CHAPTER - I

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The purpose of this chapter is not to give any chronological account of Ernest Hemingway's life. Of course, biographical facts have been gathered to show how they influenced and moulded the attitude of Hemingway as reflected in his short stories. The environment at home instilled a sense of rigorous discipline in Hemingway without which he would have been reduced to mediocrity. Hemingway's reactions against his mother prepare us to understand the conspicuous absence of mother's role in his stories.

His experiences with different newspapers and his war experiences gave him ample opportunity to see and evaluate the life in his time. However, all these influences, when taken into account, bring us to the natural conclusion that Hemingway was a gifted genius. His literary apprenticeship under the renowned writers of his time did not make him a subservient copyist. The psychological factors responsible for endowing him with an individuality of his own have been made clear while recounting the incidents of his life. The sources of his originality can, in fact, be traced to his early days of childhood. Hemingway says that unhappy childhood is the best training ground for a writer. His childhood, though outwardly happy, was full of turmoil and tension. Since he was a sort of genius, he outgrew the influence of parents.
The training for his tough reticent style has been ascribed to his mental attitudes as well as to his rigorous training at different newspapers. The Hemingway-hero is so closely related with its creator that a careful study of Hemingway's life becomes a necessity to have a clear understanding of the stories. Hemingway's aesthetic principles revealed through his stories definitely correspond to his attitudes towards life.

**His Family Background**

Ernest Miller Hemingway was born on July 21, 1899. His father Clarence Edmonds Hemingway was a medical practitioner who took his M.D. at Rush Medical College, Chicago. Dr. Hemingway married Grace Hall on October 1, 1896. Soon after the marriage, he shifted to live with Grace's widowed father Ernest Hall. Their second child was Ernest Miller Hemingway whose both first names - Ernest and Miller were from his mother's side. Ernest was the name of his maternal grand-father while Miller was his maternal great-uncle. His mother Grace was very religious woman devoted to music. Her defective eyesight could not stand the glare of the footlights and so she had to give up her career in opera. Like his mother, Ernest had also weak eyesight which barred his prospects of joining active military service.

Ernest's mother Grace was not much interested in the management of household affairs which were mostly in the hands of Sophie Stelzel who gave Ernest his first doll.
Since Grace did not take enough interest in the household affairs, it was a necessity and not luxury to have servants and maidservants. In the absence of servants, it was Dr. Hemingway who did most of the cooking. In later years, Ernest had admiration for Llyod Arnold's wife Tillie who was an excellent cook of game birds. In *Ten Indians*, while portraying the happy Joe family, Hemingway has shown Mrs. Garner cooking the food. In *Wine of Wyoming*, Mrs. Fonten has serious complaints against his son's wife because she does not give her husband good food to eat. Fortunately cooking was one of the hobbies of Dr. Hemingway who also did the marketing and looked after the domestic birds and animals. Grace always felt that she had rendered a great personal sacrifice in marrying and bearing children. She was a music nut and a frustrated singer. The husband and wife often clashed but it was the Christian faith that bound them together. Ernest Hemingway grew up in an emotionally repressed environment with a father and mother who had almost exchanged traditional parental roles. Dr. Hemingway was guided by a female-inspired standard of gentility and respectability. This atmosphere at home played a vital part in moulding the attitudes of Ernest Hemingway. However, Ernest was on good terms with his family but he was an individualist. He liked to be on the third floor by himself. Nick Adams gives expression to Ernest's view about his father and mother particularly in the story *The Doctor and the Doctor's wife*. Nick's desire to go with his father for hunting is his plaintive cry for his father's masculine
assertion. As a child Ernest longed to have a brother and wept bitterly when he had three sisters one after another. At last there was a brother but it was too late. When Ernest grew up, he did not paint favourable picture of women in his stories. Instead of an all-wise mother, we find the aggressively unwomanly female in his stories. In later life, Ernest had three sons and longed to have a daughter. He had always seen his father wearing a beard and, in later life, Ernest was also fond of wearing a beard which was a symbol of male virility for him. Outwardly he had all the comforts of life but, in fact, he had an unhappy childhood. Later on, he confessed to Malcolm Cowley that his hatred of his mother was non-freudian, that "she was an all-time, All-American bitch, and that the first psychic wound in his life had come when he discovered that his father was a coward."

