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Counternarrative as Emergence: V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*

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Abstract

Narratives are borne out of psycho-social axis of writer's territories of experiences and social praxis. In anthropological terms a narrative summarizes a people, a culture at convenience in its social patterning which experiences a semiotic disruption at the encounter with a counternarrative which establishes a heterogeneity of structuring. The logocentric and linearity defined discourse suddenly enters into the province of dialectics whereby the insider and the outsider dichotomy plays a key role in the development of dialogue. Diaspora as a subject

initiation is one such disruption which puts into crisis the order of the center from the margins. Hence when the margins push to resist the monocracy of the center they invite metaphysics of existentialism into play. V.S. Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas foregrounds the same center/ margin and narrative/ counternarrative dialectic whereby the institutionalized resistance to the foreign is vehicled by the house where Mohun is colonized and the construction of his own house is the tenor of autonomy and emergence.

Keywords: Diaspora, counternarrative, dialectics, identity, existential, autonomy.

The rubrics of nation and nation-states are situated with a new orientation and the global space undergoes a new shift under the transnational movements which reconfigure the world demography. The cultural dilemmas and displacements of the uprooted individuals is a forceful area of human psychology study and the present paper takes into account some of the first generation expatriates who suddenly got exposed to such a situation. Edward Said in his influential work *Culture and Imperialism (1994)* has tackled the issues of marginalisation and the non-acceptance of the migrant or the hybrid subjectivities. Here he talks about all kinds of 'crossing overs' or movements from one geographical location to other. This movement is not geographical alone and is imaginary too as it leads to new subjectivities and new definition of identity. While this new experience of the immigrant is painful and fraught with the agonizing narratives of his homeland and history, it is also resisted by the dominant discourse of colonial centre that

marginalizes every contamination and reconfiguration which is identified in the politics of every migration and diasporic entity. Such an outlook, says Said, prevents the "counternarratives" from emerging. These "counternarratives" are the problematic of the hybridisation or the movement of one identity to other which is rejected in the game of the colonial and the coloniser. Said has laid effectual prominence on the notion of centre as something which characterises the power and a sense of belonging. Elaborating the relationship of the imposing centre and its affective narratives he comments on the American context:

> The executive presence is central in American culture today, the president, the television, commentators, the corporate official, celebrity. Centrality is identity, what is powerful, important and ours. . . . And centrality gives ride to semi-official narratives that authorize and provoke certain sequences of cause and effect, which at the same time prevent counternarratives from emerging. (Said 393)

Thus, Said's "conternarratives" inevitably point at the repressed culture of every national discourse which is in the eye of storm of the centre or the dominant seat of power. Gurbhagat Singh adds to Said's preoccupation with the conception of centre, "Said's "counternarratives" are those of repressed cultures that are either subsumed by the meta-centre or threatened to subsuming." (Singh 22) To sum up, Centre, as per Said procures a powerful sense of "identity" in those who are in power.

These movements and migrations have given birth to and shaped the outlook of scores of writers who bear the expatriate pedigree and embody the anguish and the

dislocation woes which are enmeshed in every immigrant sensibility. The loss of roots and centre and the fear of erosion of the original culture or the cultural baggage coupled with the daunting task/challenge of re-establishment shapes the ideology of the expatriate writing which finds its best flowering in the person of V. S. Naipaul, the Nobel Laureate fictionist of the postcolonial situation.

Vidiadhar Suraj Prasad Naipaul is a representative of the Indian diasporic community in the Caribbean island of Trinidad. All his literary works present his immigrant sensibility and the clash of various cultures which hamper a personality's full growth. His inheritance and history both include and exclude him from the colonial English milieu which is so much ensconced in any writer in English. Timothy Weiss opines: "The whiff of Jasmine and the separation between word and flower focus imagistically upon the dislocations within the experience of identity of Vidiadhar Suraj Prasad Naipaul, colonial Trinidadian of Asian origin writing about the Caribbean and the West Indies for metropolitan English readers" (Weiss 23).

