Chapter – II

V. S. Naipaul: Back to the Roots.
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In his Nobel Lecture "Two Worlds" V.S. Naipaul said, "I am the sum of my books."(1) The subject matter of his novels and travel writings is the constant negotiation of where the individual is situated. What emerges out of these writings is his stance on displaced individuals, uprooted and without a distinct place called "home" and the longing for it all the same. It has generally been said that Naipaul's writing is always about unhousing and remaining unhoused. This holds good for both his fiction and non-fiction. His is the condition similar to that of his creation Mr. Biswas. Even if Mr. Biswas calls the house his own he remains vulnerable because that house has been mortgaged with Ajodha, his uncle. It is suggested that A House for Mr. Biswas may be viewed as a symbolic representation of Naipaul's own journey.

This is true of Naipaul's own feelings of having an Indian identity and at the same time realizing his being without any concrete identity. He experiments with his own "unhoused" condition in his works. His fiction and non-fiction are characterized by his own experiences, the experiences of being uprooted, rootlessness, having broken identity and hybridity. Before we proceed further it would be necessary to look at the biographical details of Naipaul and his development as a literary artist, which may help us to see what makes him the writer of Indian diaspora and what sets into him the crisis of identity, consequently making him present his troubled consciousness in his works.
Naipaul, born in Trinidad in 1932, is a third generation immigrant of Indian descent. His grandfather had emigrated to Trinidad from Benares in Uttar Pradesh as an indentured labourer. At the time of migration, his grandfather carried 'his village' along with him.

"Half of us (Indians) on this land of the Chaguanes (in Trinidad) were pretending – perhaps not – perhaps only feeling, never formulating it as an idea-that we had brought a kind of India with us, which we could, as it were, unroll like a carpet on the flat land."\(^{(2)}\)

From his childhood Naipaul grew up in an extended Hindu family of India bounded by customs and conventions, rites and rituals and always trying to guard their Indianness against the possible contamination in an alien culture. It was a ritualized life. But with every generation India became an increasingly distant object till with Naipaul it became more legendary country than a real one, a resting place for imagination. To realize this legendary country, which all the time haunted his imagination, he intended to visit it.

"I had to travel to India because there was no one to tell me what the India my grandparents had come from was like"\(^{(3)}\)

Beneath this desire to realise the country of his forefathers was lingering his intense feeling to identify his roots in the land of his origin. But how could a person belong to a land which he had never seen; the culture, language, myths and rituals of which are maintained without questioning its validity and suitability in a foreign land! And
how could a person deny the impact of the land on which he is born and brought up.

"We who came after could not deny Trinidad."(4)

So being born and brought up in Trinidad, away from India, Naipaul was unable to identify himself as an Indian. And moreover being a sceptical by birth, he never cultivated a blind adherence to the land of his forefathers. But the mixed strain of a domestic Indian world and the external Trinidadian world left him without a clear national identity. Having been brought up in Hindu culture he is influenced by it in the matters of cleanliness, but in case of rituals and religion he "had been born an unbeliever"(5). Here lies one of the reasons of Naipaul's inability to be an Indian. "I was without belief or interest in belief; I was incapable of worship, of God or holymen; and so one side of India was closed to me."(6)

Compulsions brought Naipaul to London the city of his own choice. But very soon he realized that

"London was not the centre of my world. I had been misled; but there was nowhere else to go."(7)

And the following lines best express the malady of an immigrant like Naipaul, who belongs to nowhere and whose identity not only national but even personal is in question. For him London

"... was a good place for getting lost in, a city no one ever knew, .. Here I became no more than an inhabitant of a big city, robbed of loyalties, time passing, taking me away from what I
was, thrown more and more into myself, fighting to keep my balance and to keep alive the thought of the clear world beyond the brick and asphalt and chaos of railway lines. All mythical lands faded, and in the big city I was confined to a smaller world than I had ever known. I became my flat, my desk, my name."

What sets into Naipaul the crisis of identity is his obscure understanding of India which clashes both with his West Indian consciousness acquired due to his birth on that land and his Western perception acquired due to his stay in England. When Naipaul says that he is the sum of his books he implies that his writing is rooted in his background, the background of an immigrant Indian and also that of a West Indian. He regards that his writing is formulated from two different worlds; the world of his grandmother's house and the world outside of that house. With regard to the Indian world of his grandmother's house, it was the world handed down to him by those immigrant Indians who carried it along with them in their memory of their lives in India. With the passing of time it gained a kind of obscurity and for Naipaul it became a world of darkness. When he became a writer, those areas of darkness around him as a child became the subject matters of his writings. He travelled over these areas to understand them so that he could at once realize himself, his personality, his identity.

"I travelled in the Caribbean region and understood much more about the colonial set up of which I had been part. I went to India, my ancestral land, for a year; it was a journey that broke my life in two. The book that I wrote about these two journeys
took me to new realms of emotion, gave me a world-view I had never had, extended me technically.

It is an outspoken statement of the writer about his frustration of expectations and his development as an artist. Naipaul goes from one realm of darkness to another without settling in one. Presently he lives in London, but his affinities are somewhere else. From his early age he cultivated a detest towards the Caribbean life and determined to leave the island. At the age of eighteen he left Trinidad for London. Following his father's interest in writings, Naipaul also imbibed the ambition to become a writer. After leaving Oxford in 1954, he secured a position with BBC writing and editing for programme called "Caribbean Voice". It was during this period that he started writing stories drawing on his Trinidad memories, which were later published as Miguel Street (1959). It may be regard as the young Naipaul's tribute to the Trinidad he had left behind in 1950. Before Miguel Street he had published Mystic Masseur (1957) and Surffrage of Elvira. These works established him as a writer of originality. But his effective manifestation came in 1961 with the publication of A House for Mr. Biswas. From his early youth Naipaul took up the vocation of a writer as his religion and since then has drawn on his intensely personal experience; experience of an uprooted person adrift in the world and experience of the two worlds to none of which he could belong. This autobiographical flavour enriches his works; both fiction and non-fiction. Naipaul himself is split into his characters in whom are manifested subtle shades of his emotions and
traits. Most of his works show the alienating effects of colonial past on today's post colonial people.

Naipaul excels in presenting the indentured Indian immigrant's predicament in the West Indian context and assumes the responsibility of delineating as honestly as possible the dilemma of the fractured consciousness resulting from geographical transplantation, colonial exploitation, rootlessness and so on, all of these forces working together. His apprehension of reality has been affected by his experiences of more than one country and conditioned by exposure to more than one culture. In the novel *The Mystic Masseur* he seems to exploit the comic absurdities in the lives of the transplanted Indians in the West Indies. In his early fictions he presents a lurid picture of the West Indian society. It is a society hopelessly disorganized and torn asunder by its conflicting loyalties. The present study concentrates on Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas, The Middle Passage, An Area of Darkness, India : A Wounded Civilization* and *India : A Million Mutinies* Now to bring out the complex issues regarding his identity.

1

**The Middle Passage and An Area of Darkness: A State of Confusion**

In his four travelogues on Trinidad and India, Naipaul shows his attitude of hatred towards the land of his birth, the frustrations of his desire from London and the evolving relations with India the land of his fore-fathers. At the same time these works highlight his
desperate search for his identity. In many of his interviews and essays, Naipaul has presented himself as a displaced person one who has neither a community nor a home. This dilemma is complicated further due to his unique position as a third generation Indian, born in Trinidad and presently settled in England. Naipaul is a person on the margins both by inheritance and choice. When he thinks of return to his roots it becomes problematic for him, because it is difficult for him to determine which one is his original country; whether the land of his birth or that of his ancestors?

He tries both the possibilities. But when he returns to the land of his birth, his dislike for it returns at once with higher intensity. He records in *The Middle Passage* that as soon as the ship which carried him from England back to Trinidad on a tour of the Caribbean, docked in Port of Spain, he began to feel his old fear of Trinidad. The book portrays the Caribbean world, the world outside of his grandmother’s house.

Divided into six chapters *The Middle Passage* portrays five colonial West Indian and Caribbean societies: Trinidad, British Guina, Surinam, Martinique and Jamaica. Each chapter graphically presents the socio-cultural, socio-psychic and socio-economic ills of these colonial societies in relation to their colonial history. However Naipaul regards that the history of the islands can never be satisfactorily told because such “history is built around achievement and creations and nothing was created in the West Indies”. (10) This travel writing treats the enduring effects of histories of imperial depredation and depletion and colonial marginality on Caribbean society. The picture that Naipaul draws of the Caribbean society is a
bleak one where everyone is trying to discern something which no one would ever reach. People of the Trinidadian society are extremely unsure of themselves; people without a centre of their own, without a lifestyle of their own. As a colonial people on the margins of empires, Trinidadians have learned to live in ignorance of their own history and in a fantasy of the land beyond the island:

"We could never be convinced of the value of reading the history of (Trinidad) which was, as everyone said, only a dot on the map of the world. Our interest was all in the world outside...... our past was buried and no one cared to dig it up". (11)

Naipaul calls the Caribbeans as the people who are living in a borrowed culture. In the book he describes the rootlessness of the West Indians in their own land, the culture of which splits their identity and leads to their isolation from the milieu. He argues that these west Indian colonies are plagued by a sense of marginality. The Trinidadians, although perhaps fascinated by the world far beyond and aware of the history of the world outside, do not know their own history:

"Our interest was all in the world outside the remoter the better.... England of 1914 was the England of yesterday; the Trinidad of 1914 belonged to the dark ages". (12)

The sickness that Naipaul seeks to diagnose in the colonial society derives from colonialism and imperialism. The slavery, the plantation system, the immigration of indentured workers, and the
treatment of the Caribbean and West Indies only as a resource to be exploited, have created an unstable and shaky amalgam of peoples uncertain of their roots and doubtful of their identity. The West Indians lacked particularity since their centre of existence was dispersed both nowhere and everywhere. They were only marginal beings generalized into a common centrality of experience. Mimicry and imitation of another culture leads to a dislocation from the margins to the centre of another circle. Naipaul is certainly caricaturing a culture to comprehend his own exile and his own marginality of existence.

"His views may look biased and neatly sophisticated. But nobody can doubt the genuineness of his intentions and sincerity of his vision, and the picture that he portrays rings true at all essential points. It is a half-made society with its mixture of cultures. The novelist is a member of this society which he denounces vehemently at times, and he writes about it with an insider's knowledge."(13)

The book is a record of the failure of the colonial Trinidadians and West Indians to discover their roots, to find a viable centre for their existence. It also records Naipaul, an exile, who returns temporarily to Trinidad and is torn between the conflicting aspects of his own personality. It portrays an anguished quest for an understanding of the fragmented self. Here the writer deals with the problems of a marginal man -- uncertainty of identity, feelings of inferiority, scorn for one's own culture and society. The book concentrates on an exile's break with the centre and with the culture of the land of his birth.
What leads Naipaul to highlight the degrading and degenerating aspect of the Caribbean world was his disillusionment with that land. One is able to find a similar wave of disillusionment of Naipaul in case of India. The books *An Area of Darkness* (1964) and *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977), on the home of his ancestors, reveal his deep antipathy for the immensity and chaos of the country, the sloth and naivette of its citizens, the grip of tradition, the display of religiosity, the corruption of the rulers. All this and more drove him to denounce India as 'an area of darkness' and 'a wounded civilization' and in turn provoked Indians to see it as the darkness of his sad soul. Though the foregoing statements reveal his disgust with India he has recognized the country as an ancestral fascination, from which he could not get away. In Naipaul's case his is the love and hate relationship with India. His full-fledge Indian triology - *An Area of Darkness*, *India: A Wounded Civilization*, and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* – is homage as well as protest, memory as well as erasure, delusion as well as dirge. There were other disappointments, such as the life in London to which he had looked forward had ultimately turned out to be ‘sterile’ and ‘mean’. What were the places he could think of as ‘home’, as the centre of his world? From the days of his childhood Naipaul had not learned to look at Trinidad as a “homeland” in its own right. He was born and brought up on the island which was ethnically considered but a replica of India. But he could not be satisfied with the replica which only mimicked the original. His later visit to Trinidad had merely vindicated an early childhood vow to distance himself from the island. There remained only India, the land of his ancestors.
On his first visit, Naipaul took with him the conventional ideas of India—the India then known as the land of Gandhi and Nehru, the India of the glittering classical past. He took with him his own childhood memories of an old India, the world of rituals and myths. This past held an emotional charge for Naipaul. The outcome of this visit, An Area of Darkness is a deeply disturbing autobiography. His explicit intention as stated in the book is to search and discover his ethnic roots and his own identity, and this search is undertaken through a journey to this land of his forefathers. His acquaintance with India was only through what he had heard about it from his parents and grandparents. From his childhood he had romanticized India and on his visit sought to realize the romanticized image of the land of his ancestors. He writes with a touch of feeling.

