Chapter-III
NIGHT OF THE HALF MOON: UPHOLDING HONOUR
IN THE FACE OF ALL ODDS

The notion of power is central to the novel, Night of the Half Moon. The game of power is played throughout the story. This power-play is associated with land and its possession. However this game is an unequal one in which the defeat of the weak and powerless is inevitable. Jeff Lewis describes this arbitrary nature of power when he writes: "... power is a facility of the capitalist hierarchy whereby certain groups maintain privilege in a relatively ongoing manner" (Lewis 25). However, Lewis further explains that the involvement of both the rich and poor in this power game is "inevitable because all people are engaged in relationships that involve power" (28).

Another condition that is relative to power is freedom. In this regard Lewis explains, "Clearly, the tension between individual and collective rights is central to the formation of 'freedom' " (25). Therefore, to establish one's freedom the assertion of individuality is essential in which the very act of decision-making is the assertion of freedom. Cultural studies examine this clash between the individual and the system and probes whether reconciliation is ever possible between them. In Night of the Half Moon too, the writer relates the tale of one such individual Moddan who struggles throughout the novel to assert his individuality and freedom against the oppressive society and state that mercilessly foil all his attempts to do the same.

To illustrate the way power operates, Antonio Gramsci describes the relationship through the term 'Hegemony'. He explains that leadership works through the phenomenon of supremacy. The so called powerful or dominant groups exert their capacity to exercise greater control by virtue of being supreme, either in status or in wealth. Gramsci further explains that, the ruling groups maintain their power through a process of negotiation with the subordinate groups. The subordinates in turn are more or less willing to live with this oppression due to
the lack of power or sometimes even by choice. Thus flourish the hegemonic relations.

The present study also progresses on these lines. In *Night of the Half Moon*, Moddan is shown contesting a power-ridden society where inequality and injustice rule. He stands up against the manipulative and the powerful who twist law and justice to suit their selfish motives. Sadly, as illustrated by Prof. Kishan Singh, “Despite all manhood and bravery Moddan’s tragic end is inevitable” (Tarsem and Sushil 71).

Moddan’s tragedy is of a peculiar nature. He encounters misfortune in an attempt to uphold his family honour and self-respect which are his and anybody’s basic rights. Ironically, he dies for these very values that he has imbibed from society itself but which are unacceptable to this very class-ridden society. Moddan stands for the egoistic concerns of particularly the Jatt community, ownership of land and maintenance of dignity being supreme. He is representative of the lower-middle class of the Jatt peasants who struggle hard to break free from the clutches of the landowning, powerful oppressors.

In this novel the class conflict within the Jatt community finds expression through the animosity initially between Ghana and Sauna which continues between Ghana’s son’s and the sons of Pala, a close relative of Sauna. However, like Pala who alone faces the onslaughts of Ghana and his sons, it is Moddan alone out of the three sons of Pala who takes upon himself the responsibility to carry forward Pala’s fight for justice. According to Prof. Kishan Singh:

There are three important things which come out of this conflict. One is … for working class to live with self-esteem and to live a peaceful life are two different things. Secondly, if they want to save themselves and their property they have to live beyond self-esteem. Thirdly, for some people money
is everything and a man is known by his property, whereas some others prefer human relations to their property. (Tarsem and Sushil 70)

In this novel, ownership and expansion of land is the root cause of all tensions and animosity. Another factor that plays an important role in the plot is revenge. In addition to these, unequal status and lop-sided power distribution also come up as issues of conflict. However, due to lack of power and influence Moddan suffers an undeserved tragedy in this unequal clash with his powerful opponents-Ghana and his sons. As Dr. Rajinder Singh explains, Moddan, "...dies a death of a salt crystal dissolving under the down pipe" (Tarsem and Sushil 73). In this regard Rajinder Singh also explains:

Revenge is an approved value and a need of socio-cultural milieu of Moddan for survival as human beings, to save one's socio-cultural identity, to check tyrannies of cruel and to live as an honourable citizen. (74)

However, in spite of his sorry fate, Moddan stands tall as a self-respecting 'man' who refuses to live a life of humiliation. He protects his family honour by avenging the miserable death of his father Pala. His revenge is a consequence of his orthodox egoistic values imbibed by him naturally by virtue of being a Jatt. In the words of Dr. Rajinder Singh:

The tragic irony of Moddan lies in the fact that he murders Ghana to keep his head high in the society, for his house and to bring his family out of humiliation. Now being marked a criminal, he is unable to show face in the public for the same values. (76)
It is his ego that also prevents him from forgiving his father's murderers. He avenges himself on such wrong-doers who would otherwise go unpunished due to their status in society.

Through this novel, Gurdial Singh exposes various vices associated with the capitalist set-up. He shows how, its inhuman values have penetrated deep into the social fabric of the villages in the Punjab, so much so that real brothers turn enemies for possession of property. This decline in relationships, moral values and humanity at large reveals the negative effect of capitalism voiced through this novel. As explained by Dr. Rajinder Singh:

Sajjan, who is a protector of capitalist values, becomes the agent of bringing dishonour to Moddan's family, causing cleavage of his family and bringing about his death. The failure of feudal values at the hands of capitalist values is no doubt a historical truth. (77)

In the novel, the dilemmas and crisis of the small peasants and petty landowners is portrayed through the ordeals faced by Moddan. The text relates various dimensions of exploitation that Moddan and his family suffer at the hands of the large share-holders. In this context, his experiences are the experiences of the entire lower peasantry who suffer endlessly due to extreme subjugation and suppression.

Moddan represents many like himself who fall prey to the avarice of the powerful land-owners. His indomitable courage in the face of all adversities therefore becomes the saga of the entire lower agrarian community which suffers unendingly but stoically. In addition to this, his vengeance on his oppressors, a forced gesture of honour, thus becomes the eventual choice of the multitudes who like him wish to break free. In this manner, Night of the Half Moon actually "portrays the historio-cultural crisis of the lower peasantry of the Punjab" (Tarsem and Sushil 78), as explained by Dr. Rajinder Singh.
Revenge-taking in this story, apart from being the helpless choice of Moddan, can be considered as a mode of self-assertion and a way of obtaining self-satisfaction by hitting back at the adversary after being hit. Apart from this, the inherent revengeful nature of the Jatt community can also be considered as one of the reasons for Moddan’s revenge. This tradition of revenge is an old phenomenon in the rural Jatt community of Punjab as explained by Dr. Gurdial Singh. He writes:

The incidence of vengeance in the Night of the Half Moon is not merely a means to present the ‘Jatt ego’, but it is a medium to bring to light the ... historio-cultural crisis over the peasantry of the Punjab. Moddan, the avenger for his ancestors, is not merely a character, rather a point of view in particular, to watch and live through life with dignity. (Tarsem and Sushil 79)

The novel also deals with the root-cause of all problems for small landholders namely the continuous division of land. Generation after generation, with every male progeny, the share of the land stands further divided and it keeps on reducing as the number of male children increases. With the ever increasing claim on the fast decreasing land, the crisis of the lower peasantry deepens. The vulnerable and needy often fall prey to the greed of the feudal landlords who seem to be ever-ready to grab their share.

The novel shows how with every such land-grabbing, the economic divide between the small landowners and the mighty land-grabbers inevitably increases. The resultant economic deprivation of the former leads to further crisis putting their very survival into question. Along with this, the loss of honour and dignity also presses hard on the ego of the Jatt consciousness of the land-losers. Such overwhelming condition of the peasants increases their dilemma and they feel
compelled to take extreme steps to maintain their fast eroding self-respect, just like Moddan, who kills his father's murderers and in turn suffers immensely.

