

# *Chapter V*

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## Chapter V

### Role of Attitude in Overcoming Suffering

Human beings are the only species that have been bestowed with the ability to make plans for the future. Though this ability is a great gift, it becomes a bane when circumstances fail to toe the line of the plans charted out by the individual. In such situations, people tend to cave in to depression and frustration, and find it difficult to continue living. Events such as accidents that result in the loss of a limb, death of loved ones, heavy financial losses, etc. are some of the incidents that have the power to severely impact the plans that an individual has made beforehand: “Man is the only animal that laughs and weeps; for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are, and what they ought to be” (Hazlitt, 1).

The effectiveness of a change in the attitude vouched by logotherapy has been corroborated by historical figures who had applied it on themselves in hopeless situations. In the book *The Discovery of India*, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has delineated the role played by philosophy in the lives of people who have been placed in miserable circumstances. He has focused on the Chinese and Indian people in particular and stated that despite having lived through long years of war, the Chinese people held on to hope and happiness. Likewise, even challenges like colonization and poverty could not douse the lively spirits of the Indians because the philosophies of these countries have conditioned their minds to remain hopeful and maintain the right attitude even in the most dire circumstance. He asserted that the philosophies of these countries had moulded the attitudes of the people to such an extent that optimism became imbibed in the collective consciousness, irrespective of their education and status:

The ancient wisdom of China and India, the Tao or the True Path, wrote Tagore to Dr. Tai Chit-tao, was the pursuit of completeness, the blending of life's diverse work with the joy of living. Something of that wisdom impressed itself even upon the illiterate and ignorant masses, and we have seen how the Chinese people, after seven years of horrible war, have not lost the anchor of their faith or the gaiety of their minds. In India our trial has been more drawn out, and poverty and uttermost misery have long been the inseparable companions of our people. And yet they still laugh and sing and dance and do not lose hope. (84)

The undesirable circumstances that affect a man's life are beyond his control and he cannot do anything to alter it. However, the power to choose how to react to the situation is entirely the prerogative of the individual and it is up to him to choose a mode of behaviour that would be conducive to his well-being. Problems like being diagnosed with an incurable disease or the untimely death of a loved person is beyond the control of man. Nevertheless, logotherapy provides mankind with an answer for such desperate cases, as it aims at treating the attitude of the person and changing the perspective of the problem, thereby enabling the individual to cope with the situation that cannot be altered.

In the book *The Diary of a Young Girl* (1952), a Jewish girl named Anne Frank, who was in a secret hiding place and later sent to the camp, has shared her views about the futility of worrying about circumstances that are not in man's control. From her own experience, she has mentioned the importance of maintaining the right attitude and staying happy, in order to gain sufficient strength to fight against, as well as endure the sufferings and eventually overcome them: "I could go on and on for hours about all the

suffering the war has brought, but then I would only make myself moiré dejected. There is nothing we can do but wait as calmly as we can till the misery comes to an end. Jews and Christians wait, the whole earth waits; and there are many who wait for death” (64-65).

In the novel *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, the characters who found themselves in the grip of a series of misfortunes fortified themselves by adopting the right attitude, while tackling the issues that had forced their way into their lives. Dawsey lost his father at an early age and was left to deal with a neurotic mother all by himself, for a considerable period of time. After his mother’s death, he was left with no relations. His deformed foot and stuttering speech made him overly self-conscious. The war aggravated his troubles as even food had turned into a rarity.

Yet, he was neither brutalized by the traumatic experiences nor lost the zest for life because of his attitude towards irreversible situations that were beyond his control. He learnt to savour the simple pleasures in his life by being grateful towards them, and focused his attention towards everything that was good in his life. In his letter to Juliet he did not lament about the atrocities committed during the war, but listed out the things that had contributed to his joyful state of mind: “It is a blessing to have real tea and bread with butter, and now - your book” (Shaffer and Barrows 24).

Amelia Maugery also highlights the importance of maintaining the right attitude to promote well-being. She had lost her only son during the war and had nothing to look forward to in her life. However, she accepted the death of her son with immense fortitude. After the culmination of the war, instead of lamenting over the death of her son and recalling the horrors of the war, she chose the right string of thoughts and attained equanimity:

I, too, have felt that the war goes on and on. When my son Ian died at El Alamein- side by side Eli's father, John- visitors offering their condolences, meaning to comfort me, said, 'Life goes on.' What nonsense, I thought, of course it doesn't. It's death that goes on; Ian is dead now and will be dead tomorrow and next year and forever. There's no end to that. But perhaps there will be an end to the sorrow of it. (Shaffer and Barrows 91-92)

Relatively trivial and simple activities like going for a walk whenever and wherever one wanted to, which people usually take for granted, was forbidden during the war. Curfews were imposed and nobody was allowed to get out of their homes. Resuming her habit of going for a walk was something that gave Mrs.Maugery the greatest pleasure after the end of the war. She was delighted about the change of circumstances after the war and the return of normalcy. She now enjoyed the idea of going wherever and whenever she wanted to and cherished the fact that there was no one to dictate how long she could remain out of her home. She enjoyed the absolute freedom she was able to experience and was grateful for it.

When the news of the Germans landing on the Guernsey Island reached the islanders, they did not dare, even to stir from their places. An eerie atmosphere permeated throughout the island. Everyone was petrified thinking of the bleak future that was awaiting them. Though the mood of the island affected Elizabeth too, it was of a momentary nature. She immediately pulled herself together and decided to face them head-on, instead of imagining the worst. She thereby saved a great deal of trouble for herself by her attitude because when she actually went out, she found that the Germans were like any other tourist they had seen before, as they were spending their time

sightseeing and shopping merrily: “Elizabeth was at my house, but we didn’t have the heart to make heart tonic even though my yarrow was in. we just drifted around like a couple of ghouls. Elizabeth pulled herself together. ‘Come on,’ she says. ‘I’m not going to sit inside waiting for them. I’m going into town to find the enemy’” (Shaffer and Barrows 122).

Elizabeth got rid of her fears by deciding to face the situation, instead of harbouring anxious thoughts. She put things in the right perspective by deciding that they were strangers in that place and it is they who should be frightened of the new place and the people of the island. She realized that their position was in no way better than hers and thereby got rid of her insecure feelings unlike her fellow islanders and went out to watch them as they were the foreigners and thereby, objects of curiosity: “‘I’m going to look at him,’ she says. ‘We’re not animals in a cage – they are. They’re struck on this island with us, same as we’re struck with them. Come on, let’s go and stare’” (Shaffer and Barrows 122).

