

CHAPTER-III

Crossing the River : Negotiating Diaspora

The first chapter accounted historical background of postcolonialism and Caryl Phillips' contribution to postcolonial literature. However the second chapter explained postcolonialism and diaspora in detail. Thus, the two chapters created proper background, which will help us to analyze the selected novel with postcolonial perspective in this chapter. In brief in present chapter, we are going focus on the major diasporic themes of displacement, racism, slavery, and identity crisis.

The struggle for power, wealth and ambition, for prosperity is not a new thing but it is basic human nature. From the time when man has been on earth, different cultural groups have frequently travelled from one place to another in the world, eager to find a better basis for survival. It is said that, "Ambition is corrupting force which grows in human selfishness. It compels man to create opportunities and succeed in those opportunities". This over selfishness leads man to act inhumanly. History is evidence of such numerous vicious events. Some recent events like Atlantic slave trade, European Colonialism, Holocaust and two devastating World Wars are consequences of such selfishness and greed.

When we are revising the postcolonial black diaspora importance of the history cannot be overlooked. History is the major concern of postcolonial literature. British history and Atlantic slave trade cannot be separated from each other. Economic development of Britain as a world power in eighteenth century is mainly based on economic and physical exploitation of black Africans. The Africans who were transported from their homelands were used as labors on sugar plantations. Corrosive and brutal consequences of this are left not only on that generation but also on the future generations of black slaves. The diaspora lost their ties with their homeland forever. The postcolonial literature mirrors sufferings and hardships of

these people uprooted from home and homeland.

In the present time, issues of race and ethnicity lead the intellectual discourse of various disciplines, as well as in the socio-political arena. Heightened awareness in these issues is in response to the demographic reality of increasing racial and ethnic diversity that is product of diaspora. Diaspora which is mostly outcome of population displacement that gives rise to various issues like hybridity, racism, marginality .These issues are roots of sorrows of thousands of uprooted people.

However, diaspora does not merely stand for physical relocation but it also signifies sociocultural and psychological relocation. Diaspora always suffer from dilemma and they are split into two i.e. two lands, two identities , two different cultures, two beliefs as well as in two psyches. In it, one belongs to native land and other to foreign land. The story of profit and loss of Diaspora is well described in following lines of Grace Nichols, epilogue, *The Fat Black Woman's Poems*:

I have crossed an ocean

I have lost my tongue

And from the old root

A new one sprung.

The experience of diaspora that is closely related to loss and gain is precisely described in above lines .It exactly focuses on the central feature of diaspora. The words 'crossed', 'root', and 'lost' are strongly express diasporic trauma. The poem conveys feelings of thousands who were displaced from their native land. This poem exposes the crisis that is at the heart of Phillips' writings. Thousands of Africans who crossed Atlantic Ocean lost their liberty to slavery and stepped forward to death .Though Diaspora signifies both gain and loss. In *Crossing the River*, we can observe the burden of loss is heavier. Exactly this is what we are going to analyze in present

chapter with the help of different themes presented in the novel. Bénédicte Ledent in his *Ambiguous Visions of Home: The paradox of Diasporic Belonging in Caryl Phillips'*, *The Atlantic Sound*. rightly marks that:

Phillips does not regard the diaspora as a notion to be exploited theoretically, but rather as an empirical and historical reality that needs to be probed without prejudices and from multiple and ever-changing angles.

Accordingly, my main endeavor is to study the novel *Crossing the River* from the various postcolonial perspectives as race, ethnicity, and home and to evaluate authors approach towards these serious issues.

Crossing the River is richly a detailed depiction of brutality of Atlantic slave trade. The novel presents the story of three black children sold into slavery and there journey towards the end .They have to struggle for freedom .The novel moves with Nash, Martha and Travis' struggle for survival in the host society .Boston Globe says:

Uncommonly resourceful ...an admirably complex and artfully wrought effort to renegotiate the staggering dimensions of the African DiasporaA highly particularized web of damning circumstances , each crafted in its own distinctly styled prose ... *Crossing the River* bears eloquently chastened testimony to the shattering of black lives .

The novel covers the long span of nearly two centuries of the African Diaspora. The novel is altogether historical. The story begins in the early nineteenth century and ends in the late twentieth century. The exact ending of the novel is in 1963.

Nash, Martha, and Travis belong to different times and different continents.

The individual stories put forth their sufferings. But at base of all there is question of belonging , centuries old longing for a homeland which in fact does not exist. The loneliness , a deep sense of sorrow and emotional isolation that the Black fictional characters go through present moving pictures of life. They reflect the milieu in which these characters move. Phillips prefers more reality than fancy in his fiction. Commonly in his fictions, he presents individuals of different countries and cultures who for various reasons are forced to live away from their own country and have to face difficult phases. About *Crossing the River* Publisher Weekly says:

Memorable, convincing characters , broad vision, and evocative narrative result in a novel both resonant and deeply moving ...A stirring meditation on the hardship and perseverance of people torn from home.

The novel is divided in four parts. A separate narrator narrates each part. Phillips depicts this novel through both types of characters slaves and masters, blacks and whites, victims and victors. He gives an account of the historical events like Atlantic slave trade and World War. All three characters are displaced from their origin, family, and home. The novel *Crossing the River* beautifully intertwines theme of racism, slavery, and hybridity. The novel has an epic sweep covering the whole vision of the traumatic experience of Black people. Phillips deals with different diaspora spread throughout the world .He prefer fragmented narrative style to traditional linear one. The selection of fragmented narrative has offered a very perceptive picture of psychologically and spiritually fragmented lives of blacks. *Crossing the River* opens with account of slavery and its drastic effects upon people. With the voice of ashamed, father who sold his children to a slave trader. Phillip opens the novel as:

A desperate foolishness. The crops failed. I sold my children. I remember. I led them (two boys and a girl) along weary paths I soiled my hands with cold goods in exchange for

their warm flesh . A shameful intercourse. I could feel their eyes upon me. And soon after , the chorus of a common memory began to haunt me . (1).

This unusual and touching opening of Caryl Phillips' novel *Crossing the River* not only reflects the sufferings of characters but also give insight in to the inhuman practice of slave trade in Africa. In prologue, Phillips used 'a many-tongued chorus, to represent desperate father. From that moment, a "many-tongued chorus", (1), has haunted the father.

In the prologue the Phillips uses two different voices to explain the different perspectives .One is of the ashamed father who is guilty about his unwilling act and other of slave trader who accomplishes his job . Phillips' account of contradictory feelings of the slave trader and the father is very sensitive. This unfolding of story expresses the inner struggle of father. Moreover, how the reminiscence of an awful action torments his mind. The feeling of remorse is powerfully expressed. The reality is that the father feels eyes of his children upon him but unable to converse with them. He appears as African ancestor, because he makes the following statement:

"For two hundred and fifty years I have listened to the many-tongued chorus. And occasionally, among the sundry restless voices, I have discovered those of my own children .My Nash my Martha .my Travis." (1).