“And India had in a special way been the background of my childhood. It was the country from which my grandfather came, a country never physically described and therefore never real, a country out in the void, beyond the dot of Trinidad and from it our journey had been final”. (14)

He received on image of India from the memory of the immigrants and the articles his ancestors brought from India—brass vessels, images, a ruined harmonium, a string bed all of which formed the hoary remnant of the country of his ancestors and constituted India for him. He desired to know this land which his imagination has created in its own way. He calls India an area of darkness which he has to discern.
“To me as a child the India that had produced so many of the persons and things around me was featureless and I thought of the time when the transference was made as a period of darkness, darkness which also extended to the land, as darkness surrounds a hut at evening, though for a little way around the hut there is still light. The light was the area of my experience in time and place. And even now though time has widened, though space has contracted..... something of darkness remains, in those attitudes, those ways of thinking and seeing, which are no longer mine”. (15)

Naipaul begins his journey from the realm of darkness, with an attitude of ambivalence hoping to fill the area of darkness with experience. But the experience turns out to be a shocking one and his efforts to reach his ancestral roots turn out to be rather frustrating, as these roots, when found, turn out to be sterile. When this reality militates against his preconceived notion he allows his narrative to slip into an exercise in banter, unwarranted moralizing and misplaced criticism. Towards the end of An Area of Darkness, Naipaul admits that it was a journey that ought not to have been made, as it had broken his life in two. The book became a record of fear, anguish and tirade of a frustrated non-Indian. It is the result of his disillusionment with India which came very early, even before he reached the land. He is critical of everything that represents the East; India being the part of it. The discriminatory treatment of people on the basis of caste, lack of any sense of hygiene, and crowdly places, all being the part of the East began to disillusion him. He records:

“And in the streets there was the East one had expected: the children, the dirt, the disease, the under-nourishment, the cries of bakshish, the hawkers, the touts, the glimpses of minarets”. (16)
The Scenes of the East began to shock him. He was shocked when he saw men who had been "diminished and deformed, they begged and whined".\(^{(17)}\) Seeing this he began to realize himself as a whole human being and determined to remain what he was. He also realized that it was his European self that kept him away from the people of the East. But for him "It mattered little through whose eyes I was seeing the East".\(^{(18)}\) Naipaul observes that as a part of the East India is, in spite of all her mimicry of the English, a nation altogether blind to the obvious obscenities. When he arrived at Bombay port he was encountered by coolies, fellow-travelers, policemen and beggars. The over-crowded roads, pavements and bazaars made him awe-struck and what follows then is Naipaul's pronouncement of condemnation. He expresses his prejudice about the country and its people. He is nearly exhausted when he encounters the time-consuming and harassing bureaucracy of India in his attempt to recover his confiscated liquor bottles. His venom falls fiercely on red-tapism and corruption of the Customs House, all the evils of the society. He observes that Indians have contracted 'A collective blindness'. They put up notice banning begging, yet there are beggars on running trains, some of them despicably awful to a foreign observer. The most horrible and repulsive thing Naipaul writes about India is its filth and defecation:

"Indians defecate everywhere. They defecate, mostly beside the railway tracks, but they also defecate on the Beaches; they defecate on the hills; they defecate on the river banks; they defecate on the streets; they never look for cover".\(^{(19)}\)
Darshan Singh Maini takes Naipaul to task for such prejudiced approach to India.

"Surely, we too are ashamed into silence at such a brazen unconcern with the simple decencies of life. But again, one needs a measure of understanding. The compulsion of climate and cramped living in old, crowded cities are not basically questions of aesthetics, but of sheer creature existence." (20)

But Naipaul does not hesitate to present such a disturbing picture of India. He is shaken by the condition of squalor, the condition of public lavatories, the crude ways of fundamentally rural society, its pollution, poverty, filth and confusion. His attitude is similar to that of Jonathan Swift’s Gulliver, who tries to distinguish himself from the Yahoos. Seeing these drawbacks he, instead of developing any affinity with its culture, repulses the land denying any connection to it, and ends his journey in a more suspended condition than before.

A Businessman presumed that Naipaul had read the books on India which gave wrong ideas about the country. But Naipaul claims that he had read the books which that businessman would call “right” to reveal the true picture of India. Now on his visit he realizes the ‘real’ India. His earlier perception about India, its people, its myth is shattered and Naipaul only notices drawbacks, filth and dirtiness in Indian life. In his visit to Bombay he discovers unaccounted areas in all those books on India he must have read. The inside view of the city reveals to him extreme poverty and filth which Indians could easily
ignore and keep their calm. What is very obvious to the world is forever concealed or non-existent to them. Bombay with its seacoast view of tall buildings and some selected well maintained places, like Kamala Nehru Park in the tourist brooches shields its real picture. In Indian villages he notices,

“the narrow, broken lanes with green slime in the gutters, the choked back to back mud houses. the jumble of filth and food and animals and people, the baby in the dust, swollen bellied, black with flies, but wearing its good-luck amulet”. (21)

Apart from filth and poverty, what receives his attention from the beginning of his journey is the acute class and status consciousness among the Indians, even in their duties and everyday activities. He finds this as more damaging to the Indians. Ramanath, a steno would not do the typists work even if it means considerable delay in the execution of work, while Malhotra, Ramanath’s boss, would not agree to this. Naipaul presents Malhotra, and ultimately himself, as a failure because his “years in Europe had made him just enough of a colonial to be out of place in India”. (22) India is full of Ramanath; only an orderly will serve a glass of water when a lady faints, because it is his division of work.

Indians are also taken to task for their mimicry. Indians, Naipaul says, imitate Europe in the wrong place; imitate their external unrealties, their mode and not their mind. He is for the ‘obvious’ which is ignored by the Indians and this ignoring attitude is called by him ‘the Indian withdrawl and denial’.
Naipaul admits that his views on India are coloured by his Western influence. He also presents us the people who share his attitude. He points out that what he observes in India was observed also by the people like Mahatma Gandhi and what made Gandhi observe the Indian drawbacks was his received Western perception.

"He looked at India as no Indian was able to; his vision was direct, and this directness was, and is, revolutionary. He sees exactly what the visitor sees. He does not ignore the obvious. He sees the beggars, and the shameless pundits and the filth of Banaras; he sees the atrocious sanitary habits of doctors, lawyers and journalists. He sees the Indian callousness, the Indian refusal to see. No Indian attitude escapes him, no Indian problem; he looks down to the roots of the static, decayed society." (23)

And in the very next paragraph Naipaul makes it clear that Gandhi saw India so clearly because he was in part a colonial. But the author calls him the failed reformer. Through Gandhi’s example he makes it obvious that the Indians are at fault in denying the reality not he, who has received the colonial or Western perception.

What irritates Naipaul is not only the negligence of the obvious but even the attitude of traders who make easy money by following fraudulent means.

"The function of the businessman is to make money. He might wish to sell shoes to Russia. He therefore sends good sample; the order obtained, he sends a shipload of shoes with cardboard soles. Overcoming foreign distrust of Indian business practices, he gets an order from Malaya drugs and sends coloured water. It is not his duty as a merchant to supply genuine drugs or good
shoes or any shoes or drugs at all; his duty is, by whatever means, to make money\(^{(24)}\).

These fraudulent ways of the merchants are complimentary to the superficial actions of the Indians which Naipaul describes thus:

"symbolic action: tree-planting week (seventy percent of the trees planted die from the lack of attention after speeches), Smallpox eradication week (one central minister is reported to have refused to be vaccinated for religious reasons, and vaccination certificates can be bought for a few shillings from various medical men), anti-fly week (declared in one state before the flies came), children’s day (a correct speech by Mr. Nehru about-children on the front page of the newspaper and on the back page a report that free milk intended for poor children had found its way to the Calcutta open market). Malaria eradication week (HELP ERADICATE MALARIA) daubed, in English, on the walls of illiterate Hindi-speaking villages).\(^{(25)}\)

Another Kind of superficiality is presented through Mrs. Mahindra, at whose house Naipaul had stayed as a paying guest, while he was in New Delhi. Through her he presents the obsession of Indians for foreign things and craze for modern looks.

"The house was new and on this ground floor smelled of concrete and paint. The rooms were not yet fully decorated; the furnishings were sparse. But there were fans everywhere; and the bathroom fittings, from Germany, were rare and expensive. I am craze for foreign, Mrs. Mahindra said, just craze for foreign".\(^{(26)}\)

Through her Naipaul presents a hollowness that exists in the upper middle class Indian society, the people from which are never
serious about their social responsibility and lavishly spend money for
their craze. She had nothing to do except to spend three thousand
rupees a month.

Contrary to the upper middle class, in the lower middle class
Naipaul detects the voice of frustration. He finds himself in a fix when
a teacher asks for his opinion about India.

"'Be frank. Tell me exactly what your think.'
'It's all right. It's very interesting,
Interesting. You are lucky. You should live here We are
trapped here, you know. That's what we are. Trapped.'(--------)
'Corruption and nepotism everywhere', he said. 'Everybody
wanting to get to United Nations Jobs. Doctors going abroad.
Scientists going to America. The future is totally black'.”(27)

Though Naipaul shares this opinion to some extent, what
matters to him in this example is the indifferent and complaining
attitude of middle class Indians, who are not satisfied with the present
situation and desire to leave the country for the better one. How could
Naipaul, a man already with a Western perception, easily get absorbed
in the land, in its contaminated society?

Naipaul notices that Indians, instead of being aware of the
realities or the obvious, live life by myths. Even historical facts are
colored with fantastic stories. In Kashmir he heard people talking of
things, which were remote to them, but colored by their fantasy.
Shaikh Abdulla was also one of the myths for Kashmiris.

"'Once there was no food in the land, and the people went to the
leader and said, 'We have no food. We are starving'. The
Leader said, 'You might think you have no food. But you have. You have potatoes, And potatoes are food'.

This is a reality for the people of Kashmir. It has become the part of history. This living by myths and having no sense of history, Naipaul says, are complementary to each other. Similar to his interpretation of the Caribbean’s, he finds Indians lacking in the sense of history. They, instead, retreat into fantasy and fatalism. He ridicules common Indian belief that in the Vedic period Indians possessed knowledge of such devices as aircraft, telephone and atom bomb. The claim that India in that age possessed the knowledge of highly developed surgery and that every village was a self governing entity merely shows the pathetic make belief world of the Indians. Again he takes note of the claim that India was at the brink of industrial breakthrough before British people came to India. Such incredible beliefs merely astonish him. He regards that Indian interpretations of history are almost as painful as the history itself; sometimes even foolish. He cites the example of a guide at the Tajmahal.

"And listen to the guide at the Taj, talking to a party of Australians: ‘So when she died he said, "I can’t live here any more" so he went to Delhi and he built a big city there’. To the Indian, surrounded by ruins, this is a sufficient explanation of creation and decay".

Very remarkable comment of Naipaul on historical sense of Indians follows thus:
"Respect for past is new in Europe; and it was Europe that revealed India’s past to India and made its veneration part of Indian Nationalism. It is still through European eyes that India looks at her ruins and her art. Nearly every Indian who writes on Indian art feels bound to quote from the writings of European admirers......... Where there has been no European admiration there is neglect". (30)

Naipaul is maddened by the smug talks of India’s ancient culture and spirituality in the face of the country’s horrendous poverty, the terrible squalor of village and town, the depths of ignorance and superstition and blind mimicry of the West. The reality of India in spite of ancient Indian culture and sculpture is cruel and overwhelming.

“Abruptly, at Awantipur, out of a fairy-tale village of sagging wood-framed cottages there rose ruins of grey stone, whose heavy trabeate construction-solid square pillars on a portico, steep stone pediments on a colonnade around a central shrine, massive and clumsy in ruin-caused the mind to go back centuries to ancient worship. They were Hindu ruins, of the eighth century, as we discovered later. But none of the passengers exclaimed, none pointed. They lived among ruins; the Indian earth was rich with ancient sculpture". (31)

Though Naipaul’s resentment sounds rational, it indicates to his non-attached attitude towards India, the attitude which keeps him aloof and far from any integration and assimilation into the culture of this land. As stated earlier, he had carried an ‘Image’ of India, an image which was the result of his experience of India in a small town of Trinidad. He felt himself only a visitor, an islander, when he experienced the real India, its size, its temperature, and its crowd at
their extremity. He is trying to search what is lost and the loss is irrevocable.

"Looking for the familiar, I had again, in spite of myself, become an islander: I was looking for the small and manageable.... The landscape was harsh and wrong. I could not relate it to myself: I was looking for the balanced rural landscapes of Indian Trinidad". (32)

It shows that the complex lies within the writer. He is not ready to accept the India, which does not match to his image of the land. He desired only the cherished 'Trinidad India' and could not come to terms with the variety of people, tastes, landscapes which represented India. He desired the land only to be the reflection of that part of Uttar Pradesh, from where his ancestors migrated but could not accept the whole of the real India with its varieties. He is afraid of the enormousness of the land and fears that he would sink into it without being offered an identity. And this fear along with his reservedness, prejudice and western perception made him misfit in the Indian society. How could land which absorbed various foreigners, reject a fellow having Indian background? It is the fellow who discarded it.

"It had enabled me, through the stresses of a long residence in England, to withdraw completely from nationality and loyalties except to persons; it had made me content to be myself alone, my work, my name (The last two so different from the first); it had convinced me that everyman was an island, and taught me to shield all that I knew to be good and pure with myself from the corruption of causes."

(33)
And hence he says

"India had not worked its magic on me. It remained the land of my childhood, an area of darkness."(34)

"In a year I had not learned acceptance. I had learned my separateness from India, and was content to be a colonial, without a past, without ancestors."(35)

Naipaul's visit to his ancestral village, meeting Dube, is altogether a disappointing experience. He fails to establish any meaningful connection with his forbears in India. His anger, frustration and sense of futility stems from his disinherition -- beneath the frustration there is an agonizing self-awareness admitting neither identity nor bond -- a strange home coming.

Viewing Naipaul’s dilemma in the article “Naipaul’s India and Mine”, Nissim Ezekiel accuses him being uninvolved and unconcerned with India. Like various others, Ezekiel also took Naipaul to task for his unsympathetic attitude towards Indian society. He elaborates his argument in the following way.

"Let me pause to explain again that I see India in most ways as Naipual sees her. All that he says against the grossness and squalor of Indian life, the routine ritualism, the lip-service to high ideals, the petrified and distorted sense of cleanliness and a thousand other things, all this is true. My dissatisfaction is with his mode of argument, his falsifying examples”.(36)

And when Ezekiel sums up his argument he states:
"I am incurably critical and skeptical. That is what I am in relation to India also. And to myself. I find it does not prevent the growth of love. In this sense only, I love India.\(^{(37)}\)

This is what Naipaul fails to achieve. To him India remains only the country of his ancestors. I. K. Masih expresses a similar opinion.