Assessing Moddan's situation, Dr. Gurdial Singh writes:

But the irony of the situation is that in spite of his having made so exalted a sacrifice, Moddan fails to rise to the position of a hero ... he is rather compelled to drift downward from his ordinary position. (81)

It is this downward but resistant journey that the novel relates in fictional form. However, it is not his downfall that is the focus of the present study. This study will revolve around Moddan's open confrontation with the unjust society and its oppressive mediums. His indomitable spirit will be celebrated through this study and his saga of endurance will be the centre of our concern. His reckless defiance of authority and attack on the unequal social-order will also be dwelt upon during the course of the study.

Apart from this, the onslaughts of the cruel land-grabbers will be examined as a major factor responsible for his sorry state. Moddan's survival in suffering and his heroism in revenge will mark the relevance of this study as his tale becomes a representative story of the entire suffering lot. Even in the apparent defeat of Moddan and his sad end, his victory will be evaluated in the light of his uprightness. As Prof. Kishan Singh writes:

The honour of the 'Moddans' from the lower stratum is not freedom. Their defeat is inevitable. But it is certainly a defiance, a disobedience and a revolt against a system of disposition of kakistocracy by those in command; and is a very valuable thing. (83)
In addition to Moddan’s ordeals, the study of the crisis faced by Daani Moddan’s wife, will reveal the acute degradation of societal values and humanity at large. Her fate as a mere commodity in the callous, complex, capitalist set-up will be understood in the light of the downfall in human values making Daani “a prototype of this system” (Tarsem and Sushil 83).

In addition to this, the reactions of our protagonist will be reviewed as forms of resistance to the atrocities of his adversaries, ranging from outright rejection of authority, to passive acceptance of misery as a tool to counter the unjust connivance of the powerful. The manifestation of Moddan’s self-esteem in his refusal to side with the wrongdoers will be evaluated through his brave acceptance of his downfall.

To thoroughly understand the tests faced by Moddan in the wake of the socio-cultural backdrop, an extensive, critical analysis of the text is being attempted, beginning with the first chapter *The Incomplete Tale*. At the very outset, the novel hints at the unresponsive, curt and rude behaviour of Moddan who has adopted silence to hide his alienation from society and his uneasiness to face the same. The story begins with Moddan’s return from jail and proceeds with his unwillingness to associate with the outside world. His uneasiness is evident in these words from the text: “If someone so much as glanced at him, his skin prickled all over” (2).

Moddan’s sense of disorientation increases with every step that he takes towards his village. He even has a feeling that, perhaps he is going out of his mind. He feels ridiculous because of the waves of doubt that cross his mind. He is unable to comprehend the reason why his heart is growing heavy. He attributes the cause of this to his parting with the companions in jail and soon he is “...overtaken by a strong feeling of kinship for his prison-mates” (3). This close affinity of Moddan with his jail companions is indicative of his comfortable relation with them than with his folks in the village.
This is the reason Moddan feels sad and alienated as he returns home, his face tightly wrapped in a blanket. As soon as Moddan steps on his ‘own’ land he feels invigorated. Gurdial Singh explains his exhilarated spirits when he writes:

This was the soil of their own fields, their own earth! This earth of which man is made, and to which he returns- small wonder, then, that man should be so attached to it!(4)

These lines aptly summarize the crux of the novel. They state the relationship of land to its owner and the issues related to pride in ownership of land. However, no sooner is Moddan relieved of the strange feelings of desolation, that the sight of the fields that belong to ‘them’ (his offenders) disturbs him greatly. He loses his calm as his heart beings to beat wildly again.

The sight of the unchanged, dilapidated houses belonging to the low-castes also disturbs him deeply. Moddan becomes painfully aware of his adversaries present status and material well being by looking at ‘their’ big house before him. He notices how everything that is old stands diminished and eroded like the ancient peepal tree near the well. The social awareness of Gurdial Singh also comes across to the reader through the subtle mention of the unchanged houses of the low-castes in this section.

Gurdial Singh contrasts the changes in the entire village to the ever-same dwellings of the outcastes when he writes:

As he passed near the huts of the low-caste villagers, he glanced briefly towards them, and noticed that they at least, stood as they always had. The carpenter’s shed looked worn and derelict, and the roof covering of the shed did not seem whole. (6)
Through this description, Gurdial Singh's concern for the extremely deprived condition of the underdogs finds expression.

Moddan shifts his attention to other things and it is the obliteration of the old village path that indicates to him that 'everything' has changed. This thought depresses him again. His knees and ankles feel weak, his steps falter and a sudden sensation of pain rises in his heart. Perplexed thus, the village ahead of him seems strange and unfamiliar unlike where he had lived before his imprisonment.

However, the thought of his outhouse on the hillock gives him some comfort and solace like an old friend. Thinking about this deserted outhouse, he feels that he has finally reached home. But, much to his dismay, the dilapidated condition of the outhouse on the mound makes his heart ache even more. Gurdial Singh writes, "He would talk to his mates about it all the time. Never in his wildest imagination had he thought that he would come home to such a sight" (7). This seems to be a premonition of greater misfortunes to come, and he moves away from the outhouse fearing he would be taken to be a "thief" or a "murderer" (8), the thought of the second sending shudders down his spine.

On reaching his village, Moddan is overpowered by an oppressive feeling when he sees that, "They" had built themselves a house which threatened to engulf every other in the village" (10). Seeing his opponent's prosperity, Moddan is reminded of the wicked tactics by which they managed to snatch away this land where 'their' house presently stands. He recalls how 'they' dispossessed its rightful owner, "... using every trick they could, from filthy language to strong arm tactics and conniving with the officials in a bid to grab his piece of land" (11).

Moddan feels enraged on seeing such sinners and wrong-doers flourish. The sight of his old enemy's new-found affluence drills a hole inside him. As a mark of his disgust and helplessness he turns around and spits on it with all his might.
On reaching his own house, its altered appearance fills him with an unknown apprehension. However, the warm welcome given to him by his youngest brother Chottu dissolves all his apprehensions for the moment. Gurdial Singh writes, “The mention of the word “Bhai” was enough to make a lump rise in his throat” (22). But soon, his doubts resurface as Chottu tells him that Sajjan, their middle brother is still in the Mandi and has not come to receive Moddan.

On hearing this, a deep sense of alienation grabs Moddan’s very being and he feels let down and desolate. His pain temporarily subsides when his mother, Bebe, showers her affection him and he feels a little comforted. Feeling the warmth of his mother’s love, Moddan fondly also remembers how his Taayi’s warmth and fragrance had comforted him when he was annoyed with the other members of the family as a child. Gurdial Singh writes, “Many a time, he deliberately fought with his mother so that he could run off to the Kothri and drown himself in that ocean of fragrance” (16).

Overcome by nostalgic memories of the past he retires to his kothri while thoughts of the past keep haunting him. With the desire of escaping into the past, he mentions to Bebe about shifting to the outhouse because of his uneasiness in the house in the village, where Sajjan prospers.

At the very outset, the writer poignantly shows the loneliness of Moddan even in his own village and home. He also reveals how Moddan fails to connect with the world around him because of his long confinement. His choice of keeping silent actually speaks volumes. The reader feels compelled to find out what is it that has made him so sceptic of society and its people.

The readers’ interest is also aroused by the writer by shrouding his past and its happenings and they obviously get curious to know the reason of his inexplicable guilt in covering and hiding his face again and again. To the readers, it is evident that something drastic has taken place in the past that overshadows Moddan’s present and his future.
Here, the retrospective art of Gurdial Singh needs special appreciation. He breaks the monotony of a chronological plot by beginning the story somewhere in the middle. This serves to increase the curiosity of the reader who reads inquisitively to probe into Moddan’s past. The unfolding of the story through a reoccurring flashback therefore is a master stroke by the writer.

Apart from this, Gurdial Singh’s art of realistic portrayal of Moddan is also noteworthy. He presents him as a sensitive character. The psychological delineation by the writer needs a special mention here. At the very beginning, the deep agony and alienation that Moddan feels on reaching his changed village is so vividly described by the writer that the readers not only feel his disorientation, but also feel sorry for Moddan.

