Chapter IV

The Moderate Trio: Ananta, Gauri and Maqbool

The exercise of moderation in other advanced Anandian protagonists--Ananta, Gauri and Maqbool Sherwani--in expressing their protest against the existing social setup demands serious attention. The novel *The Big Heart* is beset with postwar challenges and evils of Industrialization, which leave the coppersmiths of Cat-Killer’s Lane in unemployment and famine. Ananta, the coppersmith, who has been working in Ahmedabad and Bombay returns to his home-village and finds the life of his brethren miserable. The immediate cause of it is the setting up of a factory by the headman of their brotherhood (Murli Dhar) in partnership with the headman of the utensil seller’s community (Gokul Chand). The traditional craftsmen who do manual work for their livelihood to turn copper, brass and silver plates supplied by the utensil sellers into useful appliances, meet with the threat of unemployment as there is a sudden fall in the demand for the vessels among the public. To make matters worse, due to short supply of raw materials, the factory demanded all the available metal sheets with the utensil dealers or Kaseras to manufacture gadgets for the army to make bombs in accordance with the government contract that the company has undertaken. This has caused reluctance in the Kaseras to give metal sheets for piecework to the coppersmiths. The dealers cut short the wages for piecework unconditionally and unilaterally. In the factory, for the mechanized production, it required only a limited number of skilled workers and these jobs were offered mainly to the relatives of Murli Dhar and nominally to a few other coppersmiths who had obtained technical school education.

Ananta manages to get piecework with one of the merchants and on conversion of the metal piece into a large cauldron he learns that the wages he received is according
to the new rate. The old rates have been cut short. Ananta protests against this injustice. As an experienced trade unionist in Bombay he feels that the unemployed craftsmen (thathiars) should be organized to equip them for collective bargaining for employment so that reconciliation can be brought with the employers to settle their problem. Rao significantly observes: “The protagonist of the novel, The Big Heart, Ananta is a fiery revolutionary, a worker with an experience of political struggle. He is familiar with advanced theories worked out by the Indian Marxists like G. M. Adhikari and N. M. Joshi” (148). As in the case of Lal Singh this revolutionary too does not exhibit any enthusiasm for extreme trade union activism, as his mission is rather to make the thathiars “understand the meaning and purpose of life [. . .]” (Bais 48). So he proposed a method of organizing their collective voice for employment which will assure their survival in their crisis and which will not call for bloodshed. He observes: “we will form a union [. . .]” at least to secure the right “to a proper wage until they [the workers] are strong enough” (The Big 155). No doubt Ananta is well informed about the establishment of proletarian rule through a revolution but as a typical moderate political organizer he is fully against violent protest. As a revolutionary he is conversant with the prerequisites for the overthrow of the prevailing system through bloodshed. This is evident from his remark that the successful organization of a revolution involves:

the coming together of many things. For instance the rulers and the bosses may get bogged down so that only the workers can carve a way with their giant strides, [. . .]. It is possible that the Revolution may break out if the workers and the peasant reach a condition of the utmost wretchedness. [. . .] Until then it is better to lose the wool on your bodies than to become martyrs like sheep. (201)
This awareness made the protagonist realize that the immediate solution to the thathiars’ problem lies in an attempt to offer them a moderate means making use of the resources within their limitations. The protagonist does not try to inspire false revolutionary instinct among the innocent village folk in their wretched state of existence exploiting their need for employment and accepted wages. Instead Ananta reminds them what “comrade Lenin said: ‘whosoever expects a pure social revolution will never live to see it’” (210). Ananta’s potential to invite this glory gets restricted to moderate courage as he too has a woman to whom he has to discharge his responsibilities.

It is obvious that Ananta’s choice of the mean to offer the thathiars scope for a moderate struggle is the result of his deliberation which involves the application of his prudence. Before moving ahead with the exercise of moderation Ananta discusses it with the intellectual and poet Puran Singh Bhagat who had been to Russia, China, Japan and Britain and is presently the warden of the “bunga” of Saint Harnam Das, which formed the many charity houses around the Golden Temple. After the arrival of the scholar the place has become a centre where political organizers and workers like Ananta met to discuss their problems and plans. Presently the poet listens to Ananta’s views but he is aware of the difficulty to put those views into practice: “But surely we have to form a union, Sardar Puran Singh,” said Ananta. ‘Han--but it is not really so Simple,’ said the poet. ‘And you know it, otherwise you would have formed that union some days ago” (82). There is some hardship involved in convincing the thathiars that it is not against the introduction of machines but it is for getting employment that they have to fight. The impediments on his way are two fold. The foremost one is the fact that Ananta has come back to their midst from Bombay bringing along with him a widow dying of consumption and chosen to live with her outside wedlock. Ananta who once despised the brotherhood and went away to Ahmedabad and Bombay for better prospects
did not get enough opportunity till then to convince the thathiars the remorse he felt afterwards for doing so and prove the intensity and sincerity of his concern for the unemployed brethren’s future. Many of them are reluctant to take into confidence the words of a man who defies all social codes of morality “because of his open liaison with Janki [. . .]” (30). Hence he has become infamous for his notoriety. The violence and extremism he might have exhibited as a Bombay trade unionist is no longer in him as his preference for heroism has been replaced by moderation in the wake of new responsibilities endowed upon him. Unlike what people believe, Ananta is not a rogue. Instead he has a big heart to love the brotherhood and work for their welfare. This is explained by Janki’s words on his death: “he was such a noble creature--so much nobler than all these louts!” (227) and Puran Singh Bhagat’s optimism that the thathiars may “recall the wise things he said to them [. . .]” (229). The second impediment that Ananta has to confront is the extremist Satyapal who with his militant ideas bring counter-impact on the people to win them to his side, striving to make Ananta more and more unpopular with them. Look at the power of satyapal’s words: “There is no time to form the union. You must act if you are to make an impression” (154).

The conflict presented in the novel between the forces of tradition and modernity is represented through the thathiars’ calm resignation in their preference for traditional piecework and Satyapal’s preference for seizure of the factory or destruction of it through violence. This is worked out symbolically through “the shadow of the clock tower and [. . .]” the imagery of “the shadowless two headed snake [. . .]” (Shivpuri, “The Big” 144). This conflict puts Ananta in a middle position to defy Satyapal’s revolutionary pedantry with the protagonist’s pragmatic moderation to defeat the rival who “despised [. . .] Ananta, because he was known to have been working with the orthodox trade unionists of Bombay” (119) who are in support of the introduction of
machines. Dhar observes: "Ananta defends the machine which makes him a suspect in the eyes of his community [. . .]" (37). Satyapal prevents the thathiars from understanding the pragmatism involved in collective bargaining which would open to them a moderate means to secure the piecework as well as factory employment through a strike and compromise with the employers. Satyapal’s speeches are intended to invoke the thathiars’ wrath against machines, against Ananta, against the capitalists, to bring in anarchy not order, and this is why Cowasjee remarks: “He hates the English and the Russians, the communists and the capitalists and much else besides. He is in favour of immediate action--seize the factory if you can, wreck it if you can’t” (Introduction. The Big 10). Ralia is easily won by Satyapal to carry out his designs. In fact, Ananta’s Intention is not to make the thathiars the “slaves to the profiteers or the machines” (The Big 85). Instead, out of his understanding that “men are better men when they are working than when they are idle” (89), he wants to organize the trade union immediately to get them employment making use of their potential to exploit the earliest possible opportunities open to them. He is aware that it is impossible to establish a proletarian rule in India without bloodshed, yet he promises them to wait until a congenial situation is attained for the starting of the revolution. It is his political strategy as a trade union organizer. He wants to outwit his opponents and keep the thathiars within the enchantment of his words. Here the intention of the protagonist is to revive their means for livelihood by organizing a strike after the formation of the union, though Satyapal, Viroo and Ralia strongly oppose this view. This antagonism in their attitude provides the extremists enthusiasm for the work of disrupting the organization of the trade union by inciting the spirit of violence in the thathiars. They play this dirty game to sustain their hold on the brotherhood. The intellectuals like Puran Singh Bhagat condemn this interference of these extremists. He remarks: “I too feel angry with them [. . .]. There
are many inciters in our country who are past masters in the art of directing the simple folk into cheap heroism [. . .]" (228). This remark testifies to the fact that Ananta’s choice of a moderate means as a panacea for the thathiars’ problem has been a result-oriented programme. It could “give them strength and bring them food, as well as inner happiness [. . .]” (143), had he been able to establish it triumphantly over Satyapal’s claim. Ananta’s sole attempt in the novel has been to prevent the thathiars from indulging in any sort of destruction of the machines as that of luddites riot in England in the wake of Industrial Revolution. Hence he instructs the thathiars: “The coming of the machine in England, brothers, wrought as much havoc there, a hundred years ago [. . .]” (200). Destruction of machinery has never been a solution to save the labourers from miseries either in England or in India but it is their collective force that counted. It is to impart this knowledge into the consciousness of the thathiars that the protagonist calls for their meeting in his shop. It is clear from the context below:

in his heart of hearts he knew that the crisis was imminent, that the events of months had matured into the situation which would confront them at the gathering in his shop, and that if they did not, or could not, resolve upon a common course of action at that meeting, then some catastrophe, some explosion, would happen [. . .] for the depths of utter misery had been reached, and everyone was strained to breaking-point, ready to find vent in something [. . .] (122)