Sidney told Juliet to find out more about Elizabeth and portray her as the protagonist of Juliet’s new book because he felt that her life would serve as an example of the power of maintaining the right attitude. Elizabeth was not blessed with a good background as her mother was a mere servant. Moreover, she was orphaned at an early age and it was her mother’s employer who undertook the charitable task of educating her. However, she did not develop an inferiority complex on account of her background and conducted herself with great dignity that was so uncommon in women of her station in life. She did not shy away from mixing with people unlike Dawsey, as she chose not to focus on her drawbacks. The choice to be born as a daughter, to a servant was an external

circumstance beyond her control, but to not let that be an impediment in her life was a choice she had to make and Elizabeth did justice to it.

She took up the job of a nurse during the war for which she neither had the training nor the experience. She used her job as a medium to connect with her patients and make a difference in their lives. Sally Ann Frobisher was one such patient afflicted by scabies and needed to have her head shaved off. Since loss of hair usually results in loss of beauty, Sally became deeply affected by this change. She believed that she was ugly and she hated her reflection in the mirror. She would have completely lost her self-esteem had it not been for Elizabeth:

When I asked my mother the same question, she said she had no patience with such nonsense and beauty was only skin-deep. But not Miss McKenna. She looked at me, considering, and then she said, 'In a little while, Sally, you're going to be stunning. Keep looking in the mirror and you'll see. It's bones that count, and you've got them in spades. With that elegant nose of yours, you'll be the new Nefertiti. You'd better practise looking imperious.' (Shaffer and Barrows 126)

Elizabeth fell in love with a German named Christian and won the approval of Mrs. Maugery to marry him. However, there was a moral transgression on their part and she bore her daughter Kit out of wedlock. Matters became worse when Christian died soon after and the child was doomed to remain illegitimate forever. Elizabeth did not allow her mind to falter by lamenting over the mistake and brought the child up with great love and care. It is common amongst women under such circumstances to withdraw themselves from society due to shame and guilt. However, she handled the situation

differently and did not turn herself and her child into an outcast. The support provided by her friends was an added asset and she continued to live a normal life. However, it is her attitude that has to be credited for the fortitude with which she rose to the occasion and carried on with her life:

Juliet, how did a girl, an art student, who had never had a job in her life, turn herself into a nurse, working six days a week in the hospital? She did have dear friends but she had no one to call her own. She fell in love with an enemy officer and lost him; she had a baby alone during wartime. It might have been terrifying, despite all her good friends. You can share responsibilities only up to a point. (Shaffer and Barrows 175)

Juliet was a bachelorette at the age of thirty-two. She had been orphaned at the age of twelve and had no one to call her own. Her friend Sophie and Sophie's brother Sidney were the only people she could rely on. Juliet was engaged to be married once, but broke up as the pair lacked compatibility. Markham Reynolds was another suitor who wanted to marry her. Markham was an affluent and debonair man but Juliet was not charmed by that. She was aware that if she married him, her individuality would be lost and her only identity would be that of his wife. Even then, she did not summarily reject him because she was afraid that rejecting this proposal would doom her to remain a lonely and wretched life forever. Fortunately, her oscillation did not last for long. As soon as she landed in Guernsey, she got transmuted by the wonderful people she met and the scenic beauty of the island. Her love for Kit and Dawsey enabled her to take the right decision and she chose Dawsey, a pig farmer over Markham.



Juliet managed to take the appropriate decision owing to her right attitude towards life. She recognized her priorities well and thereby, instead of being enraptured by the offer of a personable and wealthy man who could offer her an escape from the life of a spinster, she pondered over the outcome of this alliance and its impact on her life. She realized that her career as an author would enable her to lead a more meaningful life, as it was a vocation that was very close to her heart. On the contrary, marrying Markham would reduce her into his shadow. She thereby preferred a misalliance and married Dawsey who would not be an impediment in her career and would also prove to be a loving partner.

John Booker, a servant who had impersonated his master Tobias, was sent to the concentration camp as a punishment for his deception. He could have added to his miseries by lamenting his fate and repenting for his mistakes by cursing the day he chose to forsake his master and stay back in the island. However, he chose not to do anything of that sort and focused his mind on the wonderful things that had happened to him in the past. The good memories that he managed to revive provided him with the strength to endure the miserable circumstances that he was placed in. The choice to be in the camp was not his and it was beyond his power to make any alteration in his external circumstances. Nevertheless, the power to entertain the right kind of thoughts was entirely his and his happy memories fostered the right kind of attitude to deal with the trauma at hand: "I was a living soul only a few minutes a day, when I was in my bunk. Then, I tried think of something happy, something I'd liked – but not something I loved, because that made it worse. Just a small thing, like a school picnic or bicycling downhill- that's all I could stand" (Shaffer and Barrows 130).

The characters portrayed in the novel exhibited the characteristic of being grateful for the good things in their life. Most of the islanders derived pleasure from the simple things in life such as good food, books, loving relations and good friends. Being grateful for the good things in their lives provided them with an optimistic outlook and gave them the determination and willpower to carry on with their lives.

The characters portrayed in the novel *Mister Pip* are prototypes that provide substantial evidence to the fact that maintaining the right attitude can uplift a person from any situation irrespective of how hopeless it might appear at the outset. The island portrayed in the novel is in the grip of a civil war. The redskins made it impossible for the Black islanders to lead their lives peacefully and did everything possible to isolate them from the rest of the world. They constantly ransacked the island and kept a constant vigil so that they would not be able to escape the island. Despite all this, most of the islanders were not dismayed and this was especially true in the case of Matilda. She maintained the right attitude by focusing her mind on what was still normal and good in her life and rejoiced in that. She was grateful for the good food that was still available to sustain her life and those of her fellow islanders. This attitude prevented her from dwelling on the losses incurred by the community at large and shifted her attention on what still remained with them:

We were surrounded by sea, and while the redskins' gunboats patrolled the coastline their helicopters flew overhead. There was no newspaper or radio to guide our thoughts. We relied on word of mouth. The redskins were going to choke the island and the rebels into submission. That's what we heard. 'Good luck to them,' said my mum. That's how much we cared. We had fish. We had our chickens. We had our fruits. We had what we

always had. In addition to that, a rebel supporter could add, ‘We had our pride.’ (Jones 8)

The redskins demanded that the book *Great Expectations* should be produced before them, so that they could check for themselves whether Pip was a fictitious character or a person they were hiding in their midst. However, Dolores had hidden the book away as she sensed that the novel was drawing Matilda away from her into a white world. White men had taken her husband away and she did not want to lose her daughter to them as well. She was thereby responsible for the arson committed by the redskins. Matilda was initially furious with her mother for her behaviour but later empathized with her conduct. She was aware that her mother was afraid to produce the book from the place she had hidden it, because she did not want to be a culprit in the eyes of her daughter, whom she valued the most. Matilda thereby did not interrogate her mother or ostracize her for her behaviour but forgave her and continued to love her. The relationship between the mother and daughter thereby did not take a tumultuous turn because of the attitude adopted by Matilda. She empathized with her mother and thereby reacted maturely instead of confronting her mother and demanding an explanation from her, which would only have burdened her mother with shame and guilt.

