Chapter VI

Conclusion

The centrality of the use of symbols in the novels and short stories of Hemmingway has been elaborately pointed out in the previous chapters. Every chapter deals with the significantly central symbols which have been interpreted in the possible angles and in the present context. The symbols that hover around the central themes of Hemmingway’s literary works repeatedly remind the reader of the progress made by man with an enhancement of the destruction of human life by devised methods of war and violence.

*The Sun Also Rises* is a novel which deals with the post World War human relations and societal dynamics that existed in Europe. The destruction of the war is physical - the number of human lives that are lost counts up to 20 million. The destruction of infrastructure, the untold misery of the loss of the bread winners of the family recounts the tragic direction in which society is progressing. The war machine is the most powerful symbol that occupied the mental space of the maximum number of people all over the world. People in distant lands unconnected realized
the apprehensive fear of war which became the source of all innovations in almost all walks of life. The war led to the discovery of armaments for modern warfare which culminated in the manufacture of the nuclear bomb which is dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought the Second World War to a close.

The invention of modern medicine and sophisticated air-craft, automobiles, building materials, leather gadgets, mining industry, fishing industry and almost all relevant social theories have been the by-products of modern warfare. Every aspect of life has witnessed rapid progress because of the war machine that spurred growth and development. While the current generation of management experts attribute development in various areas of human life to the war forget the human aspect. The human mind has undergone radicalization because of the fear of the war.

Hemmingway attempted to address the vital question that ruined the conditionalities of living physically and damaged the human psyche permanently. The war had created on impulse of uncertainly in every aspect of life all over the world. Historians look at is as a record of the past without assessing the impact it has created on the present, whereas Hemmingway
symbolically established the significance that war created on the present day, from almost all known aspects. He pursued the war in all its nuances not for the sake of studying war from the perspective of a writer, but for society to read his writing and take their lessons on the need to give up war and violence. He selected energy minute detail of every segment of society to explain the ramification of war. He is aware of the social segments and their aspirations that gave insights into the various aspects of human behaviour, which appear temporary but have a long lasting impact on society.

The characters in every novel, become symbols, as they represent a very significant strata of society who face the odds of war, which appear temporary, but have a very deep ramification when looked at closely. The purpose of civilization becomes questionable, with the long lasting effect of war.

Hemmingway takes us to the centrality of the purpose of civilization and the crisis of the civilization which culminated in war through a series of symbols, turn weapons to organized military exploits. Hemmingway having understood the dynamics of the war by being in the battle front as an ambulance
driver is able to understand these minute aspects that appeared 'inevitable' rather than 'improbable'. The use of symbols to make his narrative appealing is one way to get to the core of the subject. He wanted to make every reader aware of these realities that war is a manmade disaster which would be a terrible burden on the future generations to come.

Hemmingway’s vision to predict the disaster of war and the destruction war can create in the future is remarkable as he does so without making any grand declaration. The titles are so symbolically suggestive, that none among his contemporaries or even later could make such symbolically suggestive titles, that seem very ordinary but revealing layers of meaning to the careful reader who is forced to become a researcher, because of the relevance that lives in the memories of the most recent times.

Hemingway refers to the placid life of the farmers and artisans in a number of places as he describes the war zone through which the soldiers pass or the agrarian life he notices at many places that drawn his attention in his novels. They are the symbols of peace and tranquillity that existed until the end the eighteenth century. The transformation from agrarian
livelihood to industrial livelihood is obvious and sharp that is projected as symbols of change and transformation in the writings of Hemingway.

The ancient occupations of fishing and agriculture existed, but are gradually getting edged out to give way for the new society. The old man represents the ancient fishing occupation in The Old Man And The Sea, the symbol of the past order, and Manolin represents the present order, in the same occupation which had become more focused on the economics and commerce of fishing. The changes from casual, old style fishing with pride and skill, is getting replaced with time bound fishing with specific monetary goals. The teams of baseball players, the dreams of the old man—Santiago are all symbols of the old world glory and had no more relevance to the present day, when his life seemed to raise many questions to the present day generation who neither appreciate his skill nor admire his catch which is ruined by the sharks in the sea. The sharks are symbols of unethical preying which had become rampant in every walk of life.

Hemingway keenly observes and points out these changes, in a society out of war time. The restlessness of the people is symbolic of change, in the novels and
short stories of Hemingway. The change that people seek is driven by greed and inhuman methods that tend to systematically breakdown the value system that existed prior to the twentieth century.

Hemingway chooses to highlight the change in the lives of these ordinary people like the characters who join the struggle against the establishment in the novel *For whom the Bell Tolls*. The idea of liberation from the rule of the unethical forces of Spain, the rise of the people against the evils that ruin their peace is a movement which gradually involves every individual who emerges as a symbolic liberator.

