Chapter -III

THE UPROOTED AND THE HOMELESS:
THE MIMIC MEN

AND

A HOUSE FOR MR BISWAS
The book is about colonial shame and fantasy, a book, in fact, about how the powerless lie about themselves, and lie to themselves, since it is their only resource. (…) It was not about mimics. It was about colonial men mimicking the condition of manhood, men who had grown to distrust everything about themselves. (…) it occurred to me that I had been writing about colonial schizophrenia.” (Naipaul, 2003, p. 193)

Naipaul’s The Mimic Men (1967) presents the condition of a newly independent country in the Caribbean, the Island of Isabella. It projects before us the condition of the people in post-colonial period. The title of the novel signifies the condition of the colonized men who imitate and reflect colonizer’s life-style and views. Naipaul presents the life of formerly colonized people of the island who are unable to establish order and govern their country. The colonial experience has caused the colonized to perceive them as inferior to the colonizer. They suffer from dislocation, placelessness, fragmentation and loss of identity. As these psychological problems remain unsolved even after Independence, for them Independence itself becomes a word and not a real experience. Without the colonizer, the colonized see themselves as lost in their post-colonial society that fails to offer a sense of national unity and identity.

It is Naipaul’s second most important novel clearly marking the end of a second phase, the end of absorption with his personal homelessness. Ralph Singh forty-year old protagonist, a disgraced colonial minister exiled from the Caribbean island of his birth writes his biography in exile in a hotel in London. He represents a generation gaining power of an independent selfhood. In other words, Singh is the representation of the displaced and disillusioned colonial and the colonization is depicted as a process that takes away their identity, culture, history and sense of place. Ganesh in The Mystic Masseur and
Ralph have some similar problems. Ganesh wants to change his name to Gareth and Ralph Singh to Ranjit. Ganesh pretends to walk to Banaras parading as Gareth or G.R. Muir like Ralph. The insensitive full Ganesh is successful in the third world politics but the sensitive Ralph fails in it. This is the typical colonial complex exploiting the post-colonial in Naipaul’s novels. In the blend of the East and the West, Ganesh becomes a sharp character. It is this aspect of the society of Trinidad that Naipaul has tried to capture in the character of Ganesh.

“The themes of alienation, homelessness and mimicry still preoccupy Naipaul but the perspective has changed. They are now viewed as a universal condition of the modern world afflicting, both colonized and colonizers alike. Besides the familiar themes that still haunt Naipaul’s pen, there are themes that appear for the first time the broader post-colonial themes of power and freedom and neocolonialism.” (Champa, 2004, p. 81)

The novel thus deals with the effects of colonial education, the loneliness and despair that are felt by rootless people. Ralph brings about changes in the Isabella society but only temporarily. He is thrown into politics and very soon comes to know the corruption in the field of politics where the political leaders exploit the country for personal profit. Ralph’s various failures at the level of personal life show his national failure.

“The honesty with which Naipaul feels that the Third world itself is responsible for its current dire predicament, though appears to be ruthless urges post-colonial societies to lift up their struggle to a new level of contest to synthesis”. 
(Ramadevi, 1996, p. 21)

After his failure in politics and in all the phases of life, he recalls the days of his childhood and youth with the hope of discovering some meaning from his childhood experiences by arranging his life’s incidents in a sequence.
“To understand this is to understand the squalor of the politics that came to Trinidad in 1946 when, after no popular agitation, universal adult suffrage was declared. (...)The new politics were reserved for the enterprising, which had seen the prodigious commercial possibilities.” (Naipaul, 1977, p. 78)

The novel deals with the engagement of the protagonist in the first two elections of Trinidad. Political power embodies the colonized dream of power. The protagonist’s irony and satire are reflections of behaviour of the colonial with the world full of mimicry. It is never a political decision to contest election to the governing bodies. The coming from a minority Indian group encourages Ralph’s feeling of shipwreck. The shipwreck motif in the novel shows The Middle Passage (1962), which is Naipaul’s ancestral inheritance and slavery. Ralph in relation to the social political and historical force has politically and psychologically affected in his colonial displacement.

“The representation in (mimic men) of the fractured diasporic colonized subject is a critique of the colonial project of modernization progress that was based on the metaphysical of presence.” (Panwar, 2003, p. 127)

The novel begins with Ralph Singh as an exile or a withdrawn politician. He represents a generation, which gains power at Independence and can only mimic their colonial masters. The escapist tendency of the colonized results in the creation of the tragedy of persons like Ralph.

