

Volume-1, Issue-1, February 2018



ANEKANT

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences

V. S. NAIPAUL'S *A HOUSE FOR MR. BISWAS*: 'EVERYMAN'S QUEST FOR INDIVIDUALITY

Sachin Gadekar

Asst. Prof. of English, Tuljaram Chaturchand College, Baramati, Pune. MS.
Email-sachingadekarenglish@gmail.com

Abstract

The present research paper examines the identity crisis in V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*. It is an attempt to interpret Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* as a plea for the realization and assertion of identity. It is searched in a world which is cruel enough, whereas the human self, identity, values of life, etc. are subsidiary to brutality and dominance.

The novel *A House for Mr. Biswas* portrays an individual and the complexities of his aspirations. For Mr. Biswas building a house is a mark of identity. It is more than a place for living. It is also a story of individual will power. Without the support of money, employment and power his sense of self is bound to be frustrated. He rebels against the Tulsis or society. But it is impoverished version of it. It is futile despite of enough self support.

Keywords: identity, dominance, brutality, self, roots etc.

A House for Mr. Biswas is a story of low-born person of Indian origin in Trinidad. Born in the labourer's family of Indian origin in Trinidad at an inauspicious hour of midnight with the six fingers Mr. Biswas does not have a bright future. The death of his

father makes him homeless. Despite of several attempts, he is not successful in changing his identity as a labourers' son. The history repeats in the life of his children. They have also received the same identity as of labourer's son. Although, Mr. Biswas manages to establish his identity or area of independence, he is always tied with the Tulsi family for shelter in the time of unemployment and illness.

The story of the novel is concerned about the desperate fight of Mr. Biswas to construct his own house. The construction of house is not only a place of living but it is symbolic of man's need to develop an authentic identity in an uprooted and chaotic cultural milieu. Throughout the novel, Mr. Biswas tries to create something out of nothing. According to A. C. Derrick "It is a satiric demonstration of individual and social limitations". (Derrick 63)

There is a feeling of rootlessness or insecurity which is expressed in a satiric or sardonic manner. It can be linked to Naipaul's biography. The character of Mr. Biswas is simultaneously absurd and heroic. He is always in suspension. Earlier his marriage provides him a kind of security or comfort but it demands complete obedience to them, which he does not like. The story is a courageous record of an individual who is finding his own place in the society.

Mr. Biswas is a picaresque hero who passes through the vicissitudes of life. He refuses to work on the Tulsi's estate as labourer and accepts the job as a shopkeeper at the Chase, as a supervisor at Green Vale and as a journalist and a community

welfare officer in Port of Spain. The construction of house is an obsession for him. He is successful in carving his identity through the ownership of a house. But his happiness does not go longer. He dies immediately after shifting at his house.

Mr. Biswas is so obsessed with his house that even the construction of incomplete house at Green Vale gives him a security and peace of mind. But the destruction of house by storm laid him in depression. He builds another house at Shorthills, but it is also burnt in a fire. Every time he tries to run away from the domineering Tulsi family but circumstances bring him back from where he has started his journey. Finally, he borrows money from his uncle Ajodha and buys a house for himself on Sikkim Street in Port of Spain. Though his house is Jerry-built but it is his own portion of earth, his own house. It gives him an immense pleasure. However, he dies of a heart attack in it at the age of forty six, but for him it is better to die in his own house than death in the house of the Tulsis. Harry Blamires opines,

A house for Mr. Biswas is a tragic-comic and deeply understanding study of the attempts of a mediocre little man in a desert like cultural milieu, who feels himself destined for better things, to establish a distinctive personality and style of his own. The symbol of his quest is the individual ownership of a house, which he does attain, through, like everything else in his life, in completely. (Blamires 73)

The society against whom Mr. Biswas fights is described as purposeless, violent, irrational and dangerous place to live. He always dreams of that. He feels confined at Hanuman House. His life is full of stress and strain in the crowded Hanuman House. He always tries to revolt against the domineering Tulsi family. Therefore, he joined the Arwacus Aryan Association. The philosophical books give him solace. He sees himself in many Samuel Smiles heroes. Buying the dolls house for his daughter Savi at the time of Christmas is a way of showing his inner Self to the society. But, unfortunately, it creates dread and hostility at Hanuman House and the result of it, his wife Shama breaks that dolls house. The breaking of dolls house is a revenge or warning to those who wants to manifest their identity.

The barracks at Green Vale reinforces his desire to build a house of his own by all means. For Mr. Biswas the house is more than a place where he can live with his family. The house symbolizes his personality which he tries to build and maintain against the rest of the society.

Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* is an epic of low-born everyman's search for identity. It is a struggle of everyman to establish himself in the transient colonial society. It symbolizes everyman's need to establish an authentic identity. The individual ownership of a house is a quest of identity. It comes into reality at the end when Mr. Biswas buys a house on Sikkim Street in Port of Spain. Despite of provincial and geographical boundaries it has

universal implications. The protagonist of the novel is Everyman. Mr Biswas's story is symbolic of man's desperate fight to gain his self.

Thus, the house has given Mr. Biswas a freedom from Tulsis. But for him living has always a preparation or waiting for future action. The unflinching desire for his own house keeps him going. He rebels for that. He refuses to give up his own self. Now, after the construction of his house, there is nothing to wait. His life becomes dull and lonely. He has paid the price for his solitude. He dies at his own house by living back his wife and children in a better position. His death is not heroic but his struggle for identity and freedom is truly heroic in the harshness of life. It receives sympathy from the readers.

References

- Derric, A. C. "Naipaul's Technique as a Novelist." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. 7 (July 1969): 59-68.
- Gupta, Santosh and Preeti Bhatt. eds. *Contemporary British Fiction History and Present*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2007.
- King, Bruce. *Macmillan Modern Novelists V. S. Naipaul*. Hong Kong: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1993.
- Kirpal, Vinay. ed. *The Post colonial Indian Novel: Interrogating the 1980s and 1990s*. Bombay: Allied Pub. Ltd., 1996.

Naipaul, V. S. *A House for Mr. Biswas*. England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1961.

Pant, G. P. V. S. *Naipaul A House for Mr. Biswas*. Agra: Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, 2002.