Afraid of Nothing

Even at the age of two he shouted about himself to be afraid of nothing. He memorised certain stanzas from Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade." He felt great pleasure in playing the role of a soldier. Moreover from his early childhood he had the habit of exaggerating and dramatising the incidents. When he was seven years old he burst in one day with a news that he had stopped a runaway horse single-handed. His maternal grandfather Ernest Hall was much amused to hear the account and told Grace, "... this boy is going to be heard of some day. If he uses his imagination for good purposes, he'll be famous,
but if he starts the wrong way, with all his energy, he'll end in jail. No doubt, Ernest Hemingway possessed great energy and extra-ordinary imagination. Later on, he suffered from insomnia which was the direct result of his highly developed imaginative nature. Moreover, he could work for hours together without getting tired.

Dr. Hemingway taught Ernest the rudiments of hunting and fishing. He learnt from his father how to make an axe, how to make bullets for rifles and how to dress fish and fowl for the frying pan. However, the good doctor was a strict disciplinarian and never spared his children if he saw any sign of idleness or procrastination in them. Ernest became the victim of his father's anger several times in his childhood. Dr. Hemingway used to punish his children with razor-strap if there was any major contravention of religious matters. In later life, Ernest could not tolerate if he found the loosening of discipline in his friends. It also explains as to why he could not tolerate poseurs and pretenders. Gertrude Stein and Fitzgerald became his targets when they showed symptoms of definite decline in their intellectual gifts. In The Snows of Kilimanjaro, while portraying the character of Harry, Ernest has portrayed himself as to what his fate would have been if he had fallen victim to the temptations of soft life. As far as the religious part of his life is concerned, his training at home made a permanent impression on his mind. Even when he revolted against the rituals of established religion, he had the deepest regard for Jesus Christ. At crucial moment,
of life, his heroes turn to Jesus Christ. Beneath all the
descriptions of atrocities, there is the soul's cry to give
us peace in our time. He has also no compunction in
deriving the title of his books and stories from the holy
books. He inherited from his father the love of hunting
and fishing. Dr. Hemingway believed that God has provided
wild game for the nurture and enjoyment of mankind though
he has always compassion for the wounded animals. Ernest
learnt from his father to shoot all kinds of animals for
cooking pot but Dr. Hemingway never permitted unnecessary
killing of animals. Once when Ernest killed a porcupine,
his father took him to task for having killed a harmless
creature and as punishment forced him to eat its meat.
Likewise, Ernest derived aesthetic pleasure in hunting,
fishing and bullfighting and never a sadistic one. From
his mother Ernest got a keen sense of appreciation for
arts. He inherited the impulse of creative activity from
his mother but developed it further by his youthful tra-
ingen. As he was a sort of genius, he could surpass his
father and mother and the environment at home in many ways.

His Native Place

Ernest Hemingway was acutely aware of his native
place Oak Park where he lived until 1917. Oak Park, though
in close vicinity of Chicago, maintained its individuality
by retaining the provincialism of a village life. The Oak
Parkers mostly belonged to respectable and prosperous middle
class and were highly religious-minded. It was also rather
a limited world not presenting a variety of types of scenes. "It was an atmosphere calculated both to irritate and attract a boy who was proud, competitive, and intelligent, particularly if his intelligence were of a satiric and inquiring kind." Oak Park had always been a fundamental element in his attitudes. It is surprising how a boy brought up in Christian and puritan traditions could know and write about the devil and the underworld.

Oak Park High School

Ernest Hemingway never attended a college or University. He graduated from Oak Park High School which maintained a very high academic standard. Few students of Oak Park had any difficulty in getting admission in universities or colleges. The Oak Parkers were proud that four years of Oak Park High School were equivalent to two years of college.

Ernest took active interest in academic and extra-curricular activities of the school. His interest in writing was stimulated by two of his English teachers Miss Fannie Biggs and Miss Dixon. Miss Dixon's blunt honesty and mild iconoclasm were a valuable antidote for the smug complacency of Oak Park. Ernest imbibed in himself the temperament and attitude of Miss Dixon. She pushed the creative side of Hemingway and encouraged him to write his original and interesting thoughts in an imaginative way. Miss Fannie Biggs was an ideal complement to Miss Dixon. She took interest in Ernest's personal difficulties which were mostly common to all adolescent boys and did her best to soften them. His works at School magazine Trapeze and
Tabula give an ample proof that he was endowed with an artistic talent of his own. His school stories particularly *A Matter of Colour* and *Judgement at Manitou* show that he was blessed with an interest in all new experiences, a ready narrative style, and a sound training in clear self-expression.

