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Identity Crisis in V.S. Naipaul the house of Mr. Biswas

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Abstract: This paper focus on voice and identity in V.S Naipaul "The house of Mr. Biswas" This paper deals with the man struggle to make something valuable. it is a struggle projected by the heroic effort to own a dream house, which in the way to own his own life. The plot of the story is that lone man struggles to free from the oppressive force of his in-laws and failing health. Naipaul has also conveyed that the struggles face by the man actually mold him to reach his dream. Mr. Biswas mostly lives in a series of houses that either does not belong to him or are houses unworthy of the name. Each of the houses he lived is an attempt of solving a problem and each is a wrong answer in a different way. Author projected the character of Mr. Biswas as smart and funny but also often petulant, mean and unsympathetic. Mr. Biswas enemy, who are mostly his relatives are largely unlikable, but they also have admirable moments. A house for Mr. Biswas is 1961 novel published by V.S Naipaul, this is the first work of Naipaul to receive the positive critics and acclaim worldwide. Naipaul also drawn simple elements from the life of his father and he also portrayed the struggle faced by him

Keywords: House, Identity, Displacement, Petulant.

INTRODUCTION

Almost all the works of V.S. Naipaul have characters who are poor and live in rural area. Always these characters undergo trials and suffering. The hero of the story Mr. Mohun Biswas in V.S. Naipaul "A house of Mr. Biswas" is not an exemption. "I am going to get a job of my own and am going to get my own house" The story revolves around this vow of Mr. Biswas. The struggle faced by him is portrayed the pursuit of happiness to reach his dream of owning the house. The novel tells the story of its protagonist, Mr. Biswas from birth to death in different phases and his problems of an identity crisis.

This paper deals with the life time struggle of Mr. Biswas who achieved his dream of owning a house. Mr. Biswas has been born with six fingers, astrologist and his parents consider him as a bad luck for this father and his family. Mr. Biswas born as a malnourished weak kid. Mr. Biswas felt himself as an alien and an outsider in his own family and in his own Indian world. The author portrays the complexity of the relationship between a man born in Indian families and his origins and his inability to escape from it. Everything Mr. Biswas touches has unfortunate consequences. Mr. Biswas even blamed for his own father's death due to his bad luck. The author insisted his reader that the "house" he mentioned in his novel is the symbol of identity which Mr. Biswas searches throughout his life instead of running away from it.

The novel begins with Mohun Biswas a sacked journalist dying at age of 46 in his mortgaged house in Sikkim Street, Port of Spain. He is penniless as an asset he had a month of illness, a wife and four children living in a mortgaged house. Biswas's heroic struggle to attain dignity and fulfill his aspirations is reflected in his desire to own his own house. The novel is the description of the Hindu life in Trinidad parallels all the descriptions: Hanuman house, To Chase, the Barracks Green, and finally the house in Port of Spain around which Tulsi (Father in the law of Mr. Biswas) builds a wall. The whole story has shown the difficulty to break the wall and attain the identity. This story also indirectly reveals the love between Biswas and his wife. Patience and motivation which has motivated to reach his dream of owning a house.

CONTENT

"A House for Mr. Biswas" portrays through a series of homes he had and fairly brief life of a poor journalist turned civil servant in Port of Spain, Trinidad, in the years before and after World War II.

Born into an Indian family whose father worked in the sugar cane estates, Mr. Biswas, as he is called by the author from infancy on, becomes a sign painter, and at the age of sixteen, is tricked into marrying Shama, the daughter of the large and powerful Tulsi family. The choice of the protagonist's name in A House for Mr. Biswas is also interesting. Naipaul seems to have carefully chosen this name. His aim, I would argue, is not only to depict the Hindu background but also to relate it to the circumstances in which he is living. For instance, the protagonist's First name is Mohun, which means 'beloved' (according to the

novel), even though he is depicted as an individual who is branded as unlucky and who Experiences hostility and humiliation from society. Similarly, his surname, Biswas, means trust.

From his birth until his untimely death 46 years later, Mr. Biswas mostly lives in a series of houses that either does not belong to him or are houses unworthy of the name. Each of these houses is for Mr. Biswas an attempt at solving a problem, and each is a wrong answer in a different way. Mr. Biswas is like a figure out of myth – and indeed his birth is attended by negative portents and dour prophecies; he is declared to be “born in the wrong way”, seems doomed to live through each of these futile litanies before his destiny can be complete. The pointlessness and the wasted effort of these dead-end attempts give the novel a comic edge that links it both to picaresque and to the existentialist tradition

In the search, Mr. Biswas carries his meager possessions and his growing family along, from one unsuitable house to another, from Hanuman House to the Chase to Green Vale to Shorthills to a rental in Port of Spain. These residences are mere walls and roofs to Mr. Biswas. His tragedy is not only that none of them is a house for him, but that his awareness of the poor fit is acute and constant. Most of the houses belong to his despised in-laws, the Tulsis. A couple of them are built by Mr. Biswas himself, but these are swiftly undermined by their shoddiness and by elemental threat: one succumbs to flood, the other to fire. Even an expensive doll’s house he buys for his daughter Savi quickly ends up a splintered wreck. Brutal ironies dog Mr Biswas every step of the way on life’s journey, the unfairness mounts intolerably; and yet it is a funny book, too, full of jagged capers, lively malice, and clever talk.

The novel opens with relief: Mr Biswas has found his house. How terrible it would have been, he thinks, to have failed in this quest, “to have lived without even attempting to lay claim to one’s portion of the earth; to have lived and died as one had been born, unnecessary and unaccommodated”. In the long search for this accommodation – the what and why having been answered in the prologue, the novel’s course is about the how – Mr Biswas finds various lesser stratagems in which he can be temporarily housed. It begins with his name: not the “Mohun Biswas” inscribed belatedly on his birth certificate by a solicitor, but the “Mr Biswas” by which we know him, right from the cradle. Mr Biswas faces many humiliations but is rarely shorn of the modicum of dignity the honorific guarantees. The retention of this proper form of address is both comic and tense, particularly in the early sections of the novel.

His heroism lies in his self-respect and integrity. He dies contented man. By achieving a place he tries to emancipate himself from the feeling of alienation and tries to find an identity. Biswas and how a house becomes a symbol of identity for the immigrant.

Biswas gets success in proving his identity when he gets proprietorship of general store situated at The Chase. He becomes a transformed man and takes control of family, wife, and children. But after six years, he is despised and cheated by the customers, which leads him to change his place.

CONCLUSION

While writing the novel, Naipaul seems to have decided to give the novel a happy ending, which is why he created a determined protagonist who, despite his unsuccessful attempts in the early stages, finally gains a piece of space which he can call his own.

Before the events of the novel begin, the reader is informed of how it will end. Without too many details, the prologue informs the reader that the book’s protagonist has lived a difficult life. But at the end, Biswas succeeds in purchasing a house in Sikkim Street in Port of Spain, after many failed attempts. He finally gets an identity in society and it is a legacy that he wishes to leave to his children. Though the house is not built properly and his mortgaged, he is satisfied that he has laid claim to his portion of the earth. His long struggle for a house ends and gets a place of his own in an alien land.

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