Chapter 2
The Head

Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgement that something else is more important than fear.

- James Neil Hollingworth

Life is a series of flights and drops, ups and downs and to face life in all its vicissitudes one needs mental calibre. But the mental strength as such differs from individual to individual. To put it differently, it is the level of the mental stamina which airlifts one from the rank and file. If possessing extraordinary mental skills facilitates one to successfully solve personal problems, the need is intense if one wants to discharge one’s role as a hero in the context of solving societal or national problems. MacLean’s heroes prove themselves heroic both in terms of personal attainments and also in the broader perspective of upholding national safety and security at times of war and other allied disruptive factors.

When a query is raised what makes a hero, one can offer various characteristic features that are required to satisfy the term hero. The first and foremost factor is the head. This is not only the seat of the brain, but also the birthplace of thinking, which separates man from other forms of creation. Thinking is the mental manipulation of information that has been sensed, perceived, learned and remembered. Thinking is a cognitive process that includes perception, reasoning, memory and conception. In other words, thinking involves an organization of ideas or concepts. Knowledge and experiences are acquired through sensation and perception. One should think on definite lines with a definite end and try to cultivate the method of logical reasoning
while combating the problems that one may face in the pursuit of life. Since problems constitute the reality of life, one is necessitated to resort to appropriate techniques in arriving at a satisfactory solution. Herein lies the relevance of looking forward to MacLean’s heroes who are good at their problem solving skills.

The researcher has chosen nine MacLean novels. Out of the nine novels five are thrillers and four are war novels. *The Guns of Navarone*, *Force 10 from Navarone*, *HMS Ulysses* and *Where Eagles Dare* are war novels wherein the action is obvious to everyone, including the reader. On the other hand, in the thriller genre novels like *Puppet on a Chain*, *Satan Bug*, *Fear is the Key*, *Ice Station Zebra* and *The Last Frontier*, the team or individual is given a task to be completed or a problem to be solved.

In the novel, *Where Eagles Dare*, the hero John Smith being very cerebral, successfully evades the pursuing German Alpine forces by making his team go inside the women’s toilet room at the railway station. His commando team finds it very convenient to put down all the luggage they have been carrying and then change into German army uniforms. This is a case of successful lateral and vertical thinking.

It is said cognising the problem is the first step in reasoning or problem solving. And there are two kinds of reasoning. The following schematic presentation shows the division.

![Types of Reasoning Diagram](Image)
In inductive reasoning, one proceeds from particular facts to a general conclusion. Experimentations and situations form the basis of reasoning. On the basis of facts and experiences, one tries to discover general relations or generalization. In *Ice Station Zebra*, Dr Carpenter the espionage agent narrates pointers one, two, three and so on before finally revealing the identity of the murderer. The murderer turns out to be a fellow doctor named Dr Jolly, who all along has acted as if he were a harmless, happy-go-lucky, typical, British medical doctor. He is ever ready to help others and is very jovial. Hence it comes as a shock when he is identified as the cold-blooded assassin who had been working as an agent of Russia.

In deductive reasoning, one tries to apply the universal truth or generalized principle in solving particular problems. Never ever say anything unless necessary to complete any task is the maxim of the heroes. Major John Smith, the espionage agent in *Where Eagles Dare* says to his team members, at the time of radioing a message to his superiors in Britain: “Two and a half minute”. It was Smith’s turn to look surprised. “Surely you know that is the safe minimum” (26).

The triumph of a nation depends on the triumph of a hero. His is a selfless service not tainted by monetary profit. He does it for an altruistic purpose and a sense of chivalry goads him to action. Alistair MacLean’s hero does not indulge in action for money. He is doubly cautious that he cannot afford even a minor slip for that would bring about the ruin of a nation.

The numerous skills that a hero possesses in abundant measure can be tabulated as follows:

- Planning
Analyzing
Creating
Modifying
Simplifying
Organizing
Presenting
Decision Making
Skimming
Challenging
Offering Opinion
Referring
Problem Solving

These skills contain within themselves the Five W’s (and one H) according to the website “Knowing what is what and what is not – The Five W’s and One H of cyberspace” (qtd. in Five Ws). In other words “Where to do? What to do? When to do? Which to do? Why to do? and How to do?” are the many questions that a thoughtful hero poses to himself. But the query “Why to do?” will not occur in the case of heroes penned by Alistair MacLean in Guns of Navarone, Force 10 from Navarone, Where Eagles Dare and HMS Ulysses for they all belong to the genre of the war novel in which implicit obedience of the heroes is their trademark. They do not question their superiors who have given them the assignment or task. It is only in the doing of the task, that they exhibit all their varied skills.

Planning an operation is the most vital skill that MacLean’s heroes demonstrate in ample measure. Major Smith in Where Eagles Dare, Captain Mallory in The Guns of Navarone and in Force 10 from Navarone are standing testimony to the skill of planning. While all the heroes indulge in planning Captain Mallory and Major Smith are exceptionally good in it.
Major Smith plans his operation of securing the names of all the German agents from the three double agents who are part of his team. The team’s ostensible mission is to rescue the American General Carnaby from the Gestapo command post, Schloss Adler. This is the headquarters of the German Secret Service. In reality General Carnaby is only an American actor donning the role of the Admiral. This truth is shared by Major Smith with the American Lieutenant Schaffer who is also a part of the team. These two men plan well and carry out the mission successfully.

This mission however has its share of hiccups. At the moment of triumph when Major Smith had almost secured the names of all the German secret agents in Britain there is a setback. Von Brauchitsch enters and threatens Smith and company unexpectedly. However, Mary, the British secret agent sets right the setback when she overcomes and overpowers her adversary with the help of her judo training. She arrives holding the gun called Lilliput and takes the upper hand.

Problem solving is a major skill that involves a number of other skills like modifying, organizing, presenting, decision making, offering opinion and challenging. In the novel *Guns of Navarone* Captain Mallory demonstrates his decision making skills in unambiguous terms. The very first encounter proves this fact. A bellboy who had been eavesdropping is caught red handed and put in prison by Captain Mallory. His aide Captain Miller is also an alert and quick thinking soldier who is an appropriate subordinate to an able leader.

According to the needs of the situation, the hero decides upon the strategy to be employed, the method to be followed and the error correction to be performed if required. The task orientation is to be rehearsed before the job on hand is begun.
The schematic representation given below puts this succinctly:

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  Situational
   /\
  /   \
Method to follow
  |   |
  v   v
Strategy to employ
  |   |
  v   v
Error to be corrected
  |   |
  v   v
Task orientation
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The hero apart from involving himself engages the members of his team to work according to the situational variables. In *The Last Frontier*, the hero Mike Reynolds puts forth his strategy of de-linking a carriage from a fast moving express train where the imprisoned British scientist Dr. Jennings is confined. This strategy initially elicits apprehension. But the hero firmly insists on this modus operandi citing a previous instance in history. Subsequently exhibiting remarkable powers of athleticism Reynolds successfully completes this task.

The intelligent hero must possess the following characteristic features according to Thiruvalluvar, the author of the Tamil book Thirukkural (also known as Kural). Thiruvalluvar is one of those seers whose message is intended not only for his own age or country but for all time and for all mankind. Thiruvalluvar has given to the world a work to which, in perfection of form, profundity of thought, nobleness of sentiment and earnestness of moral purpose, very few books outside the grand scriptures of humanity can at all be compared. Indeed his work is eulogized by the Tamil people as the Tamil Veda, the Universal Veda, the later Veda and the Divine Book. The following characteristics earmark the hero who is a man of intelligence according to Thiruvalluvar.
The great epic writer Thiruvalluvar claims as is shown that an army which is headed by a man of intelligence should possess the following armours of protection (qtd. in Aiyar 766).

