

# A Walk Through the Myth and Psychology of Mr. Biswas in V.S. Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas

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## ABSTRACT:

In general, the concept of displacement, alienation, homelessness and the struggle for loss of native-ness has been the dominant subject linked with the novel 'A House for Mr. Biswas'. To the identity crisis of Mr. Biswas, Bruce King talks of the economic means to become an independent individual. However, the distinction between the western and the eastern concept of independence needs to be sorted out despite being an American settler though Indian in origin. Mr. Biswas's quest for a house reflects his search for belonging and independence; a desire to shift from the status of visitor into a dweller. This internal struggle acts as a bonding and disintegrating factor in the novel. As he sank deep into his unconscious task of rediscovering his own land on his own amidst the heightened pathos, poignance (state of being) of the identity serves as a humorous effect of the whole plot. To this amusing persona of Mr. Biswas, Anthony Burgess comments on the novel as "work of great comic power qualified with firm and unsentimental compassion". Mr. Biswas's search for identity is his dignity in itself that gives a structure to the chaos. Though V.S. Naipaul is known for his pessimistic element in his work, he called for authentic existence and the exercise of freedom to reestablish oneself in the worst of predicaments. N. Sharada Iyer viewed that Mr. Biswas's revolt is against any value system which denies the intrinsic importance of man, denies freedom and dignity at once.

**Keywords:** freedom, diaspora, identity issue, psychological dominant, slavery, post-colonialism, etc...

## INTRODUCTION

### As a diasporic character

In V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* the theme of freedom as a burden is projected by the character Mr. Biswas with the spirit of an outsider in the world of possibilities. Like any other postcolonial and diaspora work, the story analyzes the themes of displacement, alienation, identity and the question of existentialism. Many of the audience expect the conflict of identity issues or the lamentation of the lost culture in such work which is detrimental to the subordinate subject and objective of the work. In the case of Mr. Biswas, the search for the intrinsic value in the outside world is visualized through his psychology intractable by the world which also becomes his potency to change things. Every relationship in the novel in many ways had been stranded while the main character Mr. Biswas is portrayed as a self-seeking character who tried to satisfy his desire for freedom and independence at the cost of displeasure of his family and a fit of his anxiety. The psychological dominant and commanding position of the Tulsi's contribute Mr. Biswas as a subject of social hatred amidst the slavery and imprisonment caused by the invasion of Mrs. Tulsi's matriarchy. Subsequently, Mohun Biswas succumbs to the outside force as a victim.

of circumstance accidentally from his birth till death at age forty – six.

### **Mr. Biswas Psychological Principle**

It is true to be exploring the phenomena surrounding the character rather than sympathizing the self-marginalized/ self-victimized identity just so to identify the individual complexities and the long lost aspiration of a strong man through a house. The Mr. Biswas concept of identity is to be studied in the light of his psychological principle. It is true that this abrupt illogical inclination expose the vulnerability and lack of certainty reciprocate Mr. Biswas into sympathetic person as well as a kind of everyman identity. The character debate the contemporary and traditional definition of belongingness and independence as well as the superstitious backdrop which has left him without the strength of character itself. Then the cause and consequences as to why Mr. Biswas became an irresponsible man who own no self – love as he encapsulate the wholeness and greater value as a human under despair of his one direction mentality. Certainly the character stresses is to be studied under the question of existentialism. At best the intervention of the religion ought to be examine as the dictating factor of Mr. Biswas cycle of misfortune till his death and to rediscover the limit of one’s desire where uncertainties become a form of liberation rather than confinement in the world. From his birth, he was thought to be “inauspicious” for the family because he had “an unlucky sneeze”, “a sixth finger” and “good but wide teeth”. Despite the many tragedies and disappointment encountered, Mr. Biswas has withstand all at the cost of his life. Similarly, as an autobiographical novel Naipaul’s main concern of the nature of freedom, one’s commitment as well as authenticity which accordingly define the purpose of life reflected in Mr. Biswas ought to be (subjectively and objectively) meditated upon in both psychological and physical landscape. Mr. Biswas whole existence is for the world to be transform and not conform to the established legacy.

