



V.S.Naipaul's "A House for Mr.Biswas"

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Abstract

The study of V.S. Naipaul's "A House for Mr. Biswas " as a literature of exile by focusing on the main protagonist Mohun Biswas who lives in the state of exile. Most of Naipaul's works deals with the theme of exile. His works reflect on his state of mind and his famous novel 'A House for Mr. Biswas deals with the central theme of exile which reflects Naipaul's own state of alienation and self-exile. A House for Mr.Biswas is autobiographical in nature as it is inspired by the story of Naipaul's father. Naipaul tells about his own feelings of displacement and exile Mr.Biswas desperate struggle to acquire a house his own in novel is a symbolic of an individual's need to develop an authentic identity. It tells about Naipaul's artistic development.

Key words: Protagonist, exile, Quest, alienation

Introduction

A House for Mr.Biswas follows the life of Mr. Mohun Biswas, a protagonist inspired by Naipaul's father, as he struggles to find his freedom and house of his own. The son of a poor labourer in Trinidad, Mr. Biswas is forced to live as a guest in one crowded, inhospitable house after another. After his father dies, his family moves in with his mother's sister, Tara, and he is humiliated and beaten by Tara's brother-in-law Bhandat. Mr. Biswas Vows, "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"(P.64). He goes to work on a sign – painter for the Tulsi family and there he is begins a flirtation with Shama. After his love letter is discovered by Mrs. Tulsi, Mr. Biswas is bullied into marrying Shama, thus beginning a long and unhappy marriage that produces four children, a Constant struggle for money and countless bitter Quarrels. After a brief and failed attempt to run a dry goods store in the chase, Mr.Biswas and his family return to live with the Tulsi family, a pattern that recurs



throughout the novel. It is in part of sapin that Mr. Biswas comes closest to happiness, working as a Journalist for the tabloid sentinel, writing outlandish stories and achieving a degree of local fame. Here, too, his son Anand excels in school and shows signs of talent as a writer. But Mr. Biswa's fortunes suffer several reversals, and it is not until the very end of his life that he is finally able to buy a house – only to find the experience much different than he had imagined.

A vivid portrait of a man who fights to free himself from the entanglements of family custom and religion. A house for Mr. Biswas is also an unforgettable look inside colonial society at the beginnings of great transition.

Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul was born in Chaguanas, Trinidad on August 7, 1932. He is an Indian Brahmin uprooted from the Land of his ancestors. V.S. Naipaul, or Sir Vidia as he was called after receiving his knighthood, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature, was a man who did his own stuff, and seemed to be blind to those who pulled faces at him. This was misleading: he could see them and

was often highly conscious of what they were doing. But he would not condescend to respond to them except indirectly in his writing.

Naipaul's hurt:

Born on a small Caribbean island to a family of Indian origin, Naipaul made himself a major writer with a rare single-mindedness of purpose. He also brought this concentration, this ability to observe without seeming to be moved, to be best of his works. Of course, this ability was misleading. "Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry". W. H. Auden wrote of W.B. Yeats. The madness of the world was also essential to Naipaul's oeuvre. But while Yeats, the poet influenced by a Romantic sensibility, wore his hurt on the literary sleeve, Naipaul kept it deeply hidden. That is why Yeats's hurt translates into beautiful, Lyrical poetry with little humour in it, and Naipaul's hurt translates into humorous, ironic or satirical fiction as its best.

Despite the fact that Western Critics focus inordinately on it, it is not Naipaul's travel writing that makes him one of the greatest writers of the 20th century. It is his fiction, his travel writing comes



across as hasty at times. The hurt that Naipaul does not easily, show – or shows only as Criticism, humour, satire – is revealed in the nature of the two of his greatest books, which one among the greater ‘novels’ of the 20th century: “ A House for Mr. Biswas(1961) and The Enigma of Arrival(1987). In very different ways, both occupy that particularity fruitful space between fiction and memoir. A house for Mr.Biswas, with a story inspired by Naipaul’s father’s warped intellectual struggles in a discouraging post-colonial environment, is one of those rare recent novels in which the protagonist is basically conservative and yet gains the reader’s sympathy. “The Enigma of Arrival” is the story of the writer V.S. Naipaul, told by the writer V.S.Naipaul: a memoir dressed up as a novel or a novel dressed up as a memoir, depending on how you choose to look at it. This novel is correctly read by critics as examining the ambiguities of leaving or arriving home.

But what also needs to be recalled is that the place where Naipaul arrives or fails to arrive, in this novel is next to Stonehenge,

the very heart of England, so to say. This trajectory remains central to any understanding of Naipaul as a person and a writer. It is an index of Naipaul’s artistic greatness that he shaped it into highly honed creativity and did not allow it to seep as it often does in post-colonial circles, into insistence, rhetoric, bitterness and resentment.

Contested Politics:

Naipaul’s politics, especially but not only in his non-fiction, has been often indigestible to many, including at times .This does not detract from his stature as a writer, especially a writer of fiction, but it cannot be ignored. In Naipaul’s defence, one has to add that he often seemed to operate with a basic assumption that was anathema to the left but that is largely justified. The left operates on the assumptions that if only the poor and deprived could assume power. We would overcome the problem of power being abused. In all his writing, indirectly but clearly, Naipaul scoffs at this idea. For him, the fact that you are poor is no guarantee that you will be just if you assume power, the fact that you were deprived does not mean



that given a chance, you won't deprive others.

Hence, while acutely aware of the abuse of power within any conservative status quo, finally Naipaul prefers a coherent status quo to radical or revolutionary change. This explains his sympathy for extant English and Brahminical - centric tendencies over radical religious, social and political ideologies. Perhaps like Mr. Biswas in his long sought and finally half achieved house. Naipaul knew that our house is not perfect and that it is ludicrously incomplete but he preferred living ironically in it to pulling it down. Who, honestly speaking, can claim that he was entirely wrong? Who is any case, with a roof over his head?

Conclusion:

Derek Walcott, Judge Naipaul to be "One of the most mature of west Indian writers" Mr. Biswas battle for proper identity and alienation from the society bordering on rottenness of their existence.

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