The heroes in the four war novels, *HMS Ulysses, Guns of Navarone, Force 10 from Navarone* and *Where Eagles Dare* have the four factors conspicuously present. Alistair MacLean’s heroes are fine leaders. They share a sense of camaraderie with their team members. When one thinks about the directives given to rulers and the ruled, Thirukkural may even be compared to Chanakya’s “ArthaSasthra”. Particularly the chapters entitled “The Conduct of Affairs”, “Deliberation before Action”, “The
Characteristics of the Army” and “The Service of Intelligence” have a lot of useful advice in them.

Alistair MacLean’s heroes seem to fulfil the dynamics of heroism as propagated by Valluvar. Indeed the very urge to do something adventurous or heroic springs from the collective unconscious, whether he is an orientalist or an occidentalist. In V.V.S Iyer’s translation of Thirukkural numbered 675 under the caption “The Conduct of Affairs”, Valluvar maintains as follows: “Five things should be carefully considered in the doing of all action, namely, the resources in hand, the instrument, the nature of action itself, the proper time and the proper place for its execution” (qtd. in Aiyar 161).

This is very true in the case of the hero Talbot in Fear is the Key. He successfully plans and executes his revengeful action after a span of three years. He had patiently waited to unmistakably identify the murderers of his entire family which included his dear young wife, four year old son and twin brother. They had all been killed by bombs dropped by another aircraft because of the cargo that they carried. The cargo included gold, diamonds and emerald from the Columbian Treasury to be taken to United States of America and United Kingdom. Talbot, being a salvage specialist is deeply pained to have lost all his family in this plane crash. He has patiently waited for three years which culminates in a dramatic climax when he corners the two main killers in a bathyscaphe.

This lies seven hundred feet below sea level. Stranded inside a small cube of barely two meter square, and with an alarmingly low level of oxygen, and amidst shock and pain when confronted with the hero Talbot - who seemed to be aware of their murderous past - the two villains are dumbfounded. When they finally speak, it
is only to confess their crimes and beg to be released from that confined space. These are recorded by hidden microphones.

The hero had made this arrangement without arousing the suspicion of the two dastardly culprits and their henchmen. Ultimately this recorded confession leads to their conviction in a court of justice. Talbot had planned this elaborate charade because he needed their confession. He had no witnesses to prove that the two murderous villains had shot the aircraft killing his wife, son and brother. Alistair MacLean’s heroes seem to fulfil the criteria defined for men of action by Thiruvalluvar. Iyer’s translation of Kural number 676 claims: “Determine first the exertion necessary, the obstacles in the way and the expected profit and then take up the enterprise” (qtd. in Aiyar 161).

Keith Mallory, the hero of *The Guns of Navarone* is one such leader who accepts the role of the commando chief only after due consideration. Having satisfied himself about the entire operation, he takes up the role of the leader. Kural 678 declares: “Men decoy one elephant by means of another; even so make one enterprise the means of achieving a second” (qtd. in Aiyar 162).

In the novel *Fear is the Key*, the lieutenant Jablonsky belonging to the Federal Bureau of Investigation pretends to be a kidnapper and a criminal and bosses over John Talbot – the real hero – in order to get into the inner coterie of the conniving villains.

Swift and rapid action after due deliberations is the hallmark of a true action commander. The heroes of MacLean like John Smith, Dr Carpenter, Talbot, Keith Mallory and Andrea – all belong to this august company. Kural 671 echoes this view:
“The end of all deliberations is to arrive at a decision; and when a decision is arrived at, it is wrong to delay the execution thereof” (qtd. in Aiyar 160).

In another chapter titled, “The Service of Intelligence”, Valluvar describes the importance that has to be given to spying. In Kural 581 he says: “Let the prince understand that political science and his intelligence corps are the eyes wherewith he seeth” (qtd. in Aiyar 136).

This definition about the function of an administrator cannot be improved upon. In the novel The Last Frontier, the Count who is a double agent offers help and cooperation to the hero Reynolds. He provides him with vital inside information about the activities of the Hungarian secret police which is of tremendous value to the hero and his friends.

The Count from The Last Frontier, is a typical example of a spy that Thiruvalluvar defines clearly. Acting as an agent of Hungary and behaving like a dreaded secret agent officer, the Count on many occasions draws out secrets from others and passes them clearly to Jansci who is the head of the secret group of resistance movement. These partisans help in the crossing of the border safely into Yugoslavia. The hero Mike Reynolds also benefits hugely from the contribution of the double agent the Count, whose razor sharp brain picks up all important details. His blustering and intimidating mannerism scares the opponent into submission very easily and hence the double agent Count succeeds in most of his endeavours. More details are given about the working of a spy in Kural 587: “Behold the man who can draw out secrets from others and whose information is ever unconfused and clear: he is the man for the work of intelligence” (qtd. in Aiyar 138).
Proper logical reasoning is second nature to all the heroes of Alistair MacLean. The researcher finds many instances wherein the villains falsely claim their victories. But subsequently these villains realize that they have not clearly gauged the repercussions of their actions. On the other hand the heroes initiate actions only after a lot of deliberations and planning. In the war novels the heroes are briefed thoroughly by their High Command. Whereas in the thrillers, the heroes are prone to act rashly which seem disadvantageous initially, but later on when they have had time to masticate over their actions – when they are given the freedom and respite to relive their experiences- they realize the mistakes and follies that they have committed. This prods them into further action which results in rectifying their grievous errors that they had committed earlier. In the novel *The Last Frontier*, the hero realizes only late that he had overlooked the microphone that had been hidden in the bathroom shower. This negligence on his part leads to extreme damage. However he performs a daredevil act and nullifies the negligence he had caused. Under the caption “Deliberation Before Action” Valluvar declares in Kural 467: “Decide upon any action except after careful deliberations: he is a fool who undertaketh first and sayeth it in his heart, I shall think afterwards” (qtd. in Aiyar 106).

Under the heading “The Characteristics of the Army”, Valluvar has described as follows in Kural 762: “It is only veterans that can hold out in desperate situations with grim determination, regardless of decimating attacks” (qtd. in Aiyar 184).

The above mentioned Kural is very true when one recalls the ending of *Force 10 from Navarone*. All the three youthful commando recruits are killed in the scene of action, while the three veterans who have survived are the battle scarred Andreas, Miller and Mallory.
The epitome of all that Valluvar has to say about an army is found in verse number 766: “Valour, honour, decision in the midst of confusion, and devotion to the traditional principles of unblemished chivalry – these four are the armours of protection for an army” (qtd. in Aiyar 185).

All the above features have their manifestation in the four war novels of MacLean. In Where Eagles Dare, Major Smith acknowledges the patriotism of the German General Rosemayer, the commanding general of the German army. He confesses that he would never even dream of kidnapping him and taking him for ransom. Major Smith claims that it is only the information about the German secret agents that he is after. He is fully aware and acknowledges that he will not harm his adversaries in a non-heroic manner.

