CHAPTER VI
An Evolution In The Observation
Of Life: From Nihilism To
Positivism “Victims And Survivors”

The sixth chapter of my thesis “An Evolution in the Observation of Life: From Nihilism to Positivism “Victims and Survivors”” is in actual fact mesmerizing and hinge on the profound analysis of Mrs. Desai’s all novels. No doubt that while some of her women protagonists are victims of perverse circumstances of their lives, others seem to be survivors even in the undesired or voluntary conditions. On one hand, some women demonstrate nihilism in their attitudes but on other hand, others illustrate positivism in their conduct and approach towards life. We can distinguish their attitude moving from nihilism to positivism as the time grows on condition that we analyse her novels scientifically.

It appears that through her sundry women characters, Mrs. Desai has shown the real women of society. Going through various melancholies and struggling with the obscurities of lives, some of the women turn mentally dismayed and their vision towards life converts negative. These kinds of women, who have been entitled as “Victims”, have been portrayed in the earlier novels of Mrs. Desai. There is also another kind of women in our social order who also
suffer from the same miseries and scuffle a lot in life but they endeavor to regulate in all kinds of circumstances. They try to amend their thinking, and fruitfully their attitudes towards life and other facts of life revolutionize and turn positive. Such kind of women can be noticed in the later novels of the writer, Mrs. Desai.

Mrs. Desai's characters make efforts on the path of existence and seek to adopt the three ways of dealing with the absurd first, committing suicide and homicide, secondly hoping for the better, and thirdly, living with it. But none of them is artificial as grotesque.  

Yes, it is absolutely factual that her women take assorted steps due to their distinctive stances towards their lives. Through her varying protagonists, we can understand the changing attitude of the writer. Mrs. Desai's attitude towards life seems to be changing with the passing of time. Her women characters' consideration is seen to be altering and moving from nihilism to positivism in every next novel of hers. This is why her own attitude appears to be changing positively. If we notice this conversion intensely, we search out that the women characters of her earlier novels become distraught and nervous by reason of their problems and continuous tussle in life. Hence, they begin to look their lives in a negative approach. On the other hand, the phenomenon becomes opposite. In her later novels, we come across the fact that her female characters, while suffering from the same distress and facing the same tribulations as the women in earlier novels, show a different outlook. They don't think to end up their lives or escape these opposite circumstances while they endeavor to adjust in their surroundings
and to get a possible elucidation of their problems. Their tactic of thinking is quite positive.

Mrs. Desai’s women react violently to the problems of their lives but a positive change is seen in her women characters of later novels. While in her novels in beginning, the heroines’ quest for identity ends in death or murder of others, in the novels written later, their search for self doesn’t end in isolation but with compromise, adjustment and conciliation.

Anita Desai’s novels offer interesting variations within this common pattern. Maya in Cry, the Peacock, Monisha in Voices in the City, Sita in Where Shall We Go This Summer? ,Nanda in Fire on the Mountain and Bimla in Clear Light Of Day form an ascending graph from alienation and neurosis to self- discovery and confidence. ²

Not only one but also many other writers have discussed this evolution of life of Mrs. Desai’s protagonists. This observation turns smoothly from nihilism to positivism, and due to this change some of her female characters turn victims in the society while others remain survivors. Some women become so perturbed and alienated in their lives that to break away from their circumstances, they commit suicide and sometimes murder their husbands whom they think to be the root of their pain, anxiety and affliction. They lose their hegemony over circumstances and even over their proceedings. This is why they start doing some abnormal things. With growing time, in her later novels women cope with the same troubles but they seek to be confident. Their self-discovery results positively, and in spite
of being frustrated and troubled, they begin to think positive, and this is why they adjust in all conditions and being confident, live voluntarily.

