Chapter 3

Hero, Protagonist, *Nayaka* and *Thalaiyan*

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3.1 Hero: A General Introduction

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1999) gives three meanings to the word 'hero'. The hero is defined as, (i) a person typically, a man who is admired for his courage or his outstanding achievements, (ii) a person of superhuman qualities, in particular, one whose exploits were the subject of ancient Greek legends, and (iii) the chief male character in a book, play or film.

The word hero is derived from the ancient Greek word heros. Heros for the ancient Greeks was either a demigod - a person born of a god and a mortal being -, or a dead person noted for his outstanding achievements and noble qualities (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1982). In the first sense of the term, the hero who was a demigod was endowed with superhuman abilities due to his birth. He is considered to be less than a god and more than a human being. Because of this quality, he was able to rise above the ordinary human beings and achieve great feats and this gave him superiority above mortal beings.

In the other sense the word heros, referred to the revered dead. He was a person who lived and died as a mortal being, but was remembered and made immortal because of an unusual nobility or bravery, which he has possessed or achieved in his lifetime. Therefore, he was looked upon as a helper or protector of the society to which he belonged; and he was venerated for these qualities. The burial place of this hero became a sacred place conferring blessings on the locality in which it was found. His bones conferred blessings on the locality of his burial like the relics of a saint in later times (Levy, 1953).

The worship and glorification of the hero was an integral part of the ancient Greek religion. The hero was considered as a mediator 'between the living world and whatever nonhuman powers and zones exist' (Miller, 2002, p4). Fontonrose (1966, p46) refers to the heroes as 'powerful ghosts which emphasize not only the intermediary powers that are
associated with heroes but also their connection with death, contrasting with the ancestral
deep of a family or with the manes, being worshiped in public as the dead in general'.

In the Homeric epics, the word hero is associated with men of superhuman courage
and ability. The ideal hero was a man who could combine wisdom and valour. In
Homer, the image of the hero is that of a physically powerful young man 'dying for fame
and escaping maturation (and thus the 'bad death' of an impotent and ugly old age) by
achieving a good death that ends his physical history in combat' (Miller, 1990).

According to Hesiod as given in his Works and Days heroes were men of the 'race of
gods' who act as royal guardians - phulaks - to mortal men. The glory of the death of
such heroes was attached not only to the individual but to the city-state too. Hesiod's
hero is a political hero whose heroism is focused on the civic forces (Works and Days,
123).

In his Poetics Aristotle refers to the hero as 'a man', thereby emphasizing the humanity
of the hero. He speaks of 'noble persons' and 'noble actions'. Aristotle speaks not of the
nobility of rank but of ethical nobility. He sees the hero not as a perfect symbol of
goodness but as one with whom the audience can identify (Poetics, 13).

Pindar combines the warrior aspect of the hero with the mediating mode. For him the
hero is an exceptional human being who is raised high above mere humanity to a semi-
divine status. The immortality, which is attributed to the hero, adds to his semi-divine
status (cited in Miller, 2002, p5).

In the current usage, the word hero is not always associated with the warrior concept.
It commonly refers to the central male character of any composition. It also denotes a
person who has acted in an extraordinary fashion putting his life at risk. Hero also
indicates a role model, an ideal to be imitated. There is yet another type of modern hero.
Wardropper (1972) in his essay 'The Epic Hero Superseded' comments how in modern
times 'heroism is not our style' and that the 'post-epic hero is a hero in unheroic
circumstances'. He cites a news item which appeared in the current newspapers. An airline pilot on being ordered to change the course to Havana, told the hijackers, "OK we're not armed, we're not heroes". Wardropper comments, 'The Eastern Airlines captain who denied that he was hero showed heroic courage, moderation and decision in his acceptance of unheroic reality that requested him to think first of his passengers' safety'.

Though the ideals associated with heroism may undergo changes in different ages, heroes and heroization persists in all ages and in any society. Summing up the concept of heroes Mades comments, 'Heroization of men and women of extraordinary achievement, character or ability is an almost universal phenomenon. The precise qualities of the hero in a given time and place vary but his basic exemplary function remains the same'. The hero serves many social purposes. The society that heroizes him achieves vicariously and collectively the realization of its values. In some societies, his mythicization serves to explain natural phenomena, to induce religious zeal or to inspire men to great undertakings. By his superhuman achievements the hero wins fame and with it the immortality that every man longs for.

3.2 The Development of the Concept of Hero in the Western Tradition

A study of the hero figure down the ages shows a gradual change in the focus of the characteristics of the hero. This change can be traced to the change in the values that were upheld by the people of that particular age.

3.2.1 Early Heroes

The image of the traditional hero or the epic hero in the Western tradition is mainly based on the early Sumerian and Mesopotamian epics and the Homeric epics. The central figures of these epics have served to form the prototype of the traditional epic hero.
The Epic of Creation of the Akkadian language elaborates the earliest conception of hero. This epic deals with the establishment of the world order before the creation of man. Marduk is the young champion who is chosen by the older gods to fight the creatures of chaos.

The Epic of Creation consists of three main subjects. They are the cosmogony or birth of the world of elder divinities, an epoch of warfare in which a later generation of gods fought with them for supremacy and the victor establishing order in heaven, earth and the underworld, allotting their stations to the gods. For the service of the gods man was created. Levy (1953, p100) comments that The Epic of Creation draws its material 'from a vast mythology known to us not only in Sumerian and Akkadian poetic fragments, but also in the scriptures or folk-lore of many nations'. He traces this 'struggle for kingship by the successive generation of gods in the Polynesian religious tradition, in the Rig Veda, as well as in the myths of origin among the Maoris'. In the Akkadian version of The Epic of Creation, is found the first conception of the hero. Here Marduk is chosen as the champion of the older deities against the power of darkness. The hero who is elected by the older gods to fight the creatures of chaos is wholly a god and an antagonist of a different generation of gods.

Marduk's triumph over the chaos is closely entwined with the New Year ceremony and rituals of Sumeria. It is also connected with the wanderings of the goddess Inanna later known as Ishtar, in search of Tammuz lost in the annual death of vegetation. The public joined in this search, which ended in the ceremonial remarriage of Tammuz with his wife who sought after him.

Another epic, which belongs to the same period, is The Epic of Gilgamesh. The hero of this epic is the first epic hero in the Western epic tradition to have a human component. Gilgamesh is two-thirds god and one-third human. Gilgamesh is portrayed as a hero whose pride in his divine nature is a danger to himself as well as to others. The people pray to the gods to redeem them from the 'mana' or the heroic energy of
Gilgamesh. As an answer to their prayer, the gods create an animal double, Enkidu. Enkidu becomes the constant companion of Gilgamesh. Together they share many adventures. The death of Enkidu causes Gilgamesh to take up a journey to the underworld. Gilgamesh goes to meet his ancestors in quest of knowledge of eternal life. The epic ends with the return of Gilgamesh from the underworld back to the kingdom. He is a man stripped of his illusions, no longer desiring immortality but truth.

Gilgamesh represents the quest of the hero as found in the epics of search. The one-third human hero here goes in search of adventures with his half-animal companion. Here the semi divine hero's failure in his quest makes him acknowledge his humanity and he becomes the forerunner of the heroes of the epics of warfare. The character and destiny of Gilgamesh is of the human hero where defeat is a dramatic necessity (Levy 1953, p15).

3.2.2 Homeric Heroes

The experience of The Epic of Gilgamesh is to be collectively found in both Iliad and Odyssey. As in The Epic of Gilgamesh, the main action of Iliad precipitates from the prayers of a priest of Apollo's sanctuary at Chrysi. In Odyssey it is the prayer of Cyclops, the one-eyed monster to his father Poseidon, the god of the seas, that causes the action. The hero of Iliad though 'of the blood of Zeus' is very much human in his destiny as well as in his morality. Achilles's fall is through his pride and his redemption is through the loss of his friend. Like Gilgamesh, Achilles acknowledges his humanity at the end of the epic.

However, unlike in The Epic of Gilgamesh, in Iliad the whole plot is set in human time and space. The plot 'depends for the first time upon human beings who work their destiny in the shape created by their own character in its interaction with others' (Levy, 1953, pp174-175). The war in Iliad is fought between two equal human beings unlike in the earlier epics where the enemy is a non-human monster. In The Epic of Gilgamesh and Iliad the gods are depicted with a slight difference. The gods play no part in the
shaping of the thoughts of the hero in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* whereas in *Iliad* the interaction between gods and men gives them a distinct individuality. Even the betrayal by the gods (as in the case of Hector) gives the human beings a chance of a hero's death. Homer attributes all the means of human behaviour to the gods and reserves the heroic qualities to his human characters.

The *Odyssey* is very similar to *The Epic of Gilgamesh* as far as the structure is concerned. In *Odyssey* the experiences of the hero such as ritual segregation, blind wanderings and recognition are almost identical as that in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Though the landscape of adventure through which the two heroes Gilgamesh and Odysseus pass are almost identical, their characters are antithetical. Odysseus is represented as a mature man in his middle age physically unattractive. His character is fully developed and formed by nature and experience. The struggle that Odysseus has to face is with the elements of physical nature such as, the wind, the stone and the sea. Even in these struggles, Odysseus is confident in his ability and his mastery of his skills and he never loses control of himself. Odysseus forsakes immortality and eternal youth - the two essential desires of any hero - for his return to his own land. Unlike Gilgamesh, he is not aided by the gods nor does he receive any companionship. The final journey of Odysseus is undertaken solitarily.

The return of Odysseus to his own land is very much similar to the older epic, *The Epic of Creation*. For, Odysseus like Marduk, has a son to assist him in bringing back order and peace in his kingdom. The character of Odysseus undergoes no transformation in the epic, unlike that of Achilles in *Iliad*. In *Iliad*, the epic ends in transformation of the character of the hero. The inward change in the characters of Achilles and Gilgamesh does not occur in the case of Odysseus.