Naipaul's life and status has been that of an uprooted individual and thus, he has been writing about that experience passionately in his writing apostrophising his rootlessness and quest for identity. Naipaul relies upon the racial and the ancestral history of his own for his fictional paradigm. His ancestors, the earliest settlers in Trinidad, shaped and heralded the world of Naipaul characterised by rootlessness and darkness, redolent of Conrad. Drawing a parallel with Tony Morrison in this particular aspect, i.e. inking the racial memories, writes Subhas Sarkar in this connection:

> Here, once again, is the prevalence of the old fable or the story element, that thrives on racial memory and works subtly as a subterranean motif-force in the shaping of individuals encountering the conflict and confusion of cultures in the wake of the colonial developments in different societies, both old and new. It is interesting to note that both Tony Morrison and V.S. Naipaul have tried to trace the role of the racial memory in the chemistry of the human development against the backdrop of human history which often includes the story of neglect, subversion on even deprivation. If Toni Morrison harks back to the bruised Negro racial memory in her novels, V.S. Naipaul falls back on the racial memory of his ancestors who came from India as indented plantation labourers to Trinidad. (Sarkar 67)

Naipaul is the one, from whom centre has been distanced and like a true diasporic identity pursues the middle passage of lives, an 'in-between' life as suggested by Homi Bhabha in a bid to coincide the centre and the margin. His marginality, erupting from his exile, is his own peculiar position and a vantage point from where he can cast his eye upon the centre and the other worlds which he tries to commune with. The exile executes, what Bakhtin calls an 'exotopy' (Todorov 99) , a vision from the outside or the 'outsideness' in which one finds oneself from outside i.e. from the margins. His exotopy conveys the basic idea that one can know better about the centre through margin. Naipaul has himself remained on the margins and has commented upon the desire for the centre and the endeavours for the centre by the decentered individuals has been represented through the characters of his literary opus.

Counternarrative as Emergence: V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*

Naipaul and his literary oeuvre render a diasporic sensibility in its supreme authenticity. The cross-cultural creativity of Naipaul interrogates the rootlessness of the migrant subjectivity and the thrusts of the two cultures taking a toll upon the identity of the immigrant and heralding a life dogged with contradictions and fluctuations. An urge to forge an identity for themselves push an immigrant to strike a balance between his nativity and the alien world which responds unpredictably, sometimes to the dismay of the immigrant. He is, so to speak, marginalised. Naipaul, well aware of this marginalisation, weaves characters who are the fatalities of the cultural hybridity and dilemmas and move from pillar to post to substantiate their sense of being. His characters exhibit rootlessness trying to affirm their roots and become a part of the dominant discourse/ counter-narratives.

But the thing to be noted in Naipaul's fiction is the fact that he frequently stresses, the fruitlessness of such an exertion. All his novels bemoan the rootlessness of the earliest Indian immigrants to Trinidad and the powers and the politics of the colonial and post-colonial discourse taking a toll upon the socio-cultural relocation of the subjectivities. What it results in is, a disintegrating and culturally limping society and a flaccid existence, disharmonised by its landscape. The greatness of Naipaul lies in his acceptance of this reality. He admits candidly that he and his ilk in the Caribbean, are unaccompanied by a national identity or a cultural fabric in continuity. They are, so to speak, *nation-less.* Naipaul's trenchant observation in *The Loss of El Dorado* points out the breakdown of cultural continuum of the Indian communities in the islands of Trinidad, which recently unshackled itself from the colonial fetters: "A peasant-minded,

money-minded community spiritually static because cut off from its roots, its religion reduced to rites without philosophy, set in materialistic colonial society, a combination of historical accidents and national temperament has turned Trinidad Indian into a complete colonial, even more philistine than the white." (Naipaul, *The Loss of El Dorado* 89) the Thus, disintegration of personality from Indian and colonial and a self-invited loneliness is the way of life in Naipaulian phantasma.

The novel under scrutiny in this chapter is *A House for Mr. Biswas (1961)*, one of the first masterpieces from the prolific pen of Mr. Naipaul. The novel manifests itself as the microcosm of the immigrant life depicting the life long struggle of an individual to erect a home for himself in the ambience which pulls down every aspiration and hope of an outsider striving to stabilise himself. The uniqueness of the novel lies in presenting the dilemmas of a diasporic subject effected by the margin / centre dialectics not exactly between two cultures but within one ethnic group of diaspora where the dominant culture is represented by the diasporal subject assuming colonial postures 'which are complete colonial, even more philistine than the white'. Through the disavowed character of Mr. Biswas, Naipaul has tried to limn an immigrant's search for identity and home who gets rejected from everywhere. The chief character, Mr. Biswas, is born as an unlucky child who would spell doom for himself and his family. He is at the mercy of his 'colonial' benefactors – his in-laws, who treat him as an unwanted weed and exploit him to the hilt. Mr. Biswas wriggles to unshackle himself from the feudalistic family to own a house of his own. His longing for a piece of a land, a portion of the earth which could be called his own, lands him into much anguish but he doesn't die unheard. His movement from one place to another with a

heavy heart to forge a path for himself and his relentless efforts fructify and he dies the death of an owner of a house.

