THE IDENTITY CONUNDRUM AND POST POSITIVIST REALISM IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF CARYL PHILLIPS AND DAVID DABYDEEN

Thesis Submitted for the Award of the Degree of

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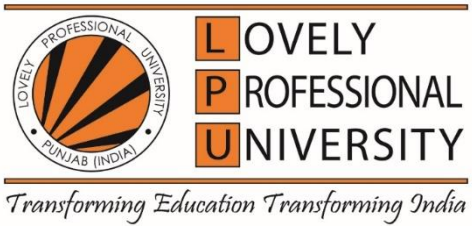

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DECLARATION

I, hereby declared that the presented work in the thesis entitled "The Identity Conundrum and Postpositivist Realism in the Select Novels of Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen" in fulfilment of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.)** is outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. Rasleena Thakur, working as Assistant Professor in the School of Social Science and Languages of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgements have been made whenever work described here has been based on findings of other investigator. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph. D. thesis entitled The Identity Conundrum and Postpositivist Realism in the Select Novels of Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen" submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the award of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** in the School of Social Science and Languages, is a research work carried out by Dilshad Kaur, 42000469, is bonafide record of his/her original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course.

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Abstract

Today, questions surrounding identity are at the center of many political, cultural, psychological, and social debates. Consequently, identity has become a focal point for extensive scholarly and socio-cultural discussions. Scholars are increasingly exploring the various meanings and classifications of identity, while socio-political and literary-cultural theorists examine the power dynamics and politics underlying the construction and expression of identities. The aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges, opportunities, risks, and benefits associated with recognizing, embracing, or asserting one's identity or identities.

Before taking a plunge into the exploration of identity politics, it is necessary to understand the varied nuances of the term 'identity'. Seemingly a very simple and lucid term, identity is in fact ridden with complexity and contestation. The concept of identity has not only attracted the attention of theorists but has also propelled them into deep contemplation. The concept has gained momentum chiefly because of the politics involved in the construction and manipulation of identities. Alluring but elusive meanings of the contested term 'identity' always escape our grasp but the ubiquity of identity politics has made the need for a critical inquiry into this contentious concept a crucial necessity. The over-determined phrase identity politics has come to signify the emergence of large scale political movements against injustices being done to certain groups in the name of identity. A wide range of politico-literary activity and theorization has found its feet by making the shared experiences of injustice to members of certain social groups as its basic premise. Political identity formations aim to secure the political freedom of a specific constituency marginalized within its larger context. They demand recognition on the basis of the very grounds on which recognition has previously been denied. They analyze oppression and recommend reclaiming and re-description of identities which have earlier been stigmatized by dominant power structures.

The present research project takes up for analysis the issue of identity in the select novels of two Caribbean diasporic writers Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen. The issue of identity and ensuing identity politics has become a punching bag for socio-cultural theorists. Myriad opinions and contentions bred by identity politics have made their way into literary, cultural, and political precincts. The proposed research project seeks to unravel the politics woven around identity in the select works of Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen. Their novels make up a tapestry in which variables of identity are woven in intricate patterns. Subjective as well

as discursive thought patterns behind the choices and decisions which characters in these novels make and which are cornerstones to understanding the identity conundrum are put under the lens of postpositivist realism.

Postpositivist realist theory settles down the skepticism surrounding the credibility of debates around the concept of identity. Skeptics question if identities are merely ideological constructs, adopted by individuals under the influence of false consciousness, why does liberation politics so vehemently defend them? Wouldn't it be more effective to attempt to deconstruct these identities instead? A potential way out of this dilemma lies in the postpositivist realist approach, which rejects both the determinism of essentialist models and the postmodern view of identity as arbitrary and constructed.

Postpositivist realist theorists proclaim that the ways in which a subject, under the influence of some ideology, responds to or engages with his/ her experiences can be analyzed theoretically to yield valuable knowledge. Such knowledge is reliable, as it is not based on arbitrary interpretation but has been rigorously evaluated and its validity tested. Furthermore, this theory recognizes that experience is always shaped through both social and theoretical mediation. The present research project probes into the issues of identity in the select novels of Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen.

The broad thrust of research is directed towards unravelling the problematics of identity. Analysis of identity entrapments and delusions has been taken up with a view to locate the possibility of access to the channels of emancipation and empowerment. The issue of identity is more vicious and knotty in case of the diasporic subjects and the study therefore tries to delve into the intricacies of diasporic identities which when approached from different standpoints (or social locations, as postpositivist realists call them) can acquire diverse contours of being either fabricated, constructed or acquired or chosen. Fluidity of identity and the consequent plurality of affiliations is the focus of critical investigation and research.

The question of women's identity has been examined through their roles within marriage, love affairs, family, and community. Feminist theories provide valuable insights into issues like exploitation, domestic violence, and the oppression of women, as well as the possibilities for resistance and subversion. In the novels being analyzed, the portrayal of women's subjectivity, sexuality, and agency is critically assessed through the lens of postpositivist realism.

After evaluating and establishing the credibility of this approach through a comparative analysis with other prominent theories like postmodernism, Judith Butler's performativity, object relations theory etc., the study delves into the nuances of diasporic identity and women's

identity vis-à-vis postpositivist realism in the select novels. Further, an analysis of the complexities of human relationships is taken up to see how humane gestures and attitudes that transcend racial, colour, gender, and national prejudices can pulverize parochial and destructive attitudes. Defying the accepted norms of society (norms which are founded and nurtured on the binaries and strict divisions among human beings), some of the characters surge over the ideological pressures to assert and affirm humane identities.

This study of the select novels of Caryl Phiilips and David Dabydeen aims to show that an analysis of the conundrum of identity through the lens postpositivist realism is highly potent as the proponents of this approach embrace the idea that both knowledge and experience are susceptible to error and are open to revision and reinterpretation. Without claiming this analysis of the select novels to be the full and final gleaning of meaning, the present research, in league with the postpositivist realist approach, pushes for the further revision of the analysis. This perspective generated by this approach is decidedly less absolutist and proves to be more theoretically productive.

Acknowledgments

Any task as onerous and challenging as a Ph.D. dissertation cannot expect to see its fruition but for the consistent support and contributions from a lot of people. Therefore, several people must be acknowledged for the successful compilation of this dissertation.

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I dedicate this thesis to my parents, husband, and son.

Dilshad Kaur

List of Publications

Journal

- Kaur, Dilshad, and Rasleena Thakur, "Disentangling the Knots of Diasporic Identity through the Prism of Postpositivist Realism in Caryl Phillips' Crossing the River." Salud, Ciencia y Tecnologia-Serie de Conferencias 3 (2024): 727-727.

Conference Presentation

- Kaur, Dilshad, and Rasleena Thakur, "Imaginary Truths and Historical Praxis: Understanding the Play of Memory and Identity in Crossing the River." International Conference on Interdisciplinary Prospectives on Memory Studies, Storytelling and the Impact of Digital Technologies (IMS2IDT), Vallurupalli Nageswara Rao Vignana Jyothi Institute of Engineering and Technology, Hyderabad, India, 24-25 November 2022.
- Kaur, Dilshad, and Rasleena Thakur, "Relocating Identity in Diaspora: An Analysis of David Dabydeen's Disappearance." Three Day International Conference on Language, Literature, and Folklore (ICOLLAF), Cluster University of Jammu, Jammu, 28-30 January 2023.
- Kaur, Dilshad, and Rasleena Thakur, "The Identity Imbroglio: An analysis." International Conference on Emerging Trends in Literature Language & Research (ETLLR-23), Lovely Professional University, 31 October 2023.

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CHAPTER 1

Exploring Postpositivist Realism and the Dynamics of Identity

The apparently simple question "What is identity?" holds the capacity to open Pandora's Box. The concept of identity raises endless questions and denies the comfort of complete answers. Does identity constitute a free perception of an individual about himself/herself? Or is it mediated or adulterated by others' views or perceptions? Can one conceive of an identity in isolation; in a vacuum- aloof and detached from all relations, associations and affiliations? When does identity crisis occur? Why is there hullabaloo about identity politics? Who threatens one's identity and who has conceptualized and institutionalized the notion of identity which one holds so dear and which one tries to protect against assaults of discrimination and conspiracies of conformism? These questions demand answers and a thorough probe. Claims of having found a perfect answer will be mere presumptions but one can certainly explore and scrutinize its various facets which might churn out new observations and insights.

Some of the most ubiquitous debates and questions today doing the rounds of political, cultural, psychological, and social spheres pertain to identity. As a result, questions pertaining to identity have, in recent years, become the locus point of much of the scholarly and socio-cultural polemic. A wide range of scholarly attention today is focused upon the myriad meanings and denominations of identity. Power nexus and politics operative at the base of identity/identities construction and deployment are sought to be understood by the socio-political as well as literary-cultural theorists with an objective to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges, opportunities, threats, and rewards which accompany the acknowledgement, embracement or assertion of an identity or identities. Some of the most pressing problems of this century which include ethnic and/or religious conflicts and immigration carry with them a whole baggage of identity. Susan J. Hekman's observation about this issue in her book *Private Selves Public Identities: Reconsidering Identity Politics* (2004) is worth notice:

> The advocates of identity politics embrace it as a permanent and positive feature of our political life. They champion the advent of different political identities,

> particularly those defined in terms of race and ethnicity… Social, political, and psychological theorists each have a particular position to argue on the question of identity and identity politics; each one asserts that this position is the definitive solution to the problems raised by identity (1).

The various solutions, answers, or claims pertaining to identity fall short of an absolute or complete explanation. Ambiguities and complexities which are both inherent as well as ascribed by certain groups to the notion of identity/identities evade any 'one formula solution' or explanation. A steady observation of the various contentions, claims, and observations through the prism of identity lays bare a whole new spectrum of thoughts and feelings. Susan J. Hekman elucidates:

> …the problem of identity will not go away because contemporary issues of identity are too complex to be easily resolved…these issues challenge some of the basic presuppositions of our philosophical and political beliefs, the issues of identity cannot be "solved", in other words, because they challenge assumptions that are deeply ingrained in our social fabric (2).

A lot of oppression has been perpetrated against certain socio-cultural groups in the name of identity. Politically conscious and conscientious individuals/groups are no longer in a mood to pocket this oppression and discrimination. Identity politics signify an emergence of political movements against the injustices being done to certain socio-cultural groups in the name of identity. This movement strives to shake people out of their slumber and to raise their consciousness so as to enable them to assert or reclaim ways of understanding their distinctiveness that challenge dominant oppressive characterizations, with the goal of greater self-determination.

Identity is the premise upon which the whole issue of identity politics stands. Therefore, it is prerequisite to arrive at some kind of an understanding of this tricky concept. The slippery notion of identity has become an epicenter of many debates and has fuelled an academic endeavour that constantly tries to work out its complexities. A short and adequate summary statement that captures the range of its meanings is still elusive. Stuart Hall makes the case lucid when he says:

> Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural

> practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation (110).

Engagement with this concept has become quintessential in a world replete with dichotomies and prejudices promoted by the play of 'differences'. A lot of ink has already been spilled on the enigmatic notion of identity but consensus is still a distant dream. Many thinkers however nod in agreement that the notion of identity has become indispensable to contemporary cultural studies and political discourse. These scholars consider identities as things to be explained and things that have explanatory force. Such critics "…have retained an allegiance to the concept of identity and have attempted to reformulate or complicate their understandings of it… [for them] identity categories provide modes of articulating and examining significant correlations between lived experience and social location" (Moya 4). If we bank upon theorists for understanding the concept of identity, then we will have to content ourselves with their theorization of identity as a phenomenon which is all pervasive and indispensable but at the same time, vague and unfathomable. Any effort to encase this tricky concept in words is bound to face interrogation yet for the purpose of present analysis, we can begin with what J. Weeks has to say about identity. He opines:

> Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others. At its most basic it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality... Each of us live with a variety of potentially contradictory identities, which battle within us for allegiance…The list is potentially infinite, and so therefore are our possible belongings. Which of them we focus on, bring to the fore, 'identify' with, depends on a host of factors. At the centre, however, are the values we share or wish to share with others (88).

And yet there are scholars and theorists who raise eyebrows and view the whole pursuit of identity and identity politics with skepticism. They try to undermine the concept of identity and downplay its complexity by questioning its political, ontological, and epistemological credibility. They go to the extent of denouncing social/cultural identity as a basis of political action as theoretically incoherent and politically insidious. The conservatives denounce identity on the ground that it "unnecessarily balkanize our society and obscure our shared

human attributes" (Moya 4) and postmodernists refuse to grant "ontological or epistemological significance to identity categories" (Moya 4).

Any endeavour to unearth or comprehend the varied nuances and complexities of identity is held suspect by such scholars. The cynicism surrounding this issue, upon which Linda Martin Alcoff throws light, has the capacity to jolt one with a theoretical shock. She states, "Like "essentialism," identity politics has become the shibboleth of cultural studies and social theory, and denouncing it has become the litmus test of academic respectability, political acceptability, and even a necessity for the very right to be heard" (313).

Critics of identity and the resultant identity politics contend that instead of problematizing the relationship between identity and politics, identity politics has in fact, fixed or trapped identities in specific political pockets and strict conformity is expected from the members of particular identity groups. It may, however, be argued that identity politics has the potential to destabilize and problematize the relationship between identity and politics and it necessitates a radical change in the understanding and theorization of identity. Identity politics is of prime importance because:

> …an ability to take effective steps towards progressive social change is predicted on an acknowledgement of, and a familiarity with, past and present structures of inequality- structures that are often highly correlated with categories of identity. This correlation undoubtedly accounts for why identity has been a fundamental element of social liberation as well as social oppression (Moya 8).

Relationship between identity and politics is a complex one. Identity politics lays bare the constructed nature of identity and shows that the pre-given identities which, at times, we adopt with 'glory', are not natural. Their discursive construction and politics are revealed to us in the moment of crisis, when they are either imposed upon or denied to us. Identity politics equips one with the arms to fight against conformity and subjugation and as Susan J. Hekman says, "Identity politics is a challenge to those groups that systematically and structurally have the power to define us, subsume us under public identity categories, and specify what those categories mean" (109).

A thorough investigation into identity politics is of utmost importance as it makes one acutely conscious of the politics that goes into the construction of identity categories. On one hand, it reveals how ideological structures and hegemonic knowledges force identities upon

individuals which results in overt as well as covert oppression; on the other hand, it shows how the identity categories can be turned into sites of affirmation and made celebratory. It forces one to "look for the power that creates subjects/identity everywhere in society and to develop a theory of that power…a new strategy of resistance" (Hekman 116). A negative, destructive politics perpetuates oppression while a positive, affirmative politics heralds new definitions, conceptions, and relationships. And identity politics awakes one to the possibility of both types of politics taking place simultaneously in our world. The terra firma of identity politics i.e. identity, beyond any doubt carries substantial weight and requisites a critical inquiry. The wrongly placed concern with, "…overly homogenizing, radically separatist, deterministic approaches to the politics of identity has led to a situation in which all identity claims have become suspect, and the links among identity, politics, and knowledge have become so nebulous that it looks as if none exists at all" (Alcoff 314).

Such approaches overlook the fact that identity categories entail the modes by which people experience, understand, and know the world. Linda Martin Alcoff's opinion in this regard is quite significant. She opines, "To say that we have an identity is just to say that we have a location in social space, a hermeneutic horizon that is both grounded in a location and an opening or site from which we attempt to know the world" (335). It is under the flag of identity that possibilities for solidarity and resistance gain force. It is "useful not only as a source of agency but also as a meaningful narrative" (318). Political credibility of the concept can in no way be undermined since within its arena, discriminations get challenged. Identity provides the solid ground for investigating the concepts of 'self', 'other', 'difference', 'multiculturalism' etc.

The discussions encompassing identity have serious implications for models of the self. Our understanding of ourselves affects our understanding of the world. Our identities influence and are influenced by our understanding of how society is structured and what our particular experiences within that society are likely to be. Leonidas Donskis's remarks in this context in his book *Troubled Identity and the Modern World* are pertinent. He says, "The way we conceive ourselves and the world around us can in fact be unique and highly individual, but the concepts in which we think or the language we speak represent the world and a long history of the human soul" (4). Identity plays a seminal role in the kind of associations human beings

form and the sort of activities they engage in. “The fusion of what had long existed before us and of the novelty and uniqueness of our reactions and choices make our identity work” (4).

Any discussion about identity necessitates a thorough investigation of the concepts of self and subjectivity. Chris Weedon in *Identity and Culture: Narratives of Difference and Belonging* throws light on the subject when he says, “In order to understand the power of identity, and particularly the role it plays in repressive individual and social practices, we need to theorize it within broader conceptualizations of subjectivity that can account for the unconscious, non-rational and emotional dimensions of identity” (2). These concepts are no less contentious and have, from time to time, inspired a wide range of theories and counter theories. Derrida puts up the issue vividly and succinctly when he says, “this question of the subject and the living ‘who’ is at the heart of the most pressing concerns of the modern societies” (qtd in Mansfield 1).

Neil Mansfield in his book *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway* has dwelt upon the concept of subjectivity in detail and has come up with many illuminating insights. Ridden with contradiction and inconsistency, subjectivity can only be temporarily encaged into strict definitions by ideology and theoretical dogma. For Mansfield, subjectivity is primarily an experience “an abstract or general principal that defies our separation into distinct selves and that encourages us to imagine that, or simply helps us to understand why, our interior lives inevitably seem to involve other people, either as objects of need, desire and interest or as necessary sharers of common experience” (3). Sifting through various theories, Mansfield has chosen to divide the theories of subjectivity into two categories: theories of subjectivity and of anti-subjectivity headed by Freud and Foucault respectively. Both the approaches though distinct and disparate in their analysis and conclusions, are unanimous in their debunking of the Enlightenment model of free and autonomous self, capable of self-knowledge.

The understanding of identity as formulated during the historical period of the Enlightenment in Europe was characterized by the emergence of individualism. Rene Descartes' 'I think therefore I am' (cogito ergo sum) made the basis of knowledge different for each person. The starting point for identity formation here was an individual’s personal existence and not that of other individuals, or of the whole community. Enlightenment made foundation of “the image of the self as the ground of all knowledge and experience of the world

(*before I am anything, I am I*) and secondly, the self as defined by the rational faculties it can use to order the world (*I make sense*)" (15; emphasis original). This individualism built on freedom was questioned and consequently rejected by the later theorists.

Leonidas Donskis focuses upon this issue in *Troubled Identity and the Modern World* and contends that individuals are part of a bigger picture. An autonomous self is a mere illusion because the self defines itself within a context and a "part of our identity is inherited and a part is acquired during early socialization and participation in or joining to social ritual" (5). Identities have their distinct reference points and contexts within which they acquire a base and gather support. Discursively, one simply chooses from what is available and builds his/her notions of identity on pre-given but arbitrarily chosen bases/contexts. Donskis reminds that "our individual grasp of reality and personal attitudes to life would be unthinkable without the use of concepts of the individual and reality that are always common" (3). The choices thus made can either have an ideological motivation or a subversive impulse. Identity, thus germinates from coming together of options proffered by tradition/discourse and of an individual's unique choice and reaction to it. We acquire an identity which is "simultaneously dividing and associating, splitting and linking, exclusive and inclusive" (5). Thus, the individualistic, fully conscious, knowing, and intentional subject of the Enlightenment could not stand the test of time and sunk into the troubled waters of a world scarred by conflicts and clashes. The project of Enlightenment and its utopian visions came crashing down in a world fractured by class, sexual, racial, and ethnic privilege and disadvantage.

Freudian psychoanalysis approaches the subject as a thing "with a fixed structure, operating in knowable and predictable recognizable models" (Mansfield 9). Freud sought to understand subjectivity by probing the interiority of the subject i.e. by gaining access to his/her unconscious wherein lies the repressed desires, fears, and guilt. This unconscious generally makes itself manifest through dreams, neurotic symptoms, and slips of the tongue (Freudian slips). For Freud, identity is neither stable nor rational; it is rather an ever-conflicted tension between id and ego, conscious and subconscious mind. At the heart of all this was the idea of the split subject. For Freud "we have an interior life split between the socially and culturally integrated processes of the conscious mind, and the threatening or unconfessable impulses of the unconscious, which the conscious hopes to keep in its place by a quantum of mental force called repression" (Mansfield 30). The repressed material (unfulfilled desires, conflicts, anger,

fear, etc.) attempts to break the barriers of repression and reveals itself through aforementioned dreams, neurotic symptoms, or slips of tongue. Freud also sought to understand subjectivity through his Oedipus model which focuses upon "gender relations and sexual identifications of the child's environment" (Mansfield 31). For zeroing in on the psycho-sexual stages of development as the ultimate marker of subjectivity, Freudian theories invited much flak and consequent rejection.

Rejecting the fixity of Freudian models, anti-subjective theorists Michel Foucault, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Louis Althusser sought to prove that subjectivity is an unstable and inconsistent power construct, brought into shape by ideology and discursive apparatuses. Turning away from the notion of subjectivity as an expression of inner truth, these crusaders against the dominant power structures set forth the theory of interpellated subjects whose roles, opinions, perceptions, and actions are engineered in the workroom of power. For them "the whole idea of a fixed and knowable, autonomous subjectivity is a hallucination contrived by power in order to isolate and control us in the cage of individuality" (Mansfield 36). These masters of suspicion de-centered and destabilized identity and provided a critical foundation upon which postmodern thinkers built and refined their theories of identity.

For Foucault, identity is a product of power/knowledge. He says that the circulations of power create discursive fields within which the construction of identity takes place. For him, the constitution of a subject takes place within a discourse, and the existence of an essential subject prior to discourse is not possible. The procedure within which a subject gets constituted has been termed as subjectification. Linda Martin Alcoff puts forth the point in these words: "Famously for Foucault, the moment of subjectification- the moment at which we attain the status of subject- is simultaneously the moment of subjection…only when we conceive of ourselves as possessing a "self" can this self become the focal point of the self-monitoring practices embedded in the Panopticon" (319). For Foucault, Panopticon is the veritable symbol of disciplinary power which manifests itself through family, religion, schools, hospitals, etc. Discipline, which according to Foucault is the main whiplash of domination "may be identified neither within an institution nor within an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a 'physics' or an 'anatomy' of power, a technology" (Foucault 215).

Within a discursive field, identities are created and then maintained within the mould of normality by these disciplinary forces. It is also ensured that the definitions of identity, deemed favourable and profitable, by the discursive power is embedded within the society as normal and any deviation from it is conveniently tagged as 'abnormal', fit to be persecuted or punished. Mansfield makes the things clear when he says that "'subjectivity' is not the free and spontaneous expression of our interior truth. It is the way we are led to think about ourselves, so we will police and present ourselves in the correct way, as not insane, criminal, undisciplined, unkempt, perverse or unpredictable" (10).

Louis Althusser's theorization of identity is another watershed in the realm of cultural studies and political theorization. He puts forward the idea that a range of 'Ideological State Apparatuses' such as religion, education, the family, the law, politics, culture, and media produce the subject. Under the sedative influence of ideology, we form imaginary relationships with real events. Althusser encases his views in these words: "What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live" (296). A maddening procession of social practices throng the individual subjected to ideology, who is then made to identify with the identities on offer. Pushed towards pre-determined directions by false consciousness, we consequently assume identities and become subjects to/of ideology. Nick Mansfield elucidates it thus:

> The subject does not develop according to its own wants, talents and desires, but exists for the system that needs it. Its only public reality is determined for it by the social apparatus that calls it into a certain kind of being. Subjectivity, therefore, is the type of being we become as we fit into the needs of the larger political imperatives of the capitalist state. It requires us not only to behave in certain ways, but to be certain types of people (53).

Forms of identity are often internalized by the individual who takes them on. This process can also be theorized in terms of what Judith Butler has called 'performativity'. This refers to the repeated assumption of identities in the course of daily life. Bound up in specific discourses, we repeatedly perform modes of subjectivity and identity until we fallaciously assume the same to be our second nature. Rejection of hegemonic identity norms leads to counter identifications and spearheads a liberating socio-political action. Althusser, in the vein

of Marxists, considers class position to be a crucial determinant in the formation of subjectivity and identity.

In Marxist theory, ideology shapes subjectivity. Throwing light on the modus operandi of ideology, Julian Wolfreys, Ruth Robbins, and Kenneth Womack in *Key Concepts in Literary Theory* show that Marxists analyze the:

> …. nexus of beliefs or ideas which, formed as more or less a dominant consensus at any particular historical moment and as the discursive, philosophical and imaginary mediation of lived social, political, economic and cultural relations, serves to perpetuate or otherwise is put to work in the maintenance of social and civil relationships (53).

The position of Marxists in the twentieth century debates on identity is both prominent and crucial. The Marxist standpoint on the question of identity is more tilted towards the issue of collective identity i.e. class identity rather than on any notion of a reflexive self. All their theorization and activism are directed towards locating the formation of identity within the sphere of economic and class structures. They engage themselves in understanding the ramifications of class and social divisions in the construction of identities and consequently, the concept of individual subjectivity is kept at bay. The importance and validity of the Marxist view of identity lies in its attentiveness to the question of how identity can be seen as making space for political engagement by exercising and challenging power structures through political action and active involvement.

Lacan developed Freud's theory of the acquisition of gendered subjectivity into a general theory of society and culture. Lacan argues that the symbolic order of language, law, and meaning is founded on the unconscious, which is itself structured like language. He writes, "Psycho-analysis is neither a *Weltanschauung*, nor a philosophy that claims to provide a key to the universe. It is governed by a particular aim, which is historically defined by the elaboration of the notion of the subject. It poses this notion in a new way, by leading the subject back to his signifying dependence" (The Seminar 77). Subjectivity is an effect of language, governed by lack. Lacanian formulation and theorization of the mirror phase, has opened new vistas for the recent theories of identity. Poststructuralists following Lacan assert that the subject is split and is governed by a lack that is produced by the non-unified and non-sovereign

status of the subject as an effect of language. It points to a lack of control over meaning in the symbolic order and the non-sovereign status of the subject.

Lacanian, Derridean and other poststructuralist theories pulverize the notion that language is the expression of meaning fixed by a speaking subject. They strip the speaker of its authority over language and declare that language pre-exists and produces subjectivity, identity, and meaning. Lacan's view as enunciated in *Ecrits: A Selection* is, "The form in which language is expressed itself defines subjectivity . . . I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it like an object" (85-86). In this poststructuralist theoretical approach to subjectivity and identity, language constitutes rather than reflects or expresses the meaning of experience and identity. For them, indeterminacy of linguistic references finds its parallel in the indeterminacy and unreliability of experience and identity categories. They deny the possibility of objective truth by advancing the concepts of 'difference', 'absence', and 'relativity'. They undermine the conventional understanding of identity by discounting the possibility of an objective truth.

Postmodern/poststructuralist thinkers hold fast to the idea that the task of progressive political activists should be to undermine or subvert identities in order to destabilize the normalizing forces that bring them into being and then nurture them to achieve certain socio-political and economic ends. Poststructuralist and postmodernist theories have shifted the focus away from class based analyses of Marxist theory and have moved towards the interrogation of diverse individual and group identities and fragmentation rather than cohesion.

The poststructuralist theorization of identity completely discredited the earlier conception of the "self" as a unified, stable, and knowable entity. The concept of a unified self, they argued zealously, was "merely a fiction of language [and] an effect of discourse" (Moya 6). They go to the extent of claiming that "Identities are not simply fictitious; they are dangerously mystifying" (Moya 6). This mystification like all other things is a product of politics. Driven and promoted by certain discourses, it attempts to cover over the fissures, contradictions, and differences internal to the social construct we call a "self". The poststructuralists designated identity as a concept that serves the oppressive ideological functions. The postmodernists vigorously rejected all claims to the stability and homogeneity of identities and considered all such claims as politically motivated so as to disguise the structures of power involved in their production, maintenance, and 'acceptance'.

Judith Butler's postmodernist approach towards the modernist concept of identity has turned many notions about identity upside down. "Butler's fictive, inessential subject dramatically reveals the liabilities of the modernist subject" (Hekman 2). As against the autonomous, rational self of modernity, Butler's inessential and performative subject claims to lay bare the fictionality of established identities. Bulter, in a typical postmodernist vein, asserts that it is necessary to abandon the coherence which the modernist concept of identity adheres to. Until and unless we accept the fictive subject by rejecting the coherent identities, we cannot move ahead. Hekman explains that for Butler "identity is not a fiction in the sense that it is created anew every morning. But it is a fiction in that there is no essence that produces actions. It is the repetition of norms, rather, that enable and constitute the subject" (10). Butler says that we are all products of hegemonic discourses and perform our actions under their influence and term our 'performance', as our identity. Rejecting the idea of a stable and coherent subject, she argues against the notion of an abiding substance that is thought to constitute a person and calls it a mere fictive construction. Calling into question, the norms that accompany the concepts of gender, man and woman, she says in *Gender Trouble* (1990) that "But if these substances are nothing other than the coherences contingently created through the regulation of attribute, it would seem that the ontology of substances itself is not only an artificial effect but essentially superfluous" (24). She calls identity a mere performativity. It is the act/performance itself that constitutes the identity and not the other way round, i.e. a coherent identity does not produce actions/ performances.

Butler's conceptualization about gender identities has serious ramifications upon the understanding of identities in general. She says "gender ought not to be considered as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (Butler 140; emphasis original). For her, gender is a performance. An individual performs his/her gender roles which are directed by "political regulations and disciplinary practices" (Butler 136). Repudiating the theory of a pre-given essence as an identity, she contends that performativity constitutes identity. An individual merely performs to the tunes of ideology, wallows in the comfort of conformity and struts out with orchestrated identities.

The act of subversion, however, lies at the core of Butler's argumentation. Any performance that does not adhere to the established gender ideology, subvert the norms of

gender identity. She warns against falling into the marsh of fixed identities which she contends are always coercive. Instead, she advocates the performativity of incoherent identities which holds the promise of subversion and agency. "It is the constitutive failure of the performative, this slippage between discursive command and its appropriated effect," she says in *Bodies That Matter* "that provides the linguistic occasion and index for a consequential disobedience" (122). Subversion/ resistance takes place in the 'slippage' of discursive spaces where identification fails and that accounts for the differences in attitudes of the subjects which are all constituted in the same discursive spaces. But what leads to this slippage' is still a question which Butler left unanswered. Why only a few slip and others glide through the discursive field?

Susan J. Hekman finds loopholes in Butler's theorization and contends that a stable core of identity is must to have any substantial agency. She argues that "Without a coherent identity, actors cannot act; they require a stable sense of self to avoid the fragmentation and splintering that is the mark of insanity" (15). She argues against the fictive subject and advocates the existence of "a coherent, core self that allows us to function as mature adults in a social world and provides us with an individual identity" (Hekman 5). This core self, however, is not be confused with the essentialist modernist subject. She acknowledges the social construction of the identity as well and says that "this core self is a social product constituted by a complex array of forces that are both public and personal" (Hekman 6). According to Hekman, an individual's identity has many facets and we falter in our conceptualization when we establish any one facet as the essential identity. Categorizing any one aspect as the essence is a serious theoretical and political fallacy.

Hekman bases her arguments on the difference between what she calls public identities and private selves. An individual's personal identity makes him/her unique but this uniqueness is surrendered to sameness in case of public identities, where one is recognized by the different 'labels' which the hegemonic forces have designed and imposed. An individual's interaction with society takes place on the terra firma of public identities and strands of the former are embedded in the personal conceptualization of the self; self which is deeply influenced by both family and society. There is no escape from public identities but response to these is always generated by personal attitudes which take shape in the very mould of society which it conforms to or rebels against. She says that "We are all embedded in social structures, but our

embeddedness occurs at different locations" (Hekman 7). She invokes object relations theory to substantiate her arguments. She avers:

> Object relations theory supplies a core subject, but it is a core that is, like that of postmodern subject, constituted through discourse and relational experience…Object relations theory, by exploring the way in which subjects are constituted by their early relationships, can explain how subjects differ; it builds difference into the very formation of identity (20-21).

This theorization puts its weight behind the concept of a core self that is relational and does not bog it down with the modernist claims of absolute innateness and essences. Though a socially constituted entity, this self is not merely a product of discursive overdetermination, it is rather "a continuously evolving negotiation between a relationally constructed self and the world that self encounters" (Hekman 21). Butler evokes cultural patterns to understand the emergence of identity but object relations theory takes into account social situatedness and personality of parents along with cultural patterns to understand identity and personality formation because parents impact one's understanding of the self and society. The theory is significant because it "combines attention to social, cultural construction with an analysis of the idiosyncratic nature of each individual human life" (Hekman 23). Social/cultural determinism which Butler talks about "cannot explain why we do not all turn out the same…it cannot explain the existence of an inner life, the sense of personal identity that we all possess" (Hekman 28). An individual's response to cultural meanings which produce public identities vary because of his/her unique experience of that culture of which he/she too is a product. Object relations theory asserts that identity is influenced not only by cultural determinants but also by family, class etc. Institutionalized cultural patterns provide a public identity but the way we approach, accept or subvert that identity is determined by one's location within that culture which is affected primarily by one's family and upbringing and object relations theory takes into account "all these different levels [parents, social structure, etc.] and types of social relations and their interactions, mutual determinations and possible antagonisms" (Flax 124).

Hekman says that locus standi of each individual in society is distinct and this distinctiveness interacts with certain general identity markers to constitute the identity of an individual. She states "identity is socially constituted, but the particular social location of each individual is different. This accounts for the uniqueness of individual identity and the

difference between identities" (Hekman 106). One should not think that public and personal identities are mutually exclusive. One's personal sense of self has deep relationship with public identity because the former is affected by the latter in a profound manner and vice versa but to conclude that public identities are the monolithic determiners of personal identities is completely fallacious. She says that public identities are not identical to personal selves. An individual possesses both these identities. Embeddedness of individuals in society constitutes their identity but this embeddedness is always particular and is not the same for all. She clarifies her stance by giving an example of how the associations attached with the public identity of woman never lose their momentum whenever discussions about or dealings with women take place. But each individual woman negotiates with this public identity in different ways, depending upon her parental, educational and socio-cultural influences. Thus, women are embedded in society but embeddedness of each woman is different and this difference determines her interactions and negotiations with society.

Another thing which Hekman points out is that individuals fail to see their identities as results of hegemonic forces. They exult in pride about their identities which are, in fact, discursive constructions. This identity, though constituted within a discourse, must entail the sense of a core self. This core self is quintessential for an individual to find his/her moorings in the society and to collect the resources that usher forth agency in the subject. She favours the assertion of "a subject with constructed, yet stable, identity. Unless we do so we cannot posit the subject as a political actor. Butler's fictive self cannot operate in the political arena or anywhere else" (Hekman 85). Courage to battle against the negative stereotypes associated with public identities comes from the sense of having a stable core self; an individual's personal sense of self which defies the derogatory and pejorative socio-cultural stereotypes which bind identities to discursive structures and definitions. In identity politics, the identity which gets challenged is public identity. Hekman observes:

> …public identities are about power. They are social constructions that define the public identities that structure our social world. We can accept them, resist them, redefine them, but they are nevertheless constitutive of our identities. Understanding identity politics necessarily entails understanding how their power operates (85).

The one who challenges public identities acquires its strength, motivation and grit from personal sense of the self. This self seeks to replace in collaboration with others, the negative associations of public identity which they all share, with more positive ones. This self seeks to re-define and re-interpret the meanings of public identities and understands that power is not given; rather, it is to be acquired in order to subvert the oppressive and demeaning associations which certain public identities carry without the least consent of the people whose personal identity gets embroiled in this tussle of definitions created by dominant ideology. The various selves who collaborate for such movements identify with each other on one or more levels of identity which are personal. Their struggle to redefine cultural categories is impacted by their personal sense of self, which in turn, too gets impacted by the struggle. The fact that individuals challenge discursive constructions shows that one is not completely determined by it. The challenges make one aware of the gaps, wherein lie the scope of agency. These discourses definitely determine identities but they are not the sole and final determinants. Object relations theory, in short, shows us the way to "see identity as a complexly constituted social product. We are social beings but not social dupes. We possess core selves but these selves are not the essential, neutral, autonomous selves of modernism" (Hekman 141).

It is what we now designate as essentialist stance of modernism on identity that comes under fire in the postmodern theorization of identity. The term is most commonly used to imply a generalization about identity. Essentialists take a single axis/aspect of identity as distinct, thus giving it priority in representation of the self. This axis/aspect is promoted as the defining feature of its participants. This leads to a reductive and exclusionary conception of the self which is at odds with the model of an integrated self. Micheal R. Hames-Garcia has come up with a notion of "restriction" vis-à-vis which he attempts to show how the multiplicity of identity (different aspects of one's identity i.e. race, class, gender, religion etc.) is erroneously undermined by certain theories. Only one aspect of identity is foregrounded to explain or understand the individual's self and the social processes which determine/constitute that selfhood. He says that in essentialism "multiplicity of the self becomes obscured through the logic of domination to which the self becomes subjected…this multiplicity of the self becomes restricted so that any one person's "identity" is reduced to and understood exclusively in terms of that aspect of her or his self with the most political salience" (Garcia 104).

The essentialist notions of identity or more precisely, as Amartya Sen points out in his book *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (2006), the "solitarist" approach to human identity tries to arrest the fluidity of the concept by putting upon it the fetters of strict definitions and codes. These complacent and rigid definitions lack both the vigour and rigour of critical insight and are often forged to serve certain social and political ends and to strengthen certain power structures. Trapped in their complacency, the authority figures try to hush the issue of identity by fixing it in certain well-assembled definitions. Befooled and baffled, the ideologically interpellated subjects accept their subjugation with gratitude but the razor blade of critical theory often renders these essentializing attempts blunt and ineffective and re-directs our attention to the plurality and fluidity of identities.

We all have plural identities and biding anyone to one particular identity is gross injustice and a serious theoretical blunder. As Sen puts it "A solitarist approach can be a good way of misunderstanding nearly everyone in the world" (Prologue XII). Essentialists chiefly falter in their assumption that identities are stable, absolute, definite and universal. They tend to ignore the historical, social, cultural, economic and racial variables which play so potent a role in the construction and manipulation of identities. Paula M. L. Moya in *Reclaiming Identity: Realist theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism* considers the position in these words: "The first problem with essentialist conceptions of identity, according to critics, is the tendency to posit one aspect of identity(say gender) as the sole cause or determinant constituting the social meanings of an individual's experience" (3). It is this obduracy regarding the fixity of identities and their projection as natural that has led to the denunciation of essentialist models of identity. Cultural nationalist and feminist movements have drawn flak chiefly because they ignored the historical changes and internal differences within a group. But they have still not declared a truce. They vehemently maintain that identity categories provide models of examining significant correlations between lived experience and social location. Their deployment of identity as an organizing principle in the scholarly, political and activist endeavours can certainly not be ignored and brushed under the carpet as mere dogma. They too are keenly aware of the fact that identities which seem natural and obvious are constituted in ways that serve particular interests.

Stuart Hall ponders over the question of cultural identity and comes up with many theoretically useful and thought-provoking insights. He opines that cultural identity must be

viewed from two standpoints. First position views identity within the cauldron of shared culture, history and ancestry, where distinctive attributes are subjugated in order to affirm and assert a shared identity. Such identities originate from common historical experiences and provide people with "stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual 'history'" (Hall 111). Embracement of these identities provides strength to the struggle against hegemonic power structures. It destabilizes power structures by putting 'accepted' notions and definitions of cultural identity under scanner and by framing new contours of identity. The facets of identity which had earlier been suppressed are brought forth with rejuvenating vigour to set the record straight.

From second standpoint, identity is to be viewed with all its differences and ruptures. Every individual's positioning and participation within history and culture is distinct and subject to change like all other things that exist in time and space and have histories. Such identities are "subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (Hall 112) and these "identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of past" (Hall 112). While dealing with identities, one has to struggle against the dominant regimes of representation. Such representations lead to the production and maintenance of stereotypes which cater to the exploitative politics of dominant power structures. Whirlwind of such representations have a dizzying effect upon the 'represented' subject. The latter's mind is constantly and continuously filled with a knowledge which has been processed in the power house of dominant regimes. From there ensues an acceptance of the 'norm' which designates the status of inferior 'Other' to the 'represented' subject.

Hall warns that "The inner expropriation of cultural identity cripples and deforms. If its silences are not resisted, they produce in Fanon's vivid phrase 'individuals without an anchor, without horizon, colourless, stateless, rootless- a race of angels'" (113). Capitulation to these stereotypes must be resisted and new, subversive and liberating forms of representation must be constituted to challenge and replace the oppressive ones. But while doing so, one must remain conscientiously alert against the exploitative urge, inherent within any emerging regime of power. Sedative influence of power can germinate the deadly cancer of totalitarian attitude which blocks all passages for alterative discourses.

Identities, therefore, are subject to reconsideration and re-definitions. They have to be viewed through the prism of history and culture. Hall reminds us that "like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation" (112). Invocation of any 'essence' by ignoring the variables of history, in order to give validity to some particular forms of identity or representation, results only in politics of oppression. Hall, with a brilliance characteristic of him, puts the point forward by saying "Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning" (113). Amartya Sen's viewpoint in this regard concords with Hall. He is of the opinion that identification with certain cultural attitudes can influence one's thoughts and identity but there is a lot of difference between being completely determined and being influenced by cultural attitudes. He says that "Influence is not the same thing as complete determination, and choices do remain despite the existence-and importance-of cultural influences" (Sen 34-35).

One more concept of identities as "wounded attachments" given by Wendy Brown in her book *States of Inquiry: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* has invited critical attention. According to Brown, identities are wounded attachments because it is the common or shared humiliation and the yearning to take revenge from the perpetrators of the same, which unite people together under the umbrella of a common identity. She contends that such people are tortured by the realization that their pain can never be understood by the people who have historically been assigned superior strength and fortune as against their own historically subjugated and subordinated position. She believes that it is pain that brings people together and hence calls relationships forged by this pain as wounded attachments. She, however, unlike Stuart Hall, does not take into account the positive and ennobling impact and the strength which these relationships can achieve. She fails to see that such shared social/cultural identities can be "enabling, enlightening, and enriching structures of attachment and feeling" (Moya 8).

The politics built in and around identity has always accrued a weighty baggage but the problem with the essentialist as well as the postmodern conceptions of and stances on identity is that whereas the former overestimates, the latter underestimates the political credibility of social identities. Postmodern celebration of fragmentation and playfulness of identity as liberating does not take into account the pain and frustration which it entails. James Glass in his book *Shattered Selves: Multiple Personality in a Postmodern World* opines that

postmodern "is not a liberatory, playful experience…multiple realities annihilate the self's emotional possibility, destroy the psychological foundations of consent, shatter the shared experiences of historical knowledge" (46). James vehemently asserts that experience and knowledge of a coherent self/identity is necessary to make sense of one's reference points within a historical context. But the postmodern situation has brought us to a point where all identity categories and claims are viewed with suspicion.

At this juncture one might ask, if identities are only products of ideology, taken by individuals under the influence of false consciousness, then why politics of liberation makes so much hue and cry regarding the defense of these identities. They would rather try to deconstruct them. The way out of this labyrinth is perhaps the postpositivist realist approach which rejects both the determinism of essentialist models as well as the postmodern labeling of identity as arbitrary and fabricated. Paula M. L. Moya succinctly introduces this approach as "It shows how identities can be both real and constructed: how they can be politically and epistemically significant, on the one hand, and variable, nonessential, and radically historical, on the other" (12). For them identity is real and not fabricated but they also recognize that it is neither self-evident nor homogeneous.

Carefully avoiding the pitfalls of essentialist models which bind identities with particular essences and filling up the lacunae of postmodern theories, postpositivist realist theorists provide a "subtler, more complex, and more complete picture of how any given identity is formed - a picture that includes that identity's excluded other, its formative context, and its historical character and social function" (Moya 18). This theory considers the multiple strains of identity rather than clinging to any one aspect of it. It posits all those ideas as invalid which consider the identities to be simply the products of power. Postpositivists do away with the postmodern denial of objective truth. Rather, according to Moya, "They suggest that objective knowledge can be built on an analysis of the different kinds of subjective or theoretical bias or interest" (13). When it comes to the pursuit of knowledge, they repose their faith in the possibility of an objective, reliable and accurate knowledge and choose revision over rigid claims of certainty and finality. Postpositivist realist theory, as Paula M.L. Moya asserts, states that:

> (1) all observation and knowledge are theory mediated and that (2) a theory – mediated objective knowledge is both possible and desirable. They replace a

> simple correspondence theory of truth with a more dialectical causal theory of reference in which linguistic structures both shape our perceptions of and refer (in more or less partial and accurate ways) to causal features of a real world (12).

Postmodern theorization has assigned identity a fabricated/ constructed character and has opposed tooth and nail, all assertions which establish relationship of identity with experience. For them, personal experiences are subject to basic instability. Social signification derived from such unstable experiences, which are themselves understood and analyzed in terms of linguistic and other signs, can lead to no clear interpretation. Jonathan Culler declares "'Experience' always has divided, duplicitous character: it has always already occurred and yet is still to be produced- an indispensable point of reference, yet never simply there" (63). Postmodernists argue against making experience a base for any social identity. Postpositivist realists, however, calls for a revisionist approach to experience in which "experiences would not serve as foundations because of their self-evident authenticity but would provide some of the raw material with which we construct identities" (Mohanty 32).

As against postmodernism, which does not deem experience to yield any reliable knowledge, postpositivist realists reiterate that a meticulously carried out interpretation of personal experience can yield reliable knowledge. They believe that "experience refers very simply to the variety of ways humans process information" (Mohanty 32) and the truth or falsity of these experiences/information can always be assessed and revised. Caroline S. Hau puts it thus, "One way of conceptualizing experience in cognitive terms is to look at it as involving a range of processes of organizing information, processes that, like all cognitive activities, involve constant reinterpretation, reevaluation, and adjudication" (156). The way(s) in which a subject responds to or relates to his/her experience can be scrutinized theoretically to arrive at some kind of knowledge. The knowledge, thus deduced, will be reliable because it is not an arbitrary choice, rather, it has been evaluated theoretically and its legitimacy and justification has been tested. Moreover, this theory acknowledges that experience is always both socially and theoretically mediated. Hau lends her weight behind postpositivist claim of experience as a means to arrive at knowledge because experience "involves the complex processing of information (including adjudication between competing background theories) and which is open to evaluation and revision" (153). Naomi Scheman's insightful essay "Anger and The Politics of Naming" (1980) elucidates this point. By taking example of women who

align themselves with feminist consciousness raising movements, she rejects the idea of emotions or personal experience being an individual's pure inner possessions. She, rather elaborates, how these emotions are both socially and politically mediated. She says:

> The structure that consciousness-raising groups provide for the interpretation of feelings and behavior is overtly political; it should be immediately obvious that one is presented with a particular way of making sense of one's experience, a way intimately linked with certain controversial political views. Consciousness-raising groups are not, however, unique in this respect. What they are is unusually honest: the political framework is explicit (though often vague) and openly argued for. The alternative is not "a clear space in which to get your head together" but a hidden political framework that pretends not to be one (186).

Scheman asserts that an individual's chaotic feelings, sometimes, get sorted out with the mediation of an elaborate and consciously chosen political and social theory. The feelings, thus sorted out, take the shape of emotion but the ways in which this emotion is experienced is not merely personal. Their composition is both social and political. One's experience of emotions is highly regulated by the ideas which emanate from the social and political theories, one aligns oneself with. The constructed nature of experience puts into dock the essentialist claims of a common cultural experience which they argue is the only base of a common cultural identity and for which they evoke a common set of values or beliefs. Satya P. Mohanty is quick to remind us that "our access to our remotest personal feelings is dependent on social narratives, paradigms, and even ideologies" (35) which can be theoretically analysed to arrive at objective and reliable knowledge. He argues that one must not fall into the trap of essentialist stance of identity politics by developing a conception of identity being a self- evident phenomenon which takes shape from the experiences of members of cultural groups nor should one subscribe to the postmodern stance of designating experience as mere mystification, rather,

> …we need to explore the possibility of a theoretical understanding of social and cultural identity in terms of objective social location …To do so, we need a cognitive conception of experience…enabling us to see experience as source of both real knowledge and social mystification…[which] are open to analysis on the basis of empirical information about our social situation and a theoretical account of our current social and political arrangements (43).

Mohanty suggests that this approach is most viable because it takes into account the constructed nature of social and cultural experience while at the same time investing in the epistemic and political agency which individuals hold within this scenario. It does not fall into the essentialist marsh because,

> …when the postpositivist realist says that something is "real", she does not mean to say that it is not socially constructed; rather, her point is that it is not only socially constructed. In the case of identity, for instance, the realist claim is that there is a nonarbitrary limit to the range of identities we can "construct" or "choose" for any person in a given social formation. It is that nonarbitrary limit that forms the boundary between (objective) "reality" and our (subjective) construction- or understanding- of it (Moya 70).

Mohanty suggests that it is wrong to assume an 'already/always there' kind of a link between one's social location (constituted along the axis of race, class, gender, religion, nationality etc.) and knowledge. Rather, this link is "historically variable and mediated through the interpretation of experience" (Mohanty 81). This experience is theoretically and ideologically conditioned; the meanings one ascribes to events which constitute his/her experience are always gleaned after the mediation of certain ideologies. But despite this mediation, experience "contains a "cognitive component" through which we can gain access to knowledge of the world" (Mohanty 81).

Paula M.L. Moya illustrates some claims which postpositivist realist theory makes. It includes, firstly, the claim that different social categories that together constitute an individual's social location are causally related to the experiences an individual has. For example, people who are racially coded as 'black' or 'white' have experiences entirely different from each other because the situations which they face are different. This difference will be seen in all social categories (race, class, gender, nationality etc.) which constitute an individual's social location. (Mohanty 81). Secondly, these experiences influence but does not actually determine the formation of cultural identity. Same event can elicit different response from different people because "theories through which humans interpret their experiences vary from individual to individual, from time to time, and from situation to situation" (Mohanty 82). Thirdly, there is possibility of error in interpretation of events because there is a cognitive component to identity. Over the time, individual's interpretation of same situation can undergo

change resulting in either a diminished or enhanced accuracy. It is important to note that "identities both condition and are conditioned by the kinds of interpretation people give to the experiences they have" (Mohanty 83). Hames-Garcia readily puts his stake at this theory because according to him, this theory's "understanding of error" (109) makes it possible to arrive at a more accurate version of knowledge. "For a realist", according to Minh T. Nguyen "error and bias are not obstacles to avoid at all cost but instead are instructive, even necessary, elements of inquiry…the dialectic is then between error and objectivity; error is opposed not to certainty but rather to objectivity as a theory-dependent, socially realizable goal" (192). Error in postpositivist realist theory is not denigrated as an obstruction in the path of knowledge; rather, it is accepted and acknowledged as a new opening to access the accurate knowledge via the route of revision and reinterpretation. The various errors of cognition make one aware of the lacunae in their respective political stances and this awareness as Mohanty maintains is very important. He points out that without "alternative constructions and accounts…our capacity to interpret and understand the dominant ideologies and institutions is limited to those created and sanctioned by these very ideologies and institutions" (Mohanty 40). Fourthly, some identities have greater epistemic value because they provide a more adequate account of social categories which constitute an individual's social location (Mohanty 83). Fifthly, an individual's understanding of the self and the world is mediated through cultural identity. An individual's ability to understand the fundamental aspects of his/her world is dependent on his/her acknowledgement and understanding of the social, political, economic, and epistemic consequences of his/her respective social location or subject position (Mohanty 85-86). Production of knowledge necessitates an understanding of the experiences within social relations rather than a mere analysis of social relations alone. "The potential for knowledge" and agency lies "in a theoretically informed liberatory project, in the "interpreted experiences," not simply the social locations, of the oppressed" (Henze 235). An individual's social location/ subject position will not lead to theorization of any kind unless it comes in contact with structures/institutions of power, oppressive or otherwise because "Social locations lead to particular knowledge only when a person experiences the effects of the social structures brought to bear on these social locations and actively interprets her experience" (Henze 236). Sixthly, to arrive at a more accurate understanding of the world, an oppositional struggle is quintessential. The claim is supported by Satya P. Mohanty when he says:

> In the case of social phenomena like sexism and racism, whose distorted representation benefits the powerful and the established groups and institutions, an attempt at an objective explanation is necessarily continuous with oppositional political struggles. Objective knowledge of such social phenomena is in fact often dependent on the theoretical knowledge that activism creates… (40).