The force of the ideology that inspires and instils the conviction to device a methodology for every individual who gets involved in such struggles like the Spanish struggle that is vividly depicted with a series of symbols, in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* assumes a cinematic effect. Every strata of society, gets involved in the conflict. This paradigmatic shift from the pre twentieth century in the lives of the common man is so effectively brought out through the symbols that Hemingway uses to subtly influence his readers, to make them aware of the change that has entered their lives, and keeps manipulating every group and create
sharp divisions that continue to plague society till today.

The post world war novels and short stories of Hemingway have had many readers to revisit the changes that occurred throughout the twentieth century and continue to affect the world till today. The reports that remained classified documents till recent times in the last two decades of the twentieth century, which have been released to the access of researchers and those keenly interested in the evolution of social and political history have unearthed certain startling facts, that has revealed the vulnerability of the common man, who has no control over these events except through a weak and miscalculated ballot in the democracies that promise peace and practice war to keep their governments in power. There is a report which states that to capture one and half kilometre of territory about twenty thousand lives are lost in the First World War. It is this shift from peace to war that Hemingway portrays through the characters he chooses from among the common man to stress, and reiterate the purpose of life which had become meaningless and horrible. The capture of territory, by the countries fiercely involved in the war in Europe,
are in the grip of a demographic crisis from the post World War II, as the institutions that perpetuate a sane world like marriage and procreation has been lost permanently. The greed of a few leaders who triggered the war and lost control of the war, have become documentary material for researchers, or subjects for discussion in seminars, while the theory that preparation for war is the only solution for peace is practiced to this day.

Hemingway’s solution is to bid A Farewell to Arms like Frederic and Catherine and search for their personal peace. Though the tragic and a Catherine, is symbolic and paradoxically symbolic when she dies of childbirth. Hemingway takes his readers to the most critical question that borders Christian Theology, the creation of human life and man’s role in it. The role that Frederic played is only instrumental and Catherine’s desire to have a baby out of wedlock could have been against the tenets of the matrimonial vows of Christianity, which is a break down on values which came with the war, but the creation of life is and is still the Creator’s desire.

Hemingway does not write for only the western society that had accepted the Christian faith, his
wrote for the whole of society. Creation of life itself is at the core of every religion, but the destruction of life by organized war is planned and executed by humans who do not understand the core of creation.

Death in the war and the death of Catherine and her baby are very strong symbols that ring reverberate in the mind of every reader of Hemingway, who begins to move on from the level of just reading to the symbolical vibrations that lead to questions of the purpose of creation. The graves of unknown soldiers in the First World War became the symbols and reminders to society, to the reality that the youth who join the army or any organized struggle will one day lose the beauty of living by dying for his country or ideology and put behind a tombstone or cross. These grain reminders of war become potent symbols of the living who remember the dead. The world has undergone a transformation in terms of killing and mutilating humans after the World War. The enhancement and continuous research and development in building a weaponry system that can inflict death and destruction in any part of the globe is the terms of progress that society and governments measure when they go to the hosting. The scale of organized war and mass killing
has now shifted if terrorists who attack and kill innocent, unprotected, civilians, children, women and old people. Even schools and prayer halls are not spared from violence, terror strikes and killings. The recent past, forces us to assess and appraise the merit of authors like Hemingway who pleaded with the elite, the educated and well informed to give up arms, in the most appropriate terms without causing an alarm. The world leaders who advocate reduction in the production of areas make pompous statements that never have any definite impact on the escalation of violence.

Hemingway’s aesthetics and philosophy are practical and not based on illusions. He understood the political compulsions of war and is never very critical or reprimanding in his writings, because he always preferred the humane aspects to be analysed, rather than the political aspects and ramifications and maintained a certain amount of distance from politics and propaganda that are the basic foundation on which the war machine moved on.

Hemingway’s accuracy and keen observation of at the battle front shaped his capacity as a writer. He is neither emotional nor digressive when he is witnessing the war, and writing for the newspapers. His
objectivity in observation and his neutrality in reporting evolve when he uses symbols to maintain the objectivity and neutrality.