### **The Consciousness**

Set in Trinidad, the Indian immigrant’s social culture and religious conflict and disintegration they experienced had been displayed by the Tulsi(s) family who rely much on Mrs. Tulsi supervision. While on the other hand Mr. Biswas psychological offence by the dominant and submissive environment had him entitled as clown character albeit a despicable rebel. Being “handcuffed to the history” Mr. Biswas fate is intertwined with that of undesirable qualities as well as an unlucky sneeze as pundit predicted. The consciousness of being born “in a wrong way” added up by his mother Bipti’s apathy after the death of her husband definitely proved Mr. Biswas as the child of deprivation and depression. This experience itself will later appear in the form of spirit of adventure and rebelliousness. The whole composition of a failed maternal guidance and support will brought into comparison with the Mrs. Tulsi’s austerities nature. Questions and similarities of two phases as a son and a husband need to be focus to understand Mr. Biswas mind in action. Therefore in his attempt to identify himself Mr. Biswas instinctively become a slave to disposition state of mind brought upon by an event throughout his life. His impatient has detach him from his state of security to insecurity into a self - victimizes mood providing him a very restrictive modes of the world. There is a presence of psychological stagnation in every steps and decision made even when he reconciled with his stigmatization. The whole mentality of Mr. Biswas is exposed when his son Anand asks him in a bewildered way ‘who are you?’ Mr. Biswas replied, ‘I am just somebody. Nobody at all. I am just a man you know’. Amidst the crisis Mr. Biswas search for fulfillment/ satisfaction of his psychological desire if not physical has delineate the whole plot. And our aim is to discard Mr. Biswas

from his psychological stand as “I am the Trinidad’s Most Evil Man”. Had the obsession to find his identity/autonomy recanted, his remonstrance against the Tulsi(s) – the defining influence of his extremist behavior banished, Mr. Biswas would have been a very urbane and charismatic persona.

## CONCLUSION

Unlike many postcolonial writers that focuses on the common ideal goal V.S. Naipaul divert the attention to how individual in the society/people create themselves and advance in life. Abandoned by his family, trapped in a lonely marriage to Shama Tulsi, poor and unable to get a foot up the ladder of life Mr. Biswas put in the prologue “How terrible it would have been... to have lived and died as one had been born, unnecessary and unaccommodated.” The theme of V.S. Naipaul major works always highlight the alienation and isolation by character painful confrontation with the civilization. Similar traits of identity is found in Naipaul’s other work ‘An Area of Darkness’ where he feel is not accepted. “...being an insider and outsider due to severe socio – political life in Indian society”. Dr. Horace Engdahl address V.S. Naipaul ‘as an explorer, not of wilderness but of societies – everywhere home and a stranger...’ who documented the distinguished individual fates which lies beyond the dutiful idealization that control our perception. Naipaul tries to understand the principle of every person’s life, the very decisive thing that made him what he is. Prakash Chandra Pradhan observes that Mr. Biswas’s suffering is, “...of a penniless individual struggling to possess a minimum basic necessity in the form of a house.” Earlier at the time of his birth the pundit predicted that because of his gap teeth Mr. Biswas would be “a lecher, a spendthrift and a liar” which throughout the story had satisfied bit by bit. The consciousness of the pundit warning, to an agreeable rate determined Mr. Biswas vision and psychology of life supposes the Freudian psychoanalytic perspective of ‘a return of the repressed’. Therefore to him a house is ‘one’s identity, national, cultural and spiritual’ to overcome the condition in which he is placed and eventually succeed or fail to survive and succeed. Bruce King reviewed V.S. Naipaul’s character as an individual, are given ‘epic’ and ‘mythic stature’. Mr. Biswas conflict of ideas and ideology is the disrupting factor of ‘Tulsidom’ (dominating structure of the Tulsi family) that stand for “established emotions”.

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