"In \textit{An Area Of Darkness}, obviously, Naipaul has become victim of the dilemma mentioned above. Why use the western criteria in determining India to be an area of darkness or light? Naipaul’s view of India is biased----I wish Naipual could identify himself with the dirt, squalor, and poverty of India."\(^{(38)}\)

His homecoming had been an assault on his European styled sensibility. Unfortunately he failed to find thousands of Gold Teeths and in spite of his one year stay it remained an unreal country-out in the void. He had hoped India to be a resting place for his troubled realization that England after all was not the centre of his world. But within a week he found out that he was an alien. "I was faceless. I might sink without a trace into that Indian crowd. I had been made by Trinidad and England; recognition of difference was necessary to me".\(^{(39)}\) And this makes him sharply react against India which he saw.

"He builds a disgusting picture of the land of his ancestors forgetting to appreciate the fact that in spite of the assault of the British for hundreds of years Indians have not broken down."\(^{(40)}\)
Naipaul fails to realize that the East cannot be West and due to this failuer of this perception India, the land of his grandparents, cannot provide him a sense of belonging. Naipaul’s 1962 visit taught him the painful lesson of his separation from India.

2

**India: A Wounded Civilization: Denial of the Ancestral Heritage**

*India: A Wounded Civilization* was published in 1977. But he began writing it during 1975 Emergency of India. From his first visit in 1962, to the second during 1975, Naipaul’s experience of India marks a qualitative change. Now he is neither too soft nor too bitter in his attitude towards India; an attained seriousness of approach shows him less moody and more sober. Still the book gives us the glimpses of his biased attitude towards India.

On his first visit India, had appeared to him ‘a strange land’, which a roused his anger, disgust and severe criticism. Now, during his 1975 visit, he is sober; he feels there is something in him that does not leave him alone, indifferent to this land. The present work shows him taking interest in all the major happening in this country.

“In India I know I am a stranger; but increasingly I understand that my Indian memories, the memories of that India which lived on into my childhood in Trinidad, are like trapdoors into a bottomless past”. (41)
Naipaul’s approach to India is basically from the outside, as an outsider. In this book, he critically takes up the modern myth of Hinduism and its fallacy. Withdrawal, retreat, balance, equilibrium which, he alleges, Hinduism teaches must have crippled the whole nation and left the people vulnerable to foreign aggression. To his eyes the consecration programme, in one temple of south India, appears to be a kind of absurdity. The temple, which was defiled by the presence of the British soldiers during the Second World War, is being renovated and its sacredness being restored by means of an obsolete method: a twelve-letter mantra chanted and written fifty million times over, for which five thousand volunteers are engaged. The deity is also installed remade with a new gold plate of inscription as a sign of new life to the God and his power. With this the devotees are now at ease. R.K. Narayan had told Naipaul that India would go on. And through the example of consecration programme Naipaul satirizes India’s going at this rate, going the same way she did thousand years back or still further earlier. He recalls the days of the great king of Vijayanagar, Krishna Deva Raya (1509-1529) and regards that the Hinduism during the days of Vijayanagar empire was a decayed one. And now in the light of Emergency, Naipaul states what seems to be the actual problem of India.

“The turbulence in India this time hasn’t come from foreign invasion or conquest; it has been generated from within. India cannot respond in her old way, by a further retreat into archaism. Her borrowed institutions have worked like borrowed institutions; but archaic India can provide no substitute for press, parliament, and courts. The crisis of India is not only political or economic. The larger crisis is of a wounded
civilization that has at last become aware of its inadequacies and is without the intellectual means to move ahead." \(^{42}\)

Naipaul regards that India is unable to move ahead because of the depletion of intellect it had undergone during the foreign rule. But in the light of the present Indian progress his statement may be considered as a hurried one. Though Naipaul recognizes the present drawbacks of India, he seems to have forgotten that the Western world, from whose standpoint he looks at India, was responsible for that depletion. His biased attitude of noticing only the drawbacks of India, without sympathizing with the land, shows his Westernized mentality as well as a detached perception.

What Naipaul calls the Hindu equilibrium is his ironic statement for unawareness of Indian people towards their surrounding social and political happenings. Naipaul calls the Hindu world as a fragile one, which seems to be stable and unyielding from outside, and yet liable to crumble at the first assault from within.

“It is as though the Hindu equilibrium required a world as small, as restricted as that of Narayan’s early novels, where men could never grow, talked much and did little, and were fundamentally obedient, content to be ruled in all things by others. As soon as that world expands, it shatters.” \(^{43}\)

The Hinduism which Naipaul, prior to his visit to India, had expected to provide him a shelter, turns out for him a decayed, deadened and disintegrated civilization.
“In the high Hindu ideal of self-realization -- which could take so many forms, even that of worldly corruptions -- there was no idea of a thousand years of defeat and withdrawal. And now the society had broken down”. (44)

He comments that Hindu society, which Gandhi had appeared to ennoble during the struggle for Independence, had begun to disintegrate with the rebirth and growth that had come with Independence.

At one place in *India: A Wounded Civilization* Naipaul says that the Gandhian image of India, as a country of non-violence, had given a new and most appropriately false idea of itself. With the passing of Gandhi, India, Naipaul asserts, is discovering again that it is cruel and horribly violent. It is shocking to see the suspension of the newly born democracy only within thirty years of its birth. In fact, the writer observes, Hindu society had begun to disintegrate with the rebirth and growth that had come with Independence.

“With Independence and growth, chaos and a loss of faith, India was awakening to its distress and the cruelties that had always lain below its apparent stability, its capacity simply for going on; Not everyone now was content simply to have his being. The old equilibrium had gone, and at the moment all was chaos. But out of this chaos, out of the crumbling of the old Hindu system, and the spirit of rejection, India was learning new ways of seeing and feeling.” (45)

Naipaul relates this reality of distress and cruelties of India to its ‘underdeveloped ego’, a term taken from the field of psychology. Naipaul quotes the views of Dr. Sudhir Kakkar, a psychotherapist at Jawahar Lal Nehru University, New Delhi, and agree with him that
this underdeveloped ego itself is created by the ‘detailed social organization’ of Indian life, and fits into that life. Naipaul’s attention is drawn to the peculiarly Indian way of perception. Kakkar had characterized the Indian ego as ‘underdeveloped’ and further propounded that the world of magic and animistic ways of thinking lie close to the surfaces and the Indian grasp of reality is relatively tenuous. Among Indians, according to Kakkar, "there seems to be a different relationship to outside reality, compared to one met within the West." Naipaul approvingly mentions the thought of Kakkar that the Indians use the outer reality to preserve the continuity of the self amidst an ever changing flux of outer events and things. The Indian mode of perception is determined by the mother who functions as an external ego of the child for much longer period than is customary in the West and many of the ego functions concerned with reality are later transferred from mother to the family and other social institutions. In Kakkar’s views the individual in India is never on his own; he is always fundamentally a member of his group, with a complex operation of rules, rituals, and taboos. What results from this underdeveloped ego, according to Naipaul, is the defect of vision. This conclusion of him is based on his complete misinterpretation of Kakkar’s views.

Naipaul substantiates his thesis regarding the negative way of perceiving both the cause and result of an underdeveloped ego by analyzing U.R. Anantha Murthys’s novel Samskar. In this regard it is noteworthy to see what Satish K. Harit has to say.
“The chief defect of Naipaul’s estimate of India is that he looks at the country of his origin through foreign (western) glasses which present numerous unreal shapes when directed at the lighted areas. His imperfect vision incapacitates him to properly comprehend the possible patterns inside and he is tragically deprived of a genuine and real view of Indian life outside his narrow vision. Naipaul’s complete exercise to develop a theory of underdeveloped ego becomes null and void by its misplaced Western model and its rigidity. He provides an estimate of the underdeveloped ego in psychological western terms like Faustian individualistic personality type. He would, however, have made a better study of this theory had he studied it as a cultural consequence of colonialism, which could have added some vitality to his theory.” (47)

Naipaul is of the opinion that one may notice lack of depth, originality and powerful thinking in the work of Indians. He criticizes the so-called improvement in the bullock cart, which, because of its cost is beyond the reach of the common farmers. He wonders why did not they replace the bullock cart by the machine, serving more purpose along with that served by bullock cart. When he visits a research and development institute, working for farming purposes, he is surprised at the absurdity of the development schemes undertaken there. He begins to conclude that all the disciplines and skills that India now seeks to exercise are borrowed and they have no native tradition of critically analyzing their achievements or failures. Even the ideas of the achievement of their civilization, which the Indians hold in high regard, are in fact given to them by the nineteenth century European scholars. Commenting on India’s past Naipaul writes:

“India by itself could not have rediscovered or assessed its past. Its past was too much with it, was still being lived out in the
rituals, the laws, the magic-complex instinctive life that muffles responses and buries even the idea of inquiry”. (48)

Apart from the exercises in borrowing, Indians have a habit of hazing out the real problem into superstition. He says that very often in India, rational conversation about the country’s problem trails away into talk of magic, or the successful prophecies of astrologers, of the wisdom of auspicious hours, of telephonic communications, and actions taken in responses to some inner voice. In this regard Satish K. Harit observes,

“His (Naipaul’s) terrible generalization that sweeps the whole of Indian psyche is too dangerous to be ignored. This tallies with Kiplingesque image of India so dearly nurtured by the West of India being a land of magic, snake-charmers and insufferable superstitions. The image that he projects is farfetched and does not tally with reality. Naipaul is not hopeful about democratic institutions in India. He believes that any attempt at modernization by Indians clearly reveals the confusions that India is caught in.----The (Indian) law too is, in the final analysis, “underdeveloped” like the Indian ego and therefore, insensitive to reality and suffering. For Naipaul, therefore, the underdeveloped ego reveals itself in every area of Indian activities.” (49)

Naipaul further calls India as a land without an ideology, people without an idea of state and the past, and having no identity beyond the tenuous ecumenism. Naipual does not see any hope of change or progress of India. Crisis of India is neither political nor economical alone. These two are the aspects of the larger crisis, the crisis of the decaying civilization. Sustaining his denunciation of the Indian civilization, he says that, in comparison to any other civilization,
modern or ancient, Indian civilization little equipped to face the challenges of the outside world. Weaknesses of Indian civilization have exposed its people to centuries of defeat and stagnation. It has not been able to develop in its people a contrast with other men nor has it given them any idea of state.

After reading this critique on India, one is naturally led to think that Naipaul seems to see only the drawbacks of India. Is India really a land having only dirt and defect? Does he never come across a thing of virtue which he could praise? Though one acknowledges that the country is overcrowded, unclean, that the people are indifferent to various factors such as social degradation, political corruption, it is a country attempting to recover speedily after centuries of being sucked of potentialities and energy. Uma Parameshwaram pities Naipaul for his prejudiced attitude and misinterpretation of the land of his ancestors:

"Even more to be pitied are the ones whose over-romanticization of India throws them for a loop when they have to face the darker side of conditions in their ancestral homeland. V.S.Naipaul's much hated An Area of Darkness is an expression of this. While expelling out the toxins from his own system and restoring a measure of health, as his later India: A Wounded Civilization shows, he certainly led a great many into yet another misinterpretation of India."^{50}

This misinterpretation is the result of his prejudiced Western approach. This reserved and prejudiced approach does not allow him to get assimilated in the land of his ancestors. His second attempt of identifying himself with India turns out to be a failure. Still he carries
an ambivalent approach towards India, the approach explicitly stated at the beginning of *India: A Wounded Civilization*.

"India is for me a difficult country. It isn’t my home and cannot be my home; and yet I cannot reject it or be indifferent to it; I cannot travel only for the sights. I am at once too close and too far."\(^1\)

Still in this statement one is able to notice a slight but positive change that has occurred in Naipaul’s attitude towards India. While the 1962 visit had taught him the bitter lesson of his separation from India, his second journey reveals a less bitter approach towards this land of his ancestors. He has at least come to realize that he cannot reject the country or be indifferent to it. The realization that “I cannot travel only for the sights. I am at once too close and too far”\(^2\) is the sign of his shifting from the area of darkness to the area of awakening. But it is during Naipaul’s third visit to India that we notice a considerable change in his attitude towards the country. His book on this third visit sheds a new light on his emotional bond with India. By this time he had succeeded in shedding most of his prejudices towards the country and its people.
India : A Million Mutinies Now: Rediscovering the Identity

India : A Million Mutinies Now is an outcome of Naipaul’s third visit to India. Published in 1990, the book is different from his other two books on India. It is a kind of final homecoming for Naipaul because he could now see India being restored to itself. The book is as much about Naipaul as it is about India. It shows Naipaul in the mood of accepting, not rejecting, the realities of the Indian social scene. India is no more an area of darkness or a wounded civilization but a reconstructing nation with million mutinies across the country. It is largely the perspective of the author rather than the nation itself that has undergone the real change. The book is divided into nine chapters and each chapter is a profusion of characters and voices, which speak for themselves. However the changing attitude of Naipaul vis-à-vis India is also perceptible through it.

The opening paragraph of the first chapter ‘Bombay Theatre’ reveals the changed attitude of the writer. During the first visit, the regular crowd of Bombay people seemed to him a kind of commotion. But the mass gathering that Naipaul comes across during the present visit does not arouse the feeling of confusion, commotion and disinterestedness. Instead he tries to find some meaning in it.

“Bombay is a crowd. But I began to feel, when I was some way into the city from the Airport that morning that the crowd on the pavement and the road was very great, and that something unusual might be happening.”(53)
Naipaul is informed that the crowd could be the gathering of Dalits celebrating Dr. Ambedkar’s birthday. This homage paid to a great man becomes a moment of triumph and honour to the men and women who had joined the celebration – an awakening of intelligence, knowledge and honour. The awareness of their particularity and the courage to assert themselves are signs of confidence and change. The alienated sections of society forming themselves into groups and counter groups speak of an awareness of particularities and each group derives its strength from different source.

"Independence had come to India like a kind of revolution; now there were many revolutions within revolution. What was true of Bombay was true of other parts of India as well: of the states of Andhra, of Tamil Nadu, Assam, the Punjab. All over India scores of particularities that had been frozen by foreign rule or by poverty or lack of opportunity or abjectness had begun to flow again" (54)

In the beginning, Naipaul records the factors that had been responsible for his reactions to India during 1962. This provides a prelude to the entirely different way in which Naipaul records his reactions in the pages that follow. He admits that during the 1962 visit he had carried along with him an image of India, which was not the part of the country in reality. He had visited the country as a member of a very small Indian community abroad; the community that had overlooked all of the regional and racial differences. His disillusionment followed when he came across an India completely different from his ideas; an India unstable with regional and caste
spirit. During his present visit India is not changed in that context but the author’s own angle of looking at it is changed.

