

Vol 4 Issue 9 June 2015

ISSN No : 2249-894X

---

*Monthly Multidisciplinary  
Research Journal*

*Review Of  
Research Journal*

Chief Editors

---

**Ashok Yakkaldevi**  
A R Burla College, India

**Flávio de São Pedro Filho**  
Federal University of Rondonia, Brazil

**Ecaterina Patrascu**  
Spiru Haret University, Bucharest

**Kamani Perera**  
Regional Centre For Strategic Studies,  
Sri Lanka

## Welcome to Review Of Research

**RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595**

**ISSN No.2249-894X**

Review Of Research Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi & Marathi Language. All research papers submitted to the journal will be double-blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial Board readers will include investigator in universities, research institutes government and industry with research interest in the general subjects.

### Advisory Board

Flávio de São Pedro Filho Federal University of Rondonia, Brazil	Delia Serbescu Spiru Haret University, Bucharest, Romania	Mabel Miao Center for China and Globalization, China
Kamani Perera Regional Centre For Strategic Studies, Sri Lanka	Xiaohua Yang University of San Francisco, San Francisco	Ruth Wolf University Walla, Israel
Ecaterina Patrascu Spiru Haret University, Bucharest	Karina Xavier Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA	Jie Hao University of Sydney, Australia
Fabricio Moraes de Almeida Federal University of Rondonia, Brazil	May Hongmei Gao Kennesaw State University, USA	Pei-Shan Kao Andrea University of Essex, United Kingdom
Anna Maria Constantinovici AL. I. Cuza University, Romania	Marc Fetscherin Rollins College, USA	Loredana Bosca Spiru Haret University, Romania
Romona Mihaila Spiru Haret University, Romania	Liu Chen Beijing Foreign Studies University, China	Ilie Pinte Spiru Haret University, Romania
Mahdi Moharrampour Islamic Azad University buinzahra Branch, Qazvin, Iran	Nimita Khanna Director, Isara Institute of Management, New Delhi	Govind P. Shinde Bharati Vidyapeeth School of Distance Education Center, Navi Mumbai
Titus Pop PhD, Partium Christian University, Oradea, Romania	Salve R. N. Department of Sociology, Shivaji University, Kolhapur	Sonal Singh Vikram University, Ujjain
J. K. VIJAYAKUMAR King Abdullah University of Science & Technology, Saudi Arabia.	P. Malyadri Government Degree College, Tandur, A.P.	Jayashree Patil-Dake MBA Department of Badruka College Commerce and Arts Post Graduate Centre (BCCAPGC), Kachiguda, Hyderabad
George - Calin SERITAN Postdoctoral Researcher Faculty of Philosophy and Socio-Political Sciences Al. I. Cuza University, Iasi	S. D. Sindkhedkar PSGVP Mandal's Arts, Science and Commerce College, Shahada [ M.S. ]	Maj. Dr. S. Bakhtiar Choudhary Director, Hyderabad AP India.
REZA KAFIPOUR Shiraz University of Medical Sciences Shiraz, Iran	Anurag Misra DBS College, Kanpur	AR. SARAVANAKUMARALAGAPPA UNIVERSITY, KARAIKUDI, TN
Rajendra Shendge Director, B.C.U.D. Solapur University, Solapur	C. D. Balaji Panimalar Engineering College, Chennai	V. MAHALAKSHMI Dean, Panimalar Engineering College
	Bhavana vivek patole PhD, Elphinstone college mumbai-32	S. KANNAN Ph.D, Annamalai University
	Awadhesh Kumar Shirotriya Secretary, Play India Play (Trust), Meerut (U.P.)	Kanwar Dinesh Singh Dept. English, Government Postgraduate College, solan

More.....

**HOMELESSNESS, ROOTLESSNESS AND ALIENATION IN V. S. NAIPAUL:  
A STUDY OF A HOUSE FOR MR. BISWAS**



**Ritu**

M.A. English, CBSE-NET-JRF.

**Short Profile**

Ritu

M.A. English, CBSE-NET-JRF.



**ABSTRACT:**

The strength of the modern literary imagination lies in its evocation of the individual's predicament in terms of the alienation, exile or search for identity. Literature of the Third World is no exception to this general tendency in modern writing in which the theme of individual's predicament in the form of rootlessness, crisis of identity mainly lying behind the desperate affirmation of traditional culture has been explicitly explored.