While at high school, Ernest read Ring Lardner with interest. Ring Lardner was the most widely-read writer in those days. His columns in *Chicago Tribune* were liked by the people of all ages. Impressed by Lardner, Hemingway wrote several adaptations for *Trapeze*. Lardner served as a model for Hemingway who, in his own imaginative way, transferred the latter's technique into a high school framework, but he soon assimilated Lardnerian style in his own inimitable way. "The boy's work [Hemingway's] ultimately became more than an imitation; it was original as well as derivative. During the winter of his senior year Hemingway made four awkward repetitive experiments; by the spring he was using the form with confidence and success. He was no longer content simply to replace Lardner's situations and characters with high school facsimiles. He used instead a Lardnerian treatment of authentic high school material."  

In later life, at Lardner's request Hemingway autographed a book, inscribing it "To Ring Lardner from his early imitator and always admirer, Ernest Hemingway." Ernest who was always original and highly individualistic soon outgrew Lardner as he had 'outgrown most of his models and tutors.'
but one thing is certain that Lardner was an important factor in the establishment of direction.

At Kansas

After high school, Ernest had three choices - College, War and Work. Any other average boy with romantic leaning for soft and comfortable life would have chosen college but despite his father’s persuasions to go to college with his sister Marcelline, Ernest rejected the idea. He was underage and hence it was out of question to go to war. He got a job at Kansas City Star which provided him an opportunity to be free from family ties and pressures and to have experience outside the provincial domain of his native place. He has acquired workable knowledge of writing. Moreover, he has a keen desire to learn to write. Trumbull White, the retired editor of Everyday's Magazine advised him to learn to write by writing. He also advised that the best subjects were those which were directly drawn from personal experience. The seven month's stay at the Star was of utmost importance because he has really begun to learn at the Star. The style sheet governing the prose style of the Star gave a definite direction to the style of Hemingway. "These were the best rules I ever learnt for the business of writing," Hemingway told a correspondent in 1940. "I've never forgotten them. No man with any talent, who feels and writes truly about the thing he is trying to say, can fail to write if he abides them." His contacts with Pete Wellington and Moise helped him in moulding his destiny as a writer.
Moreover, he was an apt and industrious pupil and learnt to tell simple things in a simple way.' Pete Wellington's advice that English language yields to simplicity through brevity left a permanent impression on Hemingway. Moreover, the hard strenuous work of newspaper was a romance for him. In *Green Hills of Africa*, Ernest points out three things for being a writer: talent, discipline and an absolute conscience as unchangeable as the standard meter in Paris. No doubt, he had talent. He had discipline too. He had luck as well. So far as discipline is concerned, Hemingway is ruthlessly particular about it. It is also part of discipline that a writer should not slacken his efforts if he gets discouragement nor he should lose his head by the praises. Hemingway had the real worth in him not to be discouraged by the first rejection nor to be killed by the first praise. He hitched his wagon to the star and never deviated from the right path. Moise's temperament and creed had a particular appeal for the young writer. Hemingway remembered him as a "very picturesque dynamic, big-hearted, hard drinking and hard-fighting man" but regreted that his talent was not disciplined and canalised into good writing.

Besides the keen interest in his work, Hemingway was also energetic enough to be present wherever there was action. The Christian ideal of service to mankind lying in his sub-conscious mind and his enthusiasm for new experience made him jump to hazardous jobs which deserved sympathy and attention. Once he saw a man fall unconscious on the floor with an attack of small pox. The doctor who attended the
case became close friend of Ernest who got from him shocking anecdotes of dope-taking among the local prostitutes. At Kansas, he could see the rougher side of life and it was altogether a new experience for a sensitive boy like Hemingway to be at Kansas City from the relatively sheltered world of Oak Park. Here it was a common sight to see the prostitutes carrying on their trade on the streets. His interest for the crime underworld was a true Christian's love for the sinner and the down-trodden. His faith in the established order of institutions was shaken and finally rested in the ultimate worth of man himself who could attain a bit of Christ-like figure in fighting against the evil rampant in our time. His was not the task to pray and go to sleep. He could think and think till he could not sleep but would not give up thinking.

Another World

Hemingway had learnt a great deal at The Star. Now he was ready to move on to another world. The spirit of adventure was so powerful in him that despite bad eyesight and parental objections he was desperately eager to go to war. He had been turned down twelve times by the medical examiners. If bad eyesight prevented him from joining military service, he got into the war as an honorary lieutenant in Red Cross. It was another Star friendship with Ted Brumback which enabled Hemingway to get into the War. However, from Kansas City, he took with him not only the lessons he had learned about writing but also a trained
reporter's eye which enabled him to profit considerably from his war-experiences.