When the redskins destroyed the basic amenities of the islanders, followed by their homes, they were not left with even a spare set of clothes to wear while they washed and dried the ones that they were wearing. They had lost their privacy after their houses were burnt down. However, they revelled in the fact that despite all the barbaric destruction, they were incapable of taking away the food that sustained them and the air and shade that the trees provided them with. “We found ways to console ourselves. We reminded ourselves of

what we still had. The fish were still in the sea. The fruits were still in the trees.

The redskin soldiers had left us the air and shade” (Jones 94).

Mr. Watts was the only White man on the island and he lived there with his infirm wife Grace. The islanders did nothing to make him feel included and were prejudiced towards him on account of his skin colour. Unmindful of their behaviour towards him, he took the initiative to teach the children during the civil war and connected himself with the islanders. He not only wanted to educate the children, but also wanted them to become a better version of themselves by developing the right attitude towards life. At the very outset, he mentioned this explicitly to his students: ““I want this to be a place of light,’ he said. ‘No matter what happens’” (Jones 14).

Mr. Watts did everything in his power to practice the apothegm that he preached to the students. No matter what misfortune he encountered, he bore it with immense fortitude and served as a role model to his students. When his things were burnt down by the islanders, he did not lose his composure or hold grudges against them for having done so. Instead, he viewed the whole situation with empathy and forgave them as he believed that they were merely giving a vent to their anger as their own things had been destroyed by the redskins and he had been indirectly responsible for it. The following day, he came to the class as usual and continued giving lessons to the children, as if nothing untoward had happened.

Even when his wife Grace was sick, he spared his time for the children and did not allow anyone to have any inkling about his sorrows. After her death, he resumed teaching them within a few days. Matilda had feared that he would get struck in time like the character Miss Havisham from the novel *Great Expectations*. However, the attitude

adopted by Mr. Watts was entirely different from that of Miss Havisham which enabled him to overcome his problem and move on in life. Unlike her, he accepted his misfortune as an external circumstance beyond his control and adapted to the situation instead of revolting against it: “Man is *not* fully conditioned and determined but rather determines himself whether he gives in to conditions or stands up to them. In other words, man is ultimately self-determining. Man does not simply exist but always decides what his existence will be, what he will become in the next moment” (Frankl, “Man’s” 133).

Mishaps that occur in an individual’s life often take place without warning. Nonetheless, every individual is vested with the power to choose how to deal with it. In the article titled “From Hard Times to Great Expectations”, valuable excerpts from an interview with Lloyd Jones has been recorded, wherein he concurred with the ideology of Viktor Frankl by stating that every individual is bestowed with the freedom to choose the attitude with which he would react to the situation: “As Great Expectations opens out its meaning to Matilda, so Mister Pip broadens into a consideration of post-colonial culture, a meditation on what is kept and what is rejected, what remembered and forgotten, and the extent to which individuals can choose...how to be in the world” (Bedell).

Mr. Watts had taught Matilda the most important lesson in her life under the pretext of teaching her more about the fictitious character Pip. Toeing the line of thought of Viktor Frankl, Mr. Watts stated that every individual had the freedom to make choices and no power on earth could snatch that freedom away from anyone. However, the manner to exercise the freedom is entirely the prerogative of the individual: “It is hard to be a perfect human being, Matilda,” he said. ‘Pip is only human. He has been given the

opportunity to turn himself into whomever he chooses. He is free to choose. He is even free to make bad choices” (Jones 61).

In the novel *An Unnecessary Woman* the protagonist Aaliya Saleh maintained the right attitude even during times of great turmoil that wrecked her life. She is the eponymous unwanted woman but she never permitted people’s opinion about her to affect her psychologically. This was on account of her autosuggestions that were conducive to her wellbeing and betterment. She never suggested anything negative to herself or blamed herself for the turn of events. Beirut had a patriarchal society in which women were forced to bear the onus of failed relationships. Aaliya was asked to be grateful for her husband’s kindness by her own mother. According to her, he could have married another woman and brought her to live in the same house as polygamy was legal. This would have certainly relegated Aaliya’s position in the house and thereby her mother considered that Aaliya’s husband was benevolent enough to divorce her before remarrying another woman.

Aaliya however ignored her mother as she was aware of her husband’s impotence and he would never be able to entertain the thought of his wives staying under the same roof and gossiping about him. She thereby put things into the right perspective and did not feel grateful for her husband’s decision to divorce her. Instead she made a mental note of the fact that he was unfit to stay married to her and the sham that she had to put up with him was finally over. She then went about erasing and evicting every trivia in that house that might remind her of him. She purged the house of his memories and began her life afresh.

Aaliya lost her father when she was a mere toddler and since her mother was a very young widow, she was married off again. After that, her mother’s attention was

exclusively devoted to her husband and the sons she bore him. Aaliya viewed the situation objectively and did not let that affect her and focused on her studies instead. She found a good companion amongst her books and chose to savour it instead of demanding love forcibly from her mother.

Aaliya did not conform to the ideology of most women in her society, who considered divorce as a scandal and believed that a woman should endure her husband's faults silently and should never divorce him. Though Aaliya was not the one to initiate the proceedings of the divorce, she did nothing to prevent it. After her divorce Aaliya took up a job in a bookstore and dedicated all her time to books. She resumed her love for reading which she had to abruptly give up on the occasion of her wedding. Even during her childhood, her mother used to taunt her for reading and cautioned her that an erudite woman would never be able to find a husband and her erudition would come in the way of a normal life. Aaliya however wanted to be anything but normal and she lived her entire life unlike most women in Beirut.