This oppositional struggle dismantles the institutionalized norms and enables one to review the events, both social and political from a new standpoint. Postpositivist realists dwell upon the idea of identity being a construct, while at the same time reiterating its realness. This apparent conflict between the two stances (essentialist and postmodern) which has been so prominently debated in the academia, has in a way, been reconciled in postpositivist realist theory. Michael R. Hames-Garcia substantiates it thus:

> Realism retains both essentialism's objective of affirming the political salience of identity and poststructuralist's objective of viewing group membership as socially conditioned. It avoids essentialism's desire to know identity and experience immediately and rejects poststructuralism's extreme skepticism toward the reliability of knowledge and the subject's ability to transcend discourses of domination (119-120).

An individual's conception of identity is always based on theory mediated experience which makes it a social, cultural, and political construct but identities are real in the "sense of being lived, of having real effects, and of constituting key features of our shared reality" (Alcoff 318). In this way, postpositivist realist theory foregrounds the epistemic and political significance of identities.

Postpositivist realist approach seeks to arrive at some kind of an understanding of the enigmatic identity without making any boisterous claims about the absoluteness of its position. For them "The most basic questions about identity call for a more general reexamination of the relation between personal experience and public meanings- subjective choices and evaluations, on the one hand, and objective social location, on the other" (Mohanty 30). They are open to the idea that knowledge as well as experience always stands a chance to be reviewed and reinterpreted. Theirs is certainly a stance which is less absolutist and theoretically more productive. Venturing into a more constructive domain, this theory shifts "the debate about the status of error away from a consideration of error per se (which often bogs down into

an examination of the injurious consequences of false beliefs and bad analysis) to a consideration of the uses of error" (Hau 160). Whilst recognizing the variability and historicity of identity categories, these thinkers also maintain the political credibility of the same. Instead of making an individual a passive recipient of ideological dictates, these theorists invest her/him with an agency. Identities, they state, are "often assumed or chosen for complex subjective reasons which can be objectively evaluated" (Moya 9). Without claiming their theorizations to be the last and final word on the subject of identity, postpositivist realist theorists certainly usher in a new thinking and debate on the topic. Lauding this theory, Laura Gillman says that "The strong epistemological and political emphasis becomes evident in the ways identities are conceived as bifurcated. On this account, it becomes possible to explain how the real can fall prey to ideological mystification" (461).

Identity has always been a fundamental element of social liberation as well as social oppression. Many of the operations – both positive and negative – in our world are still motivated by identity categories. Ethnic clashes, class wars, religious fundamentalism, racial attacks, mistaken identities, racial/gender/cultural assertions are as much an undeniable truth of our times as it was in past. Migration and diaspora formations have added further complexity to the concept of identity. The taken-for-granted ideas of identity and belonging have faced rejection at the hands of alert thinkers and theorists. Bringing to fore the plurality inherent in an individual's identity, theorists like Amartya Sen has stressed upon the need for choice and reasoning while dealing with identity categories and has also unveiled the gory truth of violence which erupts when identities are tethered with the poles of essentialism, inscribed with the pride of their exclusivity. He draws attention to the fact that "With suitable instigation, a fostered sense of identity with one group of people can be made into a powerful weapon to brutalize another…many of the conflicts and barbarities in the world are sustained through the illusion of a unique and choiceless identity" (Preface XV). To treat issues involving identity as either a mere fad or just passé is a gross theoretical as well as a grave political lapse. Identity has always been and will always be a challenge for us to accept so as to add meaningful, conscious, and conscientious dimensions to our life and experiences. Satya P. Mohanty sums up the issue satisfactorily when he says that "…our identities are ways of making sense of our experiences. Identities are theoretical constructions that enable us to read the world in specific

ways…. In them, and through them, we learn to define and reshape our values and our commitments, we give texture and form to our collective futures" (43).

Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen bring alive the complexities, trauma, dichotomies and possibilities of diasporic identity and experience generated by this identity in their novels. Caryl Phillips' *The Final Passage* (1985), *Crossing the River* (1993) and *In the Falling Snow* (2009) and David Dabydeen's *The Intended* (1991), *Disappearance* (1993) and *The Counting House* (1996) make up a tapestry in which variables of identity are woven in intricate patterns.

The characters of Phillips and Dabydeen's novels participate in introspective and dialogical processes which opens up the routes for the revision of embedded belief-systems. Their recognition of oppressive power structures motivates them to explore the emancipatory routes. Their novels explore the complex nuances of diasporic identity through critical reflection and social agency that postpositivist realism theorizes.

The select novels of Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen when examined through the lens of postpositivist realism, offer not only rich critical insights but also ushers in the epistemological depth. Both of them try to grapple with the conundrum of identity while reiterating that all generated knowledge to open to revision. Their characters sojourn into retrospective as well as introspective journeys to re-examine their past experiences and responses. These journeys are nothing short of epistemological inquiries through which they process their current experiences. Through this revisionary approach towards knowledge, they allow access to alternative interpretations and subsequently to emancipatory prospects. The select novels thus reflect the postpositivist realist belief that the oppositional narratives hold immense potential to challenge dominant ideologies, thereby opening the doors of emancipatory politics.

Both the novelists present identity as a lived and evolving construct whose contours are continually re-shaped by the dynamics of history, race, class, gender etc. Their characters struggle to negotiate between imposed identities and chosen subjectivities, which the postpositivists posit as the struggle between positionings and positionalities. This tussle reinforces a central tenet of postpositivist realism, that knowledge is continually constructed, contested and revised through lived experience. Further, identities acquire their contours within very intricate and context- dependent social, political, historical and cultural interactions.

The identities are therefore very significant from a socio-cultural as well as historical perspective.

The novels posit identity both as a site of constraint as well as an avenue for liberation. The role of critical awareness as the push behind agency and emancipatory practices is also foregrounded in the novels. Characters eventually realize their subordination within socio-historical praxis and initiate the process of resistance, subversion and re-interpretation of roles. This process exemplifies the postpositivist realist belief that identity is not merely descriptive but is explanatory as well as potentially transformative.

The select novels thus provide a fertile ground to undertake a postpositivist realist inquiry into the issues of identity. These novels focus upon the complex dynamics of relationship between personal history and collective memory, revealing how identities are continually shaped, interrogated, challenged, and redefined within socio-cultural and historical paradigms.

Caryl Phillips is a distinguished Caribbean diasporic writer who was born in St. Kitts. He spent his childhood in Leeds, England and is presently living in New York, USA. He has to his credit many celebrated works of fiction and non-fiction. His works focus on the dark legacy of black Atlantic slave trade and weave enduring tales of pain, trauma, resilience and grit. Caryl Phillips' *The Final Passage* (1985) traces the geographical, emotional and psychological journey of a young West Indian woman and follows her travails as she tries to make sense of the chaos around her. The novel is about diasporic experience, friendship, racial politics, inter-racial bonding, emotional crisis, trauma and man-woman relationship. At the core of the novel are the issues of diasporic and female identity. It explores the consequences of an event when an individual encounters reality of his/her situation and how feeble tremors of agency take birth. *Crossing the River* (1993) unfolds the experience of exile, disillusionment, problems of communication and loneliness and depicts the diasporic ambivalence and hegemony of the Whites through a story of three black people during different time periods and in different continents as they struggle with separation from their native Africa. Phillips is interested in how narratives of slavery inform the contemporary migrant condition. Identity crisis, parent-child relationship, human bonding, poverty, war and travel occupy the literary space in this novel. Various actions of slaves and women demonstrate the defiance of authority as they try to break fetters of identity which shackle them. *In the Falling Snow* (2009) is about the journey of a middle-aged diasporic man as he wades through different

and problematic paths in his professional and personal life. The need for bonding and communication is at the heart of the novel and it resonates with the aspirations of the diasporic subject who yearns to cast off the identity stereotypes and craves to carve a niche for himself on the foreign shores.

David Dabydeen is a celebrated Caribbean diasporic poet, novelist, and critic. Born in Guyana, he presently stays in London, England. Dabydeen's stories revolve around his native Guyana. Experiences fostered by colonialism and migration form the crux of his works. David Dabydeen's *The Intended* (1991) is about survival, agency, aspirations and struggle for liberation from the stigma of an immigrant status. Stereotypes are sought to be demolished by acquiring knowledge and subverting Western interpretations. The novel grapples with the issues of racial violence, diasporic ambition and relationships which are not lasting. The novel's portrayal of the instability of diasporic identity and relations among the Whites, African- Caribbean and Asians is both relevant and thought provoking. *Disappearance* (1993) explores the relationship between an educated Black man and his White landlady. Erasure of ethnicity, the West's interest in and "knowledge" about the Caribbean, female subjectivity and contrast between cultures are the issues at the heart of the novel. *The Counting House* (1996) bespeaks the plight, disillusionment and dreams of both the indentured slaves and of the oppressed and violated women. The dehumanizing tactics and inhuman atrocities of the White West are brought forth but the silver lining in the darkness becomes visible in the determined, relentless and dogged acts of subversion and muffled rebellions. Issues of racism, sexism, slavery and immigrant experience constitute the central thesis of the novel. Agency of women protagonists is evident in their efforts at turning their perceived weakness into strength and in employing this as a weapon to defeat the enemy.

The novels of Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen provide deep insights when put under the lens of postpositivist realism. This approach directs the reader's analysis into real, material circumstances, which are influenced by race, class, gender, colonialism, diasporic displacement etc. and thus debunk the reductive explanations and crude binaries about identity formations. The readers stay alert to the scope of resistance, subversion and agency within historically and culturally oppressive power structures.

The select novels demonstrate the socio-cultural as well as material conditions of diasporic lives while at the same time revealing how historically grounded realities impact the

formation of identities. These works hold ample scope for postpositivist realist analysis as they deal with the characters' struggles against power structures and depict their stubborn albeit fragile agencies which takes birth in their recognition of error and revisionary attitude.

Both Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen belong to a transitional generation which has inherited a complex tradition of Caribbean response to the loneliness, ambivalence and confusion about its relationship with the British society. Though Phillips and Dabydeen seem to have come to terms with the cultural shock, yet they inhabit the cusp where the two cultures overlap and collide.

Diasporic literature takes birth from the travails and tribulations of individuals and communities who have settled abroad, leaving their original homelands behind. This literature invites the readers to gain insights into the experiences of displacement, cultural negotiation, and the ambivalent process of identity formation. Histories of migration, exile, colonization, and slavery form the core of diasporic literature. The emotional cost behind the burgeoning diaspora is well reflected in these narratives, with a special focus upon the fragmented realities and fractured identities of those who inhabit the interstitial spaces between nations, languages, and cultures. The artistic engagement of a writer with diaspora seeks to shed light on the socio-political and historical forces that shape diasporic life.

The foremost concept which the writers engage with in diasporic literature is the notion of "home"- both as a physical place and an imagined construct. The diasporic subject is continually caught in the flux of memory and forgetting, assimilation and resistance, subjugation and assertion. The intervening factors like race, class and gender further complicate the diasporic positioning in the host nation, where power structures work relentlessly to unnerve and unsettle him/her.

The diasporic narratives build upon the native's perception of homeland as an opportunity bereft land. This stimulates a desire to embark on new shores in search of opportunities, wealth and recognition. Nurturing the dreams of paradise, these travelers, however, are left flabbergasted when they encounter a world which refuses to give them a warm and humane reception. They are constantly made to bit a crust of humility and are assigned a place on the margins of society, thus denying them any active and willed participation in the events of the host nation. These immigrants are left smouldering with the realization that the promised land is indeed fertile, churning out opportunities but the

immigrant can only step inside this fertile area to pluck out the weeds because the luscious fruit is branded as someone else's assets. The immigrant strives to prove his/her worth and his/her humanity but the host nation, in its smugness, refuses to shed its prejudices. The immigrant tries to get closer in an effort to gain acceptance and at times he/she does succeed. Surging over the misconceptions and prejudices, he/she at times succeeds in carving a niche for himself and tries to make a "home" in a foreign land. The whole process as Wesley Brown and Amy Ling puts in is "the enigma of arrival in an alien country or city, the struggle to gain acceptance in a different, often hostile environment, getting accepted and getting reconciled and finally the play of memory with the ghosts of the past and cosmic absurdity of the new world" (93).

Having grappled with the uncertainties, prejudices and humiliations, the immigrant learns to maneuver the shifting gears of his life. And when the struggles in the foreign land give him a breather, them the nostalgia begins to choke him/her. He/she begins to pine for the lost home and wishes to return. The lost homeland now acquires a hue of romance due to nostalgia and the immigrant feels himself/herself lost among aliens with whom he/she has no cultural, social, political, emotional or psychological affiliations. The immigrants end up as perpetual wanderers. Diasporic literature thus holds a rich promise of investigation into the concept of identity: how it is constructed, contested, and redefined across shifting socio-cultural, political and historical contexts.

Within this broader framework, the literature of the Caribbean diaspora holds a significant place. Their narrative are forged in the crucibles of colonialism, slavery, and indentureship, These chronicles trace a fictionalized history of forced and voluntary migrations to countries like the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. Writers of the Caribbean diaspora often deal with themes of historical trauma, social discrimination, political apathy, cultural hybridity, racial oppression. The search for belonging in host country and the longing for the lost homeland form the core concerns of their works.

Engagement with memory as a site of resistance and recovery comes out as a predominant concern in Caribbean diasporic literature. It tries to retrieve forgotten histories and provides cadence to silenced voices. In this process, the writers provide alternative narratives to understand colonial history and diaspora. The act of storytelling thus becomes a

political and epistemological endeavour. The use of creolized language and intertextuality is also an important feature of Caribbean diasporic literature.

The diasporic literature, and Caribbean diasporic literature in particular, offers strong intellectual and literary insights into the lived experiences of diaspora. Behind the creative expression, lies a robust challenge to the hegemonic discourses. These narratives enrich the scholarly and socio-political engagement with the concepts of identity, positionality, and epistemic agency.

Both, Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen, the two distinguished Caribbean diasporic writers offer a rich exploration of diasporic ambivalence in their novels. They present the tensions of diaspora within the historical context of slavery and indenture.

Benedicte Ledent's *Caryl Phillips: Contemporary World Writers* (2002), Thomas Helen's *Caryl Phillips: Writers and their Work Series* (2006), Abigail Ward's *Caryl Phillips, David Dabydeen and Fred D'Aguiar's Representations of Slavery* (2011) are important critical studies about the author and his works. Ledent's book starts with textual analysis of Phillips' fiction and goes on to examine his diasporic sensibility and pervasive sense of displacement. Within the context of debates on postcolonialism an analysis of his art of characterization and non- conventional form of his current narratives is also taken up in this book. Helen's work takes up for examination the ways in which Phillips responds both creatively and critically to the psychological effects of the cultural dispersal, racism and economic and colonial exploitation. Ward's work analyzes the representation of slavery in fiction of Phillips, Dabydeen and D'Aguiar. Drawing broadly on postcolonial and post-structuralist theory, Ward challenges the conventional accounts of British history and historical accounts of slavery in order to come to terms with the issues of racism, identity and the politics of belonging. Besides these major insights into Phillips's attitude, his thematic, literary, critical, and socio-cultural concerns are provided by the various interviews which the novelist has given from time to time. Though not many book length works on the novelist are available yet many articles, book reviews published in different journals aid the analysis and research in the direction of identity issue.

In an interview with Bell Rosalind titled "Worlds Within" (1991), Phillips opens up about his diasporic identity and how it shapes his thematic preoccupations. He talks about his authorial intent as well as narrative techniques. "Crisscrossing the River: An Interview with

Caryl Phillips" (1994) *provides insights into* Phillips engagement with fragmented histories, polyphonic narrative voices, and the inter-continental journeys."'Transatlantic Passages': Lamming, Phillips, and the Course of Black Writing in Britain" (2004) by David Ellis is a comparative study of Phillips and Lamming which focuses upon their respective engagement with transatlantic black identity and literary cosmopolitanism. In "Crossing the River: Caryl Phillips talks to Maya Jaggi" (2004) Phillips talks about his narrative intentions and stylistic choices while at the same time throwing light upon how his ethnicity breeds the ethical need of depictions of diaspora and displacement in a certain way. Bewes explores the function of shame and ventriloquy in "Shame, Ventriloquy, and the Problem of the Cliché in Caryl Phillips" (2006). The article also throws light on how he uses his prose style to represent racial trauma. Rebekah Bartley article, *"*History Reinterpreted: A Postcolonial Approach to Caryl Phillips' *Crossing the River*" (2007) offers an understanding of how Phillips rewrites Eurocentric historical narratives by placing African voices at the centre. Gordon Collier's paper "The Dynamic of Revelation and Concealment: *In the Falling Snow* and the Narrational Architecture of Blighted Existences" (2012) shows how revelation and concealment becomes the core of narrative strategy in the novel to unveil the diasporic anxiety and frustration. In "Haunting the African Diaspora: Responsibility and Remaining in Caryl Phillips's *Crossing the River*" (2014), Bellamy examines ancestral guilt and survivor responsibility in *Crossing the River*. "Caryl Phillips's *Crossing the River*" (2016) *investigates* the moral complexity and narrative ethos in Phillips' works. "Radical Dislocation, Multiple Identifications, and the Subtle Politics of Hope in Caryl Phillips's Novels" (2018) *explores Phillips' engagement with the issues of* geographical and emotional dislocation. In "Forgetting to Remember: Multidirectional Communities in Caryl Phillips' *In the Falling Snow*" (2017), Samantha Reive Holland examines how Phillips portrays memory, trauma, and communal identity across diasporic generations.

The case is not very different with David Dabydeen. Kevin Grants' *The Art of David Dabydeen* (1997) is a collection of essays which illumines the author's art vis-a-vis his poetry and fiction in the context of the author's stay in Britain and the Caribbean. Dabydeen's concern with the plurality of Caribbean experience, migration and indentured labour is well documented in this book. His aesthetic practice as a consciously postcolonial writer to deal with the issues of identity also forms the subject matter of this work. In the absence of any

other critical works one has to rely on interviews, articles and book reviews in case of Dabydeen also.

David Dabydeen's "Commerce and Slavery in Eighteenth Century Literature" (1983) is a seminal work that traces how slavery and trading discourse gets reflected in the eighteenth-century texts and how it is important to understand the dynamics of both to appreciate the diasporic narratives. The collaborative interview between Wolfgang Binder and David Dabydeen (1989) focuses upon the writer's engagement with the interplay of history, memory, and identity. "Interview with Wolfgang Binder" (1989) sheds light on Dabydeen's creative process and his positioning- literary and political- as a Guyanese writer in the diaspora. Margery Fee's "Resistance and Complicity in David Dabydeen's *The Intended*" (1993) *is a lucid interrogation of* moral ambiguity in *The Intended* which depicts the tension between individual agency and historical complicity. "Amphibian Hermaphrodites: A Dialogue with Marina Warner and David Dabydeen" (1995) is a creative dialogue which deliberates upon the issues of hybridity, myth, and mythopoeic strategies used by Dabydeen in his narratives where he depicts blending of cultural identities. *Frontiers of Caribbean Literatures in English* (1996) edited by F. Birbalsingh is an important anthology which includes articles on Dabydeen's work, covering his chief concerns such as indenture, postcolonial identity, and narrative form. "Conceiving the Coolie Woman: Indentured Labour, Indian Women and Colonial Discourse" (1996) offers a methodology for analyzing Dabydeen's female characters through its focus upon the politics of gendered indenture. "David Dabydeen with Mark Stein" (2004) throws light on the transnational identity of David Dabydeen while at the same time providing inputs on cross cultural influences which informs Dabydeen's works. *Pak's Britannica: Articles by and Interviews with David Dabydeen* (2011) provides a rich array of viewpoints on Dabydeen's literary strategies and thematic mapping, in the form of critical essays and interviews. "Voyeurism or Social Criticism? Women and Sexuality in David Dabydeen's *The Intended*, *The Counting House* and *Our Lady of Demerara*" (2015) *examines Dabydeen's* portrayal of female desire while putting colonial gaze into focus. Najnin Islem's "Racial Capitalism and Racial Intimacies: Post-Emancipation British Guiana in David Dabydeen's The Counting House" (2022) is a very useful article to understand how theory of racial capitalism can be applied to understand Dabydeen's depiction of indenture-era Guyana.

The literature survey indicates that the focus of research has primarily been upon the themes of dislocation, hybridity, legacy of colonialism, creolization, and cultural memory. The approach of postpositivist realism has not been used much to carry out the research on identity issues in Caribbean diaspora. This approach builds upon the notions of self- reflection, error, revision, and agency. The present study seeks to work on this research gap by putting the Caribbean diasporic literature under the lens of postpositivist realism.

Illuminating insights into the conundrum of identity are provided by Amartya Sen's *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (2006) which holds that the identity politics deriving from the illusion of a unique identity is the chief reason behind conflict and violence in our society. Sen argues that the religious, cultural and civilizational rift is increasing because people being prisoners of parochial attitude deny themselves the possibilities of reasoned choices. Investigating multiculturalism, fundamentalism, terrorism and globalization, he advocates a clear-headed understanding of human freedom. Paula M.L. Moya and Michael R. Hames-Garcia's *Reclaiming Identity; Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism* (2001) argues that identity is not just socially constructed but has real epistemic and political consequences for how people experience the world. Essays in the book reject the essentialist and postmodern models for understanding identity and advocate a postpositivist realist approach instead. R. Radhakrishnan's *Between Identity and Location; the Cultural Politics of Theory* (2007) examines whether theory can be of help in resolving ethical and political problems. The issues of diaspora, hybridity, nationalism and gender bracketed within the issue of identity are taken up for analysis in this book.

The Black Diaspora (1996) by Ronald Segel and *The Black Atlantic* (1993) by Paul Gilroy provide the foundations for any study of the Black identity. Ronald Segel with a redoubtable veracity chronicles the path of Africans to the New World and the contrasts and links between their cultures. A vivid account of the slave trade, life in the colonies, struggles for emancipation is provided in the book. He delves into black legacy and talks about continuing racism and also about blacks' courage, defiance, resilience, culture and creativity. Paul Gilroy describes black identity in Europe as an ongoing process of travel and exchange across the Atlantic and tries to understand its position in relation to European modernity. The central thesis of the book is that the blacks have shaped nationalism if not a nation within the shared culture of black Atlantic.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1995), Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1967) and *Black Skins, White Masks* (1986), David Punter's *Postcolonial Imaginings: Fictions of the New World* (2000), Leela Gandhi's *Postcolonial Theory: an Introduction* (1998), Robert Young's *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (2004) are the critical lamp-posts that illuminate the pathways of research about postcolonial identities. *Orientalism* is a seminal book since what Said writes about Arabs is to a large extent applicable to all those cultures and nations which have borne the brunt of imperialism. Said established that all knowledge is political and West's interest in East and its culture always has had a political angle to it. Romanticized images of Asia and Middle East in western culture had served as an implicit justification for the European and American imperial ambitions. In *The Wretched of the Earth,* Fanon explores the psychological effect of colonization on the psyche of a nation as well as its broader implications for building a movement for decolonization. He addresses the role of violence in process of decolonization and the question of cultural hegemony in the creation and maintenance of a new nation's consciousness. In *Black Skins, White Masks,* he again analyzes the effects of racism and colonization. He shows how racism generates harmful psychological constructs that both blind the black man to his subjugation and a universalized white norm and alienate his consciousness. David Punter's book provides a radically new development in the field of postcolonial writing and theory. He analyzes a wide range of canonical and non-canonical texts that are connected to the postcolonial theory. Leela Gandhi in her work maps out the sprawling field of postcolonial studies in terms of its wider philosophical and intellectual context. She assesses the contribution of major theorists by drawing up important connections between postcolonial theory, post structuralism, postmodernism, feminism and Marxism. Robert Young challenges the status of history and calls into question traditional accounts of a single world history which leaves aside the third world as a surplus to the narrative of the West. He explores the relationship of history to the theory and politics to knowledge in this book.

Major texts on diaspora studies are Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (2006) which examines the creation and global spread of imagined communities of nationality and explores the processes that created these communities. His approach centers on the socio-cultural aspects of the process. Salman Rushdie's *Imaginary Homelands* (1992) brings together most of the essays which he had been writing during 1981 to 1991. His reflections on

migration, the experience of losing one's country, language and culture and finding oneself forced to come to terms with another place are of real help. Avtar Brah's *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (1997) addresses the questions of culture, identity and politics. She examines these themes by exploring the intersections of race, gender, class, ethnicity and nationalism in different discourses, practices and political contexts. Black diaspora studies have been enriched by Wendy Walters' *At Home in Diaspora: Black International Writing* (2005) which examines the works of black international writers who have lived in and written from countries they do not call home. Wendy takes up for examination African diaspora and its experience of discrimination and displacement. Yogita Goyal's *Romance, Diaspora and Black Atlantic Literature* (2010) is an interdisciplinary treatment of black literature and cultural history. She analyzes the tension between romance and realism in the literature of African diaspora and shows how debates over Africa in the works of black writers generated productive models for imagining political agency. Gabriel Sheffer's *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad* (2003) analyzes continuous struggle of ethno-national diasporas to maintain their identity and throws light on the theoretical questions pertaining to current ethnicity and politics. It grapples with the complex questions of group loyalties to their homelands and host countries. Stefano Harney's *Nationalism and Identity: Culture and Imagination in Caribbean Diaspora* (2006) explores the influences on the sense of national identity caused by migration and the ethnicization of migrant communities. It also discusses about how the diverse nation of Caribbean has provided fertile ground for the creative tension between imagination of the writer and official discourse on nationalism.

Feminist identity questions have been discussed by Patricia Hill Collins in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (2000), Amina Mama's *Beyond the Masks: Race, Gender and Subjectivity* (1995), Umut Erel's *Migrant Women Transforming Citizenship* (2009), Gisela Bock and Susan James' *Beyond Equality and Citizenship: Citizenship; Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity* (1992). Collins explores the works and ideas of black feminist intellectuals as well as African-American women outside academy. The book deals extensively with U.S. black feminism's connection to the black diasporic feminism and issue of black womanhood. Amina Mama theorizes black femininity and places race and gender analysis at the center of our understanding of what it means to be a person. She argues that black women invoke collective

history in a continuous struggle to counteract the racism and sexism of their social and cultural milieu and so to develop new subjectivities. Umet Erel interweaves and develops the theories of citizenship, identity and culture with the lived experience of the immigrant groups. It challenges the orientalist images of women as backward and oppressed and explores how migrant women create new practices and meanings of belonging across boundaries. Bock and James' work deals with the meaning and use of concept of women's emancipation in context of gender relations and also draws attention to their place in understanding and analysis of human relationships. Overlapping and intersection of two ideas i.e. her right to be equal and her right to be different is also probed in this book.

The literature review shows how much debate and discussions the issue of identity has ignited not only within literary theory but also within social, cultural and political domains. Any investigation of the concept of identity necessitates a multifaceted approach that can delve deep into its varied layers and postpositivist realist approach serves that purpose because in this approach,

> …understanding emerges from one's past and present experiences and interactions as interpreted in sociopolitical contexts. Understanding, then, is relative to one's experiences as a raced, gendered, classed, nationalized, and so forth, being. Women and other oppressed peoples are encouraged to define and articulate their social, economic, and political realities in their own terms as part of an ongoing movement to show how structural forces shape their lives and how they act on their own behalf within the context of such forces. (Gilpin 10).

The present research project seeks to explore and examine the varied nuances of identity and following are the objectives of the project: 1. To study the concept of identity and postpositivist realism, 2. To explore the complexity and fluidity of identity vis-à-vis human relationships, 3. To analyze the select novels in the light of the ideas of Satya Mohanty and Paula Moya and 4. To apply Postpositivist Realism on the select novels of Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen.

The issue of identity in the present work will be analyzed through postpositivist realist approach. This approach takes the socio-political ramifications of identity into cognizance. Hence, a detour into diasporic and women's identities too shall make up the design of the proposed project.

In diasporic literature, the issue of identity is of paramount importance and the novels under discussion will be analysed to assess how the diasporic experience has a bearing on various characters' perception of their identities. There is always certain complexity and ambivalence associated with defining and articulating identity in diaspora. Diaspora implies not only a movement across the borders of a country, but also the experience of traversing boundaries and barriers of space, time, race, culture, language and history. As a result, diaspora enacts a socio-cultural mutation of the established assumptions and meanings of identity. Diaspora theorists reject the notion of identity as being closed and static and rather see it as performative, hybrid and existing on borders. Stuart Hall sees identity as an ongoing production, affected by history and culture rather than a finished product. For Said, identity is paradoxical. The paradox inherent in the construction of identities is indicative of its complexity, which the postpositivist realist theorists grapple with élan.

The stance(s) taken by Phillips and Dabydeen in their works regarding the issues of representation, of identity formation and manipulation will be taken up for analysis and how the postpositivist approach bridges the gap between different theoretical standpoints and how it gets reflected in the novels under study will be examined.

The Foucauldian concept of Power/Knowledge nexus can help in understanding the problems and complications of the diasporic and female identity. For Foucault identity is a product of Power/Knowledge nexus. He sheds light on the ways in which the circulations of power create discursive fields which construct identity. It is imperative to investigate how knowledge exhumes power and interferes in the construction of various identities.

The issue of woman's identity will also be explored vis-à-vis the position of woman in marital relationship, family and community. Perspectives developed by feminist theories will be of great help in understanding the issues of exploitation, domestic violence and oppression of women and the validity and scope of resistance and subversion. Feminist identity politics takes up the task of articulating women's understandings of themselves without reducing femininity to biology. Representation of women's subjectivity, sexuality and agency in the novels under discussion will be put under critical scanner.

In the light of Foucauldian concept of identities being discursive formations, the proposed study would seek to investigate the identity conundrum, its various ramifications and

its manoeuvering of human relationships as presented in the select novels, from the postpositivist realist approach so as to stave off any tinge of essentialism.

Next chapter, Navigating Complexities of Diasporic Identity through Postpositivist Lens will try to bring forth the issues of diasporic crisis and identity issues in the novels under study. Bracketed within the broader perspective of Postpositivist Realism, role and representation of women in the novels of Phillips and Dabydeen will be analyzed in the chapter titled, Examining Women's Identity through Postpositivist Realism. The chapter will focus on woman's identity as moulded/warped by patriarchy. Women's challenge to stereotypes and forced identities will be discussed alongside a theorization of woman's identity vis-à-vis man-woman relationship in the select novels. Next chapter, Disentangling the Knots of Relational Identity will analyze human relationships in all their complexity, dichotomies and politics. Human gestures and attitudes which surge over the prejudices of race, colour and nationality to assert a human(e) identity and how such identities manifest themselves in the novels under discussion will be the focus of this chapter.

The present research uses a qualitative and interpretive methodology. The select novels are put under literary and critical scrutiny with the aim to understand the dynamics of identity formation. The theoretical framework of postpositivist realism, as articulated by Satya Mohanty and Paula M. L. Moya is used to investigate the tricky concept of identity. The ways in which characters navigate their diasporic paths through imposed identities to forge alternative and affirming identities are analyzed through the core postpositivist realism tenets of positionality, identity as a lived experience, scope of error in experience, and revision of interpretation. A close textual analysis of the select novels is undertaken to examine the issues of identity vis-à-vis diaspora, women's experiences, and human relationships. The selection of texts is based on the fact that they focus upon diasporic experiences and identity negotiations.

The research methodology is grounded in postpositivist realist theory and uses the valuable insights from diaspora studies and feminist studies to generate a multidimensional approach to analyze the select novels. through which to examine identity in the select works of Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen. The research work seeks to achieve a nuanced understanding of how characters experience, challenge, and review their identities within socio-historical structures.

CHAPTER 2

Navigating Complexities of Diasporic Identity through Postpositivist Lens

The concept of identity is laden with complexity and has therefore been a constant source of debate and deliberation by the intelligentsia. Scholars opine that it is a socio-political construct which is neither stable nor is it an absolute entity. It is, in fact a process, always in a state of mutability. Despite being debated over and deliberated upon over the years, the concept has remained elusive and has defied any labelling of identity as an essentialist or monolithic concept. Its boundaries remain non- demarcated sans any parameters which can have universal validity. Identity, says Harvey in *Spaces of Hope,* "cannot be understood outside of the forces that swirl around it and construct it" (11). A multiplicity of political, cultural as well as economic factors interact in dynamic ways to constitute identities.

Identity is about the common traits which are shared among a group; traits which forge a kind of belongingness but at the same time, it also brings forth the differences from another set of groups. In a very rudimentary sense, it provides one with a sense of individuality. But this individuality has to deal with many relationships, has to pass through many cultural crossroads, which make allegiance to one stable identity, deeply complex and at times, difficult. This is why Stuart Hall says that instead of thinking of identity as an "already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent" (110), we should think instead of "identity as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (110). The ever-changing contours of identity make it a complex phenomenon.

Complexities of identity issues become the crucible of identity politics. This politics germinate from the investigation of oppression and through various stages of consciousness raising, lead to reclamation, re-description, or a thorough and invigorating transformation of formerly pilloried versions of particular group affiliations. It leads to the rejection of negative discourse promoted and proliferated by the dominant culture and power structures, and one

sets out to alter the comprehensive view not only of one's own sense of self but also of the community.

Identity in case of West Indians is of prime importance as the Caribbean identity has acquired its contours through the varied operations of history on it. In *Historical Thoughts and Representation in West Indian Literature*, Nana Wilson Tagoe emphasizes the importance of history to the West Indian. He asserts that:

> We of the Caribbean are people more than any other people, constituted by history… We were brought from African and thrown into a highly developed modern industry and highly developed language… we dealing with concrete matters that penetrate into the very immediate necessity of a social existence (19).

The question of identity occupies center stage in diasporic communities. The complications surrounding the concept are well pronounced in West Indian diaspora, which is the subject of present study. Tagoe's statement throws light on the subject matter. It is therefore, necessary to understand the term diaspora in detail before moving ahead with further analysis of West Indian diasporic identity.

The term 'diaspora' has consistently engaged the attention of literati and despite the burgeoning rhetoric it has produced, any consensus on its defining characteristics is yet to be arrived at. The word 'Diaspora' invokes a variety of meanings. Robin Cohen classifies diaspora as: Victim Diasporas, Labour Diasporas, Imperial Diasporas, Trade Diasporas, Homeland Diasporas and Cultural Diasporas. Robin Cohen finds a common element in all forms of the diaspora:

> … these are people who live outside their natal or imagined natal territories and recognize that their traditional homelands are reflected deeply in the languages they speak, religion they adopt, and cultures they produce. Each of the categories of Diasporas underlines a particular cause of migration usually associated with particular groups of people. (Cohen xiv).

William Safren points out that the term 'Diaspora' can be applied to expatriate minority communities whose members share some of the common characteristics as:

> They or their ancestor have been dispersed from a special original 'centre' or two or more 'peripheral' of foreign regions. They retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland-its physical location, history and

> achievements… They regard their ancestral homeland as their, true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendents would (or should) eventually return-when conditions are appropriate…They continue to relate, personally and vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethno- communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship (53).

Stalwarts of the field like Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Rey Chow, Robin Cohen nourish the hope that diaspora studies hold the capacity to bring forth the cultural practices of not only the forcefully exiled but also of those who undertook a voluntary migration. These studies can bridge the gap between evolving critical methodologies and current social justice engagements by throwing a fresh light on the established notions of ethnicity, race and national belonging.

Dispersion- forced or traumatic, is one of the key elements of diaspora. Longing for and an unwavered orientation to a homeland- real or imagined, as the veritable base of identity and loyal affiliations, is another marker of diasporic condition. Bound with a collective memory of the homeland, the people in diaspora pine for the lost home and move with the dream of eventual return to the ideal home which only holds the true worth and which provides the contours to their identity forged in diasporic solidarities. An acute sense of dislocation seeps into the minds of immigrants who stand with uncertainty between their native land and adopted home. This in -betweenness accentuates the sense of rootlessness and the immigrant pines for a rooted positioning in the world. This fuels the immigrant desire of home. Pointing out the significance of the concept, Robin Cohen elucidates that:

> It captured and still captures a world on move, a world of belonging and alienation, of home and away, of political inclusion and social exclusion…diaspora works as an insightful way of understanding many aspects of migration and an important trajectory of social identity construction, one marked by incomplete subordination to a single national identity. It is an inappropriate tool, however, with which to measure all other trajectories of social assertion and belonging (70-71).

Rogers Brubaker in his essay “The ‘diaspora’ diaspora” (2005) brings about a new perspective on the debate surrounding diaspora and tries to free the concept from essentialist curbs. Instead of herding every experience under one umbrella, he advocates the embracement

of plurality and difference, while making analysis of diasporic conditions. He asserts that diaspora should be treated,

> …as a category of practice, project, claim and stance, rather than as a bounded group. The 'groupness' of putative disporas, like that of putative 'nations', is precisely what is at stake in [political, social and cultural] struggles. We should not, as analysts, prejudge the outcome of such struggles by imposing groupness through definitional fiat. We should seek, rather, to bring the struggles themselves into focus, without presupposing that they will eventuate in bounded groups (13).

The novels under discussion deal with black diaspora and the vagaries of their experiences which intersect with each other to acquire different dimensions of lived reality. It is germane to quote Kim Knott and Sean McLoughlin who in their introduction to *Diasporas: concepts, intersections, identities* (2011) throws light on the black diaspora:

> It recalls at once a lost and imagined home, a recollection of the struggle, survival and death, a revisiting of the experience of confinement and enslavement, and the knowledge of the long journey to freedom, qualified by racism, violence and poverty (1).

Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen attempt to address the issues related to fallacious black representation. Theirs is an attempt to re-enter history from a new side where the old myths and stereotyping does not obstruct one's perception. By demolishing the 'standard' black cultural identities as prejudiced infused artefacts, they seek to resuscitate these identities with an approach which is not only humane but is also practically viable and theoretically potent. The way history has left its imprint on contemporary Black-British/European/American relationship is the motivation that drives these writers to try to understand Black British history. The insights gained by such a probe generates new paradigms of identity and also reveal the contradictions and ambivalences inherent in such processes of re-defining identities. In their novels, to quote, Gerd Baumann "…we study diasporas…we usually study people negotiating different cultural commonalities with the utmost flexibility in the most divergent circumstances" (46). From a postpositivist realist perspective, these novels demonstrate that "the existence of a plurality of perspectives secures the continues diversity of interpretations of the social world and ensures a richer array of knowledge from which to construct social, political, aesthetic, spiritual, and scientific accounts of our experience" (Moya

20). The characters in these novels traverse different paths on their journey to claim a distinct self and identity and in the process reveal how the processing of experience is distinct for each individual.

Experience and memory are the two constituents of identity and postpositivist realist theory tries to understand identity by taking cognizance of these two elements. It puts them in a framework of social location of an individual or a group. This approach is explicated in the novels under study through the experiences and perspectives of different characters who are charting their pathways in diaspora in different ways. Rosaura Sánchez defines experience as "constituted by an aggregate of dialectically contradictory positionings and positionalities (which) are distinct but inseparable, connected yet contradictory" (39). What Gerd calls "divergent circumstances" is somewhat akin to what Satya Mohanty and Paula M.L. Moya calls social location. And this variable positioning of characters and its impact on their understanding of themselves as well as the world around, is sought to be understood here.

Satya Mohanty contends that identity constructions offer narratives which illuminate the relations between a group's historical memory and an individual's current experience. These constructions produce coalescing frames for rendering experience understandable and thereby assist in mapping the social world. Meaning making is central to identities and therefore the scope of alternate and diverse interpretations of meanings generated by identities will never cease. Mohanty reiterates that identities reference to real experiences can never to put to doubt (42). In the novels under study, we witness characters negotiating the historical crevices of diasporic situation which have a huge bearing on their contemporary experiences as well identities. The way they interpret their experiences and therefore understand their positioning within a society, renders each one of them both unique as well as similar, at the same time. It results from their engagement as an individual, with a distinct experience, in a collective historical praxis.

Another element of realist theory which finds resonance in the select novels is their acknowledgement of the contention that identity/identities are also enforced on people from outside. Without going into a denial on this contention, they in fact come up with a counter argument and state such enforced identities as mere branding rather than a true identity representing an authentic self. Paula M. L. Moya says that "to speak of identities as "real" is to naturalize them and to disguise the structures of power involved in their production and

maintenance" (6). Lived, actual experience must find resonance in identities. And these identities should offer some kind of a meaning to an individual's routine reality. Anuradha Dingwaney and Lawrence Needham describe lived experience of identity as the one which "signifies affective, even intuitive, ways of being in, or inhabiting, specific cultures....it is perceived as experience that proceeds from identity that is given or inherited...but it is also, and more significantly, mediated by what Satya Mohanty calls 'social narratives, paradigms, even ideologies'" (21). We find characters in the novels struggling to shun the brands which have been imposed upon them in order to resuscitate their truer selves and authentic identities.

Identity cannot simply be designated as something that is assigned to a group or to an individual; rather it is to be understood as a collective as well as individual mode of living and construing, an objective social location and collective history. Identity can be defined as a 'positioned' experience in which both individual and groups come together to create new paradigms and meanings vis-à-vis historical narratives and practices. Paula M.L. Moya elucidates "Who we understand ourselves to be will have consequences for how we experience and understand the world…(our identities) influence- and in turn are influenced by- our understandings of how our society is structured and what our particular experiences in that society are likely to be" (8). Identities are to be understood as sites from which the process of meaning-making takes over. Epistemic implication of identity is focused upon by Mohanty as follows: "...social locations facilitate or inhibit knowledge by predisposing us to register and interpret information in certain ways. Our relation to social power produces forms of blindness just as it enables degrees of lucidity" (Mohanty 234). In this way, identity cannot be said to govern one's interpretation of the events nor is it to be understood as comprising comprehensive perspectives. It is rather, to be viewed as a vantage point from where particular features of reality become clear or evident. Different individuals participating in the same event may have different interpretations. Postpositivist realists contention that social location can generate some particular types of blindness as well as clarity is well explicated in the select works of Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen. The novels' concern with diasporic identity issues are in consonance with the postpositivist realist theory's basic tenets which assert that firstly, identity is important and the concept cannot simply be brushed under the carpet as regressive or obsolete. It exists and influences as well as gets influenced by the experiences of individuals and groups. Secondly, identity is impacted by social, economic and political factors

i.e. social location, and in turn makes an impact on the wider world. Thirdly, there exists a referential relationship between subject's social location and identity. These reference points can be evaluated and scrutinized to find objective knowledge, which, however, is not final and holds the importance of being a reference point for further investigation. Fourthly, the identities are shaped/influenced/promoted by ideologies. No experience is pure or detached from ideology. Objective knowledge can emerge from theory mediated experience as well as different theoretical standpoints can be analyzed and compared with to arrive at one postulated objective truth, which can again be investigated and lastly, they suggest a way out of the rigmarole of nihilism and initiate a state of inquiry where revisions of experiences and identities is both possible as well as desirable.

The novels under study bring forth the complexities of identity in diaspora and analyze its economic and socio-cultural affiliations as well as ramifications. Through the lives and experiences of various characters, identity is being analyzed under particular socio-cultural 'locations' or 'positioning'. The novels provide "a vision of the continuity between experience and identity" (Mohanty 43) and quite in sync with the postpositivist realist theory, substantiate that "the different identity claims cannot be examined, tested, and judged without reference to existing social and economic structures" (Moya11). The postpositivist realist emphasis on "causal and referential relationship between a subject's social location (e.g. race, class, gender, sexuality) and her identity" (Sanchez14) is explicated through the terms- positioning and positionality, by Rosaura Sánchez in her insightful essay "On a Critical Realist Theory of Identity" (2006) and thus provides another lens to understand the novels.

> While positioning is extra-discursive (i.e. structural), although conceptually mediated, positionality is discursive…Positionality is a useful diagnostic construct as it enables one to better examine and understand why individuals sharing a similar or even the same positioning do not *live* their situation in the same way… One's positionality is thus conditioned, but not strictly determined, by one's social positioning; moreover, positionality is always at variance with other positionalities… as one's perspectives are…constantly in a state of flux, renegotiating themselves in the face of changing realities (8-9).

Caryl Phillips' novels explore the different dimensions of immigrant experience. What stands out in his fiction is his exploration of women's immigrant experience. The novelist

himself is a first-generation immigrant and his own experiences have definitely found a way into his literary works. Paul Smethurst believes that,

> The dominant theme in Caryl Phillips's work is belonging, or rather, unbelonging…his work articulates the unbelonging felt by immigrants and their descendants … The irony of feeling distinctly not at home in the home country must surely have coloured Phillips's literary imagination. It also drove him to research the history of the African diaspora, and the history of the slave trade, both to understand his own identity and provide the backcloth for most of his novels (5).

Crossing the River (1993) is a formidable tale built around three chief black characters and covers a span of about two hundred and fifty years of Black diaspora on a scale of stupendous imaginative veracity. Ledent in "Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories" says, "The four stories making up the novel match four of the voices heard among the 'many-tongued chorus' that accompanies Africa's dispersal into the West and each voice speaks its own particular language and they are inconsistent" (56). The reader cannot help but feel the pain of blacks who after having endured slavery, are plunged into the darkness of racial prejudices or white condescending. Their lacerated souls spin around the memories which do not hold any solace, but are the only possession which they can claim to be of their own. The story enacts out on a huge canvas where the time duration is of nearly three decades and holds together stories of three blacks who are akin to each other by virtue of their common history. Gail Low suggests that:

> *Crossing the River* is like a chorus of voices with their separate histories linked together by virtue of their permutations on the patterns of love, desire, loss, yearning that accompany the separation between parent and child, husband and wives, lovers and partners. They repeat, mutate, and transform the motif of exile from kinsfolk in the originary rupture of families under slavery, and in doing so achieve the vital task of connecting lives across time and space (140).

Phillips' focuses upon how the history of oppression, brutality, and injustice has shaped the present day black identities. Different stories in the novel trace the pathways which have wounded as well as moulded the identities of black men and women. Phillips' motivation behind this in words of Jose Varunny is:

> While for many this difficult truth is hard to accept and reluctant to acknowledge, for Phillips the remembrance and acknowledgement of them are some of the essential means of a cure for the psychological damage that the transatlantic slavery has created (27).

These new identities are carved in diaspora but they carry the baggage of their history and ancestry, which lends them their unique character. The hapless African father in the novel says, "To a father consumed with guilt. You are beyond. Broken-off, like limbs from a tree. But not lost, for you carry within your bodies the seeds of new trees. Sinking your hopeful roots into difficult soil" (*Crossing the River* 2). The African father created by Phillips becomes instrumental in not only uncovering the shared consciousness of the Africans but in also keeping it alive and pulsating across time and space. The statement conveys that the chances of assimilation, re-rooting in alien lands are available. Such efforts, however, entail myriad difficulties generated by prejudices. The impetus is towards creating new identities in new homelands as the uprooting has already taken place and there is no possibility of going back. *Crossing the River* depicts how the march of history is irreversible. Through the lives of three chief characters, over the centuries, Phillips' draw our attention to the fading of African past and shaping of new personal histories amid diasporic dislocation. Diaspora entails a yearning and pining for the homeland. In Black diaspora, attachment to the homeland is dealt with finesse by Stuart Hall who argues in "Negotiating Caribbean Identities" that:

> Everyone in the Caribbean, of whatever ethnic background, must sooner or later come to terms with this African presence... But whether it is, in this sense, an origin of our identities, unchanged by four hundred years of displacement, dismemberment, transportation, to which we could in any final or literal sense return, is more open to doubt the original Africa is no longer there. It too has been transformed. History is, in that sense, irreversible…Africa must at last be reckoned with by Caribbean people, but it cannot in any simple sense be merely recovered (399).

The novel shows the slaves' impossible return to homeland while at the same time highlighting the bleak chances of assimilation into the dominant/host culture. Phillips lays stress upon the significance which the recovery of black identity in a racist society holds.

Crossing the River unfolds the play of memory and construction and interpretation of identities through its characters. The novelist has created a fact-oriented fictional history of the unheard and ignored subaltern in a Toni Morrison-like manner. Phillips takes the responsibility of documenting the history of subaltern through reminiscences offered by letters, diary entries, etc. The ideas pertaining to structure and form of historical tales in Western culture are questioned upon in this work. The colonised person which was silenced till date, shares his or her experience and stories. Such stories arise out of memories; memories which change its hues, contours as well as significance along the vagaries of time. Femke Stoke says about memories as they reflect in diasporas that, "Memories of home are no factual reproductions of a fixed past. Rather they are fluid reconstructions set against the backdrop of the remembering subject's current positionings and conceptualizations of home" (24). We witness the characters cherishing the old memories and pining to form new and happy memories in the midst of turmoil which circumstances has put upon them.

The identity of the colonial subject is centered on enforced family dissolutions, estrangement from one's birthplace, and other issues consequential from the master's disrespect for the dignity and sentiments of the slaves. The narrative employed for communicating the story also integrates the psychological turbulences of the storyteller. In this case, the Western style does not complete the intended goal. Phillips emphasizes the requirement of constructing a different history that purposefully rejects the Western ideas. He is also cognizant of Leela Gandhi's contention that white Western historians fabricate a narrative of history that enhances their dominance and then spread that version around the globe. Therefore, history develops as a "discourse through which the West [asserts] its hegemony over the rest of the world" (Gandhi170). Critics have acknowledged the affinity of Phillips style of writing *Crossing the River* with that of Toni Morrison. When questioned in an interview, Caryl Phillips replied:

> Beloved has been particularly influential. It's always easier for an author to see these things in retrospect and, looking back, yes, I can see the influences of all of these people. It's a novel which is fragmentary in form and structure, polyphonic in its voices, which means that a lot of my reading and a lot of the people whose work I've enjoyed have made their way in (Jaggi 27).

Written in the vein of Morrison's style of storytelling, this story purportedly is about two brothers and a sister, who were sold into slavery by their hapless father, not because it was the

only way out of poverty, rather, he was not given any privilege of choice. The very first lines in *Crossing the River,* "A desperate foolishness. The crops failed. I sold my children" (1) bespeaks the little, faint and feeble murmur of agency in a wretched slave who proclaim that "I" sold my children, instead of saying that his children were taken away. Stretching the limits of imagination, Phillips wants us to travel two hundred and fifty years to find the knots of kinship between entirely different circumstances of three people, from three different epochs and places. He wants us to reimagine relationships and identities on the terra firma of memory and cultural legacies. Nash, Martha and Travis are the three 'children' who were sold into slavery. The Atlantic slave trade uprooted blacks from their native lands in the most brutal ways and changed the course of their destiny forever. David Eltis and David Richardson says that the Atlantic slave trade was:

> A new phenomenon in the human experience. It was the largest transoceanic forced migration in history whereby relatively small improvements to the quality of life of a person on one continent (Europe)… were made possible by the removal of others from a second continent (Africa), and their draconian exploitation on yet a third (the Americas) (45).

Nash's story plays out the critical realist's theory that reality, although influenced by discourses, is not determined by it and "revealed to us only through the active construction in which we participate" (qtd. in Sánchez 10) but "clearly we don't all participate in this process of construction on an equal footing" (Sánchez 3). Nash endured the condescending aspect of White Civilizing Mission and became a missionary, playing initially to the tunes of his white master, Edward Williams. Nash is that black offspring who becomes an instrument for the expansion of Empire. Employment of former slaves as missionaries reduced the risk of white causalities in the inhospitable African climate. By appropriating the angst of blacks, they were used as tools to further the cause of White's mission. Nash's letters reveal how the other slaves were jealous of him for his being master's favourite who was picked over others for his deep loyalty. By insinuating competition for master's 'affection', these slaves were pegged against each other, thereby blocking the already fragile channels of bonding. American Colonization Society deputed blacks as missionaries in Africa. Apprehensive of retribution, they provided a rationale that,

> …the natives would see reason, and that the prospect of welcoming home their lost children might help to overcome any unpleasant estrangement that the African heathens might temporarily experience…America would be removing a cause of increasing social stress, and Africa would be civilized by the return of her descendants, who are now blessed with rational Christian minds (*Crossing the River* 8-9).

Aware of dirty politics, Whites were trying to varnish it with high sounding albeit shallow philosophy. Having uprooted blacks from their soil in the most inhuman way, they were now acting magnanimous by sending 'lost children' back to their 'homelands'. They exhibited a stinking complacency by forwarding notions of their religion and civilization being superior. Blacks were the commodities from which profits in form of religious propagation were to be harvested. Nash is a prototype of millions of descendants of slaves whose 'otherness' made them alien in both black and white cultures. Femke Stock rightly says,

> Despite their attachment to certain places or social constellations both here and there, (descendants) of migrants sometimes feel unable to identify with these as homes because there is no place for them in collective memories or everyday interaction (26).