The present crisis could afford a congenial situation to start a revolution but it would invite only the martyrdom of himself and many of the poor thathiars like him. The protagonist does not want to produce martyrs but his intention is to find them a way of escape from their miseries to inner happiness—the happiness of not only his brethren but also of himself, which requires “length of life” in Aristotelian terms. As for himself,
Ananta is burdened with the responsibility of looking after his ailing mistress and as such, his love for Janki exercises a powerful pull in his self in keeping him moderate in his choice of action. It is noteworthy that Ananta is a trade union leader brought up in a proletarian setup with sound knowledge of the glory of martyrdom influenced by potent revolutionary ideals propagated by comrade Lenin. As in the case of Lalu, Ananta has dual responsibilities as a lover and revolutionary in the midst of the thathiars’s crisis. His heroic courage for violence and martyrdom, which expressed its virulence in Ahmedabad and Bombay, is restricted to ordinary courage in the wake of the new responsibilities he owed to his mistress. It cannot be forgotten that with Janki, Ananta used to share his revolutionary ambitions and sensual warmth when they were working in Bombay, but now she is weak in health to share physical love with him. Yet the tenderness with which the protagonist looks after and feeds her in her ailment has a charm of its own. Even though their love is devoid of conjugal prospects, it is not the void of sensibility to be seen in his affection for her but a warmth which aureoles their love throughout. In Janki’s essentiality for his physical and emotional support he ought to have given her his sole attention, but in his mission to organize protest of the thathiars, she is left alone without any emotional attention from his side most of the time. In other words, his revolutionary mission limits his extreme sensuality and conversely enough, his responsibility towards Janki restrains his ambition towards the revolutionary extreme. Hence love prevents him from becoming a martyr and urge for protest pulls him away from devoting totally to his mistress. This conflict establishes the protagonist’s exercise of ordinary courage in organizing moderate protest of the thathiars and exercise of temperance in the area of discharging his duties to Janki. A significant factor to be recorded here is that his preference for registering protest is relatively powerful than the sensual instincts inspired by Janki.
There are textual evidences to show that the conflict between his sensual and emotional urges exercise mutual restriction. Ananta’s own words will suffice: “I haven’t learnt to deny myself for the sake of denial [. . .]. Nor have I learnt to sacrifice myself for others really. [. . .] Because I can neither look after you nor really forget you and devote myself to the ‘Revolution’” (142). As a revolutionary he has to devote himself to this cause discarding all the sensual attachments, but as a lover he has the responsibility of looking after his mistress who has no one else except him. He is fully conscious of these duties which are the two divergent forces pulling him in opposite directions. This situation calls for the application of his prudence leading to the choice of the mean to resolve his crisis. Ananta’s exercise of ordinary courage thus aims at prolonging his life for the discharge of his duties to Janki as he is “Attached to Janki, clinging to his own life with a fervour born of pity [. . .]” (143). This is the motive for Ananta to withdraw himself from his excessive revolutionary enthusiasm, from extremism as exhorted by Satyapal, to the middle way. Hence a meeting of the thathiars is called for in his shop to organize the trade union and devise a strategy for their bargain with many leaders such as the Congressman Mahasha Hans Raj, the socialist Puran Singh Bhagat, the extremist Sayapal and others. Though even Gandhiji’s views are in favour of the idea of rejecting the machine, Ananta miserably feels the futility of doing so “at this late hour when it is already there [. . .].” Satyapal declares: “And I am really for Revolution now while you prate about it and really believe in compromise” (153). It is in the idea of collective bargaining that moderation seems to find its application. Ananta’s decision evolves scope for the thathiars for observing a middle way between tradition and martyrdom as the thathiars always preferred to live in their rustic simplicity doing piecework for a small pay until mechanization was raising challenges against their livelihood. Hence the formation of the union was the safest way
for their bargain with the employers to improve the thathiars’ crumbling economy in the wake of industrial progress. As for Ananta the middle way could qualify him to carry out his divergent missions simultaneously, though Satyapal disapproves of this method adopted by “tame trade unionists” (155) to replace martyrdom by survival.

When Ananta gives the coppersmiths a feast, spending the money he alone has earned in the midst of famine, Satyapal’s disciple Viroo brands it as indulging “in an orgy of happiness when one have [sic] no money, no job, no bread [. . .]”. Viroo thinks: “Satyapal’s advice is good: if the factory catches fire [. . .] then we can at least get piecework from Kaseras” (157). He does not realize the consequences of destroying the factory. Ananta’s attempt is to teach the brotherhood the virtue of moderation in lieu of martyrdom. He explains to the thathiars the futility of violence that disrupts factory work that invites only bloodshed. But he is prevented from proceeding with his attempt by Satyapal’s another follower Ralia who asks Ananta whether he is inclined to preach “all these virtues to us just because you have treated us to a bit of food!” (158). Though Ananta had been a profligate given to excessive drinking or spending time with Janki alone, the meat he prefers to serve his brethren instead of enjoying the relish himself testifies to the existence of the virtue temperance in him which he has acquired in his moderate life. Ananta’s mission is to prevent Satyapal’s attempt to win the thathiars to Satyapal’s side. Ananta almost succeeds in convincing the brotherhood that “the old life is ending and another, new life, is on the way” (202-03). In fact a single rising in Cat-Killer’s Lane cannot establish proletarian rule. Hence Ananta admonishes the workers: “So we must neither be slaves to circumstances nor accept either Fate or unreason, but must rise above them” (209). But Ralia gets an opportunity to disrupt the formation of the union when a worker in the factory (Mehru) comes in and offers Ananta money. It is the difference of wages between the old rates and the new rates for
piecework that was denied to Ananta by the employer in the morning. Naik remarks: “A tragic misunderstanding about the money he receives as wages for the work done leads his comrades to suspect that Ananta is in the pay of the enemy” (83). Ralia accuses Ananta: “you can promise to one and perform to another” (The Big 159). Ananta’s plan to “enrol them in the union and then march them up to the shop of Chaudhri Gokul Chand and demand piecework for all if there are no jobs in the factory [ . . . ]” (171) ends in failure. Later on Ananta attempts to convince the extremists the futility of violence for which they stand for and almost meets with success in defeating Satyapal’s arguments. Ralia tries to manhandle Ananta but Dina prevents him from hurting a member of their brotherhood. When even Satyapal and another revolutionary Prof. Mejid condemn Ralia for doing so, Karam Singh who is against “setting brother on brother”(209) accuses the extremists of giving only lip service without understanding the aftermath of what they are preaching. This infuriates Satyapal and a fight ensues between the two. Ananta calls at the top pitch of his voice to restore their sanity and at this juncture the little aperture of the factory gates is opened and Channa (the foreman) and Gopi (the grandson of Murli Dhar) ask the crowd to disperse. Ralia, in his mad fury, takes an iron hammer from Ananta’s shop and rushes to the factory gates to begin wrecking. When someone opens the gates from inside Ralia dashes into the factory to wreck machines. In fact Ananta’s whole attempt has been to avert this disaster. He has been striving from the very beginning of the novel to save the thathiars from the “disaster which the orator [Satyapal] was breathing into the poisoned atmosphere” (20). When the tension has been soaring high, Ananta shouts to the mob:

Let us sit down in our brotherhood and discuss the predicament. The revolution is not yet. And it isn’t merely in the shouting. Nor is it in the single battle in the Billimaran, brothers. It is only through a great many
conflicts between the employers, authorities and the workers [...] there
will come a final overthrow of the bosses. (209)

Now that the wrecking has started, Ananta feels that the situation is out of control and
any attempt from his part either to prevent Ralia or to educate the mob will not only be
unwelcome but also be catastrophic. Hence he chooses not to interfere with Ralia and
thinks that “he would get back” (213) to his apartment. When he has reached up to the
Bazzar Kaserian, one of the boys belonging to the brotherhood (Mengha) runs after him
and appeals for his help to prevent Ralia and his men from destroying the machinery.
This is the only occasion in the novel when Ananta hesitates to take a decision “to go
forward or backward [...]” (213). Aristotle does not give any hard and fast rules for
exhibiting courage with regard to questions of expediency. What Aristotle suggests is
that the person who is involved can analyze the situation and act according to the
requirement the situation calls for. Ananta reassures his faith in his power in tackling
“the situation before him” (213) instead of getting back unconcerned as the thathiars
demand his service for bringing the situation under control. They wanted him to save
Ralia from police who have been called for, to restore order and to save the machinery
from wreck.

The most noteworthy aspect to be observed in Ananta is that initially he does not
try to control the wrecker using his physical strength as Ralia possesses a mad
satisfaction from his work in progress. Ralia is indifferent even to Satyapal’s admonition
to him to save himself from being arrested as the police are expected to arrive at any
moment. Ananta’s attitude marks his awareness of the risk involved in any attempt to
control Ralia and once he is initiated to take up the risk, Ananta too shouts to Ralia to
stop the game. Finally Ananta manages to go near his ex-drinking companion to attempt
a compromise by placing his hand on his shoulder and requesting him in a genial voice
to break one more machine and calm himself. Soon Ananta becomes convinced that Ralia who does not even listen to Satyapal and Viroo will not yield for a compromise and accordingly he thinks of withdrawing from his attempt. To his surprise, Ralia stops the wrecking operation for a while and declares to Ananta: "Don’t preen yourself that I have stopped because I am afraid of you. I can laugh at you and spit on your face [...]" (218). Then he spat at Ananta. This is the final crisis to which Ananta is exposed and the moderate hero encompasses in himself potential for exhibiting heroic courage in facing the greatest terrors, including death in a battlefield, if the situation demands for such an act. Ananta reacts valiantly by giving a big slap on the extremist Ralia’s face and when Ralia swoops upon Ananta he experiences enough muscular strength to bring him under control. By grappling him “from the waist and, lifting him, [...]” (219), he runs towards the door keeping him helpless under his arms. Ralia seems totally exhausted, expressing resignation to Ananta’s strength and with the crowd the protagonist too shares the feeling that the fight is finished as Ralia seems to have restored his sanity. But the moment the protagonist releases him Ralia gets up with a resurgence of energy, catches hold of Ananta’s throat and strikes the protagonist’s head on the broken part of a machine. Raizada remarks: “There is a tragic poignancy about the end of The Big Heart” (170). Sinha brands it Ralia’s “demonic anger [...] causing his [Ananta’s] instant death” (54). The catastrophe that comes about the protagonist is not due to his inaction. The tragedy that befalls him cannot be branded a fortuity that occurs in the most unexpected moment. The protagonist does not intend to kill his adversary; instead he wants to save him from imprisonment and the machinery from further ruin, which calls for his choice of heroic bravery in the crucial context. This is why Fisher’s attempt to support Narasimhaiah’s view--“he is Hamlet-like in his tendency to substitute words for action” (Fisher, The Wisdom 77)--is questionable. Narasimhaiah remarks in The Swan and the Eagle:
"except in the last act [...] nowhere do we have an opportunity to see Ananta, the man
of action" (132). Ananta is not similar to Hamlet either in his earlier moderation or in
his final action. The proof is in the fact that even if Hamlet had not procrastinated he
would not have been similar to Ralia or Satyapal, the blind revolutionary egotists. There
is only contrast to be worked out between Hamlet's inaction and Ananta's moderation.
In striving to follow the middle way, Ananta's "roguery, his turbulent spirit, his being
stubborn as a mule, his 'untamed spirit', 'the impetuous Punjabi extremist' [...]" (132)
spirit, everything is controlled to moderation so that he assumes the stance of an
organizer of a trade union of the thathiars to find a peaceful solution to their problem
through collective bargaining as against the extremism advocated by Satyapal. All the
words the protagonist lavishes in the novel have been to convince the extremists the
glory of life against martyrdom but they are too stubborn in their faith to accept his
views. Hence they strive to prevent the organization of the trade union using all their
equipment and Ananta fails miserably in his mission. He does not want to face violence
with violence and this is substantiated by his choice of moderation. It is not inaction but
it is the middle way between inaction and extreme action that the protagonist chooses
until the last scene. He tries to preserve this moderation as far as possible, yet the
circumstance demands heroic bravery from his part as Aristotelian theory envisages.
P.K. Rajan's perspective in the analysis of the character of Ananta is also unconvincing
as he proceeds to apply the criterion he used to evaluate Lal Singh once again in the case
of this protagonist. He remarks: "the revolutionary Lal Singh reaches its [sic]
consummation in Ananta [...]" (Mulk Raj 118). Yet he retains his conviction that the
protagonist is led to a certain vacillation "between two worlds and fails to emerge as a
man of action" (119). The critic's view does not incorporate in itself Ananta's choice of
action instead he tries to correlate the lack of heroic action in Ananta until the final
juncture, with the inaction of Hamlet. He remarks: “His [Ananta’s] tragedy, as already explained, is brought about by a fatal flaw in his character: he lacks action; like Hamlet, he vacillates” (128). It must be understood that Aristotelian moderate protagonist shares a kind of passivity, viewed from the angle of heroic courage and Anandian protagonists who are only ordinarily brave men in contrast to Nietzsche’s concept of superman shares only ordinary courage. Walsh ratifies this view when he argues that there is “a certain passivity on the part of the characters […]” which leads to “a certain limpness in action […]” (179). This limpness to adopt the extreme step of an angry trade union leader like Satyapal and reluctance for total withdrawal from solving the thathiars’ crisis is what instates the protagonist’s choice of the middle way. Even though the author is treating the problem of the community to which he himself belongs, applying “his own thathiari conscience” (P.K. Rajan, Mulk Raj 126), he succeeds in keeping his protagonist remain detached from being “Anand incarnate” (124). Fisher’s observation about Lal Singh quoted in chapter III that he is a fictional creation and his confusion is not Anand’s (The Wisdom 71) is relevant in Ananta’s case too. Ananta has the capacity to choose the middle way. It is the protagonist’s potential to observe the mean as against the author’s failure to exercise it. So the protagonist does not exhibit the lack of action, vacillation or Hamletian dilemma that the author had in his private life. The renitence that Ananta feels when Mengha calls for the protagonist’s service springs from his reluctance to break the moderation that he has been observing. The need for his involvement compels him to take a decision granting the thathiari boy’s request in a moment of their dire necessity for, as Aristotle conceives, the moderate protagonist is not a coward. The happier he is, the catastrophe appears more sorrowful to him. Despite the pain involved he chooses the noble conduct, depriving himself of the best things in life. Hence the decision is not prolonged as in the case of Hamlet who fails to choose a timely action due
to the failure to resolve his "to be, or not to be" question. Hence until Ananta is
compelled to exhibit heroic courage in the final juncture, he chooses to preserve ordinary
courage in facing all the subordinate crises without the problem of procrastination. His
choice of an effective means--organizing the coppersmiths into a trade union--can in no
way spring from a mind torn between opposing forces. It is the protagonist's success in
exercising the theory of moderation in suggesting a solution to the thathiars' crisis that is
celebrated in this work. It is solely due to this reason that Ananta "is unable to dramatize
his cause [. . .]" (Cowasjee, So Many 130) until the final scene. It symbolically stands
for his exercise of moderation while Satyapal is capable of histrionics to the ultimate
limits to draw the thathiars' support. What happens in the final act is a shift in the
protagonist's stance from ordinary to heroic courage. It is noteworthy that Ananta's
sensual urge is restricted to temperance by his urge for protest which is more powerful
and the urge for protest is impeded to courage by the less powerful sensual urge. The
extent of their mutual restriction is slightly uneven due to the imbalance of the powers of
the conflicting urges. It leads to a compromise where the mean settles down slightly
drawn towards the protesting urge. Hence the moderation achieved has only a transient
value. The shift of the protagonist's stance from moderation to heroism accounts for this
theory at work.