She was aware of her shortcomings and instead of lamenting on something that was beyond her power to change, she focused her attention on aspects of life in which she would be able to exercise her will. Aaliya was not a beautiful woman and was not loved by her family too. Instead of being crestfallen about her average looks or begging for love, she decided to try her luck in another arena and focused on sharpening her intellect. Her alternative for love was respect and she strove to earn that in her life:

May I admit that being different from normal people was what I desperately sought? I wanted to be special. I was already different: tall, not attractive and all. Mine is a face that would have trouble launching a canoe. I knew that

no one would love me, so I strove to be respected, to be looked up to.

I wanted people to think I was better than they were. I wanted to be Miss Jean Brodie's crème de la crème. (Alameddine 113)

Aaliya had a very strong bonding with Hannah as she was the only one who loved her in the world. Hannah's situation was also similar to that of Aaliya. However, Hannah was unable to deal with the challenges that life had thrown at her and committed suicide, despite having a loving family, something that Aaliya lacked. This was predominantly because of her attitudinal problems.

The man whom Hannah loved had died and she did not consider marrying anyone though she had not even been engaged to him. In fact, the feeling of love was not even mutual between her and the lieutenant. However, Hannah behaved as if she were his widow and devoted herself to the service of his family members. Hannah's incapability to overcome her affliction is similar to that of Miss Havisham of *Great Expectations*, who stopped living a normal life after she was jilted at the altar. Miss Havisham was so fixated with her problem that it overpowered her and pervaded all her actions. The lieutenant's death had become an *idée fixe* in Hannah's mind too, and that propelled her to commit suicide despite having a supportive family and a good friend. She revealed no signs of being unhappy with her position and joyfully lived the life of a widow. However, one day, she suddenly grew disillusioned with the life she was living and committed suicide. When the two women are viewed in juxtaposition, it is evident that both of them shared similar external circumstances. Nevertheless, Aaliya managed to live well but Hannah had given up hope. This clearly indicated that Hannah's attitudes were not conducive to her happiness and she was fraught with a feeling of emptiness, which prompted her to end her life and leave Aaliya all alone



in the world. Her suicide revealed the truth that, Hannah had not accepted the tragedy that had occurred to her. She had managed to live a normal life externally owing to the fact that she had created an illusion about the circumstances in her life. She viewed the world as she thought it should be, instead of accepting the way it really was. The moment that bubble of illusion was burst, she lost all her will to continue living. Aaliya on the other hand, did not turn a blind eye towards realities and accepted them, which made it easier for her to lead a meaningful life.

Another instance wherein, Aaliya was rescued by her right attitude towards unavoidable circumstances was when she came in contact with a dead body lying on the road. Instead of letting that ghastly sight disturb her, she turned philosophical and thought that the body was similar to a dress and the person had merely discarded his attire. She then immediately began to delve on how lucky she was to be alive despite all the troubles and mishaps. She adopted the attitude of being grateful and that made her happier as she had learnt to focus on the numerous things that were going on well in her life instead of the fretting about what had gone wrong. Therefore, instead of being depressed by the gory sight of the dead body, she filled her mind with thoughts about the miracle of being alive:

I won't bore you with how-to-calm-yourself-after-seeing-a-dead-body techniques at which all Lebanese become experts, although we are all adherents of different schools of practice. After reaching my apartment, I made a solemn vow that I would never complain about anything. I was alive- no matter what was happening, I was alive. The fact that I could breathe was a miracle. The fact that my eyes could see, the voluptuousness

of seeing, that my heart beat, the joy of having a body. A miracle. I would not complain. (Alameddine 150)

Her attitude towards irrevocable circumstances came to her rescue once more, when all her thirty-seven translations were destroyed because of a leaking pipe. She had dedicated fifty years of her life to those translations and they were lying about sopping wet. She realized that she would not be able to explain to anybody, what those translations meant to her, as she had not worked for monetary benefits or to attain fame, but to give a purpose to her life. “This is the private source of meaning in my life” (Alameddine 267).

After the complete destruction of the work of a lifetime, Aaliya collected herself and decided to view it as an opportunity to change her course of action. All her life, she had desisted herself from translating English works despite being passionate about them. She decided to undertake that task after the disaster, at the suggestion of her neighbour. She viewed it as a turning point instead of an end to everything. In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Frankl has recorded that the traumatic life of the concentration camp placed all the inmates in an identical situation. However, the difference in the reactions was created by the attitude with which each individual approached the problem and that is what made all the difference:

A human being is not one thing among others; *things* determine each other, but *man* is ultimately self-determining. What he becomes- within the limits of endowment and environment- he has made out of himself. In the concentration camps, for example, in this living laboratory and on this testing ground, we watched and witnessed some of our comrades

behave like swine while others behaved like saints. Man has both potentials within himself; which one is actualized depends on decisions but not on conditions. (135)

Though Aaliya was seventy two at that time, she did not lose the zest for life and that is what enabled her to carry on without an emotional breakdown. Older women, who stay alone, are more prone to pessimistic thoughts that do great damage to their mental faculties. She however steered clear from self-deprecating thoughts by investing her time and attention in creative activities.

Similarly, Liesel, the protagonist of the novel *The Book Thief* combated the difficulties in her life by maintaining the right attitude. Several theories indicate that experiencing traumatic events in childhood can leave a permanent scar and the child might face difficulty in forging new relationships. Liesel, however, was not a victim to her circumstances, as she had the innate ability to view things in the right perspective.

When her foster parents were unable to afford a gift for her birthday, she was not dismayed like other children of her age. Instead she took it in her stride as she had learnt not to take life for granted by then. She had watched her younger brother die and was aware that the opportunity to be alive was a gift by itself. She considered herself lucky to get good foster parents, who loved her and she was especially grateful that a man like Hans was a part of her life. He had enabled her to overcome the tragic loss she had endured and the emotional security he provided her with, enabled her to accept her bitter past and view it objectively. Abject poverty seemed a rather insignificant problem to her and she revelled in the little happiness that life threw her way. This is evident from the

incident wherein, she decided to conjure up a gift for herself and celebrate her birthday, in her own small way:

Liesel didn't mind. She didn't whine or moan, or stamp her feet. She simply swallowed the disappointment and decided on one calculated risk- a present from herself. She would gather all of the accrued letters to her mother, stuff them into one envelope, and she would use just a tiny portion of the washing and ironing money to mail it. Then, of course, she would take the Watschen, most likely in the kitchen, and she would not make a sound. (Zusak 104)