*Another Dawn* takes the readers into Moddan’s past. It tells us about Moddan’s parents Pala and Har Kaur. Here, Gurdial Singh relates the past events in a flashback. His retrospective art makes the reader aware about the past when Pala had returned from the prison and had fallen sick. He had then refused to leave his bed even as his wife Har Kaur continuously persuaded him to move outdoors.

Gurdial Singh here reveals how the blows of the cruel time had left Har Kaur totally shattered—the deepest wound being that of social castration and shame that the family had to undergo after Pala’s imprisonment. Voicing her concern’s out Har Kaur often lamented, “Nothing worse could have happened to us!”(24). On such occasions, she often questioned God as to why he had bestowed no happiness on them. However, some words of comfort from Parsinni, a village woman, about resignation to the law of karma did console her in a way. At such times Parasinni told Har Kaur, “So, tell me, can one have someone else’s Karma? We have to live with our own. Don’t complain pointlessly sister. What one sows, one reaps, No one has any say in this. We must bear whatever fate has reserved for us” (24).
During the course of this journey of knowing the family, the writer focuses greatly on the role of destiny in the characters' lives. His characters are shown attributing all the distasteful events of their lives to destiny’s unmerciful intervention. The social castration of the family and calamity that befalls it in the form of court cases are also thought to be a consequence of destiny by them.

Har Kaur and Parasinni usually had long discussions on fate, Karma and the role of God in one’s life which often ended in a hopeful submission to destiny. In a way, this seemed to be the only choice they were left with. However, Har Kaur often continued to be baffled as to why evil always won over good and why only the God-fearing suffered. The only respite for her were the hopes of better days to come and the silent wish that: “Someday, He will listen to us!” (25).

The writer further reveals how things had complicated for Har Kaur with young Moddan’s changed behaviour, specially towards his mother after his father’s return. She was taken aback by his abruptness and harshness. But, to avoid unpleasantness she let him be. Later, Gurdial Singh relates how Har Kaur’s worry had increased when Moddan disappeared for a couple of days without informing her. After he returned, his behaviour turned even more peculiar towards both Har Kaur and his brother Sajjan.

The actual past is revealed to the reader when the writer relates how young Moddan came to know about the wrongs done to his father through Lallu Taya. It was he who made Moddan aware of his father’s acute position. Lallu began by exposing the rashness and stubbornness of their community— the Jats. He told Moddan, “You know, Modeya we Jats never let go of the past … The cock and the Bania preserve their tribe, but the bull, the crocodile and the Jat destroy their own” (34). Through these lines the writer fully explains the self-destructive nature of Jats like Pala and Moddan.

Lallu also told Moddan how the father of one Arjan Lambardar had an uncle, an old man, who left all his land in possession of Arjan because he was
going to some holy place. For fifteen-twenty years the land remained in their
possession and when the old man’s sons came to claim it, Arjan and his brother
refused to accept their claim, saying that it was given to them by their father. When
one of the sons asked for papers, an old register with a false thumb impression was
produced. Not convinced, the sons sought to the panchayat, where an elderly man
Sauna, was called for because he was an honest and upright man. Sauna was the
brother of Pala’s grandfather who had no son of his own and his land was naturally
inherited by Pala’s father and brothers. As for the dispute, the possession was
handed over to the sons of the old man after Sauna’s intervention. However, the
two parties were soon into a dispute again and this time too Sauna intervened.

Lallu continued that, as Pala, Moddan’s father, lived with Sauna, he too
was considered an enemy by Arjan and his sons. When Arjan and his associates
lost the case, Arjan’s elder brother attacked and injured Sauna. They also lodged a
false complaint against Sauna and his brother, which was soon resolved because it
held no truth. Having been humiliated thus, Arjan and his relatives did not harm
Sauna openly but they never forgot their enmity. They continued to trouble Pala
and cause him misfortune because he was closest to Sauna.

Gurdial Singh relates how having known all this, Moddan was filled with
anger against the injustices done to his father. He writes, “Swelling up with rage,
Moddan left Lallu’s place abruptly with Sheri’s taunting words ringing in his ears:
“The man who does not avenge his fathers and his fore-fathers is not a man”” (37).

Further, the writer narrates how Moddan’s turmoiled thoughts were further
stirred by the thought of his innocent father’s face which had lost its colour in just
a year. At this point Moddan was reminded of someone who said, “My dear, a year
is a long time; shame and sorrow can make a man grey –bearded in a single day!”
(39). Moddan was also reminded of how Pala was cornered in his own house by
the foe and how he was falsely implicated and arrested on fake charges of keeping
weapons, all of this being the opponents’ trap. The entire scene once again floated
in front of his eyes. Moddan also recalled how his mother begged the police not to strip her while the sub-inspector pushed her aside and pulled at Pala’s beard before lashing him.

Moddan’s past anguish is revealed to us when Gurdial Singh writes: “He felt as if his whole body was burning with fever. A deep, stabbing pain shot through his eyes, almost as if someone had pierced his eyelids with a scythe…” (41). Over powered by mixed feelings of rage, grief, shame, humiliation and injustice, he then resolved to take revenge on his wrong doers.

Gurdial Singh narrates how he dug out a revolver from the fields and fired a shot before he headed forward. Burning with fury, he encountered Ghana lambardar on the way and killed him. Much to his ego’s satisfaction the people then remarked highly at this ‘brave’ act of revenge. Moddan’s friend Ruldu had also supported his act by saying, “True son of his mother he has proved himself to be… people are only good at making claims about their personal courage … but not many would do as he has done” (48). Further in the story, when hot discussions were on about the killing, Ruldu again remarked:

Man makes property; but that property can’t bring back a dead man. You are born only once. So what’s the point in becoming a lakhpati if one can’t even guard one’s sense of honour…money even prostitutes have.(50)

However, things worsened with an F.I.R. registered against all of Pala’s sons. The writer further reveals how Ghanna’s sons entered into a secret pact with Pala’s brother Sajjan who managed to escape imprisonment. It was only Moddan who was sentenced. The chapter ends with the writer’s mention of how the younger son’s of Pala lived a comfortable life and Ghanna’s son’s flourished and grew all the more powerful. This is clear when Gurdial Singh writes:
Pala's younger sons grew up into full-blooded young men. They even got married. The tubewell which they had installed on the "unauthorised land", at the instance of Ghanna's sons, helped them reap a rich harvest for two consecutive years. The profit they made thus was spent on the reconstruction of the interior of the house. Ghanna's sons bought a flaming-red tractor, planted a few citrus fruits on the vacant tract, converted it into an orchard of sorts, and on that pretext had their share of water enhanced, making the others in the village suffer. They helped Mirab make a good deal of money. Now the radios blared all day in their houses, and *akhand paths* were organized more frequently. Their boys rode new bicycles, and peddled down to the nearby town to study there, wearing tight-fitting *pyjamas* and starched turbans. (66)

This long and significant chapter unfolds the past with deep psychological in depth. Pala's humiliation at the hands of the offenders comes across to us through the writer's analysis of Pala's disturbed state when he laments "What harm have I ever one to anyone? Where lies my fault? Tell me. Can anyone answer me?" (20). His justified complaints and his undeserved treatment hits the readers' sensibilities as Gurdial Singh explains his deep sense of shame in being imprisoned for having done something so 'honourable' according to him.