On a larger perspective, the story of a penurious Brahmin to put together a house for himself is the tale of an immigrant's dilemma and desire to emerge triumphant against the socio-cultural forces working against him. His desire for a home is an allusion to the search for centre by the marginalized outsider/immigrant gazing from the margin. It is an epic account of an exile's craving for an identity and fixity in the hostile milieu. Mohan Biswas becomes the mouthpiece of the alienational experiences of the exiles and their perpetual quest for an identification with mainstream. The opinion of S. P. Swain is pertinent in this regard:

> It is the tale of an exile's desire to strike roots and attain an authentic selfhood. Mr. Biswas' life is a perpetual struggle between desires and obligations, inner motivations and circumstantial necessities. Besides focusing on the personal life of the protagonist, the novelist also tells the social and ethnic history of a community, its acculturation to an alien society and acquisition of a social identity. (Swain 11)

Thus, the realm of the Tulsi family, Mohun's in-laws, comes out as the projection of the hostile dominant culture of the place where the immigrant takes refuge and bows reluctantly before the coloniser politics. The Tulsi clan though, an émigré family, display a callousness and their attempts at keeping Mohun at the margins is a colonial trait under the impact of colonial circumstances in the Caribbean. Thus, *A House for Mr.*

Biswas is a delineation of the dilemmas of an identity which requires the socio-cultural approval and is the saga of an outsider's strenuous exertion to impose a fix stable identity in the centre-margin imbroglio.

Mr. Biswas' catastrophic journey commences from the day one-his birth when he is born with six fingers and born in a wrong way to pauper parents. His parents are the descendents of the Indian diasporic community who had set their foot in the Caribbean land as indentured labour years ago. This is in keeping with Naipaul's own status as a descendent of an Indian family who had migrated in Trinidad as labourers working in plantations and estates in 1880s. Thus, the pull of two culture – the Indian and the colonial British rule creates a deracinated individual whose anxieties, Naipaul has tried to limn in the person of Mr. Biswas, an anonymous and dispossessed individual, bordering on an immigrant identity. He is in the thick of the men, whose excruciations and ill-fate envelope them from their birth and who "carry about them the mark, in their attitudes, sensibilities and convictions, of the slave, the unnecessary man." (Walsh 71) His name Mohun, which means the one who attracts and is the beloved, is ironical of his situation. As against his name (the name given to Lord Krishna) he is branded a lecher and the one who would devour his parents one day through the mid-wife. The beginning of Mr. Biswas' journey in the world starts on an ominous note bordering on the dissipations and scourges waiting an immigrant trying to sift in another world and on a terrain with various cross-cultural encounters and narratives.

As a growing boy, Mr. Biswas suffers from various malnutrition consequences which dampen his growth- a shallow chest, thin limbs, and a body full of scars of sores and

eczema. His unquixotic portrayal by the novelist and referring him as just 'Mr. Biswas', even when he is lad, is a ploy to accentuate Mr. Biswas' dispossessed identity and his unknown status as a 'nowhere man'. In the later course of the novel he is witnessed confiding and complaining to his wife and confessing to his son Anand about his vile existence: "That is the whole blasted trouble,'….I don't look like anything at all. Shopkeeper, lawyer, doctor, labourer, overseer-I don't look like any one of them."(Naipaul 159) Further in similar vein, he tells his son that he is not his actual or natural father, only God is. When a bewildered Anand entreats an amplification, Mr. Biswas' reply is rife with his distraught mindset: "I am just somebody. Nobody at all. I am just a man you know" (279). His feeble physicality and his loathsome existence is in clear analogy with the measly status of the colonised subject, trampled by the colonial superstructure. It also foreshadows the potentially unwelcomed and loathed existence of the colonised subjects. The malnutrition of Mohan Biswas is symbolic of the cultural debility and deficiencies which plague the crumbling Indian diasporic range in Trinidad. His physical deformity is the beaten down state of the Indian diaspora marauded not only by the white Eurocentric colonial forces but also the internal colonial politics parleyed within the community. It also takes the shape of the Marxist struggle between the two classes, the privileged and the underprivileged, in the same cultural thread.