A scrutiny of Anita Desai’s art shows that the novelist is growth-oriented. The development from her first heroine, Maya, to her latest creation, Deven and Hugo is the story of a steady ascent towards self-realization. 3

Mrs. Desai has depicted many characters both male and female who are disintegrated in the initiation but towards the last part, get integration and a kind of wholeness. While in the instigation they are mystified and ruffled, they attain affirmation in the end. This author focuses on their inner journey from self-desertion to self-assertion so effectively. By self-annihilation her earlier characters are reluctant to succumb the trivial realities of life. Mrs. Desai has delineated artistically the growth of her characters from self-alienation to self-identification. Where in her earlier novels, she stresses on the inner predicament and heartbreaking end of her protagonists’ lives, in her last novels, she stresses on the search for real connotation of life and true significance of factors.

*The Evolution in the Observation of Life from Nihilism to Positivism* and *Who Are Victims and Survivors* can be understood on condition that we analyse the mindset and thoughts towards life of all her characters respectively.

Mrs. Desai’s first woman protagonist, Maya’s (Cry, the Peacock) way of thinking becomes so negative that due to continuous problems of her life and the fatal prophecy of albino astrologer, she throws her husband down the roof or in other words she assassinates him. The novel ends with fall of Gautama from the parapet and finally the neurotic protagonist Maya returns to her father’s house.
where she commits suicide. She fails to adjust in the environment she lives. Because of lack of proper communication, she becomes alienated and starts brooding over her life. And finally, we observe that she ends not only her life but also her husband’s life that she has always understood as the main reason of her agony and annoyance.

Virendra Parmor has written about Maya of *Cry, the Peacock* and Monisha of *Voices in the City*:

Being overtaken by the life-denying impulses and being caught in the vortex of a sinking whirlpool, they take a last decisive step to commit suicide.  

It is evident that Maya becomes the victim as a result of her husband Gautama’s ignorance and astrologer’s forecast. Since she finds her life a futile exercise and her existence nihilistic, she ends it and the reason of her nihilistic existence, her husband. The end of this novel gives a very negative note.

Monisha, woman protagonist of Mrs. Desai’s second novel *Voices in the City*, also feels neglected or unwanted by her husband, and it makes her so disturbed that she loses her control over everything and finally she ends her life by burning herself alive. Actually, she fails to comprehend her potentiality and psychic energy. She reveals only pessimistic and negative aspect in her behavioral pattern.

Divested of hope, promise and affirmation, the only course that fascinates her is to abdicate and annihilate to rid herself of the obscurities and contradictions of life. Monisha decides to seek freedom from the banal
existence and sets herself ablaze, making a la Camus, an existential choice out of absurdity. 5

On studying the first two novels of this writer, we find that only a small disparity is there between Maya and Monisha. Both of them are alienated and frustrated, and the common reason of it is the lack of communication between them and their husbands. Their mental equilibrium becomes so disturbed that on one hand Maya murders her husband and commits suicide, on the other Monisha also sets herself ablaze. In this way, just like the first novel, Mrs. Desai’s second novel also ends on a pessimistic note as Monisha feels herself unable to live in her non-favouring circumstances. She loses her heart and ends her life.

Unlike Mrs. Desai’s first two novels her third novel Bye-Bye, Blackbird doesn’t end on a totally pessimistic or negative note. In point of fact, we find a kind of acceptance in the end of this novel where the protagonists Sarah, Adit and Dev accept something or take some necessary decisions regarding their lives in which they have been ruffled by the opposite circumstances of their lives. All of them suffer from the loss of identity and this makes them the persons of negative thinking. Only a little positive point is found at the end of the novel where on one side, Dev decides to stay in America, on the other, Adit decides to leave for India soon, and Sarah accompanies him in his journey to India. In reality it is only their acceptance which can convert them free of their doubts and strain.

The women protagonist, Sarah feels unaccompanied and alienated as her own countrymen reject her as the consequence of her marriage to an Indian. But she is different from Maya and Monisha who end their lives to get rid of their
problems. She neither commits suicide nor does she kill her husband, Adit because of whom she has become an alien in her own land. She only decides to accompany her husband to India where she will be away from her countrymen who have teased and ruffled her. In this way, Sarah makes effort on the way of existence and adopts the second way of dealing with her problem-hoping for the better and thus, she leaves the first way- committing suicide. In this novel, firstly Dev becomes ruffled in the new atmosphere of America as he feels insulted and redundant there but with the passing time he learns to fiddle with that atmosphere. Through Dev, Mrs. Desai wants to reveal a fact that if someone wants to flow with life, he should accept whatever comes to him or her.

Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* is an improvement over Maya and Monisha in that she ultimately finds a compromise, a meeting point between Maya’s involvement and Monisha’s non-involvement, in her realization that there is no freedom and fulfillment without enchainment. Her voyage to Manori, the magic island where she had spent her childhood, is also a voyage of self-discovery. Illusion may be an escape from reality. But it is bound to vanish in the light of reason that is solid and tangible. While the spiritual odyssey of Maya and Monisha culminates in death, Sita’s journey ends in the realization, *there is no reality beyond the one that one lives.* She finds that one can achieve meaning in life by attaining freedom within the bondage by accepting responsibilities and duties. 6
The female character of this novel, Sita retreats to the magic Island, Manori where she has spent her childhood in order to find mental tranquility and the solution of her problems. In fact, this voyage is a voyage to self-discovery. This novel reveals a change in Mrs. Desai’s philosophy and her point of view towards the life. It is nothing but positivism of Sita that she neither commits suicide nor does she become wacky and murder anyone. Mrs. Desai’s own outlook is revealed through Sita which seems to be changed from that has been revealed earlier through Maya and Monisha. At the end of the novel, Sita comes to a decision to go back with her husband Raman, and her resolution indicates the life-affirming impulse over the life-denying impulse.

It seems that Mrs. Anita Desai admits herself the change in her attitude as she says,

Had I written the book ten years ago, I would have ended it with Sita’s suicide. 7

Sita has traveled a long distance from Maya of Cry, the Peacock and Monisha of Voices in the City though she is yet to achieve perfection........ Now Sita is in a position to see the truth in Raman’s observation, *One should be grateful in life if only a matter of disappointment, nor disaster.* 8

The next woman protagonist of Mrs. Desai’s novels is Nanda Kaul in Fire on the Mountain. She is also stuck up like earlier protagonists but she reaches a terminal at Carignano. All over her life Nanda Kaul has been cheated by her husband. She has been so much alienated and deserted but she never even thinks
of finale of her life. In her old age whether by choice or having no other option, she retreats to Carignano where she lives all alone as she has been wishing to do for a long time.

The courage, poise and balance with which she carried on a life involved and unloved is an improvement on the preceding heroines. It is only at the fag end of life after having discharged all her duties and obligations that Nanda Kaul retreats from active life.⁹

In spite of the bitterness of life and faithlessness of her husband, she performs all her duties well as a mother and as a vice-chancellor’s wife. She has never been depicted quarrelling with her husband. It gives the impression that she endures everything in her life but she is always waiting for something. And it is nothing but the same thing she does in her old age that when she gets free from the responsibilities of her children and after Mr. Kaul’s death, she goes to Carignano to live in her own way. It gives an idea of only optimism that in spite of desolation and anxiety, she neither harms anyone nor does she finish her own life.

Bimla, the protagonist of *Clear Light of Day* seems to be the most optimistic and activist character in Mrs. Desai’s all novels. She doesn’t get hitched as she has the responsibility of her mentally handicapped younger brother Baba and her alcoholic aunt Mira Mausi. No doubt that sometimes she feels so frustrated and desolate that once she slaps her brother, Baba. Though once she had very fastidious relation with her brother Raja, now there are countless
fractions between them. Her mind is so chock-full of bitterness that she neither replies his letters nor does she desire to meet him.

Anita Desai strikes the strongest note of hope and affirmation. It is by far the most affirmative of Desai's novels. All the elements that threaten to disrupt the pattern of life in all its aspects are brought under control through love, understanding, forgiveness and mutual acceptance.  