Winning strategies require one to be slow in deliberation but swift in action. This is especially true in the case of thriller/adventure heroes. Speed and surprise are the major elements which help bring success to their actions by catching their adversaries unawares. When one compares a Shakespearean immortal character like Hamlet with that of MacLean’s heroes, one understands the importance of quick action and proper deliberations respectively. Hamlet with his eternal question, “To be or not to be” is a misfit when it is a question of performing a rapid and decisive action putting an end to the matter. Procrastination is his tragic flaw which leads to the subsequent development of the play. On the contrary, Othello with his insane jealousy and hot-headed temperament does not indulge in logical deliberations. He falls a prey to his excessive jealousy and suspicion. In the novels of Alistair MacLean, the heroes prove to be decisive, logical, sharp-witted and in control of the entire situation.
All the time, they are well-prepared to face unexpected incidents and come out successfully in all their missions. They pay attention to even the minutest of details which helps them survive in their dangerous missions. In *Where Eagles Dare*, the hero John Smith’s girlfriend Mary is also a member of the commando mission. She is given a suitcase containing her winter-clothing and she is tutored to act like a niece of a bar-maid in Germany. This bar-maid is also a British spy who had been successfully sending information about the German armed forces to Britain. Mary is advised by the commando team leader John Smith to remove every bit of clothing – even the inner garments fully before putting on the winter clothes stitched in Germany. Mention is made about this factor when Mary chides him as having a “devious mind”. But Smith warns her that as she is to get inside Gestapo headquarters (i.e. German Secret Service) and serve there, the security there will definitely give Mary a thorough search. This is proved true subsequently when inside Schloss Adler, Mary is given a top to toe elaborate searching by the female security staff there. Mary pretends to be the tuberculosis afflicted niece of the German bar-maid, who has come to Gestapo headquarters for recuperation. The bar-maid Heidi who is actually a British secret agent advises Mary thoroughly as follows:

“Permits, travel documents identity cards and letters you have”, Heidi said. She fished up some papers from the recesses of her Tyrolean blouse and handed them to Mary who was sitting across from her on the bed in her room. “Plan of the castle and instructions. Do your homework well then give them back to me. I’ll take them up. You might be searched-they are a suspicious bunch up there. And drink up that schnapps-first thing Von Brauchitsch will do is to smell your
breath. Just to check. He checks everything. He is the most suspicious
of the lot”. “He seemed a very pleasant man to me” Mary said mildly.
“He is a very unpleasant Gestapo officer” Heidi said dryly. (72)

Then she is allowed free access into the fortress. Thus attention to minute details
helps bring about success in their endeavours.

Something very common to all heroes of MacLean is their insistence on cent
per cent authority. They expect implicit obedience from their commando team.
There is no room for disobedience of their orders, for they have been selected with
utmost care and confidence. In *Force 10 from Navarone*, Mallory the team’s captain
declares:

“I understand the training emphasis today – especially in the Marine
Commandos – is on initiative, self-reliance, dependence in thought and
action. Fine – if they happen to be caught out on their own”. He
smiled, almost deprecatingly. “Otherwise I shall expect immediate,
unquestioning and total compliance with orders. My orders. Instant and
total”. (47)

There is nobody who doubts the intelligence and credibility of the heroes. For
instance in the same novel, even the enemy commander accepts the fact that he had
underestimated the intelligence of the heroes:

Newfeld and Droshny were not foolish; few people would have been
while staring down the muzzles of two Lugers, with perforated
silencers screwed to the end: There was a long pause then; Newfeld
spoke, the words coming almost haltingly “I have been seriously guilty of underestimating you people”. (108)

This acknowledgement from the opposition camp commander though grudgingly uttered proves the brilliance of the protagonists in MacLean’s novels. They are men of few words, not given to elaborate description. They are quick to alter their plans and are ready to bring about sudden twists to their plans. Captain Mallory makes the enemy camp believe that he and his team have flown out of the country.

About a thousand men, women and children had worked incessantly on a frozen field to convert it into an air-strip fit for landing and take-off of an aircraft. The enemy spies who had been playing a cat and mouse game with the British Commando team, had been monitoring every movement of this group. When they saw the flurry of activity on the plateau wherein the plane’s landing arrangements were being made, they naturally assume that the commando team has plans of leaving from that airstrip by plane after the successful completion of their mission. But this assumption is not really true. In fact Colonel Vis, belonging to the Partisan group, which is a revolutionary outfit, helping the British commando team, is disappointed severely when five of his party men and not the commando team leave the airstrip. He exclaims: “All of this work just to send five of my men on a holiday to Italy” (189).

A last minute turn of events which is meant to be one step ahead of their adversaries is what makes these heroes special. Their incredible resourcefulness comes to the fore many times. The sea forms the field of action or setting in
Maclean’s novels as much as one sees in Hemingway’s novel *The Old Man and the Sea*.

In *The Old Man and the Sea* the mystique of fishing is transposed into a universal condition of life, with its success and shame, its morality and pride and potential loss of pride. This book may be read as an allegory of human life. The most obvious interpretation is the representation of human struggle, against the unconquerable ethereal elements – a struggle in which man can only lose, but lose in such a way that his loss has dignity and can be viewed as a victory in itself. It is an epic metaphor for life, a contest in which even the problem of right and wrong, seems paltry before the great thing, that is the struggle.

This is the moral triumph – the story of the determined and indefatigable fisherman who has a foot in the grave. Santiago’s experience is a manifestation of personal dignity, unstinted courage and heroism. The message given by this code-hero of Hemingway is quite simple and crisp: “A man can be destroyed but not defeated” (Hemingway 103).

In Hemingway’s treatment the sea is considered a sacred field where the old man searches his own identity through the act of pursuing the fish and in Maclean’s novels, the sea activates the heroes to establish their identity or enables them to seek their identity. A work of art is analysed by various critics using various critical parameters. A sociological critic perceives a work in terms of social reflection and psychological critics view works through the lens of psychology. With psychological criticism, one connects literature to theories of the mind. Psychological criticism often focuses on feelings and desires, or the relationships between the self, language and others.
Jung’s *Collective Unconscious* claims that there is only one natural and universal language of the human race penetrating beneath the surface of what men say or do. The underlying nature of the experiences is brought under study. Symbols, characters, situations or images all evoke a universal response. Essential human nature is one all over the world physically, mentally and spiritually. One shares a common origin and one proceeds to a common destiny. The concept that the human race is one is becoming a historic fact. Science and technology have broken down the physical barriers and have led to intellectual communication and spiritual communion among nations. According to Dr S Radhakrishnan, the distinguished statesman and philosopher of India the world is becoming one unit.

When the world becomes one unit, mankind shares certain basic and fundamental thoughts and feelings which are almost coincidental. Hence it is worthwhile to compare Alistair MacLean’s heroes with *The Odyssey*, the first epic heroic poem written by Homer. *The Odyssey* is a Greek word, meaning “the tale of Odysseus”. This is one of the two epics composed by Western Europe’s first poet, Homer. This is concerned with the adventures and exploits of Odysseus, a hero of the Trojan War.

Joseph Dorairaj in the opening paragraph of his book entitled *Myth and Literature* has this to say:

Myths are uncanny phenomena. They are at once regional and yet universal; static and yet dynamic; stable and yet protean; archaic and yet contemporary; profligate and yet hallowed; fantastic and yet highly structured; divine and yet human in that they are as much about gods and goddess as about human beings. Though they belong to a pre-
literate and pre-historical era they keep recurring in all ages and are a part of our contemporary society. Though they belong to the realm of primitive religion and come under the purview of anthropologists, folklorists and phenomenologists of religion, they are an integral part of literature and other arts. In short myths are endowed with flexibility, adaptability, and resilience which help creative artists to transpose and transplant them in diverse cultures and media. (Dorairaj 1)

Even a cursory glance at twentieth-century literature, would highlight the happy fusion between myth and literature and the creative transposition and transplanting of archaic myths in modern society. In a landmark essay titled *Myth Criticism: Limitations and Possibilities*, E.W. Herd throws light on the different ways in which myths are put to use in literature:

Generally it is also conceded that a mythical pattern can emerge within the structure of a novel without conscious development by the author. It is the job of the critic to show that this pattern forms a coherent and meaningful whole within the overall structure of the work. (qtd. in Dorairaj 71)

Though there are very many interpretations of Myth, it is most relevant to study Maclean’s heroes with reference to AC Hamilton’s observations of Quest Myth, for he has structured his derivations on the theories propounded by Northrop Frye in his book *Anatomy of Criticism*. 
Frye posits three main stages of the quest-myth that give romance a literary form – the agon or conflict, the pathos or death struggle, and the anagnorisis or recognition of the hero. (qtd. in Dorairaj 141)

The above mentioned details can be illustrated with the help of the following tree diagram.

