



# Identity Crisis and Nostalgia in *A House For Mr. Biswas* And *Mystic Messeur*

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## ABSTRACT:

The South-Asian Literature is like an ocean in which vast and multiple diasporic experiences are floating in the form of poetry, novels, prose and article writing as well as memoirs. Nostalgia a sentimental longing or wistful affection for a period in the longing for the construction of new and multiple domestic and collective homes. The writings of V.S. Naipaul deal with shifting identities, roots, homes and changing realities of migrants. The rootlessness is a prominent theme found in almost all of Naipaul's writings .It generates from alienation brought about by exile; physical, psychological or social. He is a writer who encourages us continually to question, to write about the world with the freedom of a person with no home, no country, and no affiliations. The concept of "home" and "homelessness" has always been a recurring theme of Diaspora literature, especially, the literature of the Caribbean.

**Keywords:** Expatriate, Immigrant, Diasporic, Nostalgia, Imitation, Inhabitants and Displacement.

The Indian Diaspora is the largest Diaspora in the world with its global presence and a history that dates back to the Indian civilization. The Indian Diaspora can be divided into three phases ancient, medieval and modern. The ancient Diaspora refers laborers, crafts men and traders who explored new lands for work,

wealth and adventures. In medieval times, the British imperialism caused movement of the indentured laborers. In modern times, skilled, educated and intelligent Indians moved to the USA and other European countries for economic and professional reasons. They are decentred in the sense that they have moved away from their original centre nations, communities and affiliations. Gilroy writes, that 'the image of the ship living micro cultural, micro political system in motion effectively captures the trans-nationality and intercultural relations, the exchange of ideas and activism.

The multi-cultural dispensation that is India can give rise to facetiousness in the face of the 'confusion' that seems to exist there. This study therefore does not presume to go deeply into the philosophical underpinnings of either the so-called "East" or "West" but attempts only to engage in a dialogue with the journeying author, V.S. Naipaul. Naipaul's journey is an exploration of 'self' and 'other', and of the "selfhood" of India and its erosion under colonial imaging during colonial times and as seen in post-colonial times. Naipaul's "expertise", critics have averred, has been his noted tendency to fit Indian 'reality' into Western frames of reference, and take up his own responses and reactions to individuals and situations and give them a "representative" colour.

*The Mystic Masseur* tells the real story of Ganesh Ramsumair belonging to Trinidad. In the character of Ganesh, the author has presented the crisis consisting to the problem of reconciling between two conflicting views in Ganesh's early life; events happen to him but he made no effort to direct or control the events. He was almost passive in actions. Even he married to Leela Ramloganas her father decided upon her match. During this period Ganesh believed that the success or achievement in life depends on God's will or as destiny prescience. He has found himself as a failure primary school teacher, a masseur and an author.

He realized that the success or achievement in life depends on deliberately planning, and accurately and energetically execution of the plan. From this point of view his success in life has grown. Soon he becomes a successful businessman. Now he moves on the business venture regarding his success as a religious and psychological adviser or a pundit. His fame spreads over the whole of Trinidad. This fame later opens a new vista in his life. In 1946, when the first election was held on this island, he manages to catch his popularity in the island and gets elected as a member of the legislative council.

In his new role, he shows himself as a great patriot and a defender of the rights of people of Trinidad. He refuses even to participate in the rituals of the British rulers of the island. He even supports the strike of the sugar-workers, expressing some vague Marxist ideas. However, when he is roughly handled by the crowd, his sympathies turn in the opposite direction; as a consequence, he adopts the clothes and attitudes of the Britishers.

While the others characters of the novel influence Ganesh's change greatly, the transformation of his character is best shown through Ganesh himself. Ganesh Ramsumair is a product of Indian Hindu Tradition in which he was raised and the western values he learns in his student life Queen's royal collage. He moves from the Indian culture to the British culture and changes himself according to the circumstances, forced him to change. He has been formally educated to only a low level; but he has read widely and by making use of this wide reading, he is able to establish himself in his later life.

Naipaul's response to India was confined to his Trinidad experience of Indian people, a transplanted Indian community before 1962. In 1962 he comes to be in close touch with India, the original homeland of the Trinidad Indians. Therefore the feeling of Nostalgia of Naipaul's responses to India starts from Trinidad experience, but cannot remain confined to that area alone. His personal contact with Indian people in India marks out a further evolution in his ideas and impressions, yet still further gets qualified by two more successive visits. Again the elusive impact of Indians outside India upon his mind and some of the very interesting Indian characters belonging to his novels dealing with other areas extend his response to a further developed direction. This is the linear evolution of Naipaul's responses to India. There is a further psychological evolution in his mind.