Rudy Steiner, who was as old as Liesel was unable to endure his grief when his father was asked to enroll himself in the war. He was beside himself with rage and was consumed by the desire to kill Hitler who was the root cause of all their sufferings. On the other hand, Liesel who had lost her entire family and her best friend Max, accepted the news of her beloved foster father being sent to war with greater equanimity than Rudy: "For a while, neither of them spoke, but Liesel soon found the will. 'You think you're the only one, Saukerl!?' She turned away. 'And you only lost your father....'" (Zusak 432)

Hans Hubermann is another character who exudes optimism in the midst of sufferings. His children were grown up and their ideology differed acutely from that of his, which prevented them from getting along well together. It was his ideology that prevented him from getting a stable job. Nevertheless, he managed to retain his ideology because he realized that it was important to be true to one's own beliefs to lead a meaningful life. He therefore adopted Liesel as his daughter instead of lamenting over the departure of his own grown up children.

His character is in sharp juxtaposition with Ilsa Hermann and Frau Holtzapfel. Both the women had lost their sons to death which was of a more permanent nature than that of Hans Hubermann's loss. However, their reaction to the catastrophe was what destroyed the women, more than the unfortunate incident. Their interest to continue living was completely sapped out of them. Even Ilsa had experienced a change towards the end of the story after she came in contact with Liesel. But, Frau Holtzapfel had hit the depths of depression after the loss of a single son, despite having another one to love and live for. She deteriorated further, after her other son committed suicide for which her indifference to life was partially responsible. Frau Holtzapfel did nothing but wait for her death from then onwards.

The difference in the reactions of Hans and the ladies, to a similar situation can be justly attributed to their attitudes, which was affected by their outlook towards life. Hans had an optimistic outlook and this trait of his enabled him to focus his mind on the good things of life. The pessimistic outlook of the ladies however, prevented them from moving on from the day their respective sons had died. The gloom that overshadowed their countenance on the day of the tragedy found a permanent residence as they became obsessed with the untimely death of their sons. They turned a blind eye to every other aspect that might add meaning to their lives just like Miss Havisham of the novel *Great Expectations*, who remained stuck to the day her wedding got cancelled: "... a person is free to shape his own character, and man is responsible for what he may have made out of himself. What matters is not the features of our character or the drives and instincts per se, but rather the stand we take toward them. And the capacity to take such a stand is what makes us human beings" (Frankl, "Will" 5).

Hans Hubermann was sent to fight in the war as a punishment for having helped the Jews. Hans was a civilian and an old man at that. It was a terrible blow for him to leave his family and go away to do a job that he detested the most. However, he also felt relieved because it helped him assuage the guilt that was gnawing his soul. Hans had sent Max away anticipating danger, after he had fed the Jews who were being paraded towards the camp. Hans was aware that his impulsive act of kindness would not be appreciated by the Nazis and they might search his house for some acts of treason, but to Hans' disappointment, nothing of that sort happened. He thereby experienced intense agony as his precaution to send Max away had been in vain. Hans had wanted the Nazis to retaliate in some way and the order that commanded him to join the army was received with relief by Hans as he viewed it as his penance:

When a man finds that it is his destiny to suffer, he will have to accept his suffering as his task; his single and unique task. He will have to acknowledge that even in suffering he is unique and alone in the universe. No one can relieve him of his suffering or suffer in his place. His unique opportunity lies in the way in which he bears his burden. (Frankl, "Man's" 86)

He retained his optimism even after being separated from his family and maintained cordial relations with everybody. When a colleague abused him and asked him to vacate the seat that Hans used to occupy regularly, he quietly swapped his seat instead of getting into a petty argument and ruining his mood, which he considered was more precious than having the last word in a trivial argument. His decision to swap the seat proved to be a blessing in disguise as the colleague who had occupied his seat died instantly, after their vehicle met with an accident. Hans was injured too, but not

grievously. The wound was however bad enough to render him useless to fight a war and he was promptly sent back home. Hans thereby endured his punishment gracefully and emerged triumphant out of it.

During the Second World War, due to shortage of manpower, several civilians were forcibly enrolled into the war. The civilians chosen were young men, who were not used to the tough life of a soldier. As a result, many of them became disillusioned with life as they found it difficult to cope with the uncertainty that was ubiquitous on the battlefield. The memoir *When Books Went to War* has portrayed American civilians who were in a similar plight as that of Hans Hubermann:

The transition from civilian to soldier did not come easily to the great majority who found themselves wandering around training camps in the early 1940s. Although newspapers and magazines romanticized the experience, in reality, many men were completely miserable and struggled with loneliness, isolation, and melancholy. (Manning 25)

Health psychologists have delineated a relation between the mind and the body and several research works conducted in this area have proved that unhealthy thoughts translate into diseases, which debilitate the body. It is common knowledge that people who worry a lot and lose their temper often are more prone to diseases related to heart. This correlation holds good even in epidemics, as stressful people are more likely to contract the disease compared to a relaxed and composed person, since stress weakens the immune system.

The character of Max Vadenburg is the perfect example to showcase the advantages of maintaining a right attitude. Max was a Jew living in Germany during the

reign of Hitler. He was not responsible for his religion or nationality. Likewise, he was powerless to fight against Hitler or his propaganda and thereby, he saved himself from a great deal of trouble by choosing not to focus on the problems that were out of his power. He had an intense desire to live and he went ahead to safeguard himself as soon as he found the opportunity. He had to leave his family behind to join Hans Hubermann and was aware that it was a selfish decision. He however, did not let his guilt overcome his senses as he was cognizant of the fact that it was impossible for everybody to seek shelter in the Hubermann household and he would not be of any help even if he chose to stay with his family.

This attitude enabled him to overcome his guilt unlike Frau Holtzapfel's son, who decided to commit suicide because of his intense desire to live despite his brother's death and his mother's lack of interest in life. When the bombings began and everybody darted towards the shelter marked out as safe zones, Frau Holtzapfel refused to budge. Her son abandoned her and joined others in the shelter after his failure to convince her to join them. After this incident, he was unable to forgive himself and decided to inflict punishment upon himself by ending his life, as his guilt began to weigh heavily upon his conscience.