Naipaul's fictional work is concerned with the intricate fate of the individual, societies and cultures. His recurring themes are the collision of cultures and the resultant ambiguities in human adjustment, the colonial situation that produces a special kind of human psychosis when man is eager to search a niche for himself at any cost. The problem he projects in his work is how an individual resists or overcomes the conditions in which he is positioned and eventually succeeds or fails to survive and succeed. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* appears to derive from the late nineteenth century family saga of several generations and from British novels such as *Mansfield Park*, in which possessions or inheritance of a house is a sign of moral authority. But in Naipaul's story there is at the start no house to inherit, only a mud hut; most of the houses in the story are newly made, badly built and symbolic of a new crude impoverished society. A lovely French house suggestive of the graces of an older colonial order is quickly plundered by Biswas's relatives in their passage from the plantation life of the indentured Indian labourers in the country to the modern city where various ethnic groups will meet in the new nation. Garebian Keith rightly holds the view: "Naipaul explores landscape in order to provide characters with a real home, a true place of belonging so that they will not continue to be homeless wonders, unsure of themselves and their fates. But the mythology of the land is tinged with

**Article Indexed in :**

DOAJ  
BASE

Google Scholar  
EBSCO

DRJI  
Open J-Gate

embarrassment, nervousness, hysteria and pessimism, all products in some way of Naipaul's own history as a colonial with an ambiguous identity." (23)

## KEYWORDS

*Homelessness, Rootlessness And Alienation .*

## 1.INTRODUCTION

In this novel, the central figure and most of the events are derived from Naipaul's father, Seepersad Naipaul, a journalist and short story writer. The longing for house by the protagonist, Mr. Mohun Biswas, is an object of desire created by the unhoused state of Seepersad Naipaul, long homeless under the roof of his wife's extended family. It is interesting to recall that *A House for Mr. Biswas* is modelled on V.S. Naipaul's father's short story "They Named him Mohun". That is why the latter half of the novel highlights the relations of Mr. Biswas and his son Anand, whose life and education run parallel to V.S. Naipaul's. The novel begins, as stated in the Prologue, with the protagonist Mohun Biswas, a sacked journalist dying at the age of forty six in his irretrievable mortgaged house in Sikkim Street, St. James Port of Spain. Naipaul writes:

Mr. Biswas was forty six, and had four children. He had no money. His wife Shama had no money. On the house in Sikkim Street Mr. Biswas owed, and had been owning for four years, three thousand dollars. The interest on this, at eight percent, came to twenty dollars a month; the ground rent was ten dollars. Two children were at school. The two older children, on whom Mr. Biswas might have depended, were both abroad on scholarships. (*A House for Mr. Biswas* 7)

One is inclined to agree with William Walsh when he says, "The substance of the novel has to do with the transformation of Mr. Biswas, a slave to place, history and biography, into free man, the sign and realization of that emancipation being his house" (29). Mohun Biswas came of a sugarcane workers' family in a village at midnight, an inauspicious hour and in the wrong way round, "a scrawny, pot-bellied baby with six fingers, one of which fell off when he had hardly yet got under way" (14). The mid-wife said 'whatever you do, the boy will eat up his own mother and father' and the Pundit warned "That's (the six fingers) a shocking sing of course. The only thing I can advise is to keep him away from trees and water. Particularly water"(16). The midwife's prediction came true earlier than expected when Biswas's father Raghu died by drowning in a village pond while searching for his son. Mohun's two brothers were sent away as sugarcane labourers and his sister, Dehuti, went to Pagotes where they were given some accommodation by Tara in another house. What happens to the hero? In Naipaul's words:

And so Mr. Biswas came to leave the only house to which he had some right. For the next thirty five years he was to be a wanderer with no place he could call his own, with no family except that which he was to attempt to create out of the engulfing world of the Tulsis. For with mother's parents dead, his father dead, his brothers on the Estate at felicity, Dehuti as a servant in Tara's house, and himself rapidly growing away from Bipti who, broken became increasingly useless and impenetrable, it seemed to him that he was really quite alone. (40)

Naipaul's hero, wherever he is or how elevated he is in life, never forgets his home, if there is no home of any definite identity, at least the nostalgia remains. Mr. Biswas returns years after as the Sentinel writer to detect the place of his birth, but he never finds it, seas of change has already blurred



it. The mud hut leaves nothing, the oil company overtakes it, a garden city is built there instead. It is the hero's or the author's sigh on record: "When Mr. Biswas looked for the place where he had spent his early years he saw nothing but oil derricks and grimy pumps, see sawing endlessly, surrounded by red no-smoking notices. His grandparent's house had also disappeared, and when huts of mud and grass are pulled down they leave no trace. His navel string, busied on that inauspicious night, and his sixth finger, busied not long after, had turned to dust." (41)