The choice of moderation manifest in the men protagonists of Anand is equally
operant in the only woman protagonist delineated by the author--Gauri. When the novel
opens she is a meek, submissive village girl from Piplan Kalan newly wedded to Panchi
(an orphan from Chota Piplan) with an acre and a half of land to cultivate and start a
living. Panchi stays with his uncle Mola Ram who was a Havildar in Dogra Regiment.
When his uncle was in the army, "she [Panchi's aunt Kesaro] used to dote upon him
[Panchi] and consider him [Panchi] as her son [. . .]" (Gauri 49-50). When Gauri comes
to their joint family as Panchi’s bride, there develops the jealousy of a mother-in-law in Kesaro which results in her finding fault with the girl for every adversity which befalls the village. Kesaro associates the severe draught to which they are burdened with, to the bad luck brought home by the bride. She remarks: “From the day that this wretch from big Piplan set foot in our house [. . .] the crops have withered and burnt up. The bullocks have fever. And there is no sign of rain!” (40). Paul significantly observes: “Kesaro [. . .] acts virtually like a vigilance inspector and checks the happy union of Panchi and Gauri” (The Novels 102). It is like the customary feeling of a mother for her son trying to prevent their peaceful union as the former feels like losing her hold on Panchi. Gauri does not react to the mother-in-law but goes and lies down in the small string bed shedding tears. But in due course she realizes that no solution to “the mother-in-law, daughter-in-law tangle seemed possible except the death of the mother-in-law or her own demise” (Gauri 45). Hence she is left to compromise between the two possibilities at her disposal—to endure the insults passively like a conventional Indian woman until the mother-in-law’s death or to commit suicide to voice her protest against the existing system, as it happens commonly among Indian girls. As in the typical Anandian protagonist Lal Singh, what appeals to her prudence as the most pragmatic way to solve this crisis is the choice of the middle way. She begs permission to Panchi to go back to her mother’s house. Panchi has also been thinking about a separation from the house after the quarrel he had with his uncle. But he did not give permission to Gauri to go back. Instead he indirectly suggests the partition of the property of the joint family and proposes to move to one of his friends’ (Rajguru’s) house to begin a new life. Kesaro accuses Gauri of having an inclination towards some of his friends including Rajguru, who visits their house in Panchi’s absence and declares that this shifting will result in giving his wife to his friend. This accusation arouses suspicion in the mind of Panchi
about her fidelity and he is provoked to slap her several times until she falls sobbing in bed. Though his uncle refuses to give Panchi's share, Panchi manages to shift his dwelling to Ratulke Chacha, the potter's, to share the house with him. In their life in the new house Panchi was usually indignant, sometimes resorting to violence upon his wife. But Gauri has been striving to be passive to endure him, trying to reconcile with the husband on all such occasions. She feels: “if Mira could melt the heart of God with her devotions, then surely she could get to Panchi” (101). It is obvious that her love for her husband has been preventing her from registering protest against the husband's atrocities towards her. But things are spoilt when one day Kesaro comes to the potter's to observe the religious festival of Rakhari by tying a silk thread around Panchi's wrist. Once again she condemns Gauri for breaking up their house and Gauri who cannot tolerate the insult any further catches hold of Kesaro by the bun of her hair and “dragged her from the bed and then pushed her protesting, struggling body to the door and out” (95). Gauri gathers courage for the first time in her life to protest against Kesaro who prevents a peaceful married life with her husband. She has learned from her experience that love for the husband need not be allowed to prevent her enthusiasm for manhandling Kesaro. Gauri and Panchi have been living independently, away from all contacts of this shrewish woman, after they shifted their residence. Hence it is beyond the limits of tolerance for Gauri to allow the woman to interfere with her affairs. But the venom Kesaro has managed to inject on Panchi is so disturbing for him that he cannot shake off those accusations against his wife's “dalliances [. . .] with more than one!” (97). He also cannot dismiss the belief that Gauri's bad stars have brought the affliction of draught which has almost become permanent. But Gauri retains confidence that she can win the heart of Panchi with her devotion to him as a loving wife especially when she is carrying his child. Gauri's revelation to Panchi that she bears his child brings in a new challenge
of finding money for feeding another mouth in the hard times of the year when he himself has been struggling to survive. So he kicks her out with the words: “Go to your mother’s home, you of the evil stars!” (102). All her entreaties to allow her to stay with him have been in vain and he slaps her on the face right and left. Hence she is forced to go back to her mother’s house to protect her womb against further cruelties from him.

In Piplan Kalan too the drought is very severe. Gauri’s mother Laxmi also has been finding their survival difficult especially when Seth Jwala Prasad, the money lender, has been demanding the principal amount of the loan drawn from him on the mortgage of Laxmi’s cow. Amru, Laxmi’s notorious second husband, settles this account as well as the mortgage of their two houses by agreeing to sell Gauri to Seth Jawla Prasad’s elder brother and widower, Seth Jai Ram Das. He compels Gauri to accept a “chaddar” from Jwala Prasad. This would also save them from the disgrace of Gauri’s return from Panchi’s house, if the whole business can be kept a secret. Laxmi too agrees to the proposal and Anand ironically pities Gauri: “In the village life, the cow that gives milk is more valuable to the mother than the daughter [. . .]” (qtd. in Fisher, The Wisdom 102). Hence Gauri’s protests are not listened to and she is forced to move to Jwala Prasad’s house at Hoshiarpur in the dead of a night. There Gauri suffers from fever and Sethji brings Dr. Mahindra to administer her some medicine. Later Gauri is removed to his hospital and there the junior doctor Batra develops an infatuation for her. He objects to Sethji’s attempts to take Gauri back as she is an abducted woman obtained from her parents after paying money, which is against law. Dr. Mahindra seeks Gauri’s preference in the matter and she expresses her refusal to go back to Sethji’s house. Gauri is allowed to work as nurse in the hospital and one evening Dr. Batra, in a drunken state, makes an unsuccessful attempt to molest Gauri. The consequent unpleasant situation leads to the breaking up of the nursing home. Dr. Mahindra thinks of sending this
“hillwoman” to Ludhiana in the company of another nurse named Miss Young, entrusting her with the mission of converting her to Catholicism. But Gauri chooses going back to her husband’s house in Chota Piplan as she still thinks of a happy family life with her husband and their expected child. In the meantime there is change of climate in Chota Piplan and Panchi, full of remorse, comes to Laxmi’s house in Piplan Kalan to retrieve his wife. He comes to blows with Amru and his men and is injured seriously. Under the mediation of police, Laxmi, accompanied by Panchi’s father’s friend Adam Singh, manages to reach the newly set up tents where Dr. Mahindra is running his clinic. Finding Gauri in the new role of a nurse in white clothes Laxmi faints. It makes their access to the doctor’s consulting room easy. Laxmi is full of remorse for her misdeeds and tells the doctor: “if I can once give my daughter back to her husband, I shall die happy” (229). Doctor Mahindra accepts her suggestion and once again Gauri is in Hoor Banu’s (the potter’s wife) house, looking after Panchi who is injured in the fight with Amru and his men. Guari is now an enlightened woman with the experience she has acquired from the urban world and the instruction she has received from Dr. Mahindra. Naik writes:

When she starts working in Colonel Mahindra’s Hospital in Hoshiarpur, she observes the life around her, listens to the good doctor’s views on various subjects and realizes how narrow, limited and hidebound to convention the life she had been leading in the village [. . .]. (93)

