

**HOUSE: A SYMBOL OF PERSONAL IDENTITY IN V. S. NAIPAUL'S  
*A HOUSE FOR MR BISWAS***

*U. Aishwarya, Research Scholar, Alagappa University*

*Dr. SP. M. Kanimozhi, Assistant Professor of English.*

***Abstract:***

*This article analyses the efforts of a Man whose lifetime ambition is to own a house. Mr Biswas is an ordinary man, who reflects the plight of the rootless individuals who are eager to find their own identity in a society that, undergoes a lot of socio-political changes. After the death of Raghu, father of Mr Biswas, their family gets scattered. Mr Biswas was made to live in different house, which gives him the sense of alienation. The constant sense of isolation and non-belongingness felt by Mr Biswas portrays the dilemma felt by most of the migrants, this sense of isolation and non-belongingness pushes Mr Biswas to get into a life long struggle of getting a house of his own, which he thinks as his personal identity.*

***Keywords:*** *Isolation, house, personal identity.*

Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul, commonly known as V.S. Naipaul, is one of the controversial, yet most celebrated novelist, born in Chaguanas, Trinidad, West Indies on August 17, 1932. Naipaul is third generation West Indian of Indian descend. His forefather went to Trinidad from India as an indentured labourer. His father Seepersad worked as a reporter of the Trinidad Guardian, a popular daily. Naipaul is the eldest son of the family. His younger brother Shiva Naipaul is also a well known Caribbean writer. He started his career as a novelist with the publication of his novel *The Mystic Masseur* in 1957. He has won every major literary awards including The Booker Prize in 1971, Trinity Cross Trinidad and Tobago's highest national honour in 1989, and he received a Knighthood in Britain in 1990 and The Nobel Prize in 2001. Naipaul spent his childhood in Chaugunas. At the age of 18, he received scholarship from Trinidad government, to study English at Oxford. Naipaul has three identities, a Trinidad Indian, a West Indian in London and a Westerner in India. Thus most of his characters have identity crisis. All his protagonists remain in a constant search of their own identity in a chaotic world.

Mr Biswas was born in his grandmother Bisoondaye's house at a midnight. His birth was considered inauspicious and a pundit predicted that he will bring unluck to his parents, especially to his father with unlucky sneeze. The pundit warned Bisoondaye to keep him away from ponds and rivers and also instructed that his father must see him only after twenty one days. Later Mr Biwas was sent to his paternal house at Parrot Trace. One day, Mr Biswas took the calf of their neighbour to a stream for grazing and he was missing along with the calf. Raghu, his father, although a great swimmer gets drowned in the stream, while searching Biswas. After the death of his father, the family got scattered. He became homeless and fatherless at a very young age, and naturally he struggled to gain an identity of his own all through his life. He left Parrot Trace with his mother, and took shelter in the back trace of his aunt Tara's house. Right from his birth Mr Biswas was considered as an unimportant and an unlucky man, by his relatives. And staying in different houses made him feel alienated, and this gives him an unquenchable desire to own a house, as his personal identity.

He started studying at Canadian Mission School in Pagotes. And later he was sent to pundit Jairam's house to receive religious training to become a priest. One day Mr Biswas was caught by pundit Jairam for eating two bananas, and he made him to eat the entire banana bunch, and it permanently affected

the stomach of Mr Biswas. One night Mr Biswas relieved himself on a handkerchief and threw that away from the window. Pundit Jairam found that dirty kerchief near his holy Oleander tree. He became furious and sent Mr Biswas out of his house at once and cursed that he will never become a pundit.

After this incident Mr Biswas got a job in the rum shop of Bhandat. He could not work there for a long time. Bhandat cheated Tara with forged calculations, he distrusted Mr Biswas, he thought that he was a spy of Tara. Bhandat suspected Mr Biswas must have stolen a dollar, which was missing. He started beating Mr Biswas cruelly with his belt and sent him away from his home. This made Biswas think about getting a house of his own.

'I am going to get a job on my own. And I am going to get my own house too. I am finished with this.' He waved his aching arm about the mud walls and the low, sooty thatch.