Naipaul's way of projection of the concept of identity is in many ways the Indian. He relates it with "A House" in this novel and weaves a beautiful carpet of symbols, thoughts, aspirations as well as realities. Naipaul is essentially carried by his Indian view of home as an institution of absorbing sentiment of a comprehensive personal character to incorporate the best of all human values, best natured in living together in spite of its apparent contradictions and conflicts. He makes a comic drama of those contradictions and conflicts, and suggests the tragic failure of those struggling values, in Mr. Biswas living with the Tulsis striving hard to come out and live in his own home. Mr. Biswas is on his way to be out of his father's home in that broader sense of home, home as a place is already broken up and shuffled now soon to be out of homogeneous contact and co-operation of living together with all natural development of love, affection, respect and devotion unprepared, untutored altogether in a self-contained mechanism of togetherness. With his mother Mr. Biswas is not at home, why he cannot be better reasoned in the author's word. With Tara's help, Mohun was sent to a school and became friendly with Alec, who influenced him to become a sign-painter later in life. After receiving a little education at school, Mohun was sent to a Hindu priest to be groomed as a Pundit. The Hindu Pundit, Jairam, one day in anger and disgust turned him out of his house for Mohun's greed and misconduct. Mohun went back to his mother and realized the predicament of a man without a house of his own. Naipaul sums up Mohun's reaction in the following words:

He did not see at the time how absurd and touching her behaviour was: welcoming him back to a hut that didn't belong to her, giving him food that wasn't her. But the memory remained, and nearly thirty years later, when he was a member of a small literary group in Port of Spain, he wrote and read out a simple poem in blank verse about this meeting. The disappointment, his surliness, all the unpleasantness was ignored, and the circumstances improved to allegory: the journey, the welcome, the food, the shelter. (57)

From Dehuti's humiliating hovel out again into the open world, Mr. Biswas is ready for another kind of experience among Bhandat boys and their near equal father's lewdness. Alec bands with them by force of affinity of character, then a free sign painter in the locality. Bhandat is himself away in the city with his mistress after his wife's death in child's birth. Mr. Biswas is a dove in a flock of jackdaws. Alec takes him into his profession by personal patronizing in his line. He takes him as well to ill-reputed quarters "which terrified, then attracted and finally only amused him" (79). This private secret of the whole band's proceedings continues in spite of their public engagements in and around Ajodha's establishments. Even Mr. Biswas has already served in different capacities, bus conductor, sign-painter and all that. The protagonist has not yet reached to that level of maturity which he aspires to obtain an identity of his own and now he is caught in the marital relationship with Shama. This leads to his entry into the Republic of Tulsis and strives for next many years coming forth just to search his own self, the self which, at one time or the other has tried its best to assert itself. Naipaul does not gloss over the physical side of Biswas-Shama relationship like Lawrence. Though Shama is Mr. Biswas's oasis in the desert of the Hanuman House, the oasis may have become itself also a part of the desert. In spite of the

conflict of culture in Tulsidom, Mr. Biswas struggled for asserting his identity.

Into this apparent monolith of conversions, prejudices and conservation, then, Mr. Biswas barges. He openly disapproved of many of the practices and policies. He even challenges their religious belief and associates with Hindus of another sect with whom the Tulsis disagree .... The religious ambiguity and syncretism and in some case, even neglect of traditional religion, is one of the earliest aspects of cultural confrontation with which Naipaul deals in his novel. (5)

The Hanuman House's occupants consist of the dozen daughters of Mrs. Tulsi and the husbands of the daughters and their children who rely upon the feedings of Mrs. Tulsi and have no identity of their own except being part of 'Tulsidom'. Their sense of self-pride and dignity is merged in the animal like existence, sustaining themselves on food, shelter and clothes given out to them by the central authority: "In return they were given good, shelter and a little money ... their names were forgotten; they became Tulsis'" (97). The colonial rule of the Tulsis had only one aim: to absorb the identities of the inmates of the house with least dissent and rule. But the advent of Mr. Biswas in the Hanuman House brings in the contagion of rebellion which starts the epic journey of Mr. Biswas on the road of self-assertion and an identity of his own among the bovines of the Tulsidom. The unwanted and unnecessary man, Mohun becomes an alien insider in the family and its establishment. The TulsiFortress, Hanuman House, symbolizes the traditional and the conventional Hindu world abounding in all sorts of ritualistic vagaries and superstitious hypocrisies. It is an abode of sham and pretension which is no better than a trap.

Among the tumble down timber-and-corrugated-iron building in the High streets at Arwacs, Hanuman house stood like an alien fortress. The concrete looked as thick they were, and when the narrow doors of Tulsi store on the ground floor were closed the Hanuman House became bulky, impregnable and blank. The sidewalls were windowless and on the upper two floors the windows were mere slits in the facade. The balustrade which hedged the flat roof was crowned with a concrete statue of the benevolent monkey God Hanuman. (81)