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Stages of Quest Myth
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 /   \ /
Agon  Pathos  Anagnorisis
   (conflict) (death struggle) (Recognition of hero)
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These three Greek concepts namely Agon, Pathos and Anagnorisis can be applied to all the heroes of the selected novels of Alistair MacLean. In the novel *Ice Station Zebra* Dr Carpenter goes in search of the meteorological station in the Arctic region wherein his elder brother is the team leader. The submarine Dolphin in which he travels faces a lot of unforeseen problems in locating the station. This is Agon or Conflict. Two other members of the crew namely, Hansen and Rawlings, help him in his dangerous journey on the Arctic ice. Twice he loses hope and almost succumbs to the furious elements and feels that it is the end for all the three of them. The snow storm coupled with the hail storm makes visibility level zero. Thus a conflict with nature ensues. This is followed by a conflict with his adversary Dr Jolly who is actually a Russian agent. But he is considered to be one of the indispensable members installed in the meteorological station. He had killed Dr Carpenter’s brother. He also
tried to get rid of Dr Carpenter. This is Pathos or the Death Struggle. Ultimately he emerges triumphant and overcomes Dr Jolly with the aid of the submarine’s crew. And this is Anagnorisis or recognition of the hero.

In the novel Where Eagles Dare Major Smith is another classic example of a hero who performs literally a death struggle on the roof-top of a moving cable car with his two adversaries. After a nerve wracking encounter on the top of the cable car, Major Smith ultimately wins and sends the two German spies falling to their death.

The novel Puppet on the Chain has the hero Pierre Cavell engrossed in a final showdown with the drug Mafia chief Van Gelder “who is impaled on the giant hook, swaying to and fro in ponderous arcs fifty feet above the houses of Amsterdam”. (227) In the novel Fear is the Key, Talbot the hero has a titanic struggle with the villain Vyland and in the end of the novel one finds the complete annihilation of the villain. The first person narrative of Talbot is an eye-opener:

“And don’t worry about the tape recording” I went on. They are not normally evidence but those will be … Any prosecutor in the Union will call for and get a verdict of guilty. (190)

Pierre Cavell, the hero of The Satan Bug, fights against Scarlatti the evil villain who had got hold of the vial which contained the dangerous Satan Bug. He threatened to drop it over London thereby causing innumerable loss of life and property. In the final tussle, in the closed confines of a helicopter flying over the London skies Cavell’s histrionic skills come to his rescue. He pretends to be defeated and lulls Scarlatti into a false sense of confidence. Then at the last moment with the pilot’s connivance, he overpowers Scarlatti. The pilot manoeuvres a sudden plunge of
the helicopter. This catches the villain unawares. Thus incredibly he faces an agon (conflict), pathos (death struggle) and anagnorisis (recognition of hero). The deathlike struggle of the hero is captured vividly in the first person narrative of the novel;

“I warned you, Cavell”, he shouted hoarsely. “I warned you there will be a million dead tomorrow, Cavell. A million dead, and You killed them. You not me.” He sobbed, sunk his hooked fingers deeper into my throat and started to thrust me out into the sky and the darkness. There was nothing I could do. I couldn’t even use one of my hands to fight him off: take away any one point of my supports and I’d be through that doorway. (222)

Thus the head guides and guards the heroes of Maclean throughout the stages of agon, pathos and anagnorisis. While analysing the mental skills of the heroes of Maclean’s novels, the readers are given the knowledge that the heroes are justified in their choice and methodology of their action. Even their pretence or disguise is meticulously planned and admirably executed. For instance, Talbot, the hero in the Fear is the Key, disguises himself in order to be easily identified by the conspirators. He stages a kidnapping incident in order to escape from the police. MacLean describes him as follows:

John Montague Talbot, deep red hair, parted for over on left side, deep blue eyes, heavy black brows, knife scar above right eye, left shoulder perceptively higher than the right owing to fairly severe limp. (26)

During the course of the trial John Talbot pretends to faint and asks for water distracting the policeman who turns away.
As he turned I pivoted on both toes and brought my left arm whipping across just below waist level – the three inches higher and that studded and heavily bass-buckled belt, he wore around his middle would have left me needing a new pair of knuckles. His explosive grunt of agony was still echoing through the shocked stillness of the court-room when I spun him round as he started to fall, snatched the heavy Colt from his holster and was waving it gently around the room even before the policeman had struck the side of the box and slid, coughing and gasping painfully for air, to the wooden floor. (26)

The treatment of the adventures of the hero is such as to raise him in one’s estimation and to arouse feelings of wonder and awe at the way in which he fights against the odds of life and emerges triumphant. This mental trait is similar to the mental trait of Odysseus who is the brave warrior hero of Odyssey the great epic romance which is 2500 years old. This adventure hero is a source of inspiration to many a reader even today. Among the heroes of the great tales of adventure in the literatures of the whole world, he occupies a high rank. He is a skilled sailor, a bold explorer, a great strategist, and at the same time a wily man who in certain situations feels compelled to resort to deception and trickery. In the course of the story told by Homer in The Odyssey, he exhibits many excellent qualities of head.

He is a tireless voyager and an explorer of indomitable courage and inexhaustible stamina. His war-like qualities are brought out by means of several references to the part he played during the War of Troy. The episode of the Wooden Horse and the episode of his entering the city of Troy as a spy in the disguise of a beggar show him to be a clever strategist. The story of heroism is that the heroes are
absolutely conscious of the truth that their life is not a bed of roses and that they should be prepared to take all the risks and if their moves are inappropriate, sometimes they might have to pay a heavy price. So heroism is not a sentimental phenomenon to be entertained but a sensible experience to be cherished. In the novel *Ice Station Zebra*, we find the hero Dr Carpenter being sensible of the difficulties that lay ahead when he undertakes a perilous journey in the Arctic region. The snow, the blizzard and hostile conditions do not deter him. He and Hansen who belongs to the Dolphin walk the distance in the polar ice cap from Ice Station Zebra to the submarine Dolphin. They have to climb one hillock after another amidst a snow storm which renders them blind and each step is taken with excruciating pain.

In *Fear is the Key* and *Ice Station Zebra*, the heroes had been victims of personal tragedy. While John Talbot had lost his entire family including his wife, son and brother, Dr Carpenter in *Ice Station Zebra* had lost his eldest brother. In *Satan Bug* the hero Pierre Cavell lost his closest friend. Hence revenge comes in the form of either putting them in the electric chair, or allowing the villains to commit suicides.

Thus courage, endurance, wisdom, sagacity, cleverness, subtlety, sense of justice, appreciation of the loyalty of others towards them – all these mental qualities stamp the heroes of Maclean as the greatest men. It is to be remembered that Maclean’s heroes are aware of their heroic feats. In other words, nobody compels them to be heroic. They are not like R.K. Narayan’s hero Raju in the novel *The Guide*, who being caught in the coils of his own self-deception, undertakes a twelve-day fast to end a draught that threatens the district with a famine. Heroism is not thrust upon Maclean’s heroes. They achieve heroic dimension.
Alistair MacLean’s heroes are patriots. They are not bothered about even losing their lives, while fulfilling their mission. In *Force 10 from Navarone*, the three young recruits vie with one another to volunteer for undertaking dangerous and risky tasks. The three older war heroes Andrea, Miller and Mallory have a hard time restraining them from doing anything silly.