The return of Gauri bearing a child becomes the talk of the village and to confirm its truth Kesaro first sends an old midwife (Rakhi) and later visits the house in person to cause further trouble to Gauri. Kesaro insisted on Panchi “discarding her [Guari] because the paternity of the child was in doubt since she had lived in Hoshiarpur with strangers” (255). When the whole village including Panchi’s friends voices this doubt
Panchi turns murderously at Gauri to seek her explanation. She assures him: “I have been true to you” (262). But Panchi strikes and kicks her once again. This critical juncture calls for a final choice from Gauri and the decision she takes is significant and is the outcome of her deliberation. “If I am a curse upon you, I will go away!” [ . . . ] “I shall go and work in Daktar Mahindra’s haspatal and have my child there. And I will not come back again.” (263). This determination is firm and her choice is the most appropriate one to lead a peaceful and comparatively happy life seeking economic independence as a working woman. She does not think of bringing an end to her life or of submissively tolerating Panchi’s harassments any longer. She is determined and she knows her place: “I am not Sita that the earth will open up and swallow me. I shall just go out and be forgotten of him [ . . . ]” (263). Gauri has no love reserved for her husband now. She is disappointed in her married life, yet what restrains her from committing suicide is her love for the expected child. Hence in this novel too love plays a dominant role to place the protagonist’s choice in the middle way. She strives for a contented life in future with the expected child under the protection of Dr. Mahindra who can offer her economic independence. This is why Krishna Sharma records:

She emanates as a new liberated woman, with the help of Colonel Mahindra. Bearing a close parallel to Sita in her sufferings, she undergoes excessive, unremitting hardships and insults heaped upon her by her husband and mother-in-law, and thrown out of the in-law’s house. (133)

Gauri’s observation of moderation seems to achieve the ultimate objective unlike the observation of it by Ananta because there is no scope for a conflict between extremists and moderates in this novel. The conflict in the novel is built up within her mind, between the love and hate for her husband. Gauri expresses the hope of bringing up her
child as different from Panchi (a coward) and herself (who is weak) by instilling courage into the child. The transition of Gauri from a submissive conventional woman enduring insults passively to a courageous modern woman protesting against injustice is conveyed effectively through the Sita-Parvati myths worked out as a thread bordering the episodes from the very beginning. In her attitude and devotion to her husband she has always been as enduring as Sita, suffering everything uncomplainingly until the final scene and in her attempt to protect herself from the assaults from other sources she has exhibited the power of Parvati and this is why she invokes the goddess to protect her in all critical situations. Look at her prayer: “Hey Devi Parvati, Gauri, spare me spare me [... ]” (134). This duality in her reaction has been viewed as the merging of the two phases of Sita. P.K. Rajan remarks: “Gauri as the folk-heroine merges with Gauri as the classical heroine in the best part of the novel” (Mulk Raj 143). The Sita of the folk tradition endures the suffering passively, as observed by the critic (144). Accordingly Gauri’s submission to her husband’s authority as well as her moderate protests expressed against others, up to the level of the final crisis, are substantiated exploring the two phases of Sita myth in that study. But C.K. Rajan’s view is different. Though it has been referred to in chapter I, it calls for a detailed discussion in this context. He remarks: “Direct reference to the Sita myth in the novel are limited only to three situations” (46) and proceeds to remark: “the pervasive and persistent mythical thread of the novel is that of the Parvati myth [... ]” (47) which disentangles its complexity only in a closer analysis. This view is supported by Guari’s words: “I am guided by the goddess! So do not come near me” (145). Hence it is only appropriate to attribute the Parvati figure to Gauri which the critic explains further:

The name of Gauri is one of the several names by which the mighty Hindu goddess, Devi is known, several traits of the culturally composite
goddess Devi--Gauri, Parvati, Durga, Kali, Shakti, Sati, Uma etc.--who has been worshipped in India for over four millenniums are found through her various manifestations, according to the different qualities (moods) attributed to her. Devi (goddess) is considered to be the embodiment of the strength of the male God Shiva. (47)

In Gauri's resistance against Sethji's and Dr. Batra's attempts to molest her and in her protest against Kesaro especially when Gauri pulls the latter out of Hoor Banu's house by her hair, the presence of a mighty power is observed in Gauri. In the words of Panchi: "the power that had come into the gentle Gauri, turning her into her other incarnation Kali the divine destroyer herself" (Gauri 95) is at work. What marks the difference here is that she does not destroy her rival; does not go to the extreme violence of Kali; instead her protest remains moderate between the violence of Kali and the endurance of Sita. This is the position of Parvati unlike Kali and Sita--the all-powerful consort of Shiva and the submissive spouse of Rama. In Gauri's emergence from a submissive wife to a modern woman protesting moderately against the atrocities of her husband in the final scene, the conflict between the opposites becomes obvious once again. The novelist thus utilizes the possibilities of Indian tradition merging the conventional Kali figure, Sita figure and Parvati figure in Gauri. In the process, her protest against the social situation conforms to the limits imposed by the Aristotelian concept of a moderate protagonist in accordance with the demand of the occasion. Accordingly in her approach towards the husband the Sita myth is operative, so long as she strives for a peaceful life with him. When she wants to overthrow the social code, the Kali figure, so long submerged under the Sita figure with its power for protest, becomes operative. Finally she follows Dr. Mahindra's "new point of view, a new approach to her own problems [...]" (P.K. Rajan, Mulk Raj 134) discarding her power for protest. Here
the patronage of a moderate deity is acquired between the forces of Kali and Sita figures in her attempt to fall into the middle course. Hence the Parvati figure with her power for registering ordinary protest is chosen at this juncture and this is how “The Sita-myth is introduced [. . .] to be exploded at the climactic point” (Mukherjee, The Twice 164), which is substantiated by Gauri’s words: “I am not Sita [. . .]” (263). As she regains the power of Parvati to record her protest against her husband, what has been achieved in Gauri’s final choice, in the words of the author, is “the growth of consciousness in Gauri from innocence to experience [. . .]” (qtd. in Fisher, The Wisdom 101). Through her exposure to the urban experience in Hoshiarpur, especially under the influence of the mature views of Dr. Mahindra, it becomes possible for her to attain this state. Hence Dr. Mahindra is the motive which initiates the development of prudence in the protagonist for the choice of the middle way (the power of Parvati). It leads to Gauri’s transformation into a modern woman to face the tests and trials of future life independently breaking off from the security thought inevitable for a woman from her husband. Naik substantiates this view when he comments: “the transformation which she undergoes through the impact of modernity is the chief theme of the novel, paradoxically enough, Gauri graduates into modernity because she is basically so firmly rooted in tradition” (91). Gauri exercises this choice in her family life with Panchi only once for she suffers his harassments passively until she attains this state. The prudence that she has newly acquired succeeds in convincing her of the futility of remaining a submissive wife on the one hand and on the other the foolishness of trying to get her husband legally punished. She displays her maturity and strength of character by taking the bold step of leaving her husband for good.

Gauri’s final choice thus becomes a mean between two opposites which are not externalised. The pull between these conflicting urges in Gauri operates at the level of
her love and hate for her husband. Though the love exhibited by Panchi is genuine, he is such a weakling that his treatment of Gauri as a puppet under the control of his aunt (who functions as her in-law) is harsh—primarily because of her love for him. Moreover in the early stages of the novel, she is a typical Indian village girl lacking the courage and awareness to protest against the husband and/or the in-laws. She believes that she can win Panchi to her side by her love and make use of him to tackle the in-law. It is due to this reason, as already stated earlier, she thinks if Mira has been able to win Lord Krishna with her love and devotion, it is within her powers to win Panchi with her womanly charms. When she fails in this attempt, hate begins to start its course. Hence the feeling of sensual love is restricted from attaining profligacy when she fails in winning Panchi to her side. This is why she reacts violently to his harassments towards the end of the novel. Look how she reacts: “And if you strike me again, I will hit you back [. . .]” (263). When hate emboldens her to react in a different way, the protest of a modern woman could have reached the ultimate extreme of thirsting for the husband’s blood. But she does not turn herself to be a revengeful woman; she thinks only of abandoning her husband. In fact the memory of the occasional moments when they enjoyed marital harmony inhibits her from the above choice of heroic courage. At the same time the hate which develops in her towards her husband owing to her failure to win his love stints her love to temperance. Hence she is moderate in registering her protest as well as in expressing her love and the conflict between these two equally restricted impulses leads her to the choice of seeking economic independence. She does not think of the extreme step of killing her husband making use of the potency of Kali that is inherent in her unconscious or committing suicide due to her cowardice in facing the harsh realities of life (symbolic of the method of self-sacrifice of Sita).
The immediate provocation leading to the struggle between these impulses in her psyche springs from the fact that the parentage of the child that she bears is doubted even by Panchi. Once she chooses the middle way, she decides to bring up the child as an antagonist to Panchi. This attitude of antagonism that she likes to develop in the child expresses an indirect suggestion that the child she expects is a boy. She hopes that the son can give protection in her future life that Panchi could not in their married life when the boy matures into his youth. When Gauri decides to avoid Panchi from her life there is a void created in her emotional life which she hopes will be bridged by her son. This is how the expected son becomes an emotional substitute in Gauri’s life. The courage that is exhibited by Gauri thus involves her growing affection for the child in consequence of the resultant emotional substitution as is expected from a son by a mother in a purely symbolic level. Hence Gauri achieves length of life. Gauri’s choice between committing suicide like a submissive woman and reacting heroically against Panchi to the extent of thirsting for his blood springs out of her exercise of moderation. Her prudence convinces her that she ought to resort to the method of moderate protest that would provide her with happiness that has been lacking in her married life. Gauri does not experience any Hamletian dilemma in making the choice. She “leaves for Hoshiarpur, never to come back to Panchi again” (P.K.Rajan, Mulk Raj 132). Anand encompasses in the novel the possibilities for the “full expression” of the “modern dilemma” (139) which everyman including Hamlet has to resolve, but when “the critical moment has come for her the moment at which the new woman has to choose [. . .] she chooses [. . .]” (134).

