, remarks that in A Farewell to Arms ‘the plain and the mountains (not to mention the river and the trees, the dust and the leaves) have a fundamental value as symbols (94). He analyses the two symbols that oppose each other:

Despite the insistent matter-of fact at the surface of the presentation, the subsurface activity of A Farewell to Arms is organized connotatively around two poles. By a process
of accrual and coagulation, the images tend to build round the opposed concepts of Home and Non-Home. Neither, of course, is truly conceptualistic; each is a kind of poetic intuition, charged with emotional values and women like a cable, of many strands. The Home concept, for example, is associated with the mountains; with dry-cold weather; with peace and quiet; with love, dignity, health, happiness, and the good life and with worship or at least the consciousness of God. The Not-Home concept is associated with low-lying plains: with rain and fog; with obscenity, indignity, disease, suffering, nervousness, War and death, and with irreligion. (101)

Carlos Baker traces the conflict that man faces in the operation of these two symbols of Home and Not-Home, which is contract to the narrative of A Farewell to Arms Frederic tries to come to terms with life by escaping into neutral territory, but the death of Catherine again shatters his longing to be in the midst of Home and enjoy the peace and comfort which is normally available in ordinary circumstances for any family. Though later on E.M. Halliday opined that the
centrality of the Home and Not-Home symbols highlighted by Carlos Baker in Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* is artificial and inapplicable to the art of Hemingway’s narrative and tried to downplay the validity of the use of the mountain and plain as symbols deliberately used to heighten the effect on a society that is traversing a very dangerous path of war and destruction. Halliday downplays the use of symbols while highlighting the use of irony which is subtle and veiled.

The love story of Frederic and Catherine has a number of images which contribute to the symbolical dimension of the novel. Frederic is introduced by Rinaldi to Catherine Barkley and this gradually grows into a nature relationship.

Frederic is in the War front in Italy and Catherine is in Hospital very far away. Their separation is painful and they can’t bear to be away from each other. The images that Hemingway paints in a casual manner may appear to be unconnected to the main events or the movement of the narrative but they do have a bearing on the undercurrent of the theme that Hemingway puts across to the avid reader who tries to assimilate the effect that war creates in the mind of the individuals. The images of a worn out carpet in
the hotel where Frederic and Catherine stay. The image of a dog searching for something in the empty cans points to the futility of life and the directionlessness of society.

Emptiness is a symbol that haunts Frederic at the end of the novel. He does not know where to go and what to do. His dreams of living with Catherine in Switzerland are destroyed. He becomes lovely like Santiago and Jakes. Emptiness surrounds him wherever he goes. The reality shares him in his face.

Hemingway conveys the human predicament through the symbol of emptiness and man’s vulnerability to face it. The war creates a situation where it empties the world of its population. Thirty six million people died in the First World War, which is a process of emptying the planet of human life. Outside along the street are the refuse cans from the houses waiting for the collector. A dog is nosing at one of the cans.

What do you want I asked and looked in the can to see if there is anything I could pull out for him, there is nothing on top but coffee-grounds dust and some dead flowers?

There is not anything, dog, I said. (242)
The emptiness of the cans represents the emptiness of the World and the dog searching sniffing, knowing that the can is empty represents the society of the twentieth century that is searching for something unidentifiable on the earth trying to solve the puzzle of creation which has resulted in a world war – where none is able to assess the destruction, delay and loss of human life apart from the peace and serenity that existed to a certain extent on the planet Earth.

The decadent society which had made remarkable achievement in science and technology, the creation of the enormous war machine, the logistics of war and the movement of soldiers from one front unmindful of the seasonal changes that make rain a painful experience for everyone involved in the War. Rain which is a symbol of life is transformed for the first times as a symbol of disaster by Hemingway.

The novel abounds in the use of symbols which progresses to the extent of acquiring new dimensions which are relevant to the beginning of the twentieth century. These new dimensions are ironic and thought provoking, enlightening and inviting readers to reassess their values and opinions on the purpose of life, which marks the success of the novel, when the whole world is
on the brink of desperation and clueless on the massive tragic cusp that the world landed itself in.

Hemingway is concerned with all aspects of social deterioration that is superficially invisible, during his time, as it is generally so. The evil effects of War and violence are poignantly felt in the areas that are affected by Wars which are thrust upon the people who are unable to react. His exposure with the Press – is an advantage as the Press reported the events that occurred on the battle front sometimes with comments that ignited the minds of the people as the well informed journalists justified the war. The other glaring concern of Hemingway is the tragic situations women are forced into at war time. The detractors of Hemingway failed to understand his concern for women, because he portrayed them as ‘frivolous’ and they had no more role to play in the war, other than being sexually exploited by the soldiers on the battle front.

This is the superficial impression one gets when one reads his novel, but only when the reader tries to get at the core of art as a writer and assess him concerns for society one will understand that Catherine Barkley is a noble woman, who risks everything for the sake of Frederic bears his child out of matrimony, as
the nurses working for the Army are not allowed to marry.

It is in *A Farewell to Arms* that all of the stylistic traits scattered across the decade's work are synthesized into a moving story that covers a wide variety of settings and a huge spectrum of human emotions, from facing the horrors of war and death, to being drunk and palling around with prostitutes to falling in love with a woman who becomes pregnant and dies while giving birth to a stillborn child.

Only the Hemingway of *A Farewell to Arms*, of 1928 and 1929, who had lived, read and written everything he could for all of these years, who had learned from the good and bad writing of himself and others, could write a novel of this calibre.