Really, Bim accepts everything superior and inferior and all responsibilities so easily that she looks to be gay and satisfied in her life. A time comes when all of her confusions are clear and because of her love, mutual understanding and forgiving-nature, she overlooks all her complaints and grievance against Baba, Raja, Tara and others and accepts everyone amorously. She remains as she is in all opposite conditions, and through the character of Bim, we come to know the positivism and optimism of Mrs. Desai also. Bim is survivor, not the victim.

Lila of Village by the Sea has also been depicted as a sanguine girl who in spite of scores of poverty and other difficulties of life doesn't lose her heart. She works hard in her childhood to run her household. Her brother Hari leaves his house, yet she doesn't feel scared and performs all her duties without any complaint. The end of the novel gives a very positive note when her father realizes his mistake and gives up drinking, her mother recovers and her brother comes back from Bombay with money and a new strategy, and all these things give her a new anticipation. Their celebration of Dipawali gives a note of positivism- only positivism. The novel is full of tensions and worries but ends
with many positive points. Although Hari and his family suffer a lot during the beginning and middle of the novel, at the end we become familiar with the fact that Hari is encouraged and confident, his father realizes all his mistakes and responsibilities, his mother recovers from her illness, and all the members are exultant. They have been shown celebrating Dipawali together and this celebration gives a very positive note.

The novel ends with a number of positive and constructive points. Hari seems to be encouraged and confident. He is prepared to undergo changes in his life. He is prepared to do something concrete for himself and for his family members. At the end of the novel, Anita Desai has introduced a religious and spiritual incident.\(^\text{11}\)

Deven of In Custody suffers a lot to prove his identity but as he gets catastrophe on every step, he becomes frustrated and worried. But at the end he becomes aware of the existential problems of men and strives to accept all the conditions and situations of life.

By the end of the novel he (Deven) has a disturbing vision, a negative vision. It is not the vision which would illuminate him to face life, as in the case of Sita in Where Shall We Go This Summer or Bim in Clear Light of Day.\(^\text{12}\)

But we find that in spite of disaster, Deven again starts living his life conventionally, and thus the novel ends on a note of hope and optimism.

Mrs. Desai's other male-dominated novel Baumgartner's Bombay is an artistic novel, something like Bye, Bye Blackbird. Baumgartner never feels
accepted in his life neither in his native land where he was born nor in India
where he has spent his life. He feels desolate and at odds all through his life and
unfortunately his life is ended by someone he has helped.

Finally a junkie named Kurt kills him and the novel ends on a disgusting
note. ¹³

Anita Desai’s next novel *Journey to Ithaca*, tells the story of a Western
couple who have come to India in the search of spiritual truth, and the end of the
novel gives us a very affirmative note when Sophie, after struggling hard to get
her husband back and to go to her country back with him, reveals the hidden truth
about *Mother* and gets him back to live a happy marital-life now.

Studying the female characters of Mrs. Desai’s novels, we can’t disregard
Uma and Melanie of *Fasting, Feasting*. Simone de Beauvoir has written about
this novel in *The Second Sex*:

The novel, however, opposes the status of *victim* given to all *third world*
women by showing that the situation of women in former colonies is much
more complex than implied by this label, which suggests that the world is
made up of oppressors (men) and the oppressed (women). ¹⁴

Through Uma and Melanie, the writer has measured up to the position of
Indian and Western female. She has stressed on the difference in opinions of these
two. No doubt that the novel reveals a similarity between them. Both of them feel
alienated, ignored and unsolicited but though it affects Melanie, Uma performs all
her duties regarding her household well without any objections or complaint. It
seems that both of them are equipped to accept whatever God gives them.
It is only the study of the novels based on women protagonists, and undoubtedly this study shows that with passing of time, Mrs. Desai’s attitude moves from negativism to positivism which is seen through her sundry women protagonists of various novels. In *Women In The Novels Of Anita Desai*, Virendra Parmor has summarized Desai’s achievements through four paradigms of Catharsis, elucidation, education and finally transformation. This writer is absolutely right in his statement as the women protagonists of Mrs. Desai’s novels show a changing attitude towards the circumstances of life; the attitude is changing from nihilism to positivism.