The unromantic picture etched in Mr. Biswas's mind is symptomatic of the migrant's realization of the bitter truth about the pitfalls of such a life. All the hopes and aspirations seem to dash down. The substance of the novel has to do with the transformation of Mr. Biswas, a slave to place, history and biography into a free man, the sign and realization of that emancipation being his house. But the old Hindu culture as typified by the Tulsi clan is by no means sacrosanct or inviolable. In the course of the novel, one sees the way in which the western oriented Creole culture of Trinidad undermines and corrodes Hindu traditional customs and beliefs. The cultural clash between the Hindu ideals and Western impact leads to a change of attitudes on the part of the Indian settlers and also to a psychological bewilderment among them. Mr. Biswas is not the only disruptive influence. The Tulsi clan would have been influenced by Western culture even if there had been no Mr. Biswas. The Western culture sets in the disintegration of the Tulsi clan. Mr. Biswas comes to realize the futility of his existence and is exasperated at such an existence. Worse was the attitude of the occupants of the Hanuman House towards him. All the members of the Tulsi family depend upon Mrs. Tulsi, Seth and Tulsi's the favourite and eldest son-in-law, for their subsistence. All the boot-licking toadies who can't imagine their existence in the outside world without being addressed as Tulsis. However, if one observes from close quarters it can be said that the existence of all the members is also merged in the hegemony of the Tulsidom. None deviated from the customary reverence and bondmanship towards Mrs. Tulsi and Seth, who were their patrons and benefactors. This depicts Naipaul's intentions as well as his way of dealing

with imperialism and colonialism. Here he takes an opportunity to comment the policy of the colonial strategists, symbolized by the Tulsis, to subdue their subjects. GauriVishwanathan reads in this relationship the colonial intention “to create a middle class serving as an agency of imperialist economy and administration and, through it, to initiate social change through a process of differentiation” (146). Mr. Biswas is nothing for them except another slave at the mercy of the Tulsi clan. He avoids everybody’s company and decides to remain aloof from the uproar of the Tulsis and builds up an anxiety to liberate himself from the shackles but in vain. He tries to rebel against the authority but is suppressed with a heavy hand. When Govind, one of the brothers-in-law of Shama, advises Mr. Biswas to give up the present job of a sign-painter for becoming a driver, he retorts back: “Give up sign-painting? And my independence? No boy. My motto is: paddle your own canoe” (108). He tries to assert his independence and is beaten for his protesting against the rule. Vexed by his constant criticism, Mrs. Tulsi and Seth dispatch Mr. Biswas to the Chase, a cluster of mud huts in the heart of sugarcane area. He is supposed to establish a grocery shop there. Though this arrangement is of great humiliation to Mr. Biswas, he is delighted for the time being because he has enough freedom to live with his family where meal is “prepared in the house which was his own” (146).

A shift from Hanuman House to the Chase is a sort of homing for a man who bartered away his liberty by marriage, a marriage that made him a part of the Tulsi establishment at a heavy cost of his freedom of mind and choice. The Indian concept of homing began drawing on their shift from Hanuman House to the Chase. This is mainly due to Naipaul's going essentially Indian, true to the Indian decorum of keeping secrecy of husband-wife intimate relationship. The Chase is not really Mr. Biswas’s choice, it is Hanuman House’s choice to keep a troublesome son-in-law apart from the home Republic. Mr. Biswas accepts it as a first step to freedom and an opportunity to live an intimate life with Shama. Mr. Biswas considers his stay at this place only as a pause, a preparation, a prelude to a better future. The immediate problem for him is that the shop business is not thriving upto his expectations; the villagers want things on credit without any urgency for returning the balance. Subsequently, his venture as a grocery shop owner also yields fruitless results and he is forced by Mr. Seth to burn the shop to claim at least the insurance money. Yet, he has the unconquerable wish “that some nobler purpose awaited him, even in this limited society” (182). The sense of utter identity crisis deepens further when his first child is born at the Hanuman House. He wants to name his daughter in his own affectionate way as Sarojini, Lakshmi or Kamala. But his request is turned down by the Tulsi household and the baby is named simply Savi not only that, further humiliation is added to his status because Mr. Seth writes the occupation of the father on the birth certificate as labourer. Even while at Green Vale, the thought of his own house is never out of his mind and keeps on pestering him every now and then. The desire for his own home is parallel to the insatiable desire of the immigrant to possess a habitation amidst the ambivalent discourse of colonialism, a way to self-determination and self-rule. In the novel under discussion, the colonial powers embodied in the Tulsi’s debar him to feel a part of the centre. P. Jha and T. Ravichandran quote following incident in this regard:

His yearning for house gets further manifestation when, instead of any toy or dress, he buys a doll's house for Savi as a Christmas present. Savi, the first born, is closest to his heart at this point of time, and so he has gifted his heart’s desire in the shape of a miniature house. For Mr. Biswas, who cannot bring Savi to his own house, this doll’s house is a small consolation. In addition, it is symbolic of Mr. Biswas’s rebelling identity in microcosm. (52)

