CONCLUSION

When Ernest Hemingway was still a young boy, a mere child of two years of age, he was once questioned by his mother, Grace, as to what he was afraid of? Without the least hesitation and with great gusto the little toddler had replied that he was " afraid a nothing ". It was a statement which later formed the basis of his life, his philosophy of life, and, of all his writings.

At the beginning, his steps as a writer were hesitant and unsure like those of a baby toddler. The results are clearly seen in his earlier writings, especially the early novels. But later on, as he gained more and more experience and became more full of conviction, his steps no longer hesitated or stumbled but strode out purposefully and manfully culminating in his supreme achievement, the novelette, The Old Man And The Sea.

But during his sojourn through life and before he had arrived at the answers to life, he had also to learn that there was much to fear in life including that vast cosmic nothingness which is referred to as " Nada ". Gradually he became aware that man is, at best, a puppet, a mere plaything in the hands of the foreboding and awesome
unknown. Realisation had dawned upon him that there was something evil and sinister perpetually and menacingly hovering over man and his world. This fearful and unseen evil was always poised and ready to stifle and thwart man's every aspiration and send him rushing to his doom. Hemingway's achievement lies in the fact that he, through his numerous experiences, knew exactly what he was up against. He was well aware of the odds against him and yet, adopting a pagan approach, he would charge headlong into it nevertheless. He was conscious of what the end had in store; at the same time he also knew that he could neither shy away nor run away as he had no choice or escape. Death would catch up with him --- eventually. But as we are all aware he, as well as all his heroes, did have the choice to pull back and retreat and accept his fate with resignation. However, he refrained from doing so. Instead he dared to defy the will of the Gods and venture into unknown and untrodden pastures. And though he succumbs and falls a victim to the constant pressures of the evil in nature and in life, he arouses our admiration by going down in a blaze of glory. And as advocated by Hemingway himself, it was this quality which was to be cultivated in life; the will to resist evil, to confront it manfully and fight it till the bitter end even if it meant that we might get singed along the way. Not withstanding the fact that the end is known, man should
never succumb to the pressures of life but face it boldly.
The fact that he is going to lose is a foregone conclusion.
But his defeat and fall will also yield his spiritual
triumph. Physically he may be laid to waste but morally
and spiritually he towers above all and victory belongs
to him alone.

In order to arrive at the answers to life Hemingway
often had to reconnoitre a torturous route. More often
than not he found himself bowed down with the pain of life
and at times even got singed along the way. When relating
experiences in his novels he quite naturally turns to and
draws upon his personal experiences as is clearly seen in
A Farewell To Arms. Like young Frederick Henry, Hemingway
too thinks of the battle-field as a play-ground for the
brave, the courageous and the glory-hunters. He looks upon
it as a place where one can show one's manliness and courage.
But when a shell explodes in the dug-out in which he is
sheltering, wounding him seriously, he is rudely awakened
to the realities and the horrors of war, and the myth he so
strongly believed in, is shattered. He then comes to realise
that he is nothing but a toy in the hands of the Generals.
He comes to learn of the manipulations made by man but has
yet to learn of the manipulations of life and the mysterious
unknown. What no one perhaps realises is that the Generals
too are being manipulated by the Gods.

Totally disgusted with the war and the situation he finds himself in, Frederick Henry makes a separate peace and deserts to Switzerland with his beloved Catherine. He now finds comfort and also imagines that his troubles are all over. This is the point where he makes his mistake. By letting down his guard poor Henry is led to believe that the true joys of life now lie ahead but when Catherine dies a painful death at child birth in a hospital in Lausanne, he is shocked into mute silence. He does not really know what has hit him or why? Even if he does know he finds it difficult to accept his fate. The story of Frederick Henry is only the beginning of Hemingway's long quest to unravel the mystery of life, during which he, like Henry, would have to undergo many more traumatic experiences.

In his next novel *Death In The Afternoon* death strikes his hero, Maera, in a most unexpected manner. Maera is presented as a brave and courageous man. He defies death time and again inside the bull-ring but he does so more out of bravado than out of any reason. It is therefore ironical that instead of dying a hero's death in the ring, which he probably desired, he meets his end by tuberculosis. As in the case of Frederick Henry, he too fails to come to grips
with the problems of human existence. He dies without having found either a reason or an answer to the questions of life and death.

*To Have And Have Not* places Harry Morgan in a situation wherein he comes to the painful realisation that "a man alone ain't got no bloody chance". For the first time Hemingway's protagonist comes to realise that he is up against something which he cannot overcome. But Harry Morgan's realisation too is not complete in itself. His analysis puts the blame on his fellow man who, we must remember, are themselves mere puppets in a hostile environment unconsciously pressurised and dictated to by an all pervading evil that is constantly hovering over the world of man. The incessant pressure of that evil is the ultimate tragedy of man; a situation wherein he is left a helpless spectator.