“The struggle against colonial oppression changes not only the direction of Western history but challenges its historicist ‘ideal’ of time as a progressive, ordered whole. The analysis of colonial depersonalization alienates not only the enlightenment idea of ‘Man’, but challenges the transparency of social reality. (Bhabha, 1986, p. xi)
The social and psychological disturbances, the colonial encounter of the colonizer and the colonized have been a recurrent thematic concern in V.S. Naipaul. Ralph is the second-generation descendant of Indians who travelled to Trinidad to work in the Caribbean sugar estate plantation. He tries to achieve meaning and success as a political figure. Ralph Singh opts for a political career without any lofty idea and sense of meaning. Ralph’s desire to become a politician arises out of the feeling of incompleteness of his role. He fails as a leader, as an Indian, as a Caribbean and as a person in the end.

“Escape has become a way of life and displacement a perennial condition. For the dispossessed colonial, political Independence selves no problems. A kind of cyclic determinism makes it impossible for him to find a home. Neither colony, nor the mother country provides matrix. Dependence and displacement are his ultimates.” (Thieme, 1975, p.16)

Ralph dangles between the two worlds of London and Isabella. He occupies through cultural dislocations effects of slavery and colonisation. The protagonist Ralph himself narrates his own story of colonial mimicry, its reasons and results. He tells about the corruption and rootlessness, which denies the possibility of life. We here the ecoise of Eliot in Ralph

“We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas”
(Eliot, 1961, p. 35)

Human life is full of hollow existence. There is no specific purpose, planned ambition, a fixed destination. On the contrary, one turns into a puppet dancing to the tunes of fate and circumstances. The theme of The Mimic Men like that of Eliot’s poem is corruption-corruption of the body politics and corruption of the individual human soul. It is a
political novel, dealing with society in an island called Isabella in the West Indies. The novel is particularly relevant to everybody in an ex-colony going through a period of rapid political changes. Politics has the leader who comes to power because of the masses and any change brought about by these leaders affects everybody in the society. The novel is political in a deeper sense. Although Ralph is political career is only a part of the third section of the novel, Naipaul’s stress is on the social analysis and the study of Ralph. It is a novel on colonial politics of the third world. Naipaul’s major interest in this novel is the psychological effects of colonialism on the modern man. Naipaul completes the novel with imagined Isabella, in the West Indies. The novel depicts as if Ralph Singh’s memoirs in the middle of life. Ralph considers writing a book on the history of the British Empire.

“In these novels Naipaul has underlined the conditions of world communication as being essentially political in nature; Trinidad’s unpreparedness to do so at that level is its failure. Political anxiety has introduced the dialogue between the person and his nation but political awareness is necessary before it can communicate with the rest of the world.” (Karma, 1990, p. 78)

Ralph has position as a colonial politician in Isabella. He is one of the novel who uses imperial models of power. He speaks the universal Language of injustice. Naipaul presents two antithetic political situations, one is objectivity and other is subjectivity. Ralph Singh has a symbolic political dimension. The novel has three significant attempts at separation: one at the local, other at the national, and the other at the international level. Ralph is a colonial who feels that his achievement must be counted in contrast with the colonizer. Why should they need the recognition by masters the colonized who would
have given credit to the beggars or slaves, of lower category and different colonies.

“Since Naipaul has a pessimistic view of the possibility of escape from this situation, he views the mimicry implicit in the post-colonial condition and, hence, it’s literary text as permanently disabling, because of the disorder and in authenticity imposed by the centre on the margins of empire.” (Ashcroft, 1989, p. 87)

The novel is political in deeper sense and the politics depends upon cultural sensation. Although Ralph’s political career is only a section of the novel, Naipaul’s stress is on social analysis and study of Ralph and his disillusionment. Ralph is a typical product of the complex colonial ethos. He is pictured as a victim of colonial system. The central theme is man away from his nativity, works, lives, stays in various places in the world.

“The career of the colonial politician is short and ends brutally. We lack order. Above all, we lack power, and we do not understand that we lack power.” (Naipaul, 1967, p. 06)

Naipaul’s it is more ambitious than the earlier novels. The novel is in post-war period, the period of transition when many countries became free from the clutches of the British colonizers. But the colonial rule had exploited and influenced the natives so much that even after Independence; they have continued to suffer from mental slavery losing their independent existence. The novel portrays the states of mental trouble. Ralph is a retired West Indian colonial politician, living in exile in a boarding house, in a private hotel in suburban London.