The spiritual father is forced to watch the grim consequences of his dealings that traumatized lives of his off springs. Though he expresses hope for them, he incessantly blames himself for their miseries. He is craving from centuries to meet them at this side of river. The prologue sums up with the same words that start it: "A desperate foolishness. The crops failed. I sold my children" (2).

Thus through prologue Phillips sets a historical milieu to *Crossing the River* and relates the subsequent experiences in the novel to the background.

3.1 Displacement in *Crossing the River*

The displacement plays vital role in the postcolonial premise that applies to nearly every migrant situation. It refers not only to physical displacement but also to a sense of being socially or culturally "out of place". About displacement Bhabha in his *The Location of Culture* says, "That it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history-subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement- that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking." (172)

Displacement can be considered as synonym with grief and always most at home in the attitudes of grieving. Displacement hardly ever has a definitive end, for it seems to be responsible for it. The displaced is often a suffer. Theme of Displacement has been a central notion in Phillips writings. "For Afro-Caribbean Phillips, identity of the Caribbean people is conditioned by the history of emigration and exile, and his novels always address the themes of displacement' and 'uprooting'." (Dash57). The rootlessness means that if one does not belong to one place, then one belongs to many. Definitely the novel *Crossing The River*, having distinct stories of Blacks in different parts as Britain and the United States and Africa but all linked with common theme of diaspora, which is product of displacement. The sense of failure and pain in the novel stems from one most important thing that is uprooting. Displacement is the one thing that produces all the painful accounts of diaspora. The diaspora Literature involves an idea of a homeland, a place from where the displacement occurs. These harsh journeys embark on because of economic compulsions. Basically, diaspora is a minority community living in exile. All the themes have in turn are related to Diaspora, which at its core consist the image of a home. Baumann puts concept of home as :

There is hope nostalgic home. There is hope of return. The

home may not be really exist or it may be center of nostalgia may be recently left generation ago. It is a place were we feel welcoming .They contain both physical localities and metaphorical symbolizations of belonging . The moving between two settings may be liberating for some at sometimes but for others it is disturbing betweenness of belonging nowhere . (324)

It is the condition of black characters in *Crossing the River* . Nash is emancipated slave sent to Liberia (home) as a missionary under the support of the American Colonization Society, in the 1830s. Martha is a pioneer woman heading to west in search of shelter and Travis an African –American G.I. during World War II falls in love with a white woman all these three characters displaced from their homeland are longing for home and for beloved ones.

African Americans slaves like Nash (repatriate), who were displaced by their masters for missionary work in Africa and Martha who ran away from slavery ,these blacks continued to struggle to find their place in a country still hostile to their heritage.

In the first part, "The Pagan Coast", that set in the 1830s, Nash Williams, a freed slave sent to Liberia in the support of the American Colonization Society, for converting natives. In fact it is kind of colonization under the name of "Civilizing mission". Nash having of good moral character had been chosen for the mission and was departed from the known world. Edward Williams, his former master, go after in search for him to Liberia. Though Edward is a rich white man, he detests the system of slavery. The type of relationship Edward has to his former slave Nash is against the conventions among colonizing group. He tries to find out information about Nash with the help of Madison, another former slave .The investigations come to end when it turns out that Nash has died, after contracting a disease. Edward disappointed to know that Nash has established a new home among the native people he was supposed to convert and educate. Edward also found that Nash has abandoned the values

instilled by him, married, and adapted to the native religions and traditions. Yet this is no simple act of liberation and reversal and Nash finds he cannot be truly at "home" in Liberia any more than he could in Virginia.

As forcefully displaced from homeland, Nash has no contact with his own (native) culture. In America, he has accepted the Christian ways of life. At first he works on fields later shifted to housework .He was favorite of his master. Now after his displacement he is trying to settle in Liberia. He is one of the innocent natives of it. However, at the time, he becomes a prey to the situation. His only fault is that he is a foreigner in his native land. Here arises question of belonging and unbelonging. He asks his master for help, but fails to get it. He remains alone in this pathetic condition. Being a outsider, he is considered as the white among natives.

The feeling of racialism is prominent in America. As a slave, in America he was treated like an inferior being. Now in Africa he is an outsider .He has feeling of guiltiness because of his adoption of native lifestyle. Even he creates the feeling of deep hatred towards the Whites. He contemplates upon his identity. In his, last letter to his former master he complaints him for deserting and ignoring him. Nash is unhappy with his own failure in his promised work. His frustration reveals from following lines:

I request you that you do not come to Africa, for fear that I will surely disappoint youPerhaps in this realm of the hereafter you might explain to me why you used me for your purposes and then expelled me to this Liberian paradise.....it only remains for me to urge once more to urge you to remain in your country. (63)

In the "Pagan Coast", there is description of hardships that pioneers have to face. The horrifying conditions are described as:

No longer were these unfortunate creatures pioneering in the welcoming bosom of native land, with a clear blue sky for roof and

fertile soil beneath their dusty feet. They were being tossed upon the stormy seas of fever, and when storm diminished, many found they had been driven clear out of this mortal world. (9-10)

The "Pagan Coast" is an account of miseries of Nash William. Through his letters to his master Nash depicts the harsh realities of Liberia. He finds himself hopeless and lonely in the new atmosphere. He feels very disappointed and frustrated. But keeps sending his master letters at last he says, "I fail to see what hurt I ever inflicted upon you that could justify such a cruel abandonment of your past intimate, namely myself in his last letter" (60).

At the beginning, the innocent Nash passionately dedicated himself to do God's work. He carry out his work passionately. It is rightly expressed as, "Neither climate nor native confrontation, diseases nor hardship of any manner would deflect him from his purpose." (10)

In order to sustain himself in a foreign land (homeland), Nash tries to accept even the rough lifestyle. He expects that, one day he will be successful in his mission assigned to him by his master. He was resolved to carry name of God to the heathens. His expectations from life are very little. Nevertheless, destiny does not welcome it. Africa has taught him the native art of living. With passing time due to lack of basic necessities he fails to survive and to adjust the way of life in Africa. Further there is a picture of gradual deviation of devoted missionary and of his continuous compromise with harsh realities that shows how a educated Christian changes into African heathen. As raised in White society and sent back to Africa, he almost certainly experienced identity problems while living in both America and Africa. Phillips portrays how Nash is tormented between American and African belonging and unbelonging. At a time he says, "Liberia the beautiful land of my forefathers is a place where person of color may enjoy their freedom. It is the home for our race..." (18)

At the end he mentions that, "Perhaps you imagine that this Liberia corrupted

my person transforming me from good Christian, colored gentleman who left your home into this heathen you barely recognize ."(61)

On one hand, he shows that he is happy in Liberia and on other hand urging his master to meet in America. Thus in his own homeland he is treated like a white where he feels like a stranger and fails to assimilate in heathen culture .Where as in America where he was grown up and freed from slavery not accepted by society. Nash's dilemma can be depicted in Dr. Shubha Mukherjee's words as:

No doubt, people from different countries have settled in alien nations but their hearts and souls are left behind in their far off motherlands. Physically they accept the situational change but emotionally they hate everything alien. (40).