Similar outbursts of Har Kaur are equally heart rending. The writer analyses her inner strife when she pours out her displeasure saying, "It's all His will...some people enjoy themselves all their lives without a single care, and some spend all their lives weeping" (25). Through the pen of Gurdial Singh, Har Kaur's sorry resignation voices the concerns of all those people who wonder about God's mysterious ways, and have to helplessly submit to his will.
Gurdial Singh’s use of pathetic fallacy to reveal Moddan’s inner storms is also noteworthy. Apart from the other numerous descriptions about Moddan’s mental state, one vivid analysis in this chapter displays how Moddan’s unknown guilt consciousness manifests itself after killing Ghanna through the writer’s comparison of it to the disturbance in nature. Gurdial Singh writes:

Dark clouds, as ominous as the huge birds in flight, had suddenly burst, bringing rain. Crossing above his head, they appeared to be moving backwards in the direction of the village, whispering, as if they meant to tell tales about him. Shimmering from behind the clouds, a few stars peeped out rather nervously, almost fearfully falling in step with Moddan. Crimsoned, they seemed to shine like droplets of blood... (47)

This powerful description explains Moddan’s internal upheaval by revealing his feelings through the disturbances in natural phenomenon. Another strong description is about the waning moon which seems to change colour according to Moddan’s mood as: “... first it was blood-red, then a dull grey, and finally a soot black...” (48). This explicates Moddan’s swing of moods from blind rage, to unacknowledged guilt and then to his bleak prospects of future.

Gurdial Singh’s psychological portrayal also finds expression in the kaleidoscope of reactions to Ghanna’s assassination and Moddan’s vengeance. Analysing people’s mixed reactions Gurudial Singh writes:

Some, moved by the apprehension of the family’s total ruin, voiced their fears in sympathetic tones while the others, more interested in watching it as a street show, simply wanted something or the other to happen. (58)
Land concerns are so high that after Moddan is sent to jail, it is this very land that assumes the central position in the story. “Everyone, from patwari to the tehsildar, was bribed heavily so that they could have it all their way” (64). In this deal which benefited Ghanna’s sons and Pala’s younger sons, Moddan’s sacrifice seems to be belittled. Through this connivance, Gurdial Singh brings under scrutiny the revenue system, which becomes a facilitator for the spurious ones. The system is also targeted by the writer through Akali another character in the story who decides to let everyone know the “untold story”. The vicious chain is described by him as:

Almost every morning, the patwari was at their house, and not once would he go back without drinking his usual glass of thick, creamy milk with ghee added to it. The tehsildar had his mare left at their stable where she would always get fresh gram to munch. And the kanungo would simply plonk himself at their doorstep daily, and help himself to a bottle of liquor and fried chicken … (65)

Flourishing in this manner, the clever ones like Sajjan enjoy life and the emotional Moddan suffers the consequence of his ‘act of honour’.

In this chapter, the Jats and their traits are again discussed at length. An understanding of Jat sensibility aids the readers’ comprehension of some rash actions that happen during the story like killing of the influential Ghanna by Moddan who is obviously brought to punishment by his ‘powerful’ sons. Gurdial Singh explains, “As they say, the Jat can not absorb sense until he is knocked about” (36).

Elucidating on this Gurdial Singh explains in the words of Ruldu:

What really proves suicidal for the Jats is their bigotry. Even when one says something harmless, the other refuses to
tolerate it. And then starts the rigmarole of brawls and legal battles ..... (51)

This explains why Moddan feels naturally offended and persuaded to set his enemy right. This also settles the readers’ shock about the execution of whimsical impulses and unplanned actions.

Another issue discussed in this chapter associated with the Jats is revenge for the sake of honour—one that has been the cause of the killing of Ghanna by Moddan and Moddan’s imprisonment by Ghanna’s sons. In the words of a minor character: “Look at him! Really, a Jat just can’t think straight. My dear fellow, he was after all their father. And if they let his murderers go scot free, you think they will ever be able to face the people?” (61). It seems that such things need to be avenged for public appreciation and honour more than for personal loss according to Jat sensibility.

_The Delay_ resumes the story from chapter one. This chapter begins with the coming home of Sajjan on the third day of Moddan’s return. On his arrival, Moddan is quick to notice Sajjan’s false concern and hypocrisy towards himself. He soon realizes that, his younger brother is actually uneasy with him around. Disarrayed by Sajjan’s behaviour, Moddan leaves for Ruldu’s house. Moddan also feels uneasy on seeing, “How his brother had grown a fat belly much is the manner of Ghanna’s prosperous and wily sons” (67).

Contrary to Sajjan’s cold behaviour, Ruldu’s warm welcome touches Moddan. His genuine concern for Moddan overwhelms the latter. Ruldu pours out his love and emotions on Moddan in the most sincere manner. He also talks about his own hardships particularly about managing the house and his neglected son, Magheru who is motherless.
Ruldu’s plight is also delineated by the writer through psycho-analysis. His desperation for a companion is captured in the following words: “What is a house without a wife? And if you don’t have one, you can’t catch hold of someone else’s wife and bring her home” (54). Ruldu’s disgust at seeing the flourishing crops of the wrong-doers is also given a psychological manifestation by Gurdial Singh who writes:

Momentarily, he was surprised to see how he had wrecked a good deal of Ghanna’s crops within a radius of about a hundred yards. The shoots of the plants, crushed and destroyed, gave off a strange smell which tickled his nostril and caused a burning sensation as it rose. This sensation was strangely satisfying, a source of immense relief to him . . . .(55)

These lines show how Ruldu finds satisfaction in hurting ‘them’ by ruining their crop because he is unable to do anything worse to them. Soon he is shown leaving place after abusing and spitting on it.

These lines bring out the strange sense of inferiority compounded with shame that Ruldu feels because he is a have-not. The feelings of littleness complicates matters for him. Similar feelings are shared by Moddan when it comes to land and its issues. Here the writer deals sensitively with this equally sensitive issue-land. The equation of land with honour is dwelt upon by Gurdial Singh through another character Mirab who voices the contempt of all landlords like him at the audacity of petty landowners like Ruldu saying, “Bloody chieftain! Wretched fellow! Doesn’t even own four bighas of land, and look at the way he talks” (50). The association of honour with land is so deep in society that the struggle to own it causes turmoil in the lives of many like Moddan.
While listening to Ruldu’s worries, Moddan notices Ruldu’s deteriorated physique and the unkempt house which increase his own restlessness. However, he soon feels comforted by Ruldu’s kindness. “Here you are, bhai”, he says, “This is our ‘royal meal’. They say a humble meal offered by a friend is equal to a king’s feast” (71). Moddan readily accepts his hospitality and feels relaxed.

Opening up his heart to Ruldu, Moddan expresses his unwillingness to live with Sajjan. Voicing his disgust with Sajjan, he asks Ruldu, “What do you think—if someone sells himself to his enemies, would you call him a man?” (72). Moddan also discloses to Ruldu how Sajjan’s disrespectful wife is adding to his concern. Discussing all this, Moddan sleeps over at Ruldu’s house for the night.

The next morning, Moddan again feels the same restlessness which threatens to engulf him. He urges Ruldu to accompany him to the house on the hillock. Both clear up and tidy the space, much to Chottu surprise who comes there to look for Moddan but is taken aback by Moddan’s harshness. Actually, Moddan is suspicious about both Chottu and Sajjan.

Moddan’s apprehension becomes reality when none of his brothers visit him the following day. He tells Ruldu, “Didn’t I tell you that these fellows were anxious to get rid of me? Has anyone come to enquire about me now? The truth is, bhai, the whole world is selfish... no one bothers about anyone” (77). Ruldu tries to pacify Moddan by saying, “May they be content, live happily, and God will protect you too, my friend” (77).

Unable to bear with them Moddan gets Bebe too to live with himself. He settles the division of land between the three brothers first. Just as Moddan apprehends, Sajjan’s greed and callousness manifests itself in his selfish attitude. He grabs all the better tools and implements. Deeply pained by his behaviour Moddan rationalizes, “But its not the tools or implements that make the real
difference ... what's much worse is that the hearts stand divided now! ... And who ever built bridges across broken hearts anyway?” (80).