### 3.2.3 Virgil’s New Type of Hero

Virgil deviated from the existing tradition in more than one way when he wrote his epic. The theme that Virgil selects for his epic is the destiny of Rome. Unlike Homer,
Virgil is concerned with the nation rather than the individual. Aeneas stands as a symbol of Rome. Virgil moved away from the existing Roman epic trend of the analytical form. Since the 3rd century BC, many epics were written on the history of Rome in analytical form with evidences of the various historical events (Bowra, 1965). But Virgil took the legendary past of Rome as his theme. He used this legend of the establishment of Rome to bring out the character of the nation. In the creation of his hero too Virgil moved away from the existing idea of a hero. Virgil, in his epic, created a new vision of the heroic nature and heroic virtue. The characteristics of Aeneas become the representative of Rome. Virgil concentrates not on the destiny of a single individual - the hero - but on the destiny of the nation which will be the future Rome. Thus in Aeneas, Virgil creates 'an individual who stands for the totality of his people. He becomes the first synecdochic hero' (Bowra, 1965).

Like the Homeric heroes, Aeneas is also represented as a great warrior. Nevertheless, Virgil's concept of heroism is not the same as the Greek idea of heroism. Virgil belonged to an age that was very different from that of Homer. Virgil belonged to an age that longed for peace. The Roman people of that age had endured too much of the tragedy of war and Augustus was establishing his reign with the emphasis of peace to the Roman people. Therefore, Virgil could not possibly create a hero in the Homeric mode, as a warrior who fights and wins many battles. Nevertheless, at the same time his hero should be one who could stand on par with the Homeric heroes.

Virgil's new type of hero, like the Homeric heroes, was born of divine blood, a great warrior with physical beauty and the power to command his fellow men. Added to these features Virgil created his hero as a man who was devoted to the gods and to the task that was laid upon him. Virgil added a spiritual quality to his hero, something that the earlier heroes never possessed. As the epic emphasized the social duties of the hero, the ruthless individualism of the previous age could not be applied to Aeneas. Self-assertion and ambition did not fit in with the hero of the new type. Virgil modelled his hero on those qualities that were most important to the contemporary Rome 'based on the moral views of the Augustan age but modified by his own beliefs and admirations' (Bowra, 1965).
3.2.4 Warrior-Saint Hero of the Middle Ages

During the early medieval era, the old heroism and warrior's ethic were intact and thriving among those parts of Europe where Christianity had not yet penetrated. But in the Christianized Europe it became exceedingly difficult to identify the hero with the soldier/warrior. For, in those parts of Europe where the imperial Roman rule extended, the soldier/warrior could be looked upon only as the oppressor or persecutor and not as a hero (Miller, 2002). A change in this outlook was possible only during and after the regime of Constantine the great, for he favoured the Christian religion and its adherents. During his regime, religious tolerance was granted. Those Christians who were persecuted during the past benefited during this era.

Two factors added to the particular flavour of the concept of hero during the medieval era. One was the tension between Islam and Christianity. The Christian religion was being challenged by Islam, so it became important to the Christian world to recognize the military prowess as important and essential. Therefore, the virtues of the warrior and the saint were combined in the middle ages. The twelfth century battlefields saw many eminent churchmen fighting courageously but they were far from being saints (Bolgar, 1972). Many epics where the Christian hero confronted his Islamic counterpart became popular throughout the Christianized Europe. The old French Chanson de Geste from the Chanson de Roland, the Spanish Cid, the Byzantine Digenis Akritas and the Turkish Danismend (from the point of view of the Turks) are some of them.

The second change was that in the physical appearance of the hero/warrior himself. Due to the technical inventions of the Middle Ages, heavy cavalry came into existence in Europe. Now the hero was the armoured knight on horseback. The knightly hero became the most popular figure in the medieval era. The basic hero motif in the Old German Nibelungenlied and the Arthurian tales of Old Welsh origin took on a Christianized direction in their theme, emphasizing not only chivalry but also a spiritual triumph. The final edition of the Grail narratives shows the hero not as the 'foolish
knight' of the Welsh telling but as a Christian iconic figure of spiritually triumphant perfect Christian knight (Goetinck, 1975).

The Christianization of the Celtic heroes was dealt with in a different manner. The Celtic heroes like Cu Chulainn and king Conchobar mac Nessa are received from the dead and taken into the Christian paradise as national icons (Crowe, 1871).

The Reformation brought about the fragmentation of the Christian world. The Protestant reformers were questioning the authority and the hierarchical powers of the Pope. Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus, the humanist of the fifteenth century projected a new type of heroism based on the Christian ideals, advocating social awareness. Erasmus in his Enchiridion Militis Christiani (1503) outlines the tasks of this 'new hero'. 'It is to teach the ignorant, to lift the fallen, to comfort the unhappy and to help him meet labours'. Along with these qualities, a hatred for war was popularized by the humanist. War was de glamorized and the warrior was, in Erasmus's words, a 'parasite, scoundrel, thief, murderer ... ...the dregs of the people' (Bolgar, 1972, p137). The only acceptable warfare was that against one's passions. Frei Heitor Pinto of Portugal put forth the argument that there was no heroism but a spiritual one.

The Reformation also led to a religion based on heroism, self-sacrifice, martyrdom as well as to a God-justified heroic violence. This brought in the concept of the hero being presented in the anti heroic form. Failed kings and successful villains began to replace the older heroic themes and values (Miller, 2002).

The new Christian hero was 'humble, practical, studious, devoted to the Bible, soberly wedded, zealous in the performance of good deeds... ...he was the type of man most readily found in the lower middle class, estimable but not spectacular' (Bolgar, 1972, p136). If he did fight battles, it was not because he loved it or fought for his personal glory. The warrior was engaged in battle only because he was a patriot and he fought to defend his own country and religion.
3.2.5 Hero in the Renaissance Period

By the 14th century, Europe had become alive to nationalism and patriotism. A trend that was not to be found in a medieval Europe. This was yet another change in the make-up of the hero. The interest of the state was placed before self-interest or even personal salvation. Petrarch was well ahead of his time in creating his Post Renaissance hero Africanus as a patriot and statesman.

The revival of classical learning during the Renaissance led to the recollection and the imitation of the old classical themes. The ancient heroic mode once again became popular. Another feature of the Renaissance Europe added to the popularity of this old classical heroism. This was the era in which most of the European nations were engaged in expanding their territories and building empires. This was a real kind of adventure that gave ample scope for a heroic quest that paralleled the ancient heroic themes. The discoveries of new lands and their conquest, the wealth that was found and brought from Africa and Asia gave the possibility for the European mind to slip back into the traditional epic/heroic mode. The Europeans of the conquest could thus assume and imitate a heroic role although they might or might not extend the comparable heroic honour to their opponents whose thought world was often more truly congruent with the ancient warrior that the Europeans merely thought to imitate (Miller, 2002).

Camoens, Tasso and Ariosto based their epics on the actual events. The Lusiads (Portuguese: Os Lusladas meaning sons of Lusus, i.e., the Portuguese) narrates the dramatic tale of Vasco da Gama's discovery of a sea route to India. In the process of this narration, the entire history of the 'sons of Lusus' is told. Camoens relies heavily on Virgil for both the structure and the theme of his national epic. Os Lusladas is regarded as the first epic to speak of the modern world (Dictionary of World Biography, 1998). Ariosto's Orlando Furioso is the retelling of the old French epic of Roland. It tells of the legendary war fought by Charlemagne against the Saracens. The love of Roland and Angelica and how he loses his wits when he finds out his love has been unfaithful to him,
also form a major part of the epic. This epic is considered as the fullest expression of the Italian high Renaissance (Carne-Ross, 1983).

Tasso's Gerusalemme liberata (Jerusalem Delivered) is another major literary work of the Renaissance. It is about the conquest of the first Crusades. In all these epics romance found equal emphasis as heroism. Though heroism was thriving in real life in Europe, in the literary field the heroes were ardent lovers rather than brave warriors. Heroes and heroism were finding it difficult to survive in the literary world even though chivalry and adventure were alive in every nook and corner of Europe.

3.2.6 Decline of the Epic Hero

During the 17th century the debasing of the hero was deliberately taken up by the writers. The 17th century writers 'began systematically to puncture the bubble of heroism' (Wardropper, 1972, p205) through satire. A comic attitude was adopted towards the traditional hero. The hero was being degraded through deliberate ambiguities and puns by the authors. Gradually the chivalric concept of the hero becomes extinct in this age and the anti-hero becomes predominant. Satire became the main trend in the writings of this age. If the hero was not directly satirized, his circumstances were inverted and his environment was sullied. This was the main technique adopted in works like Don Quixote and Poem of the Cid of the 17th century.

The new hero of the 17th century was 'the out-cast, the beggar, and the man who suffers dishonour gladly' (Wardropper, 1972, p207). This 'innovative recreation' Wardropper attributes mainly to the Spanish writers like Cervantes, Calderon and Grecian. These writers redefined the concept of the epic hero to fit their own age. The new hero is not an ideal type; he is the inversion of the chivalric hero. 'He is not admirable but sympathetic: We cannot admire but we can sympathize with... It is simply that he directs these heroic qualities against a world unfit for heroes' (Wardropper, 1972, pp213-214). The hero of the 17th century becomes 'the obscure hero' who fights in
the battlefield of 'life's misfortunes, isolation, abandonment and poverty and 'sometimes emerges greater than the illustrious one' (Wardropper, 1972, p214).

In the newly urbanised Europe, the idea of hero underwent yet another change. During the 18th century, the hero entered into the new and dominant genre of the novel. The historical and romance novel took the place of the epics. The new hero moves further away form the epic hero; usually represented with a comic heroic display of strength (Chadwick, 1932).

3.3 Biography of the Epic Hero

The epic hero, though separated by time and geographical space, seems to have almost universal biography. If not all, most of them share many common elements in the make-up of their dominant characteristics. Between their birth and death, the heroes of different ages and cultures travel the same path and enjoy, the same social status in different parts of the world.

3.3.1 Birth, Childhood and Youth

The superhuman quality that is associated with the hero is manifested from the very beginning. The birth of the hero is usually atypical, associated with some element of supernaturalness. Rarely is a hero born of a union of two mortal beings. An extraordinary conception is the customary pattern of the hero's birth. The hero is born of a mortal being through the power of the god, or by drinking a magical or sacred potion or he may be born to a virgin who through the supernatural powers may remain a virgin even after the birth of the hero. The divine parentage gives the hero the status of a semi-divine being and the hero naturally is the product of special circumstance
Rama and his brothers and the Tibetan hero, Gesar of Ling are born not through the union of their parents but by their mothers drinking the sacred and magical potion offered to them by the gods, thus the conception and birth are both unusual and superhuman.