The displaced people struggle to survive at the different places and get whatever their dreams and opportunities offer them. Despite the fact that they are living at remote places, their hearts find comfort in their native soil. This is a type of cultural invasion. In *Crossing the River* Martha also runs away for the hope of a 'better life' and when she is disappointed in such condition, the pangs of remaining far from homeland and family are painful.

Second part "West "is narrated by Martha Randolph. She is a victim of slavery who shuttled around different homes in her lifetime from one to another. Later becomes a frontiers woman in the American Wild West. Her story moves like shuttlecock in past and present. In the last moments of her life, she remembers incidents of her past life like an auction where slaves are sold to new owners. At such auction, Martha is separated from her daughter Eliza Mae, and husband Lucas. This parting turns into never recoverable wound in her mind. To avoid one more auction Martha chooses to run off her owner and heads for Dodge .There she sets up herself cleaning clothes and cooking food. While working in Dodge once again a ray of hope appears in her dreary life in form of Chester, she falls in love with him but

unfortunately, white men kill him. At this age when she was in great need of companionship, once again left alone in this world to survive. She feels isolated. Therefore, she makes a decision to leave Dodge. Her last wish to meet her daughter forces Martha to head for California, where Eliza Mae might be. Martha travels with a group of other black people. Though mentally she is strong at this point her age she becomes physically weak and it is not easy for her to endure hardships of journey and this affects the travelers. On her way to California, (to meet her daughter) Pioneers abandon her in Denver., Colorado due to her poor health.

Destiny all over again leaves Martha on her own in foreign land. Her loneliness is portrayed as “. ...wide black sky that would once more be her companion.” (73) At this stage of life old, useless, Martha “fall over like foolish lame mule “(73) memorizes her past beyond recent past her teen years when she was sold by her father . After completing long ,lonely, weary , hard journey of years slavery she laments ,”Father , why hast thou forsaken me ? ” (73)

In Colorado she is helped by a kind White woman and is invited to stay at there house. When Martha comes in a cabin, a place of shelter, offered by a white woman she feels warm .Her worn out state is described as: “Martha closed her eyes. After countless years of journeying, the hand was both insult and salvation... Martha Randolph Squatting like a filthy bag of bone. ” (75) Further she dies of cold.

Her story puts forth through her memories of her miserable life, including the scene of being sold like animals by her father, then in auction in which her family gets shattered, after losing her daughter and husband. Because of her personal intense melancholy she lost her belief in religion and became apathetic. Martha's story pictures bitter, inhuman consequences of displacement and slavery on individual life, her distorted family and how each time she left was lonely to survive. It depicts how she runs away to avoid to stand on an auction block, to avoid to belong to anybody, to avoid to be renamed again. Her resistance to slavery ,her endeavor to live better life is revealed from her action .She realizes that thousands of other scared black made the

same journey as she, traveling on their own to west in search of better future.

In "Somewhere in England", Travis is black African American G.I. He is the son of African father who sold him to slavery century ago. However, this story is set during the period of Second World War. This means Travis is not real son of African father but just incarnation of him. Travis was displaced from America to England who works as service man in a small village in England. However, Joyce narrates this part. Joyce is white ,English woman who falls in love with Travis .Though Phillips doesn't give more information about Travis' past ,his present reveals that he was suffering from alienation .As it is rightly said that same kind of people come together Travis and Joyce comes close to each other .Travis isolated from homeland and Joyce estranged within her own family . Further when happiness appears in his loveless life in form of Joyce, his luck turns back to him .He was sent on mission to Italy.

All of the characters were disturbed since they were uprooted from Africa, they were haunted by feeling of alienation, and as a result, they departed their life in foreign lands. Thus, all the characters in this novel prove how life means to struggle, to suffer from the unavoidable self-destruction and being unable to avoid the hindrances put before us by the cruel fate. Trauma of Africans who were torn from home reveals through their melancholy lamentations, "'We have lost sight of Africa.'"(124)

Phillips focuses on a range of struggles and stresses of displaced once. Above stories echo nostalgia of thousands as well as his own who were uprooted .Here we can understand the fact in the feelings expressed by Alexander pope in his poem as:

Happy man is the man whose wish and care,

A few paternal acres bound:

Content to breathe his native air

in his own ground.

3.2 Slavery and Racism in *Crossing the River*

A) Slavery in *Crossing the River*

A number of Caryl Phillips' novels like *Cambridge* (1991), *Crossing the River* (1993) and *Foreigners: Three English Lives* (2007) deal with myriad facets of slavery in the British domain from the eighteenth century to the present day. Phillips referred *Journal of slave Trader* written by John Newton, which provided him sufficient data of his experience and offer him helpful insights into slavery and the slave trade in the eighteenth century. Slavery and the African Diaspora in the eighteenth century played significant role in British history as well as emphasize and influence of it in the twentieth century. Joannou points out that Phillips is indeed the author, who has,

...revised the history of slavery the most extensively in his writing ... as unfinished business in terms of its continuing impact on the sense of self and on relationships between black and white people in the modern world (195).

Crossing the River depicts not only the lives of enslaved and liberated Africans but also their inter relation with white characters. A critic Ledent comments that ,“the novel has been described as the weaving of dispossessed existences into the broad canvas of the African Diaspora .”(108)

Phillips portrayed his fictional characters in their different roles and shades. Black characters reveals the practice of slavery and racism in the society .Nash ,Martha ,Travis all are victims of racism and slavery and they struggle to adjust in new society atmosphere and conflicts . The picture presented is completely realistic reflects horrors of slavery and racism.

The novel *Crossing the River* contains four separate narratives. All four stories cover diverse shades of very similar issues. All the stories are set in different periods in history. The stories represent major historical events as American colonization society, emancipation proclamation, European slave trade, two World Wars. Whereas the first three stories are set during the period of slavery, the last one is set in the twentieth century. Almost all the persons in Phillips' fiction are deeply isolated and reason of their solitude rooted in situations beyond their control like displacement, wars, and social prejudices. Phillips shows there is some sort of connection between the sufferings of people all around the world. Although the violence experienced by the victims is different, the suffering of the people is similar. The major characters are struggling for the survival.

In practice of slavery, people are treated as property. They were bought and sold like any other things, furniture, farm animals, and farm tools etc. One more important thing is that they are forced to work hard and tortured like animals. The blacks were treated like a trash and not much more than animals. Slaves are dispossessed of any right "of the right to leave, to refuse to work, or to demand compensation ". They are sold, bought, and kept without their consent according to whims of their masters. All these aspects of slavery can be observed in *Crossing the River*.

The first part "pagan coast" tells the story of a freed slave who was a converted Christian, favorite of his master and sent for missionary work to Liberia. Nash rises from a slave to master in the native society of Liberia. The part deals with hard ships of Nash and the failure of Christian values to survive in native land that consists of races that worship some other gods. Nash emulated ideals from white Americans he could not establish his own identity. Phillips describes the disillusionment, failure, and brutality.

