

CHAPTER- IV

Conclusion

The present research is an attempt to study Caryl Phillips' most celebrated novel *Crossing the River* from the postcolonial perspective. Being the author of the complex postcolonial world and having complex identity due to multiple belongings, Caryl Phillips deals with the complex issues of his age in his works. In short, he is the product of his age. Therefore, the present study embarks on postcolonial perspective that means implication of a new approach to study the different notions. That is to superimpose issues of race, cultural identity, and displacement over the other issues. In short, the present research explores and connects the theme of displacement, racism, slavery and identity crisis in the *Crossing the River*.

The first chapter delineates historical context of postcolonial literature. The brief overview of the development of novel from the beginning to the first half of the 20th century may help to trace its growth as a prominent genre. The account of signposts and their contribution supports in understanding various trends and digressions in the journey of novel. Further, the chapter throws light on the political events that affected all fields. As we know the concept of the struggle for power, and survival is age old. This greed and selfishness corrupts man and compels to act brutally. Today, we can note a number of such facts in the world. This gives rise to indifference and apathy, which is the root of all problems. The two devastating world wars are examples of it. Disintegration of the empire left wide effects on the world. In literature, also great changes took and it resulted in the emergence of the postcolonial trend. All postcolonial complexity and intricacy is mirrored in literature. Further, the chapter takes an account of Phillips' contribution to postcolonial literature. It proves how his fictional and nonfictional works have a concern for the black displaced and marginalized people. Moreover, his brief biographical account helps to trace recurring autobiographical elements in his work. It explores how his first hand experiences of racism and oppression during his childhood reflected in his works. In short, it marks

that Phillips' complex identity and his own trauma of displacement is the root cause of his writings.

The second chapter discusses the postcolonialism and diaspora in detail. It attempts to develop a theoretical framework of the diaspora. The detailed examination of these concepts paved a way to the study of diaspora. It examines how contemporary postcolonial investigations undermine so-called civilized European philosophy and it challenges the long established power structures by giving voice to subalterns. It can be said that the postcolonial literature supports to resist dominion power and presents impact of colonizers and colonized on each other. In other words, it focuses on the contact zone. Moreover, it breaks all shackles of the supremacy and represents problems of oppressed. In short, it can be noted that postcolonial literature studies the new hybrid culture evolved from cultural invasion. Then, there is a discussion of diaspora that constitutes the post colonial literature. The deep deliberation is a perceptive to the study diaspora in the next chapter. Similarly, the chapter encompasses analysis of the key terms related to the diaspora. Thus, the analysis of significant terms like displacement, racism, slavery, identity crisis, hybridity, and marginalization lays the ground for the further study.

The third chapter '*Crossing the River: Negotiating Diaspora*' is the study of the novel in terms of displacement, racism, slavery, and identity crisis. Phillips handles different stories of different times and places but in the same context of diaspora. The review of his works reveals that diaspora is at the core of his writings.

However, it can be noted that, in this novel, Phillips painted the stories in context of the Atlantic slave trade and the World Wars. The problems, he tackled, are universal in time and place through which he presented worldwide class-struggle. The struggle between indigenous and host culture is the basis of friction in the novel. Through it, he presents the universal trauma of diaspora as well as the grim reality of racism. He points out the never resolving questions of the displaced people through his characters like Nash, Martha and Travis. It is important to note, here, that Phillips' artistic skill

reveals through his delineation of themes that forms a vicious circle. The racism gives rise to the evils of slavery which in turn results into displacement. The displacement results into identity crisis. In this novel all black characters are caught in this vicious circle. Nash, Martha and Travis all suffering from racism, slavery. All these characters are engulfed by identity crisis, and question of belonging and unbelonging.