Mr. Biswas’s gift to Savi is not entertained by others as it evokes their jealousies and finally it is



broken; however, this event persuades him to leave his family behind at Arwacas and run away to the capital city of Trinidad, Port of Spain. For the first time after his marriage, he completely frees himself from the Tulsi household and musters up enough courage to make his life worthwhile with his own space: "He was going out into the world, to test it for its power to frighten. The past was counterfeited, a series of cheating accidents. Real life, and its especial sweetness, awaited, he was still beginning" (305). In the streets of that city, an intensely fresh awakening dawns on him, so far, he has seen only a cluster or a group of people living together in Hanuman House without any identity, but now "he saw the city a made up of individuals each of whom had his place in it" (316). In Port of Spain, he wants to give a free play to his creativity by becoming a sign-painter again. This job leads him to the office of the Sentinel and a desire for writing, suppressed for long suddenly sprouts in his soul. Mr. Biswas is appointed a reporter with the Sentinel. His humorous pieces and caricatures, along with his photograph, appear frequently in the paper and he becomes suddenly well-known. After this new found status, Mr. Biswas wants to "recover his family from Mrs. Tulsi" (327). There, then, is a compromise that Shama and children would go to Mr. Biswas who has to live in the town house of Mrs. Tulsi paying her a rent of eight dollars. In addition, Shama has to collect rents from the other tenants too. This change in the life of Mr. Biswas has also recovered some of his lost self that is evident even in the behaviour of Shama, who is showing "a wifely interest even in the clothes worn by him" (330). This new found glory gives further fillip to his writing; sentence generates sentence in quick succession, one good paragraph leads to another better one, resulting into a powerful journalistic mastery. He is, therefore, promoted to the rank of an investigator of the destitute and the downtrodden, which is stepped in irony considering his own situation as a destitute. N. Sharda points out the following fact in this regard:

For Naipaul, the West Indies races that have been uprooted from their original societies have not produced a new culture, to replace what was lost. They have been abandoned in Trinidad, with little in common and without the various resources needed to create an energetic new society. Naipaul is interested in what happens to an individual, in colonial ethos in the psychology of circumscribed individuals. His concern is mainly with how men and women respond and react to their environment and how in doing so they project a sense of themselves. The displaced Indian finds himself in a complicated colonial situation where the act of living is precarious and uncertain and the individual is assailed constantly by the worst fear of being left behind. (133)

However, the decision of the Tulsi's to move into the house displeases Mr. Biswas again. Mrs. Tulsi along with her daughters and their children moves into the house giving Mr. Biswas a *deja vu*. He is again feeling trapped pointing out to the futility of the efforts of an individual trying to create a turret of his own in the acidic environment. His dream of to be called a "somebody" amid the "nobodies" of the Hanuman House gives only humiliation and angst to him. He lives in two worlds—the squalid house of Tulsi's and in his own fantastic lands where there is a patch of land which he could call his own. Mr. Biswas is never done with endeavoring and keeps on formulating means to erect his abode. Encouraged by the new job, his aspirations for the house are further strengthened. Though Mr. Biswas fares good in every field, it is fortunes which queers his pitch every time like a true tragic hero. He is forced to move to a place called Shorthills, another estate of the Tulsi's, along with the entire Tulsi clan. History repeats itself and Mr. Biswas feels ensnared again. To avenge himself upon the Tulsi, he steals oranges from the Tulsi orchard and sells in the market to make some money. Eventually, he buys an isolated and fallow piece of land, at stone's throw from the short hills and constructs a house there. However, like his earlier euphoria this one too is short lived and the house gets charred by a ravaging fire along with Mr. Biswas's

hopes and ambitions. But an inveterate optimist, Mr. Biswas takes it lightly and gets braced up for the next challenge. In many ways Mr. Biswas is an archetypal figure. He is described as stranger, visitor and wanderer. Weak and frequently absurd, he is recognized in Hanuman House as a buffoon, and his role of the fool is one which he, at times, accepts in humiliation. Nevertheless, he is bitterly opposed to the idea. He is an artist and his art is the only aspect of him that the Tulsi really admires, not realizing that it is the expression of the very personality they detest. Whenever Mr. Biswas is attacked by the sense of life as meaningless void, he immediately turns to his paint brushes and tries to create something against the emptiness. He is an unimportant man who in many ways, is even petty, but the whole story of his life turns out to be greater than the sum of its mundane parts. Gordon Rohlehr detects universal implications in terms of his highly personal struggle:

Biswas is Everyman, wavering between identity and non-entity, and claiming his acquaintance with the rest of them... If Biswas represents all the things I feel he does, it is because he is fully presented as a person whose very quick and idiosyncrasy we know, in a world whose every sight, sound and smell is recorded with fidelity and precision. (84)