"West" the second part in *Crossing the River* is a story of evils of slavery. As we have seen above leading role in this part is Martha, a black older slave woman. In

this part, there are several instances where harmful effects of slavery can be traced. The first strongest example is the transaction between father and slave trader and the next is auction that is realistic picture of the eighteenth century slave trade. When Lucas told them about the death of their master Martha becomes restless because she knows that they are going to be sold again as new master has not interested in plantation life. The atmosphere described is evidence for the terror and pain aroused in their minds .Martha says, “„outside, I can hear the crickets, their shrill voices snapping, like twigs being broken from a tree.” It hints about shattering of family.

Martha and her family has to face auction.. Horrifying portrayal of auction disturbs our mind make us to think seriously about evils of slavery. Martha describes auction as:

“The auctioneer beckons forward the traders. They look firstly at the men. A trader prods Lucas’s biceps with a stick. If a trader buys a man, it is down the river. To diethe families in need of domestics or the farmers in need of breeding wenches, they look across at us and wait their turn I am too old for breedingmy ElizaMae hold on to me ,but it will no avail .she will be a prime purchase....soon the bidding will begin . Moma . Eliza Mae whispers the word over and over again, as though this were the only word she possessed .this one word. This word only ” (77).

The auction is very momentous in Martha’s life as she loses her husband, Lucas and daughter, Eliza Mae which is never recoverable loss for her. “The trader who had prodded Lucas with a stick bought him for a princely sum ... Eliza Mae was sold after Martha” (Phillips 78). Hoffmans bought Martha and left the place quickly. Here words “their purchase “, “bundled Martha” shows how slaves were treated as goods without feelings . Here starts Martha’s second tragic and endless journey. As seen above her first journey was a result of unforgettable and “shameful “act of her father in the beginning of *Crossing the River* when he sold her into slavery Martha

remembers her arrival at Virginia “ a trembling girl waited with two boys and a man .Standing off ,the ship .” (73) There were number of another instances where the dark side of slavery turn out with its ugly face in Martha’s slave life . In the period of not more than a year her new masters, the Hoffmans were going through bad phase, decided to go away from Virginia to reside outside of the city of Kansas, “a part of country which was young and promising for pioneers”. (79) Martha can make out that once again she is put up for sale. Though Mr. Hoffman was religious he did not let Martha free planned to sell her. He declared Martha that. ‘We are going to California, but we shall have to sell you back across the river in order that we can make this journey.’ Martha’s heart fell like a stone” (80). This reveals that it is only the master who rules over all activities slave. He is whole and sole for slave. It is strong evidence of commoditization of slaves.

Now Martha, in her middle age, was tired of to be sold from one master to another to and needs freedom. Throughout her life she works hard but at this stage of middle age, left without family ,she felt “assaulted by loneliness”.(79) Martha had made her mind to escape from the Hoffman family because there is no option left for her to avoid prison of slavery. Martha is perfect example of physical, psychological, and spiritual exploitation of women in system of slavery. Martha’s disgust for slavery reveals through her following act:

That night, Martha packed her bundle and left the house. For where, she was not sure (don’t care where) being concerned only with heading west 9 going west), away from the big river (away from Hell),and avoiding nigger traders who would gladly sell her back over the border and to Missouri Never again would she stand on an auction block.(Never .) Never again would she be renamed.(Never)Never again would she belong to anybody . (No sir, never). (80)

Thus, at last Martha rebels against evil system of slavery. Though she becomes free from slavery, its impact continued .The slavery was as if flowing in their

blood when she frees away herself she says: "I was free now but it was difficult to tell what difference being free was making to life". (84)

This curse of slavery affected her life so badly that she dies without fulfilling her last wish to meet her daughter. Even after her death when Martha died, the woman wondered about her identity "They would have to choose a name for her if she was going to receive a Christian burial" (Phillips 94). Even after death Martha, do not have her own identity. "West" reveals the grim intricacy of slavery that affects on entire life of slaves. No one bothers about his or her existence. They are deprived of their place in society.

The third part called "Crossing the River" set in the period of the slave trade. This part is different from other two because in this part Phillips chooses White narrator, the slave trader. James Hamilton is master on the British slave ship *Duke of York* is slave trader. This chapter depicts an account of slave trade on the ship during 1752 and 1753 and its passage to Africa. . Hamilton's notes in the ship's logbook and his letters to his wife offer detail information about every activity on the ship. "*Crossing the River* reveals the terrible and awful consequences of inhuman practice of slavery as well as hypocrisy of white colonizers. Under transatlantic slavery, Africans were the legal property of others who largely controlled the disposition of their output this can be seen in the *Crossing the River*.

The term "slave" is a multifaceted concept. A slave can be someone very marginalized and without any power .But, a slave could be someone more close to the center and who has some power. The degree in which someone is a slave depends upon the context of one's life. The effect can be seen in various forms as, of frequent rebellion, misbehavior by crewmembers, killing slaves by diseases. Frequent reports of insurrections and human cost paid can be seen in the following examples:

This morning the yawl returned upon the flood with information that the *Robert* , new England sloop ,is down the coast

with near 200 slaves on board , and that there has been an insurrection in her , in which the chief mate ,2 ordinary seamen ,and 27 slaves were killed . (111)

The horrible punishment of such acts is as:

Friday 2nd aprilslaves were forming a plot of insurrection surprised four attempting to get off their irons and upon their search in their rooms found some knives ,stones ,shot ,etc .Put two in irons and delicately in the thumbscrews to encourage them to full confessionin evening put 5 more in neck yokes .(114)

There are some such incidents where writer depicts shameful acts of colonizers that are blot on humanity and epitome of brutality. The shocking and terrible reality of system of slavery is brought to the notice of readers who are not familiar with it. As,*Saturday 10th April* ... "At 6 p.m. George Robinson seduced a woman slave big with child ,and lay with her in view of the whole quarter deckHer number is 72 ."(115)

The condition of slaves who were kept on ships as if they are cattle is very pathetic. The adverse weather and unbearable physical torture makes slaves feeble and its psychological effects are depressing which can be witnessed in number of tragic events. One of such is as follows:

" *Saturday 17th April*... when we were putting the slaves down this evening, one that was fevered jumped overboard (No .97). Got died immediately between his weakness and the salt water he swallowed. "(115)

According to the chronology of story 'Crossing the River' should be the first part but author put it on third place in which there is evidence of the transaction between father and Hamilton .The entry of it is as "Bought 2 strong man-boys, and a

proud girl.” Numbers of such transactions were recorded in this part where human beings were sold like animals. The language used for reports in logbook like “Was shown 10, but bought none .Lame, old or blind. (103)” “ a half –dozen fine man – boys ”, “ they bought a woman slave , whom I refused being long –breasted (104)” was shown 11 slaves , of whom I picked 5 , viz 4 men ,1 woman .”(105). this shows that these people were bought and sold as if they were mere commodities and goods a source of profit. There descriptions especially words like half-dozen, picked refused etc were professional, that are used in cargo dealings. The wretched condition of slaves and indifference of slave masters is obvious through the cases as refusal of the woman because of her long breasts, some others because they were blind, lame, or old. On one hand, the reports of Hamilton are dry and brief but the letters to his wife are emotional and full of love that exposes his hypocrisy.