Nash's situation is emblematic of Blacks who have been either been forced or cajoled to discard their heritage, thus creating for them a murky situation of cultural void. Rendered unable to align with any cultural image and heritage, they are shoved to adopt the culture of White master. Unable to fit in this unfamiliar culture and alien heritage, they feel estranged. Derek Walcott in *The Post-Colonial Study Reader* restates:

> I accept this archipelago of the Americas. I say to the ancestors who sold me and to the ancestors who bought me. I have no father, I want no such father, although I can understand you, black ghost, white ghost, when you both whisper "history" for it attempt to forgive you both. I am falling into your idea of history which justifies and explains and expiate, and it is not mine to forgive. My memory cannot summon any filial love (337).

The statement bespeaks the sense of betrayal that Blacks put in such situations experienced. The blame of slavery, however, cannot be assigned only to the exploitative white master. It must be shared by the influential blacks who first pushed their kinsmen into slavery.

Nash, in his letters makes reference to the process of blacks being sold into slavery by their own people. Moreover, Fanon's contention that "what is often called the black man's soul is the white man's artifact" (14) is so well explicated by Nash's initial behaviour with Edward, where his thoughts are directed and maneuvered by the white master. His alienation and cultural obliviousness testify Fanon's contention.

Nash, the good 'missionary', "former bondsman" (*Crossing the River* 7) who cannot be deviated from his 'noble task' is the "one of those most determined to survive and pursue the task that he had been prepared for…neither climate nor native confrontation, disease nor hardship of any manner would deflect him from his proper purpose" (*Crossing the River* 10). Nash's initial subservience to Edward is symptomatic of what Ashcroft says in *Post Colonial Studies.* The European slave traders "not only uprooted Africans from their home environments, but through centuries of systematic racial denigration alienated enslaved Africans from their own racial characteristics" (Ashcroft 60). This alienation is quite visible in Nash when he follows the commands of Edward with utmost devotion and also in his initial days in Liberia.

Going back to his roots in Liberia as a black missionary, Nash initially struggled with the process of acclimatization and re-rooting, faced pangs of alienation, and finally rebelled against the master, thereby asserting his newfound identity and selfhood. Liberia created "the emotional conditions in which a new kind of knowledge is possible" (Mohanty 45). After sending many letters to Edward, enunciating his devotion and commitment, Nash is left disillusioned by his master's indifference. Gradually, he starts feeling at home in Liberia, where he does not face racial prejudice. He writes to Edward,

> I doubt if I shall ever consent to return to America. Liberia, the beautiful land of my forefathers, is a place where persons of color may enjoy their freedom. It is a home for our race…. Its laws are founded upon justice and equality…. Liberia is the star of the East for the free colored man. It is truly our only home (*Crossing the River* 18).

Snapping all ties with Edward, Nash finally finds himself at home in a place which despite its materialistic scarcity, is nevertheless a free place where he is his own master. What Nash did, finds echo in David Richardson's viewpoint, that "Africans did not accept their fate impassively. They resisted and, at times, fought back- in Africa, on board ship, and in the

Americas…In resisting they asserted their humanity and identity" (32). Nash asserts his individuality and shuns Edward's authority with his defiance against the master and by embracing his roots.

Nash leaves missionary work and starts farming. He starts a family and takes pride in being a family man. Separated from families, the black identity has suffered the pain of fractured homes and snatched relationships. In that context, Nash – the sold child- is trying to recuperate the black familial ties which were left mutilated and bleeding by Whites. To his wife, he is a man and not the 'boy', working at the commands of White master. He says that "I am to her what she found here in Africa" (*Crossing the River* 42). Nash's newfound assertion with its tinge of ambivalence, so characteristic of diasporic identities is well explicated by what DuBois says in *The Souls of Black Folk.* He says,

> The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife – this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world (2).

Nash turns the historical praxis up and down with his desertion of Edward, who comes looking for him in Africa. Nash's experience in America and then in Liberia, made an impact on his identity. He realizes the fallacy of his white ideology induced experience. His situation substantiates postpositivist stance that "it is possible to be wrong about one's experience…so it is possible to arrive at more accurate interpretations of it" (Moya13). Nash had lived a life directed by the white master. His antagonism against his own folk was a result of his faulty interpretation of his experience of being a master's favourite. He soon discovers his error and redefines his experience in conjunction with his new knowledge about Africa. He is then able to understand his life in retrospect and see how his decisions and experiences were not of his own making.

Conveyed in an epistolary style, story of Nash is one of hegemony induced subservience and identity driven defiance and assertion. Separated from family and acquaintances, the White man seems lost in foreign land. For once, Edward, the White master was face to face with infirmity and loneliness, "how far he felt from home, from those like himself, and how he

desired to be once more among his own people" (*Crossing the River* 68). The former slave denies him any chance to gain access to the knowledge which he is seeking. Tables are turned. Instead of poor 'heathens', it is Edward who is being pitied. The values, knowledge and deliverance which he claims to embody are as strange concepts to these African people as is his physical presence. Edward's experiment- white civilizing mission through black missionary- has failed and Africa has reclaimed its lost child. The situation substantiates the postpositivist realist stance that "the well-being (and sometimes even survival) of the groups or individuals who engage in oppositional struggle depends on their abilities to refute or dismantle dominant ideologies and institutions, their vision is usually more critical, their efforts more diligent, and their arguments more comprehensive…" (Moya 86). Africa has taken which was legitimately its own; which the 'other' had taken away through deceit and unscrupulous power. Nash has won and has laid bare the hypocrisy behind the imaginary truth propagated by Whites about Civilizing Mission. Nash drives the final nail in the coffin in his last letter where he questions Edward. He writes with defiance,

> Perhaps in this realm of the thereafter you might explain to me why you used me for your purposes and then expelled me to this Liberian Paradise…That my faith in you is broken is evident…Your work is complete. It only remains for me once more to urge you to remain in your country (*Crossing the River* 63).

Nash refers to America as Edward's "your country". He has denounced America and its values. His deliverance could come only after separation from the white master and freedom from the blind faith and devotion which he had for the master. Talking about the acts of defiance and self- liberation, what David Richardson says, helps one in understanding Nash's defiance. He says, "That process involved more than heroic acts of resistance and rebellion. It involved, too, efforts to dismantle the cultural divide upon which transatlantic slavery was built and to identify slavery as an exceptional affront to a common humanity" (33). Liberia gave him time to think and act upon his own will. He realized that he was just an experiment and America will never accept him as one of its own. For the first time, he calls Edward, his accused and not the benefactor; the man responsible for his precarious in-betweenness.

Through the story of Martha, Phillips brings to fore the physical, psychological and emotional devastation caused by transatlantic slave trade. Enslaved Africans, separated from their homes by the Europeans, had little hope of ever returning to their native lands. They were

forced to work like beasts of burden for their entire lives. Denied any freedom or rights, they were incarcerated within the draconian boundaries created by white slave owners, who employed all means to keep the enslaved Africans separated from their culture, languages as well as religious beliefs and practices. Battered brutally, both emotionally and physically, these slaves tried hard to fight against their enslavement. They rebelled and resisted despite the intuitive knowledge that there is no hope of gaining freedom or of ever going back. Throwing light on the harm done by slavery, Dave Lichtenstein observes:

> The institution of slavery tragically produced another unique issue in the history of the Caribbean and its people. It cut people off from their personal ancestry. Slaves were torn from ancestral homes in Africa and brought across the sea to North America (a voyage known as the Middle Passage). Once in the colonies, families were broken up and slaves were often renamed according to the master's whims… remaining family lived thousands of miles across the ocean and… made the development of a personal lineage, of family traditions as we know them, impossible (par.3).

Martha, the former slave, an old woman joining the pioneers moving the American West personifies the pain which the hearts of former slaves bear. Separated from their children in the most brutal manner, the female slaves like Martha made incredulous efforts to start life afresh but at every step, their blackness becomes White man's eyesore. Dejected, she questions, "Father, why hast thou forsaken me?" (*Crossing the River* 73).

Clinging to the last straw, she wishes to join a group of pioneers heading the American West, with the hope to find her long lost daughter, Eliza Mae. She is hopeful of meeting her daughter there. Too fragile to keep pace with the travellers, she is initially told to stay back as she "will never survive the journey to California." (*Crossing the River* 92) but she insists and offers to be of help to the group by cooking food, washing clothes and looking after the sick. She pleads that:

> You let me work my fare out and I will cook, wash clothes, and powerfully nurse to the sick and ailing. And I aint fussy about sleeping on no bare ground. I done it plenty of times or a before, had the beaten hardness of the earth for a bed and the sky for covering (*Crossing the River* 89).

Her dream of meeting her daughter, which she tragically hopes to find in California, keeps her going on the difficult journey. But after spending a lifetime in back breaking slavery which has drained her physically and emotionally, she eventually falls down isolated and defeated. She is deserted by the group as they find it difficult to carry her along on the long and tiring journey. Her daughter is her imaginary truth, one which she will never get to realize. Blacks heading west,

> …were just prospecting for a new life without having to pay no heed to the white man and his ways…prospecting for a place where your name wasn't 'boy' or 'aunty', and where you could be a part of this country without feeling like you wasn't really a part (*Crossing the River* 74).

Martha dies a lonely death and paradoxically she again loses her short-lived independence when a white woman thinks of giving her some name so as to provide her a proper burial. She was again a named slave. The power and influence of acquiring authority are clearly evident in Martha, who is stripped of all basic rights and personal agency, leaving her unable to live and shape her life as she wishes. Hence, it must be understood that Black women were unable to attain true womanhood or live their lives as they desired. Instead, they were forced to adhere to societal rules imposed specifically on them. Black women like Martha faced double discrimination: one based on race and the other on gender.

Martha's suffering exhausted her both physically and mentally. Drained spiritually, she could not repose faith in a Christian God. Separated from her husband, Lucas and daughter during an auction, she has borne the brunt of slavery in the most inhuman way. She muses "I done enough standing by myself to last most folks three or four lifetimes" (*Crossing the River* 75). Martha is one of those,

> …bought or captured in the African hinterland were incarcerated by European traders and administrators before beginning the second stage of journey- the middle passage- to the New World…women and men waited in the dark, crowded into confined and frightening spaces…, after months of imprisonment awaiting the arrival of the ships that would take them to the plantations of the Americas, were led into narrow tunnels to exit through the 'door of no return' (Knott and McLoughlin 1).

She exemplifies the plight of slaves which as Richardson says were "ideologically and socially marginalized, exploitable 'outsiders' condemned in the word of sociologist Orlando Patterson to a status of social death" (29). Martha is akin to millions of those slaves who lived and died waiting for their loved ones to join them so that they can take a journey to the lost home.

Travis, a black GI posted in a village in England during World War II is the third lost child who finds love and companionship in Joyce, a White woman. Through this story, Phillips explores the pathways of reconciliation between blacks and whites. Joyce's love for Travis is unmindful of his race, a fact implied in the novel through her not mentioning about his colour or race. Theirs is a story of strong companionship, where the pain of one, hurts the other one more. With war as its background, the story foregrounds the complexities of man-woman and mother-daughter relationships. With Travis and Joyce, we are presented with a new historical praxis, where human beings are seen as humans only and are not divided with the suffocating labels. The voice of history, narrating the story of sold children, two sons and one daughter, claims Joyce to be the second daughter (other daughter being Martha) and the fourth child.

> …the common memory begins again to swell, and insist that I acknowledge greetings from those who lever pints of alien the pubs of London. Receive salutations from those who submit to (what the French calls) neurotic inter-racial urges in the boulevards of Paris. But my Joyce, and my other children, their voices hurt but determined, they will survive the hardships of the far bank (*Crossing the River* 235).

Through Travis, Phillips explores the present day repercussions of slavery- in the form of racism- on the lives and identities of blacks. Jenny Sharpe is of the opinion that the slavery past is "intimately bound up with the present, as a point of departure for the African diaspora or a condition of existence for fractured identities" (xxi). Travis- a 'free' man and no longer a slave- still has the distant slavery days as his whiplash in the form of racial prejudice. Max Farrar's opinion on the issue of racism in Phillips' novels is very insightful. He says that:

> For the past 50 years or so, the term racism has been used when one individual or population group has the power and tools to abuse or oppress another group, where those groups have different skin colours. In the modern

> world…racism has described the subordination of dark-skinned peoples by white-skinned peoples; a synonym might be white power (15).

Though fighting war for the 'nation' which demands his life, he is not considered a true citizen. One of the officers come specifically to warn Joyce against her growing friendship with Travis. He tells her,

> I've come to talk to you a little about the service men we've got stationed in your village . . . A lot of these boys are not used to us treating them as equals, so don't be alarmed by their response . . . They're not very educated boys and they'll need some time to adjust to your customs and your ways, so I'm just here to request your patience (*Crossing the River* 145).

His diasporic status is confirmed by the connectivity and relation of his ancestral past with his present. His past and present are discernible by state of constant exile and lower status. Slavery is as much a reality of contemporary times as it was of past because it encroaches upon the diaspora's contemporary circumstances and identity. The legacy of slavery stubbornly seeps into the present of blacks. Juxtaposition of different historical eras by the novelist suggests their interconnectedness and shows how the present identities of blacks are forged by slavery. Blacks "are always looking […] to the past, always hyperaware…of the fact that the present is conditioned by the past" (*Crossing the River* 102). The xenophobic bitterness which Travis experiences shows how history manifests itself in form of racial discrimination. Although the circumstances are not as brutal and oppressive as that of slavery, yet it is acutely traumatic and painful and renders one unable to forge link with the surroundings. Travis' diasporic status and condition demonstrate how the historical experience continue to impact the everyday lives of the African diaspora.

Joyce-Travis relationship makes up for an interesting reading. Joyce is a white married woman who experiences a loveless marriage and an abusive husband, Len. She is a woman of strong values who cannot be a party to her husband's illegal deals. Ridden with complexes, Len wished imprisonment for Joyce too when he is arrested and policemen asks with astonishment, "Are you suggesting we take your wife as well?" (*Crossing the River* 199). Fed up with her unhappy conjugal state, she breathes a sigh of relief when Len is put behind bars. It meant that she will not have beatings from him now. She says, "Something was lifted from me the moment they took him away. My chest unknotted. I could breathe again." (*Crossing*

the River 199). Always questioning the commonplace ideologies of her class, Joyce's perspective towards people and circumstances is always different. It is for this reason that when she falls in love with Travis, the latter's dark complexion remains an insignificant thing. It is so insignificant that throughout her narrative, the reader does not get an idea about Travis being a black man except one when she notices his "thin black wool" (*Crossing the River* 167) hair at a local dance party. Both Joyce and Travis, indifferent to the racial politics encompassing them, fall in love. But reality soon knocks at the door and Travis asks Joyce if they can get married. He was apprehensive that they will not be able to live together as "It wouldn't be allowed." (*Crossing the River* 225). Falling flat before the circumstances generated by war, the lovers had to part never to meet again.

Joyce stands tall by virtue of her character and not her colour. She brings forth the possibilities of new relationships and perspectives on disaporic experience of blacks. Through her character, "Phillips evokes spirits and hearts as the resource needed to break out of the cold, hard grip of racism, rather than ideologies and powerful political movements…" (Farrar 19). Her amiable outlook which embraces rather than shuns difference provides a new hope. Her life explicates postpositivist viewpoint that "Reflexivity with respect to one's positioning is contingent on a series of factors. It may lead to complicity or a conciliatory compromise with given social structures and perhaps to a desire to maintain the status quo, or it may lead to transformative practices" (Sánchez 38). Through African father's acceptance of Joyce as the fourth child, Phillips provides the world a hope of better future where human beings are not branded and consequently prejudiced against because of their colour or race. Joyce experience with blacks is entirely different from other characters. She, in fact, sojourns into a terrain of humanity which others have willfully avoided. Though White, her vantage point is different and ideology has not been able to seep into her thoughts to give her a perverted outlook. She becomes a paradigm to understand the postpositivist realist claim that: "The most basic questions about identity call for a more general reexamination of the relation between personal experience and public meanings-subjective choices and evaluations, on the one hand, and objective social location, on the other" (Mohanty 30). She stands tall albeit scarred because of her different stance. Joyce fulfills Phillips' vision when he says in an interview with Maya Jaggi,

> I wouldn't say I've always wanted to be an explorer of the fissures and crevices of migration. I have seen connectedness and 'celebrated' the qualities of survival that people in all sorts of predicaments are able to keep hold of with clenched fists. I didn't want to leave this novel as an analysis of fracture, because I felt such an overwhelming, passionate attachment to all the voices, and I kept thinking it seemed almost choral. These people were talking in harmonies I could hear (4).

Stories of three diasporic children are juxtaposed with the journal entries of a slave ship captain named, Hamilton. This part concurs with the postpositivist realist stance that "knowledge is the product of particular kinds of social practice" (Moya 14). His journal entries involuntary depict the draconian practices of Atlantic slave trade as well as the utter indifference and callousness of those involved in the trade. Being a white man, his knowledge and experience is conditioned by his social location. His judgments are "based on structures of belief that can be justified (or not) with reference to their own and others' well-being" (Moya 14). Leela Gandhi opines that Hamilton's journal entries present a White Western account of history which establishes supremacy of West and thus makes history a "discourse through which the West [asserts] its hegemony over the rest of the world" (170). Additionally, "the temporal disjointedness and narrative fragmentation of the novel mirrors the historical turbulence of the 250 years in which the African diasporic is caught" (22). The journal entries shock one with the cold and casual enumeration of loss and profit involved in the business involving human lives. Hamilton writes about "a woman slave, whom I refused being long breasted" (*Crossing the River* 104), then Mr. Lewis "came aboard with the promised slaves, most being remarkably fine and sturdy. I purchased 17, viz., 12 men, 5 women. In future the day must begin with arms and senitals, there now being above 50 slaves on board…" (*Crossing the River* 106). In a situation that looks tragically ironic is that Hamilton talks about the pangs of separation from his wife while at the same moment listing the loss of cargo (slaves) during voyage. While brutally separating and fracturing black families, Hamilton moans about his love and family, "of our future children, and our family life together." (*Crossing the River* 110). Toni Morrison's thoughts reveal the ugly aspect of slave trade justification when she says that:

> the necessity of rendering the slave a foreign species appears to be a desperate attempt to confirm one's own self as normal […] The danger of sympathizing with

> the stranger is the possibility of becoming a stranger. To lose one's racialized rank is to lose one's own valued and enshrined difference (29-30).

The part consisting log entries of Captain Hamilton is intrinsic to the structure of the novel since the slave merchant to whom the hapless African father sold his three children was Captain Hamilton only: "Approached by a quiet fellow. Bought 2 strong man-boys, and a proud girl" (*Crossing the River* 124). Hamilton's casual disregard of the plight of slaves can be understood through the concept of "cognitive conception of experience…which allow for both legitimate and illegitimate experience, enabling us to see experience as source of both real knowledge and social mystification" (Mohanty 43). He presents the pangs of separation from wife while at the same time rupturing the families of blacks. His experience and pain do not hold valid and thus rendered illegitimate when placed in front of the inexplicable pain of black slaves. Captain Hamilton represents the white attitude which presented slavery in benign terms. David Dabydeen writes that "The trade in black people was at the time justified on economic and moral grounds. Slavery was right and allowable, the argument ran, because it was profitable and therefore 'necessary" (3).

Phillips presents a unique interspersing of voices towards the end of the novel. Focusing upon the significance of epilogue in the novel, Paul Smethurst says that "… the idea of a ''multi-tongued chorus'' heard across two hundred and fifty years of history, and across the boundaries of race and gender, pulls together the various narrative strands into a single story of survival and communicable empathy." (6). Voices of diaspora, bespeaking memories as well as aspirations, lamenting losses and projecting hopes, indicate how the past has shaped the future. Present of Blacks in America or England cannot be understood without taking a recourse to history of their immigration; a history replete with the memories drenched in the blood and tears of blacks, a history voicing the agony, anguish, perseverance, defiance and resilience of black diaspora. The novelist presents a hopeful vision where the identity of blacks will be strengthened by their close affiliation with whites who will not demand incorporation but would rather extend compassionate arms to those seeking succor from prejudices. It is a world which is envisioned by Mary C. Waters in *Black Identities: West Indian immigrant, Dreams and American Realities.* "Yet for blacks and whites to move beyond the color line, and to prevent new Americans of many different origins from accepting that color line in order to be on its advantageous side, we must move beyond both cultural and vulgar racism" (344).

The novel stresses the need of building a new historical framework where the memories no longer are haunting or scary.

The epilogue presents a hopeful vision where blacks and white stand together on a platform built on the foundation of love. This love (in form of Greer, child of Joyce and Travis) may not find a ready acceptance but strong ties of love nurturing in hearts (Joyce) do indicate a hopeful future where Marthas will not die on roads, frozen to death; where Nashs will not die in oblivion and where Travis and Joyce will be able to build a sweet home and family together. Struggles of these characters prove that, the agency- even if fragile- ushers in a new dawn and as postpositivists say that "social actors' knowledge is conditioned by social structures—the very structures that human agency can transform" (Sánchez 4). The African father says,

> For two hundred and fifty years, I have listened. To the haunting voices... I have listened to the voice that cried: 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…A many tongued chorus continues to swell… And I hope that amongst these survivors' voices, I might occasionally hear those of my own children. My Nash. My Martha. My Travis. My daughter. Joyce. All. Hurt but determined... But they arrived on the far bank of the river, loved (*Crossing the River* 236-37).

The polyphony of voices which Phillips uses in the epilogue to present his vision of diaspora, is worth appreciation. He wished to show the connection between the homelands and memories which blacks have left behind, and their present-day positioning. He says, "I wanted to make an affirmative connection, not a connection based upon exploitation or suffering or misery, but a connection based upon a kind of survival" (qtd. in Davison 93). He shows us the lives which have been shaped in diaspora. These people cannot go back. Their homes are in diaspora and these have been acquired after a lot of struggle. This struggle lends dignity to their existence and forges a connection between African diasporic communities, who can no longer yearn for an ever-receding ancestral homeland. Phillips creates a black identity which is relational and not confrontational to the white culture and leads the reader towards an understanding of identity in a multicultural society. It is worth quoting Bénédicte Ledent here who says in "Ambiguous Visions of Home: The Paradoxes of Diasporic Belonging" 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…and leaving his readers and critics to derive the more abstract meaning from the predicaments he approaches imaginatively in his novels (200).

Crossing the River shows us that the history of blacks is a saga of pain, injustice as well as resilience. Blacks were treated in the most inhumane ways and were denigrated as mere commodities or property of the White master. This pain of denied humanity and snatched relationships have shaped their present identities. The history of slavery and black oppression as well as resistance must be communicated vigorously so that the mistakes of past are not repeated. The vacuum that came into personal identities due to de-linking from own land and people, can be filled through such memories recorded in histories which in turn, will help in creation of more constructive, rejuvenating, alert, conscious and conciliatory identities. Through the lives of Nash, Martha, Travis and Joyce, it becomes clear that "identities can be both real and constructed: how they can be politically and epistemically significant, on the one hand, and variable, nonessential, and radically historical, on the other." (Moya 12). Whites' role has to be one of reconciliation and acceptance of blacks as one of them only. The very distinction on the basis of colour needs to be demolished for a more egalitarian and humanist approach to flourish. Rebekah Bartley's observation that "*Crossing the River* validates and legitimizes a history and a perspective that is non-white, non-traditional, non-European, and non-existent" (23) concurs with the postpositivist realist approach of revisionary process to arrive at a better understanding of a said 'truth'.

The Final Passage (1985) traces the journey of nineteen-year-old, Leila who leaves her Caribbean hometown of St. Patrick along with her husband, Michael and infant son, Calvin to nurse her sick mother in England. Through the travails of Leila, Phillips shows how dreams fall flat when they come in contact with harsh reality. Upon landing in England, Leila is encountered with a place which is neither welcoming nor congenial. Finding a house on rent becomes a herculean task in a society ridden with racial prejudices. She gets to see the signs which read, "'No coloureds', 'No blacks'. 'No children!'" (155) or "IF YOU WANT A NIGGER NEIGHBOUR, VOTE LABOUR" (122). Through the travails of Leila and Michael,

Phillips reveals the rejection and disillusionment which immigrants go though. Nyitsotemve observes,

> The flustered consciousness of the West Indian personality, dignity and dependence is revealed in a perturbed sense of exile. The British constructed image of the West Indian inferiority is crystallised through the code of rejection, segregation and debasement in the various attempts that the West Indian makes to survive in London (1).

Being of a lighter skin, Leila has always been considered superior by people in her hometown. Used to that treatment, she gets shocked when she arrives in England and a woman from Salvation Army offers her a cup of soup. For the host country, she is one of those who lack resources and needs help. We get to know that a "woman in a Salvation Army uniform came towards Leila and offered her a cup of soup" (The *Final passage* 145). Feeling offended, "Leila looked away, so the woman gave the soup to an old man; she watched over him as he drank it" (145). For Leila, this experience of being treated as an underprivileged is both alien and frustrating. Her refusal to accept the cup of soup is her protest for being perceived as an inferior coloured. Faced with either rejection or condescending attitude, Leila realizes very early that England is not the place which she had imagined. She no more carries the superiority tag which her homeland gave her because of her lighter skin. Her encounter with England through the Salvation Army woman shows as Laura Gillman says that "Thus, identity, on the postpositivist realist view, is seen not as a private affair, but as an index of our relationship with the world and its unobservable causal mechanisms" (462). It also shows how one's experience of certain aspects is contingent upon social practices and its interpretation at times is erroneous. Paula M. L. Moya puts it thus, "experience is not immediate and self-evident but mediated and ambiguous, so that it is possible to be wrong about one's experience as well as to arrive at more accurate interpretations of it" (17). The contention gets proved in the case of Leila because her initial misreading of her experience makes her realize her error and consequent movement towards a new understanding.

Her stay in England proves to be physically discomforting and emotionally draining. Leila feels lost in England. Contrary to her expectations, this place was dark and dingy. Leila's vision of England as a "Land of milk and honey! Land of plenty!" (*The Final Passage* 79) is shattered as she sees ruin and dilapidation everywhere. With the sky being overcast most of

the time, she misses the sunshine of St. Patrick. It is certainly not a dream land where women wear colorful hats and carry baskets. Life is commonplace. This sudden reality of depravity and poverty leads to a deepening sense of alienation. Leila "looked at England, but everything seemed bleak" (*The Final Passage 142*). The dismal surroundings and Michael's attitude put her in confusion and she suffers from a deep sense of alienation. Michael's cold indifference and eventual desertion makes her pine for the home which had the comfort of close friendship with Millie. From being "sorry for those satisfied enough to stay" back in St. Patrick (*The Final Passage* 20), she comes to a juncture where "England, in whom she had placed so much of her hope, no longer held for her the attraction of her mother and new challenges. At least the small island she had left behind had safety and two friends" (*The Final Passage* 203). England fails to offer any refuge to Leila. In the words of Stuart Hall she stands with those who aspire "to find some ground, some place, some position on which to stand" as they have been "blocked out and refused an identity and identification within the majority nation" (38). Leila faltered in her hopes about England. She ignored the advice of her friend Millie who dissuaded her from migrating. The error to which Leila fell was her fanciful idea that England would prove a good place for herself and Michael, not only in the terms of financial stability but also in terms of conjugal happiness. She realizes her mistake towards the end and postpositivists view this error of interpretation as an "instructive presence (which) account for the need for revision of theoretical constructions…in response to challenges from competing theoretical or cultural claims" (Hames-Garcia 110). In the case of Leila, the competing cultural claim is provided by Millie. Millie's ideology combined with Leila's firsthand experience of diaspora propel her towards a journey of self-assessment.

Michael's diasporic experience is ridden with racial prejudice. Michael leaves his native land with an ache in heart. He tells Leila that "Leaving this place going make me feel old, you know, like leaving the safety of your family to go live with strangers" (*The Final Passage* 108). But like many others he too dreams of earning big in England. Caribbean land for him was a land of nothingness. Michael's grandfather, teaching him how to be a man, remarks that "the West Indies is a dangerous place to be a failure" (*The Final Passage* 42). He warns him that he would have to escape the beauty of the island and seek opportunities abroad. The grandfather's inability to positively identify with the West Indian landscape is connected to the sense of confinement it imposes. Foreign countries appear to offer abundant resources and, in

his mind, are more conducive to personal growth and well-being. Whiling away his time drinking at pubs, he never tried to take up a good job. He rather places all his hopes in foreign shores and dreams of getting rich. He tells Bradeth that he wants to move to England as "I want a big car and a big house and a bit of power under my belt" (*The Final Passage* 103). Blinded by such hopes, he is given a reality check by Alphonso who tells him that "England don't be no joke for a coloured man" (*The Final Passage* 105). Michael and his grandfather's attitude towards Caribbean as a land of nothingness arises out of the prevalent circumstances where the poverty of native land makes individuals weave fantastic dreams about the foreign lands. Paula M. L. Moya says that "humans generate knowledge, and our ability to do so is causally dependent on both our cognitive capacities and our historical and social locations" (18). Unacquainted with the complete scenario, the far-off lands appear to be the land of opportunities to them. Individuals' perception thus is impacted by the circumstances and social location.

England gives him jolts upon arrival. With coloureds like him denied jobs, he gets frustrated and nurses hatred which his grandfather had warned against. His grandfather had tried to teach him good life lessons as he was aware of Michael's volatile temperament. He teaches him to work hard and ignore the adversities which generate hate as "too much hating is the baddest…and can destroy a coloured man for true" (*The Final Passage* 41). Upon landing in a menial job, his fellow worker, Edwin cautions him that his good work might not get recognition and he might be called names by the supervisor because of his blackness. He says that "Well, all you need to remember is they treat us worse than their dogs…He's a cunt and he's going to call you names, man… It's how the white man in this country kills off the coloured man. He makes you heat up and blow yourself away" (*The Final Passage* 168). At this point, Michael recalls his grandfather's words. He was told that white men never work in fields. Such menial works fall in the lot of blacks. His grandfather's words echo in is mind. "Next time you see a piece of sugarcane ask yourself when the last time you did see a white man cutting or weeding in the field. I want you think hard when the last time you did see a white man doing any kind of colored man work and I want you to remember good" (*The Final Passage* 40). Racial prejudice produced a skewed white perspective and they failed to consider blacks as normal human beings. "The attributes of backwardness, primitivity, evil, destruction, and darkness had been long-standing references to the black man, a man fit only to be a slave"

(Patterson 73). They were discriminated against and mistreated. Kiplind D. Williams talks about how this social discrimination leads to bad consequences in immigrants. He says that "Many refugees face humiliating ostracism in their host countries: They feel unwelcome and that they are not a part of society. Ostracism has profound psychological influence-it has even been termed social death" (245). Battered and bruised, Michael behaves badly with Leila. She becomes his punching bag to vent out all frustration. Michael mistreats Leila and pours out his indignation upon her vulnerable self. Consequently, their already fragile relationship crumbles down and this leads to Leila's emotional breakdown. Both of them have their own share of sufferings within a racially oppressive system but Michael augments Leila's crisis through his attitude. Within the institution of marriage, he becomes Leila's oppressor. Paula M.L. Moya puts it thus,

> …it is the physical, material, psychological, and rhetorical manifestation of the intersecting relations of domination that constitute our shared world. To the extent that individuals are differently situated within those relations, they may be simultaneously constituted as both oppressor and oppressed (97).

Phillips takes up the issue of race and sexuality also. We witness that white women are apprehensive of their men being with black women but at the same time they try to use black men for their own sexual pleasure. Leila's mother tells her "White women never sleep with both eyes closed if a coloured woman is around" (*The Final Passage 129*). Leila too fears her white neighbor, Mary lest she snatches away Michael from her.

Opposite to Leila and Michael is the attitude of Millie. She strongly opposes Leila and Michael's decision to leave the island and tries to convince them to stay back. She snaps, "Too many people beginning to act like it's sinful thing to want to stay on this island" (*The Final Passage* 106). She provides what Satya Mohanty calls "alternative accounts" (34). She feels secure at St. Patrick and believes that one can have a good life there only. She tries to reason out with Leila at many occasions but to no avail. She provides a definition of home and belongingness to the reader when she says, "You maybe don't see it but me, I love this island with every bone in my body. It's small and poor, and all the rest of the things you and Michael probably think is wrong with it, but for all that I still love it. It's my home and home is where you feel a welcome" (*The Final Passage* 115). Through Millie, Phillips presents the steadfastness of a character who does not flounder when everyone around is swaying to the

intoxication of the dreams of greener pastures. Her alternate account of experience can "help organize inchoate or confused feelings to produce an emotion that is experienced more directly and fully" (Mohanty 34). With an alternate thought process, Millie shows how "we make a purely arbitrary choice, determined by our social locations or our prerational ideological commitments" (Mohanty 35). Leila and Michael's migration and encounter with white west generate certain experiences which jolt their respective identities. They both need to revisit their situations to assess the authenticity of their experiences. What they needed, as per postpositivist realism is the "revised understanding of experience" as "experiences would not serve as foundations because of their self-evident authenticity but would provide some of the raw material with which we construct identities" (Mohanty 32). Leila distrust of the only friend she has in England, Mary- a white woman is faulty. Michael's frustration upon Leila can never be justified. Instead of fighting the racism together, he made Leila his punching-bag.

In the Falling Snow (2009) explores the journey of Keith vis-à-vis his relationship with his father, Earl and son, Laurie. The lives and experiences of these men reveal "the relations among personal experience, social meanings, and cultural identities" (Mohanty 30). Keith lives in London and his immigrant status gets confirmed when we are informed early in the novel that "He is walking in one of those leafy suburbs of London where the presence of a man like him still attracts curious half-glances" (3). Keith is a second-generation immigrant who through his education has secured a good job and decent living in London. Despite his respectable social standing, he still is an outsider. He has tried his level best to be one with the white society but is always apprehensive of being judged on basis of colour. Conscious of his racial status he is cautious against the furtive glances which reek of disdain. Commenting on such identities, Benedicte Ledent in her book *Caryl Phillips* (2002) says that "the ontological essence of the Afro-Caribbean identity of second-generation, caught between Britain and Caribbean is a kind of cultural limbo" (24). Keith's balancing act in the contemporary England reveals how second-generation immigrants negotiate this midpoint of cultural difference which holds racial differences at its core.

Despite a respectable social standing and British nationality, Keith's identity remains staggering. In this context, Mark Stein observes "Although the term Black British leads the immigrant to think that he belongs to the white national identity, the phrase paradoxically points out the coexistence of two identities associated with two cultures that push away

mutually and cannot coexist in a stable identity" (xvi). The childhood scars of racism remain visible when "he learned that he had other names besides Keith, most commonly 'chocolate drop" (*In the Falling Snow* 220). He remembers how his mother's aspiration to move out of poverty and to start living like English people remained incomplete and their everyday life was rife with racial problems. He remembers a morning "when he discovered dogshit smeared all over the bottles of milk on the doorstep and he stopped talking about getting out of the room and living like English people" (*In the Falling Snow* 220). Racism meted out on daily basis bred a sense of uncertainty in Keith. Despite having achieved financial stability and a secure social standing, his mind remains alert to the explicit and implicit attacks of racism.

Keith's father, Earl comes to England in search of a good life but receives mistreatment only. He faced violence, blocked opportunities and apathy in England. He dreamt of studying law but ends up being a cleaner with his "dreams all locked up in the law book and the dictionary" (*In the Falling Snow* 274). He tries hard to find his feet in the alien land but fails. Crumbling of dreams and aspirations weigh heavy upon his head and he starts losing his mental stability. Incarcerated in mental asylum, he loses his will to live. He fails to forge any meaningful relationship with his son, Keith and this emotional gap replicates in the relationship of Keith and Laurie. Defeated and dejected, Earl's unending wait for social recognition makes a poignant read. Earl yearns for his homeland and tells Keith, "I want to go home, Keith. I don't mean to stupid English house. I mean home…I'm not from here" (*In the Falling Snow* 269). His agonizing wait to go back, to "turn back the clock and find myself in the Harbour Lights bar" (*In the Falling Snow* 319) and be with his kin remains unfulfilled and he dies a heartbroken man. Keith remembers how his father, "As he walked, his father left behind a single set of footprints, and he remembered lingering by the doorstep and watching closely as the falling snow steadily erased all evidence of his father's presence" (*In the Falling Snow* 321). The erased footsteps hold a great significance.

London's snow erased the signs of a man who walked over it unrecognized, carrying the mortal remains of his diasporic aspirations. Erasure of Earl's footsteps symbolize not only the end of his life but also Keith's loss of historical ties with ancestry vis-à-vis his father. Gordon Collier posits that the erasure of footprints is a warning "that familial warmth, coherence, and shared experience are the only way for the Caribbean immigrant legacy to withstand the social 'cold' of England, to celebrate the country's small miracles" (403). This becomes important

when one realizes that Keith does not have the memories of his ancestral land as he was born in England. “His generation of kids, who were born in Britain and who had no memory of any kind of tropical life before England, were clearly trying hard to make a space for themselves in a not always welcoming country” (*In the Falling Snow* 41). Despite his English nationality, he feels a lack of belonging. The outsider tag clings to him and the repercussions become visible in his day to day life. Paula M.L. Moya contends that due to these social practices “humans’ subjective and evaluative judgments are neither fundamentally “arbitrary” nor “conventional”. Rather, they are based on structures of belief that can be justified (or not) with reference to their own and others’ well-being” (14). Earl’s bitter experience of diaspora reeks of discrimination and prejudice. Keith, on the other hand, experiences a different aspect of identity crisis. His world has social and economic privileges but he still gapes at a cultural and racial antagonism. The social practices of their respective times make their experiences distinct.

Keith gets the taste of racism when he goes to meet Annabelle’s father. A retired white army man, Annabelle’s father does not make any secret of his disdain for blacks. Trying to strike a conversation with him, Keith experiences only cold hatred and is expected to “take responsibility for his people’s ‘ill manners’” (*In the Falling Snow* 44). Keen to share his thoughts on the social unrest, he is simply ignored and silenced. At this moment he ruminates, “why local authorities up and down the country had started advertising for race relation liaison officers, people who could help explain black anger to white people, and white liberal do-gooding to disgruntled black people” (*In the Falling Snow* 45). Keith realizes that despite all the efforts being made by the government to promote inclusivity, racial prejudices remains embedded in the general mindset. Years later, Annabelle apprehension of their son being close to the company of blacks also bespeaks the deep-seated racial tension. She equates blacks with rowdiness and wants her son to be away from black youth. Her concern as a mother cannot out rightly be rejected but race definitely becomes a denominator in forging social relations. Racial discrimination permeates the social fabric and whites “prefer to stand rather than sit down next” (*In the Falling Snow* 293) to a black man. Such an attitude towards any ethnicity or community calls to mind Hames-Garcia’s concept of restriction which shows how social processes ignore the multiple aspects of a given identity. As against this “realism provides a subtler, more complex, and more complete picture of how any given identity is formed- a

picture that includes that identity's excluded other, its formative context, and its historical character and social function" (Moya 18). Had the social processes of the world followed these practices, then the experiences of Earl, Keith and Laurie would have been different.

Under the current circumstances Keith and Annabelle's son, Laurie feels disorientated. Being of a mixed parentage, he struggles to find a redoubtable footing in English soil. Born and brought up as an English citizen, he still has an ethnic tag clung to him and "boys pelted him with stones and called him 'halfie'" (*In the Falling Snow* 17). Complications of racial identity combined with teenage years drift him away from parents. Keith with his extra-marital affair ruins relationship with Annabelle and the two consequently get separated. Struggling with the turbulence of teenage, Laurie does not receive the guidance necessary for navigating his way in England with a hybrid identity. Everyday discrimination and disrespect flummoxes him and he says, "You can't let people just large it up your face and disrespect you. A man's got to have respect or he's nothing better than somebody's punk" (*In the Falling Snow* 167). Laurie's hurt feelings about his identity shows how "our remotest personal feelings are dependent on social narratives, paradigms, and even ideologies" (Mohanty 35). The prevalent social discourse degrades Laurie for his mulatto status and decimates the self-esteem of a young boy. He in turn acts rashly against the society and invites trouble for himself. His personal problem have a political background. It is the politics that equate difference with inferiority which spell trouble for Laurie.

Keith himself is not well equipped with the knowledge of his historical roots or ancestry. His father, Earl could not pass over the legacy to him. Keith tries to deliver his parental duty and asks Laurie if they can plan a trip to Caribbean. He seeks to bond with Laurie as well as to acquaint him with his roots but he fails to convince his son that Caribbean is a place that constitutes their identity. Keith himself has never been to Caribbean and Laurie questions the efficacy of his proposed trip and asks "Well how come you've never been there if it's so important?" (*In the Falling Snow* 126). Satya Mohanty's observation in this situation is very appropriate. He says,

> We cannot really claim ourselves morally or politically until we have reconstructed our collective identity, reexamined our dead and our disremembered. This is not simply a project of adding to one; ancestral line, for as we have seen, it often involves fundamental discoveries about what ancestry is, what continuity consists

> in, how cultural meanings do not just sustain themselves through history but are in fact materially embodied and fought for (54).

Keith never bothered to explore his ancestry. The broken communication between Earl and Keith, destroyed the chances of passing of ancestral legacy. Keith, being a second-generation immigrant struggles with his precarious identity positioning as a Black British citizen. He himself lacks the knowledge of his ancestry and historical roots and fails to deliver any to his son. Deprived of a solid foundation and unable to place his hybrid identity in a proper context, Laurie mostly stumbles in the predominately white English society. Satya Mohanty says that "historical memory might be available to human subjects only if we expand our notion of personal experience to refer to ways of both feeling and knowing, and to include collectives as well as individual selves" (48). It is this historical memory which both Keith and Laurie need to find their feet and roots in an alien soil. The historical memory will provide them with the sense of "personal worth" which originates in "the development of…capacity for the right kind of anger or indignation (that) depend on finding the right social and political theory" (Mohanty 62). Like Nash of *Crossing the river,* both Keith and Laurie need to get in touch with their African roots to come to terms with their present situation. They must retrieve and revive their collective historical memory to properly align their individual selves in the contemporary times. Keith's escapism and Laurie's disgruntlement arises out of a vacuum which is created by lack of cultural affinity. To fill in the gap, they must need to explore their ancestry and roots.

Seen from a postpositivist realist lens, Phillips through his characters depicts that "historically constituted social categories that make up an individual's particular social location are causally relevant for the experiences she will have and are conditioned by individual's interpretations of their experiences" (Moya 18). His dealing with the aspects of diaspora is praise worthy. He picks up the different strands of the matter and asks the reader to weave a tapestry of their own respective meanings and interpretations. Bénédicte Ledent's opinion about the writer finds consonance with postpositivist realism. She writes 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. A pragmatic artist, Phillips has always examined the very concrete social and psychological implications of

> the diasporic for individuals striving first of all to understand their exilic plight, and leaving his readers and critics to derive the more abstract meaning from the predicaments he approaches imaginatively in his novels (200).

David Dabydeen's treatment of diaspora is distinct from Phillips. The canvas of his novels includes both the host nation and the homelands. His characters' desire to assimilate in the host culture is predominant and he mainly presents a male immigrant experience while throwing oblique light on the women characters. While talking about the creative process of writing novels and how his own diasporic identity interacts with his writing, he in an interview with Heike Härting & Tobias Döring, brought forth the concept and told that:

> Creative amnesia means the desire to forget history. Which is an active desire, especially if you live as a minority in a bigger country …All you want to do is escape. So there is a desire for amnesia because of social pressures…It is a sense of restlessness in yourself…Therefore it is best just to envelope yourself in a kind of total forgetfulness out of which something might emerge. It is a desire for invisibility (42).

Dabydeen's creativity nurtures itself in creative amnesia, away from the din and bustle of everyday life. What is worth notice is that despite his stance of maintaining a distance from the world, his novels provide a deep insight into the functioning and politics of diasporic life. Besides this, the writer affirms his immigrant status despite having settled in England. His ideology reflects in his novels through his characters. In an interview with Mark Stein, he said that:

> I am an arrivant. I have no problem in calling myself an immigrant. Even though I'm settled here, I was once an immigrant. The modern condition is one of migrancy . . . I see nothing wrong in saying we are immigrants: we were immigrants. Many of us are still immigrants. Intellectually or imaginatively we have not settled in the country (1998).

The novel *Disappearance* (1993) deals with the issue of identity/loss of identity. Treatment of the concept is artistically subtle and creatively engaging. David Dabydeen deals with the diasporic aspect of identity. The reader is introduced to the unnamed black protagonist who has lost touch with his cultural roots and is moving afloat in English society, whose traits, chiefly technical appeal to his mind. He wishes to forge an identity based on his vocation of

an engineer; a vocation whose traits and skills, he has acquired through English education system. He says:

> I knew nothing about Africa…I was no African though, and my fetishes and talisman were spirit-levels, bulldozers, rivets. I was a black West-Indian of African ancestry, but I was an engineer, trained in the science and technology of Great Britain (14).

In a style reminiscent of Joseph Conrad and V. S. Naipaul, the novel takes us to the interior journey of the Guyanese engineer who arrives in an English village to build up its sea defenses. Staying with an English lady, Mrs. Janet Rutherford, he learns not only about the history of this coastal village but is also prodded to acquire knowledge of his own cultural ancestry. Paradoxically, an English woman, with her strong knowledge of African heritage, brings this black man face to face with the violence hidden beneath the smooth and fascinating layers of English culture. She becomes instrumental in bringing home to him the injustices, which are the legacy of imperial past, and he is compelled to reassess his perception about himself as well as about his native land. This brings him to reconsider his positioning as a black man in a white society. His journey is an exposition of Mohanty's theory that without "alternative constructions and accounts our capacity to interpret and understand the dominant ideologies and institutions is limited to those created and sanctioned by these very ideologies and institutions" (52). His 'self' with which he was trying to negotiate English environs is unsettled and he moves on to re-examine his notions about himself and the English society. He had hitherto tried to leave behind his racial identity with its cultural baggage and had tried hard to mask himself with his English educational and professional persona. But he realizes that identity is not a flimsy, shallow or superficial trait.

The narrator of the novel with "no sense of the past" (*Disappearance* 17) and the one who had "a past that I didn't want to know and had no sense of being ruptured from" (*Disappearance* 21) has posited his individuality with an alien group i.e. English. Personal circumstances and the desire to leave his past, replete with the memories of dearth and insignificance, he tries to blend with a foreign group. He finds it feasible to "forget the past which was so intangible, and to get down to the business of making a new country for a new age" (*Disappearance* 22). But the group refuses to view him sans his racial branding. He however, learns to navigate his way on the cultural shores, after dealing with deliberate

digressions and consequent floundering. In his experiences with Mr. Fenwick who is narrator's role model, the narrator realizes the fallacy of his misplaced faith in English norms and culture. Mr. Fenwick is a university professor and he is the one who deputes this black engineer to save a crumbling Kent village. The professor is to narrator, a representative of Western knowledge with its bourgeoning advancements of science and technology. He is looked upon as a paragon of English honour, truthfulness and cultural finesse, which combined with technical prowess, is according to the narrator, the ultimate marker of a distinguished being. He says, "Professor Fenwick's influence on me was total. Not only was I in awe of his learning but his modesty made me want to mimic his every gesture and mood" (*Disappearance* 76). But during his dealing with Mr. Rushton, another engineer on the site, the narrator comes to a shocking realization of a fraud being committed by his 'role-model'. Mr. Fenwick, narrator's idol is broken when his shady dealings and corrupt intentions are realized by him. His idea of English cultural superiority comes crashing down. Insinuated by Mrs. Rutherford's stance at cruelty committed by imperialists- "'The true English nature', she scolded me' is quite contrary. You have a colonial sense of this place, that's all" (*Disappearance* 66) - combined with her push for him to delve into his own cultural ethos, the narrator finds his earlier concepts of Englishness and its refinement shattered to pieces. At such one juncture, he thinks about Mr. Rushton and he asks himself:

> Did he ever uncork himself in private acts of cruelty and fantasy? I found myself puzzling over his character, as fifteen years before, in identical circumstances, I had questioned the restraint of Professor Fenwick. Was it because they could rule their spirits that they once ruled the seas and made an Empire? But what now that the cliffs around Hastings were collapsing as the Empire had crumbled? (*Disappearance* 121)

The narrator is unwilling to align himself with his ancestry and roots but his stay in the village changes his perspective. Wanting to detach himself from his colonial past, he eventually realizes the importance which cultural and ethnic roots hold on a foreign land. He is a diasporic subject and the complexity of identity becomes more acute in case of diaspora. Diaspora is not only a physical movement across the nation- states, it is also about crossing and navigating racial, cultural, historical and linguistic boundaries. This journey entails a continuous re-signification of the customary norms and meanings associated with identity. With a plurality

of inter-relationships, a diasporic subject forges a new identity, which again undergoes alterations, with the onset of new experiences and collaborations. The narrator, being a diasporic man experiences these complicated knots of identity and traverses a path where his 'outsider' status and 'insider' attitude come to confrontation. He realizes that "Experiences are crucial indexes of our relationships with our world (including our relationships with ourselves) … and are susceptible to varying degrees of socially constructed truth or error and can serve as sources of objective knowledge or socially produced mystification" (Mohanty 38). In his dealings with English people and coolies, he comes to the realization of his own peculiar standing in the shaky and unreliable English society. This jolt makes him shift his focus on his own value system. Left floundering and groping for something substantial to hold on to, he turns to his Caribbean self to understand the circumstances both inside and outside. He realizes, to invoke Stuart Hall that 'cultural identity' can be understood in two principal ways:

> The first position defines 'cultural identity' in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self'…This 'oneness', underlying all the other, more superficial differences, is the truth, the essence of 'Caribbeanness', of the black experience. It is this identity which a Caribbean or black diaspora must discover, excavate, bring to light and express. . . Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as well as to the past…they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power… (111-112).

The narrator thus tries to evacuate his cultural identity and forges a new individual self which bears the marks of both native and foreign influences but which nevertheless is chosen consciously and not under some hegemonic influence. He acquires what is called the 'empowering paradox of diaspora'. Femke Stock states that,

> The moving between a multiplicity of home spaces, the experience of ambivalently belonging both here and there, can open up new spaces to reflect on and critique essentialist discourses of nation, ethnicity or origin and to creatively construct new homes and identities that are deemed hybrid, syncretic or fluid (26).

He has a very responsible task to accomplish. Though led by Mrs. Rutherford on the path of cultural recovery, he must not stop here. He is to travel ahead, to come up with his own meanings and signification patterns. He must realize that:

> The original 'Africa' is no longer there. It too has been transformed. History is, in that sense, irreversible. We must not collude with the West which, precisely, normalizes and appropriates Africa by freezing it into some timeless zone of the primitive and unchanging past. Africa must at last be reckoned with by Caribbean people, but it cannot in any simple sense be merely recovered (Hall 117).

The change of perception generated by experiences which the narrator undergoes can also be understood through the concept of 'positioning' and 'positionality' given by Rosaura Sánchez, who opines that experience:

> …can only be considered within a constellation of positionings that interconnect in multiple ways, never only in one way, as there are always social boundaries and limits that impact particular interconnections and overlappings that are open or closed, that is, available or unavailable, to us, depending on our positioning (41).

The young engineer's position as a young black engineer, wearing suit, carrying a briefcase and wearing polished shoes, talking in a refined manner, is something which is not easily digested by the white villagers and workers. He is expected to behave in a nomadic, barbaric way only. To the imperialist England, a native African could only be understood in Colonial vocabulary. He says, "They assessed me by my surface, my skin colour and the quality of my suit" (*Disappearance* 116). His race becomes an inseparable marker of his identity. His experience brings to mind Frantz Fanon's indelible description of the black experience in *Black Skin, White Masks*, where he says, and "I had to meet the white man's eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema…I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects" (76). The narrator too undergoes this kind of experience in his interactions with Christie.