Intelligence, as the word itself denotes refers to cerebral power of an individual. Only an intelligent person can remain focused and perform his duties well. This word also has certain other connotations. For instance, “intelligence” means a person/persons belonging to a governmental or private detective agency and who collects information on any specific individual or groups or about organizations, trusts and charities. In the great tradition of the immortal Sherlock Holmes, spies are also classified under the pseudonym “intelligence”. The heroes of MacLean do not lag far behind Sherlock Holmes when it comes to brain power. They are well endowed with both brains and brawn. Mentally and physically, they are very tough nuts to crack.

Blessed with sharpness of mind and with quick lightning like reflexes, they are a breed apart. As most of the heroes are almost middle-aged, they do not indulge in adolescent like romantic exuberances of the young or not so young. This does not however mean that they are allergic to the female sex altogether. They do fall in love, get married and become doting fathers. They differ from the romantic pulp fiction heroes of writers like Harold Chase, Perry Mason and Ian Fleming (who created the James Bond hero) in that they do not indulge in sensuous dalliance with their girlfriends. They are more like the Round Table Knights of King Arthur in that they always don the role of a chivalrous male protagonist. Mark Schone in his article “The
Black Wind- The Author as Super Hero” published in The New York Times on Dec 26, 2004 has claimed that “Maclean’s heroes are not the dapper, hard-drinking, lady-killers trotting the globe a-la-Bond. MacLean’s heroes are not rakish drunkards who constantly indulge in smoking, driving fast cars and fornicating”. (Schone) However they are ever performing gut-wrenching and nerve-shattering acts which no ordinary human being or a man on the street can dream of accomplishing.

These heroes do not show keen interest in bedroom conquests and spy gadgets. Nor do they constantly sport a smirk on their faces which are far from handsome. To be true, most of MacLean’s heroes have a scar on their faces or they have a small injury which they think make them far from handsome and attractive to members of the opposite sex. They exhibit remarkable powers of physical and mental endurance while performing their task echoing Vivekananda’s clarion call: “Arise, awake and yield not till the goal is reached”. (Vivekananda 47)

As Earl Stanley Gardner’s lawyer hero Perry Mason proves his cerebral superiority in every novel, MacLean’s heroes also are highly intelligent. They are quick to grasp essential facts and committing them to memory. These quintessential details subsequently help them in their spine chilling activities. They also exhibit great thespian skills. According to the situation that arises, these heroes display great powers of acting so as to hoodwink their enemies. Cartwright Jones, the American actor who had impersonated Admiral Carnaby excellently as tutored by the British intelligence, exclaims at one point, about the tremendous acting credentials of the British hero John Smith. This is in the novel Where Eagles Dare “Why acting? My god, I don’t know anything about it” (108).
As heroes they manifest remarkable powers of leadership. They can brook no disobedience to their commands. In the initial stages of the novels, they make a claim of being the unmistakable and undisputable chief of the commando mission. In almost all their actions both great and small, they make this very clear. They expect implicit obedience and get it too, though at times grudgingly.

Apart from receiving implicit obedience and carrying out of their orders, the heroes demonstrate their superior powers over other people when they indulge in cat and mouse games. They do not ignore the minutest of details in the course of their assignment. The reason they are alive is this sixth instinct for danger. Hence matured and experienced commando team survives whereas the youngsters in their self-assumed roles of Knights in shining armour have to lose their lives. This is especially true in the novel *Force 10 from Navarone*. The three young recruits of the commando team are not alive to savour the victory at the end of their mission. Reynolds, Groves and Richards are dead and only the three battle-weary older men namely Mallory Andrea and Miller are alive to narrate the implementation of their successful mission.

In the novel *Guns of Navarone* the hero’s observation powers are stupendous:

But almost at once he stopped, stooped and brought the head of the torch close to the surface of the ground. It was a very small portion of footprint indeed only the front half of the sole of a right foot. The pattern showed two V-shaped marks, the leading V with a clearly-cut break in it. (89)

It is this importance to the minute details that the hero gives that ensures their longevity in this risky mission. The study of the footprints made by the slightly
handicapped foot of Droshny reveals to Mallory that Droshny is on their tail and that they have been detected as impostors. This puts him on his guard.

MacLean is a meticulous fiction writer as one finds in the novels a great deal of minute details of diagrams and maps. *Ice Station Zebra* opens with a neatly labelled diagram of the submarine USS Dolphin and the positioning of the huts in Ice Station Zebra, the meteorological station in the Arctic as in figure 9.

![U.S.S. Dolphin Diagram](image)

**Fig. 9 The Submarine USS Dolphin**

*Force 10 from Navarone* and *Guns of Navarone* have authentic maps, though fictional, clearly establishing with the help of arrows, the four directions. One of these is shown in figure 10.
Fig. 10: The Island of Navarone

These illustrations help the reader clearly understand the brainwork involved when the heroes endeavour to accomplish their Herculean task. To the casual
observer they seem insurmountable. But ultimately the heroes perform their respective commando missions in a brilliant manner, often with nail-biting climaxes.

The cerebral superiority of the heroes is clear to the reader. It is this factor that helps them shine as undisputed leaders of their teams. Even their adversaries while being garrulous in their position of bravado, grudgingly acknowledge their mental sharpness. They are invariably specialists of some sorts and skilled in some science or art. Dr Carpenter, hero of Ice Station Zebra, is a medical doctor who has specialized in treating patients injured by fire.

Major John Smith, the Second World War veteran in Where Eagles Dare is a man who has specialized in espionage. He has been called the best agent in Europe, by no less a person than the General who had declared his trust and confidence on John Smith. Usually MacLean’s heroes are calm men who are devoted to their work and carry some kind of secret knowledge.

“The job, the job, always the job on hand”. The Colonel had repeated once, twice, a thousand times, “Success or failure in what you do may be desperately important to others, but it must never matter a damn to you”. (97)

Captain Mallory in Guns of Navarone and Force 10 from Navarone is an extraordinarily gifted and internationally well-known mountain climber who inspires all other lesser mortals into action. He is a living legend as far as mountaineering is considered. He is nicknamed The Human Fly. His survival instincts are phenomenal. Corporal Miller is a skilled expert with explosives. Andrea, the massively built giant - silent but powerful - is a one man army. Private detective hero Cavell in Satan Bug
is a security officer who is a skilled man in handling weapons. In the novel *Puppet on a Chain* the hero Paul Sherman is a veteran Interpol Narcotics Bureau agent. He is used to independent action and blunt force tactics. His sole aim in Netherlands is to break up a vicious drug smuggling ring that will kill ruthlessly to protect its operation.

Most of the heroes are men of extreme independent nature. In the novel *Where Eagles Dare*, John Smith declares quite categorically,

“It doesn’t matter what Christiansen thinks. This isn’t a round table seminar. It’s a military operation. Military operations have leaders. Like it or not Admiral Holland put me in charge”. The five men looked speculatively at one another, then stooped to lift the supplies. There was no longer any question as to who was in charge. (30)

The hero Cavell in *The Satan Bug* is allergic to authority. He is under no obligation or under any official Secrets Act. Officials seek his cooperation in finding the megalomaniac who has stolen the Satan Bug which is a strain of toxin so deadly that the release of one teaspoon could annihilate mankind. MacLean hero Cavell is a lover of independence and freedom in action. He cannot be subservient to anybody. Superintendent Hardangar says the following statement. “You have a reputation for taking the law into your own hands!” He smiled without humour. “I have had plenty of experience of that from you.” (10)

It is not only through the secret agents themselves that we hear about their indispensability, but even others who applaud them. Col Wayatt Turner makes the following observation about Smith in the novel *Where Eagles Dare*:
“Some people have sixth sense. Smith has a seventh, eighth and ninth and a built-in radar set for danger. Smith can survive under any circumstances I can conceive of. I didn’t pick him with a pin, sir. He is the best agent in Europe”. (52)

The credentials of the heroes are impeccable and outstanding. Captain James Jensen, D.S.O., R.N. is the chief of operations of the subversive operations executive in Cairo. He declares that intrigue, deception, imitation and disguise were the breath of life to Mallory. In the novel Force Ten from Navarone he has selected Captain Mallory and his team after a lot of deliberations and he is of the firm view that Mallory’s special qualifications and his track record are inimitable.