The social degradation began with the war which is pointed out in so many instances and symbols in his novels and short stories and the pseudo relationships between the male and female characters in *The Sun Also Rises*. The behaviour of Brett Ashley, who enjoys the company of her male friends knowing that one, is vying with the other to win her heart and marry her. Whereas she is cool about all these male proposals and enjoys the fun and has her entertainment where ever she goes. Many feminists have dubbed Hemingway as anti-woman in his values. They are among the detractors who have not made a keen in-depth study of the novels and short stories, giving special focus and importance to women who played a vital role in the very narrative of the novel. These detractors consider Brett Ashley as a woman with an unusual sexual desire creating rifts between the men who are her friends, Hemingway desisted on commenting on the behaviour of Brett, but he is highlighting the social chaos and the indifference in the behaviour of women that went against the traditional cultural norms of the society they lived in.
Hemingway is using the novel as a platform to demonstrate this social change through the characters that became symbols. Hemingway’s intention is to bring out the moral values of the society as a whole and not target the change in behaviour among women. Margot is the symbol of womanhood staking her claim as an equal in the role of society, going on a hunting expedition with her husband and under the pretext of saving her husband from the charging wild buffalo, she shoots her husband. She is the symbol of the woman who enjoys sport and shares gender equality that women have acquired to a certain extent today. These fine observations of society and its progress or transformation of women - which has emerged into literary movements, are projected by Hemingway, which may have inspired a whole generation of young women who now enjoy equal status in all walks of life.

Hemingway is very careful in his choice of the women characters, as they chose the most representative and symbolic characters to prove his point of view. The progressive women are progressive symbols of the changing society. It would be relevant to revisit the charges his detractors levelled against him in their critical analysis of his writings, in the earlier part
of the twentieth century in the present context, and
establish the validity of Hemingway as a conscious
artist who showcased the behavioural aspect of society
and project the future which is shocking then. The idea
of a woman being so liberal has become an ideology and
theory and society has traversed through the idea of
liberation where gays and lesbians have become literary
theory.

Hemingway is consistent in presenting the females
in his novels and short stories as they have been
evolving with the changes that came with the
colonization of Africa or the First World War.
Hemingway’s symbols are representatives of the types of
women who are emerging to later on evolve into
movements that would dominate the thinking and minds of
the whole human race, whether one is male or female.
The selective use of symbols and the choice of
situations set the trend for the next generation to
move forward. Hemingway’s achievement as an artist in
the extended canvas of the present will also extend
into the future. Hemingway set the stage for the next
generation of writers to be direct, factual and allow
readers to intercept the text through symbol.
Hemingway is not aware of the future of literary theory. He is not writing to put his text under a scanner and examine the literary theories that can be applied where ever possible.

Hemmingway deliberately avoids using the discourse method of narration, and resorts to the story method which is effective when it comes to dealing with the changing situations of his age. It is in this context that he uses symbols to reduce the length of descriptions, which result in a kind of discourse. The reader makes his inferences from the symbols used. The fact that Hemingway’s writings lend themselves to be re-read and re-interpreted for an analysis is because every symbol has its own reference.

Hemmingway used symbols consciously as a narrative technique to suit his age which is relevant to this day. The *Old Man and the Sea* is an example where every object becomes a potent symbol. The changing times and the incompatibility of Santiago to carry on with the profession of fishing on the high seas, his vulnerability and failing health that make him redundant is symbolic of Hemingway the writer, who is reaching the end of career as a writer.
Hemingway at every stage of his life identifies himself with the symbol he uses from the first novel, *The Sun Also Rises* - Jacques is symbolic of the wounded soldier who is in love with Brett, but unable to claim his status though he is close to her. There may be a movement from one character or hero to another as we read his texts. Frederic, Robert Jordan, Nick Adams and Santiago represent the aspirations of Hemingway in some way or the other and become symbolic of the age or the profession they pursue. The fisherman, Santiago is the symbol of patience and he is ready to sacrifice anything to prove his capacity as a fisherman. The struggle that he faces borders death, and his achievement is not the catch but his confidence and his refrain when he says that the man can be destroyed but not defeated.

Hemmingway is conscious of the message he is giving to his readers. He summarizes his understanding of the plight of man, whether he is a soldier, a fisherman, a farmer or a nurse or any other character, like Nick or the various types of people who live and work for themselves are a government or army are all suffering and unable to escape the struggle.
Hemmingway’s brevity is intentional and that’s the reason he uses symbols to communicate knowing that the times are changing and the average reader could not afford the Victorian luxury of the pre-first world war period of reading lengthy descriptions and prose materials to drive home a point of view. He therefore uses short sentences, communicative titles and symbols to make his point of view effective. This approach to writing stories made him a successful writer. As he understood that the purpose of writing for any writer is not to show how much he could write but how effectively he got his readers to read his text. This outstanding quality of Hemingway has made him successful till today with his readers. Hemmingway has made a mark for himself, because his short stories are read by a large audience till date. The relevance is found in the texts prescribed for students of contemporary times who read and enjoy the text, its message and the mode of conveying the message needs to be mentioned because Hemmingway’s symbols are universal and relevant for all times and all places.