In this chapter Naipaul presents the lives of some people from various stratas of Bombay life, people from different trades, occupation, caste and family background. He presents their families and acquaintances, their loyalties and prejudices. All these individuals stand as representatives of different groups. Naipaul’s tour of Bombay brings him in contact with every cross-section of that society – Papu the stock broker, Mr. Patil, the Shiv Sena ‘area leader’, Anwar, a young and sensitive Muslim, Mr. Raote and Mr. Ghate, Shiv Sena leader and official, respectively, the Hindu gangsters, a pujari, a Bengali, the Dalit poet Namdeo Dhasal and his wife Mallika, all representing their particular section of the society, and signs of a positive movement occurring in all the sections of the Indian Society.

Papu is a twenty-nine year old Jain stock broker, a mild mannered and Godfearing person who has been doing very well professionally. The pattern of growth is drawn out thus – he “had made more money in the last five years than his father had made in all his working life” (55) He is also deeply concerned with social welfare and desires to devote most of his time to it. He has his own concept of social work. Instead of building marble temples, he believes in building orphanages and hospitals. Through him, Naipaul presents the newly emerging concepts of the Indian society.

“My father was a self-made man. He was only a matriculate. He had to be more involved with his work. Basically, a man thinks of these other things when he’s taken care of food and
shelter. I am a little more comfortable at a younger age. That is one of the reasons why this comes up (56)

Mr. Patil, a Shiv Sena area leader, is a staunch advocate of Maharashtra for Maharashtrians. He is against the Dalit movements taking place in recent times. But in Mr. Patil, one finds the earliest beginnings of the recognition of the concepts like self and self-confidence among the masses of the Indian Society.

“His idea of ‘self’ and ‘self-confidence’ is muddled up and biased but it is a kind of beginning. This was absent in his father’s generation when the main concern was the day-to-day needs of the family. In Mr. Patil’s generation, the concerns had broadened from the personal to the social sphere but this has brought with it a lot of confusion typical to societies passing through change” (57)

Similarly, Naipaul presents the changes occurring in the Muslim society. Anwar is an educated and sensitive young man caught between his Muslim faith and its degeneration into violence. He has absolute faith in Islam. He considers lack of education as the main cause behind young Muslims slipping into crime and violence. He doesn’t think of personal progress but of the progress of the community. The very fact that he had been able to preserve his sensitivity and his reason in spite of living amidst group fights and murders is a sign of change.

Namdeo Dhasal and his wife Mallika represent another layer of the society where there is a considerable movement. Namdeo Dhasal is the founder of the Dalit Panthers and is also known for the poetry that he wrote. He has come a long way from being an outcaste Dalit
in his native village. He draws inspiration from Ambedkar and has created an identity for himself and for others. He works for the prostitutes and other oppressed classes of people. His exposure to Ambedkar's Movement has made him channelize his anger, as an outcaste, into a positive political force.

This assertion of the self is the beginning of the dismantling of old prejudices that required some men to be lower than others. It is a way of growth for thousands of marginalized people. With the coming of education and equal job opportunities, Naipaul notices, a beginning has been made.

In the chapter 'Breaking Out', Naipaul observes a three generation history of some families. Herein, Naipaul praises the spiritedness of the older generation to educate their children and grand children. He also admires their foresight when they saw education as the only means of upliftment. At the same time the chapter portrays people from different walks of life who have come out of the old Hindu world of their parents and grandparents and are working towards new goals. They are thus ushering into the Indian scene a new growth and development. The development of Naipaul's interest in Indian scenario is also noteworthy.

"The development of Indian science and technology interested me. What sort of people had made the move and given India an industrial revolution in 50 years?" (38)

To satisfy his curiosity Naipaul meets the father of Dr. Srinivasan. During his stay in Bombay, Naipaul had talked to Dr. Srinivasan, Chairman of Indian Atomic Energy Commission. He had
told Naipaul that his grandfather had been a purohit. His father, now eighty-six, and living in Bangalore had been a schoolmaster. It was his grandfather’s foresight that sent Dr. Srinivasan’s father to the University for education. In turn Dr. Srinivasan was benefited by this background.

“Out of that confluence – the new education, the purohit or brahmin’s difficult, abstract learning, the concern with the right performance of complicated rituals, the stillness that went with the performance of some of those rituals – there had come a generation of Scientists.” (59)

In this statement Naipaul also points out how the old Hindu Brahmin India survived and turned itself into an agent of growth and development of new India.

The two other Scientists, Naipaul meets in Bangalore, happen to be from a purohit or priestly background. Subramaniam is one of them. His grandfather understood that the knowledge of English was essential. He could not do much about his own education but he sent his son to an English medium school. This son went to the University and later worked with a leading scientist of those times. Into this family was born Subramaniam.

Naipaul appreciates the way the older generation of the Hindu Brahmin Society acted in educating their children. Through all his examples and citings, Naipaul wants to pay tribute to India’s all pervasive awakening.

Through the story of Kala, Naipaul gives an account of the progress taking place in the life of women. He admires the changes occurring in the thinking of Indian women. Kala is working in a big
organization. She is in her twenties and single. Her grandfather had been an administrator in a princely – state. Her mother studied up to class ten and was married. This marriage distorted her life and neither she nor her parents could do anything about it. This is why she brought up Kala to be financially independent. Having suffered herself, Kala’s mother doesn’t pester her daughter on account of her marriage. She desires her daughter only to be happy. Naipaul looks at it in an intimate way. His questioning Kala about her marriage indicates his understanding of the priorities of Indian people. He perceives that the ideas and ideologies have changed over a period of three generations and the potential that was neglected in Kala’s mother came to be recognized and valued in Kala.

"It’s all been a tremendous waste, the waste of potential in a woman nobody considered important. I value freedom a great deal now. My mother has always taught me how important education and financial independence are.’
‘You aren’t married?’
‘I have nothing against the institution, but I don’t see it as a goal.’
‘Does your mother worry about that?’
‘She would like me to get married. But not with a specific time limit. She wants me to be happy’.”

This not only shows the changing concepts of Indians, but also indicates Naipaul’s understanding of a typical Indian way of thinking. He is now able to think the way an Indian does about so many things.

To present the changes taking place in the lives of Indian women, Naipaul writes a whole chapter on them. He points out in ‘Women’s Era’ the change that has come to the Indian Woman’s ideas
of herself or her ideas about Indian women. He is curious to hear the way an Indian working woman spends her day. He discovers the tough life of the urban lower-middle class earning woman. The way he presents this picture shows how Naipaul sympathizes with them.

“-------- She’s up at the crack of dawn, about five, to fill the water for the day -------- does the morning chores, filling the tiffin-carriers for husband and children after giving them tea, breakfast ---- then she is off to work herself. A very long train journey --- she hardly gets a seat. ---- She gets off from her office at 5:30 or six ------ Before getting to the bus or station she would buy her vegetable or whatever she needs ---- Then the dinner, then the bit of children’s homework ------> Then she has to think of water again.” (61)

Against the backdrop of this he depicts another picture of the life of Upper Middle class Indian women; the life presented through the magazines for women. By presenting the picture of women from different social layers, Naipaul desires to state that it is from here that women have started acknowledging their existence and have begun to expand their ‘space’.

Namrata Rathore Mahanta points out the way Naipaul perceives the emerging concept of Indian woman.

“Naipaul has perceived Indian women negotiating changes in their situation. He has presented them in relation to the individual capacities within which women have begun to act. A woman who may appear totally powerless as a part of the entire social set up is not so at all places and at all times. Naipaul has presented her in those spaces, in those personal capacities from where she has begun to subjectify herself. She is shown as working towards her own empowerment” (62)
In the chapter ‘Little Wars’, Naipaul highlights the movements in South India. One of these movements is the non-brahmin Periyar movement. The awakening of the non-brahmins shows that even southern part of India is in this process of change. The chapter records revolutions and rebellions at personal as well as public level. This unrest is the way of new beginning for the non-brahmin, middle castes and lower castes. At the same time there is a struggle to maintain the purity and continuity of the old world. The struggle is on the both sides. It is between the old world and the new. Both worlds are changing, adapting and continuing. At present the movements speak of a new identity among people – an assertion of their newly acquired idea of the self.

Similarly, Naipaul records various other movements taking place in eastern and northern parts of India. While the naxalite movements of the eastern region are covered in the chapter entitled “After the Battle”, the chapter entitled “The Shadow of the Guru” analyses the psychology of Sikh insurgency in India. He sees the Sikh militancy as a part of a larger process of awakening in India. In ‘After the Battle’ he describes how the naxalite movement had gone astray from its ideal and was lost. He repeats the same about Sikh insurgency. He does not reject insurgency but sees it as a part of a larger process of change in the people’s idea of themselves. According to Naipaul religious identity is the first step in people’s idea of themselves. He considers militancy as a step towards the restoration of the Sikh glory. These nationwide movements of different kinds, that would have been called chaotic had the author
observed them from his 1962 angle, are seen as meaningful, fruitful and guided mutinies.

“A million mutinies, supported by twenty kinds of group excess, sectarian excess, religious excess, regional excess: the beginnings of self-awareness, it would seem, the beginning of an intellectual life, already negated by old anarchy and disorder. But there was in India now what didn’t exist 200 years before: a central will, a central intellect, a national idea. The Indian Union was greater than the sum of its parts; and many of these movements of excess strengthened the Indian state, defining it as the source of law and civility and reasonableness.”

Naipaul, who had criticized Indian democracy during his 1975 visit for its suspension within thirty five years of its adaptation, seems to correct himself and compensate for his earlier statement when he says.

“In the 130 years or so since the mutiny (of 1857) ---- the idea of freedom has gone everywhere in India. Independence was worked for by people more or less at the top; the freedom it brought has worked its way down. People everywhere have ideas now of who they are and what they owe themselves. The process quickened with the economic development that came after independence; ---- India was now a country of a million little mutinies.”

As the mutiny of 1857 aroused in the Indians the feelings about India as a nation, all the present mutinies, according to Naipaul, are helping to define “the strength of the general intellectual life, and the wholeness and humanism of the values to which all Indians now felt they could appeal. And – strange irony – the mutinies were not to be
wished away. They were part of the beginning of a new way for many millions, part of India’s growth, part of its restoration.”

What makes Naipaul adopt such a positive attitude towards India? The man who was always felt repulsed just by the air and environment of the country is seen apprehending the various forces, movements and currents in the society as a part of its progress. During his 1962 visit Naipaul had discarded any connection with the land of his forefathers. At that time the Western influence on him had made him perceive India as an utterly disgusting country. It was disgusting for him to see men begging and whining. It mattered little to him through whose eyes he was seeing the East. During that earlier visit he had perceived the various regional movements only as “the reawakening within India of disputes about language, religion, caste and region.”

He had recorded the absence of any growth and development and considered the undergoing changes in the country “only as a series of beginning, no final creation.” In that year long visit to India he “had not learned acceptance. I had learned my seperateness from India.”

But the present work on India reveals his deep attachment to this country, to that part of Uttar Pradesh from where his grandparents had migrated to Trinidad. His reaction to My Diary in India in the year 1858-59, a book by W. H. Russell exemplifies it. When Naipaul comes across this book his reaction to it is typical of an insider of the country. The book of Russell contains the details of the post – 1857 mutiny India. These details are important only to the British people. Naipaul is disillusioned with the book on account of its disregard for
the Indian surrounding. He tries to find in it some details of that region of Uttar Pradesh where his ancestors had lived.

"What was pain for Rushid was also pain for me. I couldn’t read with detachment of the history of this part of India ---- Russell’s journey from Calcutta to Lucknow lay in part through the districts from which, about 20 or 25 years later, my ancestors migrated to Trinidad, ---- That was the lesser India I was looking for in Russell’s book. It was the India only glancingly referred to -----

After his earlier assertion of his separation, this deeprooted attachment to the country of his ancestors is surprising in itself. It indicates the writer’s evolving relationship with India. Though the Indian crowd, the Indian indifference and lack of sense of responsibility towards public hygiene still irritates him, his criticism misses the earlier touch of a foreigner. He is looking at it in the similar way as the other native Indians do; as an insider.

In the last chapter of the book, “The House on the Lake: A Return to India”, he discusses candidly the psychology behind his first impassioned rage in An Area of Darkness.

"The India I had gone to in 1962 was like a different country"

He also tries to reason out the factors responsible for his inability to come to terms with this country.
"I had carried in my bones that idea of abjectness and defeat and shame. It was the idea I had taken to India on that slow journey by train and ship in 1962; it was the source of my nerves." (71)

In his visit to Kashmir, Naipaul stays at the hotel Liward. He had been there during 1962. He notices now the changes that have occurred in Kashmir, and ultimately in India. He does not feel any regret on his statement of the change occurred in his own attitude towards India

"In 27 years I had succeeded in making a kind of return journey, shedding my Indian nerves, abolishing the darkness that separated me from my ancestral past" (72)

Contrary to our expectation after An Area of Darkness and India: A wounded Civilization, the book India: A Million Mutinies Now surprises us by its empathy and modulated attitude towards India. Naipaul’s early attitude and later transformation becomes more understandable when we examine the circumstances of his life which made him an outsider wherever he went. His inability to fit makes him see himself as a person utterly displaced, connected by birth and education with three different societies and yet unable to establish living contact with any of them.

On the other hand his return to India again and again, his minute and detailed study of the Indian landscape and its people speaks of an obsession and commitment. As a result, his latest book on India becomes a positive assessment of the confusions and cultural variety represented by India. In his study of India, Naipaul reflects on a total experience, recognizing that even when he is most appalled he
is considering a situation in which he is involved and which reflects the aspects of himself. One finds Naipaul imposing an order on his own experiences and the experiences of the Indians by describing specific encounter with a general commentary on the historical progression of a community, a caste or group. The book is virtually an account of an Indian is response to his own country.