The first part of the narrative begins with his current situation in London; his mind is filled with memories of his earlier visits to the
city. The next part goes back to his early life in the Caribbean. In the concluding section, Naipaul’s forty-year old protagonist struggles to sum up his life by returning to the present in the narrative frame. In fact, it is a story of an old man who has lost everything but his mind is filled with memories of the past. It is a story in flashbacks associated with different fluctuation of the remote past, the immediate past and the present.

“No more words for me, except these I write, and in them the politician, Chapman in causes, will be suppressed as far as possible. It will not be difficult. I have had my fill of political writing. My present urge is, in the inaction imposed on me, to secure the final emptiness.” (P. 09)

Naipaul wishes to reveal, the character of a man who is suspended without a meaningful existence between two worlds to which he is unable to relate. Naipaul has chosen to allow the speaker to express himself as he is. Ralph is detached and philosophical, and he has arrived at this state only after many years. He sees his case as a typical colonial experience. He is an uprooted and lacks both the knowledge and the means to work out his own order. He has to borrow to mimic the examples, which have been set before him by others.

“How right our Aryan ancestors were to create gods. We seek sex, and are left with two private bodies on a stained bed. The larger erotic dream, the god, has eluded us. It is so whenever, moving out of ourselves, we look for extensions of ourselves. It is with cities as it is with sex.” (P. 17)

There are dilemmas of God versus the dream, the physical city versus private life. With England and his English wife, he has failed to adjust in his odd time. He turns to India as the centre of his dream. He goes to the Aryan culture imagining it to be his own to explain his experience.
Naipaul portrays Ralph as a typical modern man who can confront anyone in this world. He depicts an example of a man living in constant fear, change, and nostalgia. He has impressions in his mind about his island society; he comes to London, the great city. The city of miraculous and his experiences and affairs in this city, completely disillusion him due to the powers of London.

“There was no one to link my present with my past, on one to note my consistencies or inconsistencies. It was up to me to choose my character, and I chose the character that was easiest and most attractive. I was the dandy, the extravagant colonial, indifferent to scholarship.” (P. 19)

Ralph is of Indian descent and belongs to the surface society. It is Lieni the Maltese housekeeper of Mr. Shylock who praises Ralph by calling him ‘a rich colonial’. Ralph is an individual who can fit into any role assigned to him by others. In fact, in this act of living the lives of others, he wins the approval and appreciation of others like that of boys of Isabella. He is pleased by his amazing success at British council meeting. Ralph’s life is political planning the future of Isabella Island leader.

There are various stages in Ralph’s life in various age groups as a boy, as a youth, as a middle-aged man, and as an old person. Ralph’s childhood and adulthood are related to his life in Isabella and England, his political career and marriage and his education gives shape to the past and his experiences to understand himself. There is very little in his fate. It is only an uneasy childhood, a painful youth, and an abortive political career.

“IN THAT PERIOD of my life which was to follow, the period between my preparation for life and my withdrawal from it, that period in parenthesis, when I was most active and might have given the
observer the impression of a man fulfilling his
destiny, in that period intensity of emotion was the
thing I never achieved.” (P. 32)

Ralph refers to that particular period of his life as a parasite. The story, he records can be described as tracing Ralph’s tradition from innocence to experience, from disorder to harmony. The social analysis which he attempts in the novel is not confined to the West Indies but extends to the entire third world. It also enables him to muse his childhood experiences.

“My mother’s sanctions were a pretence, no doubt; but they were also an act of piety towards the past, towards ancient unknown wanderings in another continent. It was a piety I shared. But what release to be the last of one’s line!” (P. 59)

Ralph Singh is related to two generations of Indian cultural landscape. His mother performs Hindu religious rites over him and his wife when they arrive in Isabella as a married couple, Christianity in a form of mimicry. He sees that they are odd on the island and he also understands his need to reconnect with an exiled past. Ralph’s ultimate reaction to both public and personal event is emotional and physical, but with fear. At one point, Ralph writes that he throws himself into various activities to link him with the ‘real’ world and distract him from his internal reality.

“I suppose it was my single-mindedness and conviction which made it possible for me to get credit so easily; though it was also my good fortune to deal with an American bank anxious to establish itself on the island.” (P. 62)

Ralph’s obsession with politics also gives rise to his obsession with blaming anything that comes to stop him. The township that he develops in the land gifted by his grandfather was named as ‘Kripalville’ after his father and later on it is corrupted into
‘Crippleville.’ This act of naming clearly shows his psychological need for power. His accounts for his successful investment in land properties to build ‘Kripalville’ soon are corrupting to ‘Crippleville’. The family of Ralph’s mother owns the Bella-Bella bottling works and they are local bottlers of coco-cola. One thinks Ralph Singh’s keenness in claiming relationship with the mother family. He is aware of his position in the Isabella society. He is related to the foreign product named Coco-Cola. In fact, as a boy he used to feel a kind of security and fearlessness as long as he stayed at his grandfather’s house. His father, on the other hand hated his in-laws as well as the drink Coco-Cola for its association with them. As a boy reading in the Missionary zeal of Isabella, Ralph conceives an ideal image of his father, a young Missionary with speaking skills. He has come from a glorious place and has been shipwrecked on the island.