As pointed earlier, Nash, Travis, and Martha are sold into slavery. They try hard to adjust with the adverse situations in which they are left but fail to survive. These characters show enormous hardships for survival. Phillips exposes duality and hypocrisy of Christians who under the noble cause of missionary work send their Ex-slaves to Liberia. In fact, Christians wanted to remove the cause of increasing social stress in America. Phillips shows dire consequences of repatriation through Nash who has to give his life due to the Christian hypocrisy. He exposes wrong policies of the whites which gave rise to inner struggle between Christian and Native faith in Nash's mind. His heart suffers from pangs of identity crisis that, in turn, evokes the question of belonging and unbelonging. Phillips, here, displays that slaves are mere puppets in the hands of their masters who use them according to their craze. Nash is an evidence of the identity in human life. Through Nash Phillips reveals basic human need for belonging. Phillips uses Nash as his mouthpiece. His own identity crisis is reflected in Nash. The pain of alienation catastrophes in Nash's death.

Phillips, through Martha, reveals horrible effects of slavery into the breaking and isolation of families. She loses everything in slavery - her father, husband, and beloved daughter. Her family breaks twice but she is helpless to do anything. She possesses nothing but heavy burden of humiliation. Martha's story presents a universal thing like mother's natural feelings, her anxiety, concern and love for child. She is an obvious example of women's passionate desire for the family. Phillips shows a peak of inhumanity towards blacks through Martha's both physically and psychologically tormented story. She demonstrates different shades of slavery that how young black slave women are preferred by slave traders as breeding machines than old ones who are discarded for other household works. Martha is an apt example

of human degradation. She was fed up of changing her names throughout her life that even after her death she was renamed to get Christian burial in which she did not believe. Martha rebels against the system of slavery. Her hope for a better life of her daughter lies in her last dream. "West" ends on positive hope. However, Martha, the victim of slavery and racism, is helpless and powerless to change her future. Her quest for identity ends with her death.

Travis, American soldier, posted in England during the Second World War is a victim of racism, hatred, and greed of dominating power. He sacrifices his life in the power struggle of nations. Travis away, from home and his own people, dies on duty, in Italy. His dream of living a peaceful and happy life with his family bruised because of the evils in society.

It can be noted that Phillips in this novel portrays the suffering and curling grief that follows the destruction of human lives. Besides, it points out the fact that though these displaced characters try to adjust in alien country, and accepted changing circumstances. Their hearts are longing for their motherlands. This duality results into frustration. There is no return to the diaspora. On the whole, these characters echo: there is no place to belong to, there is no one to belong to. They are left alone resulting into a deep feeling of hatred about host country. For them displacement is fate.

It can be clearly noted that, black characters in the present novel are not stereotypes. They are lively human beings that we can come across in our life. Nash Martha, and Travis appeal to our mind and we feel they are natural outcome of the author's own experiences. It is an emotional situation when Martha asks her Father why he has forsaken her. It is heartbreaking. Similarly, it is heartrending when Joyce is not free to hug her son affectionately. Thus, Phillips creates moving picture of man's sufferings in the world.

In many ways, it is possible to read and comprehend that Phillips reaction is

neither one sided nor pessimistic. On the other hand, it is a careful observation of history and reality. Though Phillips' characters suffer hard, they are not fully submissive. At least they try to protest against the system however, their resistance is not strong. Nash blames his master for using him for his own purpose. Martha fights back against slavery though it does not make much difference. Travis also fights with Len. Thus, every character tries to protest in his own way and to survive in the alien world.

Even Phillips' choice of narrators reveals an evidence of his sensitivity of human sufferings. In the novel, the White characters he delineates are not fully evil. They stand in-between. Edwards's tormented conscience, his concern for his wife and for Nash, confirms that, he is not indifferent, towards their sufferings. Nonetheless, Hamilton's inner struggle between his work and his faith also shows some signs of humanity are still present there. Joyce suffers due to the social and economic consequences of Second World War. Though, Martha is white, she is also a victim of oppression and exploitation. Her unsuccessful marriage, her helplessness as mother who has to sacrifice her son because of social prejudices and her lover and father in the World Wars shows her pathetic condition. It can be seen that he reacts sharply against the world but he is not extremist. On the contrary he is committed to humanism and love. In fact, he longs for the change in the hearts of whites, it reveals, through the father's dream. He is hopeful for the day when the white people and colored people consider themselves as equal. As in the novel, Joyce considers Travis as equal to white people. The father sees her as one of his children. To sum up Phillips exploits his writings as a means to make us aware of our failure in dealing with victims of the evil social systems.