He planned to work as a sign painter, assisting his old friend Alec. The profession of sign-painting helped him to avoid poverty, and gain an identity of his own, which his father and brothers could not get. He suffered from identity crisis because; he could never join his ancestral society of labourers, and he could not find a right place for him the modern world. He entered Hanuman House as a sign-painter. Mr Biswas was fascinated by the young attractive daughter Shama, of Mrs. Tulsi. Mr Biswas confessed his love through a letter to Shama, and was caught by Mrs. Tulsi. Mrs. Tulsi summoned Mr Biswas that evening. Now his fortune compelled him to marry Shama.

Mr Biswas felt trapped after getting married to Tulsi's daughter; he tried to get rid of Tulsi's clutch of overpowering. He was regarded as a troublemaker in the Hanuman house. Hanuman house was named after a Hindu god; this house was the symbol of old Hindu tradition, superstition and tyranny. He revolted against Mrs. Tulsi, he refused to work in Tulsi's estate. Instead of serving in Tulsi's house, he continued his work as sign painter in order to preserve his own identity. Mrs. Tulsi and Seth irritated him by reminding him constantly that he is a son of a indentured labour. This drifted him apart from Tulsi and Seth. He lived as an outsider in Hanuman house.

He then tried to settle independently, as a shopkeeper in Chase. He found the shop in a dilapidated condition. He strove with sincerity to gain his individual identity. Although the place was in a dilapidated state Mr Biswas was satisfied in Chase. Having a meal in his own house made him greatly satisfied.

She produced a meal from that kitchen in a yard. He could not look on it as simply food. For the first time a meal had been prepared in a house which was his own.

But he failed to run the food shop at The Chase and it created a loss in business. He had to wind up his business in The Chase, and leave the village after getting into dispute with Mungroo, a local. Then he came to Green Vale to work as a over seer in the Tulsi estate. But he neither had the experience in farming nor the ability of an over seer. He could not do well as an overseer in the Tulsi's estate. He then got an opportunity for the first time to build his own house at Green Vale, but he could not complete it. He seriously fell ill at Green Vale, and was forced to come back to Hanuman house from Green Vale. The house he left incomplete was burned by the labourers in the Green Vale.

Mr Biswas took shelter in his sister Dehuti's house in Port of Spain, after recovering from his illness. He started to search for his lively hood. His brother-in-law worked in an asylum at Port of Spain. Mr Biswas got a job of a reporter in the Sentinel and attained popularity for blending his popularity with reporting. As he got popular Mrs. Tulsi got close with him. She even offered her house for accommodation in Port of Spain. Mr Biswas lived with his wife and four children at Tulsi's House happily for a few years. Later Tulsi's family was moved from Arwacas to Shorthills. Shama suggested that they should go to Shorthills. During his stay in Shorthills, he saved a sum of money. And he again started building a house of his own. But he could not live there for a long time. Because the house got fire accidentally. Now he is back to Port of Spain to live in Mrs. Tulsi's house with her other two sons-in-law. Mr Biswas felt suffocated along with his children in the crowded Tulsi's house. Mr Biswas involved in a bitter quarrel with Mrs. Tulsi's son Owad, a Doctor in England.

After this fight, he quit Tulsi's house, and hurriedly purchased a clumsily built house of a solicitor's clerk at Sikkim Street. His lifelong desire to live in own house was fulfilled but that does not lasted for a long time. He suffered from severe heart attack twice, and was dismissed from Sentinel considering his health. Only his daughter Savi and his son Anand, gave him some psychological relief and joy by winning scholarship and going abroad for study. Mr Biswas, died at the age of forty- six in his own house as a journalist.

Mr Biswas had always lived a dual life, he could not adapt himself, with the life he was living and it was not easy for him, to run away from the life that he was leading. He was always dreaming for a prosperous future. He wanted to change his identity as a labourer's son and he changed his occupation. He was able to secure his place as a journalist in the society. This gave him a professional identity. Right from the beginning of the novel, households a great image in the novel. The identity he lost in his childhood after losing his father in regained by buying a clumsily built house at the end phase of his life. The protagonist depicts the sufferings and struggle for identity and security in a postcolonial society.

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