Though Naipaul’s attitude towards India is changed, he is unable to accommodate himself in this country. He is destined to remain a wanderer as an outcome of his relations to three different cultures. Though by the end of his third travelogue his emotional bonds with the land of his ancestors are strengthened, he regards himself somewhat different from the rest of the Indians.

“People in India didn’t feel as I did perhaps – being in India and having to order their day-to-day lives there – they couldn’t feel or allow themselves feel like that.”

This statement is his recognition of himself being different from a native Indian. His condition appears to be similar to that of his own creation ‘Mr. Biswas’ who at the end of his lifelong struggle, acquires a house but due to its being full of defects does not enjoy the sense of its belongingness.
A House for Mr. Biswas: A symbolic portrayal of a personal journey.

Published in 1961, A House for Mr. Biswas helps us to see how Naipaul’s sensibility has been deeply affected by his Indian as well as Trinidadian background. In the Trinidad section of The Middle Passage, Naipaul writes about the fear that overcame him. He says,

“When I was in the fourth form I wrote a vow on the end paper of my Kennedy’s Revised Latin Primer to leave within five years. I left after six; and for many years afterwards in England, falling asleep in bed sitters with the electric fire on, I had been awakened by the nightmare that I was back in tropical Trinidad”(74)

These old fears of Trinidad have tormented Naipaul since his youth and they are well documented symbolically in the novel A House for Mr. Biswas. The novel offers to present collectively what the author has highlighted separately in his travelogues noted above. It also presents the predicament of Indian immigrants to the West Indies and their descendants. His treatment of this issue is exhaustive making one realize the reasons of his calling himself a rootless entity.

Commenting an Naipaul's novels, Ian Buruma observes that Naipaul has attempted to assert his own identity through his protagonists.

"One has the impression, from many of his books, that Naipaul is rather like Salim (the protagonist of A Bend in the River). He has written of his own fear of extinction and his desire to leave
traces in words. Very often, of course, Naipaul is his own main character. His personal story, or parts of it that matter to his theme, is repeated over and over. How he escaped from Trinidad by going to England on a scholarship; how he first became a writer; how he traced the darkness of his ancestral stories in the darkness of India; how he wrote a history of Trinidad; how he came to term with change and death. Naipaul's writing, his stories – or perhaps one should say his story – are his way of making sense of his life, of trying to find order in his world, of looking for the centre."(75)

The foregoing comment serves to establish an identification of the novelist with the character of Mr. Biswas. Though Mr. Biswas is supposed to be drawn after his creator's father, his struggle to establish his identity is similar to that of Naipaul's own. It is the tale of an exile's desire to strike roots and attain an authentic selfhood. Biswas's life is a perpetual struggle between desires and obligations, inner motivations and circumstantial necessities. Besides focusing on personal life of the protagonist, the novel also tells about the ethnic and social history of a community. Drawing a similarity between Biswas and his creator S.P. Swain says.

"The life of Mr. Biswas is the life of Naipaul himself. The experience of exile works to devalue the society that the author has deserted. In a way the novel is about the author's apprehensions of his Trinidadian life."(76)

Swain further observes,

"Mr Biswas emerges out of author's alienational experiences within exile. Like Naipaul, he is an outsider eager to strike roots, to belong. Living in exile from the society. His
ambitions go unrealized. Alienated, he falls into the arduous process of acculturisation and socialisation. *A House for Mr. Biswas* delineates the formation of an individual's social identity."

The novel traces the story of a man's struggle to make something valuable out of a circumscribed and meagre existence. It is symbolized by the hero's struggle to own a house. At the centre of the novel is Mohun Biswas, in search of an identity and continuously in struggle to arrive at authentic selfhood. He symbolises the typically lower middle class Indian ambition to have a house of one's own, to die peacefully under one's own roof. Naipaul's observation with this inherited value can be poignantly marked in his protagonist's persistent efforts to realize his dream. Apparently, Mr. Biswas' consistent striving is for a house of his own, yet embedded in it is the quest for a name and identity, independent of other's charity. Thus the storyline operates on two levels- outwardly a deep desire for habitation of one's own and inwardly an intense yearning for a well defined self. The entire text should, simultaneously, be taken into consideration to mark an anguish of the protagonist in search of his sustenance, for he finds himself misfit in both of the cultures – Oriental as well as Western.

While other writers of fiction depict ordered and well established societies, Naipaul writes about a society that is chaotic and centreless, a society of customs, rituals and superstitions that drive the individual away from his roots. For Naipaul the West Indies consists of races that have been uprooted from their original society and have not produced a new culture to replace what was lost. They have been
abandoned on Trinidad, with little in common and without various resources needed to create an energetic new society. There is no creativity, no achievement; the middle classes are parasites, mimicking the ideas and activities of metropolitan societies; each group or race continues to think of foreign land as 'home'.

In *A House for Mr. Biswas* Naipaul explores the tensions of an individual trapped in such a society through a series of powerful and evocative metaphors. Biswas' fate defines the limits of possibility Naipaul sees in the West Indian situation, in its positive and negative extremities. He seems to say that, for him and his characters there is nothing left but flight and denial. Moreover the book is an exposition of a modern man's dilemma which is because of his lack of any concrete belonging and the loss of a secure world. The novel opens with a prologue that focuses on the intensive need of recognition symbolized by the house. It gives us certain facts and particulars about the life and ultimate fate of Mr. Mohun Biswas. By highlighting certain facts in advance, Naipaul makes his reader see his stand point and understand its significance. At the same time he exposes the vulnerability of Biswas' sense of belongingness or rootedness; we are told that the house, which he was proud of, owed three thousand dollars. In the light of this information the details of Mr. Biswas' perpetual struggle, as given after the prologue, to own a house, seem to be futile or absurd. Naipaul exposes the hollowness of Biswas' desire and achievement. Yet the book forms a detailed record of Biswas' journey towards his own identity established through the house.
"As a boy he had moved from one house of strangers to another; and since his marriage he felt he had lived nowhere but in the houses of the Tulsis, at Hanuman House in Arwacas, in the decaying wooden house at Shorthills, in the clumsy concrete house in Port of Spain. And now at the end he found himself in his own house, on his own 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."(78)

The prologue describes Biswas' sense of wonder at owning a house even though it was mortgaged and full of defects of all kinds. It ends with the observation that it would have been a terrible thing for Mr. Biswas if he had died without acquiring a house of his own. It would have been a great misfortune for him to have died in the Tulsi household and to have left his family among the Tulsis.

"How Terrible it would have been, at this time, to be without it: 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."(79)

It is by no means an easy struggle. The odds are against him right from the start. Life to him has been a series of big and small disasters, each designed to underscore the fact that he is necessary to no one and dependent on everyone. Marked out for misfortune from his birth by omen and circumstances we begin to sense in him a figure, who in accordance with Naipaul's general ideas, is indeed unfortunate in his time and place. Biswas is born into a family of sugar-estate workers who are hut-dwellers; born at an inauspicious
hour at midnight. He is born with such unfortunate features as six-fingers, an unlucky sneeze, good but wide teeth with spaces between them. A person with such features, according to the pundit, will be a lecher and a spendthrift and also a liar. His being born with six fingers is considered as a shocking sign. He is asked to be kept away from trees and water; particularly water. Even the midwife predicts that he will eat up his own parents. Though named after Lord Krishna, the beloved, Mohun Biswas, ironically, experiences only hostility and indifference from inside and outside his family circle.

For some months Biswas is given extra attention. As he grows up, all the fuss and extra care gradually disappears. But he is never allowed to go near water. The first job that he gets is to look after a neighbour's calf. Biswas enjoyed taking her for long walks. And one day while intently watching the fish at the stream with great amusement, he loses the calf and fails to find her. He takes it for granted that the calf has drowned in the pond. To escape the wrath, he hides himself and it is late in the evening that he is found missing by his parents. Assuming him to be drowned in the pond, his father dives into it to find his son but the father is himself drowned. Thus Mr. Biswas grows up to cause the unforeseen death of his father and becomes an object of continuous worry of his mother.

After his father's death, the peasant neighbours make life very hard for the members of Biswas family. As a result his mother sells their hut and land, causing the family to disintegrate among relatives. As a boy Biswas suffers from severe malnutrition that stunts his growth resulting in a shallow chest, very thin limbs and a body full of scars of sores. None of his teachers develop a liking for him either
because of his strange appearance or his clumsy behaviour. Due to his less attention to studies, he was flogged by his teacher, who sarcastically called him sign painter, when he saw Biswas' skill in sign painting.

From a rudimentary education which he receives from Mr. Lal, Biswas moves over to the house of Pandit Jairam to learn some Hindu rites and rituals to become a Hindu Pandit. Here he comes across an abstract and high minded cruelty which is as unsettling as the flogging. When he steals two ripe bananas from a bunch, his action arouses anger of his master, who forces him to eat bananas to an unbearable extent. Subsequently he suffers from a stomach upset during the dead of night. Frightened to disturb his master, he relieves himself in his own room on his handkerchief and throws it on a sacred tree. This leads to his expulsion from the household of Pandit Jairam.

"'You will never make a Pandit', Jairam said 'I was talking the other day to Sitaram, who read your horoscope. You killed your father. I am not going to let you destroy me. Sitaram particularly warned me to keep you away from trees. Go on, pack you bundle'". (80)

His fiasco at Pandit Jairam begins to confirm his being unlucky. From an early age he turns out to be a failure and carries this badge wherever he goes. After this enterprise at Pandit Jairam, Tara, his aunt, sends him to Ajodha's rumshop to work as a shop assistant under Bhandat—a lecher and drunkard. Suspecting Mr. Biswas as his owner's spy, Bhandat keeps taunting and humiliating him before customers. One day Bhandat accuses him of stealing money, beats him mercilessly and compels him to leave his job. Mr. Biswas can not
digest the insult. On his coming home to his mother he finds himself unwelcome. He directly asks her.

"Why do you keep on sending me to stay with other people?" (81)

Mr. Biswas has expected consolation, but in return she said, as though arguing with him.

"Where will you go then?" (82)

Failing to appreciate her miserable plight, he mistakes it as her lack of love of him. This miserable experience makes him emerge as a man of self-respect and he decides not to be the object of any one's charity henceforth. He tells his mother.

"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." He waved his arching arm about the mud walls and the low, sooty thatch." (83)

Thus begins the haunt for the house and an authentic selfhood. The novel is all about the unaccommodated man's repeated attempts to find a stable location in a ramshackle and random world.

Naipaul reveals the feelings of loneliness resulting from this unaccommodated condition in the very first chapter of the novel, when Bipti, Biswas' mother sells the hut and the land of her own, after her husband's death.

"And so Mr. Biswas came to leave the only house to which he had some right. For the next thirty-five years he was to be a wanderer with no place he could call his own, with no family except that which he was to attempt to create out of the
engulfing world of the Tulsis. For with his mother's parents dead, his father dead, his brothers on the estate at Felicity, Dehuti as a servant in Tara's house, and himself rapidly growing away from Bipti who, broken, became increasingly useless and impenetrable, it seemed to him that he was really quite alone". (84)

Having been cut off from the warmth of his Mother's affections and having resolved to get a job on his own, Biswas becomes a sign-painter, which for him is a noble profession with a lot of creativity and possibility. It is this profession that brings him to the Hanuman House at Arwacas. There, while painting a board for the Tulsi store, he is attracted towards Shama, one of the dozen daughters of the Tulsis. He makes a clumsy advance towards her and is promptly accepted as the girl's suitor and the next thing he knows is that he is married to her, already caught in the Tulsi trap. Biswas begins to regret his weakness from the very beginning because his marriage leads to lose his identity completely in the Tulsi household, full of married daughters, their husbands and their children. Now there is no option left for him. Since it is supposed to be a love-mate, his hope for a handsome dowry too gets crushed.

"He assumed that they had decided to give more than a dowry, that they would help with a job or a house, or both. He would have liked to talk things over with Seth and Mrs. Tulsi; but they had become unapproachable as soon as notice had been given at the registrar's." (85)

Without any big ceremony his marriage takes place in the registrar's office. He feels so thoroughly cheated when the family does not even pay for the signs he painted.
After his marriage, Biswas realizes that he is supposed to live there, in the Hanuman House, as other sons-in-law used to live, as a part of Tulsi organization, and to lose all sense of self-pride.

The organization of the Tulsi house was simple. ---- The daughter and their children swept and washed and cooked and served in the store. The husbands, under Seth’s supervision, worked on the Tulsi land, looked after the Tulsi animals, and served in the store. In return they were given food, shelter and a little money; their children were looked after; ---- Their names were forgotten; they became Tulsis. (86)

Mr. Biswas too is expected to merge and assimilate his identity with the Tulsis. But his spirited self-respect does not approve this.

Mr. Biswas had no money or position. He was expected to become a Tulsi. At once he rebelled”. (87)

When Govind, one of the brothers-in-law of Shama, advises Mr. Biswas to give up his present job for becoming a driver, he retorts back.

"Give up sign – painting? And my independence? No boy. My motto is paddle your own canoe”. (88)

Biswa’s relationship with the Tulsi clan goes a long way in defining his struggle for selfhood. The oppressive presence of the Tulsis suffocates him and makes him feel imprisoned. He rebels in non-conformist acts and words. His resistance is being totally absorbed by the Tulsis and his desire to maintain some difference between them and himself takes a variety of forms. His speaking of Creole English, for example, when he is in Hanuman House, is a
deliberate and calculated act. Then there is nick naming of people which he is so good at. The marriages of Tulsi daughters are termed "cat-in-bag" transacciones. Mrs. Tuilsi is called as 'Old queen'; 'Old hen', or 'old cow' depending upon the intensity of his reaction. Shekhar and Owad, brothers of Shama, are called, 'little gods' and Mr. Seth, is let off with just "Big Boss". Above all, he calls the whole Hanuman House a "Zoo" filled with all sorts of crazy creatures. For this nicknaming he is insulted by Seth before all Tulsi members. Infuriated further and in order to wound the ego of Tulsi people, he joins hands with the rivals of the Tulsi family. He goes to the house of Mr. Nath to listen to the progressive speech of Mr. Pankaj Rai and later mocks at conservative Tulsi mind set.