To the Irish foreman, Christie, narrator can be approached and understood only in terms of his race. He expects nothing but ghost stories from the narrator. Rationality, according to him, is alien to Africans and his attitude shows the skewed perception of White West about Blacks. The narrator ruminates, "To their mind I was savage beneath my suit, and my briefcase really contained strange herbs. When I was alone, doubtless I dropped my impeccable English speech and howled" (*Disappearance*102). Such an attitude can be understood in the light of

Cavallaro's statement when he states the case of race being the determinant of utmost importance in defining an individual's socio-cultural location in these words:

> The issue of race is closely linked with that of nationalism: the classification of people on the basis of racially distinctive features…has been instrumental to the construction of national and territorial boundaries. The advancement of a nation state's ideology through imperial and colonial power is virtually inseparable from the issues of race, racial relations and racial prejudice…The colonizer's inflated sense of self can only be sustained in contrast with a non self…the more remote, primitive and exotic a colonized population could be made to appear, the more legitimate its exploitation and repression would seem to be (122).

Whites' racism reinforced the ideology of white supremacy by denigrating blacks as inferior and uncivilized. They used it as a tool to legitimatize colonial plunder and atrocities. David Dabydeen exposes the warped rationale behind this thought process when he writes that,

> An indication of the primitivism of the African was the supposed absence of manufactures, sciences, arts, and systems of commerce within African society. It was repeatedly asserted that blacks were ignorant, unskilled and undeveloped creatures, their lack of scientific, industrial and commercial knowledge accounting for their savage morality. (5)

Liberated, educated and empowerment seeking blacks sought to reject this socio-cultural hegemony, the way narrator tries to. Fanon opines that "There is a fact: White men consider themselves superior to black men. There is another fact: Black men want to prove to white men at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect" (10). Narrator' attempts to establish his credentials as an intelligent and adept engineer, finds echo in Fanon's opinion.

He realizes that blacks have been trapped into stereotypes created by White history. On being asked by Mrs. Rutherford why he became an engineer, his thoughts go back to his native land, Guyana where he did his schooling. Mr. Leroy, his teacher who was an Englishman infested with colonial prejudices tells him one day that his chances of being an engineer are negligible "because an engineer is a man of grammar whereas you speak waywardly like the nigger you are!" (*Disappearance* 58). His colonial education breeds in him a contradiction of thoughts and feelings towards his ethnicity and his profession. However best he may try, he

cannot escape this history. He initially tries to forego his black identity by trying to embrace and mingle with the host nation but his attempts at assimilation, though proactive on his part, are rendered futile by the Whites who have been conditioned to think of blacks as outsiders and inferiors. At one point he ponders over the dismal state in which blacks live in England. He says:

> On the few occasions I had to travel to London I would see thousands of blacks like myself. They seemed to live mostly in boxes made of concrete or brick… It was doubtful whether they could ever understand the mythic power of garden which had drawn them here, a garden they could never possess, being holed up in poverty and city slums (Disappearance 68).

It is Mrs. Rutherford who exhorts the narrator to maintain his African identity. She does not want him to get incorporated in the mainstream materialistic world that sustains itself on predatory practices. He should keep alive his African temperament which entails a sensitiveness towards nature. He is expected to escape the onslaught of technology. He in a way represents Africa which is fast losing its identity under the sedative influence of West. Mrs. Rutherford reminds him of the slave system and how Whites exploited Blacks but he is swept off the senses by the influence of Professor Fenwick and responds "A single act of kindness on his part has the power to erase a whole history of crime. 'It's the future that matters…I'm me, not a mask or a movement of history. I'm not black, I'm an engineer." (*Disappearance* 93). His statement reflects the sway of white ideology. For him, the injustices of the whites could be condoned off simply through an acknowledgement of his scientific temper. He is ready to forgo his cultural identity to embrace an identity based on vocation. His words, however, bespeak his frustration with the current discourse which hinders his professional progress on the basis of colour. Unlike whites, his race becomes a distinguished marker in his vocation. Instead of engaging with it with conviction and assertion, he tries to be an escapist.

But Mrs. Rutherford asks him, directly as well as indirectly, that he must maintain his individuality and Africanness, which makes him distinct but definitely not inferior, from the white west. His beauty lies in his difference which he must not forsake for the lure of assimilation. He is to rectify both the history and representations. He can reinterpret and disseminate a new understanding of this history, which is not contaminated with prejudices.

Mrs. Rutherford brings home the fact that by denouncing his cultural history, he has lost touch with his real self. She tells him:

> You had lost yourself in your computations so as to disguise all the traces of your African past, but these masks brought you face to face with yourself. That's why they still set you on edge…I watch you watching the masks in silence, but I can hear all the grating noises of your thoughts (*Disappearance* 139).

Narrator's ideas about himself and the world gets challenged during his stay with Mrs. Rutherford. The latter brings to fore some of the challenges with her preoccupation with African history and traditions. Masks, collected by the English woman, makes this black engineer reflect,

> What was enthralling was the space between wanting to know and the experience itself, which would instantly annihilate all knowledge. It was the space I had put between myself and the African masks as I stood slightly behind Mrs. Rutherford listening to her explanations. I stood behind her to shield myself from being seduced by the power of their ugliness, their inhumaneness (*Disappearance* 20).

Initially reluctant to relate to his African ancestry, the narrator gradually tries to fill in the cultural and historical lacunae through his conversations with his landlady. Exhorted by Mrs. Rutherford's consistent persuasion to delve deep into his self vis-à-vis cultural sojourn, the narrator, disillusioned by Mr. Fenwick's treachery and all that he stood for, refutes the stereotyping and tries to acquire a 'positionality'. Making comparison between sea and the history, and pondering over his positioning, he muses:

> I was seduced by its endless transformations, which promised me freedom from being fixed as an African, a West Indian, a member of a particular nationality of a particular epoch…yet I wanted to be somebody, not anything,…deep down I knew a dam was my identity, an obstacle I sought to put between shore and sea to assert my substantialness, my indissoluble presence, without reference to colour, culture or age (Disappearance 118).

He thus relocates his African identity on English soil and let cultural amnesia forego so as to arrive at a better understanding of himself as well as of his surroundings. His realization is in sync with the postpositivist standpoint that "it is possible to be wrong about one's experience…so it is possible to arrive at more accurate interpretations of it" (Moya13). Initially

binding himself with his professional identity, he comes to the realization that nobody is going to remember his name or place in the village. Mere clinging to professional acumen cannot bring any respite from the mental and emotional upheavals generated by diasporic status. He must look back and deep into his past and culture. He realizes that "The wall I helped to make would be acknowledged for a moment but I would soon be washed out of their memories. Future generations would see the wall as something that was always there, a quintessentially English monument; the efforts…erased by ignorance or national sentiment" (*Disappearance* 155).

Narrator's initial shunning of Guyanese identity and subsequent longing for affiliation to some substantial ethnic core of identity so as to resist and counter the Englishness and its hidden problems, which always makes him feel an outsider and intruder, is so well explicated by Gerd Baumann's observation when he says,

> …people desire a sense of ethnic commonality…These ethnic bonds are not primordial, as if given by nature or biology; yet like kindred and whole kinship systems, even a knowledge of their social constructedness and contextuality does not stop them from feeling primordial, even one negates them by an act of rebellion or individuation, depending on context or conviction (46).

The other characters which become instrumental in bringing about change in narrator's perception about diasporic positioning are Jamal and Swami. Jamal is a young resilient schoolboy of Indian descent who becomes a hero of his peers, including the narrator, by taking upon himself the blame of every mischief, and thus saving boys from punishment. But when he shuns the role of scapegoat/martyr, he is shunned out of the boys' community. His past 'heroism' did not save him from jeers and taunts of boys. This memory of Jamal from childhood ushers in a new perception in narrator. Analyzing his own positioning in an English village as a black outsider, he realizes that playing strong and scapegoat was perhaps the only way for Jamal to exist in a West Indian village ridden with prejudices about Indian coolies. With Mr. Fenwick's shady deals in front of him, he tries to put himself in place of Jamal. Prejudiced against, because of being an 'outsider', he too might be expected to play a scapegoat. This might open some chance of absorption with the group but he decides not to fall prey to the temptation. Instead of waiting to be shunted out unceremoniously, he decides to part ways and move forward with a new perception and has finally "decided to go home"

(*Disappearance* 152). Narrator's reckoning of his African identity proves the postpositivist realism claim that one cannot "have unmediated knowledge. Instead, it claims that, through interpretation and theory mediation of the world, one can more or less accurately grasp the complexity of the social processes and multiple conditioning that make up the "truth" of experience" (Hames-Garcia 109). He now tries to understand his social location from a new vantage point. With the mediation of Mrs. Rutherford's theories about Africa and England, he is better placed to interpret his experiences by taking his vocation and cultural identity in conjunction.

Narrator's moment of reckoning brings him face to face with the necessity to belong to his ancestry and to dissociate with the English façade at the same time. He has understood that:

> We cannot really claim ourselves morally and politically until we have reconstructed our collective identity…this is not simply a project of adding to one's ancestral line…it often involves fundamental discoveries about what ancestry is, what continuity consists in, how cultural meanings do not just sustain themselves through history but are in fact materially embodied and fought for (Mohanty 54).

He has to carve an identity for himself. He realizes that despite all his efforts to put on an English character, he cannot dissociate himself from his ethnicity and race. He realizes that "our identities are ways of making sense of our experiences…In them, and through them, we learn to define and reshape our values and our commitments, we give texture and form to our collective future" (Mohanty 43). He cannot be standing on the same plane with either Mrs. Rutherford or Christie or the Indian coolies. Prejudice, either his towards Indian coolies or the English's towards him, will ever form a binary. He must not try to blur this. He should rather try to transcend it so as to walk with confidence, equipped with the native knowledge (and not the imperial interpretation) of cultural heritage.

Described by Karen McIntyre as the novella that "very quickly throws racial and ethnic categories into flux, emphasizing the difficulty of pigeonholing people according to stable ethnic groupings" (154), *The Intended* (1991) deals with the diasporic experience of its unnamed teenage narrator who seeks to forge an identity in the alien land. The layers of diasporic existence with its physical and emotional aspects is presented through narrator's interaction with other diasporic characters and their relationships with whites. The narrator seeks to find identity and social prestige in an alien land through his education and literary

learning. He wishes to belong to England as it represents everything positive to him. The white culture for him is equivalent to sophistication, civilization and intellect. Fascinated with the white discourse, he deems his own Guyanese self as inferior. He feels that he can make up for his racial deficiency with his superior literary talent which he seeks to explore and polish by taking admission in Oxford University. He feels "I will grow…will absorb the nutrients of quiet scholarship. I will emerge from it and be somebody, some recognizable shape, not a lump of aborted, anonymous flesh" (*The Intended* 141). His perception about England and of all the good things that it stand for comes out of a knowledge which Paula M.L. Moya says "is the product of particular kinds of social practice…what humans are able to think of as "good" is intimately related to (although not monocausally determined by) the social and natural "facts" of the world" (14). To the narrator, England with its riches and prosperity is the zenith of social and cultural perfection. Comparing it to the impoverished homeland, he obviously finds it better. The narrative back home, which calls social practice, depicted England as the land of opportunities and wealth which is superior and is therefore to be emulated.

Having left Guyana, his native land, he arrives in England with hopes to excel in education. Guyana, despite its multiple problems still had the succor of mother's love and grandparents' indulgence which he misses badly in this country. Lonely, he seeks familial comfort in the company of other South-Asian immigrants and their families. To the English, they all are either coloureds or 'pakis'. Their distinct native identities are ignored to club them together under one degrading moniker. The novel depicts the dissimilarities that exist within a diaspora. Nasim speaks Urdu and is a Muslim while Shaz despite being of the same religion speaks only English and has never been to a mosque. Patel, on the other hand, is a Gujarati Hindu and the narrator himself comes from a converted Christian background. He speaks English and bits of creole and feels guilt for not being religious and attending church as his grandfather would have expected from him. Such diverse background and religious affiliations of these characters makes it clear that the formation of any view about the racial or cultural uniformity of a particular group or ethnicity, is bound to be limited and thus faulty. He realizes that despite all the cultural complexity which he is confronted with, he is just an Other to the British people. Such bracketing of people under one category and shunning of differences has been termed as 'restriction' by postpositivist realist Michael R. Hames Garcia. He calls the "process by which such individuals come to be misinterpreted and misunderstood "restriction"

(104). He says that a self is not a one-dimensional entity rather it is composed of mutual constitution of various aspects of an individual's life and orientations and "Politically salient aspects of the self, such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and class, link and imbricate themselves in fundamental ways…they do not simply intersect but blend, constantly and differently, like the colors of a photograph" (103). He says that the multidimensional aspects of identity are often ignored under the "logic of domination to which the self becomes subjected" (104). This restriction of identity fuels certain political interests and has hidden motivations and agendas which he terms as "opaque" (106). The blatant ignorance of cultural differences between the identities of different boys in the novel bespeak the politics that go behind such narratives. Lack of knowledge about an individual's racial, cultural or gender identity cannot simply be condoned off as the ignorance, it is rather to be understood as a deep seated and well manipulated strategy to sideline or degrade some identities.

The desire to assimilate with the host culture leads him to distance himself from his roots and it becomes evident when he tries to maintain distance from his friends. The negative image created by the white west is internalized by the narrator and consequently, he starts getting embarrassed by the indigenous culture reflected in the attire and mannerisms of native people. He seeks to distance himself from this and tries to project himself as different and 'English'.

With an urge to assimilate with the host culture, he forgets his mother's parting words "you is we, remember you is we" (*The Intended* 32). The mother wanted him to remain true to his roots and not to forget his cultural legacy but he tries to distance himself from his roots and this becomes evident when he decides to distance himself from his Asian friends. Instead of deriving strength from his cultural roots, he starts abhorring it. He fails to achieve the "cognitive task of "rememory" (which) is dependent on an emotional achievement, on the labour of trusting-oneself, one's judgements, one's companions" (Mohanty 45). The white hegemony takes control over him and it makes clear the "constructed nature of experience (and) why there is no guarantee that my experiences will lead me to some common core of values or beliefs that link me with every other member of my cultural value" (Mohanty 35). When his friend Nasim lands in hospital after a racist attack, he goes to meet him. Instead of sympathy, he feels a sense of humiliation when he sees Asian women in multi coloured attires and men talking in their respective mother tongues. He feels that these people are being derided by English patients and their attendants and this makes him very uncomfortable. He says "I

wished I were invisible" (*The Intended* 15). Instead of showing solidarity, his inferiority complex makes him distance himself from them. Like the narrator of *Disappearance*, he too tries to delink himself from his history and roots. In an interview with Wolfgang Binder, Dabydeen describes his youth in strikingly similar terms:

> I went about with Asian boys of my age . . . and the Asian boys were very ashamed, as I was, when we walked home from school and saw a couple of Asian women in saris who obviously looked different . . . Or we would be ashamed of who we were in a train carriage or in a bus, and two Asians spoke loudly or audibly in Urdu or whatever. In other words, there would be a very great pressure among us to become invisible. (69-70).

The experience of humiliation suffered by the narrator is not purely personal. Fascination with the English culture and mannerisms is an indication that "even our deepest personal experiences are socially constructed, mediated by visions and values that are "political" in nature, that refer outward to the world beyond the individual" (Mohanty 34). His personal experiences are influenced by the social forces around him which project native culture as backward and regressive and English culture as progressive and sophisticated. The personal thus becomes the political. The experience of shame is generated by the desire to assimilate with the host culture by casting off the native cultural identity.

His relationship with Janet, the white girl too is an effort at assimilation with the host culture. For him, Janet represents English culture and sophistication. He often compares her with the women back home and the comparison always concludes with the definite superiority of white woman over the 'desi' women. He thinks that to assimilate he must have an Oxford degree in hand and with a sound academic career, he hopes to marry a genteel white lady. He tries to conceal his straitened circumstances from Janet with a hope to develop the relationship. The two engage in an unsuccessful sexual act which has symbolic significance and can be analyzed as the narrator's inability to merge with the host culture despite his extreme affinity to its culture and lifestyle. Margery Fee posits that "This theme is undercut mainly by irony and structural disjunctions in a way that problematizes this desire by revealing it as a construct of racist discourse and racist institutions that permit only a token few members of racial minorities to succeed" (109). The narrator, blinded by the superficial lustre of British culture, fails to see the politics that go behind the formation of prevalent narratives. The narrative of

English superiority quintessentially degrades the other cultures and project them as dialectically opposite to its core values. The variability of values is both natural and desirable to have a rich array of multiple cultures that project humanity in its varied hues and flavours. This omission and ignorance on the part of narrator makes him fall for the lure of assimilation and rejection of indigenous identity. But his endeavours do not achieve the desired results and this symbolically gets reflected in his failed relationship with Janet.

The novel also talks about the violence perpetrated upon the non-whites. This violence is not only physical but also psychological. Narrator's friend Nasim and his brother are attacked without provocation by the white boys who are out "for the kill, flinging heavy punches when they sensed panic and helpless terror." (*The Intended* 14). The attack breeds fear in the mind of family and neighbours. The struggle of existence in diaspora where "it was hopeless trying to find accommodation in a white household" (*The Intended* 68) gets more difficult with the racial attack as it renders them more vulnerable and apprehensive. The whites try to degrade other ethnicities in more than one way. When the narrator lands in the job of a ticket collector for an artificial World cruise at Battersea Fun Fair, he witnesses this white violence which resides in mind and erupts out upon finding an appropriate opportunity as in the case of attack on Nasim. He sees that the images inside the tunnel sexualize and stereotype black bodies. Black men are painted as nude savages while black women are shown to have heavy breasts and buttocks. The graffiti becomes a site of racial and sexual violence. In one of the images, the narrator sees that someone has erased black man's genitals which is symbolic of castration. It appears to be an attempt to emasculate black masculinity which whites dread. Joseph, another of narrator's friend tries to repaint these images and says that "The white man want clear everything away, clear away the green bush and the blacks and turn the whole place into ivory…" (*The Intended* 73). Joseph once confronts him if any of his English books carry the whole story about Africa and the narrator is left pondering as "None of us had any answers to these questions. The only pictures of Africa were those on television, mostly waterless children, flies, deserts" (*The Intended* 78). The West shows an impoverished picture of Africa. The indigenous culture, traditions, language and the rationale behind these is never brought to light as everything African is branded as savage. Joseph's disruptive and interrogative mediation in the prevalent discourse about blacks makes the narrator as well the reader thinks otherwise. Satya Mohanty considers such oppositional struggles of meaning making important

as "without these alternative constructions and accounts our capacity to interpret and understand the dominant ideologies and institutions is limited to those created or sanctioned by these very ideologies and institutions" (*Literary Theory* 213). Joseph puts the racial and sexualized images of blacks into dock and provides the narrator with an alternate interpretation. His stance stands in sync with postpositivist realism as it proves that "through interpretation and theory mediation of the world, one can more or less accurately grasp the complexity of the social processes and multiple conditioning that make up the "truth" of experience" (Hames-Garcia 109). Joseph stands opposite to the narrator in his acceptance of cultural identity. Unlike the narrator, Joseph does not experience any shame about his colour or culture. He rather tries to rectify the faulty interpretation and thus unsettles the deeply entrenched stereotypes. In this way, he makes one aware of the process of conditioning which influences an individual's thoughts and experiences within a social location.

In midst of all this, the narrator continues his dream of making it big in England and eventually succeeds in taking admission in Oxford. His desire to be completely English remains unfulfilled but his efforts for the same continue. He says, "Perhaps I am not English enough: a piece of pidgin, not knowing where the past ended, where the present began, not knowing how the future was to be made. The years at Oxford would see to that though" (*The Intended* 154). His keen desire to assimilate with the host culture is once pointed out by Patel to which he replies "All I want is to escape from this dirt and shame called Balham, this coon condition, this ignorance that prevents me from knowing anything, not even who we are, who they are" (*The Intended* 163). His search for a sense of belongingness remains incomplete till the end of the novel. Aspiring to be "surrounded by owned things, your own things" (*The Intended* 172), he starts his journey towards Oxford "wanting to be visible" (*The Intended* 173). He can acquire this visibility by embracing his cultural identity. With his learning, he can endeavour to remove the negative stereotypes associated with his cultural identity. He needs to learn and then prove that "our cultural identities (or the moral and political knowledge we might seek through them) are defined in a way that is historically open-ended, never frozen or settled once and for all" (Mohanty 55). He has to redefine himself and needs to understand his experiences in a new context.

The Counting House (1996) engages with the re-visitation of history to challenge the boundaries between official and unofficial narratives of the past. The novel is an attempt to

remember the poetics of migrations. It highlights the psychological dimensions of coolie indentureship as a means of 'writing back' to colonial representations of Indian laborers, thereby constructing an alternative migration narrative. “What happens to the characters in the novel corresponds to the real life experience of indentured labourers, swept up in the anonymous statistics of capitalism’s remorseless expansions across the globe” (Low 213). Gail Low suggests that the novel discloses how the imperialism had close links with sex and wealth. The novelist rebuts the colonizer’s moral justifications and shows that there were economic factors behind the sham white civilizing mission. In "Commerce and Slavery in Eighteenth Century Literature”, Dabydeen throws light on the perspective promoted by Whites and states that:

> The moral justification of the Slave Trade ranged from the argument that the trade was 'benevolent' in that it provided poor white people with employment, to the argument that the Slave Trade saved Africans from the bloody tyranny of their own countrymen and from being eaten by their fellow cannibals (5).

Through the story of Rohini and Vidia, the novelist presents the conditions under which Indians migrated for indentured labour and how their dreams and lives were shattered. Indians were enticed to go abroad with the fake promises of wealth and prosperity. The recruiter in the novel sways away the mind of gullible villagers with glowing albeit fake images of riches in Guyana. He says, “Guiana is the very land of Ramayana…it have so much gold there that you don’t have enough hand and neck and foot to wear bangle” (*The Counting House* 14). Battered by poverty, the credulous people would believe the stories of recruiters and readily took the ‘escape-route’. Dabydeen does not romanticize Indian scenario and depicts that the poverty and destitution compelled people to migrate. In an interview, he said “I reject any notion of home that is idyllic…India was a desperate and, in some ways, turmoiled place. We were…enslaved in the caste system and the women were enslaved in the sati system” (Dabydeen and Macedo 134). Vidia and Rohini were living hand to mouth in their village in India. For the incorrigible romantic Rohini, words of the recruiters were like God-sent. Moreover, the social bindings forced upon married women suffocated the free spirited and ambitious Rohini and to escape the same, she plans to migrate.

Indian men and women like Vidia and Rohini provided the white imperialists with cheap labour, thus increasing their profits. It also provided them with an alternate work force as

against the blacks. Tinker states that indenture, "provided a solution to the problem of maintaining an adequate supply of cheap labour" (21). Blinded by the hopes given by recruiter, many people migrated for indenture, unaware of the hardships lying ahead. Dabydeen informs that "Boat-loads of new coolies arrived to clear new fields or to replace those who succumbed to diseases…there was no shortage of ships from India to replenish the work gangs" (*The Counting House* 65). Rohini and Vidia arrive in Guyana with the hope of getting rich. Every week they count their earnings and expect the white master, Gladstone to reward them with a plot of land for their hard work. Vidia decides to speed up his race to be rich. He slept for lesser hours lest other indentures snatch away his chance of extra work and extra money. He nurses ill will against the black workers and consider them lazy and work shirkers. Determined to prove his worth, he works extra and says that "In Plantation Albion you could work till you dropped. Nigger people turned Christian so they could mimic English God and laze on Sunday" (*The Counting House* 63). Influenced by the ideology promoted by Whites against the Blacks, Vidia fails to see that blacks' conversion to Christianity is another tactic by whites to erase the indigenous identity of blacks. It shows that "the meanings we give our experiences are inescapably conditioned by the ideologies and "theories" through which we view the world" (Moya 81). Blacks' worship of elements of nature was dubbed as savage paganism by Whites and they were cajoled or forced to convert. Their conversion into Christianity did not bring them any rewards or perks. Vidia's experience is mediated by the theory about blacks propagated by the whites.

Dabydeen provides an in-depth exploration of the interactions among the various racialized groups on Plantation Albion. It examines the conflicts stemming from the colonial structure of the plantation's racial hierarchy while also thoughtfully considering instances of mutual empathy and solidarity between Indians and Afro-Creoles. Vidia's ignorance of the brutal conditions of servitude and the relentless workday under slavery is evident in his perspective. He criticizes Afro-Creoles for supposedly missing opportunities to accumulate wealth and accuses them of turning Christian to laze on Sundays. This reveals his belief that one's attitude toward work determines their value as a productive member of society, and by extension, their humanity. The text uses Vidia's viewpoint to echo a common theme in nineteenth-century colonial racial discourse—the contrast between the lazy African and the hard-working Indian. This viewpoint as Paula M.L. Moya says shows how "identities can be

both real and constructed: how they can be politically and epistemically significant, on the one hand, and variable, nonessential, and radically historical, on the other" (12). This becomes evident in the antagonism between the coolies and Africans. Coolies were thought to be the usurpers by Africans. Kampta, the defiant worker once confronts Vidia and says that:

> Coolie come here thinking the bush clear by itself and nobody plant the fields and miracle dig the canals, but miracle is nigger, and all the canal-water pool together is one drop compared to all the nigger sweat. When English kill a few, then coolie will know the truth that each penny Gladstone pay them make from the same metal as the bullet that bore into nigger backside long-time. (*The Counting House* 121).

He tries to makes Vidia understand that the white master exploits both the Africans and the coolies. He thus provides Vidia and reader with an alternative account of experience which is very important from the postpositivist realist viewpoint. Another African worker, Miriam questions the credibility of coolies and lashes out against them for not standing up for Kampta against the atrocities and injustice of Gladstone. She says that the white cruelty has dehumanized Kampta who "behave like crocodile and mongoose and snake" and rues that "blasted no-face no –tongue coolies" (*The Counting House* 138) will not believe her. After spending a humiliating life as a sexual slave for Gladstone, Miriam now feels that Rohini will replace her. This meant that the small favours that she would extract from Gladstone after sex will now stop. Feeling jealous and acrimonious towards Rohini, she says "her small heart swell in victory over a tired nigger like me who done drop many babies for Gladstone". Determined, not to forgo her rights, she says "Coolie can't just come and inherit we kingdom" (*The Counting House* 140). Dabydeen also shows that despite all the acrimony, both the Africans and Indian coolies managed to have cordial relations based on sympathy. We witness this in the case of Rohini and Miriam. Rohini goes mad after losing her child. This happens due to the shattering of her dreams of inheriting Gladstone's wealth by giving birth to his child. She loses Vidia too, who having known her infidelity decides to go back. Miriam tries to nurse her back to health and senses. The pain which Miriam feels on seeing Rohini's condition bespeaks her love and care. Miriam's change of heart comes with the knowledge that both her and Rohini's pain comes from the exploitation of Gladstone. Their experience of pain although different yet originates from the same source. Her position in the terms of postpositivist realism proves that "there are different ways that knowledge can be constructed and seeks a dialectical

meditation of experience with the understanding that theory-laden and socially constructed experiences can lead to a knowledge that is accurate and reliable" (Hames-Garcia 109). The novel shows how people acquire a gradual recognition of the dirty politics of the master. They realize that people are sacrificed to colonial capitalism irrespective of their ethnicity. The dirty game of antagonism or 'divide and rule' policy works in the favour of the power wielder. Dabydeen, by laying focus upon such relationships presents the need for deeper emotional and potentially impactful political solidarities. Najnin Islam says that:

> The discourse of race and the range of interracial intimacies that developed between Africans and Indians despite the colonizers – solidarities which have been rendered invisible in colonial accounts and, later, by cultural theory – assume centre-stage in the novel (5).

Through Kampta, the novelist explores the risks involved in rebellion against the master. Kampta deliberately disobeys the master and also steals from his garden. Through his open defiance of the authority, he invites trouble for himself in the form of open whip lashing. Through Kampta, Dabydeen substantiates the claim of postpositivist realism that "oppositional struggle is fundamental to our ability to understand the world more accurately" (Moya 86). Kampta is elder to Vidia by some ten years and Vidia often approaches him for guidance. Kampta lays bare the dehumanization of coolies; how they have lost their self-worth and dignity and have been rendered zero in their own minds. He says to Vidia that "here you are nothing…A coolie can multiply and minus quicker than whiteman can tally but a coolie is still 0…How will you look up to the stars when Gladstone will keep your head forever bow to the root of the cane?" (*The Counting House* 74). The white master punishes Kampta for his disobedience and the newly recruited coolies are summoned to witness the whiplashing as it would serve as a deterrent for them. The novelist presents the functioning of power structures through the merciless beating of Kampta and the reaction of coolies to it. The beating is announced beforehand and it becomes an occasion of entertaining spectacle for some. People acquire thrill from such incidents and assure their own safety by siding with the master. Nobody comes out to help the injured Kampta except Miriam, another black worker. "None dared to jeopardise their welfare by offering to help Kampta" and the defiant man "raised his head with his last strength and grinned at them" (*The Counting House* 77). The relationship between Kampta and Miriam too is an act of subversion. Gladstone satisfies his lust by making

Miriam his sexual slave and Kampta's sex with Miriam besides the grave of Mrs. Gladstone is his attempt to subvert the authority.

Through the inter-racial interactions of his characters, the novelist draws attention to the fact that a given identity does not exist in vacuum, rather it carries the social, political or economic weight. Like a postpositivist realist, he understands that "as long as identities remain economically, politically, and socially significant, determining the justifiability of particular identity claims will remain a necessary part of progressive politics" (Moya 23). The stereotypes attached to both the blacks and coolies were vigorously promoted as their entrenchment in the minds of both the parties benefitted the imperial master. Dabydeen wants the reader to probe deeper and cull out knowledge which can further be used in contemporary situations.

The novel also brings into focus the possibility of error in the interpretation of experience. This error is embraced by postpositivists as essential to arrive at better understanding through revision of experiences generated under certain social, political or historical circumstances. "The realists' willingness to admit the (in principal, endless) possibility of error in the quest of knowledge" (Moya 13) enables them to reach a more accurate (but not the final) understanding of experiences. Vidia and Rohini erred in their understanding of both Guyana and the Africans. Miriam too fell in the same trap and perceived coolies as the usurpers. But both the parties eventually realize that their experiences are impacted by the politics of white master who plays by the maxim of "divide and rule". This recognition, although achieved tragically, helps them achieve solidarity and thus prove that "an individual's experiences will influence, but not entirely determine, the formation of her cultural identity" (Moya 83). By embracing solidarity, they remould their experience to forge a new identity.

The novels under study prove the postpositivist realist claim that "personal experience is socially and theoretically constructed" (Mohanty 33) and "our ability to understand fundamental aspects of our world will depend on our ability to acknowledge and understand the social, political, economic, and epistemic consequences of our own social location" (Moya 85). Through the stories of various characters created by Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen, we come across a struggle to understand an individual's positioning in the society which binds one to specific categories. Their stories prove that "as long as social subordination is a central feature of our society, the intellectual analyses of people who are marginalized and oppressed are crucial to an accurate account of social power and the possibility of political

transformation" (Moya 20). All of these diasporic characters endeavour to forgo the cultural and racial branding in different ways to arrive at alternate sets of positionings and positionalities. In the process they reveal "where and why identities are problematic and where and why they are empowering" (Moya 17). The experiences which these characters undergo and the new outlooks and perceptional changes that they then acquire is well encapsulated in the words that, "The alternate constructions and accounts generated through oppositional struggle provide new ways of looking at our world that always complicate and often challenge dominant conceptions of what is "right", "true", and "beautiful" (Moya 86). Nash takes a subversive route after tasting the pungent taste of subservience and sycophancy, Martha tries to shield herself with the memories of past as well as with the hope for future; Joyce and Travis discard the moribund, regressive and oppressive racial categorization and sojourn on a new road of reconciliation, unconditional love and empathy, and Leila learns emotional independence and Keith reviews his perspective towards life and relationships. The unnamed engineer recuperates from his complexes generated by blinding glare of western ethos and the teenage narrator goes on to seek his identity after having experienced various influences vis-à-vis his companions. Characters of *The Counting House* deal with the ever-new challenges thrown over them through a new positionality of love and care, shunning away the racial differences.

The novels under study are in league with postpositivist realist theory which contends that "identities are not something to transcend or subvert but something we need to engage with and attend to" (Moya 17). The novels posit identity as the focus of critical scrutiny, thereby endorsing its epistemological significance and socio-cultural implications. The characters play out "reflexivity" which "is an acute awareness (however contingent) of contradictions between positioning and positionality that prepare us, make us ready so-to-speak, to seek new understandings and explanations that can point the way to emancipatory practices and, by the same token, unmask false antagonisms" (Sánchez 43). Quite in consonance with Sánchez's argument, the characters acquire their agency, even if feeble or momentary, by understanding their subservient positioning in the society and thereby, making efforts to reject or surpass it by acquiring a consciously chosen assertive and confident positionality.

Stuart Hall talks about the positioning and creation of identities within the discourses of history and culture: “Identity is formed at the unstable point where the ‘unspeakable’ stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history, of a culture” (44). The novels under study prove that the interface of historical and cultural praxis create these ‘unstable points’ and each individual’s/character’s experience of it and reaction to it is diverse and distinct. For Nash, this instability came vis-à-vis his interaction with Liberia; for Martha, it came in the form of westward bound pioneers; inter-racial blossoming of love between Joyce and Travis introduced the instability. For Leila, Michael desertion and for Keith, his relationship with father and son acted as the point of instability and consequent identity formation. In the case of Guyanese Engineer, the interface came in the form of Mr. Fenwirk and Mrs. Rutherford, while for the narrator of *The Intended*, admission in Oxford becomes a test as well as parameter of his subjectivity. Miriam and Rohini come to terms with the historical forces to understand the value of solidarity. The socio-historical praxis of the novels and the experiences of its characters prove that “the different identity claims cannot be examined, tested, and judged without reference to existing social and economic structures” (Moya11).

The novels examine identity as a central subject of critical analysis, emphasizing its epistemological importance and socio-cultural implications. Through the narratives of various characters, we witness the struggle to comprehend one's place in a diaspora. These diasporic characters seek to transcend cultural and racial labels in diverse ways, forging alternative identities and positionalities. They gain agency—however fleeting or fragile—by recognizing their subordinate status in society and consciously striving to reject or transcend it, ultimately adopting a more assertive and self-determined positionality.

The novels depict that displacement and belonging are the central grounds of identity formation in diaspora. The chronicles and discourses produced by these identities, both by individuals as well as writers, are divergent, and therefore open up new avenues of analysis. Postpositivist Realism as Hames-Garcia says “calls for a constant process of verification and revision with regard to the status of identities. To account for multiplicity, social identities can never be viewed as static entities sutured at all ends” (111). The understanding of these characters’ identities is neither full nor final. Different social categories placed in their respective social locations can generate new understanding of the contours of their diasporic identity. The revision and verification hold the promise of a genuine quest of knowledge.

CHAPTER 3

Examining Women's Identity through Postpositivist Realism

A diversified range of critical and theoretical approaches have sought to disentangle the knotty issues of identity. Satya Mohanty say that, "Identities are theoretical constructions that enable us to read the world in specific ways" (43). And a woman's identity when seen through the prism of postpositivist realism and feminism, can lead one to novel perspectives and to new interpretation of experiences. It provides a nuanced understanding of the social construction of gender; how gender is not simply a biological fact but is socially constructed through language, culture and history. Postpositivist realism, Mohanty states does not only "organize the 'pregiven' facts about the world; they also make it possible to detect new ones…by guiding us to new patterns of salience and relevance, teaching us what to take seriously and what to reinterpret" (49). Understanding of gender is meditated by subjective perspectives and experiences within a particular socio-cultural location and is therefore subject to interpretation and revision. Caroline S. Hau says that the new studies being done in the theory of feminism by and for the women of colour is an example of "interpretative efforts by feminists" (157), quite in consonance with Mohanty's statement. Lorraine S. Gilpin validates the point when she says that, "We develop our beliefs, attitudes, and values, the components of identity, through cognitive and affective processes from within our sociopolitical locations" (10). Thus, the social, cultural, and political surroundings of an individual impact the formation of beliefs and values which lead to a particular identity formation.

By employing postpositivist realism within a feminist framework, one can explore how gendered power relations are manifested and perpetuated within society; how social norms, institutions, and discourses construct and enforce gender roles and hierarchies. The intersection of both these theories can offer a theoretical perspective to investigate the complex power dynamics of identity formations and experiences. Paula Moya argues that women's identity when seen from a postpositivist realist framework, comes out "not as a principle of abstract oppositionality but as a historically and materially grounded perspective which feminists can work to disclose the complicated workings of oppression and resistance" (63). Both

postpositivist realism and feminism question the idea of objective and value-free knowledge. They recognize that knowledge is influenced by subjective experiences, social contexts, and power dynamics. By acknowledging the situated nature of knowledge, they challenge the notion of a single, universal truth and emphasize the importance of diverse perspectives and multiple ways of knowing. Srilkala Narayan's viewpoint in this context is worth notice:

> It is the recognition of situated forms of experience that serves to broaden the parameters of any debate. It rejects essentialist understanding of experience as self-evident (i.e. because I am woman/disabled, I must be oppressed) and unlike post-structuralist thought, it does not consider the fluid, continually shifting, multi-locational nature of identity as lacking in theoretical value; rather it perceives this as crucial to the argument for experience as epistemically significant…their theorizing seeks to imbricate the immense variability implicit within the processes of identity formation by certainly recognizing all experience as socially constructed… (105).

The imbrication of varied social categories within a social location generate a distinct experience and this experience with its 'situatedness' is important from a postpositivist lens as it holds the promise of multiple interpretations and revisions.

Postpositivist realism asserts that our external reality and identity are shaped in the crucible of historically generated power relations which operate within certain social constructions. The focus of feminism is on examining and transforming the gender inequalities embedded historically in patriarchal systems. Scholars are of the view that "feminist theory has long acknowledged the importance of situated knowledges (or, in critical realist terms, epistemic relativism), and has called for the coming together of various different vantage points so that reality may be better understood" (Gunnarson et al 438). It seeks to investigate the narratives and discourses which lead to the construction of gender, thereby seeking access to the alleys through which power lends its operation to such regressive constructions.

Postpositivist realism and feminism share a common understanding that gender is a social construct. They reject the notion that gender is purely biologically determined and emphasize the role of cultural, historical, and social factors in shaping gender roles, expectations, and identities. Both perspectives critique the essentialist views that reduce gender to fixed and predetermined categories. While delving into the matters pertaining to women's

identity, Postpositivist realist theory intersects with feminist theory in many ways. Lena Gunnarsson, Angela Martinez Dy and Michiel van Ingen put forward their opinion in this context when they say that "Feminist standpoint theory, which foregrounds how embodying a subordinated identity can be an asset in processes of disclosing the nature of oppressive structures, is central to postpositivist realism" (433). Both of these theories lead one to investigate and understand how the complex interactions between individual agency and social structures held within the crucible of gendered power dynamics provide new contours and shapes to identities.

One major aspect that brings both these theories together is that they recognize identities as a fluid rather than a static phenomenon. Postpositivist realism stresses upon the historical and social context of identities and emphasizes upon this process as quintessential to understand how identities are shaped and negotiated. Feminism draws attention to the social and historical ways and methods through which gender norms are internalized and gendered identities are perpetuated.

Social categories or social locations (as postpositivist realists call them) such as class, colour, gender, political affiliations, race etc. are important to be understood and analyzed when one sets out to interrogate how different identities intersect. This intersection and interplay of identities is important to both the postpositivist realism and feminism.

> This is no surprise, as many of the most influential contributions of feminist theory have centered on epistemological concerns, especially the interrogation of 'malestream' notions of objectivity and scientific truth. By challenging positivist and empiricist assumptions about a straightforward relationship of correspondence between reality and knowledge, scholars … have foregrounded the situated character of all knowledge claims… (Gunnarson et al 433).

Both of these critical approaches analyze the means by which various forms of oppression generated by power structures as well as the privilege afforded to some, transect to provide shape to an individual's experiences and identities. A thorough examination of the power dynamics operating at the back of identity formation is crucial to both the proponents of postpositivist realism as well as the feminism. They seek to understand the politics of identity and sets out to investigate how certain discursive influences and dominant narratives impact construction of identity and how different individuals respond to these politics. These

approaches provide a veritable lens to scrutinize the complex nuances of identity. They try to unveil the socio-cultural and historical aspects that mould identities and thus try to comprehend the play of power dynamics.

In the present study, the interaction of these critical theories is being used to understand the varied nuances of women's identity; to see how oppressive power structures get challenged, thereby opening up new channels of social change. Through the recognition of identity as a social construct where gender and power play its role, one can expect to subvert the stereotypes and look for emancipatory pathways which are more diverse as well as inclusive.

Fluidity and social construction of identities come to fore while exploring them through the postpositivist realism and feminism. Where the former focuses upon its social and historical dimensions, the latter sheds light on its gender aspects. An understanding gained through the blend of these two approaches deepens one's perception about power operations within identity formations and how these power plays intersect to perpetuate prejudices, inequalities and injustices. Susan Sánchez-Casal and Amie A. Macdonald elucidates the point:

> Postpositivist realist theory asserts that identity and experience are mutually constitutive, that one's social location will to a large extent determine the experiences one has, and that in turn, one's cultural identity will affect how one makes sense of those experiences. By understanding experience as theory-mediated, realist theory asserts that cultural identities can be more or less epistemically reliable depending on the theoretical bias through which experience is interpreted. For example, when a person takes on the cultural identity woman, her experience as a woman is mediated by various—and potentially contradictory—theories; consequently, her identity as a woman does not automatically produce accurate knowledge about gender oppression in a self-evident way (2).

Postpositivist realism tries to interpret experience by putting social categories (example: women) within particular social locations. In this way, they try to achieve alternate set of interpretations so as to vanquish over 'purist' notions of knowledge.

While postpositivist realism and feminism differ in their primary focus—epistemology for the former and gender inequality for the latter—they both emphasize the importance of agency and how one can reshape social structures, and work towards more equitable and just

societies. Both theories, however, acknowledge that gender is not solely determined by biology but is socially constructed. They emphasize that gender roles, expectations, and inequalities are products of cultural, historical, and power dynamics. By putting the social construction of gender into focus, researchers can explore how gender norms and ideologies shape individuals' experiences and the broader social structures.

Reflexivity is the cornerstone of both the postpositivist realism and feminism. It is an acknowledgment that an individual/ societal/ institutional perspective influences the production of knowledge and can therefore be revised from time to time. Feminist standpoint offers novel insights and perspectives into the situation of women that can challenge dominant knowledge paradigms. This reflexivity of both the theories can help one to better understand the complexities of gendered experiences and power dynamics. Besides this, both the theories find common ground in their recognition of intersectionality i.e. an individual holds multiple social identities (such as gender, race, class, and sexuality) that intersect and mutually influence their experiences. Bringing postpositivist realism and feminism together can help one to see the multidimensional nature of oppression and privilege and to explore how different forms of social categorizations interact and shape individuals' lives. They both seek to uncover and challenge systems of domination and oppression. By employing a postpositivist realist perspective, feminist scholars can investigate the ways in which power operates, both at the structural level and in individual interactions, and analyze how power shapes gendered experiences and social outcomes.

This postpositivist approach aligns with the theory of performativity given by Judith Butler and Patricia Hill Collins' standpoint theory which deals with black feminist epistemology. They all establish identity as a social construct. Postpositivist realists' assert that reality exists independently of one's perceptions, albeit its access is always mediated through socio-historically situated frameworks. It is through these frameworks that one acquires knowledge. This assertion finds parallels with Collins standpoint theory where she avers that knowledge is influenced by an individual's social location which is affected by race, class, and gender. Each social location generates a unique experience and perspective. Both these theories lay focus on social location and its importance in the generation of knowledge. Postpositivist realist recognition of social categories (race, class, gender etc.) as discursive constructs

embedded in particular historical and cultural structures and times, bring to fore their impact on the real lives of women as against mere theoretical concepts.

Both Butler and postpositivist realists reject essentialist understandings of identity by bringing into focus the contention that the social production of identity is controlled by material and institutional realities. Postpositivist realism enriches Butler's theory by asserting that while gender is performative, the scripts available for performance are not infinite. These performances take place and acquire dimensions within real historical and material conditions, such as patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism. Both of these theories lay weight behind the constructed and contingent nature of identity, therby shunning the notion of a fixed, essential womanhood.

A conscious individual sets out to examine the dominant narratives and discourses which impact both the individual experiences and social structures. Such a conscious effort may bring about a resistance and challenging of the oppressive or hegemonic power structures, thereby giving boost to the marginalized/ silenced voices which can further promote emancipatory efforts, social justice, and equality. Satya P. Mohanty considers the investigation of women's experience from the postpositivist realist viewpoint in this way.

> The theoretical notion "women's lives' refers not just to the experiences of women but also to a particular social arrangement of gender relations and hierarchies which can be analyzed and evaluated. The standpoint of women in this society is not self-evidently deduced from the "lived experience" of individual women or group of women. Rather, the standpoint is based in 'women's lives' to the extent that it articulates their material and epistemological interests (39).

The novels under study bring forth the injustices suffered by women in a patriarchal society. The issue of identity becomes more troublesome in the case of women. Buffeted by the adverse circumstances and trying to prove the validity of their existence, these women seem to be baffled, groping for ways to sustain themselves in the maze of existence. . In sync with the postpositivist realism they demonstrate how "the different social locations (such as gender, race, class and sexuality) together constitute an individual's social location (and) are causally related to the experiences she will have" (Moya 81). Women in the novels hold different "social locations" and their experiences are therefore varied and distinct

They try to cope up with new challenges and devise ways to wriggle out of the dismal situations through defiance, submission, denial, or compromise. Some of these women are black and Terborg-Penn uses the term "Re-formation" to describe the identity formation/mutation of African women in diaspora. She says:

> Identity change is more than a singular transformation among the African Diaspora women. "Re-formation" can be defined as identity changes in significant aspects of women's lives, including social class, language, courtship, religion, and citizenship. All or some aspects change when identity re-formation occurs, often through the process of migration and assimilation, but also through the survival strategy that emancipated and impoverished African Diaspora women used to improve their children's survival, such as accepting advances when targeted as sexual partners by non-African descended males (6).

The novels show the struggles of women as they try to navigate their way through life. Committed to survival, they face the challenges at many levels- physical, socio-economic, emotional, and psychological. These women characters are all distinct in their social locations and experiences. We meet immigrant women, former slaves, and white ladies. Bound in the roles of mothers, wives, lovers, friends, or sisters, the reader finds them charting the life journey, facing challenges and forming responses as a woman. Their positioning in society is of paramount importance. As Paula M.L. Moya says that "the different identity claims cannot be examined, tested, and judged without reference to the existing social and economic structures" (11). Further, the experiences they undergo and the interpretations which they and the reader make of their experiences, the knowledge they acquire, depends on the social location. As Satya P Mohanty says that ""personal experience" is socially and "theoretically" constructed and it is precisely in this mediated way that it yields knowledge" (33). The personal experiences of these women characters with its varied socio-political influences throws light on the treacherous route which a female immigrant has to traverse to acquire an identity.

Caryl Phillips's delineation of women characters has received praise from many critics. His in-depth understanding of a woman's heart and mind, replete with her apprehensions, dilemmas, hopes and love is so sensitively presented that one cannot help but appreciate his efforts to reach to the consciousness of women. Asked in an interview about his focus on

women in the novels and about his ability to delve deeper into the heart of opposite sex, which Carol Margaret Davison calls "cross-gender writing" (93), he answered that:

> Women's position on the edge of society- both central in society, but also marginalized by men—seems to me, in some way, to mirror the rather tenuous and oscillating relationship that all sorts of people, in this case, specifically, black people, have in society, and maybe there is some kind of undercurrent of communicable empathy that's going on. I do think that to write only from the point of view of a male is to exclude half of the world and I obviously want to include as many different points of view as I can, so I'm very pleased that I've never really felt a problem doing that (94).

His novels reflect the emotions of women's hearts as they crisscross the paths of their troubled lives. The empathy which he shares with his women characters becomes evident in the emotional involvement which a reader feels with these characters.

Caryl Phillips's *The Final Passage* (1985) is the story of Leila and her relationship with Michael as the couple leave their Caribbean birthplace to find better avenues in Britain and to look after Leila's ailing mother. Presented in a non-chronological order, the novel takes us into the journey of Leila's struggles with present agony, past disappointments, and future concerns. Susanne Pichler says, "The non-chronological ordering of these sections in the novel is a perfect metaphor of Leila's state of being- displaced and dislocated- both in the Caribbean and in England" (53). Phillips takes the reader deep into the factors behind Leila's displacement and disorientation.

Leila with her lighter skin is a woman who is treated with a little awe in a land inhabited by blacks. Born out of rape by a white man, she is always out of place in her surroundings. "Alienated for either being too white on the Caribbean island or too coloured in England, her feeling of unbelonging is the only core her identity encapsulates" (Vyncke 96). Unable to be a part of the society, she seeks company and comfort and fatefully places her trust in a wrong man. Ignoring the red flags in her relationship with a moody and egoist Michael, she goes ahead to marry him in a ceremony which lacked any enthusiasm, charm or happiness. Broken to the core by the casual indifference of Michael, she realizes that her relationship with Michael is doomed. After suffering emotional and psychological trauma in her loveless marriage with Michael, she concludes that he is a man "whose feelings for her had been like a knife at her

throat for over two years now" (*The Final Passage* 197). Their relationship is bereft or love and communication.

Michael is one of those men for whom women are meant for nothing but sexual gratification. Utterly dead to any emotions or sense of responsibility, he is a man who wastes his life drinking at pubs to shun away boredom and dismal situation of his life. He acknowledges that in the small island "There's nothing here for me to do. Nothing ! Nothing man!" (*The Final Passage* 53) but he fails to rise or drudge his way out of this nothingness. Complex-ridden and afraid of "admission to his alleged inferiority" (*The Final Passage* 48), he casts doubt on Leila's fidelity and would "look at her filled with horror that she might betray him in some unknown way" (*The Final Passage* 48). He wants to be the alpha male, the undisputed authority in his relationship with Leila. Callous to the extent of being sadistic, he comes before Leila as a personification of male chauvinism. Treating Leila like a toy, he boasts before his friend Bradeth " Now a next lesson you must learn is how to keep a wife in she place after you done take one up…for I know when it's affection time and when it's coolness time" (*The Final Passage* 53). Eagar to pass on this legacy to his son, Calvin- towards whom he has not shouldered any responsibility- he shamelessly says that, "I tell him not to bother at all [to get married], for why a man should buy cow if he can get milk free?" (*The Final Passage* 53). The statement shows his despicable thought process which does not consider bond of marriage as sacrosanct.

Driven solely by his moods and whims, he comes to Leila only for sexual gratification and hurts her by being with another woman named, Beverley with whom he has fathered a child named Ivor and who also gets a shabby treatment from him. Battered emotionally, Beverley loses all sense of individuality and leads a mechanical life and "tried to guarantee herself against further hurt by expecting nothing of this world except a clean house, her child's health and her breath in her body every morning when she woke" (*The Final Passage* 45). She does not expect anything good from Michael and seems to have accepted her fate of being used, rejected, and insulted by Michael. Her partner's ego has snubbed her so badly that she does not even once questions his decision to marry Leila despite his already being in a relationship.

Leila is no different from Beverley. Like her, she too silently bears the insults poured upon her by Michael. Even before leaving his hometown Sandy Bay, he had made up his mind

to exclude Leila from his life in England. He admitted to himself "that his future might not include Leila" (*The Final Passage* 169) and he assessed " how much energy he afford to waste continually patching up this newly repaired but still leaky marriage?" (*The Final Passage* 170). Left alone to fend for herself and their son, Calvin in England, she desperately searches for a straw to cling upon. Her relationship with Michael touches the abyss yet "she waited for Michael, whose remoteness continued to grow with every day" (*The Final Passage* 174). Her stubborn refusal to counter the imbalance of marriage echoes the thought of Terborg-Penn "When possible, however, African Diaspora women have attempted to maintain some networks or customs with which they were familiar in their past, such as adopting the role of the submissive wife in order to ensure a lasting marriage" (6). Leila too tried to be a submissive wife. She danced to Michael's tunes; made him breakfast and coffee, let him enjoy a deep sleep despite herself being in an emotional turmoil and waited for his mood to alter for good so that she may have some communication but she failed or one can say, Michael failed her.