“Somewhere in England” is the fourth part. It is difficult to find out traces of slavery in this part as it is set in period after Abolishment of slavery. However, there is depiction of another type of slavery within traditional marriage system that is slavery within family female domination by male.

The story in this part takes place during the Second World War. This part tells the story of a woman named Joyce, who lives in an English village, and her life is presented through her diary notes. She is a white English woman with a tense relationship to her mother. Joyce marries a man Len, but her mother is not in favor of this marriage. Further, he becomes alcoholic and used to beat his wife-as if it is not enough involved in illegal activities. His involvement in illegal activities results in his arrest and imprisonment in jail for some years. In this period, Joyce falls in love with Travis, a black American soldier who has been stationed in Joyce’s village. The relationship between white and black is not acceptable in society but Joyce tries her best to continue it. However, the problem arises when Len returns from jail, who still wanted to maintain relations with Joyce and asserts that he and Joyce still are married. Joyce faces the evil side of Len again but she refuses to let him win. At the pub, Travis beats Len and warns him for his behavior. Len leaves the village and allows

Joyce to divorce him. Joyce gives birth to the boy Greer and marries Travis, Greer's father. However, Travis dies in a military mission in Italy. Joyce is left alone with Greer. She is forced to give her son up for adoption. One kind of slavery in the chapter is the marriage between Joyce and Len. Joyce is exploited into a relationship where Len has control over her and proves it by beating her. In a diary note dated December 1943 Joyce writes about Len's return from jail. From the note, it is clear that Len has become aware about Joyce's relationship with Travis and Joyce wants to divorce Len. Len treats her cruelly as if Joyce is his private property and someone trying to snatch it from him. However, it is clear from following lines :

“Len stood up. He pushed his finger into my face. He jabbed at me to punctuate his sentences. You will not see him, or any of ‘em. You won’t go to town, to the pub, have them in here, talk to them, nothing, as long as I’m here” (213-214).

Len tries to be the master and bring back what he sees as his slave Joyce by using muscle.

“I knew he wouldn’t touch me again. He’d made his point. And then there was the shame. I suspect there’s always a certain amount of shame involved for all men. After they’ve thrown the punch. They look and see you cowering ... They’re sorry. It’s pitiful” (214).

Thus, Joyce experiences the harmful effects of being married to Len .Joyce takes help of Travis to put down Len and to end his power over her. Joyce forcefully made Len to accept her divorce. However, Joyce’s miseries do not end here, Len demands profits from the shop Joyce runs; and puts a condition that if she is going to leave the village during the war, he will sell the shop. Moreover other people in Joyce’s village supports Len’s views about Joyce’s love affair with Travis. Before leaving, he says that she is schemer and a common slut .He blames her for her unfaithfulness.

Finally, Joyce breaks all shackles of slavery and becomes free from it but in turn, she has to give heavy toll for it.

Thus, Phillips examines the agony of people across history. In a sense, the suffering cause by slavery has the consequence, namely the exclusion people by regarding them as "the other." centuries earlier. He insists on the reader to think about this brutality. Phillips' aim is not to prescribe what the reader should think, but to incite the reader to form his or her own opinion. Kirkus Review rightly points about crossing the river that: "Beautifully measured writing that powerfully evokes the far-reaching realities of the African Diaspora. A masterwork." —

B | Racism in *Crossing the River*

The first half of this chapter examined brutality of system of slavery .The grim reality presented in the novel shocked us. Moreover, further this chapter explore more horrifying picture of human experiences of racism.

As said earlier, in postcolonial studies, the issue of racism has been a central for critical contest. Intellectuals are investigating the handling of different types of bias based on race, religion, or gender in literature. In postcolonial literature mainly fiction in Europe, America, Africa, and Asia has all been much concerned with racial themes and issues .Number of writers all over the world like Camus , Ralph Ellison, Primo Levi and Alice Walker have been exploring in this field .Sometimes racism comes as dominant theme while some times it is indirectly discussed . Caribbean and African-American writers of fiction have always been preoccupied with racial themes. Caribbean writers often tend to focus on racial prejudice and color hierarchies; while many African-American writers tend to examine the link between race and economics. Because African-Americans have been subject to some of the worst forms of political, social, and educational deprivation as well as grinding poverty, these experiences are often manifested in their fiction. As we have discussed Caryl Phillips is one of the acclaimed postcolonial black British writer who is product of racism, he

experienced in Britain, mainly focuses on themes of diaspora, slavery and racism in his writing.

Mostly white people used racism as means of oppression and domination. Being the most marked determinant of race skin color is described as shaping all spheres of a black life. It is believed that the idea of self-esteem is closely related with skin color and racial identity, the most important element in the lives of African-American and African-Caribbean people. *Crossing the River* also deals with the racism. 'Pagan coast', 'west,' 'Crossing the River' and 'Somewhere in England' all the parts depicts different experiences of racism.

Race is an artificial class produced by society to retain the supremacy and to dominate over number of others. In this novel Nash mentions belief of black people is that: "God had asked them to choose between land and their livestock or books and they had chosen the former". (32)

The colonizers had created a stereotype image of blacks and attached some baser qualities to blacks. Ania Loomba notes the prejudices about blacks as:

.... laziness ,aggression violence greed ,sexual promiscuity ,bestiality ,primitivism ,innocence and irrationality are attributed (often contradictorily and inconsistently) by English ,French ,Dutch ,Spanish and Portuguese colonists to Turks ,Africans , native Americans ,Jews ,the Irish and others .(93)

The above ideas can be verified through an occasion where Nash speaks about superstition prevailing in Black natives .Thus we can see that some fixed notions that "black means relaxed, savage, governed by caprice". "White means superior and blacks means inferior" were instilled in their mind. He last says,

...a colored person can enjoy his liberty in this place , for there exists no prejudice of color and every man is free and equalLiberia

,the beautiful land of my forefathers ,is the place where persons of color may enjoy their freedom it is home of our race....its laws are founded upon justice and equality Liberia is star in the east for free colored man it is truly our only home. (18)

Through the explanation, it is clear that Nash has, faced lot of difficulties in America was black, and there are many restrictions on blacks. They are treated as an inferior. There is some kind of prejudice among the people that different classes of people were fitted for particular jobs, as Blacks are good for manual dexterity and Whites for govern

Phillips through his novels wanted to create awareness about evils of racism and to depict heartlessness of Whites throughout the world .*Crossing the River* is much optimistic than Phillips other novels like *A Distant Shore* and *Higher Ground*.

The second narrative 'West', portrays theme of slavery and racism. In "West", Martha Randolph is a victim of slavery who later becomes a frontierswoman in the American Wild West. Martha's story pictures bitter, inhuman to consequences' of slavery on individual life, her distorted family.