Virgin birth is a common motif in the life of the hero in myths and folklore. 'The chapters of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* swarm with nymphs beset by gods in sundry masquerades: Jove as a bull, a swan, a shower of gold. Any leaf accidentally swallowed, any nut, or even the breath of a breeze, may be enough to fertilize the ready womb. The procreating power is everywhere' (Campbell, 1988, p311).

This is true among the Indian traditions too. In *Mahabharata*, we find many *rishis* to have had offspring through the mere thought or at the sight of a beautiful nymph or maiden. The birth of Kirpa and his twin Kirpi as well as Drona occurs in this manner. Vyasa's birth is narrated by his mother Satyavati to Bhishma. She tells how Vyasa was born to her and the sage Parasara. Parasara was struck by the beauty of Satyavati who was ferrying him across the river and makes advances towards her. Satiyavati protests pointing out that she is still a virgin who lives in the care of her father and their union is not possible and mentions that the holy men on the banks of the river would see them. Immediately Parasara creates a fog in the middle of the river where Satyavati unites with the sage. As a boon Parasara says that she will remain a virgin in spite of the fact that she has given birth to his son who is born the very day of their union.

Karna is born of Kunti in her youth when she tries to test the boon that was granted to her by the sage Durvasa. The sun god unites with Kunti, a son is born of this union and Kunti retains her virginity. The mother of Christ too remains a virgin even after the birth of Christ through the power of the spirit of God.

The birth of the Kauravas is unusual in the sense that they are born of the lump of flesh from their mother's womb that was preserved in ghee-filled earthen pots. Bishma is born of the goddess Ganga and Santhanu, a mortal being.
All the significant characters of Iliad have a divine parent. Patroklos is the grandson of Zeus. Telemonian Aias and his brother Teukros are great grandsons of Zeus (Kerenyi, 1978). Nestor, Menestheus and Hermes are the grandsons of Poseidon. Achilles is the son of the divine nymph Thetis and Aeneas (hero of Virgil’s Aeneid) is the son of Aphrodite.

More often than not, the divine parent is involved only in the conception of the hero and soon returns to the heavenly abode. Therefore, in most cases, the mortal father or mother brings up the hero. The God-begotten twice-fathered hero is common both in the Western tradition as well as in the Indian tradition. In the Greek tradition, Theseus and Herakles are clear examples of this type of heroes. Christ fits into this category too; so do Karna and the Pandavas.

Fosterage is another common face in the early life of the hero. He is usually exiled from his own home and grows up in a foster home. In many cases ‘fosterage is undertaken to protect the hero from any number of dangers threatening his extraordinary childhood’ (Miller, 2002, p97-98). Krishna grows up in his foster home in order escape his uncle’s plan to destroy him. Karna grows up in a foster home, not knowing his real parents until almost to the end of his life. According to Welsh sources, the oldest stratum of materials making up the Arthurian legends, Arthur is brought up secretly by Cei, Lord of Caer Gai. (Bromwich, 1961). Beowulf is fostered by his maternal uncle Hrethel. The Irish hero Finn mac Cumail is fostered by the powerful Kenning woman Bodhmall hidden away from his home in the wilderness where he grows up and is trained to be a warrior. The Icelandic hero Killer Glums of the Viga-Glums saga is fostered by his grandfather in Norway. Kheiron, the divine stallion, the half human, half horse, fosters Peleus, Achilles’s father and later Achilles. Moses is brought up in the household of the Egyptian monarch as a prince.

In most of the folkloric tales and epic narratives, the last-born or the youngest son is given the status of the hero. ‘The hero who appears as a younger son seems likely to display a deeper, even three dimensional pattern of heroic action... ’ (Miller, 2002, p101).
The biblical characters such as Jacob and David are the last born and most favoured sons. In the Roman tradition it is Aeneas's last born son Silvius who becomes the king and father of kings (Aenied, VI.763). Krishna, the youngest son of Vausdeva and Devaki, kills Hamsa and delivers the kingdom from his tyranny. Many a time it is the youngest, the smallest and the most insignificant child of the clan who becomes the celebrated hero. However, Rama, the hero of Ramayana, is the eldest son to his father.

The extraordinary engendering of the hero gives him the supernatural physical strength and beauty. The hero is usually 'great' and 'tall'. Hector, Achilles, Telemonian Aias and others are described as 'towering over' the others. Aeneas is described as 'mighty'. In the Persian epic Shahnsuma, the hero Rostam 'grew to the height of eight men' (Shahnsuma, VI. 48). The Celtic heroes Cu Chulainn and Cei, are represented not only of superhuman size but also as shape changers; they could be as tall as the tree of the forest when they pleased. The heroic fitness of the hero is usually associated with animal imagery. Young Digenis is described as flying like an eagle with the swiftness of a leopard and is said to have stated that no horse ever beat him running. The heroic image is further emphasized by the swiftness of his movements. Achilles and Aeneas are described as 'swift footed' while the Indian heroes Rama and Arjuna are noted for the accuracy and the swiftness in their use of the bow and arrow. Bhima is depicted as mighty in height and power. This predominant characteristic of the hero naturally places him in the role of the protector and helper.

The 'slow hero' is also not uncommon in the folklore and legends. Very often we come across a hero who declines to display his heroic traits in his youth. In the Celtic, Norse and Saxon traditions this type of 'unpromising hero' can be commonly detected. Beowulf, the legendary Saxon hero Ulffi of Gesta Danorum, the Norse Ormr Storolfs-Peredur, and the Serb hero Marko Kralijevic are some who would fit into this grouping (cited in Miller, 2002). He, the slow hero who is depicted as lazy and unpromising in his youth, borders on the comical plane because of his naivety and reversals. The typical 'slow hero' reaches his truly heroic status through gradual training and guidance. Uttara, the cowardly prince of Virata is a typical example of this type in the Mahabharata.
3.3.2 Other World Adventure and Companionship

Adventure and companionship goes together in the biography of the epic hero. The heroic energy of the hero takes him into many adventurous exploits. This brings the hero into the 'other world', which functions as the testing ground for his heroic energy. 'In contrast to the kings of the myth who must, by definition of monarchy, stand alone, the hero frequently has partners, companions or supporting cast of characters fitted to his feats though some will be more modest ancillaries in the heroic adventurous enterprises' (Miller, 2002, p102).

Gilgamesh the first human hero is paired with the half-animal half man Enkidu, who shares with him many adventures and finally dies in the palace of Gilgamesh. It is the death of Enkidu that prompts Gilgamesh to take up his journey to the other world in search of immortality. The friendship of Achilles and Patroklos is termed as the most perfect motif of 'warrior's friendship' (Nagy, 1981, p103). The death of Patroklos inspires Achilles to a fury, which drives him to the battlefield. In the Old French Chanson de Geste another heroic pair Roland and Olivier are to be seen. They are referred to as 'Roland's a hero and Oliver is wise' (Chanson de Geste, LXXXVII. 1093). Rama's constant companion is his brother Lakshmana. Together they fight many demons; even when Rama is exiled, Lakshmana opts to go along with his elder brother. In Ramayana, Rama acquires many companions such as Kuha, Hanuman, Sukriva, and Vibhishana who help him in his heroic exploits. Hanuman is one of the most important of such characters, though Hanuman is seen more as a devotee of Rama rather than a companion. Here is a parallel between the half-animal half-human companion of Gilgamesh and the companionship of Rama and Hunuman. Krishna and Arjuna is another pair of companions. Even though the idea of devotee is attributed to Arjuna, the pair is seen more as friends and companions. The aspect of devotee is emphasized mainly in the context of Bhagavad Gita. In the Persian epic Shahnama the only episode of companionship is sullied by betrayal. Bizhan goes adventuring with Gorgin, son of Milad. But Gorgin soon betrays Bizhan to the Turks (Shahnama, X. 153).
The hero's link between the human world and the worlds of the gods is established from his birth, as he is a semi-divine being. Time and again the hero passes into the other worlds with ease and agility. Beginning from Gilgamesh, the heroes in the Greek and Roman traditions, the Celtic and Norse traditions as well as the Indian tradition, are always associated with the other world. 'In the heroic context the otherworld is almost always a dangerous place to explore, with fitting gains or predictable consequences' (Miller, 2002, p156). Gilgamesh takes up the journey to the other world in search of immortality. There he meets his ancestors, Ut Napishtim and his wife and they reveal to him the secret of the gods and help him find the plant that would bring him new life. Gilgamesh finds the plant of youth at the bottom of the sea. He is determined to bring the plant to his own country Erech for himself and others to consume when they grow old. On his return with the plant to his own world, Gilgamesh disembarks for the night. While he takes a bathe in the pool of cool water, the snake that smells the sweet fragrance of the plant steals the plant. Gilgamesh bitterly weeps for this loss and returns to his own kingdom stripped of all illusions.

Numerous Greek heroes enter the 'other world', which provides them a unique heroic adventure. According to the Greek tradition, the otherworld escapades are almost always associated with Hades, the world of the dead, where they encounter their dead ancestors. Perseus entered the otherworld from which he emerged with Medusa's head and Pegasus, the magical winged horse which sprang from the Medusa's severed neck (Kerenyi, 1978). Odysseus did not go down to the dead but they came to him when he sailed to the groves of Persephone following Circe's directions. Teiresias penalizes Odysseus for disturbing the dead, with further wanderings, a violent homecoming and a death far away form his kingdom of Ithaca (Odysseus, XI. 94-224). Heracles travelled to the farthest end of Greece where he enters the underworld through the carven entrance. He travels down the infernal river with the help of the ancient boatman. With sword and bow, he fights the ghosts upsetting the timeless order of the underworld. Heracles fulfils his mission by leading Kerberos back to the king. However, he too has to pay the prize for disturbing the dead for, he is 'greatly altered' and marked with madness.
Odysseus meets his spirit in Hades still weeping over his labours especially for the one which led him to the underworld (Odyssey, XI. 602-626). Theseus along with his friend Perithoos enters the underworld with the intention of carrying away Persephone the queen of Hades. He fails in his mission and is fastened eternally to a stony seat in the dark kingdom of the dead. Orpheus descends to Hades as the other heroes through Tainaron at the uttermost end of Greece. He almost succeeds in recovering his dead wife not through his physical prowess but by the magical power of his music. He too fails in his mission and acquires the enmity of Dionysos (Kerenyi, 1978).