His natural reaction to stress is to escape. When he fears insecurity he runs to the rigidly structured Tulsi's house. When he feels his individual identity threatened by the communal pressures there, he returns to the uncertainties of the disorganized world outside. It is not that he is indecisive, he just equivocates because he cannot find a satisfactory middle ground between the extremes. The protagonist is full of hope, however, he is not sure of his luck. As it deluded him during his habitation in Shorthills. Fire destroys most of the structure and Mr. Biswas is again from where he had started, a nowhere man: a man with a wife and four children but without a roof of their own on their heads. Albeit for a short span, luck turned in Mr. Biswas's favour when he was offered a government job as a community welfare officer at a higher salary than what he was getting from *Trinidad Sentinel*. He bought a car and started putting on new suits. But the old problem of staying in Mrs. Tulsi's house continued to vex him. He began to look for a suitable accommodation and thought of selling the old car. Shama now understood her husband more than ever before and forbade him not to sell the car. "No, not the car. Don't worry. We'll manage" (602). For the first time in their married life the Biswas couple got to know each other's mind and become one like the lovers of John Donne. Naipaul dives deep into the mind of his protagonist when he points out:

He didn't now care to do anything against his wife's wishes. He had grown to accept her judgement and to respect her optimism. He trusted her. Since they will move to the house Shama would learn a new loyalty, to him and to their children; away from her mother and sisters, she will be able to express this without shame and to Mr. Biswas this is going to be the triumph as big as the acquiring of his own house. (08)

For Mr. Biswas, the course of owning a house of his own, even at this moment of time, does not run straight. Mr. Biswas has to again gravitate towards the house at Port of Spain owing to the return of Owad, the younger Tulsi son from England. Owad, with his intellectual pretensions, tries to dictate over Mohun and his family. In one such enterprise, he humiliates Anand, Mohun's son. Anand, being a sensitive and emotional boy, feels subdued and scorned. The incident fans the flames of rebellion in Mohun again and he goes for his house again. He borrows money from Ajodha at eight percent interest and buys a house in Sikkim Street for five thousand dollars from a solicitor's clerk. He is sold a fragile house by the solicitor's clerk, but Mr. Biswas does not bother much and as an ingrained optimist he, despite being burdened by loan and dogged by poor health, feels elated. He seems to show the outside



world, his triumph in finding a centre transitioning from the margin. Here, Naipaul gets an opportunity to comment upon the diasporic subject's occasional fulfillment and sense of victory at the acquisition of a habitation and identity. This identity always eluding finally dawns upon him after numerous struggles and the conscious realization of his agonizing social past. Mr. Biswas is stirred little bit at the flimsy condition of the house in which: "The staircase was dangerous; the upper floor sagged; there was no back door, most of the windows didn't close; one door could not open ..." (6). But Mr. Biswas's petty renovations and self-designed changes of the house never hide the exultation of his ultimate victory:

In the extra space Mr. Biswas planted a laburnum tree. It grew rapidly. It gave the house a romantic aspect, softened the tall graceless lines, and provided some shelter from the afternoon sun. Its flowers were sweet, and in the still hot evenings their smell filled the house. (609)

Naipaul's work is of highest relevance in a world in which we are all in a sense exiles. He has explored with great sensitivity the predicament of the exile—the pain of homelessness and loss of roots. His ruthless adherence to his own dark vision, his refusal to pretend to an optimism he cannot feel, gives a compelling persuasive power to his depressing fictional world. He has no comforting message, only the bleak knowledge that in today's rapidly changing world, the yearning for permanence can never be more than an unfulfilled ache — everyone is far from home. The exile's basic response to his condition is a search for identity. His writing is a process of self-discovery. Cut off from his home he uses words to rebuild the lost home in fictional terms. The poetic tinge of the description facilitates the blissful mental state of Mr. Biswas. Even on his death bed, he feels relieved to think that he was breathing his last in his own house:

He was struck again by the wonder of being in his own house... Instead of being condemned, as before, to retire the moment, he got home to the crowded room in one or the other of Mrs. Tulsi's houses, crowded with Shama's sisters, their husbands, their children. As a boy, he had moved from one house of strangers to another.... And now at the end he found himself in his own house, on the half-lot of land, his own portion of the earth. That he should have been responsible for this seemed to him, in these last months, stupendous. (102)

The yearning for home, roots and stability is deeply embedded in the human psyche and it is not easy to turn one's back to the past. His early works are to a large extent an attempt at defining his own situation and seeking an answer to the problem that hampered him at the start "I didn't know who I was and how I came to be on this tiny island to Trinidad" (Nobel Lecture). From this position of total deracination, he turned his attention to other lost individuals in the half definition too. That is why, to Mr. Biswas nothing would have ached more than to die without having claimed to die on his own portion of earth:

How terrible it would have been, at this time, to be without it (house): to have died among Tulsi's amid the squalor of that large, disintegrating and indifferent family; to have left Shama and the children among them, in one room; worse, to have lived without even attempting to lay claim to one's portion of earth; to have lived and died as one had been born, unnecessary and unaccommodated. (108)