Max, on the other hand, had also abandoned his family to earn his safety. He did feel wretched about it undoubtedly, but he managed to convince himself that he acted according to the demands of the situation and he could not have helped in any way by staying along with them. This attitude prevented him from losing his zest for life, despite living in the cold and dark basement of the Hubermann household. He used to exercise to make his body fit, visualize to keep his power of imagination intact, and write stories for



Liesel to engage his time fruitfully. He did everything that was possible except wallow in self-pity: “What counts is not our fears and anxieties as such, but the attitude we adopt towards them. This attitude is freely chosen (Frankl, “Unheard” 49).

His optimism can be attributed with the credit of having provided him with the courage to pull through, even after he was captured by the Nazis and ill-treated. He managed to survive in the camp till the war was over and he accomplished this feat owing to his intense will-power and his desire to live a purposeful life. He found his way back to Liesel after his release, because he had grasped the truth that irrespective of all the brutalities that life had heaped upon him, life was worth living.

Viktor Frankl in *Man's Search for Meaning* has specified about the life of survivors of concentration camps. Many of them were disillusioned to such an extent that they found themselves out of place in the normal world. Max however did not fall prey to bitterness or disillusionment as he had bolstered his mind with optimism: “Apart from the moral deformity resulting from the sudden release of mental pressure, there were two other fundamental experiences which threatened to damage the character of the liberated prisoner: bitterness and disillusionment when he returned to his former life” (98).

It is natural for human beings to make plans for the future. However, when unforeseen circumstances forcibly alter the course of one's life and shatters one's plans, the individual should mentally prepare himself to embrace the change, as he is left with no other choice. Battling against the circumstance and refusing to accept it only exacerbates the agony and thereby results in further damage. The narrator of the novel, who happens to be the personified form of Death, was amazed by the latent power present in every human being that resurfaces at the appropriate moment to enable them to overcome the sufferings that

befalls them: “She did not say goodbye. She was incapable, and after a few more minutes at his side, she was able to tear herself from the ground. It amazes me what humans can do, even when streams are flowing down their faces and they stagger on, coughing and searching, and finding” (BT 540).

Philip Carey, in the novel *Of Human Bondage*, moves closer to finding purpose and attaining meaning in his life by changing his attitude towards things. He had an extremely appalling childhood as it was dotted with the death of his parents, an insensitive guardian at home and bullying at school. His attitude towards the circumstances was also not favourable which aggravated his misery. He hated everybody around him and lacked friends throughout his school life. His club-foot made him an object of fun and ridicule. Philip took his deformity very seriously and was unable to ignore the comments passed by others to such an extent that it left him emotionally scarred.

He developed a callous approach to people around him and became obstinate as well. He took strange pleasure in defying the words of his guardian and teacher who wanted him to go to Oxford. He wanted to have his own way and he insisted that he would go to Germany at all costs. His stay in Germany had however changed his attitude towards religion and that released him from the fear and awe he had hitherto felt for it. Philip was forced to re-examine his religious beliefs which had been indoctrinated by his uncle, as he was exposed to many faiths. He noticed that everyone believed and practiced what they had been taught, with equal fervour. He realized that a person’s religion depended on the place of his birth and the society and it would be unfair to take a moral high ground and claim that one’s belief was the only one that was true and all other faiths were mendacious ones.

This enlightened him as he was finally able to release himself from the fearful dogmas imbibed into him by his uncle, since childhood:

One of the things that Philip had heard definitely stated was the unbeliever was a wicked and a vicious man; but Weeks, though he believed in hardly anything that Philip believed, led a life of Christian purity. Philip had received little kindness in his life, and he was touched by the American's desire to help him: once when a cold kept him in bed for three days, Weeks nursed him like a mother. There was neither vice nor wickedness in him, but only sincerity and loving-kindness. I was evidently possible to be virtuous and unbelieving. (Maugham 128)

An alteration in one's religious beliefs engenders confusion and degenerates into a state of existential anxiety. However, Philip learnt to look at the situation objectively and relinquished the dogmas propagated by the religion, but continued to practice its virtues. His behaviour thereby remained the same, but he experienced a great sense of freedom as if he had been freed from some invisible shackles. He was free even to be an atheist and realized that whatever his uncle had taught him was not the irrefutable truth.

After his return from Germany, he was expected to choose a career and he decided to take up a job as a clerk in the office of a chartered accountant as suggested by his uncle because he did not have a better plan in mind. Moreover, the vocation he was to opt for promised to relieve him within a span of one year and refund some of his money, if he chose to quit. Philip detested everything about the job and loathed everyone who was working with him. This attitude made things more deplorable and his life became extremely lonely and miserable.

He quit the job after the completion of one year and decided to go to Paris and learn painting as he felt that he had an aptitude for it. However, he realized that he had the ability to reproduce pictures perfectly but had no imagination to paint pictures that would make him stand apart. He thereby quit his pursuit and returned back to his uncle's home.

Philip however had matured a little after his experiences. Though he continued to perceive his deformity as a matter of shame, he was able to guard his emotions from running berserk the moment someone pointed it out to him. He learnt to analyse the situation from the point of view of the person who was being rude to him and realized that it was a general human flaw. Anyone who was displeased with him or wanted to have the last word in an argument with him, used his deformity as their weapon. This shift in his perception minimized his pain and he became immune to such attacks:

Philip knew by now that whenever anyone was angry with him his first thought was to say something about his club-foot. His estimate of the human race was determined by the fact that scarcely anyone failed to resist the temptation. But he had trained himself not to show any sign that the reminder wounded him. He had even acquired control over the blushing which in his boyhood had been one of his torments. (Maugham 294-95)

After he decided to enter the medical profession, his uncle mocked at him for having wasted two years of his life in Paris. However, Philip did not concur with his uncle as he considered his experiences immensely valuable and not a mere waste of time. He had learnt the art of observing things keenly, something that he had never done before his life in Paris. Moreover, the time he spent in Paris had been full of happiness which mattered the most, as he believed that happiness added more value to one's life contrary

to the popular belief of having a series of accomplishments: ““I learned to look at hands, which I’d never looked at before. And instead of just looking at houses and trees I learned to look at houses and trees against the sky. And I learned also that shadows are not black but coloured”” (Maugham 295-96).

Even when a friend of his commented that his stay in Paris had been a waste of time, Philip contradicted him by saying that he had learnt the art of looking at things in the right way which made them appear more beautiful. It was thereby evident that Philip had developed the right attitude towards the value of experiences after his stay abroad. Instead of focusing on the time and money he lost in the process, he was grateful for the experiences he had gained in the bargain and the metamorphosis that these lessons had engendered within him. He also cherished the independent and happy days he spent abroad because it was something that no amount of money or a stable career could have fetched him. ““Waste? Look at the movement of that child, look at the pattern which the sun makes on the ground, shining through the trees, look at that sky- why, I should never have seen that sky if I hadn’t been to Paris”” (Maugham 361).