The negative force of the Greek experience is not to be found in Aeneid. Aeneas enters the underworld through the Cumaean cave in Italy. His main aim is to know the imperial political future of Rome. The future of Rome is revealed to Aeneas by the spirit of his father. After the revelation, Aeneas escapes from the underworld through the Ivory Gate (Aeneid, VI. 720).

In the Celtic and the Icelandic-Scandinavian scenario the otherworld is linked with the fairy folk usually referred to as sid. These creatures are only slightly related to human beings though they live in a parallel world with their warriors, women, chieftains and nobles, prone to violence and venery as humans are. They are dangerous supernatural beings whose typical habitat is the hill or hath. The hero often invades this fortress of these otherworld creatures to protect his own people from the sid. Cu Chulainn defends Ulster against Queen Medb's army (Rees & Rees, 1961).

Escapades of the hero into the otherworld can be both dangerous and potentially empowering undertakings. The hero returns from these adventures with a weapon he has won or with special powers, which he had gained by his penetration into the world of the sid. Finn, in one of the tales, acquires great poetic powers; in another, he wins a spear called Birga. But the hero has to pay a price for such gains. Finn at one point loses his virile energy and when it is restored, he attains premature old age (Nagy, 1958).
In the Indian epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* a whole host of otherworld beings encounters the heroes, some of them are, Rudras, Adityas, Vasus, Maruts, Gandharvas, Apsaras, Rakshasas and Nagas. The Rudras, Adityas, Vasus, Maruts, Gandharvas and Apsaras are celestial beings who are endowed with magical and artistic powers. Though they live in the heavenly abode, they often enter this world to sport among the woods and watercourses. They frequently challenge the mortals, entice them and form alliance with them.

In *Mahabharata* Chitrasena, the Gandharva chief, challenges Arjuna and fights with him. Arjuna defeats him in battle but releases him; as a reward Chitrasena gifts Arjuna with his magical powers as well as a set of untiring horses. The Apsaras are the celestial dancers who are often sent to the earth by the gods to distract the great *rishis* with their beauty. Many powerful and beautiful offsprings are born of these union between the *rishis* and the Apsaras.

The Rakshasa and Asuras are demonic beings. They are usually associated with evil powers opposing the gods and men. The Raksasas are depicted as superhuman beings with magical and shape-shifting powers. They usually live and hunt in the deep forest. Most of them are cannibals who terrorise the sages who withdraw into the forests to lead a secluded life. As in the other epic traditions the heroes of the Indian epics too engage in battle with the Rakshasa. Visvamitra sought the assistance of young Rama to protect the sages in the forest from the provocation of the Rakshasas. Bhima more than once redeems villagers and forest dwellers form the tyranny of Rakshasas by wrestling with them and killing them. Rama's great battle is against the Rakshasa king Ravana who abducts Sita.

Not all Rakshasas and Asuras are projected as evil beings. Bhima falls in love with Hindumba, a Raksasasi, and has a son Ghatotkacha who like his mother is a Rakshasa. He assists the Pandavas while they journey in the forest by carrying the weary travellers in his powerful arms. In the Kurukshetra war, the Kaurava army is devastated by him.
Maya the Asura who was saved by Arjuna from the burning Kandava forest rewards the Pandavs by building a magnificent bejewelled palace for Yudhishthira.

Ravana, who is the antagonist of Rama, is portrayed as a great musician and an ardent devotee of Siva. He attains his immense powers through the great austerities he undertook. Vibhishana one of the brothers of Ravana fights on the side of Rama in his battle against Ravana. Mandothari, the wife of Ravana, is portrayed as a woman of great piety and knowledge.

3.3.3 Quest

Quest is one of the most important aspects in the biography of the hero. In fact, many scholars look for the aspect of quest in order to identify the hero. Quest is the 'deepest deep structure of the tales directing the hero to go out, ask, find out, fight for, take and run' (Burkert, 1979). The quest of the hero takes him from his own environment into the other world. The hero enters strange and dangerous lands. The stage for the quest is usually a wilderness or a wasteland. This provides a suitable arena for the non-human and supernatural forces the hero has to encounter in his quest. These forces help him and enable him to strive and gain victory. 'The hero comes back from this mysterious adventure, with the power to bestow boons on his fellow men' (Campbell, 1993).

The quest stands as a symbol of the maturation of the hero. Miller identifies the sequence of separation, testing and reintegration as common to the quest as well as to 'the rites that mark the passage between ascriptive childhood or adolescence and full male adulthood' (Miller, 2002, p166). The quest concludes in the recognition of the hero's special character, usually the hero's rightful kingship or the hand of a maiden or an ambiguous reward. However, not all heroes come out as victors at the end of the quest. In his quest for the Golden Fleece, Jason, the hero, is caught in the will of an otherworld woman and finally made into a feeble and shameful person. Oedipus' quest for his own identity leads him to a terrible end where he and his family are destroyed. Nevertheless,
these and other such heroes, because of their nature as heroes, had no other option but to pursue their quest even though it brought about destruction to them.

In most of the Western Medieval narratives especially those connected with Arthurian tales, we find the sacred quest theme. In these tales, the quest becomes more important than the hero himself. These legends were mainly monastic versions and legends transformed by the dominant religious ideas of the middle ages. In these narratives the characteristics of the hero are entirely transformed, he is 'purified' and completely spiritualized. The main thrust of all these tales is the discovery or recovery of the Holy Grail. Peredur of the Welsh tradition is changed to Percival the Innocent, a perfect and sinless knight. Though the whole fabric of the traditional texts could not be changed, two important transformations occurred in the monastic versions. The other world is represented as demonized and the woman's beauty, which was the symbol sovereignty's achievement and prize, becomes the symbol of sin and temptation.

The sequential quest and the eccentric quest are the two quest types that Miller (2002) analyses. The sequential quest finds its perfect example in the Welsh tale of Culhwch and Olwen. In this narrative the king's son, Culhwch quests after the daughter of the chief giant. The giant lists a series of demands to be accomplished before the king's son could marry his daughter. It is Arthur instead of Culhwch who undertakes these quests and accomplishes them so that his kinsman could marry the giant's daughter. The medieval courtly epics and the Georgian romance of chivalry The Lord of the Panther Skin come under the eccentric quest type; dealing with love, loyalty and knightly chivalric obligations as in the romance tales. Here the other world and the supernatural realm have a limited space.

The heroic helper, the king and the woman are typical elements that form the pattern of the questing hero. The heroic helper is the strong-armed warrior who shares the hero's adventures and helps him in his quest. His martial skills and tricksterish talents become the essential components in the hero's quest and victory. The heroic helper may belong to the animal world too. The animal helpers are usually the reversal of the animal
monsters that would hinder him in his quest. The king is another familiar character in the adventure of the hero. He acts as either a 'bad king' who the hero has to fight and defeat in order to achieve his goal; or a 'good king' who helps the hero in his quest and fitly rewards him in the end.

The woman will take three different types of role in the quest sequence of the hero. First, she is seen as the goal of the quest or the treasure that the hero seeks out in his quest. She may also be the reward that awaits the hero at the end of the quest. In the second type of role, the woman will function as an assistant in the quest. She will help the hero directly or his heroic companion. In this role, the woman has hidden and magical knowledge or she possesses a special secret that will aid the hero in his quest. The third role that is taken up by the woman is the reversal of the second one, where she is the enemy, the temptress, the sorceress or the evil queen who waits to vanquish or destroy the hero even after he has achieved his goal.

3.3.4 Death of the Hero

In the Greek tradition, the hero chooses early death. A good death for any hero is a battle death. Mary Douglas states that, 'part of the mysterious and lasting potency of the heroic individual comes from his voluntary submission to death: the hero wills himself to accept and even welcome the danger of death, and at the very end to don the lainon khitona, the 'coat of stone', one of Homer's many striking images of the end of heroic life' (Douglas, 1966, pp177-178). To die in battle is the most welcomed end to the heroic biography. 'Dying through illness was once thought as discreditable... ...by individuals who were dedicated to warfare' (Saxon Gesta Danorum, VII. 247). Alexander the Great, when he fell ill in Babylon is said to have lamented that he should die 'taking a bath' and not by the hand of an enemy (Rufus, 1956). The Icelandic hero Kormaks, though dying of the fatal wound he has received in battle, repents the fact that he has to face 'straw death' on his bed (Hollander, 1949). In the Icelandic and Scandinavian sagas are found many examples of bad death. 'These heroic victims as revenants still pursue the strenuous careers cut short by their supposed death' (Miller, 2002, p130).
Those heroes who face bad death return in some physical form to meet out violence. Among the Greek heroes, Akteon and Orestes can be cited for bad death. Sometimes the 'undead' hero returns to actively help his people in battle. This sleeping king or hero is usually a historical figure to whom legend and folklore have been attached. The best known such heroes are Charlemagne, the Byzantine emperor Constantine and King Arthur. These heroes are usually connected with the legend of the king or a powerful figure who after his death is transformed into a completely different person such as an unknown, mysterious holy man (Davidson, 1978).

Throughout the lifespan of the hero, a willing submission to death can be traced. 'That part of the mysterious and lasting potency of the heroic individual comes from his voluntary submission to death. The hero wills himself to accept and even to welcome the danger of death' (Douglas, 1966). The self-willed death has its own trials too. Hadingus, the Saxon hero, is given a boon 'never to die except of his own will'. This boon leads him to old age and weakness. Finally tired of his own prolonged life and adventure Hadingus hangs himself. In another version Hadingus tricks his young companion into killing him (Saxon Gesta Danorum, VII. 252).