As to comment on the structure of the novel, Phillips' choice of structure also reveals his aim. The story does not follow chronology and even within the individual parts; also, it moves to and fro. This kind of special use of fragmented structure reflects broken life of characters. In the first and the third part Phillips uses epistolary method of narration. The second part unfolds through memories of Martha whereas

partially third and fourth part uses logbook notes and notes in diary consequently .This manner explores a psychological struggle of soul. It shows how the life of these displaced people is split into duality and how their life is overwhelmed by pangs of broken relations. All these characters are torn by memories of the past. Moreover, the author's tone it is tragic. *Fathers lament* creates melancholic and emotional tone that pervades throughout the novel. His pain shows futility of human struggle. It can be said that the novel has remarkable structure with prologue, story, and epilogue. Like in the Greek tragedy chorus is used in the prologue and epilogue that mainly as commentator at opening and at the end to express social attitudes. Here chorus presents Phillips' point of view. If we consider his black characters, they reveal his vision.

It is important here to point out that, Phillips highlights a range of human struggles and tensions in this novel. However, Nash, Martha and Travis all the three characters are suffering from evils in society the situations they face are different. It proves that through his stories he steps forward from particular to general. It gives universality to his work. In short, he has given a new perspective to the universal problems of diaspora and its related issues.

Phillips in his novel *Crossing the River* reveals many approaches into the lives of blacks and presented the problems of assimilation .In fact, he questions an age-old belief, which needs serious social scrutiny and reconsideration. However, he does not offer any perfect solution predicament of blacks but suggests reform.

Further, it need not be over emphasized that Phillips' *Crossing the River* orbits around serious themes of slavery, racism, and identity crisis. He does not want his readers merely to feel sympathy towards the sufferers but he wants them to think seriously over this universal issue. *Crossing the River* more exposes facts and at the same time makes us deeply involved and reflective. It is important to note here that Phillips not only voiced the problems of marginalized but also made a personal crusade for equality through his writing. The present study finds that no other writer

presented diaspora with universal dimensions that of Phillips because Phillips' concern for diaspora shows that diaspora is not only a theme, moreover it is the root cause, as well as basis of his writing.

If we study Indian English literature we can note that number of writers contributed to Indian diasporic literature. The major contributors as we noted earlier are SalmanRushdie,V.S,Naipaul who live outside India. Similarly ,the writers like Anita Desai , Bharati Mukherjee ,Shashi Tharoor , Amitav Ghosh , Vikram Seth ,Sunetra Gupta ,Robinton Mistry ,Jumpa Lahiri, and Hari Kunzru predominantly dealt with the theme of exile and displacement .All these writers explored not only geographical dislocation but also a socio-cultural feeling of displacement .They tried their hands on problems of exils and immigrants. Though the experiences of Indian diaspora are different from experiences of black people the torments are same. It shows that predicament of diaspora is alike all over the world.

For Indian readers like us *Crossing the River* presents picture of slavery that is different from our own experience of slavery. We Indians also experienced slavery under British rule but in our own lands. In case of racism, also our experience is different. Our class discrimination is not based on skin colour .Though the experiences are different sufferings are same. Here I like to refer Mulk Raj Anands novel *The Untouchable*. The sufferings of downtrodden in the Indian society are similar to the blacks in the Western society. It is said that India (Eastern countries) is superstitious and backward country but the picture of the west portrayed in *Crossing the River* proves that problems of class difference are same all over the world. It displays how germs racism and class discrimination plagued minds of people all over the world. Power in the hands of some so called civilized people rules over the millions of unprivileged and exploited for centuries .It questions the existence of humanity. It doubts about the presence of feelings like love, compassion, sympathy, kindness, and affection in the mind of modern man. It raises question if man has converted in machine.

To conclude it can be thought that the present novel of the present study is thought provoking one. It grapples our mind and makes us to think rather to step forward positively .It can be thoughtfully conceived and appealingly presented ,showing how the issues of emigration , displacement are vibrantly alive in and to the world .