Worth elaborating point here is the impact of the colonial society of Trinidad over its subjects, especially the immigrants. The colonial ideology is always engaged in the eroding of national and ethnic histories of the colonial people, which is a

significant tenet in the theory of the postcolonial. It is evident in the type of education which Mohun acquires in the school. He, being an out and out Brahmin, is made to memorise Lord's Prayer in Hindi from books which bear the name as fundamentally English as 'George V Hindi Reader' and English poems from the 'Royal Reader'. The professed aim of such an educational system, as perceived by Naipaul, is to make the children feel ashamed of their ethos and their history which must be wiped out in the dominant negotiations of the centre and Said's postulation of *narratives* and *counter-narratives*, where the *counter-narratives* are prevented from emerging or flourishing. Ralph Singh in *The Mimic Man*, too recounts this systemised process of erosion when he sits back and writes his experiences in isolation. In fact, they (he and his other Trinidadian friends) were forced to conjure their own private abodes and ivory towers where lay their own life and so to deny "the landscape and the people we could see out of open doors and windows." He expresses further : "Anything that touched on everyday life excited laughter when it was mentioned in a classroom: the name of street, the name of street-corner foods. The laughter denied our knowledge of these things to which after the hours of school we were to return." (Naipaul, *The Mimic Man* 95) All these are the colonial tactics to gradually expunge the national and the ethnical histories of the colonial subjectivities. Centre or the meta-centre signifies power which browbeats the *counter-narrative* of subsuming or wearing down.

His being sacked from the jobs which becomes a permanent trait of his life highlights his rootlessness, instability and fluidity of identity. The very first job he gets in his early childhood is of taking his neighbourer's calf for grazing. But Mr. Biswas loses the calf and out of fear hides himself. His father, in the search of his son, loses

his life and the forewarning starts showing its veracity. After the dud at Pundit's home, Mr. Biswas is sent at wine shop owned by his aunt Tara's husband Ajodha. Here he is constantly made the butt of ignominies and violence by Bhandat, the employee of Ajodha - a lecher and an unscrupulous fellow. Finally, Mr. Biswas is coerced to relinquish the job and is thrown at the mercy of aunt Tara. Thus, the atmosphere in which Mr. Biswas has to work is not only insulting and uncongenial, but appalling too. This is inadvertently symbolic of the situations and the conditions of an immigrant who has to put his shoulder to the wheel to eke out living and respect in the unresponsive world. Meenakhi Mukherjee rightly observes that the novel is all about "unaccommodated man's repeated attempts to find a stable location in a ramshackle and random world." (Mukherjee, web)

Every immigrant or an uprooted individual shifts to another habitat in an anticipation of making big in life i.e. to progress and solidify himself in the dominant culture and life-stream. Almost all the migrations are engendered by the lure of a better opening in the well-to-do nation to prevaricate the wretchedness of the homeland and the desolate conditions therein. The migration of the Indian impecunious fraternity to the Caribbean in abundance as indentured toilers in hope of better livelihood and conditions was one such migration and which altered the face of the country for good. The mass migration resulted in various fractured diasporas lending a new socio-cultural identity to the islands. However, the dreams were not fully realised and the Caribbean turned out to be a big mirage which had earlier enthralled them. The shattering of the cherished dreams made the life even more unbearable and the cultural shocks further

worsened the situation. The lineage of this indentured labourers faced the crisis which are shown to prevail upon Mr. Biswas in the novel. His ancestral homelessness and destituteness in the disintegrating and the disorganized fabric of the Trinidadian islands procures the same anxiety and vacuum as experienced by its creator itself.