Bhishma is given self-willed death as a boon for the great sacrifice he made by deciding to remain unmarried so that his father could marry the woman he loved. Bhishma remains alive in his bed of arrows for fifty-six days, till he feels that the right moment has come for him to depart from this world. In the death of Krishna we see the framework of 'voluntary submission to death'. Thirty six years after the Kurukshetra war Krishna foresees that the end has come for the Yadavas as well as for himself. He prepares himself to face the end. When the Yadava clan have killed themselves, Krishna withdraws into the forest. 'Having restrained all his senses, speech, and mind Krishna laid himself down in high yoga' (Mahabharata, 16.4.21). He lets himself be killed by a shaft of a common hunter.
Near death and resurrection is another frequent theme in the biography of the hero. In *The Epic of Creation*, Marduk is resurrected from the lower world, with the living waters and is reunited with his wife Zarpanitum (Langdon, 923.). This is enacted in the New Year rituals of the Babylonian people. Among the Egyptian rituals of spring festival, the death and resurrection of Osiris is associated with the renewal of vegetation. Like in the Babylonian tradition, Osiris depends on his wife to lead him from death to life. This goes back to an earlier Sumerian tradition where the goddess Ishtar wanders in search of Tammuz lost in the annual death of vegetation (Levy, 1953).

In the *Ramanayana*, Rama and Lakshmana are attacked by the serpent arrows of Indrajit and die but they are soon revived by Garuda who neutralizes the serpent arrows. When again they are attacked by Indrajit, inflicted with magic wounds and die Hanuman revives them with the herbs he brings from the summit of Himalayan Kailas. Among the Pandavas, all of them face near death and resurrection at least once in their life. In the lac house episode, all the Pandavas are believed to be dead. The burnt bodies of the Nishada woman and her five sons are taken to be those of Kunthi and the Pandavas and Bhishma and the other Kuru elders perform their funeral rites. Everyone other than Vidura believes the Pandavas to be dead. When they are recognized in the *svayamvara* of Durapadi it is almost like a resurrection. During the Vanavasa, Bhima is revived from the coils of a python by Yudhishthira. All the Pandavas except Yudhishthira face death at the lakeside by not heeding the warning of the Yaksha crane. The god of justice resurrects them after he is satisfied with the worthiness of Yudhishthira. Arjuna faces death and is resurrected thrice in the *Mahabharata*. In his encounter with the mountain man Kirata, Arjuna is killed and is revived by Siva who rewards him with the celestial weapon the Pasupatha. Later in life Arjuna dies at the hands of his son Babhravahana and is revived by a special gem at the insistence of Ulupi.

The biography of the hero ends in death, which holds not terror but the way to immortality, fame and glory. The heroes know that death will be followed by fame and glory, which in turn will make them immortal. The knights of Nibelungenlied fight for the 'praiseful honour'. Roland fights to protect his 'good name' and warns his men to fight
in a manner that no 'malicious song' is ever sung about them. The Irish heroes Cu Chulainn and Fergus mac Roich are 'renowned in song' and 'famed in song'. (Miller, 2002, p132)

'The hero imagined as a great man is conceived as one who lifts or forces himself into a dominant place in his society and epoch, and then compels that society and time into new, even unique historic patterns; in the process he will, in all likelihood, push aside older and worn out representatives of the principles of power and authority - such as tired and dynastic monarchs' (Miller, 2002, p20).

3.4 The Protagonist

In the original usage, the word 'hero' was used to refer to the main character in the epic. The word 'protagonist' was used to refer to the main actor in a play. The source of the word protagonist is the ancient Greek theatre. It is derived from the two Greek words 'protas' and 'agonistes' meaning 'first in importance' and 'actor' respectively. The actor who took up the main role was referred to as the protagonist of the play. In modern usage, the word protagonist has moved away from its original meaning. It no longer refers to an actor. It has now become a synonym to the word hero. It is used to identify the main character in any literary form, be it epic, drama, novel, short story or cinema. However, in the current use, the term protagonist is preferred because in many of today's compositions, the leading character does not have the qualities of the traditional hero and the readers may find it difficult to identify that character as a hero (Baldick, 1990).

The earliest Greek theatre consisted of the chorus and the leader of the chorus (Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopedia, 1971). The chorus danced and sang the dithyrambs or the odes and acted out a dramatic narrative representation of the events from legends and myths. In 530 BC, Thespis introduced an actor to the Greek theatre. This actor, called the protagonist, was separate from the chorus. While the chorus was involved in singing and dancing, the protagonist delivered the prologue and set speeches. With the introduction of the protagonist 'dialogue became possible, with dialogue there came the

By 485 BC, Aeschylus, the great literary figure in the Greek theatre, introduced the second actor - the deuteragonist. Among the many other innovations he brought into Greek theatre are the more imposing costumes, elaborate stage machinery like cranes, and painted scenery (McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of World Drama, 1984). The addition of the second character made it possible to bring into the plays true dialogue. Dialogue became the most important part in the plays of Aeschylus. With the introduction of the second actor, the role of the chorus became more restrained. The actor who took up the second character usually played the role of the antagonist as opposed to the protagonist.

By 470 BC, Sophocles introduced the third actor (tritagonist) and the structure of the Greek drama was completed. It consisted of the chorus and three actors. The introduction of the third character gave the possibility of more intense dialogue and dramatic flexibility. Sophocles also changed the tradition of presenting three different plays for the Dionysian festival. He substituted by presenting three plays with the continuation of the story. He also focussed on a single individual character rather than on a family or a house as his predecessors. It was Sophocles' plays that Aristotle used in his work Poetics for the analysis of drama (Botinelly, 2003).

In the Greek theatre, the dramatic function depended on the chorus and the three actors. The chorus consisted of about 12 – 15 individuals who danced and sang the dithyrambic odes as they moved across (Banham, 1995). They usually represented the crowd, the elders, or the citizens of the country. The main function of the chorus was to narrate the events of the play and comment on them. The actors were responsible for the action of the drama and the interaction of speech was allotted to the actors. The protagonist, being the important actor, was responsible for the main movement of the play. He 'conversed with the leader of the chorus, and by his reports of events occurring off the stage could provide the chorus with materials for fresh songs in new scenes'
The protagonist also functioned as the voice of the dramatist bringing out the ideas that he intended to be expressed by his plays.

When a plot or story line of an epic is simple and straightforward, the character that goes through the 'heroic adventure' can be the main mover of the plot and may function as the voice of the author. In a complex plot, it is possible for the author to separate the hero and the main mover of the plot. Therefore, while the hero is involved in his own function as the subjective character who is concerned with the heroic deeds, the protagonist becomes the objective character who makes the plot move towards its goal, by being the central figure in the action of the plot. Nevertheless, this function need not restrict the central character from being the hero as well as the protagonist of a work. At the same time, it is also possible for the protagonist to take up the central role devoid of any heroic characteristics.

The epic has a wider time span than a drama. Therefore, the author can make use of the role of the protagonist as the pursuer of the goal of the work. The protagonist functions as the chief proponent and the principal driver in the effort to achieve the story's goal (Masterson, 2004).

While the protagonist's movements are towards attaining the goal, his opponent antagonist would function in a manner to hinder the movement of the protagonist. The antagonist's actions will be those that will stop the protagonist's actions. In certain circumstances, these actions of the protagonist and the antagonist will be reversed. When the antagonist has a negative goal the protagonist's function will be to stop the antagonist from achieving it. Here the protagonist will function as the obstacle character.

The epic hero is an archetypal figure who moves within his restricted formula, even though each age imposes its own ideals on him. The epic hero moves from his supernatural birth through his heroic adventures to his self-willed anticipated death. However, the protagonist is not curtailed by such set patterns. The protagonist functions are as derived from his original function in the drama.
3.5 The *Nayaka*

The main male character of a composition is referred to as *nayaka* or *neta* in the Sanskrit literary tradition and *kilavan* or *thalaiwan* in the Tamil literary tradition.

In Sanskrit the detailed study of the *nayaka* is taken up in the treatises on dramaturgy. Bharata's *Natya Sastra* belonging to the 4th or 5th century BC has the earliest study in *nayaka* in detail. Since Sanskrit drama aimed at illustrating the ideal side of life, 'the hero had to be a symbol of nobility possessing the attribute of self control combined with an exalted, gay, calm and haughty character. With loyal submission to the theory, the dramatist had to pick out one of the many models usually drawn from among the princes. brahmanas, ministers, merchants and commandants of the army' (Shekhar, 1977). The Sanskrit theorists, in their detailed classification, have as many as sixty four types of heroes according to their nature and station in life.

Bharata has allocated one whole chapter in the *Natya Sastra* to the detail analysis of the types of various characters and their qualities. He divided the characters initially into three general types. They are the *uttama* - superior, *madhyama* - middling and *adhama* - inferior type. According to Bharata, only the superior and middling type of characters are eligible to be considered as the *nayaka*. The inferior character is dismissed after the general classification.

These three types of characters are further analysed in detail. 'The superior male character is a man with full control over his sense organs. He is wise and skilled in various arts and crafts. He never utters lies. He is prone to enjoy pleasures. He is willing to help people and console poor people. He is conversant with all *sastras*, grave, liberal, patient and munificent' (*Natya Sastra*, 39. 22-28).

The *madhyama* character is an expert in understanding the manners of other people, proficient in arts and *sastras* and makes a living thereby. He possesses wisdom and sweetness of manner.
The *adhama* character uses harsh words, is ill-mannered and base in his mental attitudes. He is irascible and violent. He engages in useless activities. He is haughty in manner and ungrateful. He does not hesitate to dishonour venerable persons. He is covetous of women and will steal others' possessions, is fond of quarrels and treacherous.

According to Bharata only the superior - *uttama* and the middling - *madhyama* characters are qualified to come under the four-fold category of *nayaka*. The inferior character is not in anyway taken for further study. The four-fold division of *nayaka* is as follows:

*Dhiroddhata:* The (vehement) one with self-control. He is noble in bearing and is the esteemed one. The character of gods comes under this category.

*Dhiralalita:* The frivolous or light-hearted, possessing self-control. Kings and royal dignitaries are depicted under this category.

*Dhiroddatta:* The noble and exalted one. The esteemed one with self-control. Ministers and commanders-in-chief are classified here.

*Dhiraprasanta:* The quiescent one with self-control, the noble and calm personality. *Brahmanas* and merchants belong to this category.