The female protagonists of her earlier novels Maya and Monisha, feel incapable to bend in her opposite environment. Because of their suppressed psyche and loss of control over their actions, they end up their lives. Maya not only ends her life, but also executes her husband by pushing him down the roof. Women protagonists of her further novels, Sita and Nanda Kaul are also ruffled by their non-favouring situations but they don’t finish their lives and reach their terminals at Manori and Carignano. With increasing time we can notice transformation in the women of Mrs. Desai’s novels, and it is the education that makes them stand on the road of transformation. Sarah becomes ready to go to India as she is doomed due to loss of her identity and hopefulness to acquire her identity back in India. *Bim* seems to be the masterpiece of Mrs. Desai as her quest clearly moves through four paradigms and achieves perfection in her life.

On one hand, some of Mrs. Desai’s women protagonists become victims of the society whereas others remain survivors in spite of impenetrability and
pressure of their lives. Not only in women character but in her male characters also, an evolution in the observation of life from nihilism to positivism is evident. But in assessment between Mrs. Desai’s male and female protagonists, it is found that the thinking of her male protagonists is more positive than that of her women protagonists. A reason for this factor can also be that in her later novels she has taken males as the main protagonists, and her attitude or thinking appears to be quite affirmative in her later novels. This is why her male characters are in reality quite optimistic.

Thus, not only through women protagonists but also through male protagonists, we come to know Mrs. Desai’s attitude towards life which seems to be changing with the time- from pessimism to optimism. In depiction of different characters, a few are found as victims and others remain survivors. Not only the main characters but also the supporting-characters become representatives of the victims and survivors of the society. In Fasting, Feasting, Uma’s cousin Anamika wins a scholarship to study in Oxford University but she is not sent alone to abroad and is sacrificed on the altar of marriage. We find that finally perhaps she is burnt alive by her in-laws in demand for dowry, and thus she becomes a victim of the patriarchal family system.

Uma’s sister, Aruna’s life is also not so successful as it looks. She doesn’t get her identity as an independent individual. Though it is unnatural, the fact is that the main protagonist of the novel Uma, in spite of being a failure and the disgrace of her family, succeeds in surviving through her inner self. Melanie is
quite different from her as she enjoys the sovereignty but falls a victim to misunderstanding while Uma becomes competent to transcend her constraints.

Whereas the women of Mrs. Desai’s earlier novels become the victims of wrong systems of our male-dominated society and other feminine tribulations, become ludicrous, suicide themselves or murder others, and we can catch sight of such kind of lives in Maya and Monisha, the women of her later novels don’t think to end their own or others’ lives but they remain survivors in all the situations. Their judgment is quite positive and their optimism makes them assertive. In this way, they learn to accept everything and to adjust in their opposite circumstances.

Studying all Mrs. Desai’s novels, we become acquainted with a point that Maya, Monisha, Sita, Sarah, Nanda Kaul etc. represent progressing steps of their self-perception. The very first step reveals a journey from Maya’s self-destructive involvement to Monisha’s meaningless detachment. Their fate is not very different as both of them commit suicide. The second step shows Sita’s dilemma between rejection and acceptance. She wants to escape the brutal realities of life and now understands the final realization of acceptance. The third step is Mrs. Nanda Kaul’s predicament in which she pulls on a life of faithlessness and pretence but now retreats to Carignano and accepts everything. The last or final step shows some more improvement. This phase is glimpsed in Bim who seeks to make her life perfect and significant. The arrangement of above steps is a journey from negation to affirmation.
It has been maintained that in her last novels Anita Desai has moved from alienation to a “mythic acceptance” of life and its myriad problems.\textsuperscript{15}

The earlier novels of Mrs. Desai throw light on her belief and ideas towards problems of a feminine-life. It can be assumed that while she wrote \textit{Cry}, \textit{the Peacock} and \textit{Voices in the City}, she was quite pessimistic as she ended both these novels at the death or suicide of the women protagonists, Maya and Monisha. The theme and end of \textit{Where Shall We Go This Summer?} demonstrate that with the changing time, Mrs. Desai’s attitude towards life and its challenges changes. Many critics of the writer have noticed this change in her outlook.