One significant critical tendency has been to read the attributes of various female Hindu deities in the character of Gauri. The validity of such analyzes notwithstanding, Gauri and her troubled fortunes beg for a political interpretation. The contention is that
Panchi and his aunt and their ill-treatment of Gauri represent the tyranny and exploitation of India by the British Raj. Her moderate revolt against the in-laws and her husband shall represent the Indian struggle for independence based on the doctrines of nonviolence and moral strength. In that sense her final separation from her husband and her self-declared independence and establishment of her selfhood shall stand for the political will that was lacking in the Indian freedom movement or even the declaration of independence by the Indian leaders on 26 January 1930. It might seem too farfetched but the meekness of Gauri, the initial show of affection by Panchi (the British East India Company) even at the outset, and above all the subjugation and subhuman treatment meted out to Gauri with the political realities in India when the novel was written, lead one to suspect the possibility of a thickly veiled political theme in the novel. The argument becomes more compelling when we consider that Anand has written all other novels in the sociopolitical background of British India and the hostile forces the protagonists have to confront with derive their energy from British maladministration. It is equally significant that Gauri attains her enlightenment consequent on her exposure to the wider world during her job in the hospital as a nurse under Dr. Mahindra. It is he and his tutelage more than anything anybody else in the novel that matures Gauri to a bold individual from the state of a frightened Indian village girl. It shall stand for the renaissance that started from Bengal following the Western education received by the Indian intellectuals. Seen in that light Gauri’s final action is sublime and is in conformity with Gandhian method of moderate protest. Thus she assumes the heightened identity of a whole nation’s urge for freedom and selfhood.

Maqbool Sherwani in *Death of a Hero* is one of the leaders of Kashmir National Movement. He is inspired by patriotic feelings when he is informed that his village (Baramula) has been occupied by Pathan tribesmen. He flees to Srinagar to seek the
advice of his leaders regarding the step they have to take against it. He is told that their king Hari Singh has requested Jawaharlal Nehru to send them immediate military help to defend their state. Maqbool is left to decide whether he should remain in Srinagar with the leaders till the army arrives or return to Baramula intending to organize the villagers’s resistance against the invaders in the mean time. He asks for the opinion of one of the young Punjabi comrades sitting next to him and he replies: “No one can advise you [. . .] that a man should consult himself.” Though the Punjabi does not want to influence Maqbool’s choice of action, his preference goes in favour of heroism leading to martyrdom. He remarks: “If you choose to go to Baramula, your deed will be heroic, because you will be facing death in defence of your home [. . .].” (126). The invaders are trained Kashmiri tribesmen under Pakistani officers sent back to Kashmir in military trucks with arms and ammunition supplied by Pakistan, after setting up “an ‘Azad Kashmir’ Government in Rawalpindi with Muhammad Ibrahim at the head” (16-17). They are likely to issue orders at any rate to put to death Maqbool, one of the organizers of Kashmir National Conference, who has given support to King Hari Singh to resist the militants’ attempts which “has been planned by one of the bravest officers of Pakistan army! [. . .] Mr. Jinnah himself is in Lahore, waiting for the good news of our [Kashmir’s] accession to Pakistan” (70). As a nationalist who stood for the cause of bringing Democracy in India, Maqbool feels that the people of Kashmir ought to have been offered freedom of choice to join India or Pakistan. This must be given in accordance with their preference instead of the latter’s strategy of occupying the land by force: “I am for Kashmir. Not for its usurpation by force, but for its freedom to choose where it wants to go” (22). He shares deep confidence with the people of Srinagar that help from India will reach them before their land is conquered. Maqbool’s attempt in the novel is to communicate this information to the villagers of Baramula to prevent them
from a total submission to the Pathan invaders for the Pathan occupation can prolong only until the Indian army arrives. So he chooses to come back to his native village after spending three days away. Sinha remarks: “more characteristically, he is a poet whose mission is to fire the imagination of a whole people” (76) instead of organizing their armed resistance (when they are without sufficient weapons to fight the militants). So there is little initiative from the protagonist to form the confederation of the villagers for this purpose and as Riemenschneider observes, “Action takes place more in the soul of the hero than in reality” (“The Problem” 22). The protagonist’s choice to go back to Baramula on his motorcycle as immediately as possible to impart this wisdom to the villagers thus involves the attempt to remain passive and unexposed to the enemy till the moment of the invaders’ defeat. This priority for a long and complete life to fulfill the protagonist’s aspiration to become a poet explains his preference for a worldly life in contrast to martyrdom. He writes to his sister: “you have always thought of me as somewhat of a hero, [. . .]. I have never been anything but an aspirant to poetry” (The Death 125). If the force of worldly aspiration to restrain the revolutionary ambition takes its effect through the protagonists’ mistresses Maya and Janki (in Lalu trilogy and The Big Heart respectively) this pull to keep the protagonist away from extremism takes its course through Maqbool’s sister Noor in Death of a Hero. He loves his sister more than anyone else in this world and she is the only individual to keep the secret that he has gone to Srinagar.

The brother-sister love between Maqbool and Noor works out a sufficient counterforce to restrict the revolutionary zest for martyrdom experienced by the protagonist at the ideological level. It leads to his withdrawal from the weaponless defence against the intruding forces which otherwise would have led to his death. There are no textual evidences to illustrate that there is an undercurrent of sister fixation in their
relationship. But the love is intense. "The warmth which came from Maqbool's physique drew Noor to him more ardently than she might, at this age, have been drawn to any lover" (94). It is this warmth of feeling that makes Maqbool ask for his sister, the moment he reaches home from Srinagar. The tenderness with which Maqbool concludes his letter to his sister also connotes this intensity: "I kiss you tenderly on your forehead and each of your big black eyes" (128). This force is capable enough to exert an opposing pull against the revolutionary's impulse to organize the people of Baramula for a fight against the besiegers. Thus he is placed safely in the novel to observe moderation between his preferences--revolutionary enthusiasm and calm and peaceful life of a poet. In consequence he exhibits the moderate courage to come back to Baramula unobserved by the enemy and to inform the villagers that the job of defending their land will be taken up by the Indian army. It is noteworthy that the instinctive love of life inspired in him by the operative sister-love compels the protagonist to give up his extreme revolutionary enthusiasm leading to the choice of moderation. Look at the protagonist's own words: "with the certainty of death before me, I can renew my faith in life. I shall love life with the last drop of my blood" (128). These words of Maqbool written in the captivity of the enemies carry the suggestion of his expectation of a reprieve, even though it is impossible when the militants are waiting for the ratification of their decision to assassinate him by higher officials. The love of life to the last drop of his blood is sufficient reason to support the exercise of Aristotelian virtue. With the signal of the distant firing, the protagonist's optimism develops as there is every chance for him to be found and liberated by the arriving Indian army. These traits qualify Maqbool to share the stance of other Anandian protagonists who are guided by the theory of moderation.