The four-fold division of Bharata's analysis on *nayaka* has been treated in many different manners and styles in the following ages. The later theoreticians have classified *nayaka* under diverse schemes.

*Agnipurana* the work of an unknown author, believed to have been composed later than *Natya Sastra* classifies the hero in a different manner. In this work, the hero is looked upon as *alankaravilhas* of the *srongar rasa*. Therefore, the classification of the
nayaka is based on the relationship of the hero with the heroine. This again is a four-fold classification as follows:

anukula: the faithful
dakshina: the courteous or gallant one whose attention is divided among many.
satha: the deceitful or the sly one
dhrista: the shameless or saucy one.

Dhananjaya, an important authoritative theorist in Sanskrit literary field, attributes eight qualities to the hero. These eight sattviba gunas or physical qualities as given in his work Dasarupaha are as follows (Dasarupaha, II. 10):

sobha: beauty of character
vilasa: vivacity
màdhuraya: equanimity
gambhiraya: poise
sathairaya or dairya: firmness
tejas: sense of humour
lalitaya: light-heartedness
audhraya: magnanimity

Bhoja, in his Kavyaalankara, classifies the nayaka into several divisions based on six characteristics.

1. According to the qualities of the hero he is identified as uttama, madhyama and adhama.
2. According to general characteristics, he is identified as dhiroddhata, dhiralalita, dhirodatta and dhiraprasanta.
3. On the basis of nayaka's relationship with the heroine as anukula, dakshina, satha and dhrista.
4. On the basis of his nature as sattvika, raja and tamas.
5. On the basis of his relative position and importance in the plot as nayaka, prattinayaka, upanayaka and anunayaka.

6. According to the number of wives the nayaka has: aradharana and sadharana.

Bhoja also draws a parallel between the classification of Natya Sastra and Agnipurana in associating the four types of classification of Bharata with the srungar rasa (Radesagupta, 1967, cited by Upadhyaya, 1987).

Dharma srungara in dhiroddhata
Artha srungara in dhirodatta
Kama srungara in dhirolalita
Mosha srungara in dhiraprasanta.

Bharata in Natya Sastra gives a very simple and clear formula to identify the hero in a composition. He says 'if there are many characters who qualify as hero, the one who undergoes great difficulties and miseries by dint of the energetic ultimately attains exalted position is the nayaka' (Natya Sastra, 38). Bharata accepts the possibility of more than one hero. If there are two or more characters that fit into the above description of nayaka, he who is the best of them becomes the nayaka, says Bharata.

Hemachandra in Kavyanusasana identifies the nayaka as the one who enjoys the most exalted position with a personality that towers over that of others. Further, he states that the one who enjoys the benefit of efforts and in whose interest all the movements are directed and culminated becomes the nayaka (Kavyanusasana, VI. 1)).

3.6 The Thalaivan

Tholkappiyam, the ancient Tamil literary text dated not later that 300 BC, analyses the character of hero (kilavan or thalaivan, in Tamil) from another point of view altogether. The thalaivan in Tholkappiyam is classified according to the region and the specific function of that region. The social status of the thalaivan is not taken into consideration.
at all. What defines him is the unique ethical status he occupies - his nobility and his resolve (Selvamony, N., 1998. Persona in Tolkappiyam, International Institute of Tamil Studies, Chennai.). The *thalaivan* is seen as a superhuman being in *puraththinai iyal* which deals with the public life of the hero. In the *akaththinai iyal* which deals with the private life - love and marriage - of the hero, he is depicted in a normal human stature, without any superhuman qualities.

The qualities ascribed to the hero in *Tholkappiyam* are as follows:

1. *Perumai* - greatness. The essential greatness of the hero lies in him being the ideal lover and husband in *akaththinai* and being the ideal warrior in *puraththinai*.

2. *Uram* - strength. This helps him to win the hand of his lover and build a good home in his private life in *akaththinai*. In his life as a warrior in *puraththinai* it helps him to win several combat strategies. His strength also lies in his mental training and discipline which helps to prove his resourcefulness.

3. *Uruvu* - appearance. *Tholkappiyam* describes the physical appearance of the *thalaivan* as radiant as the sun and that decked with all the fineries equal to a king. The physical appearance of the *thalaivan* proclaims his physical strength and the ability to use all the weapons, the spear and bow and an impressive chariot adds to the appearance of the hero.

4. *Nirutta Kama Viyal* - disciplining the senses by which the objects of desire are enjoyed. Winning the hand of the lover and vanquishing the opponent in battle are not seen as the sole aim of the private and public lives of the hero. The means that are taken to achieve these ends are as important as the aims themselves.

5. *Neri* - stability of character. This helps the *thalaivan* restrain his passions in both love and war. There is no breach of faith in his private life, as the hero possesses this quality. In warfare, *neri* – the stability of character - prevents the hero from making the war an act of brutal killing. The war becomes an ethical combat.

6. *Arul* - being compassionate. The graciousness of the hero is compared to the elements in nature; the endurance of the earth, the deliberation of the sky, the strength of the wind,
the wrathfulness of the fire and the grace of water. Feeling the distress of others and being compassionate towards non-human beings is also considered as *arul*.

7. *Unarvu* - understanding gained through the senses. This helps the hero to respond to his surroundings in totality. It helps him to be in close harmony with nature and aesthetic objects.

8. *Thiru* - wealth. The hero is in possession of cattle and land and other wealth. He makes it his endeavour to increase this wealth in order to share it with others, whether it be food or booty a warrior acquires in war.

These eight qualities are possessed by the hero both in his private life as a lover and husband and in his public life as a warrior.

### 3.7 Twentieth Century Heroes and Icons: A Case Study

3.7.1 Hundred Remarkable People, Twenty Heroes and Icons

Towards the end of the last century, the Time magazine of America published details of what it thought as 100 remarkable people of the 20th century. In the opinion of the magazine these are the people who have 'for better or worse - most influenced the last 100 years' (TIME Magazine: TIME 100 – People of the Century, 2003, p1). They were divided into five groups namely; 'Leaders & Revolutionaries', 'Artists & Entertainers', 'Builders & Titans', 'Scientists & Thinkers' and 'Heroes & Icons' and 20 persons were selected for each group. Finally, one among the hundred was selected as the Person of the Century. Albert Einstein was the Person of the Century with Franklin Roosevelt and Mohandas Gandhi as the runners-up.

Although not everybody will agree with the full list given by the magazine, I believe that most will agree with many in the list. I have chosen to analyze the heroes and icons selected by the Time magazine for this study mainly because this seems to be the only available major document that lists the persons it considers as the heroes or icons of the 20th century and gives their credentials. I have included the phrase 'a case study' in the title because I have reasons to believe - and some of these will become apparent as one
goes through this text - that this list has an American bias. It should be noted that among the epic heroes discussed in Sections 3.2 and 3.3, some may be real characters, some legendary and some others imaginary. However, their stories are told in the epic form. The heroes discussed here are real persons and the information given about them are true facts.

Apart from the basic criterion for inclusion in this list given in the first paragraph of this section, each of the five groups has its own yardstick for selection into that group. The twenty 'Heroes and Icons' of the twentieth century are the 'people who articulate the longings of the last 100 years, exemplifying courage, selflessness, exuberance, superhuman ability and amazing grace' (TIME 100: Heroes and Icons, 2003, p1). This criterion for selection imposes one condition on both heroes and icons that they should articulate the longings of the last 100 years, which basically means the sincere and deep desires of the people who lived in that century. In this sense, the present day hero deviates from many of the epic or legendary heroes who seem to have the personal glory or the glory of a nation or tradition in mind.

Hero or Icon?

The question that arises first is whether one can separate heroes from icons in this list. To understand the thinking of the publishers we look at the defining motto for other groups. While it seems possible to separate the members in some groupings, it is impossible in others. For example the selected twenty 'Artists and Entertainers' are the 'pioneers of human expression who enlightened and enlivened us' (TIME 100: Artists and Entertainers, 2003, p1). One may roughly assume that artists are those who enlighten us and entertainers are the ones who enliven us. However, in the case of 'Builders and Titans' where 'twenty innovators who changed how the world works' are selected, both the builders and titans have only one quality, namely, being innovators (TIME 100: Builders and Titans, 2003, p1). Therefore, it seems that one has to look into the possibility of separation in a group based on its own merits.
Different authors wrote the texts about the different persons in the list. Let us see which of the persons given in the list of 'Heroes and icons' are explicitly referred to as a 'hero' or as an 'icon' or as both by the authors.

Muhammad Ali (former boxing champion), Edmund Hillary & Tenzing Norgay, Charles Lindburg (who made the first non-stop solo flight across the Atlantic), Emmeline Pankhurst (leader of suffragist movement in Great Britain), Jackie Robinson (a baseball player 'who shattered baseball's colour barrier') and Andrei Sakharov (Soviet Physicist who campaigned for disarmament and democracy) are explicitly described as heroes by the corresponding authors.

Billy Graham (American evangelist), Harvey Milk ('first openly gay person elected to any substantial political office'), Marilyn Monroe (greatly admired sex symbol of American cinema), Rosa Parks (a black American woman who, in a 'simple act of protest galvanized America's civil rights revolution'), Princess Diana and Bill Wilson (founder of Alcoholics Anonymous) are openly referred to as icons (or by a synonym, symbol) in the text.

Che Guevara and Pele (renowned soccer player) are each called a hero and an icon. While Che Guevara is explicitly referred to by these two words, Pele is described as a hero and a 'mythic figure' by the contributors to this compilation.

Anne Frank, Hellen Keller, The Kennedys, Bruce Lee and Mother Teresa are not explicitly referred to as heroes or as icons in the text.

Hence, it appears that the authors of the texts did not take into consideration the exercise of separating a hero from an icon. In the following section, an attempt is made to see whether it is possible.
Defining Hero and Icon

According to the nominal definition of the Concise Oxford Dictionary (1999), a hero is 'a person, typically a man, who is admired for (his) courage or outstanding achievements'. Moreover, an icon is 'a person or thing regarded as a representation symbol or as worthy of veneration'. The dictionary gives clearly identifiable qualities of a hero but does not define an icon in a similar way.