His wife and children start valuing him and he feels highly relieved at the time of his death. The novel, ending with the acquisition of a house by Mr. Biswas finally, after numerous trials and tribulations, confirms the efforts and courage displayed by an ordinary man to strike a rapport with his hostile environs. The situation, which had never been conducive to Mr. Biswas and which had always stymied him, finally quenches his thirst for the simulation of his own country. The country, here—by,

connotes the place of retreat and possessive reverberations. The novel speaks of the yearnings and anxieties, which beleaguer any migrant and which alter the premises of the earliest conceived notions of homes and abroad. Thus, the owning of the house transforms itself into a victory over the colonial rule and the assertion of one's individuality. The novel, therefore, can be read as a counter narrative in which Naipaul explores the resistance of centre to absorb the marginalized, decentralize the power, the unending struggle of the marginalized to move to the centre and gain self-determination. Such criticism of the colonial centre is presented through the explicit rigidities of a Hindu clan, which itself is a pointer to the colonizing power moving in Naipaul's mind. Gamini Salgado says on this point:

The house represents not only a recognizable location and identity for the displaced second generation colonial out of sympathy with his Indian roots and unable to identify with his new surroundings. It also stands for the acceptance of the roles of husband, father and breadwinner which both circumstances and temperament invite Mr. Biswas to resist for so long. It is only when that resistance is abandoned that Mr. Biswas succeeds in attaining a home which survives him and can become a point of growth for the new generation of Savi and Anand. (101)

Naipaul is not so much bitter against the Indian living on the margin of life, He is more concerned that why their lot has not improved despite decades of independence. His sense for the poor and deprived continues in almost all novels written by him, of course his views may sometimes be controversial. So what he writes in his travelogue on India should be judged in a broader perspective. Educated in England, where he has been living for so many years, he does hardly write anything on the western affluence. His main concern is the dispossessed section of society. As the title of the novel under discussion suggests, it is all about the everlasting attempt of Mr. Biswas to own a house of his own, even at the cost of his life. Modeled on the father of the novelist, Seepersad Naipaul, Mr. Biswas is so called since his birth in an ironic tone in the sense that he is born of a very pauper parents Raghu and Bipti. His parents have little to sustain themselves in Trinidad except a little bit of land and physical labour. Poverty is so much appalling in the family that Raghu is forced to become miserly, leading to frequent quarrels between wife and husband. In fact, just before the birth of Mr. Biswas, Bipti has to run away to her own parents because of similar tiff. But even the condition of Bipti's father is not better- Asthmatic and bedridden, he is left "to die in a crumbling mud hut in the swamplands" (11). So, the beginning of the novel itself suggests that the back drop of this novel is deprivation of a very low order, people who want to assert their identity in one way or the other in an alien land.

Mr. Biswas is not the only marginalized character of the novel troubled by a series of misfortunes. Even his wife Shama, though a Tulsi daughter, is also equally marginalized. She herself knows that she is "only an actor in a force and nothing else" (197). She has no authority worth the name in the Tulsi household and no affection from her husband. Mr. Biswas had married her at the spur of the impulse and nothing more. However, it is only in the end that Shama achieves some recognition in the Biswas household. Shama's widowed sisters are even worse. There is a time in his professional career when Mr. Biswas has to investigate the case of deserving destitute. He is shocked to find Sushila and a few other widows of the Tulsi house surrounding him for a certificate of destitute so that they can get some relief. As they are relatives, Mr. Biswas cannot recommend their cases and so all are crestfallen: "The five widows were silent. For sometimes they remained immobile, staring at Mr. Biswas until their eyes was blank" (472). Dehuti, the younger sister of Mr. Biswas, is another marginal character in the novel who takes a step to liberate herself from the clutches of society, but lands nowhere. Nature and luck have never been kind to her. Fatherless and daughter of a destitute mother and no charm visible on

her face, she has no chance of getting a good match. An unnecessary wait would have turned her into an old maid, she runs away with Ramchand, a yard-boy of low caste working in the household of Tara. Even Ramchand gains some financial independence in Port of Spain, social acceptability still eludes him. As one of Tulsi women comments on his brashness when he comes to see ailing Mr. Biswas: "However much you wash a pig", Chinta said, "you can't turn it into a cow" (314).