This explanation substantiates Maqbool's choice of a different strategy--as the action "takes place more in the soul of the hero [ . . . ]" (Riemenschneider, "A Statement" 21)--
instead of what the head of the volunteer corpse asks him to do in reality: “Maqbool Sherwani—we are in peril! We must do everything to avert the disaster! [. . . ] we must resist the butchery with our brave hands!” (9-10). At first Maqbool also feels that something must be done to resist these invaders. But when he realizes the difficulty to convince of its need even to Mahmdoo (one of his staunch supporters, who is running a cookshop at Pattan) he gives up the plan as it will invite only casualty. The information he gathers from the fanatical pro-Pakistani, Babu Ishaq is another factor that aborts the idea as he is convinced that it is impossible to face the invaders through any moderate means. He remarks: “Our brethren from Pakistan have completely liberated Baramula, [...]. And they have spread out in two flanks towards Srinagar. [. . . ] We expect them to be in Pattan tonight or tomorrow morning” (20).

Violence is the only way to stop the militants. But Maqbool puts into practice the strategy of going back to his village unidentified and unobserved to inform the people of the expected help from the Indian army which will be consoling to them. This will improve the morale of the villagers who are looted by the militants for Maqbool observes: “in the absence of any other concrete plans, go and reconnaître [sic] the position in Baramula” (31). In this operation he is careful to preserve his life at all costs as he feels, “He must keep afloat on the sea of existence.” However he has to await a favourable opportunity to fulfil his longing to go home. It is due to this reason that he feels it is “best for the while not to yield to the longing for home, but to attend to the bigger anxiety and avoid being caught” (32). Maqbool knows that if he is caught by the raiders he has to give up his life and the only practical way to protect his own life as well as the villagers’ security is by hiding from the enemy and waiting for the army to restore peace. Hence he upholds the view: “We will not accept their rule. And we shall defend [...].” (40) it, yet he cannot do it himself as he prefers to choose moderate courage as the
way to avoid a catastrophe. Thus leaving the duty of tackling the militants to the armed
forces Maqbool tries to build up only mental resistance among the public. This is why
Aston remarks: “The novel is mainly concerned with the effect of the political
development on the minds of the people” (102). The protagonist thus gathers courage to
use his father’s cousin Rahti’s bicycle to go past the militants like a common villager,
spending a few moments with the raiders at the confectioner’s, without creating any
suspicion about his identity while keeping the secret to be divulged to the villagers that
their King Hari Singh has joined India and “Nehru may have gone into action and sent
Indian army to our relief” (37) as against the spreading rumours that the raiders will soon
take control of Srinagar. The protagonist’s choice of giving more propaganda to an
imminent relief and his preference to remain aloof from activity becomes obvious in this
context. The burden of defeating the militants is left solely to the Indian army. Maqbool
tells this to the businessman Muratib Ali who feels that they must struggle on principle if
they “believe in freedom from these ‘Muslim Brethren’ as we believed in freedom from
the British and their friends” (54). As such his sole plan is to talk about the army action
to the villagers, to strengthen their morale against the idea of occupation by the “‘Muslim
brethren’. [. . .] And to survive until help comes from Srinagar” (60-61). It is this
strategy that makes him assume “the pose of the ordinary behaviour before he should
pass by the Pakistani sentry” (62). This tactic might help him to reach home even in the
unfriendly environment. This is how the protagonist successfully carries out the plan by
stopping to drink his morning tea at Amira’s shop sitting among the Pathan invaders and
even talking to one of them. When he has left the shop and gone halfway, Amira
foolishly reveals that he is one of their leaders and the raiders outside the confectioner’s
shout to the other sentries to stop him. The sound of a shot also rings out behind him.
By this time he reaches the destination—his friend Gulam Jilani’s house—without being
caught by the enemy. But he recognizes to have put himself in to more trouble for he meets Ahmed Shaw, the lawyer, who has shifted his allegiance to the side of the militants' Azad Kashmir Movement and Khurshid Anwar, one of the officials of the invading army, in that house. Ahmed Shah asks Maqbool to join their side as the people of Srinagar are expected to be in their favour ready to welcome them. Maqbool refuses this request in the characteristic way of a moderate protagonist, trying to explain what he has gathered in Srinagar. He says: "there has been no defection [. . .]. And the people of Srinagar are not ready to welcome the raiders" (69). But there is always a felt difficulty in working out a compromise with these extremists and all his attempts to maintain self-control ends in failure. Hence he has to refute their arguments and explain his stand to convince them of their follies— their unwelcome invasion and looting the houses of Kashmiri Pundits. George observes: Maqbool's "heroism is founded on moral courage [. . .]" (136) which in Aristotelian view is the mean between the extremes—heroic courage and cowardice. But this middle stand does not deprive the protagonist of his potential for protest when the situation calls for such a brave action. This is why instead of a cowardly acceptance of their arguments the protagonist dares to exchange angry words with them to defend his stand. As a result Kurshid Anwar is provoked to bring the protagonist into a trap. He declares: "I give you a choice: You can have as honourable a place in the brotherhood of Islam as Ghulam Jilani and Ahmed Shah here. Or you will be handed over to our forces to meet the justice due to spies and traitors!" (Death 74). But Ghulam Jilani interferes to save Maqbool by pointing out that a guest is sacred according to the traditions of Islam and Maqbool too is a guest in his house as Khurshid Anwar and Ahmed Shah are. He tells them: "I [Jilani] would not like to misuse the fact of his visit here to impose a decision on himself" (75). He points out that (Maqbool) has chosen his side as against their choice of their side. So far Khurshid Anwar has been demanding
only one lakh rupees to this businessman as conscience money to leave his family and himself safe. In his attempt to support Maqbool he threatens that the ransom may be enhanced to two lakhs. Without paying heed to such threats Ghulam Jilani insists on a compromise between these leaders of the militants and Maqbool and saves his life from the crisis into which he has fallen. Jilani's old servant Ibil informs Maqbool that the Pathans have been waiting outside asking for him and proposes the only way to rescue Maqbool's life—to escape in the “burquah” of Beegum Jilani, wearing a woman's veil, accompanied by Ibil's wife, Habiba. He accepts the proposal because of his longing for a longer life. Ibil's mission succeeds and Maqbool reaches home safe, to the astonishment of his mother. At home he feels comfortable for a while but aware that the fight has not ended. Hence he comments: "we must fight against violent destroyers of life—with violence" (93). But he consciously abstains from it by striving to maintain moderation leaving the difficult task to the army. Once the army is expected to arrive, Maqbool's mother too feels that normalcy will be restored after the army action and there will be no further threat to the life of her son. Hence she says: “I would like to feed him on good food at least for a month when all this is over” (91). Later on the enemy suspects Maqbool’s escape in the “burquah”. They knock at the door of his house to confirm his presence there. Maqbool gets to the rooftop, moves to the flat roofs of other houses with an intention to jump off to the fields. The invaders break open the doors and realizing his escape, surround all the houses to trap him. He leaps into the courtyard of Akbar Khan's house, unlocks the doors and emerges into the lane. The barrage of rifle-fire behind convinces him that they shoot him only at his heels and feels: “Perhaps they didn’t want to kill him outright. That was why they were shooting at his feet” (100). It is a comforting thought for a moderate protagonist who gives importance to preservation of life that the enemy does not want to kill him. If he can prolong his life in
their captivity for one more day, there is much scope for his release by the Indian army. He is sure: “His sister would certainly insist on their searching for him” (118). Quite accidentally, when he is running forward, his feet slip on the slime on the road and the advance guard of the pursuers is on him. Thrusting fist-cuffs, slapping him on the face, pulling him from side to side and abusing him throughout, he is taken prisoner by his enemies. He is accosted by a tall lanky man (Zaman Khan) and Maqbool restrains “the impulse to [. . .] answer back [. . .]” (102) to observe moderation once again as he does not want to invite a catastrophe by defying them openly, when he is in their captivity. He is imprisoned in a dark cell which had been used as a residential quarter by the “tongawallahs” of Baramula, until the arrival of Khurshid Anwar. So long as he is unwilling to shift his allegiance he knows that Khurshid Anwar’s decision will be against him and he writes a letter to his sister about his hopes and aspirations, feeling suspicious whether further observation of moderation will preserve his life till the army action takes place.