Distraught at his attempts to fashion an identity for himself, Mr. Biswas takes up the job of a sign-painter and accidentally becomes a part of the Tulsi clan getting involved in a fling with their daughter Shama and gets married. In getting Mr. Biswas ensnared for life the subtle motive of the novelist is quite clear. Here he facilitates the movement of the uprooted individual into the place which is biding its time to victimize somebody under the facade of aggrandizement and material prosperity. The migrant walks into the trap only in the hope of a better place where he would have all the solace and peace which he had always desired. Little does he know that the sham and flashy portico of the alien land knows nothing but exploitation and the erasing of the identity of the person who crosses the threshold of the new world. Mr. Biswas, thus, unwittingly takes the Hanuman House for the congenial habitat which he had always looked for. It actually turns out to be a never ending nightmare.

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 doled out to them by the central authority: "In return they were given food, 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 the unnecessary man, Mohun becomes an alien insider in the family and its establishment. The Tulsi Fortress, Hanuman House, symbolizes the traditional and the conventional Hindi 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 tumbledown timber-and-corrugated-iron building in the High streets at Arwacas, Hanuman house stood like an alien fortress. The concrete looked as thick they were, and when the narrow doors of the Tulsi Store on the ground floor were closed the House became bulky, impregnable and blank. The sidewalls were windowless and on the upper two floors the windows were mere slits in the façade. The balustrade which hedged the flat roof was crowned with a concrete statue of the benevolent monkey God Hanuman. From the ground the white washed – features could scarcely be distinguished and were , if anything, slightly sinister, for dust had settled on projections and the effect was that of face lit up from below.(80-81)

The unromantic picture etched in Mr Biswas' mind is symptomatic of the migrant's realisation of the bitter truth about the pitfalls of such a life. All the hopes and aspirations seem to dash down.

Naipaul as a writer has always been an enigma as to what are his subtleties while commenting upon India and the Indian diaspora at large. Making Hanuman House a metaphor for the dominant discourse Naipaul has kicked the dust as he seems to question the Hindu intimidation as exemplified in the Hanuman House with his denunciation of the colonial superstructure which is its yet another dimension. The readers keep guessing as to what are Naipaul's motives – whether to define and categorise Hinduism or he is exploiting the native evils to denounce the alien. At any rate, the plight of Mohun Biswas within the confines of the Hanuman House is something which the crumbling Indian society in the Caribbean looks like.

Mr Biswas comes to realise the futility of his existence and is exasperated at such an existence. The feeling of got swindled refuses to get exorcised from his heart. Worse was the attitude of the occupants of the Hanuman House towards him. All the members of the Tulsi family bank upon Mrs. Tulsi and Seth, the favourite and eldest son-in-law of Tulsi, for their subsistence. All are boot-licking toadies who can't imagine their existence in the outside world without being addressed as Tulsis. But, ironically, their existence inside the Hanuman House had also been 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 is imperialism and colonialism which Naipaul has been dealing with in his one after another literary produce. Here he takes an opportunity to comment upon the

policy of the colonial strategists, symbolised by the Tulsis, to subdue their subjects. Gauri Vishwanathan 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." (Vishwanathan 46) 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 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." (107) He tries to assert his independence and is beaten for his protesting against the rule.

Mr. Biswas here becomes the microcosm of the writer Naipaul. Rejected and dejected, he is a refugee at the mercy of an indifferent, cold world which has marginalized his existence as against the ruling centre. Naipaul himself had been a person of margin by inheritance and choice, a man at the peripheral. He and his ancestry had moved from one place to another under the colonial subjugation and seated itself in the East Indian black society. Naipaul himself kept travelling around the world even in the colonial centre of England but has always felt himself a 'refugee' and 'peripheral'. In an interview with Ian Hamilton, Naipaul remarks: "London is my metropolitan centre; it is my commercial centre; and yet I know that it is a kind of limbo and that I am a refugee in the sense that I am always peripheral." (Hamilton,

web) Thus, despite London being a high seat of modernity, pace and pursuits of excellency which everybody pines for, it doesn't give Naipaul solace owing to his disconsolate demeanour and a constant feeling as an outsider. Mr. Biswas moves into the Tulsi clan for comfort and in a hope of love and affection which he could not receive from his mother but is terribly disillusioned at the apathy of the residents of the Hanuman House. He desires to have an identity and name of his own, a sense of dignity. But all seems to get obliterated in the world of Tulsis. His situation as a caged bird gets consolidated gradually and the longing for his own house starts becoming conspicuous with every passing day.