When she was on the road at Denver and "a tall man passes by her she feels worried that he might split on her but he didn't". (73) From this, we come to know harsh realities of slavery and racism. How the blacks were deprived of their right to live a normal human life with self respect. Even they get coarsely treatment than animals.

Though Martha runs away from slavery ,though she is free from slavery her life doesn't changes .Martha's hardships doesn't end ,she has to wash ,has to scrub and has to cook .she is overburdened by work .At one place she mentions that:

, "...these days colored folks were heading west prospecting for no gold , they were just prospecting for a new life without having to

pay no heed to the white man and his ways . Prospecting for the place where things were a little better than bad ,.... prospecting for the place where your name was not boy or aunty and where you could be part of this country (73-74)

This reveals how black people were disgusted with callous treatment they get in white society. However, blacks were part of society they were treated as outsiders. The only thing they get in abundance is humiliation. They do not have self identity. One more best example of it when Martha denies renaming as she says:” Never again would she be renamed.(Never)Never again would she belong to anybody . (No sir, never). (80)

When Martha died, the woman wondered about her identity, “They would have to choose a name for her if she was going to receive a Christian burial” (94). Some events show that the blacks even do not have a name whenever they sold from one master to another they get new name. Thus, their sufferings have no limits.

Before her death Martha dreams that she had arrived to California ,where she meets her daughter Eliza Mae ,who was now a tall colored strong woman having some social status, and lives with her happy family in a fine ,broad avenue . Her dream reveals her hidden wishes that she desires social status, better living conditions, and happy united family for her daughter that Martha herself was deprived of in her entire life because of racism and slavery in the east .She was so severely harassed in the east in white racial society that she decided never to head towards east again.

In the third section, Phillips emphasizes on the indifference of white slave trader James Hamilton to the misery of the black slaves. It is account of the desolate predicament of the Black slaves . Hamilton’s hypocrisy is exposed as on one hand, he is apathetic towards slave as well as his crew, and at the same time, his letters to wife present him as loving and caring husband. He depicts number of brutal incidences on ship with equal indifference. The insensitive and callous attitude of

colonizer is presented through Hamilton.

In the fourth, section "Somewhere in England, Joyce is the narrator. She is a twentieth-century white English woman who is unhappy with her marriage. She falls in love with Travis, a black American GI stationed in England. However, a Black and white couple is not tolerable idea in the society. They have to face opposition of society. After facing number of problems, Joyce and Travis get married but unfortunately, Travis was sent on expedition. Joyce gives birth to a black child, Greer. As Travis dies she cannot able to raise a black child so puts him in orphanage. Thus theme of racism and hybridity are explored in this part. There are various instances where evidences of racism can be seen.

However in one such instance these Black soldiers were called "bloody Yanks" and their presence is disliked by whites. (134) In another instance an officer comes to Joyce's shop to advise her about black service men. He says that:

.....it took you three months to get here, did it ? Well get on with it then. I 'm all ear's. A lot of these boys are not used to us treating them as equals, so don't be alarmed by their response. What are they going to do, I thought, throw themselves on the floor before us if we smile? They are not educated boys and they will need some time to adjust to your customs and your ways, so I am just here to request your patience. (145)

From this, we can come to know the approach of so-called civilized whites towards the blacks. As human beings are certainly confined to, some natural prejudices which give rise to racism. They consider the blacks as inferior to whites so this discriminating social system prevents individuals from establishing any type of contacts within. According to them they are (blacks) are different and just they do not tolerate any type of relation with them. Even in above example we can see that the white officer believes that he is superior and his speech is somewhat arrogant.

Obviously, it does not suggest just his individual approach but it is a shared approach of the whites in England. The whites degraded others. The supposition of their superiority over others is clear from the lines of the English press in June 1940, "....one Englishman is worth two Germans, four French, twenty Arabs, forty Italians, and any number of Indians" . (164)

In fact, Joyce also belongs to white class but she never mentions about anything about his color or race. According to critic's it as:

An interesting aspect about their relationship is the fact that Joyce does not seem to notice that Travis is a black man; she never describes him as a man of colour nor does she mention any clue to his blackness. According to Wallace Joyce is "colour-blind" (101) whereas Ledent calls her "prejudice-free" (122).

Same thing can be proved from the other instances as when Joyce and Travis were on the walk people in the village stare at them strangely but they do not speak with her. Further, when they missed a bus they take lift from military officers and then he is badly punished for this. They beat him with their sticks just because they afraid of any incident which may be difficult for both thus Phillips portrays how the people strictly bound to codes of manners and social traditions. They wanted to maintain the position of supreme power over blacks by dominating them .That means they do not want any relations between blacks and whites. Peoples pointing towards Joyce their staring at her, what does all this suggest?

It shows their aggressive and long-established approach towards blacks. Even when Joyce gives birth to a black boy, she is unable to raise him at her own in the white society. Even though the baby has mother he sent to orphanage because of helplessness of Joyce to raise him against hostility of society. Racism is blot on humanity. It is just, an instrument in the hands of white, by which they can subjugate and persecute the blacks. It is important here to think over some questions raised by Ania Loomba; Are human beings essentially the same or different? Is difference

defined primarily by racial attributes? (91) In addition to this we have to contemplate over the following questions: Are these children of god destined to suffer? Is there any end of their suffering?

A number of such questions remained unanswered even in the today's globalised world. The themes of slavery and racism in the novel not only appeal to the heart but also make us to think over it seriously. The readers must feel sympathy for thousands of blacks who even today get humiliation. Number of events show inhuman treatment given to blacks. Racism is like a virus that destroys everything. So it is open-ended debate, compels us to think and to introspect ourselves for some hopeful change.

3.3 Identity Crisis in *Crossing the River*

After dealing with slavery and racism in the previous section now we turn to the most serious and universal issue of identity crisis in the following section.

As we know that man, is social animal and he cannot live in isolation. Thought food, shelter, and air to breathe are basic needs at the same time community (social) companionship (relationship) is also essential for human beings. Therefore, man lives in society or group which evokes feeling of security. Thus desire to be belong to some group is always there in his mind. Therefore, he develops relations and in turn, these relations give rise to his identity.