In contrast to Sajjan, Chottu does feels ashamed and remorseful. He also shows his hidden anger for Sajjan, but Moddan feels irritated at his refusal to protest openly. Nevertheless, Modan does feel sympathy for Chottu in spite of his irritation.

Resuming control over his own affairs, Moddan now concentrates on settling down. Ruldu helps him in everything and both boost up each other’s dampened spirits. However, even in these trying circumstances, never does Moddan forget the wrong done to his family by Ghana. Realizing that his field is irrigated by the tube-well owned jointly by Ghana and Sajjan, he tells Ruldu, “Let those gram and sarson flowers wilt for want of water. I am not going to use the water of those butchers. You think I'll irrigate my lands with that blood-spattered water?” (82). Ruldu replies in the affirmative saying, “No self-respecting man worthy of his father’s salt would even entertain such an idea. No question of it at all …” (82). As a result Moddan’s crops wilt but he says “Even if it runs to seed, we are not going to use their water!” (83). His concern for honour is more than evident in these lines.

The situation worsens as Moddan’s enemies twist the mud boundary of his field to instigate and trouble him. Surprisingly this time, Moddan weakly grunts and refuses to retaliate. It is Ruldu who sets out to settle issues saying, “But Moddana, come to think of it, were born only once in this world - just as we die once - so why should a man die a thousand times before his death…” (85). Much to Moddan’s relief, matters do stand settled for the time all because of Ruldu’s intervention.

Having gained confidence in Ruldu, Moddan wants Ruldu to settle other matters too. He discloses to Ruldu, “Bhai, I feel that now even I should claim my share of happiness” (87). Sensing his desperateness, Ruldu comes to his rescue
again and resolves to find him a companion. When Har Kaur comes to know of this she feel elated and laughs out "perhaps for the just time in fourteen years" (88). To keep up his promise, Ruldu mortgages two acres of his land to Sukhu, the lambardar. Moddan disapproves of this but is quietened by Ruldu’s sincerity who says:

My dear fellow why do you have to talk like this? This is hurtful. After all, is there any difference between you and me? Well, you must be thinking that Ruldu is no blood relation ...O innocent one, what is that binds one man to another? He alone is your relative who walks in step with you. (91)

Moddan soon learns from Ruldu that a woman has been found for him. The only shortcoming is that she has a son from her previous marriage. Everything else that Ruldu suggests is acceptable to Moddan but he does not like the idea of “protecting someone else’s seed” (98). Moddan feels torn between mixed emotions. Bebe too is totally stunned by all this. However, her over-reactions infuriate Moddan and he decides to go ahead with it without informing her.

In this chapter, Gurdial Singh discusses the question of honour yet again. Both Moddan and Ruldu strongly feel that death is better than a life without dignity. It is because of this that Moddan shifts to the outhouse in spite of numerous difficulties. He refuses to give in to any of the difficulties and stoically endures all that crosses his way. Even when he witnesses his dying crop, he refuses to irrigate it with “their” water. Ruldu resonates his concern saying:

...This land and property will all be left behind, but a man without honour and self-respect is as good as naught. His life is a deadly curse....It’s not a matter of livelihood alone- as far as that goes, even cats and dogs know how to scrounge
for a meal. Tell me, how else is a man different from other lowly animals? (83)

However, the painful reality that, his over concern for honour is sure to drive Moddan towards disaster disturbs the readers greatly. Along with this, the indifference of Sajjan towards Moddan and the undeserved treatment that the latter gets, also shake the reader. For Moddan too, it is hard to digest that all these years he had been living a desolate and deprived life for such ungrateful people. Even though, he is shattered by Sajjan’s ingratitude, he still shows his nobility by allowing him and Chottu to choose their shares first.

This chapter also marks the flourishing of a beautiful relationship between Moddan and Ruldu. In the characters of Ruldu, the writer sends Moddan a saviour, a comforter and a companion. Ruldu’s character has been delineated by Gurdial Singh with great passion. Ruldu’s compassion for Moddan, inspite of his own troubles, impresses the readers greatly. His selflessness and nobility comes forth in the form of the secret mortgage of his land for Moddan’s marriage. When Moddan comes to know of this, Ruldu tells him to have faith in him. He says, “It’s not money that makes a person big, what one really needs is a generous heart ... And the true son of a man should always be magnanimous” (91).

Ruldu seems to have realized his divine purpose in helping Moddan. He sincerely wants to elevate Moddan from a life of deprivation though he himself lives a deprived life. In this, Ruldu emerges as a saint when he says, “When I finally leave, I want people to sit up and say: “Well, this was a man who was born with a purpose”... Beside’s, what’s the point in wasting such a precious life? ... No?”(91).

Another important development that takes place in this chapter is the slight dampening of Moddan’s spirits which comes forth through various subtle instances. One is when the boundary of his lands is twisted, Moddan helplessly
seems to reconcile with it. Another such incidence is when Moddan becomes aware of Sajjan's changed nature, he pacifies himself and allows Sajjan to have his way in the property division. He also comes to the realization that people prefer to stay away from him in spite of his well-meaning advances. It is due to such societal reactions and pressures that his spirits slacken a bit. More than his own disillusionment, it is the cruel society's onslaughts that mar his individuality. Gurdial Singh writes:

Walking down the road, often with his head bent low, he felt as though people from every direction were darting strange, suspicious glances at him. The children, he sensed, scampered off in panic, and the elder turned their faces away made the mistake of lifting his eyes to meet their gaze, he would be stunned to find people actually staring at him. (92)

The writer here asserts that the role of society in making or breaking a man can be immense. In addition to this, it is also asserted that Moddan's suffering is representative of the sufferings of all social castrates. Also, his act of courage may have been belittled by society as an act of faulty judgment, but the writer establishes that Moddan stands tall in the eyes of all those who in spite of their bravery are shunned by society as rebellions and misfits. It is through these individual acts of defiance and self-assertion that this study, *Representing the Unrepresented* gains relevance.

Through this chapter, Gurdial Singh also indicates at various survival strategies adopted by Moddan and Ruldu. The author talks about Moddan's silences as his personal strategy to avoid society's probings. This escape from society's sharp eyes through his refusal to indulge in its hypocrisies, also shows his disapproval of such a lop-sided society. Moddan's decision to shift to the old dilapidated house on the hillock is also one of his survival technique in order to stay away from the constant vigil of people. At times, Moddan is also seen
confronting the society as in his blatant challenges to Sajjan. Like Moddan, Ruldu also shows his concern for survival in his outright defiance of oppression through challenging the twisting of the boundaries of Moddan’s fields by Ghanna’s sons.

Gurdial Singh also touches upon a very personal aspect of Moddan’s character, his desperate want for a companion. The writer talks of Moddan’s instinctive feelings to possess his former finance when he writes:

Once or twice, his feelings had even got the better of him, threatening to leap out like a wild animal. He had even heard the roar of the devil deep inside, wide awake, thirsting for blood. Somehow he had managed to tame the mad elephant by shackling his feet to pious thoughts. This entire episode was a secret he didn’t want to share with anyone, even himself. (90)

This episode highlights Moddan’s deep desire for a companion. His boldness also comes across to the reader through his decision to marry a woman who has a son from her previous marriage, even though he is somewhat unhappy about the latter part. This adds to the complication of the plot and furthers the story.

*The Melting Day* begins with Moddan lashing out on Chottu, who has come to him as Sajjan’s messenger. Sajjan wants Moddan to stay away from this proposed matrimony. But Moddan, quite aware of Sajjan’s evil mind, reprimands Chottu with disgust saying:

Don’t I know all about that man as well as his messenger! You are all the same...The kind of devilry you learn from those fat rogues is no secret to me. Isn’t it true that you think: ‘Let the man languish and die, so that we can grab his land’- isn’t that how you are figured it out? But don’t be so hopeful!(99)
Chottu feels extremely humiliated on being counted one among 'them'. He is hurt by Moddan’s words and doubts, but like always, he is too afraid to voice out his feelings.