“Why you? You speak Greek like a Greek. You speak German like a German. Skilled saboteur, first class organizer and eighteen unscathed months in the White Mountains of Crete – a convincing demonstration of your ability to survive in enemy held territory”. (38)

Mallory’s survival instincts have been discussed in both novels dealing with the fortress of Navarone. Miller had been picked for one reason only. A genius with explosives, resourceful and cool, precise and deadly in action, he was regarded by Middle East Intelligence in Cairo as the finest saboteur in southern Europe.

The commando mission entrusted with Captain Mallory and company to say the least was incredibly tough. Everyone who had served in the Eastern Mediterranean had heard of these notorious guns in the grim and formidable iron fortress off the coast of Turkey. These guns were indestructible and were heavily
defended by a mixed garrison of Germans and Italians, one of the few Aegean islands on which the Allies had been unable to establish a mission.

“Those guns were no ordinary guns. Naval experts said they were about nine inch rifle barrels – a dreadful weapon – shell extremely slow in flight and damnably accurate. They disposed off the cruiser Sybaris – an eight inch cruiser that was sent – in five minutes flat.” (27)

Monsieur Eugene Viachos of Navarone considers Captain Mallory to be “a brave man and a foolish one”. In the same breath he declares “I suppose we cannot call a man a fool when he only obeys his orders” (78). Thus we realize, MacLean’s heroes not only give orders, but also obey orders. General Vukalovic showers an encomium on this New Zealander “who climbs mountains as a rather gifted individual” (97).

There is perfect co-ordination and understanding between the heroes and their subordinates. The slap stick comedy act put out by Captain John Smith and Lieutenant Schaffer in *Where Eagles Dare* is a fine example of camaraderie and friendship. Schaffer is an articulate young officer who will always come out with his one-liners at the drop of a hat.

One of the most satisfying elements of MacLean’s best plots is the never-ending cat-and-mouse game, the life-and-death battle of wits between the heroes and their cunning adversaries. In the novel *The Guns of Navarone* the heroes are captured by the Germans and one of the heroes – a lethal warrior who has killed innumerable Nazis – faints at the sight of blood. Such subterfuge is frequently employed by
Alistair MacLean’s protagonists who show them to be individuals of far more than superlative physical prowess – they are also men of almost preternatural brilliance.

This is especially true of John Smith, the English secret agent who is the main character of *Where Eagles Dare*. Smith, one finds, is a man of spectacular resourcefulness, a man who gradually reveals himself to be one of fiction’s great masters of espionage. In the novel Smith is given the mission of infiltrating the Gestapo headquarters in Bavaria to rescue a captured American general who knows the secrets of the impending D-Day invasion of France. Making his mission impossible is the fact that the headquarters is in the Schloss Adler, a castle located on a lofty mountain peak, guarded by elite Alpenkorps troops and men with trained Doberman Pinschers. It is accessible only by a cable car suspended one thousand feet over a yawning chasm.

*Where Eagles Dare* remains one of the most suspenseful thrillers ever set during the grim days of World War II mainly because of its hero John Smith who proves to be a multi-faceted personality. He towers both intellectually and physically over the action, pulling the strings of both friend and foe as though he were the master puppeteer of a vast, high stakes marionette show.

In this tale, nothing is ever what it seems – not the mission, not the members of Smith’s team, and, especially, not Smith himself. Bits and pieces of the truth bubble slowly to the story’s surface in the midst of the heroes’ breakneck attempt to breach the fortress’s defences. The reader becomes aware of large portions of the truth only when, in one of the most intense scenes in espionage fiction, Smith reveals his actual identity. “I am Schmidt. I live Schmidt. I breathe Schmidt” (136). But not all is revealed. Smith alone knows about the finale. All but him believe that the hair-
raising saga is mercifully concluded. There is a last climatic twist to this gripping tale when Smith reveals the true identity of Colonel Wyath-Turner. He is the leading double agent of Germany who had selected Smith to lead the Commando team to Schloss Adler believing him to be another fellow agent of Germany, who had infiltrated into the British Intelligence. It is only in the final pages of the novel, does the reader realize the role played by Captain John Smith. He successfully leads the Commando mission by neutralizing the Guns of Schloss Adler and also by collecting the vital information, ie., the name lists of all the German agents in England and Europe.

But even Smith pales in comparison to the heroes of MacLean’s finest work. *The Last Frontier* which is a great twentieth century thriller. The story is set in Hungary, a few years after the Soviet’s brutal suppression of the 1956 uprising. Britain’s top secret agent, Michael Reynolds, must rescue a leading English scientist, Dr Harold Jennings, from the Communists. Reynolds is a battle-scarred British commando who fought in World War II and whose rapier-sharp training since has prepared him for even more dangerous missions as a secret agent deep inside a Communist police state. But even Reynolds’ heroism is dwarfed by that of two members of the Hungarian Resistance from whom he receives aid: Jansci and The Count. In their roles as freedom fighters against both the Nazis and Communists, these two men have endured hardships and suffered staggering personal losses that would crush lesser men.

Jansci’s father, a dedicated Ukrainian Communist, was murdered by Stalin in the purge of 1938, tortured to death by the police in Kiev. Seeking justice, Jansci proceeded to kill his father’s murderers, but was captured and shipped to Siberia
where, for six months, he was kept in solitary confinement in sub-zero temperatures, without daylight, a bed, or a blanket, and with mere scraps of food and drops of water for sustenance. “For the last month they stopped all supplies of water also, but Jansci survived by licking the hoarfrost off the iron door of his cell” (138). The Communists then shipped him to the slave labour camps at Kolyma, where millions died under Stalin. At Kolyma he lost three fingers while being dragged inches behind propeller-driven sleds, was thrown unarmed into a pit with starving wolves, and was nailed naked to two trees and left to die in the frigid Siberian temperatures. “Nobody ever came back from . . . Kolyma . . . but Jansci came back” (157). No one knows how he escaped, but within four months, alone and on foot, Jansci reached the Trans-Siberian Railway and made his way back to Ukraine, where he joined the army and awaited his chance to fight the Soviets.

When the Germans invaded in 1941 he joined them, as did hundreds of thousands of other Ukrainians, in order to fight the Communists. After two years, he was recaptured by the Russians and forced to fight against the Germans from a suicide position but, again, he escaped and, after the war, became an anti-Communist freedom fighter based primarily in Hungary, helping hundreds escape to the free world via Austria. In his exploits, he has made the gruesome discovery that his mother has been killed and his two children buried alive by the Soviets. Everyone but him believes that his wife is also dead and in search of her he has broken into – and out of – five of Hungary’s nine concentration camps. If intelligence is the ability to adjust with the environment, Jansci ascertains his intelligence by accepting the challenging events leading to the bare minimum amenities essential for life during contingencies. His intelligence is established through his will power which enables him to cope with
Siberian Temperatures. For a hero, for a dynamic hero or for an achiever, the spirit to conquer is more important than the physical ailments. The realization that there is no gain without pain or success is sweet but its secret is sweat is the hallmark of an intelligent hero.