Despite his best efforts Mr. Biswas fails to strike a rapport with the ambience which had been asphyxiating him since the day he set his foot in. He wished to be clad in the Tulsi attire but, "he could not imagine the Tulsi anywhere else except at Arwacas. Separate from their house, and lands, they would be separate from the labourers, tenants and friends who respected them for their piety and the memory of Pundit Tulsi…"(390) The Tulsis send him to the place called the Chase to run a grocery shop which Mr. Biswas sees an opportunity to unfetter himself from the smothering of the large family but here too his exertion goes awry. The shop is doomed due to bad debts and he is forced by Seth to immolate it and claim insurance. Despite the debacle he has the indomitable wish "that some nobler purpose awaited him, even in this limited society" (182).

Mr. Biswas' next misadventure is at Green Vale, a Tulsi Estate, where he is sent as a debt collector as well as driver at a paltry salary of twenty-five dollars per month. The conditions there are dingy and he turns even more restive to own a house of his

own away from the squalor of the Hanuman House and diabolic Tulsis. 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 present novel, the colonial power embodied in the Tulsis debar him to feel a part of the centre. Yashoda Bhat too interprets the metaphor of the 'house':

> The symbolism of the house is worked out artistically. The house stands for a rootless man's longing for a home. The expatriate Hindu's love for a home is personified in Biswas' longing for home; it is also the Third World rootlessness in general longing for home and also a universal longing for an identity and a home of one's own. The home also stands for one's identity for which every rootless person strives. (Bhat 58)

In case of Mr. Biswas, even "Green Vale", which could have symbolised a new opening turns out to be thwarted dream. His attempts to procure his own house also get beaten when his ramshackle house gets destroyed by the torrential rains and he has to return to the Hanuman House.

Mr. Biswas' anguished soul starts writhing under the inhuman Tulsidom when his gift for his daughter bought through his skimpy earnings is seen with a green eye by every child and more disgustingly, by the elders in the house. It was beautiful Doll's House which is thrown out by Shama only because it had generated an acrimony in

the house. The event poisons Mr. Biswas' heart and decides to leave Arwacas pronto and reaches Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad. There he goes to stay with his excommunicated sister and her husband Ramchand. He takes up a job in the newspaper *Sentinel* as a journalist to satisfy his urge for creativity. Thus, his journey towards self-discovery begins once again.

Naipaul's artistry makes the Doll's House episode a metaphor of the frustrated attempts of the immigrant to assert himself in the antagonistic surroundings which want an immigrant subject to be subjugated. His Doll's House for his elder daughter Savi, is symbol of his long buried aspiration of owning and providing a house to his children. He can't do it but mimics an owning of a house and even that is pulled down. In this way, two of his houses or say, two of his rebellions and assertions are crushed and pounded with a heavy hand. But every fruitless effect steels Mr. Biswas further and he endeavours again with double resilience and vengeance. He loses his consciousness and acts as a demented man after the Green Vale disaster, his house being swept away by the torrential rain, but he doesn't give up. Robert Hamner points out in this connection: "After Green Vale, all of the evasive reactions, heretoafter signs of his inadequacy and weakness, undergo a marked change. He continues to rage and throw impotent temper tantrums, but upon his recovery at Hanuman House he has gained invaluable confidence in the resilience of his spirit**"** (Hamner 16).

In the city of Port of Spain, he envisions a new beginning and a new world waiting for him to be explored which would facilitate his desire for a house of his own. Not only the colonial superstructure plays havoc with the colonised Biswas but it also joins forces with the nature and chance to frustrate him. Thus, the quest for home

acquires Thomas Hardian tragic proportions whereby role of fate and chance decide man's destiny. The indifference of nature towards the uprooted individual is something which can't be overlooked and may wreak havoc anytime.

It was decided that Shama and children would accompany Mr. Biswas who has to live in the town house of Mrs. Tulsi paying her a rent of eight dollars. Besides, Shama would collect rent from other tenants also. This small liberty to live on his own and away from the colonial structure of the Hanuman House gives him a long yearned relief from the restlessness and the "experience of existential suffocation." (Kamra 85) This respite and reprieve from the tyranny plays wonder for his creativity and he marches ahead in his professional sphere churning out quality articles and ideas. He becomes a journalist of repute and is promoted by Sentinel to the rank of an investigator of the destitutes and the downtrodden, which is steeped in irony considering his own situation as a destitute.