When some asks you who are you? The answer may consist all or one of the next: your name, nationality, gender, religion, status etc Identity is important for every human being. One scholar Sondkar says:

Identity is a subjective sense and an observable quality of personal sameness and continuity .it can only be realized by process of

examination in to the past incidents and the personal experiences are different almost in every way :emotional physical and social .(160)

Thus we recognize identity as a social construct and signified by the relationship between self and other. Our sense of identity relates ourselves to different societies, countries, communities and people. These groups may be cultural, ethnic, territorial or racial provide us sense of belonging through the personal feeling of attachment to other members. Hence, identity is multilayer concept. It means our consciousness about our inclusion as member of one collective body, namely, a community known as nation. Benedict Anderson defined it as “an imagined political community” (6)

Identity crisis is psychosocial state of confusion, because of contradictory internal and external experiences, pressures, and expectations and seldom generates acute anxiety. *Crossing the River* is a novel that seeks to explore identity crisis experienced both by colonizer and colonized. The black characters are facing identity crisis because of mainly displacement. Whereas whites because of their double standards of moral, religious and racial ideas. However, Nash and Martha are placed in the context of nineteenth-century slavery when the society was strongly divided between black and white or master and slave and though Travis is in twentieth century Britain, where the racial prejudices still continues. So all characters are oscillating between two binary oppositions as African or American, native or civilized, Christian or heathen, belonging, or unbelonging .All the three black characters are striving for collective, religious, as well as individual identity. As we have seen that in the novel Nash Martha and Travis are uprooted for slavery from their African root .Their life is divided into Africa and America, native land, and foreign land .Their families are shattered, they have lost their beliefs. In this respect Benedict Ledent rightly says about Phillips’ novels that; “...his books are neither plot nor idea driven but rely on an empathetic and tactful exploration of individual souls .”(6)

In the present novel Phillips highlights predicament of these characters in foreign land. They all are struggling to determine their own identity in different times

and places. Here we find postcolonial dilemma and diaspora experience having nostalgia and problems of survival in alien land and culture .Identity crisis in *Crossing the River* is outcome of racism, slavery, and displacement.

In the first part "Pagan Coast", there is account of miseries of Nash William. He is the freed Black slave, with an indefinable identity in the novel. He is liberated due to his good character. He is a converted Christian who is sent to native land for missionary work by his ex master Edward Williams. Nash is his master favorite. He is educated and adopted American culture where he has spent many years as a slave. Nash is faithful to his master and he devoted missionary. Phillips praises Nash as :

...he had apparently won the respect not only of the african natives but also of the free colored men of america and of the few whites in the inhospitable clime, after seven long years this former bondsman who had been inspiration to priests and educators alike was nowhere to be found. (7)

Moreover, Nash is a good teacher, and doing his missionary work so sincerely that his mission school got legendry reputation. Through letters to his master, Nash depicts the harsh realities of Liberia and asks for help to his but he gets no reply. Nash feels very disappointed and frustrated. At last, he dies in Africa with fever.

At first when he comes to Africa his native land how he was very pleased and he tried his best to assimilate in his native or own land .he worked hard to survive in this country but as time passes he loses his enthusiasm and distracts from his noble path.

He is troubled of his identity crisis .After spending years in America where he was grown up, where he learned manners and acquired culture it is hard for him to adjust in new (native) land. His "Homecoming" was not happy. Nash is a hybrid, an in-between identity even though he seems assimilated into heathen culture. He experiences that living with American culture in Africa is not possible so he finally

reverts to his traditional culture. Nevertheless, in doing so he was not happy .He was in dilemma .Sometimes he feels that he belongs to Africa but sometimes not. In his native land he was treated like outsider and these heathen identify him as “white” whereas in America he was black and outcast.

However, Nash not only loses his national identity but also his religious identity. He realizes that Christian religion can never take root in Africa. He marries with number of native women and bore children. In reality he was devoted Christian but the surrounding in which he was left, was hostile and out of his control. Therefore, there was no option for him. He at last compromises with situation and accepts native lifestyle, and distorted his faith in Christianity that he admits as,

..... this Liberia corrupted my person transforming me from good Christian, colored *gentleman* who left your home into this heathen whom you barely recognize.... (61)

Consequently he is caught between two worlds ,two religions ,two cultures and two selves . His confusion revealed as on one side he calls Africa “Dark land of our forefathers “(41) , It is home of our raceit is truly our home (18) , “ lands of civil and religious privileges” (22), “dark world”(26) and on other hand says to his masters “ we of so called civilized world” (31). In America, he was slave but in Africa, he makes heathens to work under him and becomes master. Thus, he considers himself both African as well as American but actually treated as outcast in both. We can trace his restlessness in following lines;

Master, you took me to your house as a young boy and instructed me the ways of civilized manWhy have you forsaken me? There are many things I cannot discuss with my native wifeFor it is improper for her to share with me the memories of what I was before. I am to her what she found here in Africa .If this is goodbye ,then let it be with love and respect in equal portion .(42)

the spirit of the struggle for survival ,and the essential fight against social exploitation ,depravation as well as domination . Martha with her memories of past and recent past keeps on going. Throughout her life she fluctuates between two opposing cultures one her own and other alien.

Martha like any other woman shows qualities like tolerance, kindness, adjustment, self –sacrifice as well as she has decision-making power, and toughness and hard working. Through various experiences, we get proof of this but her decision of escaping is exceptional because until then she was submissive, accepting whatever comes in her way without complaining. However, at this stage of age she needs family that is taken away from her forcefully. Her alienated soul needs love and care .When Chester comes in her life she gets some mental relief from her loneliness though her physical hardship does not end. Their relationship was mainly based on companionship .Chester's love made her happy. They lived together for ten years .Still even after her emancipation Martha was doing same work. Slavery was so ingrained in her mind that freedom makes no change in her life. She says:

I was free now, but it was difficult to me to tell what difference being free was making to my life. I was doing same things like before, only I was more contented ,not on account of no emancipation proclamation but on account of my Chester .(84)

Once again, destiny plays her role and takes away Chester from Martha. Thus, she loses her faith because of misery in her life. Her suffering knew no bounds. Throughout her life, she faces humiliation because of slavery and racism. It is ironical that Martha who ran ways from masters to avoid renaming even after her death requires to be renamed to get Christian burial .She is accompanies pioneers heading to west, she serves hard for them. The only purpose to meet her daughter Eliza Mae.She wanted to live a life with some dignity that is denied by whites through out her life. She dreams about a happy, prosperous as well as life with some status of her lost daughter Eliza Mae. Her dream is contradictory of her reality that means she dreams

the spirit of the struggle for survival ,and the essential fight against social exploitation ,depravation as well as domination . Martha with her memories of past and recent past keeps on going. Throughout her life she fluctuates between two opposing cultures one her own and other alien.

Martha like any other woman shows qualities like tolerance, kindness, adjustment, self –sacrifice as well as she has decision-making power, and toughness and hard working. Through various experiences, we get proof of this but her decision of escaping is exceptional because until then she was submissive, accepting whatever comes in her way without complaining. However, at this stage of age she needs family that is taken away from her forcefully. Her alienated soul needs love and care .When Chester comes in her life she gets some mental relief from her loneliness though her physical hardship does not end. Their relationship was mainly based on companionship .Chester's love made her happy. They lived together for ten years .Still even after her emancipation Martha was doing same work. Slavery was so ingrained in her mind that freedom makes no change in her life. She says:

I was free now, but it was difficult to me to tell what difference being free was making to my life. I was doing same things like before, only I was more contented ,not on account of no emancipation proclamation but on account of my Chester .(84)