Jansci’s partner, known only as “The Count”, possesses an equally astonishing capacity to continue fighting for his ideals while enduring hardship and nightmarish personal suffering. At the novel’s outset, The Count, like Jansci, has suffered the loss of his entire family to murder or disappearance, at the hands of the Nazis. An actual Polish aristocrat, The Count, fought the German invasion of his country in 1939, then joined the Underground Resistance to secretly fight the Nazi occupation that followed. Captured and condemned to grisly slave labor, the Count killed his Nazi jailers and escaped, joining the Polish Resistance Army. Captured again, and sent this time to Auschwitz, The Count, nevertheless survived, and after World War II joined forces with Jansci to form an elusive, irrepressible cadre of freedom fighters to battle the conquering Communists. The Count, a swashbuckling, devil-may-care hero, has used his mastery of disguise and language to infiltrate the AVO, Hungary’s cunning and murderous secret police, and to rise brilliantly to the rank of Major. The Count, in his nerve-straining double existence, risks his life daily – and to great effect. The knowledge he gains in his position as a trusted confederate of the AVO leadership is invaluable to Jansci, enabling him to carry a steady stream of freedom-seeking Hungarians to the West.

Without Jansci and The Count, Reynolds would have no hope of rescuing Dr Jennings from the Communists. But even with the aid of these two great men, Reynold’s chances of success are slim; they are deep within a suppressive totalitarian
state, where the secret police are ubiquitous. The result is an epic duel between, on
the one hand, Reynolds and Jansci’s freedom fighters and, on the other hand, the
secret police, who are represented superlatively by the relentless and deviously
brilliant Colonel Hidas. Plot twists abound and the suspense continues to the story’s
death-struggle climax.

One highlight of the rescue attempt is Reynolds’ adrenaline-pumping, death-
inviting journey across the icy roof of a train hurtling through a howling blizzard, a
feat brilliantly rendered to leave the reader wide-eyed and sweaty-palmed for the
duration of the scene. Generally, MacLean’s plots are limited to violent external
conflict in which the hero is single-mindedly determined to prevail, suffering no
internal value struggle regarding the desired outcome. But in The Last Frontier, the
heroes are burdened by an agonizing internal struggle that casually engenders the
story’s roaring climax, for the freedom fighters discover that, through the vicious
cunning of the secret police, the lives of some of their loved ones will be violently cut
short if they carry their mission to fruition. The on-all-fronts nature of the conflict
engaged by MacLean’s heroes is what accounts for the Hugo-esque quality of this
book. The grandeur achieved by men so principled that they dauntlessly face any
form of antagonist – internal and external, intellectual-emotional and physical – to
successfully conclude their chosen value quest is what makes The Last Frontier
MacLean’s finest work. Rabindranath Tagore’s lines from his famous poem Gitanjali
surfaces to one’s mind when one thinks of the Count.

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high

Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where words come out from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee
Into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake. (qtd. in Tagore 20)

A minor aspect in this novel is the pacifistic philosophy spouted by Jansci and his converts. It also serves to enhance their heroism. Because they can incapacitate, but never kill, their murderous secret police adversaries, Jansci and his freedom fighters, are driven to even more brilliant heights of ingenuity to overcome both their enemies and their self-imposed limitations.

In MacLean’s novel *Fear is the Key*, the hero walks out silently after having taken revenge on the villains who were responsible for the death of his wife, son and twin-brother. He is left with nobody. He marches towards a brighter tomorrow. His past is gone. Only thing left is the present. War does not allow a past. Although successful in his mission, the MacLean hero does not boast of his escapades. Although victorious, the heroes remain humble about their achievements. They never
allow themselves to be affected by pride, one of the deadliest sins. It is only the other characters who reveal to the reader the magnitude of his accomplishments. In *Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway says that the present is the only dimension. Lt. Henry, the hero of *Farewell to Arms*, lives in the present only. He is shown not merely as a man of action but also as a thinking man. Again and again, Hemingway gives the reader glimpses of what is going on in Henry’s mind. His meditations, reflections, and ruminations are set before the reader. The reader learns of Henry’s disillusionment with certain words like “glory”, “honour” and “courage”. There is Henry’s reflection about “the rules” and how any violation of these may bring about heavy penalties. The mind of Henry is dissected for the reader. In the concluding portion of the novel one sees Henry walking back to his hotel in the rain, a defeated and crushed man who will yet face the future with fortitude. Like Santiago, another hero of Hemingway, Henry shows by his stoic silence during the time of crisis that his “Head” is in its right place and that the hero can be destroyed but not defeated.

During the course of analysis, it is observed that Abraham Lincoln and Charles Darwin can be compared with the heroes of Alistair MacLean as these two personalities possessed great leadership qualities and had contrasting styles of action. These “birth twins” had to find their way forward through untrodden territory in order to accomplish their historic feats. Darwin was the explorer, whereas Lincoln was the commander. These different roles impact more than just the challenges a person faces on an indefinite journey. They also reveal the ways in which we gather and process information and navigate our way through unknown waters because explorers and commanders have very different goals (Wallace).
The explorer does not have a set destination in mind. The goal is to explore and to learn and try to understand what a new or unknown territory contains. This kind of navigation is an open-ended, expansive process of adding more and more data to the equation. No direction or step is necessarily wrong, because it can reveal information that might be interesting or illuminating. For example, Paul Sherman in the novel *Puppet on a Chain* is an explorer who sets foot in Amsterdam as the novel begins. A secret agent from United Kingdom, he is entrusted with a job of busting a narcotics gang in Netherlands. As soon as he lands, he witnesses the killing of his predecessor right at the airport terminal. The narcotics mafia gets scent of his arrival and his mission. As a threat of warning him, the gang kills his colleague in broad daylight in front of his eyes. Helpless he becomes a spectator to this gruesome murder. But slowly and surely he collects information about the narcotics gang. In the final culminating episode of the novel Paul Sherman kills the top brass of the narcotics gang in a classic climatic encounter. The Police Chief, who in reality is the head of the gang, meets a well deserving sordid ending. Hence we can say that some of MacLean’s heroes belong to this explorer variety.

The commander, on the other hand, has a very definite goal or mission in mind. The territory that lies in between may be uncharted, but every piece of information, and every navigational decision, is weighed against how likely it is to achieve the end destination and goal. A commander’s job is not to gather as much information as possible. It is to sort through the available information and make the best possible decision about where to go next, based on that limited data.

This model can be illustrated by comparing Captain Mallory of *Guns of Navarone* and Major Smith of *Where Eagles Dare*. Captain Mallory, the legendary
mountain climber, is the hero of not only *Guns of Navarone* but also *Force 10 from Navarone*. He is a born commander. Major John Smith, the hero of *Where Eagles Dare* is also another example of this category. These heroes begin their tasks with predetermined knowledge and specific details and thereby successfully achieve their mission. Armed with foreknowledge, these heroes accomplish their tasks with clockwork precision, behaving in a flexible manner as and when the situations arise.

Paul Reynolds, one of the heroes of *The Last Frontier*, is a combination of both explorer and commander. As an explorer, he successfully performs certain tasks in his individual capacity. Also as the commander with the other two heroes, Jansci and the Count, as his collaborators, he successfully completes his mission. In the bargain he also acquires the hand of Jansci’s daughter.

The two categories of explorer and commander can clearly be described in the following manner. If one imagines a funnel, the explorer starts at the narrow end, collecting a widening amount of data as he goes along. The commander starts at the wide end, winnowing down the available data to reach a clear and narrow decision point. That quick process of winnowing available data may be repeated almost constantly as the commander moves along, processing ever-changing data and factors into continuous course corrections. Likewise, the explorer does not necessarily wander around aimlessly. The explorer may have a starting destination in mind.