As an ambulance driver on Italian front, it was Hemingway's keenest desire to be on the front. Naturally for a sensitive boy of eighteen, it was a shock to see dead bodies scattered over the ground. He was severely wounded on 8th July, 1918 while carrying a wounded man on his shoulders when he was struck with a mortar shell. However, he delivered the man to the command post and fell unconscious. It was a heroic deed indeed. When surrounded with dead and dying, he felt it natural to die than to go on living. This serious wound and the scene of human suffering released the hidden powers which he had in him. "By troth, I care not; a man can die but once; we owe God a death" - this passage from Shakespeare became his talisman. It was this incident which developed him into something larger and bigger and forced him to forgo the demand for an explanation of everything and to concentrate on giving meaning to life through action. Moreover, the disappointment in his first serious love-affair was like the second mortar shell and he reacted violently.

The Slopes of Montparnasse

After his marriage with Hadley he came to Paris. Had he been a mediocre he would have stayed at home allowing himself to be absorbed in mass-life. Sherwood Anderson wrote letters of introduction to Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound. John Peale Bishop visited Paris in 1922
and wanted to meet the ablest American expatriate living in Paris at that time. Ezra Pound took him to Hemingway. John Peale Bishop found Hemingway "instinctively intelligent, disinterested and not given to talking nonsense." He was particularly struck by Hemingway's genial honesty. He could not be purchased. Moreover he could not tolerate poseurs and intellectual shams. At Paris the slopes of Montparnasse made him itch. He found that the slopes of Montparnasse were crawling with fakes and pretenders. Hemingway never deviated from his self-imposed high standards. He also happened to see the spectacle of refugee misery in Asia Minor which left a permanent scar on him. In his creative work he made use of what he learnt from Greco-Turkish war. The scene of refugees misery appears again and again in his writings. The civilian suffering gave a new dimension to his determination to be a writer. He had neither seen nor imagined such human suffering as he saw in October, 1922 along the road to Adrianople. He was so shocked that he did not know what he should do to mitigate the human suffering. After all he had been raised in the decent world of Oak Park with its middle class nineteenth century heritage of New England humanitarianism. He decided 'cold as snake' to be a writer and to write as truly as he could. His choice to become a writer was motivated by his inherent desire to serve mankind. He wanted to serve mankind in a way which may hold good for years to come. In Green Hills of Africa he says:
"A country, finally, erodes and the dust blows away, the people all die and none of them were of any importance permanently, except those who practise the arts..."

The uncapitalised Paris edition *In Our Time* appeared in 1924. It contained only vignettes which served as inter-chapter sketches in later editions of *In Our Time*. Prior to this, Hemingway's all the stories and poems composed since his arrival in Paris, kept in a suitcase were stolen and never recovered. A writer's indebtedness to other writers can be very well assessed by his early writings.

The loss of early stories makes it difficult to find Hemingway's indebtedness to other writers. However, *In Our Time* undoubtedly points out to the originality and individuality of Hemingway.

The Shaping Influences

The editorial work at the *Transatlantic* helped Hemingway to render an invaluable service to Gertrude Stein. Despite his work at the *Transatlantic*, he missed no opportunity to have fruitful discussion with Fitzgerald, Christian Gauss and others on literary subjects. Fitzgerald admitted that he was indebted to Compton Mackenzie.

Hemingway named Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* as his first pattern. A true artist outgrows the influence of others in the same way as a patient has to wean himself of the influence of psychiatrist if he wants to go on his own way. No doubt, Hemingway soon outgrew all the outside influences. However Anderson, Ezra Pound and Gertrude Stein were in a position to be called among those who
influenced Hemingway. Anderson and Pound never felt that they were the architect of Hemingway style. Gertrude Stein may claim this honour but her statement after the quarrel cannot be trustworthy. Moreover the steady growth of Hemingway's personality from Oak Park to the time he came in contact with Stein leaves us in no doubt that he was temperamentally an originator rather than an imitator. By 1923, when his suitcase containing his early work was stolen, Hemingway seems to have an independent spirit which he had always been since the earliest times. Of course, he was only 24. He could make mistakes; he has still to learn much and he was keen to receive the hints that came in his way. He learnt to write by writing. Sedulous he definitely was but never an ape. His experience as a reporter as well as his inherent curiosity taught him to observe accurately and to express clearly, subtly and concisely what he saw, heard and felt. By the time he was 24, his writings had acquired lustre and tone of their own.