An outstanding achievement requires some superhuman ability. Hence among the five secondary qualities given by the magazine to define heroes and icons we can assume that 'courage' and 'superhuman ability' resulting in an outstanding achievement point mainly to the hero. (The primary one is that heroes and icons should articulate the longings of the last 100 years.)

Therefore, the other three secondary qualities, namely, selflessness, exuberance and amazing grace should point to an icon. Let us consider selflessness first. Clearly a person showing concern with the needs and wishes of others more than that for his/her own may be considered as worthy of veneration or as a representation symbol. Some heroes are also unselfish but selflessness alone does not qualify one as a hero - there should be associated courage or superhuman ability.

Possession of the other two qualities, exuberance and amazing grace alone will not make one worthy of veneration nor as a representation symbol. One can only say that public masses will get attracted to those who possess these two qualities and hence they have the potential to become icons by being role models. However, the importance of these two qualities in defining an icon is arguable.

One has to be careful that a person included in the list of 'Heroes and Icons' may possess qualities representative of the two types. This will become clear as the list is discussed in detail. Nevertheless, one example may be given here. The former US President John F. Kennedy (who is included in the list under the title 'The Kennedys')
may be said to possess courage, exuberance and grace but not superhuman ability nor selflessness. Thus, he has part of a hero's qualities and part of an icon's qualities. Further, a hero, who possesses courage and superhuman ability, may also be selfless or cheerful or graceful. Similarly, an icon can also be courageous or may have achieved some superhuman tasks. Hence, some of the persons given in this list may qualify as heroes, some as icons and others may possess qualities characteristic of both types. In some cases, it may be difficult to make this separation. In other cases, the selected person may possess some important qualities not mentioned in the selection criteria.

In this study, therefore, an attempt will be made to identify the special qualities possessed by each person or a group of persons in the list. An effort will also be made to identify who can be considered a hero, who an icon and who possesses qualities of both types. This study shows that in some cases it is easier to decide who cannot be considered as a hero, who not as an icon and who not as either.

'The American G.I.': An Exception

Before delving into the detailed study of the qualities that distinguish the persons listed in 'Heroes and Icons', one point has to be made. Among the list of 'Heroes and Icons' given in the Time magazine one figure is not taken for this study. It is 'The American G.I.' included in the second place in the list of twenty 'Heroes and Icons'. (This term is generally used to denote the US soldier.) There are two main reasons for not taking the American G.I. for this study. First one is that it does not denote a single person nor a small group of persons where the individuals can be identified and their qualities scrutinized. Neither does the general term 'The American G.I.' represent a certain well-defined set of qualities. Further - this is the second reason - the sweeping remarks made in the text describing 'The American G.I.' make it difficult for one to consider the text for serious discussion. The following are three of the claims the author of this text makes (Powell, 2003, p2).
"For most of those G.I.s, World War II was the adventure of their lifetime. Nothing they would ever do in the future would match their experiences as the warriors of democracy, saving the world from its own sanity."

"The G.I.s were willing to travel far away and give their lives, if necessary, to secure the rights and freedoms of others. Only a nation such as ours, based on a firm moral foundation, could make such a request of its citizens."

"As this century closes, we look back to identify the great leaders and personalities of the past 100 years. We do so in a world still troubled, but full of promise. That promise was gained by the young men and women of America who fought and died for freedom."

Among the other nineteen in the list, Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay (the first to reach Mount Everest) are considered as a single entry and it is so with 'The Kennedys'. In this study also they will be considered as single entries.

3.7.2 A Study of the Personalities

It proves to be an uphill task to set apart the heroes from the icons in this 'list'. In some of the cases it may be said that the concerned person is more of the heroic type and in some cases he/she is of the iconic type. It is also possible in some cases to say that the person is not of the heroic type and similarly in some cases he/she is not of the iconic type. However, in some others it is difficult to make any of these distinctions. Hence no attempt will be made in this study for a rigorous separation of all those in the list into heroes and icons.

Superhuman achievement

Charles Lindburg has one great achievement to his credit, the first ever non-stop solo flight from New York to Paris when he was only 25 years old (Lindburg, 2003). This is superhuman in 1927 and shows his extraordinary courage and determination. Later in his life, he became an environmentalist but he is not included in this 'list' in that capacity. Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay are remembered for being the first to conquer Mount Everest (Morris, 2003)). This requires courage, determination and, to some
extent, superhuman physical strength. They are also remembered for being ambassadors of good will and good work but that is a minor point.

These three men won the admiration of the people for being the first in an important physical feat and may, therefore, be called heroes.

Sacrificing one's own life

Mother Teresa gave a new life to street children, orphans and lepers and tried hard to give a dignified death to the terminally ill destitute (Mukherjee, 2003). All this she did with unsurpassed selflessness and humility. She possesses 'liveliness' and 'amazing grace' not in an ordinary sense but in a special way at a much higher level that attracted people from all lifestyles to her. She does not have any superhuman physical strength although her mental strength must have been extraordinary. On the balance, the needle points her to the iconic state.

Che Guevara possesses many of the epic hero characteristics. 'Like so many epics, the story of (Che Guevara) who abandoned his profession and his native land to pursue the emancipation of the poor of the earth began with a voyage' (Dorfman, 2003, p1). He was extremely brave and highly skilled in handling weapons. He travelled to different lands to fight against oppression and tyranny. He died young in a violent encounter and obtained 'immortality'. There is one difference between Che Guevara and a typical epic hero. Unlike a typical epic hero who has a companion in his adventures Che Guevara served as a companion to his leader. He did not have a perfect health condition but this was compensated by his skill in the battlefield. With all these epic hero characteristics, Che Guevara is venerated as an icon due to his supreme selflessness and a kind of liveliness with which he infects and inspires others.
Overcoming insurmountable physical or personal obstruction

Helen Keller became blind and deaf at the age of two and went on to become one of the most quoted literary persons by her extraordinary will power. She also articulated social justice (Schuur & Jackson, 2003). These achievements, which she obtained despite the drawback due to her physical disability, have also made her a 'symbol' worthy of following. However, it will be difficult to say that she becomes an icon because of the three qualities deduced from the five given by the Time magazine, that is, due to selflessness, exuberance or amazing grace. Hence, an important conclusion can be derived here. A person may also qualify for an icon by overcoming severe restrictions such as a grave physical disability.

'From the rubble of a wasted life, (Bill Wilson) overcame alcoholism and founded (Alcoholics Anonymous and its) twelve step programme that has helped millions of others to do the same. He started drinking as a soldier at the age of 22 and stopped after seventeen years when alcohol had destroyed his health and career. That change did not come easily. While struggling to give up the habit Bill Wilson realized that 'by helping another alcoholic he could save himself' and devised his 12-step plan. He is also credited with creating 'an enduring blueprint for an organization with maximum individual freedom and no accumulation of power or money' (Cheever, 2003, p3). Obviously, Bill Wilson had a shattered health and is remembered for neither exuberance nor amazing grace. Nevertheless, there is an achievement that is definitely superhuman. His intention of helping others is partly to help himself. In doing so he created a system that will help the whole of humankind. After him similar programmes have been developed for 'eating disorders, gambling, narcotics, debting, sex addiction and for people affected by others' addictions' (Cheever, 2003, p1). Today Bill Wilson is an icon all addicts can follow.

Therefore, as in the case of Helen Keller, Bill Wilson, though possessing heroic superhuman mental strength and not recognized for selflessness, liveliness or grace becomes an icon by overcoming an insurmountable obstruction, in this case a serious addiction.
While Helen Keller stands as a symbol worthy of following for anyone with a physical disability, Bill Wilson shows the possibility of a new life to other addicts. The initial intention of both of them was not to help others but to help their own selves. By overcoming an insurmountable obstruction, one natural and one self-made, they have shed light in the life of many others and have become icons of hope.

Physical attractiveness

There is something common between Princess Diana and Marilyn Monroe apart from their beauty. Ian Buruma, the author of the text on Princess Diana states: 'Diana's eyes, like those of Marilyn Monroe, contained an appeal directed not to any individual but to the world at large' (Buruma, 2003, p2). So they captured the hearts of men and women of the world.

Princess Diana was a 'radiant society beauty' (Buruma, 2003, p3). She is also remembered for her charity work in which she tried to turn the attention of the world towards AIDS patients and landmine victims. She did this although she could have had all the media attention while living a comfortable life in a palace. Princess Anne (now known by her new title Princess Royal) has been the President of the 'Save the Children Fund' since 1970. She works with definite commitment while it may be said that Princess Diana worked out of compassion. However, Princess Anne is not included in the list of 'Heroes and Icons'.

Princess Diana does not possess the qualities of a hero. In the words of the author of the text about her, 'Diana was beautiful...She often looked as if she were on the verge of tears.... Yet she was one of the richest, most glamorous and socially powerful women in the world' (Buruma, 2003, p2). This combination may also have attracted men and women across the world towards her.
Marilyn Monroe 'is the most delectable sex symbol of the century' (Rudnick, 2003, p1). Though she got this status through cinema, she 'wasn't quite an actress'. Rightly, she is not included in the list of 'Artists and Entertainers' where Marlon Brando and Charlie Chaplin have found a place (TIME 100: Artists and Entertainers, 2003). Having committed suicide at the age of 36, she does not obviously possess mental strength. Neither did she have any superhuman physical strength. Nevertheless, she had physical attractiveness and a kind of appearance that appealed to everybody. She is included here in the list mainly because of her status as a sex symbol.

Both Princess Diana and Marilyn Monroe fail to fulfil the primary requirement of the Time magazine that is to articulate the longings of the 100 years of the twentieth century. But it is difficult to dispute the fact that they have acquired some iconic status. The appeal of their physical attractiveness is definitely the main reason for it.

Standing up for equality

Emmeline Pankhurst was a woman of extreme courage who lead a movement for women's voting rights at the turn of the twentieth century. In this struggle in which Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters played dominant roles, the protesters faced the kind of oppressions that is unbelievable today (Warner, 2003). It can be rightly said that Emmeline Pankhurst articulated the longings of the women of that day with supreme mental strength and therefore qualifies to be a hero of the twentieth century.