Later in this chapter we are introduced to Moddan’s wife, who comes to his house and takes charge of things. Moddan takes a quick liking for her but he feels uneasy about her four year old son Gelu’s presence in his house. Sensing his discomfort, Dani continuously scolds Gelu to keep him under control. Moddan feels surprised at this behaviour and on being asked, she empties her heart out explaining what she has suffered. In the end she says, “... all people aren’t bad-if God has put one in a tight spot, that doesn’t make a person evil by nature!” (101). However Moddan is still doubtful because he has heard a lot about “women’s ways” (101).

However, much to Daani’s respite, slowly things smoothen out. She looks after the house and Moddan takes care of the fields. Moddan even starts liking Gelu. Bebe also accepts him and Dani but relents that none of the other family members have cared to visit them.

As time passes, their peace is disturbed by the secret talks in the neighbourhood that Dani has been jointly bought by Moddan and Ruldu. Both feel angry about this allegation. More than Ruldu this back biting hurts Moddan immensely. He even harbours a doubt about Dani and her loyalty to the house. As for Ruldu, he does actually feel torn between his passions on seeing Dani and his loyalty towards Moddan, but as Gurdial Singh writes about his thoughts, “Often he would regard them as a sign of failure or weakness on his part” (112). Life moves on as Ruldu and Moddan work hard at the fields and both get a good yield. They also plan to buy an ox for ploughing.

Once again, Moddan’s life is disturbed by rumours that Sajjan has forsaken Chottu and is forging some kind of partnership with Ghana’s sons to set up a new
tube-well. Except Moddan, everybody else already knows all about this. It is Ruldu who tells Moddan about the real state of affairs. Moddan tries to stay calm because he knows perfectly well that if he indulges in any kind of defiance this time, there would be no rescue for him.

Turning his mind away from such distractions, Moddan concentrates on his family. He takes good care of Dani who is pregnant by now and he also buys an ox, much to Ruldu's happiness. But never does Moddan forget his animosity and hatred for Ghana's family. He is still angry and full of revenge towards them. He often becomes upset with their ill-earned prosperity as a result of their connivance with the corrupt revenue officials. On such occasions, it is Ruldu who calms him down but whenever Moddan recalls the wrongs done to his own family, Ruldu too become helpless in calming him down. Moddan is particularly hurt by Sajjan's conspiracy and Chottu's inertia.

However, much to Moddan's relief, he is soon visited by Chottu who speaks of his woes and tells Moddan: "I have had nothing to do with them ever since you went to jail. In fact, we came quite close to exchanging blows on several occasions" (123). Chottu also admits that Sajjan being in command, he just had to listen to him. As for now, he fears for the worse and so begs Moddan to intervene. He says, "Those bastards are just waiting for some such thing to happen. They will always enjoy the show ... and people would, of course, always be eager to heap shame upon us!" (124).

Chottu's confiding in Moddan brings the two brothers closer. But Sajjan flares up on learning about Chottu's heart felt concern for Moddan. All this finally ends in the clever division of land and house by Sajjan leaving Chottu totally unsatisfied. As a result of this callousness, Chottu is forced to take a detour to his field because Ghana's sons refuse to allow Chottu to have an easy access to his field. However, Chottu wisely averts any kind of problem and Moddan again feels annoyed at his complacency. He explodes on Chottu saying:
O my gentle soul, you mean to say that if tomorrow they tell our wives and children not to step out of our houses, we'll take it lying down? Such defensive behaviour is not going to help beyond a point. Besides, how downright demeaning for a Jat’s son to show such cowardice. This won't help, I tell you. (127-128)

Inspite of minor disagreements, the two continue to share things and help each other invariably. Once again, as all seems to be running smooth, the ‘gossip-mills’ once again ruin everything. The gossip mongers seem to be bent upon ruining Moddan’s peace without any scruples. This time too, their target is Dani who is believed by people to have cast a spell on Chottu too.

On the other hand, when Dani comes to know of Chottu’s trials, and that Moddan is helping him, she behaves strangely and becomes distraught. She throws fits of rage and Moddan takes some time to pacify her. Later in this chapter, Dani leaves for her brother’s house. Ruldu, who has been away for a couple of days, feels inexplicably uneasy about her departure and does not approve of Dani being sent away. He probably fears for some known cause and tells Moddan, “You shouldn’t have done this, you should have at least waited for me to get back…but let me tell you this wasn’t not a very wise thing to do … you shouldn’t have driven Laxmi out of the house on such an auspicious day!” (134). The chapter ends with Moddan realizing that Dani has left home on the auspicious day of Dussehra.

The ending hints at the suggestive title of this chapter, The Melting Day. The writer points out the relevance of this day of Dani’s departure as the day that brings upheavals in Moddans and Dani’s life. The title also hints at the melting of their relationship and harmony. The superstitions of Ruldu voiced in his concern over sending Dani from the house on the auspicious day of Dussehra, prophesizes grave disaster and Moddan also feels certain ominous premonitions about the future.
Chapter four revolves around the latent power of society in the form of its “gossip-mills” that threaten to ruin whatever little happiness Moddan enjoys. Through this chapter, Gurdial Singh voices out his disgust on all heartless watchdogs of society who are callously narrow-minded and small-hearted while dealing with humans. Moddan’s peace is destroyed time and again by such societal interferences. The writer here lays bare the baseness of society that is bent upon destroying ones like Moddan who dare to survive in the face of all odds. Through such onslaughts of society and Moddan’s counteracts, Gurdial Singh also voices out his concerns for every individual’s right to life and privacy.

In this section, various shades of Moddan’s personality are delineated by Gurdial Singh with great subtleness. Various roles of Moddan as a brother, friend, husband, son and also as a father are performed by Moddan with dignity. He is shown helping out Chottu and settling his matters with Sajjan. Moddan also continues to be a good friend to Ruldu. He takes good care of Dani as a husband and tries to pacify her doubts about Chottu. As a son and father too, he manages to strike a balance in his duties. In addition to all these varied shades of his character, Moddan continues to be an upright and a self-respecting man, a non-stooping individual.

One of the most significant developments of this chapter is the introduction of Dani into the story and Moddan’s life. She comes as a ray of hope to Moddan’s desolate and hopeless life, adding the colours of love, care and womanhood to his shattered house. Dani’s portrayal by Gurdial Singh adds the much-required vivacity to the novel. In spite of her own sad past, she symbolizes better future for Moddan and she comes as a breath of fresh air into his desolate life.

On another plane, Dani’s portrayal as a victim of the atrocities of society because of her vulnerability is also delineated with sympathy. In her suffering, she represents the helplessness of the entire womanhood at the hands of the unmerciful people in society. She presents the plight of all women who are made to suffer
endlessly even when they do not even know what they have done to deserve such treatment. In Dani’s own words, “I don’t know evil by nature!” (101).

Later, Dani who is the main target of the Gossip mills, presents the sad plight of womanhood again which suffers inevitably because of being the weaker sex. Her very existence is threatened time and again and her sad condition voices the difficulty of every woman to maintain the integrity of character and dignity in an unjust and uncooperative world. Dani’s desperate condition explicates the undeserved treatment of every single girl like her who stands degraded and dehumanized by the cruel onslaughts of the heartless society. In this regard a critic observes:

Daani’s crisis presents the degradation of human values to the lowest level. Her own brother instead of protecting her honour, does not hesitate selling her repeatedly to keep his addiction going on. Daani’s being sold and bought continually, refers to the feudal values of the Punjab in which woman is regarded merely as a commodity and not a human being. The problem of human turning into a commodity has become more complicated in the capitalistic system. Daani is a prototype of this system. (83)

Here, Gurdial Singh also exposes the prejudices of people about “women’s ways”. Though the character of Moddan, he shows how society is largely suspicious about women in everything that they do or do not do. Gurdial Singh writes about Moddan’s apprehensions as: “He had heard about “women’s ways”, though he had no experience of them” (101). Ruldu too had often warned him saying, “Don’t trust them! Just watch out; a woman can be up to all manners of wiles, and you wouldn’t know a thing about it!” (101).