Another complexity in Leila's life arises out of her incapability to express her real self to anyone. Even her bosom friend, Millie does not inspire in her the confidence of being a confidant. In England, she fails to communicate openly with Mary and Mrs. Gordan either. Her paranoia of these women being her competitors for Michael's attention, sucks out the confidence necessary for the bond of friendship. She is apprehensive and "Mary posed to Leila the hardest part of her new life to consider, for now more than ever before she was white, and Michael's woman was white (the hair blonde)" (*The Final Passage* 198). Leila's distrust of these women can be traced back to her complex positioning in both the Caribbean and the English Society. Being a mulatto, she is thought to be a snob by blacks. She too has somehow internalized the attitude of being superior to other black women but her attitude bites dust in England where white complexions give her inferiority complex. Moya's opinion that "humans generate knowledge, and (their) ability to do so is causally dependent on both our cognitive capacities and our historical and social locations" (12) finds ground in Leila's response.

Leila's relationship with her mother is quite ambivalent. Her mulatto mother was sexually abused as a child by her white great-uncle and, once, when she sees Leila lying on the beach, she utters the sternest of warnings: "Don't ever let me catch you lying with white people again or as God is my witness I'll take a stick to you and beat you till the life leaves your body". (*The Final Passage* 129). Instead of making her daughter understand the politics of sexual

exploitation which the Whites had been indulging in, she simply chides her away, thereby blocking the path of an effective communication. Had she talked to Leila at this moment, and perhaps at many other such crucial moments (which the novelist does not present but implies), the relationship between mother-daughter would have been more congenial and trustworthy. Leila's life pattern could have been different had her mother used a different and more friendly and communication based approach towards Leila. Rahbek rightly describes her "failure of communication [as] something she has inherited from her mother; the only legacy her mother passes on to her" (131). This communication gap becomes a major problem in her life.

Leila's decision to marry Michael strained her already fragile bond with her mother and the reader witnesses how "From that night, things between Leila and her mother changed" (*The Final Passage* 34). Her mother's opposition to a relationship with Michael was founded on strong grounds. She rightly warns Leila against Michael and says "He loves himself too much and he will use you…If you don't see that, girl, then you don't see nothing and I don't bring up no blind child" (*The Final Passage* 34). Michael, it seems, wants Leila to atone for her mother's 'mistake' of devaluing him. He wants Leila to massage his bruised ego with her 'repentance' and "although he said nothing, Michael no longer appeared to be trying" (*The Final Passage* 35) to reignite the spark in their relationship.

What makes Phillips's novel distinctive is its dealing with the agonizing journey of a female immigrant. Ulla Rahbek points out that Caryl Phillips, "tells the relatively untold story of the female migrant of the late 1950s, accentuating her difficulties in keeping herself and her family together, and he delegates the same aimless male character to a marginal position" (128). One always has had the stories focusing upon the travails of male immigrants but Phillips' took upon the task of presenting the struggle of a female immigrant as she tries to find ground in alien lands while fighting the demons of sexism and racism.

Leila's experience as a working woman in England turns out to be traumatic. Her diasporic experience reflects the trauma suffered by women of colour. Women of the third world bear the brunt of oppression twofold. Their being woman and being black comes as a double whammy for them. Michael's desertion of Leila forces her to look for a job to sustain herself and her son. She takes up the job of a bus conductor but the experience with rowdy male passengers, who exert their 'superior' masculinity through jeers and lousy words and glances, turns out to be traumatic for Leila. "A barrage of whistles and chanting greeted her as

she adjusted her ticket machine" (*The Final Passage* 184). Rahbek rightly says that Leila is "the visible embodiment of what Phillips deals with in most of his novels: how power and race intersect with sexuality" (129). The psychological violence which male gaze perpetrates upon women has been discussed with vigorous logic by feminists. The casual fun which men derive from teasing or stalking women, causes acute fear and frustration in women. After the incident in bus, she is reminded of an incident when a man would stalk her and how she was filled with fear. She reminiscences "Either way the man would stare, but if she were on her own then the stare took a peculiar ferocity, more a leer…and it made her feel she had been attacked, that his hand was already resting in her lap" (*The Final Passage* 186). Phillips's shows the harm which this psychological violence does to a woman through the experiences of Leila.

Leila's experience of diaspora becomes more traumatic because of Michael's desertion. Though Michael had never been her support yet she hoped that changed scenario i.e. the absence of Beverley might work well for their relationship. The novelist states the case "Her marriage was dead, though it had probably only managed to breathe at all by drawing upon the artificial cylinder of blind hope" (*The Final Passage* 197). Eventually she realizes that Michael is a parasite. He had always behaved in an irresponsible way that reeked of selfishness and apathy. Neither St. Patrick nor London, neither Beverley nor her absence could affect his behaviour. He carried the sullen baggage of his complexes all the way from Sandy Bay to England and treated Leila in the most humiliating and inhumane way. Words of María Lourdes López Ropero find resonance in this situation. She says, "Philips is touching upon the gender politics of Caribbean society, where woman play a 'minimal' role and where there is …a long tradition of wilful or unwilful neglect or absence on the part of men. They had to perform migratory labour, but there is also wilful irresponsibility" (92). Michael exhibits utmost irresponsibility towards Leila and Calvin. The insults that he bears in the outside world because of his ethnicity, the brunt of the same is borne by Leila in the form of cold indifference.

In England, Leila waits for Michael to return to the apartment and to her. The very thought of his being away sucks the life out of her. His final desertion devastates Leila. She loses orientation and behaves erratically. Despite all the complications in their marriage, she was still banking upon Michael and was hopeful of his return. One realizes that "Leila's migration experience does not prove to be empowering for her, but makes her extremely vulnerable and more dependent on Michael for support" by which, in other words,

"immigration…may renew and strengthen the patriarchal structures brought from home" (López Ropero 93). But Leila finally tries to gather the scattered pieces of her life in order to start afresh. She firmly decides, "The child in her body and the one in her arms would never know of Michael" (*The Final Passage* 203). Ulla Rahbek rightly observes that "Leila has to face the disruption of her own family, the loss of her husband and how it feels to be nothing" before she "seems to come to terms with her own cowardice, her own inability to face herself and admit defeat "as a sort of "act of self-acknowledgement" (133). The success of her efforts was not in their accomplishment rather in the very courage of aspiring for it. Her acceptance of Michael's desertion is her first step towards a life of assertion rather than of apprehensive waiting.

Leila's journey and identity formation vis-à-vis her marriage to Michael, his desertion, her hysteria and her final acceptance of situation and decision to start afresh and alone, reveals a pattern which finds consonance in Caroline Hau's postpositivist viewpoint. The thought of having an independent identity comes to Leila when she finally acknowledges that her relationship with Michael's is dead. This acknowledgment gives rise to a knowledge which prompts her to look within herself and retrieve the resources essential for sustenance and identity formation. Caroline Hau states that:

> There is, therefore, a cognitive component to identity formation that sets up the conditions for the possibility of error in one's interpretation of experience. Such error however may be continually verified over the course of the individual's life…Such forms of error are also seen as necessary for achieving greater transformative effects on individual experience (164).

Leila's identity formation too goes through the stages of error before culminating in a transformative experience. Her journey has been through a painful process laden with betrayal and desertion. She has been in a flux, weighing her emotions and relationship with Michael. Her immigrant situation aggravates her dilemmas and she struggles to find her way in a new country with a man who becomes stranger to her. Her estimation of Michael, as warned by her mother, was erroneous. It takes her good time and effort to wriggle out of the lover-wife persona and to evaluate the situation more objectively. She understands that her bitter relationship with Michael has nothing to do with Beverley or her own 'superior' mulatto self. She eventually understands the chauvinism of Michael with whom she does not hope for a

future. It is at this point that she sets on a new voyage of self-discovery. Her thoughts about the future course of action seems to hold the promise of an independent life where unlike the old days "when she stretched to reach him" (*The Final Passage* 30), she would now exclude Michael from her and her children's life. Leila's initial assessment of Michael was vague. She did not muster up to the courage to evaluate his attitude towards her, either before marriage or after it. Her painful experience of this relationship was some of her own making. Had she understood the red flags in the beginning, events would have taken another shape. But her being wrong about experience is understandable from the postpositivist realist point of view. The murmur of agency, albeit feeble which one sees in her stance towards the end finds tune with Moya's thought that "experience is not immediate and self- evident but mediated and ambiguous, so it is possible to be wrong about one's experience as well as to arrive at more accurate interpretation of it" (17). Driven by the social pressures, she tries her best to mend relationship with Michael. Her jealousy with Beverley too was found on wrong group. She erred in her assessment of Michael at almost all points. But as Moya suggests is that instead of focusing upon the errors, one should shift focus to the revisionary attitude and the experience generated by it to acquire reliable knowledge of the self. Leila accomplishes it when she casts Michael off her life and decides to start afresh with a new perspective.

Leila's earlier behaviour can be termed as performances of idealized femininity and wifely devotion. Her silence towards Michael's misdemeanour represent her socially conditioning where a woman is expected to suffer in silence. She internalizes and enacts her performance within a patriarchal and colonial framework. Judith Butler's theory of performativity helps in understanding how Leila's gendered identity as a wife and immigrant woman, is forged through the repetition of gendered scripts. She goes at painful lengths to meet the expectations of a traditional wife. Her subordination to Michael's desires, whims and fancies is what Butler terms the "reiteration of norms" (145). Her eventual decision to separate from Michael is a performative disruption. Her assertive act implies the failure and rejection of those scripts which tried to fully contain her subjectivity. The collapse of her conjugal and romantic relationship with Michael acts as a discursive and material rupture. It is through this rupture that she may begin the process of redefinition by rejecting the traditionally imposed roles. The epistemological significance of Leila's eventual transformation can also be understood through Collins standpoint theory. Leila' social location or positioning as a

marginalized immigrant woman generates a particular standpoint. Her standpoint geminates her experiential knowledge; this knowledge, however, is erroneous at many steps. She reassesses her responses and thus proceeds to critical reflection. Her re-assessment of Michael's callous attitude echoes Collins' model of dialogical and self-revising consciousness which she attributes to marginalized knowledge (252). Her transformation reflects her structural positioning and the crisscrossing subjugations through which she tries to steer clear.

Crossing the River (1993) deals with the issue of women's identity through the characters of Martha and Joyce. Phillips delineates these women very sensitively, giving the reader an access to their innermost thoughts. While taking up the analysis of the novel, Kerry-Jane Wallart states that, "*Crossing the River* can also be read through the lens of gender and stages women who, beyond racial distinctions, have been the underdogs in bondage or "freedom"" (270). Story of Martha and Joyce is indeed of women whom the society subjected to the bondage of gender.

Through the story of a free slave, Martha, Phillips shows how slavery rendered women's body and soul battered. The barbarity inherent in the system of slavery fractured the families of blacks and bestowed slaves with a cruel legacy of torn families and bleeding emotions. The readers meet Martha Randolph in the second section of the novel –'West'. Having lead the life of a chattel slave, Martha has lost everything precious in her life. She has borne the dehumanization of slavery system which Orlando Patterson describes as "…is an extreme form of domination which involves total power from masters and total powerlessness from slaves" (1-2). Further elucidating the denigrating impact of slavery on the life of slaves, Patterson says,

> The master was essentially a ransomer. What he bought or acquired was the slave's life, and restraints on the master's capacity wantonly to destroy his slave did not undermine his claim on that life. Because the slave had no socially recognized existence outside of his master, he became a social nonperson (5).

Martha's story echoes the pain and resilience of countless women slaves who lost their families to slavery. Martha was put on auction along with her husband, Lucas and daughter, Eliza Mae. Her husband was sold, "A trader prods Lucas's biceps with a stick." And she knew "If a trader buys a man, it is down the river. To die" (*Crossing the River* 77). She loses her daughter too and in the years to come she "no longer possessed either a husband or a daughter, but her memory of their loss was clear" (*Crossing the River* 78). Martha herself is purchased

by a couple from Kansas. While bearing the burden of slavery and having accepted the fact that Lucas is no more, she longed to meet her daughter. With dejection and loneliness mauling her, she clings to the last hope of meeting her daughter whose partition cries rends her heart. Phillips gives us a peep into a mother's bleeding heart at being separated from her child. Martha's tormented heart cries:

> The auctioneer slaps his gavel against a block of wood. I fall to my knees and take Eliza Mae in my arms. I did not suckle this child at the breast, not I did I cradle her in my arms… to see her taken away from me… my Eliza holds on to me, but it will be to no avail…she will be a prime purchase. 'Moma'. Eliza Mae whispers the word over and over again, as though this were the only word she possessed. This one word. This one word only (*Crossing the River* 77).

Once freed, she tries to start life afresh with Chester. This life too is full of drudgery but she has the solace of being in a stable relationship with a man, she is confident, will not be sold into slavery. She relishes being loved and cared for and dreams of meeting her lost daughter someday. She says,

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

The freed slave had "My Chester" to claim as her own. She laid a righteous claim on a relationship with a man who helped her forget her past pain, isolation and dehumanization. But the blight of white supremacy soon took away her happiness. Lichtenstein very rightly observes that although the late 1800s mark the formal end of slavery, "the oppressive nature of colonialism led many to believe that the liberation of slaves was only an illusion" (Lichtenstein par. 1). The white master reluctant to forgo his authority, still wanted that "most blacks, though free, would still be living in conditions of poverty with low wages and little hope for advancement" (Lichtenstein par. 2). Whites could not tolerate a white man making progress. The jealousy against Chester engineered his murder by two whites. Such an incident was not an isolated case. Abolition of slavery did not end the vicious cycle of inhuman discrimination and prejudice. Blacks were still seen as the inferior other.

Martha was once again looted of her relationships, once again her loved one was snatched away from her by the Whites. Having lost her faith in White God, she dies a heartbroken and lonely woman in an unknown terrain deserted by pioneers. Dreading the past, refuting Christianity, Martha even in her death does not gain freedom. Her unclaimed body had to be buried and "They would have to choose a name for her if she was going to receive a Christian burial" (*Crossing the River* 94). She was not free even in her death. Her tragedy shows that "even our deepest personal experiences are socially constructed, mediated by visions and values that are political in nature…" (Mohanty 34). Her plight and dreadful experiences were bred by slavery. Through her fate, Phillips focuses upon the malpractice of re-naming of the slaves. After making a purchase, the white masters re-christened their slaves to establish their superiority/mastery over them. Burnard states this as, "Whites fostered such distinctions (naming) in order to further their belief that Blacks were inferior – more like animals than Anglo-European" (329). Martha died without an authentic identity. Her life is a painful saga which reflects how "The social processes of domination and exploitation benefit from the naturalization of social identities, which is also therefore the naturalization of domination" (Hames-Garcia 110). Whites justified their dominance and subjugation of blacks by establishing their identity as that of an inferior other. The white norm denuded blacks of their authentic selves and thus cast their identities in a superficial mould and presented the same as natural and real. This "naturalization" made Martha's life a tale of losses. She lost her real name, her daughter, her family and consequently her faith in God. Much severe than the cold weather of Colorado, it were her losses which led to her pitiable death.

Martha, however, asserts her feeble agency through her decision to look for Eliza Mae. The oppressive White society snatched her motherly rights to rear up a child. She like many others, was only a breeder for the Whites who would provide more work force to the master. But she clings to her role of a mother and makes desperate attempts to look for her long lost daughter. Maria Rice Bellamy says that:

> The society in which she lives forces Martha to relinquish her maternal rights but not her maternal identity. At a time when slave-based Western society identified black women as breeders, not mothers, Martha's devotion to her daughter can be considered "an act of political resistance". Martha searches for her daughter and

> clings to her maternal identity as a means of defining herself against the prevailing discourse of her society (10).

Martha's stubborn search for her daughter follows that "final claim of a postpositivist realist theory of identity is that oppositional struggle is fundamental to our ability to understand the world more accurately" (Moya 86). She fights against the dominant structures of signification to claim her role as a mother and therefore poses a challenge to the imperial and racist societies. She proves that the subjugated and downtrodden must know "what it would take to change [our world and in] …identifying the central relations of power and privilege that sustain it and make the world what it is" (Mohanty 214). She tries to fight off the denigrating "naturalization" of black women's identity by laying claim to her motherly identity.

Phillips, through the character of Martha explores the depth of trauma which women slaves had to bear. The mother-child bond which is held sacrosanct in all cultures was ruthlessly ruptured by the slavery system. Martha is depicted as a resilient woman who fights off the adverse circumstances till her last breath. When she gets to know that her present masters are planning to sell her off to some other whites, she decides to run away from them. She decisively decides that "Never again would she stand on an auction block. Never again would she be renamed. Never again would she belong to anybody" (*Crossing the River* 80). Martha, when reviewed through the lens provided by Satya Mohanty to analyze Sethe from Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, comes out as a character who has always valued freedom as the core element of human existence. She like Sethe feels that freedom "is the ineliminable human need for self-determination, with the capacity for moral agency at its core" (Mohanty 47). She claims full right over her free self.

Her decision to run away in order to escape a new trap of slavery shows her determination and assertion. Her decision bespeaks her hope for a future where she expects to meet her lost daughter and where she can start a new life. Under slavery, she bore the indignity of being treated like an animal. This decision is her assertion of a new identity of a free being. Martha decision to join coloured pioneers who were going to the American West showed that these people had a "dream of tasting true freedom, of learning important skills, of establishing themselves as a sober and respectable class of people" (*Crossing the River* 93). Martha too

wanted to live a respectable life surrounded by her family but the dreams of this freed slave tragically fall flat on earth and she leaves the mortal world in an unknown city among strangers.

Martha's resistance can also be understood through Butler's theory of performativity. Her concept of agency within constraint can be applied to Martha. Her self-reclamation, "Never again would she stand on an auction block. Never again would she be renamed. Never again would she belong to anybody" (*Crossing the River* 80) is a redoubtable disruption of the enforced performances/identities which the institution of slavery had imposed upon her. At this juncture of her life, she refuses to accept the submissive roles imposed upon her and thus performs an act of refusal and defiance that helps her reclaim her psychological and emotional autonomy.

Knowledge and resistance of Black women like Martha are forged through their structural location within the systems of domination. Martha's life had been marred by the loss of loved ones, sexual violence, and dehumanizing slavery. Her decision to run away is not merely an act of escape from slavery, rather it should be seen as an epistemic claim to her own humanity. Her suffering gave her an experiential knowledge which then becomes the basis of an alternative moral and political vision. This vision helps her to think of a life of freedom and dignity and such visions as per Collins are not merely subjective but carry critical epistemological weight (252–254).

Phillips's next creation, Joyce comes in front of the readers in the fourth part of the novel- 'Somewhere in England'. The narrative of a married white woman, Joyce shows a heart that craves for love and care. Her husband, Len doubts her fidelity and makes no effort to strengthen the conjugal bond. Like Leila, Joyce suffers in a relationship marred by inferiority complex of the husband. To the world, Len was no match for Joyce but she loved him and thought that together they are "A team against the rest of the world. Man and wife. Him and me" (*Crossing the River 141*). With the onset of war, civilians start recruiting for war but because of medical unfitness, Len is left out and this hurts his masculine ego. He starts behaving badly and begins to physically abuse Joyce. She understands that inability to be part of the 'warriors' has hurt him. "He was just working off the embarrassment of not having a uniform" (*Crossing the River 159*) but she asserts herself and warns him not to beat her again and decides "the next time he raises his hand to me it'll be the last time" (*Crossing the River 159*). The relationship between two worsens with the killing of her friend Sandra by her husband and Len's friend, Terry. With

Joyce openly accusing him of the murder in a pub, Len "was ready to belt me then and there, in front of everybody…" (*Crossing the River 170*). The acrimony increases and Joyce begins to feel alienated from him. She feels that theirs is not a formidable bond. To make the matters worse, Len is arrested for black marketing and he expects Joyce to be arrested too. He wanted his wife to be a partner in his suffering. Villagers too gave Joyce contemptuous looks for "I had not 'stuck by him'" (*Crossing the River 199*). She was supposed to defend her husband's illegal activities. But she decides to keep her chin high and "To learn to ignore what they might be saying about me." (*Crossing the River 199*). She decides to deal with the gossip and accusing glances in a formidable manner.

At this juncture, she decides to part ways with Len and explore life. She meets Travis and both of them develops a relationship on the foundations of good communication. Keen to learn about each other's life, their relationship soon blossoms into love. Paths of Joyce and Travis cross when the latter is posted as a GI in her village during World War II. Soon, she finds a sensitive being inhabiting a soldier's body. Accustomed to the casual crudity of soldiers, Joyce finds a gentleman in Travis. She observes that "When he saw me he lowered his eyes. I could see he was slightly frightened" (*Crossing the River* 134). In the meanwhile Len is released from jail and he brutally thrashes Joyce for infidelity. Joyce takes the decisive step of walking out of the loveless and abusive marriage and breaking all the bounds she makes it clear to Len that she will not leave the property to him as she too has a share in it. Her decision to be with Travis, ignoring the society and racial politics, makes her a strong character. Through Joyce's relationship with the black GI- Travis, the novelist explores the possibility of romantic relationships between different ethnicities; relationships where the colour of skin holds no importance.

Joyce's experience can be analyzed through the prism of post positivist realist theory. Her experience with Travis is completely at variance with the general white attitude towards blacks. She proves that realism "enables the expansion of possibilities for solidarity across difference" (Hames-Garcia 120). She does not even seem to notice that Travis is black as nowhere in the novel does she mention his complexion or racial identity. Travis' black identity is revealed to the reader after a dance party, when she notices his "thin black wool" (*Crossing the River* 167) hair. Warnings by officers against her growing affinity with Travis lead her to "getting good at learning the difference between the official stories and the evidence before

my eyes" (*Crossing the River* 165). She registers the warnings as based on national rather than racial differences. The contempt and disapproval which she faces from the people, too is conceived by her as the result of her being in an extra marital relationship rather than being in relationship with a black man. She thinks, "I knew what they were thinking. That he was just using me for fun. There was no ring on my finger, but I didn‟t think that they had the right to look at me in that way. Just who the hell did they think they were?" (*Crossing the River* 202). Joyce's relationship triggers the fear of miscegenation among the white officers as well as among the villagers. It was a fear as Wendy Webster, in *Imagining Home: Gender, 'Race' and National Identity* tells is that "[t]he concept of "miscegenation" - widely used in race discourse in the 1950s -signalled not only the idea that races were biological categories marked by difference, but also that the mixing of these in heterosexual relations was deeply problematic and unnatural" (48). Joyce, however, was innocuously unaware of the danger she was setting her feet into. Her distinct experience with Travis and the consequences which she has to suffer prove that there is a "causal and referential relationship between a subject's social location and her identity" (Moya 14). Her social location designates her as a married white woman who should earn respect by waiting for her bully husband to return from prison but her identity as a woman willing to enter a new relationship- forged on love and respect- makes her stand in the socio-cultural line of fire. The society binds her identity to her colour but she shuns the same to adopt a new path of love.

Her experience is different from other whites. Her identity/social position of being white and being with an abusive husband, make up for an entirely different experience. Her positioning as a white is cancelled by the positionality of love she takes up and is therefore accepted in the fold by black father. At the end of the novel, the African father addresses Joyce as one of his children. He says, "But my Joyce, and my other children, their voices hurt but determined, they will survive the hardships of far bank" (*Crossing the River* 235). Phillips projects a future where discriminations and prejudices do not mar the beauty of relationships. Staggering, struggling and fighting the prejudices, these children of humanity will forge a world of love and trust. That is why the African father says, "But they arrived on the far bank of the river, loved" (*Crossing the River* 237).

Joyce's conscious and decisive rejection of her prescribed role -as a white, respectable submissive wife- is an act of subversion. She refuses to play out the normative roles through

which, as Butler suggest, identity gets constructed (145-149). Through her bold decision to be with Travis despite the societal censure, she disrupts the expected performance to the tunes of racism and patriarchy. Her position as a marginalized white woman-battered but bold- gives her a unique epistemic vantage point. Collins states that knowledge is shaped by social location and that marginalized perspectives can reveal critical insights into systems of power (252–254). Joyce's marginalized position also reveals the power dynamics of White English society. Her response to the disapproval surrounding her from all sides cannot be called a mere emotional response. Her response geminates from her specific experience and knowledge and therefore provides a better understanding of the play of power.

Crossing the River while portraying the varied aspects of diasporic condition, also provides an in-depth study of women's experiences and identity formation. The novelist's understanding of women has been appreciated more than once and Kerry-Jane Wallart asserts that:

> Phillips has declared how he felt that writing from a female point of view seemed a step aside in order to render both the centrality and the marginality of being Black; between the Black and the female subjects he sees an undercurrent of communicable empathy (270).

The novelist not only succeeds in communicating the empathy for his women characters rather he passes on the same to the readers.

In the Falling Snow (2009) explores the experiences of diaspora through a multigenerational story of three men, Earl, Keith and Laurie. The novel primarily focuses upon the experiences, struggles and dilemmas of these men as they navigate their life in the contemporary England. Annabelle- Keith's wife and Laurie's mother is a middle-class white woman who had married Keith against the wishes of her parents, especially her xenophobic and authoritarian father. She parts ways with Keith after discovering his affair with a young girl named Yvette. She co-parents her seventeen-year-old mulatto son, Laurie with Keith and seeks his assistance in dealing with the teenage issues of their sons. She realizes that her son is going through a turbulent phase because of his mulatto identity and unable to deal with the societal pressures, he may go astray. Annabelle is a self-dependent modern woman who had the guts to defy a very authoritative father when getting married to Keith. She exhibits the same grit when she separates from Keith and moves ahead in life with another man, Bruce. Keith

admits that "she has made it a business to carefully construct a steely façade around her emotions in a way of distancing herself from him" (*In the Falling Snow* 7). Annabelle is a woman who knows her minds and does not easily get caught in the marsh of emotions. She knows how to maintain her emotional well-being and keeps a communication with Keith to ensure the well-being of her son and to keep him bound to paternal duty.

Brenda- Earl's wife and Keith's stepmother is also a white woman. She too is a woman who knows her mind and takes her decisions independently. She supports Earl in his bad phase and takes care of a young Keith in a motherly way. Once the racial discrimination starts taking toll over Earl's mental health and he starts acting violently, she sends him off to an asylum and takes charge of Keith's education and well-being. She assures him "No matter what happens between your dad and me, I just want you to know that I promise I'll always be there for you, Keith" (*In the Falling Snow* 180). Brenda showers motherly love on Keith and reprimands people who suggested her to put Keith in a foster home as he was not her responsibility. She asserted that "Nobody was taking 'her Keith' from her" (*In the Falling Snow* 193). Brenda, however, suffers tragically at the hands of Earl. He holds her responsible for his incarceration and denies the fact of his mental instability. Keith understands the pain of this "woman who became a second mother to him" (*In the Falling Snow* 192) and tries to reason with his father unsuccessfully. Brenda dies a lonely death. Through Brenda, the novelist explores the scope of reconciliation between people of different races. She does not only possess a highly sensitive heart but is wise enough to understand the perils that Earl being a black immigrant has to go through. When Keith loses patience, she tries to reason out with him. She says, "…his problems were not all of his own making. 'He's sick, Keith, so you have to be a bit easy on him" (*In the Falling Snow* 190). Brenda stays with the reader as a projection of Phillip's hope for a future of love and empathy where relationships are built on human emotions defying all societal differences.

In the case of Joyce, Brenda and Annabelle, one sees the intersectionality of gender and race. Their identity of being white women in relationship with black men causes trouble for them. The society binds their responses as an act against their ethnicity and their gender aggravates the problem as women are supposed to carry the baggage of honour. Hames-Garcia terms such responses by society as 'restriction' where society where an individual self comes to be recognized under the single aspect of identity ignoring the multiplicity or

intersectionality. As against such an approach, he suggests that postpositivist realism provides one with an attitude that offers "transcultural insights into ethical questions of human value, community, and solidarity" (Moya 18). These women exhibit a contestation of privileged notions of class and gender and Moya suggests that "a realist theory of identity demands oppositional struggle as a necessary (although not sufficient) step toward the achievement of an epistemically privileged position" (87). Their efforts and experiences are purely personal but they are built on the premises of defiance and hold the promise of social and political change, both in outlook and in situations.

Joyce, Brenda, and Annabelle's refuse to conform to the racialized gender performances and this act of subversion undermines the standard expectations of white femininity. They reject the societal scripts to produce a new knowledge and existence based on equality and love. Collins standpoint theory primarily focuses upon the experiences of black women within specific situatedness to show that marginalized positions can also usher in new ways of perceiving. But, in the case of Phillips' white women characters, the insights of this theory can help understand the attitudes of these women characters. Joyce, Brenda, and Annabelle, although white, are still marginalized and ostracized by their own communities because of their affinity with blacks. Their respective vantage points offer them a unique and humane perspective about the social injustice and apathy. They stand quite in consonance with Collins assertion that marginalized standpoints can produce a "distinctive consciousness" that leads to a broader and more inclusive vision of justice (251–53).

Phillips's women characters mirror the dilemmas and struggles which women in the world face. They exhibit a certain level of defiance in the face of oppression and adversity. Their grief shatters the heart and their resilience wins the heart. Phillips women characters traverse a path of pain and suffering. Wounded but not defeated, they move forward or at least project a hope for future. This future is one where the demarcations of colour are blurred if not erased completely. Women like Joyce, Annabelle and Brenda become a beacon of progressive change in the society. They make the reader re-visit the situation of relationships between blacks and whites. In league with the postpositivist realists, Phillips show us how "culture and identity present interesting implications for how we might act in the service of a progressive social change" (Moya 19). His novels speak volumes about the mutual sympathy and the need of cordial human relationships. A careful reading of his works shows his creative response

towards a positive social change. He provides a sensitive portrayal of white women who disassociate themselves from their respective racial privileges and tries to build relationships based on transcultural ethos of care and positive change. Their progressive and subversive stances concur with the postpositivist realist vision of objectivity and performative revision.

David Dabydeen's works have prominently focused upon the issues of black identity and his depiction of women characters have received mixed responses. Where some critics find his delineation of women verging on pornography due to his use of graphic linguistic images to describe women and their bodies; there other scholars have defended his graphic portrayal as true to life, mirroring the scenario in which we exist. Elizabeth Jackson argues the case thus: "Dabydeen is courageous enough to write so explicitly and honestly about misogyny in colonial and postcolonial contexts…" (428). Defending the case for Dabydeen, she suggests that the author presents the reality per se, without straining off the crudities. She goes on to state that:

> Dabydeen's fiction exposes in ruthless detail not only the nature of gendered violence, but also the conditions which exacerbate it, the lies men tell themselves to justify it, and the ways in which women respond to it. He suggests links between violence, sexual desire, misogyny and the commodification of women in colonial and postcolonial contexts (430).

The Counting House (1996) explores the gender power dynamics within the plantation system through the characters of Rohini and Miriam and depict the struggles faced by women indentured laborers within the context of labor exploitation and racial hierarchies. It is worth notice that tied to the axis of gender, race and class, the Indo-Caribbean women had a triple-fold vulnerability and their existence on the estates was perilous. Alison Klein informs that a sexual relationship between white masters and the indentured women labourers was a common occurrence. Any good-looking coolie woman was entrapped in such relationships either through the bait of monetary benefits or through coercion. He says that, "At best, such relationships were exploitative, as the managers had great power over the women, and at worst, these women were forced into sex, either through physical threats or threats to their livelihood or family" (Klein 35).

Dabydeen has brought forth the strife, enigmas and pathos of these women whose experiences have otherwise eluded elaborate mention in historical archives. The depiction of a

sexual relationship between a white master (Gladstone) and an indentured labourer (Rohini) and a former slave (Miriam) shows how gender and race intersected to complicate the struggles between different indentured ethnic groups.

The novel traces the journey of a young credulous rural Indian couple, Vidia and Rohini. Poverty-ridden, they are easily taken in by the dream of greener pastures shown by the crafty recruiter and travel to British Guiana for not only earning a livelihood but to build considerable wealth. . The recruiter lures them thus, “Guiana is the very land of Ramayana.... And it have so much gold there that you don't have enough hand and neck and foot to wear bangle. You wish you had ten hands like Lord Shiva, and even then you run out of skin” (*The Counting House* 14). Rohini’s rebellious heart dreams of release from the poverty and socio-cultural scrutiny which many Indian married women like her are often subjected to. British Guiana with its prospects of gold and wealth seem to her the ultimate haven.

Recruiter flares up the sentiments of villagers with his big albeit bogus promises of prosperity and Rohini exploits the situation created by the recruiter’s visit, exemplifying how Indian women navigated and challenged cultural gender restrictions to enhance their lives. She takes a drastic action by secretly poisoning the family's cow, leading the family members to believe that they are cursed and prompting their move to another town, thereby allowing her and Vidia to indenture freely. However, it is important to note that she never considers signing an indenture contract alone. She undertakes these dramatic measures to ensure Vidia will indenture with her. Rohini, despite her strong will and frustration with Vidia's helplessness -in the face of poverty and parental control-, cannot imagine leaving him, which firmly places her in the role of "wife.” Rohini eventually migrates with Vidia and thus can be counted among the minority of married women who travelled for indenture. The McNeil-Lal Reports of 1915 states that “The women who come out consist as to one-third of married women who accompany their husbands, the remainder being mostly widows and women who have run away from their husbands or been put away from them” (313). Generally, the women who travelled for indenture were either widows or prostitutes or societal castaways.

The exploitative structure of indenture system is revealed through the relationship between a white man, Gladstone and an indentured woman, Rohini. The depiction of this sexual relationship between Gladstone and Rohini corroborates with many of the historical instances which reveal how during slavery and indentureship, white men “used their positions

as owners or managers of the subaltern to render colonized women sex objects over whom they could exercise power" (Shepherd 31). Women like Rohini fell prey to the lust of white imperialists. Exploitation by the whites thus operated on both the racial as well as sexual level. The novel throws light on how these exploitative structures grows out of colonialism and helps to bolster it. Lomarsh Roopnarine validates that one chief reason for the large number of laborers emigrating as indentured laborers was colonialism. He states "The process of capital accumulation is supported by a labor surplus drawn from the less progressive to the most flourishing areas of the world" (102). He is of the opinion that the colonial plantation system in the Caribbean created a demand for labour, while British imperialism in India led to significant upheaval, resulting in a surplus of laborers willing to migrate to the Caribbean.

Rohini's arrival and stay in British Guiana unveils the complex nuances of gender roles under indenture. The novelist shows that indenture did provide some material benefits to women like Rohini who earned wages and thereby afforded them some independence. Historical records show that indentured women would often get into relationships with more than one man to acquire financial security. A Canadian missionary named Sarah Morton recalls conversation with an Indian woman who said, "'when the last [immigrant] ship came in I took a papa. I will keep him as long as he treats me well. If he does not treat me well I shall send him off at once; that's the right way, is it not?'" (Niranjana 65). Rohini too knows that in this new place, with its scarcity of women, the option of leaving Vidia for another man is open to her. She understands that she is a commodity for men and like other women, she decides to use this in her favour. She ruminates, "In the three long months to Guiana and the two long years following, she met only with the sickness of greed. That was all there was, though, and she might as well find a way of profiting from it" (*The Counting House* 67). Rohini, at this juncture, decides to use her physical charm as a weapon over Vidia, "Although she would not dream of rejecting Vidia for such men, she still tormented him with the prospect of betrayal'" (*The Counting House* 67). With the intent of using her sexuality as a weapon, she begins to deck herself up with bright colored head bands and by polishing her skin with oils, "By these means she would goad Vidia into achievement…In exchange for his labour she would maintain her body and make children for him, not many…one boy, perhaps another, then she would stop before growing misshapen and outworn'" (*The Counting House* 67). But the novelist points out the dead end of her open route when he says,

> She knew there was a shortage of women on the plantation, that many of his fellow cane cutters would scheme with money to bribe her, or with poison to kill him, if only she consented to it. But what would she gain by them, these uncouth coolies who would throw a few coppers her way and expect to devour her in return, then when she had grown shabby and exhausted, put her out to work for other men? (*The Counting House* 66–67).

Rohini understands that she would be compelled to choose among different men, each willing to exploit her for their own purposes, devouring her in exchange for a bit more financial security. As an Indian woman, she remains doubly marginalized. Her race and gender intersect to diminish her status and to demolish her individuality. In this context, Gail Low observes:

> Not only does *The Counting House* revolve around money and the exchange of money for services that enable the accumulation of wealth, it also shows how commodification reformulates, manages and regulates individual desires. In this climate, sexual desire is not exempt from the system of exchanges: Rohini represents her lovemaking with her husband as an exchange for Vidia's labour. (211-12).

Larger issues of race and class get reflected in the novel through intimate relationships. Vidia beats Rohini when he comes to know about her poisoning of the family cow. This physical violence is more due to his frustration with his own sense of sexual failure and consequent inability to impregnate her. The other workers "gossip about her lack of child, spreading malice about Vidia's manhood" (*The Counting House* 112). He grows jealous of Rohini, imagining her enjoyment with sex a result of her infidelity. All this germinates from his own sense of sexual inadequacy. He wonders, "…was she learning from the niggers how to do it in shameless ways, spreading her legs and opening her mouth?" (*The Counting House* 92). He accuses her of sleeping with Africans, "'Niggerman digging in your belly for gold that belong to me'" (*The Counting House* 87). Men's honour is always considered to be tied to women's virtue. Consequently, conflicts among men to preserve ethnic identity often revolve around controlling their women and shielding them from other men. Vidia's actions reinforce this perspective. He links Rohini's sexuality to a possession rightfully belonging to him. Moreover, he appears to have internalized the stereotype portraying Africans as hypersexual and is fearful that they might provide her with something beyond his reach.

Vidia's beating of Rohini shows that violence serves as a potent commentary on the mistreatment of women and the imperialistic structures that fostered such behavior. However, what calls attention is the authorial attitude towards the depiction of pervasive violence and humiliation towards women in the novel. Instances of sexual assault are portrayed in both casual and explicit detail and there seems to be no effort to challenge the dominant narrative. Examples are, when the recruiter encourages villagers to rape Muslim women. "'Mouth or pokey-hole or arse-hole, or puncture she belly and bore new hole, it is all one to me'" (*The Counting House* 48). Following the command, the men of the village rape and kill a Muslim woman named Rashida. The language used in the depiction of sexual and domestic violence is notable not just for its vividness but also for the associations it establishes between wealth, women's sexuality, and mortality. Vidia speaks of African men excavating in Rohini's abdomen, while the recruiter, goading villagers to assault Muslim women, repeatedly mentions cavities. These depictions of excavation and cavities liken women's sexuality to a treasure, a comparison reinforced by Vidia burying his money to conceal it. However, these images also carry connotations of burial and mortality, indicating a disregard for the lives of Indian women. This callousness is accentuated when the recruiter proposes that villagers pierce women's abdomens as a means of assault. This violence does indeed manifest later in the novel when Rohini's baby is forcefully aborted, piercing her abdomen and resulting in the death of her unborn child. These relentlessly explicit depictions serve as a critique of the sexual violence intertwined with colonialism. However, the degradation of female characters in the novel (both the linguistic and physical sexual violence) predates the arrival of colonizers.

Rohini receives small favors from Gladstone—discarded items like the empty biscuit tin mentioned in the novel's prologue, and a job for Vidia in the counting house, sparing him from field labor and providing a better income. It is evident, however, that these are trivial favors that cost Gladstone nothing. In return, he gains significantly: a sexual relationship, a maid, and power over someone willing to do almost anything in the hope that some of his power and wealth will benefit her.

Rohini understands that her relationship with Gladstone can never be acknowledged publicly as she is considered lowly. She come to the realization that her financial gains are puny when compared with the sexual favours which Gladstone had been enjoying. She is in awe of his power and wealth and uses her body to attain some trace of power via him.

Impregnated by the white man, she foolishly dreams of her child inheriting Gladstone's infinite wealth, power and status, "Rohini would bear Gladstone's baby, reveling even as it burdened her with pain, swelling her body to the roundness of the globe which one day it would inherit" (*The Counting House* 133). Rohini pregnancy frustrates Vidia's sense of manhood. Seeking escape from the poverty, they had embarked on this journey towards indenture. But Rohini's sexual involvement with Gladstone wreaks havoc on their marriage and life. The novelist captures Vidia's thought process and says, "Gladstone's gaze would strip him of ambition, revealing him to be a coolie less than man, a coolie who could barely maintain his body, or his wife's, yet who planned unrealistically for a boy-child" (*The Counting House* 130). The white colonizer encroaches upon the life of coolies and devastates them. Rohini ultimately loses the child as well as her sanity as Miraim, her competitor for Gladstone's attention, manages to abort it.

Certain critics have pointed out faults in the characterization of Rohini. Sharmila Sen opines that Rohini's character fits the archetype of vulnerable, promiscuous women commonly found in Indo-Caribbean literature and is effectively silenced, as her story is narrated in the third person, "Dabydeen's novel, while ostensibly attempting to give a voice to Rohini, finds itself unable to articulate that experience in the first person" (194-195). Dabydeen has come under radar for writing a stereotypical novel about indenture. It is said that fictional narratives about indenture rarely feature single women. The main characters are typically either males traveling alone or male and female couples, highlighting the highly gendered depiction of labor. When envisioning workers performing physical labor, we tend to picture men, despite the fact that in many traditional cultures, women bear the brunt of the hard labor. Bringing attention to the role of women as a worker, Chandra Talpade Mohanty observes that in the developing societies, women typically perform agricultural and factory work, yet they are often labeled as "housewives" rather than "workers." She writes, "The effects of this definition of labor is not only that it makes women's labor and its costs invisible, but that it undercuts women's agency by defining them as victims of a process of pauperization or of 'tradition' or 'patriarchy,' rather than as agents capable of making their own choices" (151). Seen in the light of this argument, female characters like Rohini, who travel under indenture with their husbands, tend to overshadow the real women who migrated alone and faced the challenges by themselves, devoid of 'protection' of husband. This line of thought, however, can be

challenged. As Moya states that an individual's experiences depend upon the social location which is constituted by different social categories like race, class, gender and sexuality.

Dabydeen tries to present Rohini as a complete individual by placing her in the midst of intricacies of the society and tradition and then giving her the literary space to let her enact her responses before and after the migration. It is a ubiquitous truth that power is inherently tied to varied forms of exploitation, and Dabydeen shows us that sexual relations are closely connected to power. In this novel, access to money and sex signifies and amplifies power. This dynamic applies to both those already in power (Gladstone) and those aspiring to gain it (Rohini and Miriam), demonstrating that power flows in multiple directions. Dabydeen has presented multidimensional aspects of Rohini's personality which include her emotional and mental inclinations. Praising the novelist's presentation of Rohini and for investing her with agency, Shivani Sivagurunathan opines:

> The method of writing back used by Dabydeen has one very crucial function, and that is the clearing of space for the displaced… with the intention of restructuring attitudes without the residues of oppression and which then allows the subaltern an attempt at self-representation. Hence, Rohini's putative existentialist crisis with its attempts to create a psychically rounded Indian and then coolie woman marks the first step towards the extrication of space. And within this space, the ability to contemplate the dynamics of migration becomes possible (58).

Delineation of Rohini with her complex motivation behind immigration shows the novelist's intention to topple down the commonplace stereotypes which cast coolie women as castaway women who chose indenture as the last recourse to livelihood. Rohini wanted to escape the penury of her home but she also wanted to have autonomy over her life and home. Migration, to her mind was the way to independence from the authority of her mother-in-law and society at large. It was generally assumed that the women who migrated were either the widows or the ones who had gone astray and were unlikely to be accepted in society and the migration was deemed to be en escape route to forgo the old scandals and start a new life but Rohini does not align with such assumptions and one can easily see that the reasons behind her migration are more than just economic. Moses Seenarine makes three observations regarding the assessment and depiction of female immigrant indentures as sexually accessible women by

the White authors. He points out the prejudice ridden representation of coolie women and says that what the colonial master did was:

> (1) the stereotyping of all female indentured laborers as immoral; (2) a denial of colonial responsibility in abusing Indian females during the recruitment process; and (3) a justification for targeting the most exploited of South Asian women, those who have few options besides paid sex work, to be recruited as bonded labourers (n. pg.).

Dabydeen, however, gives us the character of Rohini who does not fit into the categories assigned by the white master. Her reasons to migrate, as mentioned before are not merely economic. She craves for autonomy over her life and the same gets evident in her relationship with Vidia where she calls all the shots and he obeys her like a meek child. This Rohini cannot tolerate the scrutiny which her 'married status' forces upon her. She hates her mother-in-law for being bossy and says, "'I want more', Rohini brooded as she spat into the oil… 'Lazy bitch! She treats me like a slave but I disease her first!'" (*The Counting House* 31). She wants more than just "salt and flour and cooking oil" (*The Counting House* 33) because these are the things which bind her in the typical housewife role. But she aspires for a full autonomy not only over her household but also over Vidia. The dreams of grandeur shown by recruiter sway her off her feet and she decides to migrate and leave the sullen world behind. She tells Vidia, "It is not money'...Recruiter say Guiana have plenty land, you can turn man and own so much you can't see the fencing how it is so far in front…Why stay here? You wake up, you eat, you go…till you dead one day…Recruiter say outside have plenty action…I want fight war…not spend all day and the next day killing weevil in a bowl of peas'" (*The Counting House* 52-53). She wishes to claim her space in the world; a space which has social, economic as well as sexual dimensions. But all her desires fall flat on face and she like thousands of coolie women who were victims of the indentured labour, meets a tragic end. Elaborating upon the plight of women like Rohini. Jeremy Poynting says:

> Undoubtedly, the experience of Indian women during the indenture period was one of multiple oppression: as an indentured worker in a system of quasi servitude, as an Indian whose culture was despised as barbaric and heathen by all other sections of the population, and as a woman who suffered from the sexual depredations of

> the white overseer class and was restricted within the reconstituted "Indian"! family structure (133).

The exploitative relationship between Gladstone and Rohini is not only a fictional depiction of facts, rather depiction of such relationships is also something that is not new in literature. Pointing out this, Alison Klein says:

> These relationships act a focal point, a catalyst within the plot for tensions around colonialism, both by pro-imperial authors advocating Britain's power and civilizing influence, and by anti-imperial authors attempting to demonstrate the selfishness and brutality of the colonizers (87).

The difference in approach and attitude of pro-imperial and anti-imperial authors explicate the postpositivist notion of error in knowledge and how theory mediated knowledge always carry the scope of both the error and the revision. Caroline S. Hau foregrounds the cognitive feature of experience and says that "it can be susceptible to varying degrees of socially constructed truth and error, that it can be a source of objective knowledge as well as social mystification. The realist position attaches importance as much to error as to truth" (159). Exploitation of the third world people had always been considered as a civilizing and patronizing attitude by whites but with the onset of postcolonial studies, the new set of knowledge emerged which challenged and opposed the stereotypes. This new set of knowledge evaluated the experiences in a new way and ushered in a change in the perspective which is definitely theory mediated and therefore holds the scope of revision.

Rohini's disgruntlement with her ordinary village life, confined in the lanes domesticity and drudgery shows her stubborn resistance to the prescribed gender roles. Her defiance of societal and gender roles, craving for material and sexual control, and unapologetic meanness, are the traits which illustrate her desire to transcend the normative gender roles. Seen from the perspective of Butler, she shatters the compulsory reiteration of gender norms (Butler 145-149). Her migration to Guyana along with Vidia, whom she insinuates with the dreams of riches in Guyana, can also be seen as an act of performative resistance. As against the societal norms, she as a woman, and not the man of the house, took the decision to leave their homeland. Her idea of migration is not merely an escape from the suffocating walls of domesticity, rather, she harbours the dream of a life which is free from material as well as sexual constraints. Her sustained defiance of gender norms, which mark women as passive, subdued, weak and

dependent, establish her identity as one of a non-conformist individual; the one who refuses to perform to the scripts of patriarchy. Her situatedness as an oppressed but defiant woman helps her develop a conscious critique of systemic domination (Collins 252). Armed with a distinct consciousness, she challenges the binaries of gender and dares to topple down the class differences through her daring dream of inheriting Gladstone's wealth.

The novel introduces reader to another important female character, Miriam. She is a former black slave who commands some fear among coolies and former slaves because of her proximity to Gladtone, yet she invites derision because of her gender. How language can be used to violate a woman sexually is shown to us when the coolies taunt her, "Is true nigger pokey-hair hard like wire broom and scratch up your face when you go down to suck? I hear you got to close your eyes when you go down in case the hairs juk them out and blind you" (*The Counting House* 78). Giving two hoots to such taunts, Miriam walks with utmost confidence. Coolies and African fear her because of her proximity with Gladstone.

Miriam's sexual relationship with Gladstone began during slavery, but she maintains it because she has become accustomed to the relatively easier lifestyle of a house servant: "I taste too much Cadbury and sweet-biscuits to go back to when Ma abscond and hunger scratch" (*The Counting House* 144). But this liaison is as humiliating for her as it is for Rohini. Shivani Sivagurunathan says that for Miriam "Sex with him is not performed out of pleasure, but desire which is somewhat removed from lust. For the motivation behind her sexual relationship with him is the desire to maintain and to elevate herself in class, financial and political terms" (77). She further elucidates that "Numerous reasons converge to elucidate Miriam and Gladstone's sexual activities. On her part, desire, revenge, poverty, power and position fuse to meet his lust, desire, ownership and control" (78). On being asked by Rohini, Miriam tells about the dehumanizing experience of having intercourse with Gladstone. She says, "Because they take you from behind. Because they lash you so you can bray, which is the only noise they want to hear. Because they feed in the trough between your breasts or in the trough of your mouth. Because nigger women is her back-end" (*The Counting House* 100).

Miriam despises Gladstone yet she competes with Rohini for his sexual favours. She nurses the fear of being superseded by Rohini. The matter at hand is not merely of sexual nature but has wider significance when seen from the perspective of a former slave who has earned some autonomy and power within community with great effort. The fear that Rohini arises in

Miriam is of being dispossessed of authority. What Dabydeen states is symptomatic of Miriam's fears, "Indians were seen as stealing [the African's] rightful inheritance, newcomers and interlopers accorded legal protections and material privileges denied to slave and ex-slave" (Jenkins 4). Former slaves always viewed Indian indentured servants as their competitors who would usurp their place on the plantation and would consequently enslave them. In the same league, Miriam is apprehensive of Rohini for her presence and proximity to Gladstone would mean encroachment on her sexual autonomy on the plantation. For her Rohini is a rival who has the potential to "gather up Gladstone and all his gifts" (*The Counting House* 108) and rendering her and her brothers destitute. The snare of colonial desire, manipulation and exploitation uses sex and sexuality to trap its prey. Both Rohini and Miriam vie for Gladstone's favour and destroy themselves whilst the white exploiter enjoys his prey. Both the women become competitors for Gladstone's attention because it provides them with meagre monetary benefits and a superficial authority over other indentures. "Both Rohini and Miriam work in the Great House and gain small rewards and privileges for their services; both compete for the Master's little favours … Both also jostle each other for Gladstone's sole attention, sole ownership" (Low 211–12). Although, Miriam views Rohini as a competitor for Gladstone's affection, she still cares for her injuries when Vidia harms her and even provides advice on the plight of women on the plantation. After losing her child with Gladstone, Rohini is nursed back to health by Miriam. By the conclusion of the novel, Rohini resides with Miriam and assumes a maternal role towards the latter's brother, Thomas. Najnin Islam elucidates the situation:

> The complicated nature of their relationship – marked simultaneously by affection, malice, and disgust – gives pause to any interpretation of absolute solidarity. Their status as gendered and sexualized subjects within the plantation economy, however, plays a significant role in their ability to build affective alliances across racial lines (11).

The changing contours of Rohini-Miriam relationship can also be understood through the prism of postpositivist realism. The change that comes in their relationship in not sudden. Both of them are victims of Gladstone's sexual exploitation and their own fancies. Both of them are aware of each other's vulnerability and when the situation demanded, they became each other's support. Moya affirms that,

> Identities are not self-evident, unchanging, and uncontestable…identities are subject to multiple determinations and to continual process of verification that takes place over the course of an individual's life through her interaction with the society she lives in. It is in this process of verification that identities can be (and often are) contested and that they can (and often do) change (84).

Both the women realize that the white imperialist has played its dirty game to make them opponents. Their identity changes from being Gladstone's sex toy and therefore each other's rival to a more cordial sisterhood where one's pain is felt by the other. Their understanding of the imperial master's exploitation awake them up to the sexual and racial politics and they reconfigure their identity as women who need to be each other's support system so as to fight the exploitation collectively.