Neither method of navigation is inherently superior. They just achieve different ends. The explorer’s approach is more likely to lead to greater understanding of places, issues, people or the world. The commander’s approach is more likely to accomplish a set goal or task. Thus, like the success of any master navigator of unknown territory, the heroes have the ability to move back and forth fluidly between
the two modes of navigation. He explores new subjects to gain better understanding, and then folds that understanding back into command decisions that gain forward movement toward a chosen goal. All the heroes of MacLean subscribe to either one of the above two roles. They have mastered a dynamic and effective balance between the two.

His heroes show a clear willingness to explore new opportunities and territories, while retaining the ability to make a command decision on the fly, if necessary. The ability to move fluidly between the two modes of navigation shows the clear advantages of such a dynamic approach. When we discuss the traits of leadership between Lincoln and Darwin, we can say that Lincoln is the leader of men and that Darwin is a thought leader. This suggests other parameters for consideration such as loyalty, a craving for order and dedication.

Loyalty looms large in the personality of a commander, whether it is Captain Mallory or Major Smith. Any commander demands loyalty, but the ideal commander returns loyalty to those beneath him. In contrast, an explorer’s loyalty to persons is probably limited to his sponsor or benefactor. Rather, his main loyalty is to truth or to events.

A commander’s appetite is to control, to render order from chaos, whether it be wielding his subordinates into an effective organization or dominating events to satisfy his vision and charge. Jansci is a prime example of this category. Dr Carpenter from *Ice Station Zebra* who is an explorer, on the other hand, allows events to unfold and assumes a more passive role. He allows events to unfold without intervention and analyses and publishes their results. This, of course, creates its own form of order. The hero constructs a story of what had happened as if he had seen it scene by scene.
Carpenter’s cerebral superiority and powers of observation are demonstrated by this ability to reconstruct what had happened. Narrating the activities of the villain Dr. Jolly, the hero narrates the following step by step account:

He went into Major Halliwell’s cabin and shot him and the other man as they lay on their beds. I know that because the bullets in their heads entered low from the front and emerged high at the back – the angle the bullets would naturally take if the killer was standing at the foot of their beds and fired at them as they were lying down. (236)

In the novel, *Ice Station Zebra* we find the hero Carpenter exhibiting remarkable power of logically constructing the past events. He further narrates:

In addition to leaving what was in effect an enemy agent planted in Zebra, the Soviets also left a portable monitor – an electronic device for tuning in on a particular radio signal which would be activated inside the capsule at the moment of its ejection from the satellite. Our friend took the monitor and went out looking for the capsule. He found it, released it from its drogue and brought it back to the station. (235)

Hence it became a question of paramount importance to safeguard the capsule which contained certain photographs. A highly advanced camera, which was a satellite missile tracker was launched in a Soviet Satellite on a polar orbit, crossing the American middle west seven times a day. In just three days, with perfect weather conditions, the Soviets had all the pictures they ever wanted – pictures of every American missile launching base west of the Mississippi. The enemies wanted to have a Soviet Inter-continental ballistic missile ranged in on every launching-pad in
America. This cat and mouse game played by the USSR and USA is brought out clearly when Dr. Carpenter narrates expansively during the final stages of the novel.

We had arranged for Canada to lend us a St. Lawrence ice-breaker to set up the Zebra Station, but the Russians in a burst of friendly goodwill and international co-operation offered us the atomic-powered Lenin – the finest ice-breaker in the world. They wanted to make good and sure that Zebra was set up and set up in good time. It was. (234)

Thus the hero possessing a comprehensive knowledge of the whereabouts of the villains who were masquerading as scientists in the Meteorological Station set up in the Arctic behaves like an explorer who puts together the different pieces in the jigsaw puzzle. His acumen and clarity of thinking enable him to arrive at a stage wherein he traps the criminal who, in the midst of witnesses, confesses his crime of sending the photographs to Russia. The winning stroke is that he has sent only the photographs which Carpenter had substituted.

Both commanders and explorers exhibit strong sense of duty, with corresponding risks from obsession. The premise that a good leader always has a good story underlying his leadership is true. While that notion in isolation is simplistic, there is no doubt that leadership is accompanied by and supported to some degree by a good narrative. In the case of the commander, the story consists of both his history and his quest. For the explorer, the story is a work in progress until and unless delivered to its intended audience. To a hero, one of the toughest commodities to hold on to in the middle of any challenging endeavour is that of perspective. The mountain seems more insurmountable when one is too close to it to see how far one has already come. It’s hard to remember why one thought this adventure was a good idea when
one is in the middle of it and the tent has blown away and the flood waters are rising. So to unexpectedly stumble onto something that jolts one into seeing the bigger picture again is a gift, wherever one finds it. In some cases stumbling onto the quiet wisdom of others who have had to struggle for courage and perspective in adventures and battles of their own has a benefit of its own.

In a survey a wide variety of people who have leadership roles of one kind or another such as Doctors, Ministers, Heads of Non-Profit Organizations, Chief Executive Officers, Politicians and Activists were asked to submit a poem that was particularly helpful to them when they felt in need of courage. They were also asked to write a few accompanying paragraphs, explaining the choice of the poem. From the responses given by these men of leadership, we deduct certain general principles. The leaders talk about their learning to move more slowly, accepting the help of others, and cherishing small things. They revealed that by healing others they could heal themselves. Martin Luther King Jr. aptly declared that everyone can be great because everyone can serve (qtd. in Wallace). This unexpected oasis of wisdom, perspective, and strength is demonstrated amply by the heroes of Alistair MacLean. Some of the heroes have more introspective ability than others.

These heroes do not just act on impulse although they take a big chance sometimes. They figure out the risks that they can afford to take. They keep in mind that failure is one of the toughest challenges and lessons of a hero’s journey. At the same time they are not getting comfortable with failure. This is very important. Failure is the word that we have been conditioned to fear. A rational approach to the essential need to experiment is to navigate, evaluate and innovate. Most people seem to discourage risk not out of meanness or spite but for the fact that they cannot see the
path to success. On the other hand getting comfortable with an idea of failure is a tricky idea. Failure has to motivate, to make one uncomfortable and to spur on more effort, creativity or whatever is needed to eventually succeed.

One of the toughest dilemmas anyone faces in making choices about career or life paths is which to weigh more heavily: safety, or fulfilment. A lucky few manage to have both qualities at once, but most jobs that offer good pay checks and “safe” job security turn out not to be the most fulfilling ways we could imagine spending our days. There is a reason. It turns out, they pay so well. People will not do those jobs for the love of them. There is usually a cost to fulfilment. And figuring out whether that cost, or trade-off, is worth it gets a lot harder when there are children or a family in the mix.

The dilemma is a tough one. But there are costs and benefits to the choices we make that aren’t quantifiable on a spread sheet. Running back into a burning building might seem crazy to a lot of people. But sometimes, running from safety is the only way to stay alive (Wallace). And this is what Mac Leans heroes have proved time and again.

In literature and art, the idea of simplicity is usually very complex. The simple is not the elementary or the ordinary. MacLean’s heroes are also similarly simple. Their thinking powers carry them through their crisis with fortitude. They evolve into successful victorious heroes because of their cerebral power. They are not disillusioned with war and its after effects. They are robust, men of valour, who are ready to lay down their lives for their country, if the necessity arises. Thus indulging in Scientific Method of problem solving and by using inductive and deductive reasoning power the heroes march successfully. Using the various skills like planning,
organising, ordering and categorising, the heroes of MacLean strive forwards to their successful destinations. They exhibit in their endeavours how the quality of heroism is a universal phenomenon. It is because of this universal trait that Alistair Mac Lean’s heroes subscribe to the many qualities propounded by Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar in his world famous work Thirukural. The heroes demonstrate in ample measure their superior powers of thinking skills. Their only mantra is dedication and hard work leading to an efficient employment of their mental skills.