Once again, destiny plays her role and takes away Chester from Martha. Thus, she loses her faith because of misery in her life. Her suffering knew no bounds. Throughout her life, she faces humiliation because of slavery and racism. It is ironical that Martha who ran ways from masters to avoid renaming even after her death requires to be renamed to get Christian burial .She is accompanies pioneers heading to west, she serves hard for them. The only purpose to meet her daughter Eliza Mae.She wanted to live a life with some dignity that is denied by whites through out her life. She dreams about a happy, prosperous as well as life with some status of her lost daughter Eliza Mae. Her dream is contradictory of her reality that means she dreams

things that she did not get at all throughout her life. Her life is meaningless because though she is wife of Lucas she is deprived of conjugal bliss. In the same way there is no response for her loving motherly call as she lost her in auction. Loss of beloved ones causes intense pain and agony in her. Both times her family gets devastated in front of her eyes but she cannot do any thing. She tries her best to avoid misery in her life but she is helpless. At first, she runs away from her masters to avoid hell of east. But she doesn't aware of fact that the habit of slavery is in build within her and secondly when she heads to west towards the promised land of her dream cannot to reach it and dies in foreign land. The whole life she lives with a hope to meet her daughter. The inhuman system of slavery destroyed her life with broken identity. The pathetic story of Martha states the condition of female. Thus, the theme is universal presentation of displaced from home. The novel *Crossing the River* reveals horrific situation of slaves from which they never think to come out rather it is impossible for them to do it.

Then the next story "Somewhere in England" moves like shuttlecock in past and present. It traces slavery and racism in the most depressing events during the period of Second World War and depicts brutality of the Second World War. However, Phillips tells this story through Joyce instead Travis (son of African father sold in slavery). Joyce a white British woman who lost her father in First World War. Joyce has some differences with her mother. She marries Len against her mother's wish but in course of time feels sorry for it. Her conjugal life with Len is not blissful. Len is arrested for the black-marketing. he is caught and sent to prison. Len used to harass Joyce but now she gets relief. She expresses her feelings of freedom as, "Something was lifted from the moment they took him away. My chest unknotted. I could breathe again" (199). Joyce falls in love with Travis who is American soldier posted in England during Second World War. She divorces Len and lives with Travis. She feels happier with a black man who is more mature than Len. She stands against traditional social norms and as consequence of it. She has to face opposition of white society. Society in turn imposes banishment on her. Joyce gets irritated when they look at her with humiliation, "I tried to avoid the way people were looking" (202). She

is treated like black; outsider in her own homeland .She gives birth to black boy .But dominant social customs made her to give her son for adoption. Thus, Joyce has to face both internal and external conflicts. Joyce faces pressures of expectations in her roles as a daughter, as a wife. On the other hand, she faces external conflicting forces as a lover and as mother.

Travis' death in Italy leaves Joyce alone. Though she wants to raise her child on her, own her economic and social circumstances left no option for her. She feels very guilty for the act to her son at the same time she does not want to reveal this Greer's truth to her new family. She faces horrible inner crisis when after twenty years she meets her son Greer. Her crisis is mirrored in:

I stared at Greer and longed for him to stay as I longed for him to leave. I'd explained that I thought he should go before the children came back. I know that he would never call me mother .He could go but would he come back? (223)

She wants to hold him close and show that she loves him. She wants to tell him that he is her son. Nevertheless, even after long years, she is unable accept him because of the social pressures on her mind. We can just imagine the helplessness of a mother who unable to express her love for son, who meets her after eighteen years. She is caught in duality of society .Joyce pays high cost to keep duplicity of society. This shows that though years pass away, we have made myriad developments, in nearly all fields, but the old frame of our social and racial thinking is remained unchanged.

In the novel author shows two another white characters Edward William, and Hamilton in different shades. Phillips does not present them thoroughly brutal but they belong to colonizers group. However, Phillips reveals their hypocrisy to some extent .On the other hand these white characters are also going through psychological and moral confusions. First, we will see Edward William.

Edward Williams is the son of wealthy tobacco planter with three hundred slaves .He educated some of his slaves at his own expense. He is faithful Christian so he feels guilty of being “slave owner “as slavery is sin against humanism and it is contradictory to Christian philosophy. Therefore, to get rid of this feeling he sends some of his slaves to Liberia under guidance of American colonization society. Nash William, his favorite slave, with whom he has homosexual relations, is also send for missionary work. Amelia, Edwards’s wife kills herself because of her husband’s strange whim.

On one hand, he is helping for noble cause of Christianity and on other side his strange attraction for young slaves. This creates some kind of suspicion about Edward in our mind. When Nash disappears in interior of Liberia Edward himself goes there to trace him. He shows great concern for Nash .After experiencing adverse conditions he feels sorry for sending Nash and other slaves to Liberia. He thought, “...this business of encouraging men to engage with a past and history that are truly not their own is after all ill judged.” (52), thus Edward realizes failure of mission.

Edward William is tormented by the circumstances that are created by him. His mind was full of guilt because of miseries experienced by Nash because of him. Therefore, his tortured conscience and dual moral approach proves inner conflict in his mind .Hence his personality is neither entirely noble nor fully corrupt shows in betweenness. He is not only guilty about Nash’s predicament but also for his unfaithfulness to Amelia. He prayed god, “... that he might be forgiven for his indifference towards Amelia...” (56) He is the man at the edge of his life preoccupied by the feeling of remorse and shame for losing Amelia and Nash.

Captain Hamilton a slave trader is another white character. His records and letters to his wife offer account of the slave trade He stands for social duality of dominant society. He describes him as, “cold and indifferent”, because he treats black men as if they are commodities. However, on the other hand, his letters to his wife reveals love and affection for her. Captain Hamilton has split personality. His double

standards reveal from his manners, he expresses his love for his wife very passionately but when he conveys incidents on ships, he seems indifferent. He is struggling between his job as a slave dealer and his Christian morals.

The four stories making up the novel suggests four of the voices heard among the many-tongued chorus' that accompanies Africa's dispersal into the West. As Ledent says, 'each voice speaks its own particular language' and they are inconsistent (56)

Crossing the River ends with epilogue to the spiritual father who was mourning for his shameful act in the opening of the novel. He was shown as a puppet in the hands of destiny . He was helpless and for two hundred fifty years longing to meet longed to meet his children . However at the end the novel the father looks more optimistic in his mood. This time she includes name of Joyce in his children.

"But my Joyce, and my other children, their voices hurt but determined, they will survive the hardships of the far bank" (235).

That the father's inclusion of Joyce suggests about his hopes for future

" I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood" (237)

In the novel Phillips chose his narrators from both groups Nash and Martha from the blacks whereas Hamilton and Joyce from whites. This choice of narrators displays Phillips' hopeful vision towards the problem. The novel closes with the same lines with which it opened: "A desperate..." The father dreams about the day when white people and colored people consider themselves as equal. Since Joyce considered Travis as equal to white people, the father sees her as a beginning of his dream and thus sees her as one of his children.

Thus, the end is unique. The novel emphasizes on the problems ,raises number of questions but there is no answer. As Phillips reveals , “I want to leave an open space for the reader to feel outraged .I want them to fill in the gaps .”(http://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/acad/sa) Thus the novel gives impetus to readers to think over it.