Despite the degrading nature of Miriam and Rohini's relationships with Gladstone, both women wield some degree of power over him. This suggests that their experiences are similar and that the laborers were not entirely subservient to their masters. Miriam has free rein in the house and occasionally steals small amounts of money from Gladstone's safe, validating the same to Rohini with an undeniable logic, "If I ask him he would give me ten coin but I'd rather thief. He thief it from me in the first place, from my Ma and Pa and grandpa and all the niggers who old Gladstone murder, so how he can give what don't belong to him?" (*The Counting House* 108). Physically stronger than Gladstone, Miriam once knocks him off when he becomes too sexually aggressive and thus "leaving him sprawling at the foot of the couch, utterly terrified by what else she might do" (*The Counting House* 98). Rohini, on the other hand, is physically fragile but she too exerts her power over Gladstone and succeeds in gaining some favours like securing a place for Vidia in the counting house. The relationship pattern between Rohini, Miriam and Gladstone suggests a power structure functioning behind the interactions of exploitative white masters, indentured labourers and former slaves. This power structure is like a web where each person although entangled yet has the agency to tug on the strings and, to some extent, shift the position of the others. Both Rohini and Miriam's historically constituted social location of being Indian/black and indentured slave put them in a subservient position. Both of them however, seeks to reap benefits through their gender. Their experience of sexual exploitation by Gladstone affords them the benefit of securing monetary benefits for their family. In this way, their experience of sexual violence might differ

from other women indentures who suffered beatings and threats over denial. Moya suggests that,

> …historically constituted social categories that make up an individual's particular social location are causally relevant for the experiences she will have and demonstrate how identities both condition and are conditioned by individual's interpretations of their experiences (18).

Rohini and Miriam's social location as an indenture is manipulated by them for their benefit. They tried using sex as their shield against the adversity and hardships. Their subservient identity is exploited by Gladstone but their initial experience of it is interpreted by them as rewarding. Their competition with each other reflects how they both erred in their interpretation of experience with Gladstone. Sexual exploitation was mistakenly construed as a lifelong guarantee against poverty and deprivation. Miriam realizes her mistake with a level head but Rohini slips into insanity.

Miriam is a strong woman and commands considerable respect from her clan. She is a fighter who knows when to attack and when to turn on defenses. Arrival of Rohini on the plantation ruffles her up but she quickly regains her composure to give the situation a thorough analysis and to turn it in her and her clan's favour. Despite being mauled verbally with sexual slurs by the coolies, she maintains her confidence and examines the situation which demands action from her. She is among those whose "…initial focus is the examination of experiences constituting (their own) individual and group identities, to discover their social meanings and reclaim the power to redefine them" (Gillman 461). She throws away the stereotypes that the society clings to a woman and leads an assertive life of independence where she takes the responsibility of her whole clan. The writer informs:

> She knew her status among them…To begin with she accepted her status dutifully, for the sake of restoring her pride. She was looking after her abandoned brothers and she would take in the rest of the tribe. She would nurture them all until they grew strong enough to survive on their own (*The Counting House 96*).

Rohini and Miriam's initial colluding response to the sexual violence perpetrated by Gladstone can be viewed as a sexualized performance which ensured protection and access to the resources of the white master. Both the women, specifically Rohini, construe this sexual liaison as a chance to improve her and Vidia's state of affairs. She misinterprets sexual

compliance as a guarantee for long-term financial security and falls into a performative illusion where she misinterprets her exploitation as her power.

Femininity of Rohini and Miriam is not innate but socially produced and enacted through repetitive performances intended to achieve financial security and stability (Butler 145–149). Ironically, these performances did not bring the agency that was envisioned. Their desire for freedom "turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation (Butler 2).

Miriam firmly rejects the gender scripts imposed upon her. She redefines womanhood as the one invested with agency. Patricia Hill Collins' standpoint theory supports the view that individuals occupying marginal positions often attain epistemic clarity through struggle. Miriam's grit and consciousness germinates not only from her personal strength but from her recognition of power operations across gender and class lines. Marginalized subjects often develop "a distinctive consciousness" (Collins 253) which empowers them to reinterpret and resist the narratives imposed upon them.

Disappearance (1993) deals with the cultural dilemma of its unnamed narrator-protagonist. While tracing the diasporic journey of its narrator, the readers come across the character of a white woman, Mrs. Janet Rutherford "who had lived in Africa and whose husband had abandoned her childless" (*Disappearance* 12). Her house has "a…row of shelves bearing wooden and clay pots she had brought back from her travels in the 1950s and '60s" (*Disappearance* 13). Her knowledge of African topography, rituals, ethos and culture make her a very intriguing character. From the very start, she tries to cajole narrator to talk about his roots and would often find him lacking but as he admits was never "scornful of my ignorance" (*Disappearance 15*). Living in her house as a tenet, he is amazed by her knowledge of Africa. The narrator feels that "She described the continent with an almost instinctive feel for the place, drawing my attention to the subtleties of form that distinguished one tribe from the other" (*Disappearance 15*). Talking about the distinct qualities of art forms belonging to different tribes of Africa, she strikes the reader as someone whose interest in Africa is neither superficial nor exploitative. Mrs. Rutherford demonstrates the potential of socially situated knowledge. Through her, Phillips demonstrates that privileged individuals may, through ethical engagement and critical self-reflection, adopt alternative standpoints that allow them to see and challenge oppressive structures (Collins 252–253). Her rejection of dominant racialized

scripts presents an intentional re-performance of whiteness; a whiteness cleansed of oppression and prejudices and therefore entrenched in empathy rather than dominance.

The way she deals with the narrator and nudges him towards a personal cultural retrieving, makes her stand apart and makes her different from the imperial whites. As an individual who describes "the continent with an almost instinctive feel for the place, drawing…attention to the subtleties of form that distinguished one tribe from the other" (*Disappearance* 15). Her cultural identity of being White can be subjected to a realist analysis. Her stance in the novel shows how the experience is always mediated by some discourse. In fact, she alters narrator's perception and experiences with her theories with a purpose to make him alive to a more authentic existence. She explicates "postpositivist realism considers a theory-independent reality to exist and assumes that our theories of the (social) world can help us to understand it and are, to some extent, dependent on it" (Hames-Garcia 108). Her personal perception generated by first-hand experience makes her empathize with the blacks. Although positioned as a white in the cultural arena, her sympathies lie with the blacks. Bringing to fore the cruel legacy of White imperialism, she says,

> That's how they got the land. They wiped out the weaker folk, joining one stolen field to another, then built castles to defend their loot, and gave themselves their titles like Baron or Duke. The history of England is a nasty business… It is English sickness. We carried it all over the world. Boatload of ivory or boatload of blackbodies, it was all the same (*Disappearance* 86).

Mrs. Rutherford may signify the ruptures in history designed by Whites; a history replete with cruelty. Unlike her prejudiced and predatory husband, Jack, she found solace in Africa and wanted to be soaked in its serenity and mystic wilderness. She rejoiced in the purity and richness of African topography which had yet not been violated by the Whites. Her husband, Jack represents the conventional White who viewed blacks with hatred and skepticism. For him, the topographical wilderness is symptomatic of mental savagery that requires taming from the 'superior' and 'cultured' whites. She recalls the times when she would venture into wilderness in Africa to seek comfort of solitude. Her husband, Jack would at such times get mad at her for exposing herself to the dangers of jungle. His face "blistered with hatred" contrasted sharply with her own "calmness" (*Disappearance* 92) but he would take her "…back to the familiarity of the English sound of my voice, back to myself as an English

person in a certain place at a certain time with a certain mission…I just wanted the silence and the emptiness of the desert that Jack was making me leave behind" (*Disappearance* 92). She felt and experienced the place with all her heart. It is for this reason that she talks about it with authority and comfort.

She brings to fore what the whites try to hide or feign to have forgotten- the dark imperial past. She may also represent the guilty conscience of England. Jack, her cruel and sadist dead spouse who went to Africa to unleash his sexual perversion, may symbolize the horrible imperial past. He must die/disappear to give place to Janet Rutherford and the guilty conscience to make amends and repent its deeds. She punctured holes into the West's narrative of Blacks. The narrator reminiscences,

> …on one of our trips to Hastings, had pointed me to a splendid mansion in the Georgian style. 'To think that West-Indian slave money built that', she said, 'but the crowds who gape at the fine furniture and fine paintings think it's the best of English heritage. And the guide-books don't tell them any different (*Disappearance* 155).

Mrs. Rutherford's maintains a garden, which with its exotic flowers may symbolize a colonizing process. She unsettles the notion of the harmonious and civilized English Garden (colonization and civilizing mission) by "snipping off the heads of dying roses with a particularly violent action of her scissors" (*Disappearance* 39). By doing so, she disrupts the whole artefact of English ideology of its great culture, ethos and history. She says with conviction,

> That's why I keep the garden I suppose, to remind me of their Englishness, their cruelty. It's the most English thing I can do. As you say, it's all order on the surface. I kept it that way for years so that one day somebody like you would come from far away and disturb it. Like the reverse of an English fairytale, where the white knight arrives to restore order and security to the imprisoned maiden. I wanted an African to arrive and disrupt the place… (*Disappearance* 140).

Gardening is considered to be harmonious process but Mrs. Rutherford's outburst connects it to imperialism and cruel process of white domination. Exotic plants in her garden can also be taken as symbols of displaced and uprooted African people, since these plants are uprooted from their natural habitat and planted in alien lands. Mrs. Rutherford's thoughts thus

can be understood by placing the process of gardening in a new theoretical light where it is seen as a metaphor of imperial domination and as she says "It made me know for the first time what we really are, outside of England and the decencies of garden, the farm and the cottages" (*Disappearance* 72). Mrs. Rutherford through her questions, masks, and stories prompt the narrator to reconsider his identity within the crucible of his ancestry. She makes him realize as Mohanty says the "need to reconstruct what our relevant community might have been, appreciate the social and historical dimensions of our innermost selves" (47). She wants the narrator to maintain his African identity by resisting conformism and incorporation into the mainstream British culture. She expects him to retain his innate African sensitiveness to nature and to preserve it against the onslaught of technology which his work demands. For her, progress should not come at the cost of nature. She believed that Africans have lived closer to nature and have worshipped it. For them, a living spirit permeates nature and West with its juggernauts of technology boasts of development and complacently refuses see the flipside of development which makes the nature bleed. In such a scenario, human beings become mechanized and bulldozer in the novel thus becomes a symbol of dehumanization of humans. For Mrs. Rutherford, he represents Africa that is losing its identity under the influence of West. She wants to save the narrator from this dehumanization and to help him maintain his individuality and Africanness which makes him unique and distinct from westerners. He is like a flower in her garden which she has nurtured with utmost care. His beauty lies in difference which he must not forsake for the lure of assimilation.

Mrs. Rutherford, thus is a very important character who becomes the catalyst in the transformative journey of the narrator. Her presence strikes a note of consonance with the postpositivist realism too. Through her, the narrator realizes that there is always a possibility of error in one's approach to the reality; an error which can be revised time and again. She brings to fore the idea that identities are definitely subjection constructions which can be analyzed objectively. Her position of a white woman with deep affinity to black culture and ethos makes her a distinct character. She is a character who has in terms of Satya P. Mohanty acquires "Cultural decolonization" (63). Mohanty explains this as a kind of ""Learning" to value and imagine (which) is relevant not only for the disadvantaged but also for the historically privileged, for both privilege and privation can produce (different kinds of) moral and political blindness" (63). She is the one who has surged over the socio-political blindness

of western 'superiority' and civilization. Her cultural decolonization ensures that she stands apart from the hegemonic apparatuses and having achieved this, she embarks on the journey of bringing the narrator out of his blindness. It is through her, the reader is acquainted with the fallacious interpretations which the privileged white west has imposed upon the Blacks and how the hegemonic pressures have made blacks accept the same with gratitude.

The Intended (1991) is about an unnamed Indo-Guyanese boy who lives in England and hopes to make a decent life for himself. He lives alone and has a company of Asian boys who are his friends. Together, they form "the regrouping of the Asian diaspora in a South London school ground" (*The Intended* 8). The novel, with its focus on human relationships traverses the terrain of diaspora and brings to fore some of the issues concerning women and their representation. The novel shows show sexism and casual misogyny penetrates every nook and corner of one's daily existence and thus mould the young minds in such a way that all their fantasies reek of sex and sexism. The narrator says,

> All of us growing up in London were swamped with images of sex which had no bearing on morality, or indeed any kind of value at all, apart from the commercial … The billboards we passed on our way carried provocative photographs of fleshy lips sucking at a cigarette, or teenage girls in black tights sprawled on the bonnet of the latest motor car (*The Intended* 19).

The pervasive nature of such advertisements impacts the mind of both the young and the old alike. It vilifying impact is seen the most in teenage boys. They start mistaking masculinity with sex and resultantly, disrespect for women ensues. The teenage narrator and his friends are, to varying degrees, drawn into the depraved environment. However, the narrator, who has a taste for canonical literature and is aspiring for admission in Oxford, contrasts sharply with his friend Shaz, who pimps for his prostitute girlfriend Monica.

Shaz, narrator's friend and the son of Pakistani immigrants, indulges in pornographic magazines and feeds his imagination on misogynistic images. Bragging shamelessly and in detail about his sexual activities with Monica, Shaz's language is infected by the explicit content which he is habitual of viewing in magazines. The narrator notes that "the language of his descriptions was straight out of the magazines" (*The Intended* 123). Resultantly, Shaz becomes completely misogynistic and views all women as objects of men's sexual gratification. Like an expert, he introduces the narrator to sex industry of London which houses

sex shops and massage parlours showing “large billboards of women offering their naked flesh to us.” (*The Intended* 125). Perplexed, the narrator confronts Shaz about the direction he is moving to and gets the reply that sex is ‘a business like any other’ (*The Intended* 133).

Shaz sexualizes and objectifies women. He tells narrator all kind of stories woven around women and sex. For him, a woman is nothing but a sexual object asking for a physical contact. He shows porn magazines to narrator and talks about how women ask to be violated, how “their roughness and crude vocabulary giving her multiple orgasms” (*The Intended* 121). The narrator gets influenced by these stories and starts thinking of Janet as a body to be violated. He thinks about how “to pounce on her instead, smearing blackness over all her genteel Englishness” (*The Intended* 121). Shaz’s description of menstrual cycle disgusts the narrator. His discomfort with a woman’s anatomy is visible when he says “The thought of blood leaking from her…made me nauseous” (*The Intended* 122). The vocabulary used by these boys to describe and imagine women is crude and sexually graphic. It makes the reader uncomfortable.

Monica is used by Shaz for his financial gains as well as an object whose sexual favours can be gifted to his friend. He sells Monica’s body for prostitution and pays off the mortgage of his house with the earned money. Monica, too is a party to the whole game. At no point, does she object to all this. She too finds all this a good source of income. What really strikes hard is that woman’s sex is used by a man to bolster up his confidence in worldly affairs. It becomes evident in the episode when the narrator has sex with Monica. He realizes that “…Monica was Shaz’s parting gift to me, his way of bolstering my self-confidence so that I could take on the intellectual challenge of Oxford” (*The Intended* 157). He was grim and unenthusiastic about his going to Oxford chiefly because of is incomplete relationship with Janet. But sex with Monica recuperates his confidence and virile masculinity.

Patriarchy, this way binds both the men and women in a vicious circle. Patriarchy often uses the female body as a tool to reinforce male confidence and societal dominance. Women’s sexuality is used to validate men's status and power. Patriarchy frequently sexualizes women's bodies, positioning them as objects for male pleasure and validation. The societal norms ensure that women internalize a dismissive or exploitative understanding of themselves, which undermines their confidence and reinforces their subordination. By perpetuating these standards, patriarchy maintains its structure, where the female body becomes a site of both control and validation for men, bolstering male confidence through the oppression and

regulation of women's physical and sexual autonomy. The attitude of these boys towards women and narrator's gratitude towards Shaz reinforces their deep-rooted misogynistic ideology. Their experience of a woman's body is conditioned by the patriarchal attitude. Paula M.L. Moya's observation in this context is highly relevant. She says that "The meanings we give our experiences are inescapably conditioned by the ideologies and 'theories' through which we view the world" (81). More important is the next part of her statement where she says that "…experience in its mediated form, contains a "cognitive component" through which we can gain access to knowledge of the world" (81). The experiences of the men of *The Intended* are conditioned by the patriarchal ideology and Dabydeen in his depiction of this, lays bare the working of ideology on minds and thus provides the reader with an alternate set of knowledge which puts the ideology under scanner.

Narrator's girlfriend, Janet is the opposite of Monica. Docile and cultured, she is like the beautifully maintained garden of Mrs. Rutherford. The narrator of *Disappearance* often compares England with that manicured garden that exudes serenity, beauty and symmetry. Mrs. Rutherford, however, always prods him to see beneath its surface at the wilderness of English history. Monica with her crude sexuality is that wilderness, that force which threatens to disrupt the idyllic conception of England, tearing into pieces, the claims of civilization. Both the narrators of *The Intended* and *Disappearance*, however, initially choose to see that image of England which has always been promoted. They wish to be one with that England which is enveloped in serenity and civilized culture.

Patel, the other friend of narrator too has seen the underbelly of England. He also conforms to Shaz's view of sex as a business and therefore sells pornographic films in the family video shop. Confounded by the rationale behind his friend's business, the narrator wonders how Patel's father with his conservation outlook could allow this:

> How could the father sell all that sex stuff which went against all their Indian beliefs? Indians were family people, everybody knew that. The men watched over the family, especially the girls whom they kept from dirt and who saved their virginities for marriage (*The Intended* 135).

At this point in the novel, the narrator's willfully idealized vision of Indian family life has already been contradicted by his own experiences. Additionally, his perception of 'virginities' as gifts to be 'saved' for future husbands reflects another form of the

commodification of female sexuality, suggesting that the husband has an exclusive lifelong 'right' to his wife's body even before they have met.

The institution of marriage and the place a woman is assigned in it too has been shown in the novel. The politics of dominance and use of woman's body as a site of violence is shown on many occasions in the novel. The narrator often ruminates about the beatings that his mother were subjected to by the father. He remembers an incident when his father comes home and he along with his sisters rush to greet him. They are brushed aside by the father who goes after their mother in a fit of rage. On reaching the bedroom they "could hear her sobbing as he hit her…(they) peeped through slits in the bedroom wall to see him pull our mother off the bed by the hair, drag her to a corner out of our sight and beat her" (*The Intended* 39).

Tana, another drunkard from the village too beats up his wife. His battered wife would seek refuge in the house of narrator's grandmother. "Sometimes she would come running over to my grandmother's house late at night, her face swollen and hair torn up" (*The Intended* 38). At this point, grandmother would ask her sister, Auntie Pakul to accompany her to teach Tana a lesson. Auntie Pakul is a strong woman who is thought of having killed her drunkard and abusive husband. She is looked upon by women of the village as a protector who can shield them from the beatings of their respective husbands. Narrator's father too gets a beating from her. On coming to know that he has beaten his wife, she comes to their place taking an early morning bus and "without asking any questions cuffed him heavily on the mouth, closed her large hands around his head…and banged it against the wall…slap him about the face…" (*The Intended* 40). Auntie Pakul thus acts as a champion of women's rights and throws the conventions- that expect women to be coy and silent in suffering- to wind to assert her authority and basic human right to respect.

Patriarchy perpetuates itself through wife beating by reinforcing and legitimizing male dominance and control within the family structure. In patriarchal societies, norms and beliefs that endorse male authority over women are deeply ingrained, often leading to the acceptance or justification of intimate partner violence. This violence serves as a means for men to assert and maintain control over their wives, thereby reinforcing traditional gender roles and hierarchical power dynamics.

Wife beating is often justified under various pretenses, such as disciplining a wife for perceived disobedience or failure to fulfill domestic duties. Men view wife-beating as a

legitimate response to what they perceive as their wives' transgressions. The narrator's father too tries to justify beating his wife by accusing her of infidelity. He says that she "…had taken a man when he had gone away" (*The Intended* 40). This behavior is not only a personal assertion of control but also a reinforcement of societal norms that value male authority and female subservience.

The novel chiefly shows us how men see women. Women characters are minor, with Janet and Monica finding more literary space than the other women characters like the narrator's mother, grandmother and Auntie Pakul. It is through the conversation and thought process of men that the novelist gives us a peep into the patriarchal society that binds woman with her anatomy and then derides it for the same. The language used by men brings forth the prevalent sexism and misogyny of society. Besides the friends of narrator who live in a city, we are shown characters from the village of Guyana who indulge in cheap talk. Richilo, narrator's grandfather's brother uses abusive language and like the villagers and coolies of *The Counting House,* he uses sexually explicit language and cuss words for women. Shamelessly he goes to women to sell fishes and eggs and says, "'I gift you all the fish in the oceans of this world,' he would offer poetically and expansively, 'for a sight of your hairy fish'" (45). Laden with sexual connotations, his words speak volumes about the mass mentality which traps women in her body.

Dabydeen's depiction of women characters initially hit the reader with a jarring note. He does not delineate them in a way that evokes pity. The language which male characters use to describe and discuss these women too seems to be crude and sexually graphic. As pointed by many critics, such a depiction give rise to the suspicion of his indulging in misogynist politics where women's body is trapped in highly explicit and sexually graphic language. But there is another perspective to it. Elizabeth Jackson's views on this are pertinent. She says:

> One of the interesting aspects of Dabydeen's fictional writing is his extensive and sustained engagement, from a male perspective, with the radical feminist idea of sexuality being the basis of women's oppression. Even more interesting, perhaps, is his uncompromising approach, which seems to suggest that all men (or at least all heterosexual men) are capable of cruelty towards women in particular environments and particular circumstances. The commercialization of women's

> bodies is repeatedly emphasized in Dabydeen's fiction, from 1970s London in *The Intended*, to nineteenth-century India and Guiana in *The Counting House*… (431).

The novelist presents these women from a male gaze but to deconstruct it. He hits the snoozing reader with a jarring note so as to sensitize him against the prevalent narrative which sees and depicts women in only sexual terms. His methodology does not always bring home the pain of women directly, rather he does it indirectly by evoking disgust against the commonplace and all pervasive sexually abusive terminologies that are used for women. He awakens the reader with a jolt against the casual misogny. On being interviewed by Clarisse Zimra, he responded to the question regarding portrayal of women thus:

> I hope I don't invest in the pornography of empire; you really have to be dreadfully honest about what seems to me to be at the heart of empire, which is … callousness to the female which expresses itself in a variety of violent ways … But then, I don't want to write about cruelty to women in a kind of poignant way either. So, yes, it's difficult territory to discuss … There's always a problem of men writing about women, anyway. You can never do it to everybody's satisfaction (153).

Both David Dabydeen and Caryl Phillips show the multiple sides of women's personalities and lives in their novels. Their presentation of women characters however differs from each other. Where the former presents the prevalent sexism by depicting his women from the predatory eyes of male, the latter gives the reader an insight into a woman's soul. Both of them, however, try to bring forth the trauma experienced by women. Where Dabydeen mainly presents the reason behind that, there Phillips captures the excruciating pain of it. Their viewpoint and its expression is generated by the different positions they have chosen to ruminate over the issue. Moya suggest that "humans generate knowledge, and our ability to do so is causally dependent on both our cognitive capacities and our historical and social locations" (18). The social location or what realists also call- positionality of the novelists is to be kept in mind while making an assessment of their women characters. And this can very well be analyzed with postpositivist realism as it "can facilitate the use of positional perspectives as the means to identify and evaluate the background assumptions and epistemic consequences of differently positioned individuals and groups" (Gillman, *Unassimilable Feminisms* 10). Stances taken by both the novelists in their depiction of women characters are

diverse and distinct and provide one with multiple perspectives to interpret the situations and experiences.

Women characters in the novels of Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen breathe a distinct life on the pages of novels. They lay bare the workings of power structures which function against women either directly or indirectly. Male-chauvinism, wife-beating, misogyny, indifference and casual sexism are some of the aspects which the novelists have brought to fore. The stories of Leila, Joyce, Annabelle, Brenda and the perspective of men towards women in *The Intended* depict the social scenario where the women experience injustice in the most intimate relationships. Most of the time, they ignore it or refuse to acknowledge the violence that takes physical, emotional, psychological or linguistic form. It takes time for them to rise up against the violence being done to their subjectivity. Satya P. Mohanty says that "a feminist political consciousness often develops, for instance, through a recognition of the overwhelming significance of the personal, of the way gender relations and inequalities are played out in our most intimate relationships (including our relationship with ourselves)" (63). We witness how Leila differs in her delayed response to Michael's chauvinism from Joyce's or Annabelle's response to their respective husbands. Where Joyce refuses to bear the torture, there Annabelle put her foot down on gaining the knowledge of Keith's infidelity. These women eventually understand that the closest relationships give the sharpest of wounds. With this understanding, comes the awakening and journey towards a more assertive and independent self.

Since patriarchy predates recorded history, tracing its origins to a single cause is challenging. However, Laura O'Toole et al. highlight that it began with the notion of women as property.

> Women were the first slaves. In the quest for women, invading clans would kill adult males on the spot and enslave their women and children. Rape and other forms of physical and psychological violence were used to control women in their new communities … Both violence toward women and the elaborate social structures that develop around such practices serve to … institutionalize patriarchy. Over time, overt and covert forms of violence come to characterize 'normal' gender relations, institutionally and interpersonally (6–7).

Cases of rape, wife-beating, sexual harassment, casual sexism etc. emerge from the notion of woman as a property. Elizabeth Jackson while discussing the sexual politics too dwells upon this contention. She says that:

> …it stands to reason that colonized men's humiliating experiences of slavery and indentureship encouraged a culture of violence against colonized women within the home, adding to their already vulnerable position as commodities within the wider plantation economy (429).

Vidia's beating of Rohini and Michael's disdain of Leila can be understood within this context. Slavery, colonialism and racism acted as a double whammy for women because they suffered at the hands of both the whites and their own men. Len's complacent acceptance of Sandra's murder by Terry and his beating of Len too emerges from the idea of woman as a commodity or property which can be handled by the master as per his will. The novels under study sheds light on this theme and also focuses upon the reverberations of women's hearts and souls and their responses to situations. The woman's experience of beating from a realist point is worth notice. Caroline S. Hau opines:

> For the battered woman, the social fact of gender, based on empirical evidence that refers outward to causally significant features of the world…provides the causal explanations that are relevant to her experience and the possibilities and choices that are open to her (157).

Having experienced the diaspora, both the novelists have their distinctive outlook. The march of time has created many layers in their respective ideologies and their works give us a peep into how knowledge created at various levels impacts an individual's experience and vice-versa. Their works themselves provide one with a certain set of knowledge about women, their experiences and identity. The hidden rules running the juggernauts of power are unveiled for the readers and they do what Laura Gillman states as:

> By creating theory-mediated knowledge through narratives that make salient features of experience not transparently evident, and weighing those against other empirical features, individual knowers can render intelligible the unobserved rules, ideologies and practices that underlie power laden social categorizations (462).

The journey of women characters as they negotiate their ways through different circumstances, places, societies, and relationships brings to fore the continuous process of

identity formation: a formation which alters at multiple levels to acquire new contours, thereby providing a fluid character to it. Srikala Naraian rightly states that "…the continuity of self emerges from within this continual movement through multiple geographical and psychic borders in the negotiation of the self through historically mediated experience" (105). Naraian's viewpoint echoes the postpositivist realist perspective. The self of a woman negotiates the riddles of historically constituted knowledge and acquires an experience which needs to be tested for the variation from other experiences. Women in these novels at times misconstrue their experiences. With the passage of time, they realize their fallacy. The realists contend that such an error in the interpretation of experience is acceptable as long as it encourages one to try to acquire a new and more valid meaning. "Experiences are crucial indexes of our relationships with our world (including our relationship with ourselves)" (Mohanty 38). Such experiences get manifest in the novels through Leila's mulatto status and snob tag, wherein she feels herself superior to others, in Joyce's open eyed ignorance of white prejudice, Rohini's fairytale imagination of getting rich and powerful first by immigrating to Guyana and then by inheriting Gladstone's wealth and in Monica's 'bad faith' living by selling her body. Satya P. Mohanty argues that to say that the experiences of these women generated knowledge is to say that " they can be susceptible to varying degrees of socially constructed truth or error and can serve as sources of objective knowledge or socially produced mystification" (38). Experience, for the realists, is neither self-evident nor reliable and is therefore not be a source of objective knowledge and requires "constant reinterpretation, reevaluation, and adjudication" (Hau 156). These characters enact the desired reinterpretation in their quest for an authentic experience.

Women have traditionally and ideologically been assigned a lower status and their voices have often been either silenced or communicated via the silencer of patriarchy. Their true narratives are pertinent to be acknowledged and understood so as to arrive at a better understanding of not only their experiences but also of the human world at large. Sandra Harding contends that to acquire reliable knowledge in a society that has strong denominators of class, gender or race,

> …one requires a methodology via which 'the activities of those at the bottom of such social hierarchies can provide starting points for thought – for everyone's

> research and scholarship – from which humans' relations with each other and the natural world can become visible' (54).

Postpositivist realist theory provides one with such a methodology. It acknowledges the intersectionality of various denominators of identity and focuses upon how difference of vantage points or situations can alter one's perception of circumstances. The dominant impact of one denominator of identity (race, class, gender etc.) can lead an individual to arrive at some knowledge which is both temporary and open to error and therefore to revision. Further, knowledge acquired in the context of oppression- based upon any identity denominator- carries an epistemic privilege. It brings to fore the identities which lie at the "bottom of social hierarchy" and reiterates the power embedded in individual as well as collective agency.

Paula M.L. Moya while analyzing Cherrie Moraga's realist feminism puts across very valid arguments regarding the status of women of colour: how they are typecast, prejudiced against by the dominant culture. Moya shows how Moraga's "theory of flesh" concentrates upon "the materiality of body my conceptualizing "flesh" as the site on or within which the woman of color experiences the painful material effects of living in her particular social location" (92). A black woman's body becomes a site of violence and it renders her vulnerable to both the racist and sexist attacks. The humiliation suffered by Leila in her job as a bus conductor, suffering of Martha, Rohini and Miriam as slave and indentures stems from their embodied selves which are black and female. They suffer because their gender and race is misconstrued and is thereby bound to jobs and situations which are unjust and inhuman. Moya says that "women of color face situations and have experiences that arise as a result of how other people misrecognize them…These misrecognitions…are painful" (92). Moya asserts that the world constitutes an intersection of various forces of domination which exhibit their power in material as well as psychological domains and its impact gets reflected in the respective social location of individuals. The variation of social location renders some of them as oppressed while other are placed as oppressors. Annabelle, with her social location of being white and middle class as against Keith's black colour status, still suffers because of her gender and status as a wife. Her authoritarian and obstinate father with his 'superior' white middle class masculinity becomes an oppressor both to her as well to her mother. In the same way, Earl despite his 'inferior' blackness becomes an oppressor to Brenda and Keith. The variation in situation receives impact from the social categories of gender, race and class and the

dominance of a particular facet generates privilege as well as privation. Alert to the systematic and structural nature of oppression and domination, Moya understands that the world is "hierarchically organized according to categories of class, race, gender, and sexuality" (97) and a systemic realist analysis of such a world can help one acquire objective knowledge. Theories focusing upon women align with postpositivist realism in these matters and try to understand women's position and identity in the society from different angles so as to understand the impact of intersectionality. Chandra Talpade Mohanty says that,

> It would require a clear understanding that being a woman has political consequences in the world we live in; that there can be unjust and unfair effects on women depending on our economic and social marginality and/or privilege. It would require recognizing that sexism, racism, misogyny, and heterosexism underlie and fuel social and political institutions of rule and thus often lead to hatred of women and (supposedly justified) violence against women (3).

She talks about how different factors combine to constitute one social reality and how a multipronged approach is necessary to combat the oppression. She opines that:

> …a clear analysis and critique of the behaviors, attitudes, institutions, and relational politics that these interwoven systems entail, a just and inclusive feminist politics for the present needs to also have a vision for transformation and strategies for realizing this vision (3).

Her opinion finds consonance with the postpositivist realist standpoint which embraces intersectionality as a way to arrive at knowledge about a given situation. Focusing upon situated nature of knowledge, postpositivist realists put the notion of a single, universal truth in dock and underscore the significance of different perspectives and multiple ways of approaching the truth. Focusing upon the political and ethical agency which the acknowledgement of the situatedness of knowledge brings, Linda Martin Alcoff says that,

> Transcending difference does not happen through the application of abstract universal principles or by forcing the Other to accept what we "know" to be the unmediated truth but through a shared activity in a shared context. Thus do we achieve knowledge (335).

The women characters in these novels provide readers with multiple perspectives to arrive at objective knowledge. Leila's forbearance and subsequent assertion (although feeble

and nascent), Martha's pain and fighting spirit, Brenda's love, Annabelle's grit, Rohini's agency veiled in deception, Miriam's grimness and control, Mrs. Rutherford's persuasive force, Janet's docility and Monica's sexuality, all can be investigated from different angles. Satya P Mohanty opines that "The most basic questions of identity call for a more general reexamination of the relation between personal experience and public meanings-subjective choices and evaluations, on the one hand, and objective social location, on the other" (30). Paula M.L. Moya suggests that the social significance tied to each woman's gender could be so distinct that trying to describe one woman in terms of the other becomes pointless. Challenging the essentialist casting of women in one definition, she contends that "Even two women living in close proximity to each other…might be so differently situated in relation to the category of gender that their experiences cannot be usefully described in the same terms" (3). In the present study, this contention becomes visible in the case of Rohini and Miriam. Both the women are exploited sexually by Gladstone but the dynamics of their relationship with the exploiter as well as with each other are very complicated and are not one-dimensional. Leila's response to her situation is different from her friend, Millie. Women like Joyce, Brenda and Mrs. Rutherford, though similar in their conciliatory attitude towards blacks, are distinct in terms of motivation and experience. Janet and Monica, both are of the similar age and social background but their experiences and responses to situations are far from same. Their experience of gender is distinct. Satya P. Mohanty says that "Gender is a social fact that is causally relevant for the experiences she has and the choices and possibilities that re available to her" (56). Besides this, the interpretation of their identities and acquisition of knowledge depend upon the social situation of the reader too. Gillman provides clarity on this when she says that,

> Identities do not determine one's capacity to develop reliable knowledge but they do function as what Alcoff calls 'horizons', perceptual access points from which the causal aspects of reality can become visible without requiring that interpretations within the identity group be uniform (464).

These characters, distinct in their experiences and responses to their respective social location, provide varied perspectives on women's identity. Paula M.L. Moya deliberates upon how different individuals with their respective complicated process of identity formation or

acquisition, can provide one with a multi-nuanced perspective on the functioning of power structures. She says:

> Some identities can be more politically progressive than others not because they are "transgressive" or "indeterminate" but because they provide us with a critical perspective from which we can disclose the complicated workings of ideology and oppression (71).

Seen from this perspective, Mrs. Rutherford's identity becomes "transgressive" which lays bare the underbelly of White West. Joyce, Annabelle and Brenda too cast off the baggage of White man's burden and embraces human values and love. Through their embracement of love and shunning of discriminatory politics, they inadvertently lay bare the politics of colour and "enables the expansion of possibilities for solidarity across difference" (Hames-Garcia 120). Martha through her oppression in slavery and suffering outside slavery rends the veil off 'superior' west as against the 'savage' Africa. She shatters the whole ideology of white man's civilizing mission. Leila and Monica, on the other hand, gives us a peep into the sedative influence of masculine ideology. Leila eventually wakes up from her stupor to reclaim her 'self' but Monica is bogged down into it with frail chances of recovery. Ideology has claimed her victim-trophy in form of Monica. The variable experiences of these women cannot be analyzed in one frame and therefore demand a realist analysis which "implies that we can evaluate different experiences comparatively (since they provide different aspects of one world) by considering how adequately they can explain the complex causal structure that we call "social reality"" (Hau 161).

Error, fallibility, revision are the bridges which postpositivist realism wants the reader and the researcher to take in order to access ever flowing and course changing flow of knowledge. Validating the importance and potency of error in the process of achieving objective knowledge, Michael R. Hames-Garcia says that "it has only been through an acknowledgement of error that feminists have been able to increasingly question the role of difference and multiplicity within the category of 'women'" (110). Postpositivist realism examines how the one's purely personal choices are often a perceptional selection out of the given milieu which has strong social as well as politically undertones. In other words, what seems like a pure personal choice is deeply embedded in socio-political scenario. Satya P. Mohanty says that "Experiences and identities – and theories about them-are bits of social and

political theory themselves and are to be evaluated as such" (57). The motivations, actions, experiences, and responses of the women characters in the novels under study can be put under constant scrutiny to understand the socio-political dynamics of both the fictional world as well as its creator. Paula M.L. Moya asserts the potency of this approach thus:

> I suggest that when truth claims are understood in a realist way as fallible and subject to verification and revision, they can contribute dialectically to the development of reliable knowledge about the world. By rethinking, from an alternative theoretical perspective, notions of agency and truth, I hope to reinvigorate discussions … about the relationship between theory and practice, between intellectual inquiry and our ongoing attempts to transform ourselves and our world (61).

The women characters in these novels offer diverse perspectives on identity, shaped by their unique experiences and social locations. Identity formations provide insight into power structures, asserting that some identities reveal ideology and oppression more critically than others. The varied experiences of these characters demand a realist analysis, acknowledging error and revision as key to knowledge. Postpositivist realism sees identity and experience as socio-political constructs, requiring constant scrutiny to understand both the fictional world and its creator. Analysis of women characters in the present study are neither final nor complete. Interpretations change and new analyses usher in new understandings. Motivations, actions and experiences of these women characters can be further put under lens to discover the layers of their personalities. Hence postpositivist realism is the lens to be used.

CHAPTER 4

Disentangling the Knots of Relational Identity

Exploration of identity within the context of human relationships reveals complex patterns which intersect in myriad ways and render a fluid character to the identity. In a constant flux, identity acquires new shapes in its multiple and continuous interactions with social, cultural and historical factors. This fluidity comes to fore in the domain of human relationships too. One realizes that identity in human relationships mutates to acquire new contours as it encounters diverse socio-cultural as well as psychological variables. Evolution of identity under such circumstances discloses the interplay between the self and others and thereby becomes instrumental in understanding the complexity of human relationships.

The intricate and multifaceted character of identity gets impacted by factors which are social, cultural as well as political in nature. These factors combine to impact the dynamics and nature of interpersonal relationships. It is within such specific socio-cultural as well as socio-political contexts that human relationships acquire their specific yet fluid character and it is within these relationships that humans define and redefine themselves. Exploration of the complexity and fluidity of identity in human relationships thus leads one to understand how diverse contexts intersect and interact to provide contours to individual identities.

While engaging with the fluidity of identity, one realizes that it is within the context of specific relationships that certain identities express or reveal themselves but they nonetheless undergo constant construction and reconstruction, aligning with varied ideologies and forming new affiliations. The notion of a stable relationship stands challenged and one observes dynamism in the character and constitution of relationships. Within these unstable reference points of human relationships, individuals navigate and negotiate their identities.

A clash between individual's motivations and society's expectations often forms the base of formation of identity. An individual sets out to resolve this clash with an aim to find a distinct self within human relationships. The path of resolution can be either of defiance or conformism. The potency of defiance or the compromise of conformism also undergoes change with the changing circumstances and relationships. Human relationships occupy a central place in the formation of identity. The quality of relationship goes a long way in determining the

response of an individual to different aspects of life. The emotional component inherent in any relationship impacts an individual's response to the social and cultural domains of life.

In the novels under discussion, one encounters characters whose identities are deeply influenced by the relationship markers (example-gender). The focus of discussion is on the man-woman relationship and the parent-child relationship. The novels depict how the dynamism of human relationships impact the perspectives of characters and how these perspectives lead them to analyze their position within the relationship and the impact it creates on their identity. The dynamism of relationships influences the characters' response to different circumstances and this in turn, impacts the way they negotiate the altered contours of their subjectivity and identity.

Analysis of the intricacies of human relationships is of importance from a postpositvist realist point of view also. Though highly subjective, these relationships vis-à-vis their internal dynamics of love, sympathy and dependence can generate knowledge about individual situatedness. The realists assert that "objectivity is inextricably tied to love and personal and social relationships; we attain objectivity not by disregarding or disavowing our emotions and values, but by interrogating their epistemic character to assess the relevant insights they might provide" (Nguyen 200). A thorough engagement with these emotions and values can therefore help developing a more balanced and accurate perception and interpretation of reality. Realists hold the opinion that objectivity of knowledge is inextricably tied to the objectivity of values (Nguyen 201). Instead of debunking the emotions and values out of the critical realm, postpositivist allocate them a high status. They reiterate their significance in assessing the overall fabric of a social order and historical time. Nguyen asserts that "The emotions of trust and love and the values of mutuality and solidarity thus function as evaluative concepts that we can use to gauge a society's moral health and political development" (201). The argument gets testified through the analysis of human relationships in the select novels where the internal dynamics of relationships reveal the functioning of discursive structures.

We come across relationships which surge over the binaries and are identified by only one marker i.e. humanity. Both the novelists present us with certain characters who forgo all differences, prejudices and antagonism to create and find embalming human relationships with humane attitude. Shunning the binding and denigrating racialized identities, some of the characters come forward as the messengers of hope, love and equality, carrying the identity of

humans only. They embody Alcoff's idea that "We also use identity to talk not only about how one is *identified*, but how one *identifies with*…in identifying *with*, one can come to identify as more self-consciously," (Alcoff 340). Their self-conscious and rebellious stance is important from socio-cultural as well as political perspective. Their identification with a humane identity signifies a rupture in the discursive field and this brings out a new perspective and approach towards reality. Such identities have "important epistemic and political roles to play precisely in ensuring and enhancing solidarity" (Alcoff 340).

The white women characters through their stance against racism and prejudice, choose to embrace human identities. They, thus contribute to the dream of a just society based on humanism. Their stance can be understood through Nguyen's perspective when she says that "Our racialized experiences, cultural practices, and perspectives signify more than just contestations of the dominant structure and ideology; they are undergirded by a rich and meaningful constellation of social values and theoretical assumptions about what it would take to be more human human beings and what constitutes a just society" (202). Our racialized experiences thus affect our understanding of a just society and meaning of being a human. Carrying a normative element, this understanding highlights the necessity of a strong defense of objectivity. A robust postpositivist view of objectivity can lend its weight behind a radical and progressive humanism; humanism that appreciates historical and cultural differences while still making space for moral universalism.

Nyitsotemve opines that the base of human existence is founded on faulty values that define societies from an externalized perspective (1) and this perspective abhors inclusivity as the norm for human sustenance. He observes that:

> … the 'you' and 'we' syndrome has made human relationship most uncommon and evermore distant. This 'you' and 'we' phenomenon is the basis of historical, cultural, religious and geographical categorisation of humanity. Humanity has gradually progressed towards dominance from decade to decade and from century to century (1).

Vanquishing over the 'you' and 'me' syndrome which divides humanity into innumerable parts, some of the characters in the select novels become the beacon of hope for the sustenance of humane attitude and compassion, testifying that "Mutuality is the transformative strength" (Nguyen 196). They seem to propagate the idea of similarity in

difference. The novelists challenge the psychological and emotional restrictions which discursive structures ingrain in the identities of individuals and bring forward the humane idea that "They are different from us, but they cannot be so different that they are radically incommensurable and unintelligible" (Nguyen 196). Inability to recognize basic human needs of love, care, and respect so or an obduracy against such a stance blurs the vision of reality and hampers a holistic experience of shared human values. A step away, and ahead of parochial attitude of binary perception can help an individual develop an objective viewpoint, according to the postpositivist realists.

Phillips and Dabydeen, through their humanitarian approach seek to modify the commonplace approach towards oppression. Humanity demands one to speak against the oppression even if one is not affected by it. Understanding others' pain and attempts to alleviate it (even if fragile), constitutes our collective humanity and makes one more human human (Nguyen 202). Presenting the significance of such an approach from the postpositivist realist angle, Brent R. Henze suggests that "Rather than treating oppression as a binary force either oppressive or unoppressive to ourselves…we must see it as complex and relational, linking us to others and at the same time making us responsible for how we participate in the matrices of power that sustain oppression" (249). Many characters like Miriam, Mrs. Rutherford, Annabelle and Brenda come forward as women who refuse to collude with the juggernauts of power.

T. Minh Nguyen talks about how human values of solidarity and human equality are dealt with by some progressive writers of colour (190). Phillips and Dabydeen also work in the similar direction, as a close analysis of their select novels reveal that,

> …their insights on values…are tied to larger explanatory visions and theories of social justice…their perspectives of the world should not be taken as only resistant or counterhegemonic contestations; they should also be seen as constituting normative theories of social relationships and arrangements (Nguyen 190).

Emotional vulnerability is not seen as a weakness by the realists. Nguyen believes that it can be turned into a source of strength and consequent self-knowledge and a better understanding of the subjectivity. She asserts that vulnerability can "lay groundwork for establishing trust and empathy with others…our experience of our own vulnerability will more

likely guide us to self-reflection and self-examination. To an opening and deepening of our perception of the self" (194).

The parent-child relationship is one of the most profound and formative bonds in human experience. As a cornerstone of personal identity, emotional development, and social structure, it has been explored extensively in literature across cultures and time periods. Relationship of offspring with their parents occupies an important space in the novels under discussion. An analysis of these relationships reveals the trajectories of characters' experiences in a new light. The select novels scrutinize the tensions, affections, and emotional complexities of the parent-child bond by bringing into focus the issues of displacement, trauma, and the search for identity.

Caryl Phillips exploration of human relationships is multifaceted. His novels draw upon the complexities of these relationships and Shyama Ramsamy opinion in this regard is worth notice. He says:

> What Caryl Phillips captures through his novels is the absurd instability of relationships between individuals, particularly the failed relationship between a man and a woman which is common in Afro-Caribbean families. Phillips draws attention to complicated human relationships, isolated individuals who are often unable to engage in efficient communication with their family or partner. Another common experience of the Phillipsian characters is the dysfunctional family and particularly the ambivalent relationship of parents with their children (33).

Caryl Phillips deals with the problematic intricacies of parent-child relationship in his novels. With the diasporic displacement as a common denominator, his novels unravel the intricate emotional landscape between the parent and child. Bénédicte Ledent puts forward the point thus:

> I would like to argue that Phillips's take on the family, especially on the parent-child relationship, crystallizes the complexities of diasporic identity, shaped as it is by initial losses but also by undeniable gains, however ambivalent these might sometimes prove to be (68).

Family ties albeit fraught with longing, loss and identity crisis hold an important position in his fiction. His exploration of parent-child relationships is rooted in this broader framework of alienation, displacement, and the enduring impact of historical injustices like slavery and

colonization. His characters are often haunted by fractured family dynamics, symbolizing the larger fragmentation of identity experienced by people uprooted from their cultural and geographical origins. The parent-child relationships in Phillips' novels are not just personal but are emblematic of larger socio-political realities. Bénédicte Ledent rightly points outs that:

> Family relationships are central to the way Caribbean writers define their identities. This is particularly the case of Caryl Phillips. Most of his fiction presents the family as a site of disruption, but also includes examples of surrogate parenthood, which reflect the complexity of the writer's identity conundrum (67).

Phillips's fictional universe is replete with parents and children who are separated physically or emotionally, or both. In *Crossing the River* (1993), he depicts how slavery left the families with the lasting scars when the parents were torturously forced to part from their children. This separation caused the systematic annihilation of familial bonds and left the blacks in an emotional and psychological trauma.

The novel begins with the mournful monologue of an unnamed African father who is forced to sell his children, Nash, Martha and Travis. He rues "I soiled my hands with cold goods in exchange for their warm flesh. A shameful intercourse..." (*Crossing the River* 1). Spanning over a period of two hundred and fifty years, the heart- rending stories of this broken parent-child bond unravels the brutality of slavery and diasporic pain of unbelonging. His children are scattered across the Atlantic world and they negotiate their identities in unfamiliar and hostile environments. The hapless father says that among the many voices of history, he "discovered those of my own children…Their lives fractured. Sinking hopeful roots into difficult soil" (*Crossing the River* 1). Through their stories, Phillips interrogates how displacement transforms and distorts the parent-child dynamic. The guilt-ridden father says "To a father consumed with guilt. You are beyond. Broken-off, like limbs from a tree", he hopes to "rediscover my lost children. A brief, painful communion" (*Crossing the River* 2). Phillips juxtaposes the father's guilt and anguish against the children's lifelong struggle for belonging, identity, and the elusive promise of reunion.

The breakup of the parent-child relationship in the novel is linked to the painful search for belonging by the sold children. Rudderless, they move in a world that denies them easy definitions of identity. Their dislocation and the father's inability to maintain contact with them represent the broader struggles of African descendants who must navigate the complexities of

their fragmented identities. The sold children's narratives highlight their constant struggle to assert their place in a world shaped by the legacies of colonialism, This becomes evident in Nash's disillusionment with the sham white civilizing mission which he had held so dear under the white master Edward's influence, Martha's heart rending and unsuccessful search for the daughter lost in a slave auction, and Travis's defiance of racial boundaries through his relationship with a white woman, Joyce. The father's remorseful narrative reflects the guilt and helplessness of parents who cannot provide stability and security of life and identity to their children. It hits hard in the face when one of the children, Martha who is dejected and broken to the core, cries out "Father, why hast thou forsaken me?" (*Crossing the River* 73).

Martha's story depicts the pain of a mother who loses her daughter to the draconian practice of selling slaves at auctions. Standing in the auction "with the rest of the Virginia property", she trembles at the thought of losing her child and "fall to my knees and take Eliza Mae in my arms. I did not suckle this child at the breast…shower her with what love I have, to see her taken away from me" (*Crossing the River* 76). Brutalized and weakened physically as well as emotionally, Martha leads the fag end of her free life in search of her long-lost daughter. Having lost everything beautiful and soothing to the ogre of slavery or brutal racism, she stands defiant against all odds to accomplish her stubborn search for her daughter. Treated like an animal under slavery, she asserts her human and maternal right to be with her daughter whom she had named, Eliza Mae. The mother-daughter bond snaps at the hitting of auctioneer's gravel. With the fate of Eliza Mae unknown, Martha remembers the heart-breaking cry of the child, "'Moma.' Eliza Mae whispers the word over and over again, as though this was the only word she possessed. This one word. This word only" (*Crossing the River* 77). Through the poignant story of Martha, Phillips explores the desires and expectations of a mother's heart. Unable to live the bond with her daughter, she defiantly dreams to see her daughter happy and prosperous in life despite the knowledge that she was sold as a slave. Though unsaid, it becomes evident that this dream originates in her hope of having bequeathed her daughter with the trait of rebellion and defiance. She herself escaped slavery because of these traits. Their story depicts the grueling pain which slavery inflicted upon the families of slaves by depriving them of familial and parental bonds. Their dehumanization impacted the forging of healthy and stable identities.

The relationship between mother and daughter in the case of Joyce, Leila and their respective mothers in *Crossing the River* and *The Final Passage* traverse similar trajectories. In both the cases, the relationship is imperfect and is handicapped by lack of effective communication which results in an emotional void. The mothers in both the cases fail to get over their respective past traumas. Consequently, the daughters remain bereft of a formidable bond which could instill confidence and provide succor. Christiane Northrup declares that "Every woman who heals herself helps heal all the women who came before her and all those who will come after her" (3). It is this healing that the mothers in both the novels fail to achieve. They make no active effort to come out of the marsh of their personal traumas so as to provide some direction to the life of their daughters. Brooding over the past, they ignored the fact that their advice and counselling can save their daughters from the pain. Christiane Northrup says that,

> The mother-daughter relationship is the most powerful bond in the world, for better or for worse. It sets the stage for all other relationships. How a woman sees herself, how she is in her adult relationships with partners, and how she mothers her own children, is profoundly influenced by her relationship with her own mother (6).