Philip fell in love with Mildred but it was unrequited. She finally went away to live with a German man, leaving Philip heartbroken. He was unable to forget her and the worst part of it was that he found it impossible to fathom the reason for his love, as she was neither a good woman nor beautiful. A fleeting thought of suicide cropped up in his mind but he readily brushed it aside as he valued his life more than a woman without a good character. Though Philip loved Mildred profusely, he was very objective about his assessment of Mildred. He was not blind to her flaws or to the power she wielded over him. This prevented him from going overboard and contemplating suicide on serious terms.

His views on life underwent a great change after he started treating patients. Life in all its hues played out before him but nothing swayed him emotionally. He realized that nothing about life was either good or bad. Different circumstances affected different individuals, and the reaction to it purely depended on the individual's perspective. For instance, in one of the cases he tended to, the death of an infant was received with relief because of the impoverished state of the parents. He noticed that death was not feared by the poor and they accepted it as a natural part of every life on earth. On the other hand, poverty terrified them because it robbed them of all dignity and caused them endless turmoil. Philip thereby came to a conclusion that every circumstance was merely a fact that was neither comic nor tragic by itself: "But on the whole the impression was neither of tragedy nor comedy. There was no describing it. It was manifold and various; there were tears and laughter, happiness and woe; it was tedious and interesting and indifferent; it was as you saw it; ... there was neither good nor bad there. There were just facts. It was life" (Maugham 469-70).

An experienced doctor seconded Philip's philosophy by citing the example of a patient who had hit the nadir in his life and attempted suicide. The failed suicide attempt resulted in additional disadvantages, but it was only after his encounter with death, that the man fell in love with his life and remained happy and contented after the incident. This story made it more evident to Philip that the external circumstances in life were in no way responsible for a man's feelings. Everything depended on the individual's attitude towards the situation:

They're a funny lot, suicides. I remember one man who couldn't get any work to do and his wife died, so he pawned his clothes and bought a

revolver; but he made a mess of it, he only shot out an eye, and he got all right. And then, if you please, with an eye gone, and a piece of his face blown away, he came to the conclusion that the world wasn't a bad place after all, and he lived happily ever afterwards. (Maugham 549)

Philip met a boy with a club-foot in the hospital. His parents wanted the boy's foot to be examined and Philip was summoned to give his opinion as he had a similar deformity. The situation was extremely embarrassing for Philip as he felt that everybody's eyes were on him and his foot. He hated to show his foot to anybody and in that situation, he could not possibly deny the request of the doctor and thereby displayed his foot to everybody. However, when the boy was asked to show his foot, he did it with absolute nonchalance. Philip was taken in by surprise as the boy's affliction was similar to that of his, but his way of dealing with it was entirely different.

Philip had his foot operated upon because he was advised that the patients would be doubtful if the doctor himself was sick or deformed. He underwent the surgery because he had always been ashamed of it and wanted to get rid of it, though he knew that the deformity would not disappear completely. Despite all this, he was unable to prevent people from having fun at his expense. Their intentions were not malicious, but they were not empathetic enough to realize that the deformity was traumatic for Philip and they should not add to his troubles. They thought that they were imitating him secretly, but Philip had cognizance of it. Nevertheless, it failed to hurt him like before and he ignored them, instead of taking it to his heart and sulking about it. The transition of Philip, from being a boy who blushed uncontrollably when his deformity was mocked at, to a man who understood the viewpoint of

the person who mocked at him, was thereby complete. The attitude he developed towards the issue showcased his understanding and empathy.

After Philip became insolvent and his uncle refused to support him, he was forced to live on the streets and remain hungry. For someone in his station in life, it was the worst circumstance to be in. Thoughts of suicide began to surface in his mind, but he quelled them by remaining optimistic about the future. Instead of focusing on his present troubles, he pinned his hopes on a better future when he would inherit his uncle's wealth and gain financial stability. He thereby, unconsciously adopted the method of cognitive restructuring, wherein, an individual would substitute his negative thought pattern with something positive. His attitude in the midst of poverty and destitution enabled him to overcome the miseries and carry on with life: "He kept on saying to himself that it would be absurd to commit suicide, since something must happen soon; he could not get over the impression that his situation was too preposterous to be taken quite seriously; it was like an illness which must be endured but from which he was bound to recover" (Maugham 583).

The death of Philip's friend Hayward came in as a rude shock at a time when he was battling with poverty and the nation was in a grip of war. It was the first time he lost a friend of his own age and the disinterest with which death summoned the young and the old numbed his senses. His troubled mind began to ponder about the meaning of life and he initially came to the conclusion that life had no meaning as every incident that happened in one's life was a matter of chance and was devoid of justice:

The effort was so incommensurate with the result. The bright hopes of youth had to be paid for at such a bitter price of disillusionment. Pain and



disease and unhappiness weighed down the scale so heavily. What did it all mean? He thought of his own life, the high hopes with which he had entered upon it, the limitations with which his body forced upon him, his friendlessness, and the lack of affection which had surrounded his youth. He did not know that he had ever done anything but what seemed best to do, and what a cropper he had come! Other men, with no more advantages than he, succeeded, and others again, with many more, failed. It seems pure chance. The rain fell alike upon the just and the unjust, and for nothing was there a why and a wherefore. (Maugham 613)

Philip thereby toed the line of absurdist philosophers and momentarily arrived at the conclusion that life had no meaning and everything was a matter of chance, which provided him with the freedom to act as he deemed fit because, according to him, it did not make any difference in the larger scheme of things. This line of thought enabled him to appease himself momentarily. His friend Cronshaw had once presented him with a Persian rug and had told him that the rug contained the answer to the question of the meaning of life. Philip was now able to decode it, and he realized that the job of weaving a pattern on the rug was similar to the pattern of living a life. Just as the weaver had the freedom to choose his own design, likewise, man has the freedom to choose his own course of actions and act upon it. Whether the rug existed or not, made no difference to mankind. Likewise, whether a common man existed or not was not a quintessential question.