Hemingway gave himself an intensive course of reading in certain of the prose writers. Among them were Turgenev, Chekov, Tolstoy, Dostoievski, Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, W.H. Hudson, Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, Henry James, Thomas Mann, Joseph Conrad and James Joyce. Hemingway learned from all these masters though he cannot be said to have imitated any of them. Moreover, his circle of friends was quite a large one. Besides Gertrude Stein and Pound, he was often in the company of John Dos Passos, Malcolm Cowley, Archibald MacLeish, James Joyce, Ivan Beede,
Donald Ogden Steward, Ford Madox Ford, Dr. William Carlos Williams and Fitzgerald. He has also very close friendship with artists like Henry Strater and Waldo Pierce. He talked about the art of writing with such renowned correspondents as Guy Hickok, Lincoln Steffen, William Bird, W.B. Ryall, and Sisley Huddleston and with such companions as Captain E.E. Dorman Smith, Evan Shipman and Harold Stearns. However, it will be only one-sided picture if it is presumed that Hemingway passed all his time in sedentary academic pursuits. He could be seen at various sporting events around Paris and went to gymnasium to work the fat off the body. Though engaged in out-door masculine activities he was producing a lot of hard and careful work. Though he was in the company of all writers and thinkers, he spared time enough to concentrate in loneliness to transmute his base material into gold with the touch of his genius. Years later, he said, "Writing, at best, is a lonely life. Organisations for writers palliate the writer's loneliness but I doubt if they improve his writing. He grows in public stature as he sheds his loneliness and often his work deteriorates." His self-imposed standards were high and exacting. He was not in the habit of choosing soft assignments for himself. Though quite a young man, Hemingway was known for his honesty, independence and incorruptibility. He has contempt for the writers who fall victim to the temptations of life. Bill says to Jake in *The Sun Also Rises*:
You're an expatriate. You've lost touch with the soil. You get precious. Fake European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You become obsessed by sex. You spend all your time talking, not working. You are an expatriate, see? You hang around cafes."

Hemingway had personally dissociated himself from the false aesthetes and playboys of the Rotonde. Hemingway, the true devotee of art, could never tolerate the slackening of discipline even though it was in Anderson or in Fitzgerald. Of course, his bluntness made him many enemies and brought the charge of being ungrateful to his former tutors but Hemingway thought it a duty to have a crusade against what Matthew Arnold called "Charlatanism" in literature.

His Originality

On the publication of In Our Time in 1925, Rosenfield found signs of influence from Anderson and Gertrude Stein but it was his judgement that the new voice was original. There was no odour of corruption. Hemingway in In Our Time has his own style reflecting the discipline of a spartan mind and will along with his own ideas. However, with the publication of The Torrents of Spring, Hemingway declared his literary independence by throwing off the tutorship of Anderson.

A careful study of the stories of Hemingway may point out to the existentialist characteristics of his heroes but the fact remains that he was not an avowed existentialist philosopher. It is just possible that he imbibed the spirit of existentialism in the bars and
cafes of Paris in 1920s when he came in contact with all the thinkers and writers of his times. Hemingway's earlier stories and sketches antedate every writing of both the German and the French existentialists. His stories are the hard, wrought-from-the-heart product of his 'lived experience'. John Killinger in his foreword to Hemingway and the Dead Gods says:

"In a time when death is so mechanical and impersonal as to produce the nada-concept, when one of man's profound fears is of nihilation by absorption into the machine, the mass, or whatever, it is not unlikely that many thinking men arrive independently at approximately the same conclusions about what it means to exist." 19

Hemingway was temperamentally an originator and not an imitator. Moreover, his apprenticeship was extensive, sustained and purposeful. The durability of his creative works testify to the fact that his apprenticeship never ended. The period from 1916 to 1923 is very important period of his apprenticeship which established his professional principles and habits. Hence the importance of Hemingway, the short-story writer. He continued to impose upon himself a demanding growth and a rigid discipline. "I am apprenticed out at it," Hemingway told a friend in 1949. "Until I die. Dope can say you mastered it. But I know nobody ever mastered it nor could not have done it better." 20 Archibald MacLeish, a good friend of Hemingway has rightly praised:
The lad in the Rue de Notre Dame des Champs (down—
At the carpenter's loft on the left-hand side going
The lad with the supple look like a sleepy panther —
And what became of him? Fame became of him.
Veteran out of the wars before he was twenty:
Famous at twenty five; thirty a master —
Whittled a style for his time from a walnut stick
In a carpenter's loft in a street of the April City. 21

Lionel Calhouse Moise knew Hemingway very well from the time
when he worked on the staff of Kansas City Star. His opinion
gives us a true picture about Hemingway:

"Like all great writers, Hemingway owes his
well-deserved eminence not to any 'influences'
but to his ability to select from a host of
influences a part of that little thing called
genius." 22
References:


2. Ibid., p. 28


8. Ibid., p. 29.


10. Ibid., p. 37.