Maqbool’s ex-friend Ahmed Shah accompanies Khurshid Anwar to the cell and the latter kicks the protagonist for remaining passive and dumb to his cross-questioning, still unrepentant. Maqbool falls down but he conquers his anger to retain moderation to the highest possible extent but when he compels him to give up membership in Kashmir National Conference and repent if he wants to preserve his life, the protagonist is provoked to use a highly offending language against his opponents. Zaman Khan gives him a blow which reminds him of the “rough justice in the old British days of the ‘Quit India’ movement when Jayaprakash had been tortured in Lahore jail, and of the tortures in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany [. . .]” (111-12). The preservation of moderation by the national leaders of Indian freedom struggle has resulted in achieving their target, but his tolerance has reached its ultimate limits when exposed to
these atrocities. Hence the protagonist says: "You can kill me without all this [. . .]. Why do you want to prolong the farce?" (112). The militant leaders want to listen to a confession from Maqbool about his activities of the last three days. Cowasjee remarks: "Ahmed Shah and the fanatic khurshid Anwar [. . .] ask him to divulge the names of his Indian collaborators and the people whom he had contacted since his arrival in Baramula" (So Many 163). When they fail to gather the information, Ahmed Shah accuses him: "you are a pro-Bharat still". Maqbool is compelled to reply: "So were you once!" (The Death 113). Ahmed Shah denounced the protagonist and his leaders in Srinagar for calling in "the Indian army to desecrate the sacred soil of Muslim Kashmir, whose people want to unite with their brethren in Pakistan". Another reason for the protagonist’s provocation is that Khurshid Anwar abuses him with the insult--"Come to your senses! Raper of your sister"--which he cannot tolerate due to his intense sister-love. He replies: "I value my sister’s honour more than my life! [. . .]. So please do not abuse me like that" (114). This is followed by the expression of his displeasure at Ahmed Shaw’s defection that provokes him to order the protagonist’s immediate execution. Maqbool exhibits heroic courage at this juncture and Aston conceives it as a requirement “in his self-defence, [. . .]” (103). Naik observes that the protagonist’s attempts to “flee [. . .] from his captors” (107) ultimately end in failure. The primary question that troubles the militants is whether they could pardon a Muslim who supported a Hindu King in his attempt to unite Kashmir to India instead of supporting the accession of the state to Pakistan leading to the formation of “a central Muslim state, which will be a counter to communism in the north, and to the Banila Hindu Raj in the south [. . .]” (72). In the context of the protagonist’s firm faith in his allegiance they decide to keep him in custody until final sanction arrives from the higher authorities to carry out their decision to shoot him. But even a small delay in executing him counts a
lot for it can sometimes avert the catastrophe and hence “his heart had begun to throb again out of the instinctive love of dear life” (117). It is then that he hears the signal of the arrival of the saviours and “he felt a quiver of tenderness go through him at the prospect of being found and liberated” (118-19). Unfortunately the invaders shoot him at night.

There are two important points to be explained here. The first and foremost one is that the exercise of moderation envisages in itself courage which is a mean between cowardice and recklessness. The protagonist checks all his enthusiasm for a front-to-front fight with his enemies at any rate and at the same time refuses a cowardly acceptance of their proposal for an unconditional repentance. Accordingly he has to express his protest through the arguments in defence of his stance, which infuriate them to take an impulsive decision. Secondly the attempt of the leaders of the militant forces to abuse the sanctity of his sister’s chastity has provoked him to express his resentment in a heroic form as it has insulted him beyond all limits. It has been remarked that Maqbool does not enjoy sister fixation even though his love for her is intense. He cherished the impulse to kiss her on her forehead and big black eyes like a profligate. But the relatively stronger revolutionary urge limits this impulse as he is kept away from her presence in discharging the political duties. Hence Maqbool’s active involvement in political affairs springing from his revolutionary zest has been restraining his profligacy to temperance. The extent of this stinting is slightly more than the impediment effected on its opposite extreme. So Maqbool chooses only a limited period of time in the novel to spend in the company of his sister. As these conflicting urges--courage in registering protest and temperance in enjoying sister-love--are slightly uneven, the mean attained between them cannot be in the exact middle. Hence the compromise attained has only a
transient value. Consequently moderation is preserved in Maqbool only until the final scene. He shifts his stance to heroism in resolving the final crisis.

The detailed discussion attempted hitherto testifies to the fact that Maqbool exercises the choice to observe moderate courage to register his protest in all the subordinate junctures except the final one. Hence it cannot be agreed with Mehta’s view: “Maqbool is [. . .] a passive sufferer [. . .]” (186). As Jung comments, Maqbool is “one [. . .] who want [sic] to protest and resist” (20) though the protest he registers is always moderate until he is in the captivity of his enemies. In his attempt to avoid the extremes he unconsciously allows the conflict between the contrary urges to take place in his psyche to effect mutual restraint of these impulses as part of the protagonist’s technique to find a moderate stance. P.K. Rajan comprehends it when he comments: “The operation of contraries in the heroic make-up of Maqbool does not seem to be adequately dramatized in the narrative as against the vivid dramatization of dualism in the earlier heroes” (Mulk Raj 171-72). These contraries that constitute conflicting tendencies become inevitable for the exercise of choice in the protagonist’s mission to stop the invaders. This is his duty as a revolutionary. To our surprise he leaves it to the army and excludes an external conflict. His worldly ambition to enjoy the calm and peaceful contemplative life of a poet represented through the intense love for his sister is the opposite extreme. It is also kept concealed in his mind. This is why the conflict is not so pronounced as in Lal Singh and Ananta. If Maqbool were an extreme revolutionary he would have chosen to embrace martyrdom in his attempt to organize the people and resist the aggression. On the other hand, if he preferred a calm and peaceful life of a poet he would have abstained from the activities of Kashmir National Conference from the very beginning. Throughout the novel the protagonist exhibits his preference to assume a significant stance observing the middle way—exhibiting moderate
courage in voicing his protest against the injustice of refusing Kashmiris' freedom of choice for the accession of their state to Indian union. This predominant love of life for achieving happiness which underlies Aristotle’s theorizing can be traced as the thread connecting the novel from the beginning to the end. It is substantiated by the protagonist’s reluctance for physically preventing the invading forces by “organizing people’s resistance against the aggression” (P.K. Rajan, *Mulk Raj* 169). He plans to create only a mental resistance of the natives. This moderation springs from Maqbool’s resolve to avoid a catastrophe until the army restores law and order in Kashmir. It is objectionable to call this mental state the protagonist’s “frailties and failures [. . .]” as in Hamlet or the author’s superimposing of his own “ambivalent imagination [. . .]” (171) or “inner struggles and vacillations [. . .]” (168). What happens on the final occasion is an inevitable shift of stance as in the case of Ananta.

In a work of art it is possible to analyze the protagonist’s character based on the repetition of a particular kind of act he does. Aristotle has stressed this point in *EN* to explain the modes of observing the mean, which are habits or trained faculties following the guidance of right reason. The advanced Anandian protagonists in whom this virtue is traced are youngsters who are ruled by feelings. Love is a dominant impulse in these protagonists. Love establishes a struggle with their revolutionary spirit to control their excessive heroism. In a circumstance of danger they apply their prudence to direct their desires and action and gain profit. Hence they become capable of choosing the mean in the world of the novel. As observed earlier, the Anandian protagonists--Lal Singh, Ananta, Gauri and Maqbool--are courageous in the sense that they choose their strategy for action taking into account the merit of the respective situation in accordance with what reason bids them. In certain contexts these protagonists allow the choice of moderation to be replaced by heroism in the end. Consequently the operative mean is
alleged to fail in attributing the desired result. So it is required to estimate whether the Anandian advanced protagonists fail or succeed in attaining the ultimate goal envisaged by Aristotle in the choice of their method of compromise. The next chapter proposes to analyze the traumas of the Anandian protagonists in their choice of the middle way. Conclusions are based on Aristotle's theories and Nietzsche's "principle of individuation" as applicable to Anand's fictional writing.