This kind of nicknaming, wry humor and joining hands with rivals, are Biswas' ways of hitting back at the system which reduces him almost to sub-human levels of irrelevance. His clowning, his querulousness and his blasphemies are all, at one level, the fluttering of a trapped self, caught in a world from which there is no easy or lasting escape for him. His clowning especially is defence against his being turned into a puppet of deterministic forces, and ridicule also is used by him as a defence in situations which he cannot otherwise control or dominate.

Mr. Biswas becomes a vexed question for Mrs. Tulsi and Mr. Seth. His refusal to conform to the code of conduct at the Hanuman House leads to his expulsion from there. He is now sent to the Chase, a cluster of mud huts in the heart of sugarcane area, to take charge of the Tulsi food shop there. Though this arrangement is of great humiliation to Mr. Biswas he welcomes it because he gets enough
freedom to live with his family. For the first time he really enjoys a food that is not produced in the mess of Hanuman House.

"And, further miracle, she produced a meal from that kitchen in the yard. He could not look on it as simply as food, for the first time a meal had been prepared in a house which was his own. He felt abashed; and was glad that Shama did not treat it as an occasion. Only feeding him at the table in the bedroom---she did not sigh or stare or look weary and impatient as she had done in the lotus decorated long room at Hanuman House." (89)

He is satisfied with the fact that Shama has become a responsible woman at the Chase. She is now a wife and housekeeper and nearing the time of her delivery. When she gives birth to a daughter at Hanuman House, to the utter despair of Biswas, the child is given the name Savi by Mr. Seth and Hari. Mr. Biswas, a person of self-respect resents it and also protests against his occupation having been mentioned in the birth certificate of Savi as that of a labourer.

At the Chase, Biswas tries his best to adapt himself to the surrounding of illiterate people and dull creative atmosphere but fails to strangle his urge for better independent life. It hurts his pride that even this arrangement at the Chase is part of someone else's charity, this time of the Tulsi’s. So he considers his stay at this place only as a pause, a preparation, a prelude to a better future. Even his undertaking of running a Tulsi shop ends in failure.

The customers of his shop buy things on credit without any urgency for returning the balance. He is even got involved in legal matters and ultimately his shop is utterly at loss. At Mr. Seth’s
suggestions he burns the shop to claims at least the insurance money. Thus he is compelled to return to Hanuman House, again, as a failuer.

But during his six years stay at the Chase, a drastic change comes over Mr. Biswas in his attitude towards Hanuman House. This change forms an important stage in his progress towards locating himself somewhere. He begins to realize that Hanuman House is not a chaotic place as he used to think. Now it seems to him a world more real than the Chase. He feels that he needs such a place of refuge, a place of warmth, a place where he becomes lost in the crowd. He begins to develop an intimacy with the inmates of Hanuman House.

Mr. Biswas's next misadventure is set in the barracks of Green Vale, another Tulsi estate, where he is sent as a driver-cum-overseer, at a salary of twenty-five dollars a month. At Green Vale he begins to feel even more bitter because he finds the one room, which has been assigned to him in the barracks there, to be most uncomfortable. His having to live in this room deepens the morbid streak in his nature. The barrack yard with its mud and its animal droppings gives him nausea. He decides to give his mind to building his own house. It was always his first thought. When Seth gives him the money which he has obtained from the insurance company as compensation for the shop at the Chase, it occurs to Biswas that he should build a house of his own. He decides to put this money aside and add to it until he has enough to build a house. He has been thinking deeply about this house and by now he knows exactly what he wants.

"He wanted, in the first place, a real house, made with real materials. He didn't want mud for walls, earth for floor, tree
branches for rafters and grass for roof. He wanted wooden walls, all tongue-and-groove. He wanted a galvanized iron roof and a wooden ceiling. He would walk up concrete steps into a small verandah, through doors with colored pans into a small drawing room; from there into a small bedroom, then another small bedroom, then back into the small verandah. The house would stand on tall concrete pillars...”

Along with this development in his idea of his house, he also begins to develop as a father. He becomes well aware of his responsibility towards his daughter. Yet an unknown fear begins to trouble him at Green Vale.

“One child claimed; one still hostile; one unknown. And now another.
Trap!
The future he feared was upon him. He was falling into the void, and that terror, know only in dreams, was with him as he lay awake at nights..... The relief that morning brought steadily diminished.”

To surmount his fear he decides to begin constructing his house immediately.

“That week he decided he could not wait any longer. Unless he started his house now he never would. His children would stay at Hanuman House, he would remain in the barrack room, and nothing would arrest his descent into the void.”

Accordingly, Mr. Biswas, after getting clearance from Seth, gets into touch with a builder, Mr. MaClean, and the construction of the house begins. He tells Mr. MaClean that he wants two bed-rooms and a drawing room. Mr. Biswas does not have enough money with
him but he thinks that he would be able to save enough every month from his salary to be able to meet the expenses of the construction as it progresses. His intention to borrow money from Ajodha comes to nothing. As the construction proceeds, it is found that the cost of good material, which Mr. Biswas desired to use in his construction, would exceed his capacity to pay. The result is that, at Mr. Maclean's suggestions, secondhand and unsatisfactory material has to be used for the construction. In spite of all the economy, however, the house remains incomplete because of shortage of money. Only one of the two bedrooms is fit for habitation and Mr. Biswas moves from the barracks into this bed-room thinking that the feeling of living in his own house would make him cheerful. But the fear of an unknown, uncertain thing again begins to haunt him. Though he does not realize its reason or nature one may certainly know that is due to his loneliness at the Green Vales, as Shama frequently goes to Hanuman House and spends long periods of time there. And, now, his moving to his own one bed-room house worsens the matter. Along with his son, Anand he undergoes a dreadful experience in this incomplete house. A torrential rain accompanied by a howling storm, nearly pulls down his house. All this brings about a nervous break down, as a result of which Mr. Biswas is carried to Hanuman House to be nursed back to health. Subsequently, the incomplete house which Mr. Biswas has built, is burned down by the labourers. And once more Mr. Biswas is homeless and has to depend on the charity of Mrs. Tulsi and Seth.

But Santosh Chakrabarti looks at the Green Vale experience and Biswas' coming back to Hanuman House as a positive change
"The Green Vale experience is a disaster because his incompetence in labour management is compounded by the trauma of failure in building his first house...... This is an anti-climactic end to his rebellion. The inescapable truth is that the Hanuman House is a convenient transfer point for Biswas and family, for under the slightest inconvenience Shama has the habit of returning to the Hanuman House...... But now with Biswas' return to the House under the direst of circumstances another journey for him begins-the journey towards stability and identity". (93)

The horrible experience at Green Vale leads Mr. Biswas to think seriously over his future. After the stormy life at Green Vale he feels pleased to be at Hanuman House again. On Shama's suggestion the furniture from Green Vale is brought back to Hanuman House. Evidently she does not want even Mr. Biswas going back to that place again. In fact just the name of that place becomes the source of panic even in Biswas. When Seth asked him.

"You thinking of going back at Green Vale?"
To his own surprise, Mr. Biswas found himself behaving in the old way. With an expression of mock-horror he said, "Who? Me?". (94)

As Biswas could not and does not want to go back to the Green Vale, the uncertainty of his future becomes the matter of his constant worry. Though he enjoys the security, comfort and warmth of the Blue Room in Hanuman House, the protection and care of the Tulsi household cannot solve his problem of rootlessness. The care of Hanuman House provides temporary reprise, but his condition is actually emblematic of the psychological nowhereness of a rootless person. He reviews his own situation. He is the father of four children,
but his position is just what it had been when he was only seventeen, unmarried and ignorant of the very existence of the Tulsi’s. He is now without a job and without any means of earning a livelihood. The job at Green Vale is over and he cannot rest in the Blue Room forever and live continuously on the charity of the Tulsis. It is the time for him to take some decision about his future. He is also running short of money. Even Seth asks him to decide something about his future. Yet the security of Hanuman House makes him unable to take a decisive step. But when he learns that Mrs. Tulsi and Owad, Shama’s younger brother, are coming back to Hanuman House, he thinks of an immediate action. Because of the pricks of his self-respect, he is unwilling to face Mrs. Tulsi and Owad. He does not want himself to be presented to them as a failure once again.

And then comes his departure. Without meeting Shama and the newly born child, he sets out to seek his own world, away from and independent of the Tulsis. For the first time after his marriage, he completely frees himself from the Tulsi Household and musters up enough courage to make his life worthwhile with his own space.

“He was going out into the world, to test it for its power to frighten. The past was counterfeit, a series of cheating accidents. Real life, and its especial sweetness, awaited; he was still beginning”. (95)

For the rest of his life, it is the capital city of Trinidad, Port of Spain, and not the constricting Arwacas, that largely becomes the area of his activity, both professional and emotional. Moreover his departure
from the Tulsi house hold is the step towards acquiring his own self-hood.

In Port of Spain, an intensely fresh awakening dawns on him. He comes across a city made up of individuals, each of whom has a place in it. His venture into journalism comes for Biswas at a time when his self has taken a lot of beating from all quarters. Hemmed in from all directions, moving from job to job and one kind of habitation to another, he has been reduced to being a passive victim of circumstances. In Port of Spain, he wants to give a free play to his creativity. While passing through a street where a number of newspaper offices are situated, Mr. Biswas thinks of looking for a job there. He meets the editor of *Trinidad Sentinel* and gets a job as a sign-painter. From sign-painter he is promoted to the post of a newspaper reporter. The editor Mr. Burnett wants him to write some report which would shock the readers. He gives Biswas some practice to write. His wry humour and nicknaming the Tulsi family member in an attempt to be different from that world of Hanuman House, along with his invective and ire reserved in his soul against that Tulsidom, when brought scathingly on paper, wins Mr. Burnett's heart.

Journalism saves him; more than that, it is the city, Port of Spain, that saves him. In Tulsidom and in Green Vale he felt smothered. The city brings about a refreshing and invigorating change in his being. There is an openness and an impersonality about the city which offers Mr. Biswas a ray of hope and complete consciousness. Above all the city gives him the possibility of establishing relationships on terms very different from those available to him in Tulsidom. His humorous pieces and caricatures, along with his
photograph, appear frequently in the newspaper and he becomes suddenly well known. Now he wants to recover his family from Tulsidom.

Naipaul's efforts in this novel is to present a rootless person who develops a social self in the long run. It develops in the process of an individual's social interactions and experiences. Port of Spain helps Biswas to evolve as a social self. The terror of disintegration which bothers Biswas so much during his stay at Green Vale and Tulsidom, is dispelled greatly by his coming in contact with a new world where he experiences lot of freedom. Though, at the beginning of his stay at Port of Spain, he lives again in the house of the Tulsis, his self-respect is kept intact when he pays rent to Mrs. Tuisi for his dwelling. Moreover, his living there with Shama and children, helps him to develop an intimacy with his own family. The loneliness at Green vale, that caused his nervous break down is seen nowhere near him in Port of Spain. His war on relations with his wife and son enable him recover some of his lost self and a new dimension is added to his life. Even Shama shows a wisely interest in his clothes. This newly found glory gives further fillip in his newspaper and creative writing; sentence generates sentence in quick succession, one good paragraph leads to another better one, resulting into a powerful journalistic mastery. He is therefore, promoted to the rank of an investigator.

Biswa's career at Port of Spain begins all of a sudden with an unexpected vigour. His reconciliation with Shama is not a breach bridged anew, but a removal of something that made them cruel to each other. Even the reconciliation with Hanuman House is brought
about and it brings his rebellion to naught. In a big way Hanuman House embittered his mind. The Tulsis did not act up to his expectations, may be his expectation was a bit impractical. He is now in Mrs. Tulsis Port of Spain house with his own family, not under her charity or authority, but as her tenant.

This phase of his life is very crucial, thoroughly illustrating how he tries to be a writer. The Sentinel career gives him further inspiration to be a writer, as his reading interest gave him and is still giving, an aspiration for an acute and adequate expression. His desire to be a writer brings him in touch with a correspondence course in journalism. He spends beyond his means, even to the severe opposition of Sham who appers to be more practical than Biswas. Eventually his stories or material sent to the school of Journalism, for publication, are sent back to him, without being published and making him aware of the futility of his action. Ignoring Shama’s protest, he had also bought a second hand portable typewriter on credit. His repeated attempts, to write some stories, fail again as he is unable to go beyond the opening sentences.

At Port of Spain, another important development occurs in his personality. He becomes more responsible towards his children, and particularly with Anand. Anand’s writing of a composition, in which he describes his own experience of having got drowned, impresses Biswas. He meets the headmaster of Anand’s school, who agrees with Biswas that Anand could win a scholarship if he studies hard. Biswas makes arrangements for Anand to be given private lessons after school.
But when it seems to Biswas that troubles in his life have come to an end, the change in policy at his office greatly disturbs him. The earlier editor, Mr. Burnett, has to leave the Sentinel and a new regime starts at the newspaper office. Under this new regime, the administration at his office undergoes vast changes. A booklet called Rules for Reporters, containing rules about language, dress and behaviour, is printed and distributed among the reporters. Biswas is felt deeply annoyed with these instructions. Everyday some new directive is issued to govern the conduct of the reporters. Biswas begins to feel very restive in the face of such directives. He becomes rebellious and thinks of starting his own magazine. Suddenly, Biswas is relieved of his duty of writing court-news, news about funerals and news of cricket matches. He is deputed to work for Sunday magazine and is required to write a weekly feature. These events revive his fears and everyday he expects to be summoned by his seniors and told that his service is no longer required. The polices of the new management, curbing the style of its reporters, again reduce Biswas to a mechanical existence.

