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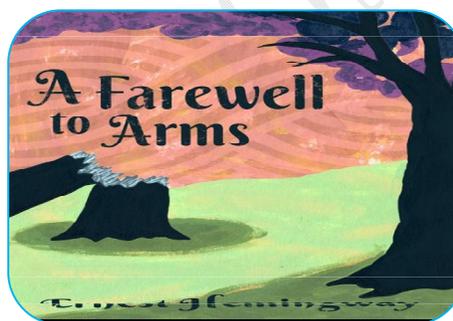
REFLECTION OF DEATH IN HEMINGWAY'S *A FAREWELL TO ARMS*

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ABSTRACT:

This is a humble attempt of Hemingway's thoughts on Death. In the introduction to Man at War Hemingway says that one can learn "about the human heart and the human mind in war". It won't be an exaggeration to say the same thing about A Farewell to Arms. The condition of the human heart and mind corresponds to two inextricable strands, the theme of love and war, in the structure of this novel. Hemingway uses war as a metaphor for the general condition of man's existence. War has now become a deep and permanent crisis in the public affairs of all nations. Modern mechanical war has killed the age old heroic ideal which involved the demolition of the old moral and social values, including the masculine mode of conduct and behaviour both in public as well as in private life. The death of the heroic ideal has hurt the male psyche and it has become subject to vacuity, anguish and fear.



KEYWORDS: *human heart , general condition , old moral and social values.*

INTRODUCTION:

Hemingway places his hero Fredrick Henry at the war front where human beings kill each other in thousands. More die because of rain and cholera and other unnatural causes. Death stalks the landscape and hurts every living being. Hemingway is at pains to convey that modern war means total violence and pervasive death. War is now a universal phenomena not a limited involvement in time and space. Everybody gets involved in it. Philip young is right when he says that, "a whole country could read its experience,

Wilson to Harding, in his, and it began to become clear that in Hemingway as elsewhere "hero" meant not simply protagonist" but a man who stands for many men.

The novel starts with two contrasting rituals. Frederick Henry's sensual ritual of wine and women, an escapist game to hide chagrin at the defeat of the heroic ideal or the masculine mode and Catherine Barkley's ritual of propitiating death by caring for life, the ritual by which death is to be defeated by dying for life. These two rituals correspond to two contrasting states of mind. Catherine Barkley

has also tasted death. Her lover had died fighting at the front. She is struggling to bear this shock and her attitude to death is still ambiguous. Sometime, she feels that death is the end of all and yet she is dying to do "something for him" as long as she is alive. She has now resolved to bring him ritualistically back to life, and give her all to him.

More shocking is Henry's attitude towards death. One is likely to become casual and callous when death is so abundant. According to Atkins, "The natural man, as a consequence of his life, dies an unnatural death, i.e., from loss of blood. But if natural behaviour

results in unbridled acquisitiveness, then violent death will become comparatively normal." Mechanical death puts such a strain on the mind that it is bound to become distracted and confused. Hemingway has dramatized these contradictions by creating a number of characters juxtaposed to each other. Ferguson, for instance, stands for traditional social and moral values and summarily dismisses any need of a formal marriage ceremony. Another ritual that Hemingway puts great faith in is the practice of sports. To play a game well needs mental discipline, and following the rules requires skill acquired through patient practice. Henry practices indoor games with Court Greffi, a father-figure in the novel. The grand old man repudiates war and Henry confesses to him that he is a cloyant at night, and when the old man asks him:

'What do you value most?
Someone I love.'

'With me it is the same. That is not wisdom. Do you value life?
'Yes.'
(p.202)

Life Henry had dimly realized was a "fixed race" and the end has turned out to be the same. The truth is finally confirmed and Henry realizes its depth and accepts its inevitable conclusion. Henry's mind has gone through a terrible experience to achieve some degree of understanding and steadiness. According to Kazin, "Hemingway hero comes to regard himself, to cherish himself, by achieving control over a disorder that is different in kind from himself. Everything is founded on the struggle that given one back to oneself." This is exactly what happens to Henry. We, therefore, conclude that it is not nihilism but a very dynamic life-urge, a deep surging inspiration for resurrection that informs the core of the novel. *A Farewell to Arms* is a powerful parable of survival in the face of pervasive death. It is perhaps one of the best war novels of the century which brings out the truth about war and life in our time and upholds the values of courage, stoicism, order and tenderness as against anarchic violence and death.

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