As was mentioned in Section 3.7.1, Harvey Milk was the 'first openly gay person elected to any substantial political office' in America (Cloud, 2003, p1). This was in 1977, when psychiatrists declared homosexuals as mentally ill and judges awarded them prison sentences. A lot of courage was required to come out in the open and to ask for political support. Harvey Milk was unbelievably lively and cheerful despite the mortifications and death threats that followed him and proved that 'a gay person could live an honest life and succeed' (Cloud, 2003, p2)). That was a gigantic task. He was shot dead by an assassin in 1978.
Anyone who looks at a photograph of Rosa Parks will never miss to 'see' her calmness, inner strength and serenity. She was an ordinary woman working as a tailor and leading an ordinary life until one day, at the age of 42, when she refused to give her seat to a white passenger in a city bus. This happened in 1955 in Montgomery in Alabama, US. In 1955, in Montgomery, blacks were required to pay their fare to the driver, then get off and reboard through the back door. Sometimes the bus would drive off before the paid-up customers made it to the back entrance. If the white section was full and another white customer entered, blacks were required to give up their seats and move farther to the back; a black person was not even allowed to sit across the aisle from whites (Dove, 2003, p2).

One December evening in 1955, the white section of a bus became full and a black woman was ordered to give her seat. This had happened many times before but this time the black woman - Rosa Parks - refused. She was arrested and the community looked upon her to take this trouble to the finish. By the strength of the deep virtues she had harboured in her mind, she stood up to their expectation. In November 1956, the Supreme Court in America ruled that segregation on transportation is unconstitutional.

Andrei Sakharov was the father of the Soviet hydrogen bomb, which was first tested in 1953. Yet, he lost his job as a Physicist, his decorations and awards were taken back, he was kept under house arrest and was later exiled. All these happened because he tried to apply Physics to Politics. He believed in the power of reason and wanted to derive conclusions 'based on a profound study of facts, theories and views, presupposing unprejudiced and open discussion' (Lizhi & Ratnesar, 2003 p2). His campaigns for liberty, respect for individual dignity, disarmament and democratic rights earned him all the repercussions mentioned above and also the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1975.

In the words of the author of the text on him Andrei Sakharov's 'moral challenge to tyranny, his faith in the individual and the power of reason, his courage in the face of denunciation and, finally house arrest made him a hero' (Lizhi & Ratnesar, 2003, p1). He
was released in 1986 after Gorbachev came to power and was elected to the Congress of People's Deputies. He died in 1989 when the Soviet Union was in the process of taking giant strides towards transformation.

Thinking good of others and thinking for the good of others even under extreme suffering

The title quotation for Anne Frank reads as follows. ‘With a diary kept in a secret attic, she braved the Nazis and lent a searing voice to the fight for human dignity’ (Rosenblatt, 2003, p1). She died very young, at the age of 15, in a Nazi concentration camp. There was no time to realize her physical potential, if she had any. This is also not the time to test one's mental strengths. True to her age, she was moody, cheerful and critical. Nevertheless, she has gifted something - a hope and an inspiration that will touch the humane side of one's mind - to the world in the form of a diary. Out of the desperation in which she was forced to live there was a search for the meaning of life. Although she did not have a chance to live to exhibit her liveliness she did have amazing goodwill, as can be seen from her writing, that gives hope to other people.

She wrote ‘...I can hear ever approaching thunder, which will destroy us.... ...Yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think that it will all come right.... ...I must uphold my ideals, for perhaps the time will come when I shall be able to carry them out' (Rosenblatt, 2003, px2).

Transcending time Anne Frank gives hope to other people and, as a result, rises as a hero.

Enduring suffering for the good of one's own people

The time of Jackie Robinson was the time of separate schools for blacks and whites in America and Jackie Robinson happened to be a black. It was also the time of separate drinking fountains, separate baseball leagues and many more. Jackie Robinson was a baseball player and was the first to break the colour line in this sport.
In the words of the author of the text on Jackie Robinson 'he wasn't the best Negro League talent at the time he was chosen' to play in an all-white team (Aaron, 2003, p2). What was more important is that he suffered silently sacrificing 'his pride for his people' and 'gave the country a good idea of what it has been missing all those years', thus giving a new hope to other black sportsmen. Unlike Pele or Muhammed Ali, Jackie Robinson was not the best player in his game. He was not even the best black player. What makes him a hero is the fact that he sacrificed his pride for his people, silently suffered humiliations, threats and bad and violent treatments and succeeded in bringing the two races closer.

Induct new life

True to the word, Muhammad Ali is a real hero admired for his courage and outstanding achievements. There have been many boxing champions before Muhammad Ali and many after him also. What distinguish Ali from others are his liveliness and his inimitable skill. At the time when Muhammad Ali appeared in the boxing ring, the Mafia was controlling the game. Muhammad Ali gave a new life to the game and 'brought beauty and grace to the most uncompromising of sports' by his skill and character 'and became the world's most adored athlete' (Plimpton, 2003, p2).

Even outside the boxing ring, Muhammad Ali had his own special way of dealing with obscure situations. He was stripped of his title when he refused to join the American Army to fight in Vietnam declaring that he had no quarrel with the Vietnamese. As a result, he was made to 'idle for three and a half years at the peak of his career' (Plimpton, 2003, p2). Then in 1971, the Supreme Court of America ruled in his favour but he refused to take legal action to get back his title. He won it again in the ring. Muhammad Ali is also considered as an icon for the new life he inducted to the sport of boxing.

The main protagonist of 'The Kennedys', John F. Kennedy, made history when he became the youngest elected President of America at the age of 41 (Sidey, 2003). He
was the youngest to die too, at the hands of an assassin within three years after assuming office. He was also the first Roman Catholic to be elected to this office. He was a charismatic leader and a remarkable orator. His brother Robert Kennedy was assassinated while running for the Presidency in 1968, five years after his brother's death. Interestingly John Kennedy was not included in the list of twenty 'Leaders and Revolutionaries' who 'helped define the political and social fabric of our times' where the former US Presidents Ronald Reagan, Franklin Roosevelt and Teddy Roosevelt have found a place (TIME 100: Leaders and Revolutionaries, 2003). John Kennedy has been included in a broader entry as 'The Kennedys' in the list of 'Heroes and Icons'.

One reason for this may be that the publishers of the Time magazine felt that John Kennedy served as the President of the US only for a short time and he died before he could 'help define the political and social fabric of our times'. It may be true. Though during his short tenure in the Presidency, John Kennedy took definite steps in the fields of civil rights, space exploration and disarmament; he didn't live long enough to take them to the finish. There could be another reason. The American nation was so enthralled by the entire Kennedy clan, the wife and children of John Kennedy, his parents and all other siblings and all of them cannot be included in the list of the 'Leaders and Revolutionaries'. Nevertheless, they may fit into the defining motto for the 'Heroes and Icons' as they are remembered for their lively and cheerful nature and courteous good will and to some extent for the remarkable courage shown in the face of several odds.

By their courage, exuberance and goodwill the Kennedy clan inducted new life into American society and is admired the world over.

Inspire people breaking all boundaries

'Transcending doctrine and denomination, he served as the nation's spiritual counsellor and made America safe for public testimonies of faith' (Bloom, 2003, p1). So reads the title quotation for Billy Graham. The text also claims him to be the 'Pope of Protestant America (if Protestant is still the right word)'. While the stories of all other eighteen
entries discussed here touch the hearts of people and inspire them breaking all national boundaries, this is one exception. Here is a tendency to frame religion into a national boundary. A true hero or an icon should win the admiration and inspire people breaking national, social, religious and time boundaries. His/her mission should be human and universal. Therefore, when a person is credited for squaring a religion into a national boundary it is not possible to call him a hero or an icon. It is possible to call Billy Graham the icon of Protestant America. That is not doing any good to him.

Though it is not possible to call Billy Graham a hero or an icon, a study of his contributions shows us one important requirement. The heroes and icons may have worked for a certain group of people at a certain period but their mission should inspire the world breaking all boundaries.

Reach extraordinary heights

Bruce Lee is a hero in the cinema halls. He reached that status by his real superhuman physical strength. When he performs an extraordinary feat of martial arts in a cinema, the people in the theatre know that 'the real Lee could do that too' (Stein, 2003, p2). When Lee appears on the screen clad in ordinary clothes hiding all his strengths inside and then explodes like a spring in front of his enemies he becomes a hero to all those who watch him. When one sees his bare body in a photograph, radiating its physical powers and telling us what we too can do with our body he becomes an icon.

Both Bruce Lee and Pele have taken a place in the 'list' due to their superhuman physical strength. While Bruce Lee has reached extraordinary heights in the field of martial arts, Pele achieved the same in soccer (Kissinger, 2003). According to the text about them there seems no other trait that qualifies them for the 'list'.

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3.7.3 Characteristics of the Twentieth Century Hero

The study of the Time magazine has an inherent deficiency, that is, it has limited the number of heroes and icons to twenty. It is possible to think that, had this study been more objective more subtle qualities of heroes and icons could have been identified.

The magazine imposes one fundamental quality on heroes and icons, that is, they must articulate the longings of their time. A similar fundamental requirement arises from this study. The heroes and icons may have worked for only a small group of people at a particular time but their mission should inspire all humans irrespective of colour, race or any other social boundary. One may also become a hero or icon by inducting new life in sports, politics or any other field.

Superhuman achievement and reaching extraordinary heights are two qualities associated with traditional heroes. Superhuman achievement signifies reaching a most difficult target as in the case of reaching the top of Mount Everest or completing a most difficult task such as the first flight across the Atlantic. There is no such target or task in 'reaching extraordinary heights' discussed in Section 3.7.2. In this case, it is only showing extraordinary skill in a particular field of action.

There will be no problem for anyone to associate the quality 'standing up for equality', which requires remarkable courage with a hero. Suffering quietly and proving oneself in an arena for the good of his/her own people is a new qualification in the make-up of a hero for the twentieth century. Realization of the importance of human rights during the latter part of the century makes one with this quality a hero. As in the case of Anne Frank, giving hope to humankind despite undergoing a lot of suffering can also take one to the rank of heroes.

Sacrificing one's life for the cause of others (or selflessness as given by the magazine), overcoming insurmountable physical or personal obstruction and exceptional physical attractiveness seem to be the qualities that make an icon.
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