There is one distinct change: Sita neither dies in the end nor kills anyone, nor does she become mad. She simply compromises with her destiny.\textsuperscript{16}

It is beyond a shadow of a doubt that through Sita, Mrs. Desai longs to give a positive solution of the problems of present day world like seclusion, estrangement and temperamental maladjustment. It appears that after this novel the writer’s attitude towards the challenges begins to give a positive and possible solution to the alienated and perturbed women protagonists; the solution is the acceptance of the circumstances as they are.

The end of the novel \textit{Clear Light of Day} is also positive as it gives a message to be strong and decisive and to play against the challenges and problems of this world audaciously. The theme notifies that Bim has been so annoyed and outraged with her brother, Raja after his departure and especially after his letter but through the positive end of this novel, the writer proves that it is only forgiveness and dedication that transfigures our lives, and if we don’t have these
qualities, we will remain damaged, lacking wholeness. Bim sacrifices all the exhilaration of her life for the sake of others. Being alienated in her life, at the end of novel she has a clear outlook. She can see and understand everything so clearly that she forgives everyone even Raja. It seems that because of such people the world is still worth living. Mrs. Desai has depicted Bim in such a way that she represents sacrificing but optimistic women of Indian society.

It is heartening to note that Anita Desai after experimenting with this complexity of inner experience bordering on the neurosis moves forward to an understanding of the limitations of life both within and without. Her reconciliation with self and environment is seen in her later novels like Clear Light of Day. 17

In this way, not only in one novel but also in almost all of her later novels, the characters become optimistic having a positive thinking at the end of novel. We discover in her novels that the characters who are alienated and fragmented in the beginning of the novel and search their identity in the middle of the novel become integrated and attain comprehensiveness at the end. On one hand, women like Maya and Monisha deny accepting and living with the trivial realities of life and end their lives. On the other hand, other women like Sita, Nanda Kaul and Bim realize that only the acceptance of existence and circumstances with positive self-affirmation can lead to fulfillment. The realization and positive thoughts of such kind of women make them confident and accepting everything as it is, they remain survivors and not the victims of social-systems.
In dealing with the interior landscape and the psychic ordeal of the abandoned self, Desai has delineated the growth of the protagonists from self-alienation to self-identification. Thus, the hysterical and saturnine abnormality in *Cry, the Peacock* gives way to a jovial, delectable and diurnal life-view in *Clear Light of Day* and *In Custody*. ¹³

In this way, not only the female characters but also the male characters like Deven, Dev, Adit, Baumgartner, Hari etc. illustrate a positive growth. Though they struggle in the beginning and middle of the novel, they achieve self-realization and identity at the end. All of Mrs. Desai’s later novels whether of female protagonists or of male protagonists end on a positive edge.

Studying Mrs. Desai’s novels one by one, we come to know that after some of her earlier novels, she makes a departure, and this departure is from the novels of hypersensitive and neurotic women to the novels of optimistic and confident women. In the beginning of her later novels, the protagonists whether male or female, may not be optimistic but their continuous search for identity makes them the women of positive thinking and optimistic attitude.

Anita Desai’s first two novels *Cry, the Peacock* and *Voices in the City* end on the completely negative note. In her first novel, the woman protagonist murders her husband and dies herself while in the second one, the protagonist commits suicide. Her third novel ends at the point of adjustment where the male protagonists takes an decision to leave for India although it is very difficult for him to take such kind of decision. And his wife, the woman protagonist of this novel doesn’t hesitate in leaving her native land and accompanies him. All these
things show that this novel ends neither on positive nor on negative point but on a point of adjustment.

After this novel a great change comes in the theme of Mrs. Desai’s novels. The reader observes a welcome note of positivism and optimism in her fourth novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*. The female protagonist of this novel dares to say the great ‘No’. But it is absolutely affirmative when she says ‘Yes’ to the unpalatable aspects of life as she has understood that her development and growth lie there in her husband’s house.