Gurdial’s Singh social concern also manifests itself in his portrayal of the unjust bureaucracy, specially of the revenue system, which twists the records to
oblige the wealthy and powerful. In turn, they themselves stand rewarded with wealth. He exposes this vicious cycle through the extremities done to Moddan, Gurdial Singh targets the totally corrupt revenue system and the higher ups who connive to bring havoc upon the less powerful. Through the plight of Moddan Ruldu and Chottu, the writer shows how hegemonic relations are strengthened by every fall of the weak which becomes the victory of every powerful man.

To lay the system bare, Gurdial Singh relates Ruldu’s tale of misery at the hands of such system when the latter plans to install a hand-hump. In Ruldu’s own words:

Those who have everything in abundance, get their supply of pipes much too easily—because those ‘bigwigs’ can crush their noses. And there is another rider, too! Those petty officials know that such ‘bigwigs’ have an access to the high-ups and may easily approach the ministers. If they go to that extent, what would happen then? In that case, they’ll have to bow to the pressure anyway. That’s how they are: always eager to please the bigwigs. No wonder things are done exactly the way they want them done ... And why should they view people like us with awe? Even if it’s something as simple as submitting an application to the Tehsildar, that bastard Dadhu ... the deed-writer - the one with a humped-up turban, charges no less than three rupees just for scrawling a few words on that silly stamped paper worth only three paise. And how much does it cost him—that blob of an ink worth no more than a paisa or two ... you’re a wise man, tell me, isn’t it gross injustice? - Wahe Guru Wahe Gure! (117)

In this chapter, other social concerns like multiple division of land due to family expansion and the clashes between the values of the old and new generation
are also discussed. The writer shows how every increased demand on land leads to many unforeseen disasters like petty partnerships and dubious alliances that one has to risk in order to survive. Gurdial Singh also talks about how the established values of the older generation which stand at the mercy of the capitalist equations of the new generation. The “old ones” are shown to be silenced by the arguments hurled at them by the intimidating members of the newer generation.

Apart from all the social critiquing done in this chapter, this section of the *Night of the Half Moon* beautifully describes the delicate moments shared by Moddan and Dani on the night of the ‘scythe moon’. This night brings them closer and the two share some precious moments together which they have managed to snatch away from the ever-grueling time-machine. In these moments, the softer side of their harsh lives has been described by the writer with a delicate touch. The reassurance that Moddan and Dani feel in each other’s arms in the presence of the moon that slowly comes into its full glory is the most touching episode in the sorry lives of Moddan and Dani. Describing their short lived ecstasy, Gurdial Singh writes:

That night, Moddan shifted Gelu to the other bed, snuggled up with Dani in a childlike embrace and lay there till the small hours of the morning. She too, rolled up like a child and went off to sleep. When Moddan shut his eyes, she would break into hysterical sobs. Time and again, he had to comfort her, patting her with the affection one ordinarily reserves for a child. (132)

In *The Wild Fire*, Dani has still not returned from her brother’s house and Moddan restricts himself from bringing her back home because he thinks it may seem somewhat unbecoming on his part. Waryama, Dani’s brother pays a visit to Moddan and tells him that Dani would return after giving birth to their child. Ruldu is totally against this and tells Moddan that Waryama is surely making up an
excuse. He fears for something bad to happen. He says that he would soon get Dani back but as life slogs on, he finds it hard to take out time and Moddan also gets engrossed in his own affairs.

Now it is Chottu’s ill-treatment at the hands of ‘their’ assistant that infuriates Moddan. He and Ruldu find it hard to control their anger. Moddan’s restlessness increases when he sees the lush green fields of Ghanna’s son Mirab. Gurdial Singh writes, “A tremendous surge of revolt appeared to rise up from the earth like a cloud, and he saw flames around him, generating a heat that nearly scorched him” (138).

Hatred, anger and revenge surge up uncontrollably in Moddan’s heart and this time even the spicy anecdotes of Ruldu strike him as irritable and uncouth. He admits to Ruldu, “I feel somewhat uneasy” (140). Soon, Ruldu’s fears also become real. Overwhelmed by his hatred for his offenders, Moddan threatens ‘them’, as he moves towards ‘their’ house saying:

Oye ... today I’m going to chew them up alive – those bloody bastards! ... come on now, if you’re the true sons of your mother – come and accept this challenge – you swine! – here I come, your ‘son-in-law’! ... Do you have the guts to face me ... Oye ... .(141)

Moddan continues to challenge ‘them’ openly outside their house too. This time, it is Moddan’s turn to be assaulted and that too by his own brother Sajjan who hurls his pickaxe at Moddan and injures him. By this time, Ruldu, joins Moddan to avenge the bloodsuckers. He hollers out the battle cry again but finds Moddan grievously injured. Moddan sustains three axe-blows, one on his head, another on his shoulder-blade and the third on his leg. He is also hit by two or three pellets from a double barreled gun. After being grievously injured, Moddan is carried back home by Ruldu and Chottu who also look after him. Though injured
previously, Moddan refuses to go either to the hospital or to the police. He continues to show his fighter spirit and says:

We aren’t going to the police station … nor do we want any deed of compromise … If somehow we survive and have the necessary strength … we’ll settle it on our own … otherwise … well, it’s all right the way it is … . (144)

*The Wild Fire* has a very appropriate title. As the name itself suggests, a wild fire threatens to engulf everything that crosses its way in Moddans life. The title is suggestive in more than one manner. It stands for the wild fire of rage that burns incessantly inside Moddan’s heart and which erupts finally like a volcano. This time this fire has become so uncontrollable that it has engulfed its creator, Moddan himself.

Like a forest fire that becomes uncontrollable within seconds, Moddan too explodes with anger and becomes senseless. His blind rage sees no law and knows no fear. Even Ruldu’s words of warning do not bring him back to his senses and what begins with Chottu’s innocent complain, ends in tragedy for Moddan. Nevertheless, his indomitable spirit stands unmitigated and Moddan’s words at the end of this chapter emphasize his exalted self-respect yet again.

The title is also suggestive of the end of the relation between Dani and Moddan because ‘the wild fire’ has threateningly flared up to engulf their relationship also. Waryama’s pretence and his false excuses hint at their dying association. More than anything else, this fire like the power of Bhasmasura is largely self-destructive in nature.

*The Wild Fire* also stands out in the entire novel as an action packed chapter in which, the actual confrontation between Moddan and his opponents is dramatized. The hollering cries of Moddan and Ruldu, the gnashing of their teeth,
the counter cries of Sajjan and others, the crying of women, the injuring of Moddan and his stoic endurance of pain, all come to reality through the descriptive art of Gurdial Singh. With great economy of words, he pictures all these events in less than two pages.

The last chapter, *The Odd Hour* takes the readers some time later in the harvest season. Chottu and Ruldu are trying hard to manage things while Moddan recovers from his injuries. One of his wounds on the leg has become a particular cause of concern for all. Waryama also comes to see him and listening to his pretentious and boastful talk, Moddan turns evermore suspicious about his intentions. By now, Moddan realizes that Waryama is lying about Dani and their infant daughter too.

This time too Ruldu proposes to fetch Dani and leaves all by himself to get her back. When Ruldu returns back alone, Moddan becomes totally distraught. Ruldu somehow manages to evade his questions and again disappears for a week. On returning he tells Moddan that Dani had been sold to a wealthy unscrupulous Jatt for two thousand rupees even before the birth of her child. He tells Moddan that Waryama works for this Jat and has still been farming on his land. Ruldu also tells Moddan that he had gone to locate Dani’s whereabouts and had also warned Dani’s uncle about the consequences of their misdeeds. Surprisingly, Moddan shows no signs of anger. He instead hides himself in his blanket to evade Ruldu’s enquiring eyes.