This argument is testified in the story of Joyce and Leila. Joyce and her widowed mother's relationship is fraught with complications. Marred by the lack of communication, their bond is fragile. Both of them care for each other but never makes a show of it which sometimes is necessary for the strengthening of a bond. Joyce ruminates about an incident when she came home late form pub, her mother did not ask her any questions and pretended not to care: "But she never asked any questions. It was as if she didn't want to ask in case that meant that she cared. That much I understood about her. That she did care, but she didn't want me to know this. She was angry with me. Always angry" (*Crossing the River* 131). Joyce however feels responsible towards her mother and wants to have a connection. After her marriage, she often travels to meet her mother. She says that, "The only relief I have from this place is when I travel down to see my mother, whose sole occupation in life seems to be to make me feel guilty. I guilt I'm determined to resist" (*Crossing the River* 150). After her mother's death, she decides to visit her grave once a month in order to preserve her relationship with her. She decides that "I would play daughter" (*Crossing the River* 187). She hopes that her mother is in a happier place and has joined her husband in the ethereal world. The

communication gap that marred their relationship also bothers her as she hopes that her mother might be listening to her from the other world as she never paid heed to her conversation while alive. "Now that she was with her maker I had the feeling that she was listening to me. Which is more than she ever did when she had some breath in her body" (*Crossing the River* 187).

Her mother did not let her finish her school and chided her for reading too many books. Reading, on the part of Joyce, was an act of disobedience, defiance and escapism. She loves books because they are not judgmental like people. "I'm just happier with books. They don't shout at me, or accuse me of anything" (*Crossing the River* 191). She was denied an education and was expected to earn her own livelihood. Such things turned their relationship sour and led Joyce seek comfort somewhere else. Her romance with Herbert started with their mutual love for books and reading. And the end of this romance led to the circumstances which deteriorated her bond with mother.

Joyce's mother, after losing her husband in World War I, devotes her life to Christianity and finds in it the purpose of her life. Her world began and ended at Christ. Joyce however, rejects the faith after she undergoes a painful heartbreak in her relationship with Herbert. Chinks in their relationship comes forth prominently when after her heartbreak at the age of eighteen, her mother does not bother to console her or provide some counsel. Her response to her daughter's plight is strange as she does not even inquire about the reason for her being upset and crying. "But she didn't even ask me why I was crying. If she had have done, I would have told her" (*Crossing the River* 193). Denied any emotional support by her mother, Joyce seeks comfort in Christianity, the way her mother had done after losing her husband. But she fails to find a connection and she rejects Christianity. This spells a doom upon her relationship with mother. She says, "So I left the church. Or I left Christ…And then she left me. My abandonment of Christ was the last straw. I'd chosen to leave He who had made her life possible. That was, for her, the unkindest cut of all" (*Crossing the River* 194). Her mother's faith in Christ was the only thing that kept her alive amid all the desolation and loneliness after her husband's demise. Joyce's denouncement of the faith dug the final nail in the coffin of their relationship.

With the beginning of World War II, Joyce announces her marriage to Len and her decision meets disapproval by her mother. She warns her "She looked at me, as though trying to warn me about something…Men are at their best in pursuit" (*Crossing the River* 132-133).

Having lost her husband to WW I, she is apprehensive of her daughter meeting the same fate. She probably didn't wish her to marry at all. For her, the loss of husband was a big jolt and she does not want her daughter to bear the same pain in case she loses her husband. She asserts her maternal right to show the right path to her daughter even if she does not like it. She decries against the war and how it might impact her personal life but Joyce pays little heed to her as the communication between them had always been scarce. Joyce is determined to have her way with her subdued defiance against the mother. Her mother also realizes that Joyce has made her mind but that does not stop her from giving her opinion. That's why Joyce remarks "She knows I'm not really listening to her but she doesn't care. She just likes to have somebody to talk to. Somebody whom she feels it will be all right to bore. She feels she has the right to bore me. I'm her daughter" (*Crossing the River* 151). Both the women had an ambivalent relationship. An individual's decision to stay restricted in a cocoon by shutting doors on the face of others' emotions spell doom on relationships. Joyce's mother sabotaged her bond with the daughter. Sunk in the grief of lost husband, she loses her daughter too who unsuccessfully sought her mother's love, advice and company.

The damaged mother-daughter bond recurs in *The Final Passage* (1985). Leila and her mother's relationship too suffers from the lack of communication. A victim of sexual assault and trauma, Leila's mother falls short of equipping her daughter against the assaults of male-chauvinism. After being raped by a great uncle "at least fifty years older than her…she knew deep in her heart that the coupling of man and woman would hold no fascination for her" (*The Final Passage* 125). But she never settled down to make Leila understand things which have shaped their lives. A gullible fourteen-year-old Leila once lies down beside the white men on a beach and her credulous self fails to gauge the sexual overtures of these men. At this juncture, her mother angrily drags her from there and "made her shower in the street, under the rusty stand-pipe, naked and fourteen. The tears that lined her face outnumbered the thin streams of water that arched around her shoulders and down her back" (*The Final Passage* 128). The trauma of this emotional execution incident clings to her. Her mother does not try to talk to her about the apprehensions of sexual assault and instead punishes her for something which she does not understand. She probably feels that the punishment of attaching shame to her body will act as deterrent to her in future. This incident left a permanent scar on Leila's mind and blew another dent into the bond with her mother.

The relationship between the two is marked by reticence and emotional aloofness. Having brought up Leila in an emotionally detached manner, her mother leaves her unprepared for the emotional travails of life. The vacuum created by her emotional detachment hurts Leila. She leaves for England without any prior information to Leila and the latter follows her to England to take care of her deteriorating health. The shock of uncongenial British surroundings combined with the burgeoning indifference of Michael makes Leila ruminate over the lack of emotional support in her life. She comes to the sad realization that she has covered only the physical distance to be with her ailing mother, the emotional gap between them is so huge that nothing seems to infuse breath into their panting bond. Their conversation lacked any warmth and Leila feels that "The pain of illness, the pain of marriage, the pain of journey across the world and the happiness of a small baby for them both to share, nothing seemed to be able to bring them together and this first exchange had been more interview than conversation" (*The Final Passage* 124). She realizes that this void germinated in the unhealthy and demanding relationship with her mother. Leila was her unwanted child, a result of rape. She could never reconcile herself to this fact and perceived Leila either as a burden or a trophy. Leila remembers that as she "grew up her mother learned to love her more each day…not because she was her constant and only companion, but because of Leila's sharp intelligence…it was as if Leila has shot some urgency and direction back into her life" (*The Final Passage* 126). She wanted to cash in this sharpness to her financial benefit. She would blackmail men, claiming to expose them by projecting Leila as their child and would thus squeeze money from them.

Despite having a parent, Leila often felt herself an abandoned child. Her bruised and famished emotional self seeks love and care. She knocks at the wrong door for this and ends up in a toxic relationship with self-obsessed Michael. Her mother has always been apprehensive of Michael and she makes her disdain clear to Leila when she says that "You're a fool girl. A damn fool and you let me down…the boy from Sandy Bay is no good. He loves himself too much and he will use you" (*The Final Passage* 34) but Leila is head over heels in love with him and to her utmost regret does not pay heed to her mother's words. The utter disregard of mother's advice too had its genesis in the broken bond. She had always been deprived of a good counsel as well as healthy conversation by an aloof mother and when she did come up with some advice, it seemed like an undue interference. She marries Michael against the wishes of her mother and the two fall further apart.

The ache of emotional distance is accentuated by the geographical distance when her mother moves to England without telling her. The call of duty urges Leila to follow her mother. After traversing distances, both physical and emotional, Leila ponders over her disjointed bond with mother and concludes that "She barely knew her mother, that everything until now had been a preparation for knowing, not the knowing itself. Her mother was almost a stranger, even after four months in England Leila had never given up hope that she might still get to know her" (*The Final Passage* 132). Leila craved for mother's love and longed to have a heart to heart conversation. She could never achieve that and her mother lived and died without opening the strings of heart. The knot of indifference remained entangled in their relationship. Nancy Chodorow points out that the mother-child bond impacts not only the personal relationships that the child forges in her later life but also "external ability to deal with anxiety and to master drives and environment, and lastly but most importantly, relationships children have towards themselves" (83). Her contention proves true in the case of both Leila and Joyce. Both the women lose orientation in their life journeys, falter in relationships and undergo self-doubts. Had their mothers been their anchors, their personalities and lives would have been different.

In the Falling Snow (2009) is about the relationship between fathers and sons and explores the issues of parental authority, identity, generational conflict, and the emotional estrangement. The lives of three generations of Caribbean diaspora i.e. Earl, Keith and Laurie, makes one witness to the social and political structures that combine to impact the personal dynamics of a family. In an interview with Abigail Ward, while talking about this novel and the relationship matrix of three generations, Phillips said that,

> I was interested in that relationship to a country that often causes difficulties between first-generation parents and their second-generation kids, and now we begin to see the emergence of a third generation… - an older generation who sadly are beginning to pass on, and a younger generation who are beginning to emerge, whose relationship to the Caribbean, or whose relationship to their grandparents' point of departure, is becoming increasingly distant. I wanted to try to explore that (632-33).

The novelist explores these issues through the life of first-generation immigrant, Earl who came to England with high academic and financial hopes but ended up being a janitor and a disgruntled man. His social failure impacted his personal life badly and he could never forge

a dependable bond with his son, Keith. Earl was not prepared to shoulder the responsibility of fatherhood. Keith came to him after his mother's demise. His stepfather hands him over to Brenda and when Brenda brings Keith to Earl, his initial reaction is of shock and disbelief. "This is how I find out that you are my responsibility, and suddenly I find myself being asked to play the role of the father…I sit down heavy on the chair and wonder how the hell I'm supposed to play this role" (*In the Falling Snow* 317). Bludgeoned by the extreme racism of White society, Earl starts losing his mental balance and ignores his fatherly duties. Brenda takes the charge of young Keith's welfare. Keith's childhood had either father's absence or an abusive presence. It impacted their relationship badly and the two never sat down to discuss the matters. Earl could not prepare his son for the racist society which he too confronts. Brenda understands Earl's circumstances and tries her level best to convince Keith to spend his summer holidays with his father and to initiate some conversation but he retorts that "he had no interest in spending the summer building any kind of a relationship with his father, for he felt that the effort should be coming in the other direction" (*In the Falling Snow* 42). Having suffered a complete lack of father's affection and support, Keith balks at the idea of bowing down to a man who played no role in his upbringing. Brenda urges him to "Be kind to him, love. What's to lose?" (*In the Falling Snow* 83) but it falls on deaf ears. Annabelle too appeals to him to understand that his father had a difficult life and that has turned him into a bitter and taciturn man but Keith "has found it difficult to be always sympathetic towards somebody whose stubborn behaviour so successfully obscures whatever sensitive or vulnerable qualities he may possess" (*In the Falling Snow* 52). A complete collapse of bond is witnessed in their relationship.

After many years of living apart, the communication gap between Keith and Earl only widens. When he comes to meet his father after some thirty years, they fail to start a conversation. Silence is the key element of their relationship. He says that "they passed the last hour or so in the pub in almost total silence, which pretty much summed up the nature of their relationship since he left to go to Bristol University as an eighteen-year-old" (*In the Falling Snow* 183). Walking back from the pub, he "tried to make a conversation by talking about what they might do tomorrow, but his father seemed irritated…and so they re-embraced silence" (*In the Falling Snow* 183). Silence becomes the hallmark of their relationship. Responding to a question on the problem of communication, Phillips told Abigail Ward that:

> I think it's a universal issue, this notion of rediscovering, or often discovering for the first time, who one's parents really are as they age: realizing that you're running out of time to have the conversations that you've never had with them…The stakes are exacerbated if part of your knowledge, or lack of knowledge, of your parents' life is because it happened in another country…There may be reasons why they've never said anything to you, but if you've not been privy to the life that they had before they arrived in this country, it's difficult to start a conversation. So, I think it's a general problem, but it's a problem whose difficulties sometimes ratchet up when you introduce migration into the equation (633-34).

Phillips makes clear that the universal problem of communication between parents and children is aggravated by the complexities generated by migration and diasporic experience. This problem presents itself in the case of Keith and Laurie too. Keith unlike his own aloof father wishes to connect with his son Laurie but "Laurie seems somewhat indifferent to the idea of spending any time with his father" (*In the Falling Snow* 7). Keith understands that his separation from Annabelle complicates his bond with Laurie. He knows that "Sons can be unforgiving towards those who they believe have hurt their mothers. He knows this from his own life" (*In the Falling Snow* 166). He, on the insistence of Annabelle, makes efforts to bond with him and genuinely tries to dispense his fatherly duties. Annabelle's apprehensions about their son keeping secrets from them are allayed by Keith with a rational viewpoint. He reminds her, "But don't you remember when you were a teenager? You took risks and kept secrets from parents, didn't you? You did things they didn't know about, but you came through it" (*In the Falling Snow* 118). His efforts to bond with Laurie are witnessed on many occasions. He tries to open the channel of communication with his son which he himself had been deprived of. Unlike Earl, who was an absent father, Keith ensures that he is there to assist his son in his identity turmoil.

Laurie is a third-generation immigrant and his problems are different from that of his father. Being born to a black father and white mother, he is subjected to racial bullying and is called names. His teenage complicates the matters further and Annabelle is apprehensive of his alignment with some gangs and therefore asks Keith to intervene. Keith wishes to ask his son if he is part of some gang but dreads an answer in affirmation. He feels incapable of giving him any advice against it without ruffling a few feathers. Generation gap becomes visible in

his hesitation at the communication. He ponders "what advice he might offer him that wouldn't provoke his son's ire and frustration, so he decides to say nothing" (*In the Falling Snow* 129).

Keith wants Laurie to have a connection with his side of family and therefore offers him a vacation to Caribbean. Laurie seems disinterested as he finds no connection with the land of his forefathers. Keith himself being a second-generation immigrant lacks any knowledge of his ancestry and his sour relationship with his father, Earl blocks the chance of having any connection with that land. Annabelle's wealthy parents indulge their grandson with gifts and money and Keith "doesn't want Laurie to feel that should anything happen to him then Annabelle's family are all that he has. In this sense, offering to take him to the Caribbean is his attempt to repair this imbalance…" (*In the Falling Snow* 129). Laurie's disinterestedness upsets Keith and when Laurie cuts the conversation mid-way and puts on his headphones. Keith feels "He wants to suggest to his son that conversation might be a good alternative to just cutting himself off in this way, but he decides to leave it" (*In the Falling Snow* 129). The hesitation to pour out the feelings and thoughts become a common factor in the relationship of both the sets of fathers and sons. However, Earl and Keith deal with the situations differently. Where Earl opts for a withdrawal, there Keith seems to make efforts to strengthen his bond with the son. Bénédicte Ledent throws light on the matter thus:

> *In the Falling Snow* puts side by side two opposite black masculine figures, whose main differences lie in their experience of fatherhood and their degree of social recognition. The divergences in their trajectories could certainly be ascribed to their differences in personality. Keith is a born fighter and has a more driven nature than his father who is of a depressed and withdrawn disposition (265).

Phillips, however, does not leave the reader in a vacuum regarding the reasons behind Earl's failure as a father. Towards the end of the novel, one gets to know Earl's story in his own words. Max Farrar rightly says that "But in the magnificent final section of this book Earl speaks – with the intense, vernacular, political, proud, intelligence of first-generation migrants from the Caribbean – and Keith listens, readers will probably suspect, with gratitude" (Max 14-15). His words are echoed by Clingman when he says that "In the last fifty pages of the novel Earl is given his own monologue, spoken to Keith, and it is a tremendous emergence from silence, the silence in which Keith himself to some extent lives regarding a life that might have been otherwise" (377). Earl's deathbed narrative reveals the torturous hardships which

he endured as a first-generation black immigrant in a very hostile England. He recounts his physical and emotional travails and pleads Keith to take him back to his mother country. He accuses England of sucking the sap out of him and leaving him shrunk and withdrawn from himself as well as from his loved ones. His friend Baron also tells Keith about Earl's hardships and how he now prides himself on his son's success. He tells Keith that "Earl likes your company. The man is always boasting off about you, and how you're doing this big job and in charge of all kinds of people in London" (*In the Falling Snow* 196). Earl's shattered heart rejoiced at Keith's success in a society which rejected him in the most abominable ways. Ledent remarks that "Keith's and Earl's diverging fates are also shaped by the different social contexts in which they evolve and which either favor or thwart their ambitions, and by the fact that they belong to different generations" (Ledent 265).

Earl loses Keith in the foreign land. He falls prey to cruel circumstances in England and loses everything: his aspirations to study law and be successful, his sanity and his family. He never wanted to come to this dry land but prodded by sister, he ventured into this land of apathy which denied him all happiness. In different circumstances, he probably would have been a happier family man. Racial violence and discrimination took away his sanity and he is left desolate in England. Ledent opines that:

> Earl's masculine identity, too, displays what might be called variable geometry even though he never possesses the same self-assurance as his son. Still, he first comes across as a cold, taciturn, possibly indifferent man, but his deathbed narrative makes the reader, and Keith, aware of all the suffering that he bottled up during his lifetime, and which institutions such as the Race and Equality Unit can never effectively redress (Ledent 267-68).

He fails to understand his relationship with his son and this creates a further vacuum in his lonely life. Towards the end, Keith remembers an evening when the father-son duo goes out for a movie and Earl offers his hand to his son. Keith says that "His father offered him his hand and even though he felt too old for this he took it…" (*In the Falling Snow* 320). For the first time, Keith experiences the warmth of father's love and in this rare moment of togetherness he says that "he could feel his hand tight and safe in his father's hand. He looked behind him and saw two sets of footprints…a larger pair and his own smaller ones…he tugged his father's hand. His father looked down at him and smiled" (*In the Falling Snow* 321). When

Earl walks back after leaving Keith at Brenda's place, Keith sees him father's single footsteps being erased by the snow. Earl loses everything in England. His single footsteps are a painful reminder of his loneliness and the broken bond with son. Keith fails to preserve the legacy of his father as is indicated by the erasure of footsteps. He ruminates "His father is gone and now there's nobody ahead of him. Nobody higher than him on the tree…he feels exposed and vulnerable. Small. That's it. Small" (*In the Falling Snow* 326). He does not have any fond memories to cherish or derive strength from. The only thing which he has inherited from his father is loneliness. The obdurate denial to communicate- despite Brenda and Annabelle's entreaties- created a big chasm in their relationship and none of the two ever made an honest attempt to fill it with an authentic communication. Had Keith understood the reason behind his father's cynicism, things would have been different. A little bowing down would have broken the suffocating cocoon of Earl's loneliness and frustration. The father would have then shared the stories of his past, including his homeland and travails at the host nation. This would have enriched Keith's knowledge about his ancestry and culture and he would have been in a better position to deal with Laurie's problems. But with Earl's death, his last connection with the Caribbean is snapped and he is left gaping at the hollowness. In a highly poignant way, Phillips brings forth the pain which lack of communication and dearth of understanding causes in relationships.

The novel also investigates the relationship between a white mother, Annabelle and a hybrid son, Laurie. Annabelle is a very conscious mother who wishes to be privy to his son's problems but Laurie seems to be drifting apart from her and this flummoxes her. Keith reminiscences about Annabelle's insistence upon Laurie being given time by both of them. He remembers that, "Ever since Laurie was born Annabelle had been adamant about his need for two committed parents, as though some deeply unconscious part of herself feared that she might replicate with Laurie the type of unhealthy dependency that has developed with her mother" (*In the Falling Snow* 231). For the well-being of her son, she does not hesitate to seek his estranged husband's help too. Laurie's problems have a lot to do with his being a hybrid child. It is for this reason that he is drifting away from his mother who is a white woman. Annabelle understands this and is therefore terrified and very cautious. Laurie fails to communicate his frustration either to his father or mother. Keith persuades him to open up about his dilemmas and puts it straightway that his mother might not understand his issues

despite her best efforts because she has never been in such situations. Keith tells him "there are things that I've been through myself as a black kid growing up in this country and I think I can tell you what I know without it coming over like a sermon" (*In the Falling Snow* 167). Despite Annabelle's sincere efforts and Keith's friendly conversations, Laurie seems to recede further in his cocoon. Annabelle despite her broad thinking (reflected in her decision to marry Keith) dreads Laurie's affinity with Black kids as she too aligns them with gang wars and notorious activities. Keith too shares in Annabelle's apprehensions and therefore tries to talk about the same to Laurie without much success. At times, it appears that "Both parents lack the multidirectional tools to be able to deny the reification of race and acknowledge their son's multiple racial belonging" (Samantha Reive 216). One cannot, however deny the honesty of Annabelle's efforts. Struck between the infidelity of husband and reticence of son, she makes honest and earnest efforts to ensure Laurie's well-being.

The mother-son bond finds some space in David Dabydeen's novels *The Intended* (1991) and *Disappearance* (1993). The novels primarily focus upon the identity issues in diaspora and the relationship of the unnamed narrators of both the novels with their respective mothers comes out through the childhood reminiscences. The reader gets to know about the relationship through the eyes of the sons as they remember their mothers' love as well as their ill –treatment by the husbands. Father figures appear on the sidelines as the oppressors of mothers.

The only hint of the mother of teenage narrator of *The Intended* comes through his memory of his father beating her up one day for no apparent reason and how children are terrified by this act. He along with his sisters stand in silent rebellion against the father who is taken to task by the bold Auntie Pakul. Diasporic ambitions and teenage friendships and relationships occupy most of the literary space in the novel and the mother-son relationship remains confined to just a few passages.

In *Disappearance*, we find that the unnamed narrator remembers his mother with fondness which reflects his love for her. He recalls how his mother suffered betrayal at the hands of her husband when he started living with another woman. She did not want her son to be a derelict and irresponsible person like him and chided him for being lazy and acted tough with him when he does not pay attention to his studies. The narrator understands her tough stance and says that "she harboured great ambitions for him. I would not turn out to be like him, a lecher and layabout…" (Disappearance 78). The narrator too loves her and is pained to

see her crying when her husband leaves her for another woman. When he goes to the university for higher studies, he misses his mother and admits that "I had left my mother's house in the countyside and I still felt attached to her and the peasant ways of our village" (Disappearance 77). He feels that his mother should have acted tough with his father and should have objected sternly to his irresponsible and rowdy day to day behaviour. He feels that in is through him that she wishes to avenge her disrespect. She tells him that "Your father is my burden and wretchedness but you is my crutch" (Disappearance 91). She made sure that her son studies hard and becomes successful. She ensured that:

> I would be different, she would bury me in the books until the day came when I raised my head from them qualified as a doctor or lawyer. She too would be able to raise her head high in the village…the son would have redeemed the father and her own disgrace of being abandoned while still of child-bearing age (Disappearance 78).

She tried to give her son the best what was possible in her poor capacity. Pleading God for his success, she spent her youth with the hope of making him a successful man and when he finally gets admission in the city, she ensures that he has decent clothes and accessories with him. She sells away her gold wedding ring and finally breaks the bond with her estranged husband who had deserted her and her son years ago. The narrator says about the wedding ring that "In selling it to buy me what I needed for college she had finally abandoned my father" (Disappearance 79). The relationship between the two is full of love and responsibility. Both become each other's succor in adversity. The novelist presents their relationship as a source of fond memory for the narrator whose life otherwise is fraught with complexities of identity issues.

In *The Counting House* (1996), the parent-child relationship is again not the central focus. It runs as an undercurrent in the narrative, bringing attention to the loss of familial bonds due to the brutalities of colonial labour systems. The novel, however, explores the dynamics of sexual-politics through the mother-daughter relationship of Rohini and Finnie. Finnie had a dissatisfied sexual life with her husband and when Rohini matures into an attractive girl, Finnie starts getting jealous of her, lest she may enjoy those sexual pleasures which she in her youth could not. She wishes to use Rohini as an instrument which would ensure good returns. Her own unfulfilled desires, both material and sexual are sought to be fulfilled through Rohini. She

expects Rohini to marry a rich widower of old age and to preserve her virginity. She hoped that after this old man's death, Rohini would inherit his wealth and both of them would then be able to lead a luxurious life. She plans to become a money-lender and multiply her wealth. "Finnie dreamed of transformations which would make her the matriarch of the village, chief money-lender and market gardener, with a beautiful daughter whom she would preserve from marriage" (*The Counting House* 29). Her dreams are shattered when Rohini declares her love for Vidia. Too obstinate to be taken in, she rebels against her mother's wishes and asserts her desires. "But now Rohini was glowering at her, demanding Vidia. Her daughter whom she wanted to remain a child now hinted at sexual rivalry" (*The Counting House* 29). It becomes a point of conflict between the two but Rohini wins the battle and marries Vidia.

Rohini's learns her brashness from her mother only. It becomes clear when Finnie dissuades her from going to Guyana by invoking her sense of duty and calling the dereliction of duty as sin. She inadvertently admits that Rohini has learned all her tricks from Finnie. "She taught the girl to grow as brash as any man and not to take licks and bad sex from any man…but she never taught Rohini to sin. And if Rohini went to Guiana and left her, then Rohini would be sinning" (*The Counting House* 58). Finnie could never bear her only daughter leaving for Guyana, thereby leaving her alone in the village. She makes quite an unpleasant scene when Rohini breaks this news to her. "She would curse and plead and pretend madness and call Lord Krishna's name until duty made Rohini stay" (*The Counting House* 58). But all her pleadings and curses fall on deaf ears. The mother-daughter relationship lacks any deep feelings or sincere emotions. Finnie is Rohini's mother just by the virtue of having given her the birth. One never comes across an instance where their bond comes out as endearing or enduring. Besides this relationship, Rohini's strong desire for a child echoes the deep psychological impact of displacement and forced labour. The loss of family ties caused by indenture can be seen as a symbol of the dehumanizing effects of colonialism, where individuals were treated as mere labouring bodies rather than members of a familial or cultural lineage.

An analysis of the parent-child relationship in the select novels demonstrate not only the personal and private emotional struggles of characters between generations but also reflects the larger societal anxieties about displacement, legacy, and identity. The novelists offer a poignant and multifaceted exploration of the parent-child relationship by bringing the issues of emotional estrangement, lack of communication, displacement, identity crisis, and

intergenerational trauma. One realizes that the very personal relationships are deeply entwined with the historical and socio-political variables such as slavery, colonialism, migration and racism. The characters scarred by the hostile historical forces or personal wounds, crave for the comfort of love, connection and bonding which they seldom achieve.

Very complex dimensions of identity are held with man-woman relationships. These relationships have an intricate dynamism which is influenced by gender roles as well as by individuals' response to cultural narratives and societal pressures. They are vastly influenced by the social and cultural factors and the negotiation of identities within them are neither purely personal nor overtly political. The desire to wield power over the counterpart is to be analyzed by keeping the factors like emotional dependence, affection and desire in mind. When the pervert gender roles are affirmed with authority, these relationships breed identities marred by inequality and disrespect but when supported by authentic communication and unconditional intimacy, these man-woman relationships can produce empowered identities.

The novels under discussion reveal the complexity of identity in man-woman relationships. The interpersonal dynamics between men-women relationship get influenced by factors which are social, cultural as well as historical in nature. The politics of domination as well as the approach of complementarity get reflected in these relationships. Multiple strands of different shades intertwine in these relationships to weave a complex tapestry in which the pattern of individual identity undergoes a constant change.

The select novels project the desires, dreams, inhibitions and apprehensions of characters as they traverse the complicated trajectory of relationships in specific socio-political circumstances. The novels explore the dynamics of man-woman relationship. There is a diverse array of characters, different from each other in terms of race, class, age and era, but the novelist nonetheless gets deep into the motivation behind their actions and attitudes and thus provides the reader with an insight into the complicated working of relationships. Phillips is deeply interested in the exploration of stories of survival or surrender to historical storms and socio-cultural buffets. Klein Alison says that his "focus on individual lives rather than systems of thought breaks down the barriers of race and gender. His stylist prose is married to moral purpose. While its starting point may be the black diaspora, his work illuminates relations between black and white, master and servant, newcomer and "host", men and women" (134).

The piercing pining for love, lack of communication, torturing pain of separation, jolt of infidelity, and the need of emotional dependence constitute the universe of man-woman relationship in the select novels of Caryl Phillips. While depicting the intricacies of man-woman relationships in their roles as husband-wife or as lovers, Phillips never loses sight of the human element. He digs deep to understand the complex reasons behind the actions of his characters. Sarvan and Marhama describe Phillips as "a writer who can penetrate the inner being of people vastly different from himself in time, place, and gender, yet people very much like us all in common and eternal human inheritance of pain and suffering" (40). The reader cannot help but choose sides to claim affinity with his characters.

Unraveling the knotty issue of matrimonial acrimony, *The Final Passage* (1985) brings before us the tumultuous relationship of Leila and Michael. The novel also shows us the relationship between Michael and Beverley. Michael in his relationships with women, is insensitive and ruthless. Brooding over everything and whiling away time drinking at pubs, he tries to destroy the individuality of women in his life. His ruthlessness is for the most part not countered with strong opposition either by Leila or by Beverley and his masculine ego therefore gets used to nourish on the silent acceptance by women.

Lack of communication emerges out as the prime factor behind the relationship failure of Michael and Leila. Reticent to the level of cruelty, Michael closes all doors of communication on the face of Leila. Too confused to react, Leila just gapes at the widening gap and fails to muster up courage to confront Michael about his attitude. On their journey to England, no communication takes place between them. Under normal circumstances, partners discuss about their plans, dreams and apprehensions but "Two weeks of non-communication on the ship had only served to deepen her distress. So much between them still remained unspoken" (*The Final Passage* 163). Michael's sadistic attitude combined with Leila's reactionless attitude gives rise to a toxic relationship. Michael makes her a punching bag to vent out his frustration as well as to show his superior masculinity and Leila, for the most part, chooses to accept this without a whimper of resistance or complaint. Living in a state of perpetual anxiety, she finds "his silence baffling and hurtful, his moods unpredictable, his distrust obvious and murdering any chance of a durable base to their relationship" (*The Final Passage*163). Too confused to absorb the shock of masculine toxicity, she moves around numb, trying in between to make sense of the situation.

Michael and Leila's courtship itself reveals how Leila tries to satisfy his masculine ego through her small efforts. She innocently finds these efforts a part of love. "She stood on her tiptoes, put her hands on his shoulders, and kissed him lightly on the lips. It was not that he was much taller than her, but she knew he liked it when she stretched to reach him" (*The Final Passage* 30). The lines are symptomatic of the pattern their relationship eventually takes. She stretches and bows to reach him but he reciprocates with indifference. Leila's decision to marry Michael is resisted by her mother and she makes it clear on the day he comes to propose Leila. Her mother's dislike of him is taken angrily by Michael. He throws away the bouquet he had brought for Leila and when she bows down to pick it up, he spits at it. From that day onwards, he punishes Leila for no fault of hers. He "began to behave differently" (*The Final Passage* 34) and "although he said nothing, Michael no longer appeared to be trying" to beautify or mend the relationship (*The Final Passage* 35). He, it appears, wants Leila to atone for her mother's 'mistake' of devaluing him and wants her to massage his bruised ego with her repentance.

Michael's ego reduces the identity of women in his to a mere object meant to satisfy his needs. With all his sulking and aggressive attitude, he still comes to both Leila and Beverley to satisfy his sexuality. He breaks the bond of sanctity in marriage when he continues his relationship with Beverley even after marriage with Leila. Beverley seems to have accepted her fate and looks forward to a quiet life with her infant son, Ivor. Michael, however goes to her and lusts over her. He "followed her with his eyes, knowing that he would simply make love to her, then walk back across the village the way he had come" (*The Final Passage* 146). The same man gets insecure about his wife and without any reason, dread infidelity from her side. Apprehensive, he at times looked at her "filled with horror that she might betray him in some unknown way" (*The Final Passage* 48).

Michael's cruel indifference and Leila quiet acceptance becomes the norm of their married life. They leave St. Patrick and arrive in England but the change of location does not change the status of their relationship. Leila understands that "for her marriage was again to be tolerated, not shared. It seemed to her that no matter what she said or did Michael had decided to give her nothing in return, except for his anger or his all too familiar silence" (*The Final Passage* 164). Things keep on getting worse with Michael choosing killer silence as a response to Leila's queries. His masculine ego swells too big and threatens to usurp Leila's

individuality. Things keep on going on the same pace until Leila decides to cast off her emotional dependence on Michael and chooses to free herself from his ever-widening and unending domain of accusations and self-pity.

The complexity in their relationship arises out of Michael's discomfort with the acceptance of Leila as she was. He tries to crush her confidence and identity by making her a slave who depends on him for her emotional and psychological fulfillment. The common perception of Leila being superior to her, frustrated him. Instead of resolving this through a healthy conversation with Leila (who remains oblivious to this), he opts to sulk and punish. Michael's attitude is reflected in these words:

> Most people thought Leila too good for Michael. But he felt that to talk of this with anyone, including Bradeth, was admission to his alleged inferiority. Therefore, he kept the anger locked up. This frustrated him, but it also made him more determined to prove something to himself and everyone. What exactly he was trying to prove he was still unsure (*The Final Passage* 48).

He chooses to demean Leila to prove his self-worth. Marriage becomes a power-game for him where he hits his spouse-opponent without any provocation. His intention is to "keep a wife in she place…for I know when it is affection time and when it's coolness time" (*The Final Passage* 53). Denuded of companionship and love, his approach towards Leila seeks to diminish her status and identity to a mere object.

Leila lacks courage to confront Michael. She develops cold feet in front of him and this aggravates her emotional oppression and satisfies his ego. She does not make him realize his faults. Consequently, he takes her for granted. Michael insults her and throws a glass of wine on her face on the very day of their marriage. Leila swallows up the insult and decides to go ahead in this relationship with Michael who has more than once exhibited insulting behaviour. She ponders, "A wife and a woman. A woman and a wife. She shut her teeth tight with frustration, knowing she would go out there and talk to her husband as if nothing had happened" (*The Final Passage* 55). Had she taken a firm decision of showing Michael his mistake, things would probably have gone different. But she continues to writhe in the rigmarole of marriage. Her friend, Millie warns her constantly against falling blindly for Michael but Leila fails to pay heed to this advice. Leila, despite having the knowledge about Beverley and Michael's affair, chose to ignore it. She was presumptuous enough to think that

a woman like Beverley could be a threat to her. She acted selfish and became a reason for other woman's pain. Instead of leaving Michael for his infidelity, she foolishly deems herself too good to be ignored or deserted by Michael. She in this way becomes a reason for Michael's abandoning of Beverley. Millie confronts her and calls her a coward who is too scared to admit her mistake and to make amends for it. She says, "…for the only thing wrong with you, and it's going get you in trouble, is the fact that you is a coward, you too damn scared to come out and admit…when you do make a mistake" (*The Final Passage* 60).

Michael's sway over Leila comes to fore when after remaining absent during Leila's childbirth, he comes one day to take the child away for the ride. Despite Millie's resistance, Leila hands over the child to him despite the fact that he had not once enquired about her and child's well-being in six weeks after the birth of Calvin. She admits that "he had a hold over her and short of abandoning her son, Leila could see no way of correcting her mistake" (*The Final Passage* 84). Its takes time for Leila to get over this sway and assert herself.

Upon reaching England, things worsen between the two. Death of Leila's mother puts the final nail in the coffin. Michael, instead of providing any comfort to Leila, chooses to skip the funeral. Devastated and disoriented, for the first time, Leila refuses to acknowledge Michael's physical and emotional absence. "Where Michael was and what he might be doing did not concern her; he had told her this many times, but tonight she felt it in herself…she chose not to cry. Not tonight" (*The Final Passage* 134). The widening rift and Michael's constant quarrel over non-issues makes Leila think about the future of her marriage. She toys with the idea of leaving Michael but again wavers from taking a decision. The moment of reckoning and decision comes when Michael blasts at Leila for not being a supportive wife and she confronts him for his indifference towards Calvin and for his drinking habit. She also suspects him of having an affair as his clothes have the "smell of cheap scent" (*The Final Passage* 189) and his face had the smear of lipstick. She ponders over the whole situation and weighs the option of forgiving this man "whose feelings for her had been like a knife at her throat for over two years now" (*The Final Passage* 197). His drunkenness and infidelity could be put aside but "she could not forgive him all of these things at once, and she could never hope to understand them if he could not see her, or talk to her even" (*The Final Passage* 197). Leila admits the death of her relationship to herself as it "was drawing upon the artificial cylinder of blind hope" (*The Final Passage* 197). Her admission of failure opens up the

channels of emotional freedom. She decides to embark on a new journey of finding her 'self'; a self which is free from the traces of Michael. The sudden jolt of reckoning spirals her mental state into temporary chaos and disorientation but she emerges out of it, wounded but not defeated. She affirms her new-found freedom and identity and decides to leave Michael and go back to St. Patrick. Erasing all the traces of Michael's painful presence, she asserts that "The child in her body and the one in her arms would never know of Michael" (*The Final Passage* 203). Leila certainly comes a long way from enduring with silence a painful relationship to snapping all ties with the man who was bent upon debilitating her identity. Their relationship depicts how conventional gender roles burden a woman with the responsibility of maintaining a relationship. Conjugal happiness is the joint responsibility of both the man and the woman. And when even one of them deviates from the path, the relationship becomes a burden and puts emotional and psychological toll on the partner. Leila and Michael's relationship depicts the trauma which is generated by lack of communication, infidelity and society induced complexes.

In his relationship with Beverley, Michael tastes the taste of his own medicine when the former shuts the doors of her house on his face and tells him to get out of her life. In his sadistic casualness, Michael takes Leila's infant son to Beverley's place. Utterly blind to the pain that it would cause her, he tries to act as if he owns the place and the people who inhabit it. But at this juncture, Beverly asserts herself and "slapped him hard across the face, knocking him slightly off the balance, the she spoke…'Take the child out of my house'" (*The Final Passage* 85). She exhibits real grit, telling Michael that she is not a toy to be played with. Michael follows her after this and seeks a response from her as to why she has locked the house but she decides to confront and defeat his chauvinism and 'taken for granted' attitude with stubborn silence. She deprives him of a shelter and he is forced to go back to Leila's house. He says to Leila that "I want to come back" and Leila "Looked at Michael, she saw him still as both a destroyer and a partner…because Calvin needed a father, and because she did not want her mother to see her as having failed in something she did not wish to partake of in the first place" (*The Final Passage* 95). Their relationship is ruined by disrespect and inequality. They are not two distinct individuals who replenish each other with their respective strengths, rather the man like a parasite seeks to suck life out of his counterpart to feed his ego.

Crossing the River (1993) introduces reader to the intricacies of man-woman relationship through the stories of Travis-Joyce and Len- Joyce. Through the relationship of the former, we find the blossoming of unconditional love and respect during the period of war, while the story of the latter reveals how the institution of marriage becomes a burden if it is denuded of mutual respect and trust.

Travis is a black GI posted in an English village during the time of World War II and Joyce is a white British married woman inhabiting the same village with her abusive husband, Len. Paths of Travis and Joyce cross and both of them discover that the tender feelings they have for each other is no mere physical attraction but a more enduring commitment to be each other's support system. Although married, Joyce still ventures ahead in this relationship with a black man. She remains blissfully unaware of the colour difference and finds in him a companion who she can trust for her emotional well-being.

Joyce suffers humiliation in her marriage with Len and when Travis comes on the scene, she takes steps with caution. She remains cautious against the hurt that he might cause her in case she exposes her vulnerability. Her insecurity can be understood in the context of her past experiences with Herbert and Len. Herbert disowned his responsibility and left her pregnant at the age of eighteen. Gullible and pining for love, she fell for Herbert as he fulfilled her desire to explore the world through books. Suffering an emotional vacuum because of her mother's indifferent attitude towards her, she mistakes Herbert's attention towards her for love and thus suffers a devastating heartbreak. In her marriage with Len, she missed the companionship and trust. Len denies her an equal footing in marriage and deems it his prerogative to take decisions on behalf of the both. Deprived of a healthy communication, their marriage moves in a mechanical way where she is not privy to any of Len's decisions. He begins to do black marketing during the period of war and Joyce remains unaware of this and when his deeds of black marketing are found by the authorities, he is arrested. At this juncture, instead of thinking about protecting his wife, he expects her to be arrested too. He wants her to suffer with him. He "glared at me as though I was somehow responsible" (*Crossing the River* 199).

In her relationship with Travis, she finds a friend and soul mate who listens to her and wants to know about her life and family. He is protective and cannot tolerate her being in pain. They both dare to take their relationship forward despite the colour difference and the gossip in the village. The white society's fear of miscegenation is defiantly overlooked by Joyce.

Travis is apprehensive of the repercussions and he shares his feelings with her. Vanquishing over the fears, Travis finally proposes marriage to Len after a brief period of separation caused by war. His coming back for Joyce touches her heart and she feels that "He really wanted me. That day, crying on the platform (she feels) safe in Travis's arms" (*Crossing the River* 226). As against the domineering Len, Joyce finds Travis to be a gentleman. He is shy, speaks softly and cares for her opinion. She notices that "When he saw me, he lowered his eyes" (*Crossing the River* 134). Touched by such things, she feels safe with him around. During a dance party, they come together for a dance and observing her confidence, Travis remarks that "You oughta be proud of yourself…You don't seem shy and uneasy like the rest of them" (*Crossing the River* 163). Unlike Travis, Len could never recognize her spirit and confidence. He never gave her the wings to fly.

Len could never appreciate that he is married to a thinking woman; one who does not accept things in their face value. Fond of reading and with a perceptive attitude, she questions the propaganda during the war. With an ability to understand the workings of ideology being broadcasted on radio, she blurts out "If Churchill tells me one more time that this war is bring fought for freedom and true principles of democracy I'll scream…I'm good at learning the difference between the official stories and the evidence before my eyes" (*Crossing the River* 165). Len failed to appreciate that the woman he is married to is an independent thinking woman and he can take her counsel in certain matters. His male ego is too big to accept these qualities of Joyce.

Len and Joyce are poles apart. They have an age gap and he is deemed inferior to her but she tries to stand strongly with him. "Len and I were supposed to be together. A team against the rest of the world. Man and wife. Him and me" (*Crossing the River* 141). She tries to build a strong foundation of her marriage but for Len, marriage has a different meaning. She is expected to be quiet and submissive, ready to bear husband's ill-temper and mood swings. Once he hits her without any provocation. He is frustrated at not having being commissioned in the army because of his lung issues. Commission in army was equivalent to having a virile masculinity who could take over the world with his physical prowess but he was denied that chance. Unable to cope up with this situation, he vents out his frustration upon Joyce just as Michael does with Leila. Joyce is perceptive enough to understand that "He was just working off the embarrassment of not having a uniform…he was playing at being a man" (*Crossing the*

River 159). But she is not the one to take the rubbish upon her head. Righteous and confident, she warns him not to repeat the act as it would spell doom on their relationship. She decides "The next time he raises his hand to me it'll be the last time. Drunk or sober. It'll be the last time" (*Crossing the River* 159).

Their relationship becomes suffocating to the extent that when Len is arrested, Joyce feels relieved. His hovering presence and restrictions were too much to tolerate for a woman like Joyce. After his arrest, she feels "My chest unknotted. I could breathe again" (*Crossing the River* 199). Such a feeling germinates from a relationship that is deprived of togetherness. There is no formidable communication between the two. Len is least interested in telling or knowing about each other's families. He bears a grudge against her mother as the latter did not give a happy approval to their marriage. Len refuses to be a part of her mother's funeral citing that the deceased woman never liked him. Joyce confronts him and tries to invoke his sense of duty and respect but his rigidness makes her burst out "Who said she had to like you? She tolerated you. That was a lot for her" (*Crossing the River* 187). Len does not want to talk about his family despite Joyce's curiosity to know about it. He never initiates any talk in this direction and when Joyce does, he simply brushes it off. Though married, they remain strangers to each other's backgrounds. Joyce sadly realizes that "I knew then that we'd never really been married. We didn't know each other. We didn't trust each other" (*Crossing the River* 197). Trust in their relationship was deficient. Communication without inhibitions, form the base of a strong relationship and nurtures trust but their marriage lacked it.

Marriage for Len was a societal norm where the man dictates and the woman obeys. Joyce, however, sought companionship in marriage, where both the partners become each other's support. Where Len stands with the majority who get swayed by the storm of ideology, there Joyce stands alone with her conviction and subversive ideas. Her embracement of love irrespective of colour prejudice reveals her personality. They were not meant to be together. Defiant and courageous, ready to take on the gossip-mongering of the conservative society, Joyce could never find compatibility with a man like Len who is handicap because of his skewed perspective and parochial approach.

The dependence of two individuals upon each other for emotional sustenance and support after leading a dehumanized life of humiliation and deprivation under slavery, is poignantly depicted through the story of Martha and Chester in *The Crossing River*. Though Martha's

obdurate hope to meet her lost daughter remains the central focus of her life story, her relationship with Chester and their efforts to put together the scattered pieces of their life together adds an additional element of poignancy to her story.

Martha meets Chester at Dodge after her escape from slavery. She was trying to start a free life by doing some laundry business when Chester approaches her with a proposal to move with him. She "just needed some companionship" and Chester was looking for a "prospect for happiness together" (*The Crossing River* 83). Their relationship is founded on the base of shared pain and dehumanization of slavery. Together they seek to embalm each other's bruises and weave happy memories together. Their togetherness is blissfully free of any bindings and conditions. Such relationships give rise to empowered identities here both the individuals flourish and rise. Martha feels that the sense of freedom which she enjoys is "on account of My Chester" (*The Crossing River* 84) as this man made her forget her past sufferings and kindled the hope of a happy future. Martha happily declares that, "I never thought anybody could give me so much love, even without trying, without appearing to make any effort, without raising no dust about it…Always there when I needed him" ((*The Crossing River* 84-85). In their association of ten years, Martha and Chester exhibited that relationships built on love, care and respect are empowering for the parties involved. Adorned with confidence in each other, their relationship ushered back in them the sense of belonging, possession and dignity. Presented by Phillips within three pages, this story explores the empowering power of relationships and how coming together of two individuals should never be intercepted by culturally defined gender roles.

The intricacies of man-woman relationship are explored through the marital bond of Keith and Annabelle in *In the Falling Snow* (2009). The complications in their relationship are caused by Keith's extra marital affair and the light is thrown upon how deception destroys a marital bond. Keith is a middle age second-generation Black man who lives in England and has a good job and decent lifestyle. His marriage with a white girl, Annabelle created a furore in the society. Annabelle bravely stood against the disapproval of her white supremacist father to marry Keith. Together, they have a son, Laurie.

Betraying the trust of his wife, Keith gets entangled in an extra marital affair with a much younger girl named, Yvette. Drawn towards a girl half is age, Keith breaks the bond of trust with Annabelle who had rebelled against her father and white supremacist society to marry

him. Together, they had built a good life and in his relationship with Yvette, Keith realizes that unlike his relationship with Annabelle where both of them had stood with and for each other, this liaison can never move beyond physicality He ruminates about Yvette that "no matter how attractive he finds her he knows full well that there is no substance in their relationship" (*In the Falling Snow* 12).

The liaison wreaks havoc on his personal as well as professional life. Annabelle decides to divorce him and after three years of separation, she gets into relationship with a man named Bruce. Maintaining her dignity and poise, she chooses never to develop weak knees in front of Keith, except when it comes to the matters concerning their son Laurie's teenage and racial identity issues. Keith too understands this and admits that "she had made it her business to carefully construct a steely façade around her emotions as a way of distancing herself from him" (*In the Falling Snow* 7). Like Leila, Annabelle too chooses to bear with her tyrant for the well-being of her child. She is a sensible woman who stresses upon the importance of communication in relationships and therefore tries to keep the channels of communication open even when the relationships have grown sour. She understands that Laurie needs both of his parents to deal with the tumult of his teenage years and she never hesitates to seek Keith help when required.

Fulfilling her role of a true companion, she tries her best to guide Keith in the right direction. She encourages him to build a rapport with his estranged father, Earl. She tries to convince him for it by telling that his father had a hard life and it has made him bitter. She "encouraged him to be more understanding…to remind him that for the greater part of his father's adult life the man had been either hospitalized or struggling in the mind" (*In the Falling Snow* 51-52). Trying to keep relationships healthy, she encourages Keith to fulfill his parental duty and talk to Laurie about his problems. Her commitment and honesty come to fore once again when she tells Keith about Bruce and expects all of them to meet as "she wanted her estranged husband to meet the man who might have some kind of a role in his son's life" (*In the Falling Snow* 49). Even after suffering infidelity, she does not want her agony to impact their son's life. Unlike Keith who stumbles from one point to another, she tries to maintain the balance in relationships with utmost honesty and good will.

Keith, on the other hand stumbles on more than one occasion. After having wronged Annabelle through his relationship with Yvette, he takes him time to register the response of

his wife as a valid one. He feels that this one act could have been easily ignored if weighed against the rest of their life together. But when Annabelle reveals her relationship with Bruce, he is filled with jealousy. Even after three years of separation, his male ego does not let him accept his former wife's new relationship, "the idea that she might be with her friend Bruce annoyed him" (*In the Falling Snow* 14). His male ego is hurt. His racial complex also comes to the forefront. Deep inside he feels jealous of Bruce not only because he is romantically involved with his estranged wife but also because he feels that "red-faced tossers like Bruce" (*In the Falling Snow* 240) has replaced a black man like him in Annabelle's life.

Keith's affair with a co-worker and a much younger Yvette opens a Pandora box for him. The woman threatens to report their affair as sexual harassment if he tries to discontinue it. Unable to find any deep feelings for Yvette, Keith breaks up with her only to be branded as a pervert and sexual offender in his office. Yvette shares his personal messages on the official email and he is sent on a compulsory leave and an inquiry is initiated against him. The issue leads to a confrontation with Annabelle too as she dreads that Laurie too might get to know about it and as a mother, she did not want her son to get upset with such matters. In a moment of reckoning, he realizes that his desolation is a fruit of his own needs, "he is fully aware that through nobody's faulty but his own he now lives alone in a small flat, and his wife and son have every right to protect themselves emotionally" (*In the Falling Snow* 7).

Keith and Annabelle relationship starts with a note of rebellion against the racial prejudices of the white west. Having stood for each other in tough times, their bond suffers an irreparable jolt with Keith's infidelity. Complexity in their relationship comes from the presence of Laurie who binds them together. Despite her disgust against Keith, Annabelle is ready to bear him for the well-being of her son. The racial prejudice which she had stood against comes to haunt her when her son, Laurie being a mulatto begins to experience the identity crisis in his teens. The woman who showed braved defiance against her xenophobic father, begins to falter in his perception of blacks when his son shows inclination towards black way of life.

Entangled thus, Annabelle chooses to let her motherly duties take over her injured wife's self. She with a poise, grit, and understanding, asks her estranged husband to come together to rescue their son. Keith therefore, regrets losing Annabelle, he "has plenty of regrets for he should have been responsible not only to his wife's feelings and her dignity, but to her life, to

her journey, to the fact that he had met her parents, and it was not possible for him to simply pat himself on the back and priortise being in tune with his feelings over his sense of responsibility" (*In the Falling Snow* 250). He realizes that he owed a lot to this woman who had chosen his love over other things and who had given her all to this relationship which his infidelity has destroyed.

Another dimension of man-woman relationship comes to fore through the story of feisty Rohini and submissive Vidia in *The Counting House* (1996). Married at a very young age, after a brief and secret romantic stint, the two of them lead a life where Rohini calls the shots and Vidia only responds or reacts to her actions. Both of them are illiterate and poor villagers who work hard to make both ends meet. Rohini has big expectations form life and is an incorrigible romantic while Vidia leads an uneventful life and takes it as it comes.

Unlike girls of her age, Rohini is neither shy nor docile when it comes to the matters of sexuality. She takes the lead in physical intimacy and tries to tickle Vidia's passion too. Rohini's strong sexuality is revealed early in the novel when she persuades Vidia for a kiss. "She put her mouth upon his. It opened unexpectedly and his tongue made to escape but she chased after it and caught it between her lips. He tried to retrieve it by she clamped more firmly" (*The Counting House* 22). Her this fervent sexuality eventually brings destruction upon them when they migrate to Guyana in search of greener pastures.

Rohini wields full control over Vidia. In Guyana, she rejoices in the fact that her competitor for Vidia's obedience i.e. her mother-in-law has now been left far behind. She now manoeuvers him according to wishes. "She was nineteen now, a wife with no one to shackle her. Without Droopatie, Vidia was even more unprotected, even more obedient to her moods." (*The Counting House* 66). She shows utter disregard to the sanctity of their marital bond. She flaunts her sexuality in an unhesitant manner to make Vidia insecure and thus to keep him on his tenterhooks lest he behaves against her moods. "Although she would not dream of rejecting Vidia for such men, she still tormented him with the prospect of betrayal" (*The Counting House* 67). With the shortage of women on the plantation, she knew that she is a prized possession of Vidia; someone other coolies wish to acquire with some money. Keeping her stakes high in life, she decides to reject the advances of these men as they could not secure a rich life for her. She foolishly hopes to use her bodily charms to ensnare the white master, Gladstone. Putting Vidia into a serious doubt about his potency, she gets into a sexual relationship with Gladstone

and gets pregnant. Living in a world of dreams, she expects this child to inherit Gladstone's wealth. "Rohini would bear Gladstone's baby, reveling even as it burdened her with pain, swelling her body to the roundness of the globe which one day it would inherit" (*The Counting House* 133). All her dreams eventually bite the dust and she come to the shocking realization that she was only a sexual toy for Gladstone meant to be thrown away after use. The blame of Vidia's eventual death and her own disorientation falls at her own foolishly romantic vision of life.