The heroine of *Fire on the Mountain* after being free of all of her responsibilities, begins to live in her own way or in seclusion and loneliness as she has wished all through her life. She is contented and doesn’t want any kind of interruption in her privacy. She has no complaint against anyone and against her life or fortune.

The woman protagonist of *Clear Light of Day* seems to be the most optimistic woman of Mrs. Desai’s all the novels. It is because she performs all her duties while her siblings leave her in trouble and think for their own sake but in the end, she is not angry but contented and satisfied after forgiving everyone including his brother Raja with whom she has been so much angry once.

Hari of *Village by the Sea* has learnt her lessons from his life full of difficulties and miseries. But as his education comes to an end, he is prepared for each and every kind of situation in his life. Deven of *In Custody* finally, transcends his personal problems and achieves consciousness of the existential
difficulties of man. He accepts all his conditions as it is and thus asserts a confident personality.

Through the protagonist of Baumgartner's Bombay, the writer has revealed how a man who finds himself always in difficult and opposing conditions, learns to accept the life in all its shades. Journey to Ithaca is a novel in which the female protagonist doesn't leave her husband in difficulty of illusion. Instead she makes all possible efforts to find out the truth and draws his partner away from the false world. The novel Fasting, Feasting suggests that the world is made up of oppressors and the oppressed who are women. It shows that whether in India or in Western countries the condition of women is not very good but it is better in West than that in India.

While in her earlier novels Mrs. Desai has depicted the inner world of women in which they are suffering frustration and loneliness, they become alienated and begin their journey for search for self but unfortunately don't get their identity and lose heart in the way and this becomes the reason of their disaster, in her later novels Mrs. Desai has delineated the women of positivism and affirmation who are not ready to end their lives or to leave their lives in the hands of destiny. But they are ready to struggle with their fate and fight the hindrances of their progress. They look at everything with a positive thinking and gets the solution of every problem.

The women characters of Mrs. Desai's later novels want to be recognized as existents, to enjoy the same rights as men do and not to subordinate their existence under men. They are not refusing to perform their duties but they want
to be aware of their all kinds of rights with their duties. Where the women of her earlier novels end their lives, end others’ lives or escape the opposing situations, the women of later novels don’t need to do any of these things. They want to change their circumstances that ruffle them and know how to tackle with these situations or problems. They want to know the meaning of their lives and the importance of their existence. They are not satisfied in the four walls of their houses but want to go out and enjoying their liberty, they want to know and prove their identity. They have to tolerate and suffer a lot but now they are not ready to leave their goals. They don’t want to be the ‘victims’ of wrong notions of the society but the ‘survivors’ of the society who can live their lives in their own ways.

Concluding this chapter, it can be alleged that many critics have noticed the positive growth in Mrs. Desai’s characters. I assume that the women protagonists of her earlier novels become depressed and alienated. Though they undertake to find their identity and struggle in their lives, they find no absolute solution of their tribulations and uncertainties, and finally being illogical or crazy and losing their control over themselves, sometimes they commit suicide like Maya and Monisha and sometimes they murder others thinking them to be the incentive of their wretchedness. Such women are actually the victims of opposite circumstances. Thus, the earlier novels show that Mrs. Desai’s approach to life seems to be negative.

With the change of time, we come across a positive change in her thinking as in the later novels, though the protagonists undergo and put up with the same
problems, their quest for identity ends on a positive note. Instead of ending their lives, they make an effort to modify them in their opposite atmosphere and consent everyone as they are. We locate a positive change in their attitude towards life, existence, its problems and its challenges. Such kind of women like Sita, Bim, Sarah, Nanda Kaul, Uma, Lila (small girl) don’t become victims but remain survivors of our social order- its culture and civilization. These women are alive with positivism. In this way, the analysis of evolution in the observation of life in them that is from nihilism to positivism, is in actual fact quite fascinating. Characters of negative observation become victims whereas others of positive observation remain survivors.
Notes and References


   *R.S. Sharma, Anita Desai*, p. 102.


   *Anita Desai, Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1982) p. 143.


Vol. II. p. 9.