Tragedy overtakes and strikes down the lovers, Jordan and Maria, in *For Whom The Bell Tolls*. There is no denying the courage exhibited by Jordan and, also, by Maria. But, nevertheless, at his death one is left with a sense of unnecessary waste. Jordan's love for Maria and his excessive zeal and commitment to the cause were never balanced at any stage of the story. This fact itself provides ample warning of the tragedy that is to occur in the near future.
Had Jordan's love for Maria been truly what it is shown to be, certainly he could have dispensed with the war; a war in which he is only a volunteer and which, one must stress, has no direct relation to his personal life or his country. The only over-riding factor is his commitment. One could argue that like Frederick Henry he, too, for the sake of personal happiness, had the choice to make a separate peace and get away from it all. Yet again, taking into account his commitment and loyalty to the cause, he could still have conducted the operation on the bridge successfully, directing from the rear and relative safety. This, he refrains from doing so. Instead, like all heroes, he prefers to lead from the front thus inviting his own inevitable doom. It goes without saying that the choice of life and death was in his own hands; he had decided to take his chances and, unfortunately for him, he had to pay the ultimate penalty --- death.

_For Whom The Bell Tolls_ is definitely a development on the earlier novels. Here, Jordan is aware that he is up against something sinister and evil. He also knows that life is fleeting and as such it is the values we believe in and uphold that gives substance and meaning to our lives. No sacrifice is too great to fight for what we believe in. In trying to uphold his values, Jordan fights a battle from
which he suspects he may never return. His unflinching stand and his glorious exit arouse pride in our selves for he, that is man, has tried to and succeeded in transcending his limitations. He wins our respect and we feel sorry at his fall.

Upto this point all of Hemingway's heroes are shown going down in a blaze of glory. But in spite of their glorious fall one is left with a sense of unnecessary waste as is always the case in a tragedy. A waste, one feels, that could well have been avoided. This strain is continued in the next novel *Across The River And Into The Trees*. Here the old soldier, Colonel Cantwell, also tries to philosophise and arrive at the answers which had previously come to both Frederick Henry and Robert Jordan. This novel is also a development on the earlier novels. But still there was a long way to go; and it was finally left to the old fisherman, Santiago, in *The Old Man And The Sea*, to provide all the answers that was in Hemingway's vision.

In *The Old Man And The Sea* the aged hero, Santiago, a fisherman without par, is shown to have gone without a catch for eighty-four luckless days. His ill fortune has been so miserable that fellow fishermen begin to refer to him as "salao" a term denoting the worst form of unlucky.
Even his only close companion and helper, young Manolin, is compelled by his parents to abandon him. Left to fend for himself and absolutely alone in harsh surroundings, one would have expected the old man to break down in despair. But he surprises us: he does not meekly bow down to his fate. On the other hand, adversity only strengthens the resolve in the frail man. One is almost tempted to think that Fate is taunting him to dare. And, he does dare. He calls the bluff of fate and so very fittingly rises to the occasion that one cannot but feel admiration for the old man. Santiago decides to venture far out into the sea where no man had ever been. And it is there that he hooks his prized marlin. His epic battle to subdue and kill the fish and then to retain it from the maraudering sharks is now a part of history. What strikes the reader is that, he is left with a feeling as if something or someone had all along been dictating the moves made by Santiago. Santiago is made to go fishless for such a long period in order to drive him deep into the sea. The power that controls him knows very well the calibre of man Santiago is and also knows or foresees that he will not shirk away from a challenge. What is more intriguing, as also evident, is that Santiago himself appears to know that he is being manipulated and is willing to take his "chance like any man or bird or fish."* He dares to go forward. The same

* The Old Man And The Sea - Ernest Hemingway;

power that controls him tempts him by giving him a fish the likes of which he had never come across before. But in order to impress His power on the puny man he snatches away by force Santiago's victory in the shape of sharks which tear the noble fish apart and leave it a skeleton. From the very outset Santiago is prepared in the knowledge that fate is going to rob him of his victory. But in spite of this premonition he chooses to fight a battle which he knows would only end in his defeat. He does not back away because Santiago had come to realise what the earlier Hemingway heroes had not; that, life is ephemeral and transient wherein humans are but playthings in the hands of the divine. And in the long run, no matter how hard one tried, one was bound to be trampled, suffocated, and finally done to death by the ever-present and menacing evil that is hovering over and around the world.

Santiago knows he will lose - either way, with or without a fight. And his very nature does not allow him to submit. He prefers to battle to the bitter end thereby gaining the readers pity and sympathy and rising to the proportions of a mythical hero.

The question of choice has been discussed earlier. In The Old Man And The Sea Santiago's choice itself, it appears, is governed by the entity that wills him on to his doom.
Santiago's story clearly amplifies the terrible and terrifying predicament of man. The unsavoury truth and fact of life is that man is surrounded by evil; an evil incessantly hovering and watching over him and sinister in its every design. In the world in which we live, Man is not left with a choice. His very existence, therefore, is tragic. The greatness of Hemingway lies in that he advocates that this realisation should not be a cause for depression. On the contrary, it should propel us to greater deeds of heroism; to defy that horrifying and frightening predicament of man --- death. And only by a positive approach to life and by struggle can man rise gloriously from the debris of his fate.