Bhandat, another relative of Mr. Biswas, is yet another character who has lost his identity in the alien land. When in charge of the rum shop of Mr. Ajodha, he used to abuse and beat Mr. Biswas. But when he becomes old and lives with his Chinese mistress in a slum of the city, he has to beg Mr. Biswas for enlisting him as a deserving destitute. Although Mr. Biswas is moved by the squalor in which Bhandat resides, he is unable to recommend his name as he is his relative. There are, then, unnamed people of Indian origin, mostly farmers and workers, gathering every evening in the open space before Tulsi to share their grief. Hovering between their present predicament and their yearning to return to India, but being checked by the apprehension of the unknown, these rootless people are the most marginal characters in the novel. In fact, Mr. Naipaul has to struggle himself in life to rise above his marginal social status. Most of Naipaul's writings issue from a desire to understand his position in the world. The unique combination of circumstances which related him to three societies, and yet left him with a deep sense of homelessness, undeniably plays a pre-dominant part in shaping his sensibility and determining his writing career. The story of Mr. Biswas's career from being a fatherless, homeless child of six to becoming a father of four, established in a house of his own at the time of his death, is a story not only of Trinidadian born Indian, Mohun Biswas but also the social history of the Indian community in Trinidad and by extension in the West Indies.

Slavery, colonialism and war, have contributed to make this century and the last a century of the homeless. The more endemic the experience of deracination, the more magical the word 'home' has become. It becomes a symbol of all that has been lost, of ancient certainties, of faith, of security. In the present century, the exile for being a solitary figure has become the type of modern man. It is this world wide crisis that Naipaul addresses to. He has no comforting message, only the bleak knowledge that in today's rapidly changing world the yearning for home can never be more than an unfulfilled ache, but at least Mr. Biswas towards the end of his life dies in possession if only a caricature of his dream of responsibility and freedom, a house shamelessly and cunningly jerry-built foisted on him by deception, one remains deeply aware of the heroism and importance of his struggle and what it represents. Apart from giving a sense of security, the house also helps one to get rooted in a place and to assume an identity.

While writing the novel, the empirical self (i.e., biographical self) goes extinct and the implied self (i.e. the point of view embodied in the work) emerges. Naipaul's father's story becomes the story of any post-colonial man displaced from his origin by chance or choice. The 'unhoused' condition creates a kind of uncertainty among the people of contemporary diaspora and hence, there is a need for overcoming this uncertainty by owning 'a house'. In spite of autobiographical design of the novel, it succeeds in transcending that individual self by universalizing the issue of 'alienation' and 'rootlessness' in the postcolonial world. "The nuclear unit of a bourgeois ideology is materialized as a house that is remembered as a home; the reach of empire rests in the adoption of its colony into its post-imperial fold" (Mustafa 77). Mr. Biswas does not revolt against established customs because of social or political beliefs. His revolt is against any value system which denies the intrinsic importance of man, denies freedom and dignity. Mr. Biswas's heroic struggle to attain dignity and fulfill his aspirations,

as reflected in his desire to own a house, becomes an allegory of the attempt to emancipate oneself from colonial, determinist dependence. To him a house is not simply where one lives; it is one's identity-national, cultural and spiritual.

#### WORKS CITED

1. Iyer, N. Sharda. *Musings on Indian Writing in English (Fiction)*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2003. Print.
2. Jha, P., and T. Ravichandran. "Local Habitation and a Name: The Strange Case of Naipaul's Biswas". *V.S. Naipaul: Critical Essays*. Vol.1 Ed. Mohit K. Ray. New Delhi: Atlantic, 2002. Print.
3. Keith, Gorebian. "V. S. Naipaul – Negative Sense of Place." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 10:1. Aug. 1975. Print.
4. Mustafa, Fawzia. *V.S. Naipaul*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Print.
5. Naipaul, V. S. *A House For Mr. Biswas*. London: Picador, 1967. Print.
6. Rohlehr, Gordon. "Character and Rebellion in *A House For Mr. Biswas*." *The Critical Perspective on V.S. Naipaul*. Ed. Robert D. Hamner. London: Benn, 1975. Print.
7. Vishwanathan, Gauri. *Marks of Conquest: Literary Study and the British Rule in India*. London: Faber & Faber, 1989. Print.
8. Walsh, William. *V.S. Naipaul*. New York: Harper & Row, 1973. Print.

# Publish Research Article International Level Multidisciplinary Research Journal For All Subjects

Dear Sir/Mam,

We invite unpublished Research Paper, Summary of Research Project, Theses, Books and Books Review for publication, you will be pleased to know that our journals are

## Associated and Indexed, India

- ★ Directory Of Research Journal Indexing
- ★ International Scientific Journal Consortium Scientific
- ★ OPEN J-GATE

## Associated and Indexed, USA

- DOAJ
- EBSCO
- Crossref DOI
- Index Copernicus
- Publication Index
- Academic Journal Database
- Contemporary Research Index
- Academic Paper Database
- Digital Journals Database
- Current Index to Scholarly Journals
- Elite Scientific Journal Archive
- Directory Of Academic Resources
- Scholar Journal Index
- Recent Science Index
- Scientific Resources Database

Review Of Research Journal  
258/34 Raviwar Peth Solapur-413005, Maharashtra  
Contact-9595359435  
E-Mail-ayisrj@yahoo.in/ayisrj2011@gmail.com  
Website : [www.ror.isrj.org](http://www.ror.isrj.org)