



# Class Struggle against Society : A Study of V.S. Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas

Tamanna, Assistant Professor , Jat College, Rohtak

V.S. Naipaul's 'A House for Mr. Biswas is a beautiful work which deals with the theme of isolation, frustration, belongingness and negation in a colonized society: a society that twins cruel and callous to the aspiration of the protagonist, Mr. Biswas Naipaul has tried his best to project in his novels a sustaining course of all those who are rootless or homeless. Keith Garebian rightly holds the view "Naipaul explores landscapes in order to present 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."

The main protagonist, Mr. Biswas struggles hard in search of identity for himself in a malignant, dogmatic society of conservative ideals and ideologies. He wants to liberate himself from the cruel

ISSN : 2348-5612 © URR



narrow ideas and (himself from) of so called Brahmin socio-cultural system and tries to establish his own identity in the society.

The novel depicts a class struggle for personality against a society that denies it. Mr. Biswas is a man of his own principles who prefers freedom to servility and slavery and feels himself trapped. As a self-respecting and independent minded man, he immediately rebels against the system which insisted the observance of rules and Tulsi house hold code of conduct. Hanuman House represents communal living and a hierarchy where Mrs. Tulsi and Seth were the over lords and the others including the sons-in-law were mere cog in the wheel of the organization. They have no status, no rights and no extra benefits as partners in



the family business. Mr. Biswas the product of modern age felt rebellious and for the first time he was moving against autocratic rule. He becomes conscious of his individuality and strives for its recognition by others. The Tulsī code of conduct could not tolerate defiant talks of Mr. Biswas and he was expelled from Hanuman House. He was sent to the chase to take charge of Tulsī food shop there and work independently. But he feels dissatisfied with the accommodation provided to him and comes back to Hanuman House. Mr. Biswas in Hanuman House becomes acutely conscious of the need to have a house to realise himself.

Mr. Biswas was sent to Green vale as an overseer but here too he is not satisfied with his work. During Christmas days he presents doll's house to his daughter Savi. This present shows his inner desire to have a house of his own. The house also suggest the sense of his freedom and security full of love and sympathy. So he starts making building a house there. But there he feels obsessed with vague fears about his future and by strange questioning. There is a breakdown of his nervous system and he is taken to Hanuman House to be nursed. His house is later burnt by labourers who were hostile to him and thus he achieves nothing

so far inspite of his self assertion and independently working. Mr. Biswas fails wherever he is sent and the frustration caused by it creates a streak of morbidity in him. He often curses his fate and the hostile circumstances.

‘A house for Mr. Biswas’ portrays the colonial situation in Trinidad around the time of world war II. The colonial set-up has been analyzed quite comprehensively. Mr. Biswas, the protagonist has been set against the conventional and customary conservative. Hindu ideas, traditions and ideology. He is completely isolated in a crowd and is the lone fighter against the powerful conservative system filled with rotten myths, customs and rituals. The Hindu community has been instrumental for inciting the spirit of rebellion in Mr. Biswas, the man who stands alone against these dominant forces of dogmatism and mechanical habits. So, he wants to liberate himself from this cruel society. Ian Baruma writes :

“Naipaul's heroes do not always succeed in stripping rituals of their magic, their quest for freedom is sometimes pathetic, confused, even



hopeless but at least they put up a fight.”

The Sikkim street house despite its flaws, is an accomplishment. The ending is subdued but Mr. Biswas dies after attaining his life’s desire at the age of forty six. The tall square house on Sikkim Street is the synonym for Mr. Biswas’s success. The house comments the family bond and then he dies, secure in the thought that the family is no more without shelter. “A House for Mr. Biswas” stands out as an amazing act of redemption.

#### References :

Naipaul, V.S. *A House for Mr. Biswas*.  
1961. New Delhi : PPicador, 2003.  
Print.

Buruna, Ian. “Signs of life.” New York  
Review of Books. M Feb 1991.  
*Contemporary Literary Criticism*.  
Ed. Deborah H. Schmit. Gale  
Cengage, 1998. 26 Oct. 2011.