However, the process of creating the rug gave a sense of happiness and satisfaction to the weaver. Similarly, man was free to create a pattern of his own and rejoice in the beauty of it. There was no framework or guidelines for a perfect, meaningful life and thereby, it is

the individual's prerogative to decide the pattern and derive pleasure out of it. Viktor Frankl in his book *Man's Search for Meaning* states that "Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather he must recognize that it is he who is asked" (113).

Philip's reasoning equipped him with the ability to view things in a new light. Hitherto, he had viewed happiness as a parameter to determine whether an individual's life was purposeful. With his newfound edification, he realized that happiness was not the only yardstick and thereby experienced immense relief, as his life so far had not been a happy one. He started to view life as synonymous with art and ceased to think of it as a haphazard labyrinth of random twists and turns. He thereby, not only overcame the horror of his friend's death with his changed attitude about life and death but also derived the motivation to live it well and to the fullest possible extent, without nurturing any expectations from it.

After Philip's financial condition improved, he completed his education and began his practice. Philip wanted to go abroad so that he would be able to explore the world alongside his duties as a doctor. He was offered a job for a month as an assistant to an old doctor named South. Doctor South was a very unpleasant person and thereby nobody preferred to work with him. Philip however decided to grab the opportunity as he would be able to earn some money. Philip soon learnt that the doctor indeed matched the descriptions given by others and he took pleasure in admonishing and belittling his subordinates. Philip also became a victim to the doctor's sarcasm and irony. Nevertheless, Philip's attitude prevented him from making a mountain out of a molehill and he dismissed the doctor's sarcasm with a smile and some witty repartee. The doctor was annoyed as well as surprised by this reaction which was very different from the manner the other assistants

had hitherto behaved. He wanted to dismiss Philip for his impudence but feared that he would laugh at him. Philip had thereby instilled fear in the mind of his oppressor with his good humour instead of permitting the doctor to oppress him. The shift in Philip's attitude from a boy who endured bullying silently to a man who wielded power over the oppressor is evident in this instance.

Another occasion when the doctor became enraged and snubbed Philip was when the fisher folk preferred Philip to Doctor South. In a jealous rage, he pointed out his deformity. However, Philip was now accustomed to the jibe and though he got offended by the remark, he did not react to it. This composed reaction brought in a change of heart in the doctor and he offered Philip to stay with him permanently. Doctor South added that Philip would be able to occupy his position after his death, which meant that he would be able to treat all the patients and earn a lot. Philip however politely refused the offer by expressing his desire to travel. The doctor allowed him to go stating that he was welcome to return and take the offer whenever he pleased. Thus, Philip had managed to win the favour of a man who had the reputation of being a surly and insufferable person, by maintaining the right attitude, irrespective of the doctor's atrocious behaviour.

After his brief stint with the doctor, he began planning his trip to go abroad. In the meanwhile, he fell in love with Mr. Athelny's daughter Sally and entered into an affair. She then began to suspect that she was pregnant and this came as a huge blow to Philip. He analysed an amicable way to solve the problem and did not entertain the idea of abandoning her like most men in his situation usually did. He always remembered the kindness that the Athelnys had showered upon him during his days of misfortune and considered abandoning their daughter as a mark of treachery and cowardice. He thereby

decided to marry her and sacrifice his dreams as a token of his love for Sally. He then began to visualize the perfect life they would live together and in that state of mind, he even accepted his deformity which had hitherto been a cause of torment and ignominy. His mind was filled with optimism to such an extent that, a trail of optimistic thoughts followed and he experienced an epiphany. He realized that the unavoidable suffering that he was subjected to had a purpose, and he had attained it. He owed all his attainments to his malformed foot, but had remained oblivious about it for so long:

He accepted the deformity which had made life so hard for him; he knew that it had warped his character, but now he saw also that by reason of it he had acquired that power of introspection which had given him so much delight. Without it he would never have had his keen appreciation of beauty, his passion for art and literature, and his interest in the varied spectacle of life. The ridicule and contempt which had so often been heaped upon him had turned his mind inward and called forth those flowers which he felt would never lose their fragrance. (Maugham 708)

His newfound knowledge and revelation made him more compassionate. He forgave all the people who had caused him misery and cheated on him because he realized that everybody had been a hapless victim of their emotions or circumstances at some point in time in their lives. He remembered the lessons they had taught him but ceased to resent their actions. He realized that those people had contributed in shaping his character too and he had emerged fortified out of the ordeals they had subjected him to. He had now developed the attitude that such people should be treated compassionately with patience and must not be despised. He was satisfied to have acquired the confidence

to deal effectively with people of the ilk of Mildred and Griffiths: “At this moment he could feel a holy compassion for them all. They were the helpless instruments of blind chance. He could pardon Griffiths for his treachery, and Mildred for the pain she had caused him. They could not help themselves. The only reasonable thing was to accept the good of men and be patient with their faults” (Maugham 708).

Philip’s character had thereby undergone a complete transition by the end of the novel. He had started out with a negative perception of everything around him. Instead of being grateful about the fact that he had an uncle and aunt as his guardians, he was fretful about his unlucky destiny of being an orphaned boy with a deformed foot. Despite being aware of the fact that Mildred was not a good woman, he loved her to distraction and brought about his own destruction. Death, poverty, rejection and war bombarded his life with tragedies, which were far greater than the ones he had endured in his childhood. However, these catastrophes acted as a catalyst and enabled him to change his approach towards life. His thoughts shifted from viewing himself as a hapless victim of fate, to perceiving himself as an artist who was given the responsibility of designing his own life.

After he decided to marry Sally, Philip’s attitudes underwent a further recalibration. He realized that real happiness and meaning could be found in a simple life and the complex ideals he had set for himself did not entice him anymore. He realized that he yearned to have a loving family the most in his life, as he had never experienced familial love. He took cognizance of the fact that he had been letting life slip away by dreaming about and waiting for a more perfect, ideal and unique future. Moreover, the ideals he had set were not even that of his own, but were of the people whom he admired. Philip thereby decided to abandon his utopian visions and live a pragmatic life, as he

realized that every life had a specific meaning and discovering it was the responsibility of the individual.

To adumbrate, the characters discussed in this chapter had experienced every conceivable problem that life has to offer. However, their attitude enabled them to make a conscious choice to continue living life and not lose hope or concede defeat. The common characteristics shared by all the characters subjected to analysis is hope for a better future and acceptance of the truth that life can be cruel and unfair but one must carry on with the business of living with a belief that every life has a meaning and no one has lived in vain, but the onus of unravelling that meaning solely rests on the individual.