For Vidia, marriage with Rohini was a ritual that boys of his age are supposed to perform. He however, cares for Rohini and therefore succumbs to all her demands to keep her happy. He yields to her life altering demand of leaving their village for Guyana. He does not balk at the idea of making her comfortable by sacrificing his own comfort. One such instance is when Rohini is asked by Gladstone to stay overnight in the Great House. Vidia asks her to take the only blanket the poor couple have to save her from the discomfort of sleeping bare in the cold. He wishes to give Rohini comfort in life and dreams of buying her things she like and which in the present state of indenture he cannot afford. It is with the dream of living a happy life together that he works excessively hard with a hope of earning big money. He hopes "He would build a house, and seek promotion to wages clerk, given that he was the best coolie at counting. He would earn more…Their children would …grow up to get the best jobs on the estate…" (*The Counting House* 113). But his hopes are dashed to the ground when he senses the growing sexuality and infidelity of Rohini. Frustration generated by the back-breaking labour combined with racist slurs, imperial oppression and Rohini's deceit unbalances Vidia. The man who went to lengths to satisfy his wife, finally raises hand at her. He hits her and cries out "Niggerman digging in your belly for gold that belong to me" (*The Counting House* 87). Rohini's infidelity and lust for money wreaked havoc on their bond. It devastates Vidia and he decides to go back to his village but dies on the way.

Sexuality occupies a major part in their relationship and further complexity is added to it through the character of Rohini's mother, Finnie. Her husband, Jagnet could not satisfy her sexuality and she feels jealous of her daughter. Living in a highly orthodox society, Finnie could never share her frustration with anyone and continued to carry on with a relationship that offered her neither companionship nor love. To the world, they had a normal life. Rohini was for her "the child who at birth gave her status in the eyes of the village, proving her to be

fertile" (*The Counting House* 27). Disease-ridden, Jagnet dies an early death, leaving Finnie penniless with a daughter. Relationship between Finnie and Jagnet shows the psycho-sexual complexes which a loveless marriage breeds and the societal pressure which women bear about their fertility.

Finnie's sexual dissatisfaction breeds in her a contempt and jealousy against her own daughter. She tries to warn her against physical relationship with Vidia with a rationale that men lose interest in women after sexual encounter. She says "Don't give him nothing, you hear, nothing…he'll always want you then and not betray you" (*The Counting House* 26). But high-headed Rohini is not the one to pay heed to this and she declared herself "a rival woman" (*The Counting House* 27). It is this rebelliousness of Rohini that eventually brings her doom. Her utter disregard for Vidia's care and compromises makes her blind to the bond they were in. Running after the mirage of riches and luxury, she destroys herself and Vidia.

In Dabydeen's *Disappearance* (1993), we get a glimpse of emotional aloofness that mars a husband-wife relationship through the characters of Mrs. Janet Rutherford and Jack. Their story, revealed through the conversations between the unnamed narrator and his landlady, Mrs. Rutherford, throws light on the issue of compatibility and shows how the disregard for the other person's feelings smothers a relationship. Their story forms a miniscule part of the novel. It is either Mrs. Rutherford's memories or conversation about the time spent in Africa which bring Jack into picture or it is through the gossip of villagers that the reader gets a vague idea about their conflicted relationship.

Jack is a white supremacist whose interest in Africa is purely exploitative. Deeply prejudiced and cruel, he dismisses Africa as a wild place full of savages but for Mrs. Rutherford, the place and its people hold the charm for their distinct civilization. He exploits their women sexually while she busies herself in learning about their lifestyle, culture and language. "In the end he seemed to long for nothing except sin and cruelty…He had no desire to know the Africans except sexually, whereas the longer she stayed there the more sensitive she grew to their habits…" (*Disappearance* 65) and it becomes a matter of conflict between them. Jack, as she tells the narrator, left her one day and never came back. She does not know his whereabouts and she admits that "I never bothered to enquire" as "I knew all along that he'd be leaving, the foolish man" (*Disappearance* 13). Revealing the emotional bankruptcy of their relationship, she nonchalantly tells the narrator how he left one day "mumbling something

about he'd leave me money" and how she "banked the cheque, that's all, and forgot him" (*Disappearance* 13). Out of disgust for her husband, whom she suspects of sexual exploitation of the black women, she names her dog Jack and tries to downplay it by saying that the dog's breed is Jack Russell Terrier. But the narrator comments that "It was perhaps the only direct lie she told me in our months of friendship" (*Disappearance* 20). Jack comes out to be a smug Englishman who exploited blacks much to the chagrin of his wife. She cites his brutality to reveal the gory underbelly of 'sophisticated' English culture. Alliance to different ideologies is the chief reason behind the failure of their marriage. His sexual deviation is not to be understood as mere infidelity to his wife, rather it was his lust to unleash power over the downtrodden that undid his conjugal bond. Through Mrs. Rutherford, Dabydeen presents the agency of a woman who does not mourn the death of a putrid relationship and who acts practically and declares her own sovereignty over her life and decisions. Despite the socio-cultural pressure and gossip-mongering among the villagers who suspect her of husband's murder, she stands unfazed and firm.

The Intended (1991) unveils the diasporic journey of its unnamed narrator and while doing so, briefly explores the complexities of man-woman relationship. The unnamed Caribbean narrator's brief romantic stint with an English girl, Janet shows the aspects of teenage relationships where one tries to mask his past dreading that it might spoil their relationship. Complexes generated by race and class occupies the central spot in their fragile relationship. Their relationship lacks confidence. Taking every step with extra caution, the narrator does not want her to get a peep into his real impoverished self. He tries to keep her away from his circle of friends who he feels are too crude for her sophisticated upbringing. Her inquisitiveness to meet Joseph is met with a firm denial as the narrator feels that:

> I didn't want to involve her in the squalor of Joseph's life…to see the slum basement, to breathe the stench of it, to soil her dress…I wanted to protect her…Deep down I preferred to believe in her photographs, I wished I belonged to her family…with all its protections and confident virtues (*The Intended* 122).

Besides this, the immature fancies of sexual intimacy are also brought forth. The unnamed narrator tries to present his impoverished diasporic situation in the best possible manner to Janet who belongs to a sophisticated and cultured English family. During a romantic outing, they visit a fair and decide to take ride in an artificial tunnel. He feels extremely

uncomfortable with the racist images depicting his homeland painted on the wall of the tunnel. "We passed some African country crowded with naked men and women planting yams and I lowered my eyes in shame" (*The Intended* 85). Instead of getting furious at the racial stereotyping, he simply bothers about how Janet might perceive his homeland as a land of savages. Janet throughout the relationship behaves in a passive manner. One does not get to peep into her heart and mind. For the narrator, she becomes the experiment of social acceptance in an alien society. Both of them finally indulges in an unsuccessful sexual encounter which symbolically becomes the narrator's failure to assimilate in the host country.

Their relationship remains immature and incomplete. One can understand that neither of them has the maturity to deal with each other's emotions as they are mere teenagers. But one aspect that once again springs forth is the lack of communication. Inability to communicate effectively, either out of hesitation, fear of judgment, or out of ego, renders a relationship hollow. Though not at a very deep level, their relationship too is marred by the inability to express their respective feelings and thoughts. When Janet comes to his rented accommodation for the first time, he thinks of having long conversation with her about his decent collection of books. With an aim to impress her, he memorizes some fine poetry and hopes that:

> …we would get into a long conversation about the substance of romance and I would quote to her the Latin phrase our teacher used…I imagined our conversation would pause on a dual moment of poignancy and erudition, that she would be moved by both (*The Intended* 88).

But this dreamy conversation remains a dream and the two of them never comes emotionally or mentally close enough to have an uninhibited talk. Behaving like any other teenagers of their age, they try proximity at the physical level but that too without success.

The relationship of Monica and Shaz brings to fore the purely carnal element of a man-woman relationship. The two never transcends over sexuality and in fact sinks deep into it when Shaz becomes a pimp for Monica and both of them decide to earn quick money. Besides, these the reader gets a peep into the toxic relationships between spouses through the story of narrator's parents and drunkard Tana and his battered wife. His father makes it a business to vent out his frustration upon the wife by beating her up. We are shown how this is taken as a norm in the society and few women like Auntie Pakul dare to stand against it.

Narrator's father has an office job away from his hometown and the narrator remembers how one evening he came unexpectedly and straight away went to beat up his mother without any provocation. He remembers "He had locked the bedroom door so we could not get in…my younger sister and I climbed on the wooden cupboard …to see him pull our mother off the bed by the hair, drag her to the corner out of our sight and beat her" (*The Intended* 39). After pouring such insult upon his wife, he indulges in sex with her. The incident reveals how men assert their power over women and treat them as nothing better than a rag doll. She is expected to bear all the pain of battering as well the humiliation without making any noise. And women like his mother and Tana's wife who gets beaten up on daily basis by her drunkard husband bear their pain in silence and thus conform to the power nexus of patriarchy. In such relationships, women lose their individuality completely. Such toxicity in man-woman relationship barricades the flourishing of togetherness in which two individuals grow together, and evolve distinct yet complementary individualities.

Surging over the binaries of race, class, gender, region etc., some relationships are formed on the basis of human values. Such relationships preserve love and compassion and promote attitudes which are humane and which stand strong against the onslaughts of prejudices and discriminations. In such relationships, humane attitude serves as a foundation for meaningful connection and interaction. It promotes the recognition and expression of qualities that emphasize empathy, kindness, respect, and a shared sense of humanity. It results in the fostering of authentic relationships, where individuals are valued not merely for their roles or societal labels, but for their inherent dignity and emotional complexity. Such relationships take into its fold familial, romantic, as well as social alliances with a wider project of cultivating deeper understanding, compassion, mutual respect, and emotional support. Audre Lorde says that "Only within the interdependency of different strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways of being in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters" (Lorde 111). From a postpositivist realist perspective, the power generated by this interdependence of varied social locations give rise to individual as well as collective agency.

When perceived through the prism of humaneness, the whole world, with all its differences, appears as a beautiful conglomeration of shared humanity. Relationships forged thus evolve into spaces of tolerance and compassion. The novels under discussion also bring

forth some such identities and relationships which reject the parochial boundaries of race, class, and colour and reiterate the validity of humane attitude as the universal value. Some of the characters in the select novels try to achieve membership in human community and as Catherine Bateson explained in *Peripheral Visions* (1994):

> Membership in a human family or community is an artefact, something that has to be made, not a biological given. Membership both acknowledges and bridges separateness, for it is constructed across a gap of mutual incomprehension, depending on the willingness to join in and be changed by a common dance (187).

In *Crossing the River*, Phillips provides us the instances of such humane identities through the relationship of Joyce and Travis and through African father's happy acceptance of Joyce as one of his lost and reclaimed children. Rejecting the boundaries of race, both Joyce and the African father become the beacons of hope for the humanity. In the epilogue, African father talks about the embracement of those who submit to "neurotic inter-racial urges" and who people dread as "No first-class nation can afford to produce a race of mongrels" (235). Hitting hard on such narratives, people like Joyce opens up the avenues of new hopes for humane relationships to flourish. The confident African father, therefore acknowledges Joyce as his child and is hopeful that equipped with the strength of their characters, his children will vanquish the forces of racism. He says, "But my Joyce, and my other children, their voices hurt but determined, they will survive the hardships of the far bank" (235). The African father becomes the voice of the novelist whose one aim in the writing the novel was to bring focus on the forces of solidarity as against discrimination and oppression. Answering the question of Carol Margaret Davison, Phillips said that:

> I wanted to make a connection between the African world which was left behind and the diasporan world which people had entered once they crossed the water. I wanted to make an affirmative connection, not a connection based upon exploitation or suffering or misery, but a connection based upon a kind of survival. This is an unusually optimistic book for me (93).

In *The Final Passage*, one gets a few glimpses of such humane relationships through the interactions of Leila with her white neighbor, Mary. Mary tries to help Leila to the best of her capacity when the latter struggles with the new environment of England as well as with Michael's indifference. When Leila finds an apartment with the help of a white nurse, Mary

comes to meet her new neighbor. Trying to start a conversation, Mary talks about the weather in England and how Blacks take time to get used to the extreme cold. She says " I used to come home and say to him how I'd seen some of you, coloureds that is, shivering by the bus stops and I just wanted to go across and hug you and say, 'don't worry, love, you'll get used to it" (170). She was friendly and helpful, but "she puzzled Leila, for she could not work out why she would want to be so towards a total stranger" (173) but then she thinks of her friend Millie and how she too would have behaved in a friendly manner had a stranger moved near her home in St. Patrick. Leila's shock at the open racism of English society which refuses to accommodate blacks is counterbalanced by some incidents of pure humanity. The woman who helps her find a house in England is a white nurse. She suggests to her an estate agency and says that "I'd be happy to let you use me as a referee" (157). The conductor's behaviour in the bus that drove her to that place too was very courteous as she says "the conductor came to her personally and told her when it was time, and how to get to the estate agent's" (157). These people though less in number, hold the promise of a positive change in society and such a change is necessary as the whites have to acknowledge the presence of blacks in their countries as a result of their ancestors' brutal action of bringing them across the Atlantic on slave ships. Rini Vyncke states it thus:

> This cosmopolitan space where other ethnicities are visibly present results from a history of migration, international trade and wars instead of being a completely new development in contemporary society. Therefore the people belonging to these other ethnicities have the right to 'claim' their Englishness despite their complexion, religion or traditions. They are no longer migrants themselves, but the outcome of a society that should commence to regard itself based on an inclusive vision of who its members are in order to correspond with the reality of its existence (15-16).

This inclusive vision is seen in *In the Falling Snow* too. Earl on his arrival in England is perplexed. The English weather as well as English mannerisms strike him as strange. He tries to make sense of the confusion around him and he once meets a stranger who offers him some good counsel about how to survive in the country. The man tries to be friendly and offers him sandwich as well as cigarette. Earl accepts cigarette despite being a non-smoker just in order not to appear rude. This white stranger advises him against pretension and boosts up his morale

by admiring his looks. He then shares that "I fought in the jungles of Malaya alongside you chaps. If you're good enough to fight and die with us then you're good enough to live on my street…everybody's the same in my book" (289). People like this stranger added a sweet memory in the otherwise bitter annals of Earl's diasporic experience. Petra Tournay-Theodotou commenting upon the novel's significance puts forward the point that:

> We have not transcended race. It still matters, but increasing numbers of black and mixed race people are defining themselves… and are refusing to be fixed by an essentialist notion of blackness. Such stances disturb the rigid boundaries of the past and provide testimony of new identities and new forms of belonging emerging and blossoming between the cracks. *In the Falling Snow* makes a valuable contribution to the discussion of this pressing and topical issue (61).

Another beautiful and endearing example of humane identity presents itself in the relationship of Brenda and Keith. Brenda, a white woman showers motherly love upon Keith, a black child. When Keith comes to his father after the death of mother, Brenda takes him under her wings and does everything to make the child comfortable. Her reassuring words that she will not let anybody or anything harm him gave his tender heart much consolation and relief. Their bond is beautifully humane. She once tells Keith that her strained relationship with his father Earl is not going to impact her love for him. "No matter what happens between your dad and me, I just want you to know that I promise I'll always be there for you, Keith" (*In the Falling Snow* 180). She takes him for walks and indulges him with ice-cream. Like a mother, she wipes off his soiled face with utmost care. They are given curious glances by the onlookers because "they appeared strange together, but Brenda never seemed to mind how people stared at them" (*In the Falling Snow* 180). When Earl is sent to mental asylum, authorities propose to send Keith to a foster home but Brenda remembers her promise to the child that she will always protect him. She vehemently opposes the idea and asserts her love bound possession of Keith by saying that "Nobody was taking 'her Keith' from her" (*In the Falling Snow* 193). People like Brenda are the novelist's hopeful projection of a more humane society where fine human emotions are not fettered with racism. In this context. Petra Tournay-Theodotou posits that the novel "offers a representation and commentary on the more hopeful possibilities located within black and mixed-race British identity politics" (60). The realist approach towards such cordiality and relationships is explicated by Brent R. Henze thus:

> …outsiders must recognize their situatedness in oppressive systems of power even if they do not directly experience those systems of oppressive…doing so calls for knowledge that can be obtained in concert with those who are themselves oppressed, but it produces knowledge that elucidates the workings of power structures and relations for outsiders" (245).

The stranger in the bus and Brenda, though, not the victims of racism or diasporic dislocation, can still understand the trials and tribulations of those who occupy these social locations. Their attempts to gain access to the knowledge of their predicaments and problems make them aware of the dirty work of racial politics. This knowledge brings them face to face with the bruised face of humanity and prompts them towards healing process.

Phillips never fails to depict instances of such humane gestures in his novels as they bespeak the hope of a more inclusive society where individual identities are not demarcated on the basis of prejudiced markers of race, class or gender. Rini Vyncke's opinion about Phillips is worth notice here.

> Phillips' fluid and fragmented narratives, the nuanced plurality of voices and the lack of a judging authorial narrator show that he does not write to choose sides or pass judgement, but rather to raise both awareness of the rich complexity of society and empathy towards other people and their story, regardless of their skin colour (15).

This affirmation of humane identities is seen in the novels of David Dabydeen too. In *The Counting House*, he presents to the reader an alternative composition of family. Blacks after being separated from their kin by the imperial forces, tried to forge new connections of filial ties which were bound together by the pain of shared oppression and by the zest to survive in the face adversity. Miriam is not Kampta's wife but cares for him and stands up for his dignity. They live together without marriage. Miriam, like a true matriarch takes upon herself the responsibility not only of her brothers but also of her community members who bear the brunt of imperial oppression. She takes Rohini into this fold when the latter is traumatized by the shattering of her romantic illusions. Miriam's initial relationship with Rohini is marred by racial tensions of Blacks and Indians. But she eventually surges over it to develop a sympathetic bond with her. Michael R. Hames Garcia says that "Coalitions must cease to be coalitions of people with "different" interests, and the fragmentation within must be healed"

(121). Miriam and Rohini also learn from their bitter experiences that they must face the tyranny together. Despite their ethnic difference, they were akin due to their plight at the hands of Gladstone. In due course, they repair the seams of their relationship and vanquish over fragmentation.

Kampta, too is an Indian but coolies consider him as one of their own because of his open defiance of the white master. Their own inability of defiance lead them to project Kampta as a hero. Deliberating upon the possibilities of challenge to power structures through an inclusive approach suggested by realists, Maria C. Lugones opines, "I don't think we can consider 'our own' only those who reject the same dichotomies we do" (instead) we find our people as we make the threat [to domination] good, day to day, attentive to our company in our groups, across groups" (477). Challenges, such as that of Kampta, transcend racial boundaries to perceive the oppressor as a threat to all humans; a threat that must be challenged. Kampta, Miriam, and Coolies are aware that their situatedness as coolies on Gladstone's estate make them prone to racial and sexual violence, irrespective of their ethnic difference. Their plight is shared because "The personal experience of people of color are theoretically mediated by visions and values that are deeply social and political in nature" (Nguyen 192). The white man's politics of domination flourish upon divisive policies which develop clashes within the races, vying for a secure social standing. The befitting response to this division can come only via solidarity amongst the victim/fighters which may present itself in the form of mutual sympathy or collective aggression.

Here, Dabydeen also rejects the idea of a Victorian family structure and shows that it is the humanity and not the ties of blood that hold people together in a group. The alternate family structure is based on the principle of shared history of injustice and deprivation. The members of this new kinship come together to search for the survival strategies against the imperial onslaught.

Glimpses of a family outside family are seen in *The Intended* through the brief episodes of narrator's encounter with Nasim's family. The demarcation of religion or ethnicity is thrown off by his family in their hospitality and love towards the narrator. Nasim's parents dole out their love on the narrator, despite his being a complete stranger. He is treated with delicacies whenever he visits their home as they consider his lonely state as pitiful. He feels "I suddenly felt treasured in their presence, strangely moved by a sense of family. I was small and shabby

but they made me feel valuable…" (22). They are bound together by the strand of diasporic situation and the narrator therefore ponders over the vulnerable existence in diaspora and how each one of them has to stand for each other. He says that "I knew we had to look after each other" (*The Intended* 151). These episodes of mutuality, though brief, brings out the hope and expectations of humans from each other. It is with the character of Joseph that the novelist exposes the power politics and expresses the need for a just and humane society.

Character of Mrs. Rutherford, when seen from the postpositivist realist framework possesses, what Moya calls Epistemic privilege. It endows her a special advantage with respect to possessing or acquiring knowledge about how fundamental aspects of our society (such as race, class, gender, and sexuality) operate to sustain matrices of power (Moya 79). With her privilege, she acquires knowledge about Africa, its complex and rich ethos and its people. She uses this knowledge to facilitate the black engineer's interaction with his historical past and current cultural placement. Her approach can be seen as a "theoretically informed liberatory project" (Henze 235), in the which the knowledge is produced through her interpretation of the narrator's experiences within his social location. The knowledge she acquires ushers in agency for the narrator as he reconciles with his historical and cultural heritage. In this context, Brent R. Henze rightly observes "Knowledge is not produced simply by understanding social relations, but by understanding experiences in terms of social relations" (235).

Other white women like Joyce, Annabelle and Brenda too have this privilege due to their whiteness and it is with their privileged vantage point/social location that they understand the damage which racial societies do to individuals like Travis, Keith, Laurie, and Earl. All these women in their respective relationship with these different men, witness and understand the brunt of racism from a very close hand. These experiences change the contours of their respective mutual relationships and generate a unique knowledge for these women. In this context Brent R. Henze opines that "Social locations lead to particular knowledge only when a person experiences the effects of social structures brought to bear on these social locations and actively interprets her experiences" (236). The men in their diasporic social location- marked by racism, prejudice and apathy- process their experiences to produce knowledge which is not opposed to but is very different from the experience and knowledge of these women who process the vagaries of diasporic condition with humane and conciliatory attitude.

Joseph with his idiosyncrasies and impractical ideas bespeak the vision of a utopian society. Alienated from society, socially as well as mentally, he lives in his world of visions. Standing at the margins of the civilized society, he is perceived to be a trouble maker, fit it be put behind the bars. Having spent much of his child in correction homes, he is searching for a meaning in life. When he meets the narrator, he seems to have evolved into a thinker albeit immature. Unlike other boys of his age, he is interested neither in girls nor in alcohol. Although illiterate, he yearns for knowledge. He wishes to be an artist and tries to capture his vision of the world through a stolen camera. He desires to create a timeless and immortal art. He suspects the efficacy of common art forms and wishes to evolve such a language of art that defies all boundaries. He tells the narrator that he wants to "make a new language with film which would not alter with time, a language which told about the journey, loss, rejection and death not by describing particular episodes or characters but by using what he called a 'set of open-ended symbols'" (*The Intended* 115). He wishes to celebrate human relationships by preserving the boundary-defying human legacy of love, pain and hope.

He appears to be the beacon of hope for the lost humanity. He tells the narrator that "he had become a Rastafari and all he wanted to do was to learn black history and spread love and feelings to everyone" (*The Intended* 65). He wishes to spread love and harmony against hatred and prejudice. His affiliation to Black culture and history does not make him a purist seeking to promote his ideas and annihilating others. His identity has love and harmony as the chief markers. Hitting out at the skepticism around he says "If you talk peace, they think you only smoking weed. Is a dangerous thing to preach feelings and oneness. They prefer you to hang around cars" (*The Intended* 65). It saddens him to realize that nobody wants to buy his idea of love. Power structures benefit by denuding the sense of oneness in people and by replacing humane feelings with selfish motives. Joseph's vision of the world, although romantic, is the need of the hour. He resists the dominant thought and presents an alternative. His resistance, though confined to his small group of friends, is potent and desirable. Hames-Garcia says that "This kind of resistance is one through which the self grows, transforms, and expands. It counters restriction with expansion, fragmentation with multiplicity, separation with solidarity, and exploitation with transformation" (Garcia 126). His vision falls in line with the Realist concept of group membership which "must reject master's tools, the tools of purity and separation, and make connections between, among, and across groups" (Garcia 126).

The narrator comments that "He organized his life totally around a vague ambition to give love to people. It did not seem to matter that no one wanted to receive or appreciate it or appreciate any nobility in him" (*The Intended* 66). Through his character, the reader is acquainted with a humane vision of life and relationships; a vision which is blissfully free from the stink of selfishness and self-aggrandizement.

Although illiterate, he interprets Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in his own philosophical way when the narrator reads out the novel to him. Like a postpositivist realist, he points out the error in the narrator's reading of the novel and comes out with an insightful interpretation. Hitting out at the racist politics and oppression, he says:

> You been saying is a novel 'bout the fall of a man, but it really 'bout a dream. Beneath the surface is the dream. The white man of England and the Thames is the white sun over the Congo that can't mix with the green of the bush and the black skin of the people. All the colours struggling to curve against each other like rainbow, but instead the white light want to blot out the black and the green and reduce the world to one blinding colour (*The Intended* 72).

His interpretation brings into focus the white supremacist politics which seeks to downgrade and thereby exploit the other cultures by promoting a narrative of white supremacy. He distrusts the dominant interpretations and this bespeaks his agency. Nguyen says that healthy doubt is integral to pursuit of objective truth. She asserts that "Rather than act to immobilize us, doubt and distrust are valuable epistemic tools that we can use to interpret and evaluate our theory-mediated experience" (198). Joseph's alternative interpretation disclose how the whites reject the beautiful and colourful diversity to embrace a colourless uniformity with which they seek to subjugate others. This is why he interrogates the common place stereotypes and dares to rectify the sexist and racist images inside the artificial tunnel made at Battersea Fun Fair.

Despite his illiteracy, Joseph is capable of philosophical thinking. He understands that "Words are full of cleverness" (*The Intended* 76). As against the ideology laced education provided by the standard educational institutions, he utters free thoughts. He flies on the wings of imagination which has not been curtailed by the standard education system. Like a poet-philosopher, he weaves beautiful images with his words but the depth of his words remain unrecognized because he is an underdog. Shaz voices the dominant thought when he mocks at

Joseph's ideas and says that "You're full of shitty useless dreamy ideas. You'll never work for a living because you too doped up with unreal thoughts" (*The Intended* 76). Living on the margins of society, he neither has the desired educational qualification nor the social status to afford him any recognition. Had the same ideas been delivered by someone sitting on the seats of authority, then they would have been considered the gems of knowledge. Joseph epitomizes freedom of thought; a freedom which no political fetters can bind into conformism.

Joseph lives in a symbolic wilderness and swaggers at the margins of the society. His ideas can never enter the mainstream because he does not qualify to do so. The narrator opines that "Everything was contained in books and he was handicapped by illiteracy" (*The Intended* 77). Without a formal education, his ideas hold no validity. Information contained in the books is the license to enter mainstream. In short, his curiosity to explore and the courage to question which gets reflected in his norm defying ideas cannot acquire any relevance or recognition until he becomes part of the system. Recognition demands conformism and Joseph rejects in his artistic frenzy. His difference can only be accepted if he adheres to the norms set by the dominating power structures.

Through the character of Joseph, Dabydeen wishes to make a point against the standard education procedures that never move beyond the technicalities of form, them and technique etc. He questions the advantage of such an education system which fosters neither compassion nor interrogation. Snubbing creativity, such systems breed mechanical workers devoid of any capacity to think independently beyond the range of ideology. Through the racist violence perpetrated by students, the novelist depicts the limitations of standard education which fails to inculcate humane attitude and thus address human issues and problems. Working on the principles of rot mechanism and adherence to standard interpretation, this education blatantly ignores the subversive or alternative interpretations such as given by Joseph. Dabydeen seems to advocate the alternative meaning making as the hope for the flourishing of humanity as a whole rather than a piecemeal benefit of a few privileged.

The novels under discussion reiterate that the relationships made on the trajectories of humane identities become the veritable foundations for empathy, compassion, and mutual understanding to take place but "Unfortunately, people and societies are not eager to revise their carefully instituted notions and persevere with categorizing people into prejudiced roles by pinning them down with restrictive labels" (Vyncke 29). However, deeper and more

meaningful and enduring relations are formed when one recognizes that we are all part of one shared humanity and where suffering in its myriad ways, affect the destiny of all, irrespective of race, gender or class differences. This "suffering is the common denominator of what it means to be human and that which enables the recognition of our universally shared condition as vulnerable creatures with minimum level of needs" (Nguyen 199). This recognition helps an individual to break the cocoon of selfishness and prejudices and expands the moral imagination rendering the "responses morally illuminating and just" (199). Embracement of such humane identities make relationships more resilient and supportive and help individuals acknowledge the dignity, rights, and unique worth of one another. Ultimately, this conscious cultivation of humane identities promotes a more inclusive and harmonious society, where relationships are characterized by kindness, acceptance, and solidarity.

The novels assert that relationships founded on humane identities nurture empathy, kindness, and mutual comprehension. Genuine and enduring human bonds form when individuals acknowledge their shared humanity, adopting identities that surpass racial, cultural, and societal divisions. Emotional understanding or sympathy is important from postpositivist realist perspective as Caroline Hau believes that it "underscores the emotional contribution to epistemic accessing" (162). Both Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen in their distinct ways make the readers experience the harmonious blend of humane identities and thus nurture in them a sense of empathy with this nuanced multiplicity. This way they open their minds and hearts to the cultural plurality adorning our human societies, thereby opening access to news forms of liberating knowledge.

The emotions and values have the epistemic significance because "like our knowledge claims…our social values and moral inquiry might necessarily be tentative, imprecise and open ended, subject to revision in light of new information and changes in social norms and practices" (Nguyen 197). Emotions and values, therefore, like experiences are open to revision because the social norms change over the time. This leads to the refinement of one's understanding of what promotes or limits certain values within society. Since values like personal experiences impact the way we interpret the world, they are also shaped by the theories and perspectives and can therefore be evaluated for their epistemic salience and legitimacy. (Mohanty 240-243). Both the novelists, thus understand the theory-laden nature of values which require that one identifies and discerns between true and false experiences of

mutual interaction and cooperation and seek, through theoretical and empirical inquiry…better and more genuine ways of developing cooperative relationships and solidarity (Nguyen 198).

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

The issue of identity and the discourse that it generates is intriguing as well as essential. The concept, though discarded by some as too cliché to be deliberated upon, still holds within it a plethora of review opportunities. Till date, identity is a fundamental element of both the social liberation and the social oppression. Identity categories are still the driving force of many positive as well as negative operations within the society. Alert thinkers have always stood guard against the commonplace and compromised ideas of identity as these ideas germinate from the conformism to power structures.

The issue of identity is of paramount importance in the select novels of Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen. Both the novelists delve into the processes of identity formation and manipulation and bring forth the power mechanisms involved in the process. The diasporic status of both the novelists bear a definite stamp on the presentation of their characters' lives and experiences. Issue of slavery, indenture and racism as it intersects with the diasporic status also occupies a major thematic space in the select works. With all the characters, both male and female, traversing their ways through the labyrinth of diaspora, the focus of the select novels at times falls predominantly on certain women characters. At such points, the identity crisis of a woman comes to the forefront and one gets to witness resilient women grappling with the juggernauts of diverse power structures.

Postpositivist realism rejects the rigid empiricism of positivism. It focuses upon the intricacies, contingency, and contextuality of knowledge and subjectivity and investigates how these factors impact the pursuit of objective truth. Rejecting the postmodern relativism, this approach propounds a theory which views identity as socially constructed yet materially grounded, fluid yet historically situated. Many other scholars have deliberated upon the concept of identity as a discursively enacted and structurally conditioned phenomenon.

Postmodern assumption of identity is one of radical relativism where identities are viewed with scepticism as they are considered as the product of language and discourse which cannot yield any objective knowledge. Paula Moya explains that for postmodernists meaning is neither fixed nor fully present because it is constantly shaped by what it is not, making it

inherently deferred and unstable (5). For them, meaning is produced in the everchanging networks of signification, and humans therefore lack access any truth outside these linguistic systems. Under such circumstances, the idea of objective truth/knowledge cannot be envisioned. They debunk the belief in objective knowledge as based on flawed assumptions; one assumption being that there is a direct correspondence between language and reality, and the idea that meaning exists independently of human interpretation (Moya 5). Postpositivist realism, on the other hands advocates the search of meanings- which they claim, do exist, despite their partial and contingent nature. They substitute the decentered subject of postmodernism with a materially and historically situated one. Such a subject carries the potential of subversion and agency. The political ambivalence generated by deconstruction with its focus on constant deferment of meaning leads to an indeterminate limbo, blocking the potential of subversive actions. Postpositivist realism, on the other hand, holds the potential of subversive actions because of its perception of experience as a lived reality, situated in historical and cultural praxis.

Susan Hekman's object relations theory views feminist epistemology from a non-essentialist stance and provides a materially grounded understanding of identity, knowledge, and power and thus aligns with the tenets of postpositivist realism. Both of these approaches reject the claim of an objective and value-independent truth, postulated by positivism. They also reject the relativism of postmodern thought. While acknowledging the potency of their challenge to foundationalism, they critique their lack of consideration of material and social structures. Hekman's concept of socially situated realism has affinity with postpositivist concept of social location. Both the concepts underline the material and social construction of identity without undermining their discursive construction. Their stance is no-essentialist and focuses upon the role which the historically and culturally constituted social location, social situatedness or standpoint play in the acquisition of knowledge. They also contend that agency takes shape within discursively constructed contexts which becomes manifest when two different individuals act differently within a certain ideological structure. The individual capacity for reflexivity and critical thought within discursive contexts can never be ignored.

Judith Butler's theory of performativity also demonstrates the postpositivist realist shift from fixed and essentialist identities. Her theory focuses upon gender identity to argue that it is performance rather than a pre-existing essence. She asserts that gender performances are a

repetitive enactment of social norms. This view coincides with the postpositivist conception of identity as a product of discourse rather than a stable core or essence. The realist's acknowledgement of agency as being both enabled and limited by material and historical paradigms, is concurrent with Butler's concept of constraints- within which performances take place. She understands identity as a continuous phenomenon which at times solidify, while at other times, pulverize dominant structures of thought.

Postpositivist realist focus upon the role of contextuality and positionality in the formation of identity and knowledge production gets echoed in the concept of situated knowledges (Haraway 455-472). Haraway argument that both identity and knowledge are partial, situated, and embodied finds alignment with postpositivist realist emphasis on reflexivity and with the claim that that identities acquire shaped vis-a-vis experiential engagement with the society. Both these approachs reject the notion of an abstract universality. These theorizations stress upon the epistemic value of subject's social location which lends identity the character of a lived and situated experience through which power relations get reflected as well as challenged.

A similar thought emerges in the standpoint epistemology of Sandra Harding. She posits that identity formation takes place within the interconnecting structures and systems of domination. These systems can variedly be of race, class or gender. Like the realists, she contends that identity is impacted by one's location within the discursive structures and therefore generates partial and situated knowledge only. Such identities provide insights into the operations of power structures through their specific historical and cultural situatedness.
These different theoretical frameworks enrich the trajectory of studies focused upon the concept of identity. Taken together, they demonstrate a core tenet of postpositivist thought i.e. the claim that identity is neither static nor inherent; it is dynamic and situated and is shaped in the crucibles of socio-historical and cultural milieu. A critical engagement with the concept of identity, along with the scrutiny of power relations, form the core of these intersecting theories.

The select novels present a rich scope of analysis on the issues of race, diasporic dislocation and gender. These issues require analysis in a broader socio-historical context as they pertain to characters inhabiting specific historical, material and cultural spaces as real, lived realities. Analysis of these texts under the lens of postpositivist realism is pertinent because this approach engages reality as a lived experience and therefore provides a more

nuanced understanding of characters' motivations and struggles. The dynamics of power play as reflected in the politics of marginalization and strategies of resistance adopted by different characters gets analysed to understand the impact it creates on identity formation.

Postpositivist realist theory of identity brings the epistemic and political significance of identities into focus. It puts the fundamentals of both essentialism and postmodernism into dock and asserts that identity cannot be brushed under the carpet as an obsolete category. It bridges the gap between different theoretical standpoints and the same gets reflected in the select novels. They posit the realness of identity alongside its socio-cultural and historical constructedness. They claim that an individual's knowledge and lived experience is theory mediated and is therefore constructed but it is at the same time real because it is lived and has real consequences.

The layering of multiple social categories within a particular social location creates a unique experience. From a postpositivist perspective, this "situatedness" is crucial as it allows for multiple interpretations and continual reassessment. Postpositivist realism posits that external reality and identity are shaped by historically rooted power dynamics within social structures. An individual's social location which constitutes the variables of gender, race, class, political affiliations, sexual orientation etc. becomes a determining factor in his/her response to a situation. This response is further susceptible to error and is therefore open to revision. An individual's personal experience might be at variance with the public meanings attached to it. Postpositivist realists in this sense try to evaluate experiences with respect to the variance between subjective experiences and objective social locations. They reiterate the presence of error in one's interpretation of a lived experience and stress upon the significance of revision. For them, fallibility and revision are the passages which allow the researcher to access the ever flowing and changing current of knowledge.

Further, one witnesses in the novels that the characters take a sojourn into the past to re-examine their experiences. In league with the postpositivist realists, these characters remain open to the acknowledgment of error as well to the scope of revision. This sojourn into the past becomes quintessential to understand the oppression and cultural appropriation which had taken place in the past and impacts the present. The understanding achieved upon breaking the barriers of ideology generates agency and emancipatory actions. Paula Moya suggests that "it is only when we have a realist account of our identities, one that refers outward to the world

we live in, will we be able to understand what social and political possibilities are open to us for the purpose of working to build a better society" (99).

The potency of postpositivist realism lies in the fact that it enshrines identity in the midst of cultural and political debates, thereby validating its epistemological value and the socio-political and cultural ramifications and the same gets reflected in the select novels. Through their various characters, the novels show that an individual, and group identity influences the life and experiences of individuals and impact the way they see and understand the world. Through the travails of diasporic characters and the struggles of women in novels, one realizes that 'individuals live their identities'. The novels brilliantly analyze how the socio-cultural affiliations impact the experiences of characters.

Caryl Phillips delves into the issues of diaspora by taking the historical framework of Atlantic slave trade and the resultant migrations into focus in the select novels. The dislocation and discontinuities generated by this historical movement appears to have made an indelible imprint in the psyche of the characters. Racism, the contemporary equivalent of slavery, too is shown to have impacted the lives of diasporic characters. *In the Falling Snow,* the novelist depicts the changing contours of contemporary British society where the cultural difference is no longer a stark oddity albeit in some stray cases. Through the dilemmas of Laurie, the third-generation immigrant, Phillips seems to question if there is any valid answer to the question of belongingness. He seeks to blur the historical and cultural dichotomies with the help of human connections and humane affiliations. His exploration of diaspora is commendable, as he skillfully engages with its various facets, inviting readers to weave their own unique tapestry of meanings and interpretations.

David Dabydeen's portrayal of diaspora differs notably from that of Phillips. His novels encompass both the host nation and the homeland, focusing predominantly on his characters' desire to assimilate into the host culture. He primarily explores the male immigrant experience, while offering only indirect insights into the lives of female characters. Dabydeen's creativity thrives in a state of intentional amnesia, distanced from the noise and distractions of daily life. Remarkably, though he maintains this stance of detachment, his novels offer profound insights into the dynamics and politics of diasporic existence. Moreover, Dabydeen openly embraces his immigrant identity, even after settling in England, and this ideology resonates through his characters and narratives. He shifts away from the traditional historical archive in his

engagement with the legacy of slavery. Instead, he takes a confrontational and intentionally provocative approach, marked by a deliberate vandalization of and irreverence toward accepted historical narratives. His primary focus lies in the ethical complexities of representing slavery.

Through the narratives of various characters crafted by Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen, we encounter a profound struggle to understand one's position within a society that confines individuals to rigid categories. These diasporic characters strive in unique ways to shed cultural and racial labels, seeking alternative identities and positionalities. In doing so, they illuminate how identities can be problematic as well as empowering. The experiences and shifts in perception these characters undergo reflect postpositivist idea that alternate narratives and interpretations arising from oppositional struggles offer fresh perspectives on our world, consistently complicating and frequently challenging prevailing notions of what is considered right and true in a particular social location.

In *Crossing the River*, Nash, for instance, adopts a subversive stance after enduring the bitterness of subservience and flattery. Martha fortifies herself with memories of the past and hope for the future. Joyce and Travis reject oppressive racial categorization, embarking on a path defined by reconciliation, unconditional love, and empathy. In *The Final Passage*, Leila learns emotional independence, while Keith reconsiders his outlook on life and relationships in *In the Falling Snow*. The unnamed engineer of the *Disappearance* overcomes insecurities rooted in the overpowering allure of Western ideals, and the teenage narrator of *The Intended* seeks his identity after experiencing diverse influences through his companions. Characters in *The Counting House* confront the evolving challenges before them with a new orientation toward love and care, rejecting racial divisions.

The novels place identity at the center of critical examination, highlighting its epistemological importance and socio-cultural ramifications. These characters acquire a heightened awareness of the contradictions between positioning and positionality and therefore brace up to pursue new insights and explanations that hold the promise of emancipatory avenues while simultaneously revealing false antagonisms. They gain agency, however fleeting or fragile, by recognizing their subservient roles within society and striving to transcend them. They achieve this through an assertive and consciously chosen positionality that resists and redefines their imposed identities.

The novels, through the experiences of their characters, illustrate that displacement and belonging are central to identity formation in the diaspora. The stories and perspectives generated by these identities—both individual and authorial—are diverse, opening up new avenues for analysis. The understanding of these characters' identities is neither complete nor definitive; rather, varying social categories within specific social contexts offer fresh insights into the contours of diasporic identity. This ongoing revision and verification underpins a genuine pursuit of knowledge.

We witness the struggles of women as they navigate complex paths through life. Driven by a commitment to survive, they face challenges on multiple fronts—physical, socio-economic, emotional, and psychological. These women characters are distinct in their social contexts and life experiences, including immigrant women, former slaves, and white women of varying social ranks. As mothers, wives, lovers, friends, or sisters, they confront obstacles and carve out personal responses to their journeys as women. Their societal positioning holds crucial significance, and their personal experiences, shaped by diverse socio-political forces, illuminate the arduous path a female immigrant must navigate to establish her identity. The novels highlight the significance of agency and its potential to reshape social structures to foster more equitable and just societies. The struggles of women characters reveal that the gender roles, expectations, and inequalities emerge from cultural, historical, and power dynamics.

Caryl Phillips's portrayal of women characters has earned acclaim from many critics. His nuanced understanding of a woman's inner world—her fears, dilemmas, hopes, and affections—is conveyed with such sensitivity that it is impossible not to admire his efforts to delve into and reflect women's consciousness. Phillips's female characters reflect the dilemmas and struggles that women around the world confront. They display a spirit of defiance in the face of oppression and adversity. Their sorrow can be heart-wrenching, yet their resilience is truly inspiring. These women navigate a landscape marked by pain and suffering. Though wounded, they refuse to be defeated, moving forward or at least nurturing hope for a brighter future—a future where the divisions of race are blurred, if not entirely erased. Characters like Joyce, Annabelle, and Brenda emerge as beacons of progressive change in society, prompting readers to reconsider the dynamics of relationships between black and white individuals.

David Dabydeen's works prominently address issues of Black identity, and his portrayal of women characters has elicited mixed reactions. Some critics argue that his depiction of women approaches pornography due to his use of graphic language to describe their bodies. Conversely, other scholars defend his explicit portrayals as authentic representations of the realities in which we live. Dabydeen illuminates the struggles, mysteries, and sorrows of women whose experiences have often been overlooked in historical accounts. His portrayal of the sexual relationships between a white master (Gladstone) and an indentured laborer (Rohini), as well as a former slave (Miriam), highlights the ways in which gender and race intersect to complicate the challenges faced by various indentured ethnic groups. The identities of these women evolve from being Gladstone's sexual objects and rivals to fostering a supportive sisterhood, where each recognizes and shares the other's pain. This awakening to the imperial master's exploitation heightens their awareness of the sexual and racial politics at play, prompting them to redefine their identities as women who must stand together and support one another in the fight against exploitation.

Dabydeen's portrayal of women characters initially strikes the reader with a jarring effect. He does not present them in a manner that evokes pity; instead, the language used by male characters to describe and discuss these women is often crude and sexually explicit. Many critics have noted that this depiction raises concerns about his potential indulgence in misogynist politics, as women's bodies become entangled in graphic sexual language. However, the novelist presents these women through a male gaze that he ultimately seeks to deconstruct. By delivering this unsettling portrayal, he aims to awaken readers to the prevailing narratives that perceive and represent women solely in sexual terms. His approach does not always convey women's pain directly; rather, it does so indirectly by provoking disgust towards the commonplace and pervasive sexually abusive language used to describe women. In doing so, he jolts readers into a heightened awareness of casual misogyny.

Both David Dabydeen and Caryl Phillips explore the multifaceted nature of women's personalities and lives in their novels, yet their portrayals of female characters differ significantly. Dabydeen highlights the prevalent sexism by depicting women through the predatory gaze of men, while Phillips offers a deeper insight into a woman's inner life. Despite these differences, both authors aim to illuminate the trauma experienced by women. Dabydeen focuses on the underlying causes of this trauma, whereas Phillips captures the profound

anguish it entails. Their distinct perspectives stem from the different positions they occupy in contemplating these issues. Thus, the social location—or what realists refer to as the positionality—of the novelists is crucial to consider when assessing their portrayals of women characters. The approaches taken by both novelists in their portrayal of women characters are diverse and distinct, offering readers multiple perspectives for interpreting the situations and experiences depicted in their works.

The novelists bring forth the mechanisms of patriarchy as it gets reflected in the commonplace male-chauvinism, wife-beating, misogyny, and casual sexism. How women experience pain in the most intimate relationships is witnessed through the life-stories of Leila, Joyce, Annabelle, Brenda and through the sexist perspective of men towards women in *The Intended.* These women's initial refusal to acknowledge the pathetic state of their respective relationship with men renders them almost senile. Browbeaten, physically as well as emotionally, they take time to assess the situation and then to confront their perpetrators. Their response to the patriarchal violence differs from each other. We observe how Leila's delayed reaction to Michael's chauvinism contrasts with Joyce's and Annabelle's responses to their respective husbands. Joyce refuses to endure the torment, while Annabelle stands firm upon discovering Keith's infidelity. Ultimately, these women come to realize that the closest relationships can inflict the deepest wounds. This awareness sparks their awakening and sets them on a path toward a more assertive and independent sense of self.

The journey of women characters as they navigate various circumstances, places, societies, and relationships highlights the ongoing process of identity formation—a process that evolves at multiple levels to take on new dimensions, resulting in a fluid sense of self. Postpositivist realist theory offers a methodology for exploring this dynamic. It recognizes the intersectionality of various aspects of identity and examines how differing perspectives or situations can change one's perception of circumstances. The dominant influence of a particular aspect of identity (such as race, class, or gender) can lead an individual to acquire knowledge that is both provisional and subject to revision. Moreover, knowledge gained within the context of oppression—rooted in any aspect of identity—holds an epistemic privilege. It highlights the identities that exist at the bottom of the social hierarchy and emphasizes the power inherent in both individual and collective agency.

Examining identity through the lens of human relationships uncovers intricate patterns that intersect in various ways, resulting in a fluid and dynamic sense of self. Many social, cultural as well as political factors combine to impact the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. The examination of parent-child relationship in the select novels reveals the emotional struggles of characters as they try to cross the barriers of generational gap. Their personal traumas and anxieties also throw light on the wider issues of displacement, cultural legacy, and identity. Both the novelists present the intricacies of relationships with poignancy and explore the issues of emotional estrangement, lack of communication, displacement, identity crisis, and intergenerational trauma. They bring home the point that deeply personal relationships are intricately bound with the historical and socio-political variables such as slavery, colonialism, migration and racism. Scarred by hostile historical forces or personal wounds, the characters yearn for the comfort of love, connection, and bonding, which they rarely attain.

Analysis of the man-woman relationships in the select novels unveils the knots of identity in the most intimate relationships. The interpersonal dynamics of these relations expose its socio-cultural dimensions. One witnesses, on one hand, the pressures of patriarchal ideology ruining the bond, there, on other hand, we see men and women coming together in a harmonious bond of togetherness and complementarity. The select novels analyze the complex maze of human relationships within specific socio-political situations and delve into the longings, dreams, fears, and anxieties of characters. The novels feature a diverse array of characters who differ in race, class, age, and era. Despite these differences, the author delves deeply into their motivations, offering readers with an insight into the complex dynamics of their relationships.

The select novels foray into a universe of human relationships where the intense longing for love, lack of communication, tormenting agony of separation, trauma of betrayal, and the need of emotional reliance invite the reader to probe into the power dynamics behind these emotions.

The novelists reiterate the need of forging relationships on the basis of humanity. Discarding the binaries of race, class, gender etc., they urge to build bonds on the foundations of mutual empathy, tolerance, inclusiveness, and understanding. Deeper, more meaningful, and enduring relationships are cultivated when we acknowledge our shared humanity. Embracing

these humane identities fosters more resilient and supportive relationships, allowing individuals to recognize each other's dignity, rights, and unique worth. Ultimately, the intentional cultivation of humane identities fosters a more inclusive and harmonious society, where relationships are defined by kindness, acceptance, and solidarity. In their unique styles, both Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen allow readers to experience a harmonious blend of humane identities, fostering a sense of empathy for this nuanced multiplicity. In doing so, they open their minds and hearts to the cultural plurality that enriches our human societies.

Postpositivist realists try to grapple with the conundrum of identity by positing experience generated within particular social locations as the starting point of analysis. Projection of error and revision as an undeniable aspect of experiences is another prominent aspect of this approach. This aspect acknowledges the impact of ideology but also validates the agency inherent in individual response which consistently shatters the veneer of ideologies in search of objective knowledge. Laura Gillman settles the matter thus:

> Thus, identity, on the postpositivist realist view, is seen not as a private affair, but as an index of our relationship with the world and its unobservable causal mechanisms. By creating theory-mediated knowledge through narratives that make salient features of experience not transparently evident, and weighing those against other empirical features, individual knowers can render intelligible the unobserved rules, ideologies and practices that underlie power laden social categorizations (462).

Identities are definitely shaped or influenced by ideologies but postpositivist realist affirms that these ideologies can be analyzed by using theoretical tools.

Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen explore the dynamics of identity vis-à-vis diasporic existence, women's experiences and human relationships. They depict the traumas and travails of their characters as they traverse the meandering paths of their lives. They misinterpret their experiences but with the passage of time, realize the folly and thus venture into a new journey. Aligned with postpositivist realism, they acknowledge errors and embrace revision. In this process, they unveil past oppression and cultural appropriation and initiates the process of awareness, breaking ideological barriers, and enabling agency and liberation.

Through diasporic struggles and women's challenges, the novels reveal that identities are lived realities, offering a profound analysis of how socio-cultural ties influence characters' lives

and worldviews. The novels present the characters' struggle with societal constraints that impose rigid categorizations. These diasporic individuals challenge cultural and racial labels in unique ways, forging alternative identities and positionalities. Their journeys highlight how identity can be both restrictive and empowering. The transformations they undergo align with postpositivist thought, stressing that alternative narratives and counter-perspectives provide new insights. The journey of women characters through different situations, places, and relationships shows how identity is constantly evolving. Postpositivist realism helps explore this process by recognizing how race, class, and gender shape perspectives. It highlights how knowledge gained through oppression offers unique insights and empowers both individuals and communities.

Postpositivist realist theorists assert that their theorizations on identity are not the last word on it and can be taken up further review. The analysis of the issue of identity in the select novels is also neither complete nor final. Adhering to the postpositivist approach, the research project aims towards "a consideration of the uses of error" (Hau 160) in the present work as well as in the future works on identity. The research gaps can be taken up to arrive at a more theoretically productive approach.

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