Individual existence of the hero which tells the ethnic and social history of a network. He attempts to absorb in Hanuman House yet he is fizzled at each stage. He turns out to be totally secluded man in the group and the forlorn warrior against the traditionalist framework loaded up with spoiled legends, customs and ceremonies. He felt himself as an undesirable and pointless man in Tulsi tribe. Mr. Biswas is an East Indian who wants to part from his Hindu legacy yet experiences issues in acclimatizing himself into Western culture.

Naipaul centers on the individual existence of the hero which tells the ethnic and social history of a network. In *A House for Mr. Biswas*, the experience of appearance is investigated with regards to the appearance of the Indian indentured workers in Trinidad. As method of foundation, the principal significant rush of the diasporic development is the consequence of exemplary free enterprise. In *A House for Mr. Biswas*, the Indian indentured workers and their descendents can't completely show up in Trinidad as a result of sublimated connections to their disappearing pasts. Appearance likewise alludes to the introduction of the fundamental character, Biswas, who is an image of the post-indenture age that needs to adapt to Trinidad's assorted and destabilized world and Trinidad's entrance into the independent period of its set of experiences.

The interaction between these two cultures is designed to show that old Hindu culture which the Indian Hindus had taken with them to Trinidad cannot long withstand the influence of the alien western culture. Of course, the old Hindu culture is not completely absorbed by the western culture, but it is certainly weakened and undermined. In short, Hanuman House is a microcosm of the old Hindu culture. The Tulsi family is very orthodox, but its orthodoxy begins to crumble with the onset of western influences. Mrs. Tulsi, in ruling over her family, is helped in her task by Seth, her dead husband's brother. Seth and his wife Padma also live in Hanuman House where they enjoy a status as high as that of Mrs. Tulsi herself.

*A House for Mr. Biswas* is an individual's search for identity and his struggle to arrive at authentic selfhood which comes to an end with his construction of a house for himself and his family, however faulty the construction might be. Certain universal implications can be detected in Biswas's personal struggle :Biswas is everyman , wavering between identity and nonentity and claiming his acquaintance with the rest of them.

He seems to move toward a clearer feeling of place, of being at "home." I thus regard Naipaul's novelistic writing as a process of identity recovery undergoing a series of transformations: He denies or negates his Caribbean homeland, adopts a stage of mimicry in England, searches for his cultural roots in India, and finally reconstructs his identity out of his multi-cultural particularity and uniqueness.

Diaspora literature has made a significant contribution to Indo-English literature by its rich exposure to multiculturalism. Though the sense of displacement may be an essential condition of Diaspora literature, it is not experienced precisely with the same identity by all; it differs according to time and place. The spirit of exile and alienation enriches the diaspora writers to seek rehabilitation in their writings and establish a permanent place in the minds of readers. Naipaul, in particular, consistently paints the picture of the derelict man in the desolate landscape.

*A House for Mr. Biswas* is, therefore, individual attempts to overcome “homelessness”. The writer sees the characters as victims of their environment. Their urgency comes from their efforts to get others to acknowledge them so as to have it validated for themselves, their human necessity. The house becomes a legacy which Mr. Biswas can bequeath to his family. Just as through his writing Naipaul attempts to salvage his own family history and the history of the Trinidadian Indian community so also the hero of his novel makes a final effort to create a new world out of nothingness, thereby leaving behind his footprint on history and escaping annihilation and attaining fulfillment.

Naipaul is best known not only in the academia but also in the whole literary world as one who gives expressions to the themes of identity crisis, rootlessness, alienation and problem of location or homelessness. Though he has some limitations and error of judgments which have been highlighted in this study, yet, he is undoubtedly one of the greatest figures in the literary diaspora.

The story of Mr. Biswas is the general story of man tortured by communal pressure and threatened by an unstructured society. Every individual in the world, however low his social and economical status, desires to possess some space that could be his own, his house or home. This desire is more evident in people who, for some reason or other, are displaced from their origins and for whom homelessness is an everyday phenomenon. The realization of their rootlessness forces them to create a solid home-space even in an alien land, just as Mr. Biswas does at Port of Spain. Through him, Naipaul speaks for the displaced people all over the world.

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