The next morning, Har Kaur asks about Moddan’s worried look but is quietened by his angry retort. She is totally taken aback by his rudeness and she recalls his similar behaviour before killing Ghana. She quickly senses some impending danger and disaster. Leaving a totally puzzled and worried Har Kaur behind, Moddan leaves for his fields where he soon feels tired and drowsy and the pain in his leg becomes unbearable. As he gets up to return back home, the pain surges up again and again. With great difficulty he reaches home and lies down to rest.
The next day, the village Hakim is called for and he confirms that Moddan’s wound has become serious. He even suggests that Moddan should be taken to the hospital in Patiala. But Moddan refuses to do so. Bebe feels deeply agonized at Moddan’s deteriorating condition and also feels completely shattered on seeing him fade away.

A day later at dusk, Sajjan comes to visit Moddan to apologize for his deeds. He weeps and repents for his vices and Moddan forgives him openheartedly. That night brings great pain for Moddan. The next day at dusk, Dani also returns. She is totally unaware of Moddan’s condition and when reality dawns on her, she finds herself in greater pain than Moddan. She cries bitterly for a long time on seeing his reduced body.

The next morning, Moddan’s condition worsens and he dies a little later. Ruldu tells Dani, “Dan Kaur all this while he was simply waiting for you …!” (156). He also tells her to go back to her new home because here there could be no future for her. He also asks Dani to take good care of the infant daughter and get her back when she grows up. Dani goes away without saying anything, leaving Ruldu behind. The story ends with Ruldu’s lamentations at his personal loss and at Moddan’s sad end.

This chapter titled The Odd Hour is symbolic of all odd happenings that happen at odd hours. First of all, an injured Moddan steps outdoors at the odd hour of sunrise. For a brutally injured man like him, the morning chill would naturally be dangerous and it does prove to be suicidal for Moddan. His condition worsens after this odd hour expedition to his fields. Later, we find Sajjan coming to Moddan at the odd hour of dusk. His coming is as odd as is the hour he has chosen to visit Moddan. Never could the readers have imagined that Sajjan would even come to Moddan seeking for forgiveness and would cry in repentance.
After this, around dusk again, it is Dani another unexpected visitor, who comes to visit Moddan. She is totally unaware of what Moddan has undergone. She does come as a comfort to the injured Moddan. For Dani’s visit too, the odd hour of morning has been chosen by the writer. The same odd time of morning is chosen for Dani’s permanent departure from Moddan’s life and his house too. Ruldu does plead with her to get his daughter back here sometime in the future, however, it remains uncertain whether Dani would do so or where would she go to.

In the end, Moddan is shown suffering endlessly and he too is “more sinned against than sinning” just like Shakespeare’s King Lear. Beginning from his excruciating physical pain to the extreme emotional torment after knowing Dani’s plight, Moddan continues to suffer physically, mentally, emotionally and psychologically. Gurdial Singh captures his trauma as Moddan goes out to the field. He writes, “As he walked through the knee-high green stalks in the field, he had a sense of being utterly alone in a desolate space in an alien land, a space with no end and no horizon, a dead world” (148).

This saddens the readers who realize how Moddan has sacrificed his entire life for the cause of honour attached to this very land that now seems alien to him. In a way it indicates the giving away of his attachment to land with man-made boundaries and his willing departure for boundless lands. The later lines in this chapter re-affirm this as:

As he turned to go back, he took a last look at the fields around him, and a great despair and sadness came over him as he saw the furrows lying untended with great clods of earth scattered untidily all over. But as he walked forward he felt the soft earth through the thin soles of his jooti and felt a little reassured. (149)
Moddan's condition is compared by the writer to "the gnarled branches of an aged tree that look like the protruding nerves on a bony hand hanging limply, and it seemed to him, that the tree had come to the end of its life span" (149). In the same manner, Moddan too has lived his life and soon meets his end.

Moddan’s tragedy is once again attributed to the role of destiny in his life by a relative Nihali Chachi who comforts Har Kaur saying:

No, no, He will be merciful, after all. It is the good who always suffer. You’ve not wronged anyone that God should punish you thus! Don’t you worry—everything will turn out right ... you know, sickness is something that just can’t be wished away. There are people who recover even after having lost their limbs ... Compared to that, this is nothing... God will definitely answer our prayers... O dear behen, He waits but watches... ! Yes! Believe me... . (150)

But soon she wonders whether God really gives what one deserves or is he arbitrary in nature because Har Kaur has never wronged anyone in her life, and still fate has decided to shatter her completely and leave her totally disillusioned.

Through Har Kaur's desperate life, Gurdial Singh seems to question God’s ways and justice. He tries to probe into the cause as to why women like her who live their entire lives in silent resignation to destiny, never feel lucky with life. Through Har Kaur, the writer glorifies the virtues of patience and silence in such women who live a live of total submission to God but without happiness. He also glorifies the mother in Har Kaur who says:

I have everything. Somehow my Moddan should get back on his feet again ... he should have a long and peaceful life. I’m old and ripe, and death is now only a matter of time. If only I
could see them all happy and flourishing, that alone will bring cheer to my poor heart. (152)

Gurdial Singh’s existential search leads him a little further and his latent Marxism find vent in his questionings about blessings earned by doing good deeds and their benefit. Through Har Kaur he seems to put forward his own doubts about appeasing God. In doing so he makes Har Kaur wonder:

Har Kaur, if blessings alone could ensure happiness- perhaps everyone would give away a handful of atta to a beggar, seek his blessings and ensure for himself a permanent place in heaven, for no less than seven lives ... If only we knew what would propitiate God ... No one knows His leela or sportive spectacle. And perhaps it gibes Him some satisfaction to see a human being suffer. (153)

In the character of Moddan, Gurdial Singh celebrates that what is sublime in all of us. When Sajjan seeks forgiveness, Moddan’s feelings do overwhelm him and he says, “Of course, I forgive you ... but ... remember what you did was not right...!” (154). This one line with long pauses gives insight into Moddan’s nobility and uprightness. His quest for the cause of ‘right’ as opposed to ‘wrong’ presents the crux of this novel.

At the end of this chapter we find the mention of the scythe moon once again which appears to Ruldu, ... “more like Dharamraj’s iron-cast half face, his blasted eye dangling”(158). He laments the injustice done to Moddan in depriving him of even the smallest of joys. He also laments the loss of Moddan saying- “Without the loved one, its all dark ...” (159)

_Night of the Half Moon_ is a deeply ironical novel. There lies a great discrepancy between what the protagonist desires and what ultimately happens.
The very act of talking revenge on Ghana and his sons is laden with irony. Moddan kills Ghana to safeguard his honour and his land but ironically his own brother Sajjan compromises on these by joining hands with Ghana’s sons. In addition to this, Moddan thinks that his imprisonment would be respected by people as a mark of his brave act of defiance, but on the contrary, he is castrated by society. Thus the very act of taking revenge becomes a cause of humiliation for him after his release.

Irony also lies in Moddan’s heart-felt desire to settle in life with Dani. This too is not granted to him and he is marked a criminal by people and dies a desolate death. His desperate desire for a companion and his attachment to Dani ruins him instead of giving him happiness. In the end, it is Dani’s said truth that shatters him completely.

Gurdial Singh uses irony also to mould every tragic moment into something unexpected. Chottu, a well-wisher of Moddan, never means any ill towards Moddan, but ironically his honest and knaive complaints about ‘them’ brings disaster for Moddan, who receives a fatal blow from his own brother Sajjan in an attempt to set matters right. His oppressors continue to flourish while he dissolves as a salt crystal but never does his self-respect dilute.
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