"Now, writing words he did not feel, he was cramped, and the time came when he was not sure what he did feel. He had to note down ideas and juggle them into place. He wrote and rewrote, working extremely slowly, nagged by continual headaches, completing his articles only to meet the Thursday dead-line..... He said nothing to Shama, but he lived now in constant expectation of the sack. He knew his work was not good". (96)

The news of Biswas' ridiculous situation at office, somehow reached Anand's school. His classmates started to laugh at him
because, according to their version, Biswas was being treated most shabbily at his office. Biswas, feeling offended, assured his son that in case of any trouble in his job, they would go back to Hanuman House.

"I don’t depend on them for a job. You know that. We could go back any time to Hanuman House. All of us you know that". (97)

This comment shows Biswas’s attachment to Hanuman House. Earlier he used to consider that place as a trap for him. But now he has begun to regard it as a place of shelter in difficulties. He is sure of its certainty, warmth and security. Instead of saying that he would leave his present job and stay in Port-of-Spain by adopting another job or sign-painting again, he straight away thinks of going back to Hanuman House.

Irrespective of his rage, rebellious nature and venom towards the Tulsidom, Biswas has developed a relationship of intimacy with Hanuman House. It has become a place where he is sure to get shelter in his troubles; a place like motherland for an emigrant over which he has a right-by-birth. This state of mind of Biswas is indicative of his complex regarding the place of belonging. Having lost his paternal house, he begins to assume Hanuman House as his own.

But Biswas' notion of Hanuman House receives a great shock, when the Tulsidom begins to disintegrate. When Seth, in order to park his lorries, destroys the rose garden developed by Biswas at the Port of Spain house of Tulsis, what is surprising for Biswas is the fact that Seth has some lorries of his own. He has never thought of Tulsi property as belonging to any particular person. Further it is also known that Seth has quarrelled with the rest of the Tulsi family and
that a state of war now exists between him and the Tulsi family. This is the sign of disintegration of Hanuman House, which rapidly takes place with the Tulsis moving to Short hills, another Tulsi estate.

On Mrs. Tulsi’s persuasion, Biswas also agrees to move his family from Port of Spain to Short hills. He agrees on the condition that he would continue with his job at Sentinel. She also hints at the possibility of his building a small house of his own at Short hills. But their stay at Short hills is not as comfortable as it used to be at Hanuman House. Moreover there is an increase in the members of Tulsi family at Short hills. Biswas regards his stay here as a kind of interlude. His job at Sentinel has made him independent of Tulsis; and Short hills is simply an insurance against the possibility of his being dismissed by the newspaper. His stay here provides him with an opportunity to save money and also to earn more money by stealing some oranges from Tulsi estates and selling them to a shop keeper in Port of Spain.

Being left uncontrolled because of Seth's absence and withdrawal of Mrs. Tulsi to seclusion, some of the sons-in-law begin to plunder Tulsi estate for their own benefit. Their loyalties are no more to the Tulsidom. The domestic atmosphere at Short hills becomes more chaotic because of over crowdedness. Children begin to face inconvienence in their going to school at Port of Spain. This gives rise to disputes among the Tulsi family members. After one of such insulting experiences, Biswas decides to build a house of his own at Short hills. After his earlier failure at Green Vale this is his second attempt to have his own house. He finds a site and construction of the house begins at that site. Both, Shama and children are unenthusiastic
towards Biswas' project. But his resolution is made stronger because of their protest. Even the house is built with great speed that he has no time for withdrawal from the project. He now shifts to this house along with his family. He has certainly achieved independence but Shama and children are not satisfied with this change. The children want to go back to Port of Spain, to the life they had been leading before coming to short hills.

"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 girls stayed close to Shama, as though frightened to be by themselves; and in her shanty kitchen Shama sang sad Hindi song". (98)

Despite this sad song of Shama, her husband has a sense of victory. Yet this second attempt of owing the house ends in futility.

One night a fire breaks out in the wood near by and there is a danger of Mr. Biswas new house catching fire. The children, alarmed by the danger of the spreading fire, rush to the Tulsi household. Several members of the Tulsi household hurries to Mr. Biswas' house. They help in extinguishing the fire which has already burned down a portion of the house. Thus the dream of the house, having been realized, is shattered in a short period of time and Biswas is again brought back to Port of Spain.

But now he and his family are not the only ones to move from Short hill to Mrs. Tulsi's house in the capital city. Other sons-in-law of Mrs. Tulsi, such as W.C.Tuttle, Govinda along with their family have arrived to live in that house at Port of Spain. A widow, who was
also given a small room at the house, has begun to accept students from Short hills and Arwacas as boodler in the same house. Thus the house of Mrs. Tulsi at Port of Spain has become a crowdy place where Biswas could not get any pace of mind. Prior to their move to Short hills only Biswas' family used to live in that house, which gave them a feeling of authority. But now they are pushed to two rooms only. Biswas now begins to feel fed up not only with the noise in the house but also with the insanitary conditions which prevailed there. Despite his tiresome duties and the fear of the sack, the office of Sentinel has now become the haven to which he escaped every morning from his house. His complaints regarding stomach and indigestion have now become chronic. Even children begin to suffer from nervous ailments; Anand having suddenly developed asthma and Savi suffering from a skin disease. For Biswas his office is now the only place where he can find some peace of mind. He begins to spend as much time at his office as possible.

His condition became more miserable, when Sentinel duties brought him in contact with Indian farmers on the island. They treated him as an incredibly superior being. But Biswas, being well aware of his miserable state at house, realized that in reality, they were far above him.

"And these same men who, like his brothers, had started on the estates, and saved and bought land of their own, were building mansions; they were sending their sons to America and Canada to become doctors and dentists. There was money in the island. It showed in the suits of Govind, who drove the Americans in his taxi; in the possessions of W.C. Tuttle, who hired out his lorry to them; in the new cars; the new buildings.
And from this money, despite Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus, despite Samuel Smiles, Mr. Biswas found himself barred”.

He broods over his own future and particularly over Anand’s future.

“Mr. Biswas didn’t smile. Govind had six suits, Govind was making money, Govind would soon have his own house. Vidiadhar (Govind’s son) would be sent abroad to get a profession. And what awaited Anand? A job in the customs, a clerkship in the civil service: intrigue, humiliation, dependence”.

He is sorry for his own plight, his dependence and when he is appointed as an investigator of Sentinel to select deserving destitutes who are really in need of financial assistance, he ironically calls himself as Deserving Destitute Number One. Though a responsible father, his financial condition does not allow him to fulfill even small demands of his children. When Anand is not expected to score well in his exhibition examination, the requirement of money for his college education constantly troubles Shama and Biswas. Something more awaits for Biswas.

One day news comes that Bipti, Biswas’ Mother, has died. He is oppressed by a sense of loss. After returning from the funeral, he shows symptoms of having been deeply affected by his mother’s death. He starts going alone for long walks at night. He remains silent most of the time and begins writing to keep his mind occupied. He is somewhat relieved of his sorrow when Anand, unexpectedly, stands third in the merit list of scholarship winners. Anand begins to attend a college and Biswas now shows a great interest in his studies. But his gloominess again overcomes him.
“Change had come over him without his knowing. There had been no precise point at which the city had lost its romance and promise, no point at which he had begun to consider himself old, his career closed, and his vision of the future become only visions of Anand’s future” \(^{(101)}\)

Having continuously struggled with his life for nearly thirty five years, Biswas has developed an attitude of frustration. He begins to feel that things are beyond his reach and he has grown to accept the circumstances as unalterable. The buzzing house at Port of Spain, its split-in condition, and sneezing himself into two congested rooms increases his sullenness. His dream of ‘house’ has become more and more unreachable. He has grown to look upon ‘house’ as a thing that concerns other people. Those houses he came across, have ceased to rouse his ambition or misery. He has nearly lost his vision of the house.

“He sank into despair as into the void which, in his imagining, has always stood for the life he had yet to live. Night after night he sank. But there was now no quickening panic, no knot of anguish. He discovered in himself only a great unwillingness, and that part of his mind which feared the consequences of such a withdrawl was increasingly stilled” \(^{(102)}\)

He is still investigating the cases of the destitute and recommending the deserving ones. But his state of mind is not the same. He does not enjoy his job any more.

Suddenly, quite suddenly, he is revitalized when he is offered the government job as a Community Welfare officer at the salary of fifty dollars a month higher than what he was getting from *Sentinel*. 
So he submits his letter of resignation to the editor of the *Trinidad Sentinel*, and begins his new job.

Though the job as Community Development Officer is tiresome, it offers Biswas financial stability. He purchases a car which arouses the jealousy of other members of the house. Yet he is not in the condition of buying a house. The miserable condition at the house always upsets him. Wearing new suits and driving one's own car, temporarily appease him. Moreover all these achievements of him are neutralized with one stroke, when one day. W.C. Tuttle declares that he has bought a house of his own. Biswas is very upset by this news. He ignores the consolation which Shama offers to him and begins to pick quarrels with her in order to give an outlet to his irritation. He secretly visits the house of Tuttle and to his disappointment he finds it in a good area, on a whole plot and in a good condition. When Tuttles leave the Tulsi House, Biswas consoles himself with the thought that their departure may make his stay at the Tulsi house somewhat comfortable and he would enjoy some peace of mind. He also thinks of making money by renting the rooms the Tuttles occupied.

But his hope is dashed when it is announced that Mrs. Tulsi is coming from Short hills to take possession of those rooms vacated by the Tuttles. One more stroke comes when Owad returns from London after completing his degree in medicine. Biswas begins to feel uneasy. It occurs to him that he and his family might be asked to vacate the rooms.

"But he was uneasy. Once, many years before, he had felt that he had to leave Hanuman House before Owad and Mrs. Tulsi
returned to it. Now he experience the same unease: the same sense of threat, the same need to leave before it was too late. Over and over he checked the money he had saved.... The sum never varied: he had six hundred and twenty dollars.... But it could not attract a loan to buy an house other than one of those wooden tenements that awaited condemnation". (103)

He starts looking for suitable accommodation on rent but could not find the right one. Ultimately he is compelled to vacate the two rooms he is occupying and to live temporarily in the tenements. He is told that the house is to be repaired before Owad comes. After necessary repairs of the house he returns to it, but not to the earlier two rooms, which he used to occupy. He is given only one room, that too at the back. He takes it as an insult. But more shocking insult is yet to come. Returns of Owad from London and Mrs. Tulsi from Short hills make his stay in that house suffocating. He always feels himself under their dominance. Under Owad’s shadow the Biswas family is nearly relegated to a miserable condition and begins to receive blows one after another. Biswas the born rebellious and sensitive in self-respect, at once rebels against the Tulsi dominance. This rebellion has been the part of his life, but now having relished the life of independence, he no more succumbs to Tulsi dominance and brings his lifelong struggle to an end by purchasing a house of his own.

It happened thus. Till now Biswas intensely felt to separate himself completely from Tulsidom, not to remain as a dependent on them or as a receiver of their charity. But his financial limitations have forbade him from taking a decisive step. But now his self respect is severely damaged when Anand is insulted by Owad. This insult makes Anand appeal his father to leave the place for another one.
“Pa. We must Move.’ Mr. Biswas turned. ‘We Must move. I can’t bear to live here another day.”'(124)

This leads to a furious quarrel between Biswas and Mrs. Tulsi. In his annoyance and dissatisfaction he makes some bitter comments on Owad. As a result Mrs. Tulsi asks Biswas to go to hell. She also reminds him the day he came to Hanuman House with no more clothes than could be hung upon a single nail. Biswas curses the day on which he stepped into Hanuman House. Biswas gives her notice of his leaving the house whereupon Mrs. Tulsi also gives him notice to quit her house.

Having received the notice to quit, Biswas has to look for some other accommodation. This brings him in contact with a solicitor’s clerk. This man has somehow come to know that Mr. Biswas needs some residential accommodation. So he comes up to Mr. Biswas and invites him to lunch. In the course of the lunch, the solicitor’s clerk says that he is living with his mother in his house situated in Sikkim street and that his mother, having developed heart trouble, can not climb up to the upper storey of the house. The Solicitor’s clerk says that he has been offered a house in another locality where his mother can live on the ground floor. But in order to buy that house he has first to sell his house in Sikkim street. Being in dire need of accommodation, Biswas agrees to go with that man to have a look at his house. He then drives in pouring rain in the company of the solicitor’s clerk to see the house. He is greatly impressed by the look of the house. The solicitor’s clerk offers that house for Six thousand dollars and the bargain is struck at five thousand and five hundred dollars.
The need for an immediate accommodation, the first impression of the clerk's house along with the desire to overcome the insulting treatment at the hands of Mrs. Tulsi, contribute to take the hasty decision of buying the house. In his own hurry he does not realize the haste of the clerk or does not suspect his eagerness to sell the house. If he has not been disturbed because of the strain at the house, he might have queried the clerk's eagerness more impolitely. The impatience and hurry of his own forbid him from noticing various drawbacks in the clerk's house.

"If it had not been raining he might have walked around the small yard and seen the absurd shape of the house. He would have seen where the celotex panels on the eaves had fallen away, providing unrestricted entry to the bats of the neighborhood. He would have seen the staircase that hung at the back, open, with only a banister, and sheltered by unpainted corrugated iron. He would not have been deceived into cosiness by the thick curtain over the back doorway on the lower floor. He would have seen that the house had no back door at all ....... But he saw none of these things. He had only a picture of a house cosy in the rain, with a polished floor....." (105)

Shama is completely against his decision. But her opposition only makes his resolution stronger. When she objects to the price of the house, he dismisses her with a flimsy answer. He silences her with the taunt that she will be happy only if he and his children go on living with her mother as her dependents. In his excitement, even the amount five thousand and five hundred dollar seems to be reachable.