But the decision of the Tulsis to move into the house displeases Mr. Biswas again. Mrs. Tulsi, along with her daughters and their children move into the house giving Mr. Biswas a déjà vu. He is again seen as 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 Tulsis and in his own fantastic land where there is a patch of land which he could call his own. He is like one of the "romancers" of *Miguel Street(1959)* who transcend the boundaries of reality (Naipaul, *Miguel Street* 34) and also Ralph Singh

in *The Mimic Man* who can only mimic his personal freedom and space though he is gripped with restlessness. By analyzing and interpreting his own experiences he intends to find the long desired centre and order amid the prevalent chaos and anarchy. The uncertainty of the future dogs the uprooted individual and the best he can do is mimicry. He analysis the society as a whole rather than the disintegrated society of the West Indies,

> It was my hope to give expression to the rootlessness, the deep disorder, which the great explorations, the overthrow in three continents of established social organizations, the unnatural bringing together of peoples…..But this work will not now be written by me; I am too much a victim of that restlessness which was to have been my subject. And it must also be confessed that in the dream of writing I was attracted less by the act and the labour than by the calm and the order which the act would have implied. (Naipual, *The Mimic Man* 32)

The novel is a sort of transition - transition from the innocence to experience of Ralph Singh, from the disillusionment with the order and stability to a mental posture where he can sit back and reflect upon the bygone occurrences. Perhaps Mr. Biswas would be writing such a memoir later in his life which would be bereft of the colonial courses of action employed by the Tulsis to ensnare Mr. Biswas. Thus, Ralph Singh, who has came out of the bedlam and the tumult of his earlier existence, writes his own story to voice the wrecking loneliness and the browbeating denigration of the ousted individual. "The writing of his story, becomes the very means to endure the terror, shipwreck, abandonment and loneliness of his situation." (Rao 126) Mr. Biswas too, longs for a

segment of earth which he could call his own and where, like Ralph Singh, he could write his own script.

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 fortune 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 Tulsis, along with the entire Tulsi clan. History repeats itself and Mr. Biswas feels ensnared again. To avenge himself upon the Tulsis, 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 a stone's throw from the Shorthills and constructs a house there. He moves in there with his unimpressed family especially Shama who is most comfortable among the Tulsis.

> The new house imprisoned them in silence and bush. They had no pleasures, no cinema shows, no walks, no games even, for the land around the house still smelled of snakes. The nights seemed longer and blacker. The girls stayed close to Shama, as though frightened to be by themselves; and in her shanty kitchen Shama sang sad Hindi songs. (424)

Despite such a mournful number by Shama, Mr. Naipaul is exultant. However, like his earlier euphorias this one too is short-lived and the house gets charred by a ravaging fire along with Mr. Biswas' hopes and ambitions. But an inveterate optimist, Mr. Biswas takes it lightly and gets braced up for the next challenge.

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 doesn't bother much and as an ingrained optimistic 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 an identity. This identity, always eluding, finally dawns upon him after numerous struggles and the conscious realisation of his agonizing racial 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…"(12). But Mr. Biswas' 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. "(584) 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 and again by the wonder of being in his own house, the audacity of it; to walk in through his own front gate, to bar entry to whoever he wished, to close his doors and windows every night, to hear no noises except those of his family, to wander freely from room to room and about his yard, 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. (8)

Nothing would have ached more than to die without having claimed to die on someone else's portion of earth.

> How terrible it would have been, at this time, to be without it (house): to have died among the Tulsis, 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 the earth; to have lived and died as one had been born, unnecessary and unaccommodated. (13-14)

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 situations, which had never been conducive to Mr. Biswas and which had always stymied him, finally quench his thirst for the simulation of his own country. The country, here by connotes the place of retreat and possessive reverberations. Mr. Biswas, like his creator, doesn't transcend the geographical boundaries, but tries to fathom the diasporic reality of rootlessness and alienation within a space which is the microcosm of the colonial and postcolonial paradigm. The novel speaks of the yearnings and the anxieties, which beleaguer any migrant and which alter the premises of his earliest conceived notions of home 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.

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