"A week before Mr. Biswas would have dismissed any thought of buying a house for five thousand dollars. He wanted one at three thousand or three thousand five hundred; he never looked at any above four thousand. And the strange thing now was
that, having raised his sights, it did not occur to him to look at other five thousand dollar houses”\(^{(106)}\)

Because of the present situation and necessity he does not even think of buying any other and better house at five thousand and five hundred. It is only after the purchase that he realized his mistake, the hastiness of his decision.

To meet the financial necessities, Biswas goes to Ajodha and asks for a loan of four thousand and five hundred dollars. Ajodha gives the amount on an interest of eight per cent per annum to be repaid in five years. But when he leaves Ajodha’s house, Biswas at once becomes aware of certain realities.

“It was only when he drove away that his exhilaration left him and he saw that he had involved himself not only in debt but also in deception. Ajodha did not know that the car had not yet been paid for; Ajodha did not know that he was only an unestablished civil servant. And the loan could not be repaid in five years; the interest alone would come to thirty dollars a month”.\(^{(107)}\)

After the Solicitor’s clerk vacated the house, Biswas, along with his family visits the house. It is his first afternoon visit when the sun shines brightly. At once they begin to discover various faults in the house. The first of their discovery is that only kitchen escapes the sun and whole or the remaining house is heated. The light hurts their eyes and makes them sweat. Without curtains the house seems smaller than the children remembered and has lost the cosiness they have noted. Mr. Biswas discovers the absence of a back door. Shama discovers that two of the wooden pillars supporting the staircase
landing are rotten. Now a drastic change has come over her. Though she was against Biswas’ decision to own that house, she has left behind her grudge against him or his decision. On their visit they all begin to discover the faults in the house but instead of complaining or criticizing as usual Shama only says that the house needs a few repairs before their moving in there. Biswas is pleased with this change in her. This is for him a victory similar to that of owning the house.

Further they discover that the landing pillars are rotten because they stand next to a tap. The water from the tap simply runs into the ground. The yard is found to be without drainage system. The windows downstairs would not close. The front door flies open in a strong wind even when locked and bolted. And as they discover more and more, Biswas begins to refer the solicitor’s clerk as a tout, crook, Nazi and blasted communist. Biswas has to spend lot of money on repairs. By the time some repairs are carried out, he has no more money left with him and for further repairs Shama has to borrow two hundred dollars from Basdai, the widow who lives at the Tulsi house.

At last they leave the Tulsi house. A lorry is hired and all furniture is packed into it and taken to their own house. From his Indian neighbour Biswas comes to know certain facts about the house. All of them shocking. The first shock for him is that the clerk has built the whole house himself. For that he had worked on Saturdays, Sundays and in the afternoons. It was like a hobby with him. He did not even employ a carpenter for building the house. He did the wiring for the whole house. And the material used for it was of third grade quality. Biswas is told that the pillars at the four corners are made up of hollow clay bricks. He is further surprised when he is told that
building low quality houses and selling them at profit is a kind of profession for the clerk. But the last revelation is the most shocking. The clerk could not get anybody easily to buy the house because he was telling higher price; four thousand and five hundred dollars. And, a dupe that Biswas is, he has bought it for five thousand and five hundred dollars, a thousand dollars more than the clerk demanded to others. That he is cheated by the clerk agonizes him further.

But soon afterwards all of them become habitual to their house in Sikkim Street.

"Soon it seemed to the children that they had never lived anywhere but in the tall square house in Sikkim Street. From now their lives would be ordered, their memories coherent. The mind, while it is sound, is merciful. And rapidly the memories of Hanuman House, The Chase, Green vale, Short hills, the Tulsi house in Port of Spain would become blurred; events would be telescoped, many forgotten". (108)

One day Biswas discovers that the solicitor’s clerk has, by accident or design, put up the fence around the house twelve feet inside the boundary shown in the deed for the house. This means that Biswas can enclose additional twelve feet wide space around his house. In this extra space he plants a laburnum tree. The tree grows rapidly, giving the house a romantic look. It gives a smooth touch to the tall graceless lines and provides some shelter from the afternoon sun. Its flowers fill the house with its sweetness. And Biswas and his family begin to enjoy the newly acquired freedom and the spirit of owning the house. Despite his undistinguished and unfortunate past,
Mr. Biswas finally gets what he always wanted - a local habitation and a name. After owning this house at Sikkim Street the attitude of his wife and children towards him change dramatically.

But 'Epilogue' to the novel reveals that the troubles for Mr. Biswas have not come to an end and he has to undergo the miserable life even in his own house. He does not live longer to enjoy the fruits of his lifelong struggle. A very short period after he moves in his own house, the Community Welfare Department is abolished and he is compelled to join the Sentinel again. He has paid only five hundred dollars of the debt that he owes to Ajodha and now it is impossible for him even to pay the monthly interest which comes to thirty dollars. This debt is now a heavy weight on his mind. It is enough to frustrate his energy and his ambition. Under this weight his enthusiasm and ambition begin to fade. His work at the Sentinel now becomes irksome to him. The zest goes out of his articles which he writes for his paper. Life has always been a preparation and a waiting for him and the years have passed in that state of waiting. He has exhausted his physical energy in his life-long pursuit of a house as well as in his fight against the Tulisdom. Now he feels that there is nothing to wait for. Of course the children still inspire some hope in him.

All of a sudden there is a burst of good luck for the family when first Savi, his elder daughter gets a scholarship to go abroad and then, two years later, Anand also gets a scholarship and goes to England. Biswas sees no possibility of being able to repay the debt, but he feels that he can wait for the children to complete their education and training and to get good jobs. Biswas has nothing to do
but wait. He has to wait for a Anand and for Savi. He has to wait for the five years to come to an end.

"There was nothing Mr. Biswas could do but wait. Wait for Anand. Wait for Savi. Wait for the five years to come to an end. Wait. Wait." (109)

And then comes the final stroke. One day Biswas gets a heart attack while he is on his duties. He is immediately taken to the Colonial Hospital where he spends a month. When he comes home he finds that Shama and his two younger daughters have distempered the walls down stairs, and stained and polished the floor in order to welcome him. The garden is blooming. Biswas is quite moved by their attempt to please and he writes a letter to Anand mentioning that their little house is very nice. But now he is full of fears. He fears for his heart; he fears for Anand. He fears for the end of the five years during which the debt is repayable. However to escape these fears he continues to write cheerful letters to Anand. But Anand’s replies come at long intervals and are not very encouraging. Then the Trinidad Sentinel puts Biswas on half-pay. After about a month of rest, Biswas joins his duties. But again he gets another, and this time more severe, heart attack. He is admitted to the hospital again. When he comes home after six weeks he has nothing to do but wait for Savi, Anand and the end of five years. He now becomes more and more irritable. Even the Sentinel sacks him. He feels that there is no one except Anand to whom he can complain and he writes a hysterical, complaining, despairing letter to Anand. But he receives no immediate response from his son and Biswas also decides not to
complain any more. Biswas is on the verge of hysteria because the time has come for his last pay-pocket from the Sentinel and even draws near the end of the five years.

But right at the end everything seems to grow bright. Savi returns and Biswas welcomes her as though she were herself and Ananad combined. Savi gets a job, at a bigger salary than Mr. Biswas ever have got. And events organize themselves so neatly that Savi begins to work as soon as Biswas ceases to be paid. He writes a letter to Anand.

"It was a letter full of delights. He was enjoying Savi's company; she had learned to drive and they went on little excursions; it was wonderful how intelligent she had grown. He had got a Butterfly Orchid. The shade was flowering again; wasn't it strange that a tree which grew so quickly could produce flowers with such a sweet scent"(110)

With this sense of fulfillment and satisfaction in one's own house, Biswas dies of heart attack. Thus ends the life long struggle of a mediocre man, Mr. Biswas.

Biswas' achievement in buying a house of his own towards the end of the story is seen both as a triumph and a failure. It is a triumph because he has at last become the proud possessor of a house and has achieved a sense of ownership of a place where he and his family can lead a life of independence. His purchase of house is the fulfillment of a long cherished ambition. But this achievement is also seen as a failure because, in the first place, the house suffers from a large number of defects which have not been perceived by Biswas prior to the purchase; and secondly, because the house is mortgaged to Biswas' uncle Ajodha and there seems to be no possibility of Biswas'
paying it back on his own. Thus the sense of ownership is incomplete. At the time of his death Mr. Biswas is no doubt living in his own house; but he is unemployed and his house is a structural disaster. However, dubious as his victory seems, it is still better than death in the house of the Tulsis.

There is no doubt about the fact that Biswas is a simple and obscure entity. His achievement may not stupefy the entire world. It is something private and has meaning only for himself and his family. His accomplishment is not something that the whole world is likely to applaud but something which becomes meaningful when talked by each individual on his own behalf. What is significant is that he has become something in the eyes of his family and of himself. His being responsible for this always pleases him. It is evident that his achievement gives immense satisfaction to himself as he has managed to put his mark on his small plot of earth. One early incident in his life clearly reveals his fear of extinction. Having acquired a zest for life he had visited the area in which he was born. He could not find the places where the mud huts of his parents and grandparents had once stood or the spot where his navel string and sixth finger had been buried. All the traces of the poor and insignificant people had been erased completely from the land where not stood powerful and prosperous oil companies. That early felt fear of extinction compelled Biswas to acquire his own distinct identity and this intense feeling has survived him.

The uncertainty in the matter of debt repayment and the insecurity of the ramshackle house are seen as the negative factors in Biswas' achievement. But at the micro level of personal relationship
his achievement in attaining dignity against sordid social reality and imparting dignity to the members of the family at the same time is surely positive. The final judgment is to be found in the emotional involvement of his wife and children who feel a vacuum in the house after his demise. When his wife and children return from his funeral, the house and garden are still recognized as his

"Afterwards the sister returned to their respective homes and Shama and the children went back in the Prefect to the empty house".  

Throughout the novel Biswas desires to possess a house and the house itself acquire a deep symbolism which 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 a home; it is also the Third world rootlessness in general longing for a home and also the universal longing for an identity and home of one's own. The house also stands for one's identity for which every rootless person strives. The artistic working out of the metaphor of the house is to be seen in the development of the various stages in buildings several houses".

In the novel Hanuman House serves the symbol of traditionalism, rigidity, ritual duty, hierarchy and communal life. Biswas' attitude towards the Hanuman House is ambivalent. Sometimes, it is seen as a shelter wherein Biswas may get absorbed in at the time of difficulty and sometimes it is an object of hatred. As a shelter it is symbolic of one's own motherland where emigrants are sure to get shelter, warmth, intimacy, food and security. The Hanuman
House is also presented as an object of hatred. Along with the whole of the Tulsidom it become a trap for Biswas, an alien fortress, a bondage, from where he desires to escape. It serves to develop in Biswas the spirit of rebellion and independence which in turn compels him to acquire his own identity through the house. This rebellion is symbolic of an immigrant's struggle on a foreign land to establish himself without being absorbed himself in the alien culture as well as to maintain his native or original roots. Tulsidom symbolizes the foreign territory that demands complete submission, surrender or the complete conversion.

"The husbands, under Seth's supervision, worked on the Tulsiani land, looked after the Tulsani animals, and served in the store. In return they were given food shelter and a little money; their children were looked after, and they were treated with respect by people outside because they were connected with the Tulsiani family. Their names were forgotten; they became Tulsis."

In this regard Yashoda Bhat says, "The story of the Tulsiani household is the story of the consolidation of Indian Diaspora in Trinidad, its perpetuation and its final disintegration with the sweeping historical changes brought in by the twentieth century."

Biswas' struggle to assert himself in this mediocream world is not without touch of heroism. Indeed he is at times petty, coward and contemptible and also presented in all his littleness. Still he preserves a sense of the man's inner dignity. It is in this sense he comes very close to represent the fate of an average man with mediocre abilities but a strong will to preserve his identity, however comic or absurd it may be. He thus becomes an everyman describing the modern man's
fate in a rootless society. The novel is an everyman's journey from nonentity to identity. Biswas is everyman, wavering between nonentity and identity. The rebel as he is, "There is no doubt in saying that whatever Biswas achieves he does so by defying the fate thrust on him in the guise of the Tulsis. The Tulsis who are keen on absorbing him and are ready to encourage him to surrender his identity, in a way challenge Biswas to make something of himself so that he can oppose them. In fact, his first real sense of himself arises from the sense of security offered by the Tulsis, he successfully overcomes this apathy and create reality out this nothingness." (115)

Throughout the novel Biswas is an exploration of the complete fate of a displaced person who finally reaches his destination in the form of the house. The substance of the novel has to do with the transformation of Mr.Biswas, a slave to place, history and biography into a freeman, the sign and realization of that emancipation being his house. The world of *A House for Mr. Biswas* is modeled upon a society from which the author has himself wished to escape. In creating or coming to own a house of his own Biswas confirms the possibility of finding a concrete identity of his own, which is in no way attached to the Tulsidom.

Overall, the novel appears to deal with the theme of the general history of three generations of East Indians and their struggle to survive and to be accommodated in Trinidad. Mr.Biswas' aim in this world is to die as an accommodated individual after claiming his share of land on this earth, which, if viewed from a modern man's perspective, appears to be a universal problem, the problem of everyman in the modern world. The desire of Biswas to escape from
the world of the Tulsis is similar to that of Naipaul's own desire to escape from Trinidad. Naipaul's fear is similar to that of Biswas' and his determination to leave behind the insecurity apprehended in the Trinidadian society is symbolically presented in Biswas' constant struggle to obtain an identity and an accommodation independent of the Tulsidom, the world which in itself is symbolic of Trinidadian chaotic world.

Biswas' two attempts of building a house turn out to be failure which in turn serve as a symbol for Naipaul's first two attempts to identify himself with India. But both of these attempts of identification resulted in failure. Naipaul's third attempt of identification appears to bear fruit. This is also presented symbolically in Biswas' last attempt of owning a house. But the house full of defects means an incomplete sense of identity which is a suitable symbol for Naipaul's present state of being a 'limbo'. He is destined to remain a wanderer throughout his life, destined to remain with a sense of fractured identity. The fate of Biswas seems to be similar to that of creator.

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