“My first memory of school is of taking an apple to the teacher. This puzzles me. We had no apples on Isabella. It must have been an orange; yet my memory insists on the apple. The editing is clearly at fault, but the edited version is all I have. This version contains a few lessons.” (P. 97)

He recollects Newton’s story of the fall of apple, inspiring the laws of gravitation. The ideas and language, which were taught in school of Isabella, the kind of education that he gets is totally irrelevant to the local situation. This also is the reason why he begins to create fantasies. While interpreting the colonial education in post-colonial terms, it may be said that the dichotomy between the practical life and the school education results in creating the colonial politician such as Ralph. He starts reading Rajput and Aryan stories of Knights, horsemen and wanderers. He reads the Aryan people and their migrations and develops a complete fantasy life from this one that
includes the island of Isabella. The dreams and fantasies are as unreal as the island Isabella. There is no island in the West Indies called Isabella now, although long ago there might have been one. An instance could be seen in Ralph Singh giving himself a name just to sound extraordinary and to compete with Deschampsneuf’s (who had a six-part name) by having a longer name. He broke Kripal Singh his name as R.R.K. Singh. He modifies his original name Ranjit Kripal Singh to Ralph Ranjit Kripal Singh shortened to R.R.K. Singh or Ralph Singh in the public domain. He is a Rajput and not a Sikh. In his attempts to define himself through his political activities, Singh realizes that he has become separated from his position. He feels incomplete because he is aware of the meaninglessness of his role as a colonial politician.

“I began to chew my collar; Hok almost ate his off. I ate my school tie to rags; the end of Hok’s tie was never out of his mouth; he chewed it like gum. Between us was another bond. We were both secret readers of strange books.” (P. 102)

He realizes that such a task is impossible and is disillusioned. Ralph Singh has a Chinese friend Hok who reads books on his origin of China, idealizes his past, and is humiliated when it is discovered that he has black ancestors. He is a Negro, hybrid with Chinese father and Negro mother. Hok ignores his mother because she is a Negro whereas he being of mixed blood does not look like a Negro. The scene of rejection takes place when a group of schoolchildren was going on the road.

Browne, Ralph’s revolutionary friend also fantasizes his origin and his room is full of pictures of black leaders. Ralph’s obsession with homing clearly shows his psychological need for power and ownership. Ralph’s cousin Cecil pretends Deschampsneuf’s, Evans and
Browne belong to the world of mimicry. Ralph’s experience with Cecil’s father is political. Cecil’s father had a beach house where Singh hears about a shipwrecked brother who tried to save his drowning sisters but was drowned himself, instead. It was an island Columbus named on his first voyage a tiny island in the Bahamas which bears the name ‘crooked’ island.

“To be born on an island like Isabella, an obscure new world transplantation, second-hand and barbarous, was to be born to disorder.” (P. 127)

The connotative of the island where he is born and raised as obscure,’ second-hand, ‘barbarous’ and disordered brings into focus its colonial legacy that Ralph finds hard to adjust with the atmosphere of island.

Ralph Singh, a disgraced politician, is found recording his new impressions of London which are quite contrary to what he felt in the past shortly after the war. He writes about his student days, his marriage with an English girl, Sandra and his return to Isabella, the place of his world of business, politics and the ultimate debacle. He confesses that while at Isabella, the island of his birth, he had been with impressions in his mind about his island society. With such impressions in his minds, he comes to London. The name Isabella for an island is closely modeled on his native Trinidad. Naipaul forces the reader to remember Trinidad’s colonial past- it was won first by the Spanish before the British (1797 to 1962).

Ralph Singh’s father also owned an Austin in which he used to take his family for outings to far-off place which finally came to an end with a Sunday lunch. One day he left his job in the Education Department, abandoned his family and went to the hills as a preacher and mentor to a group of frenzied disciples including the slaves, the
dock-workers and the ‘volunteers’. He gives his follower a cultural identity. By searching his Hindu past, he establishes his own cultural identity. His relationship with his father influences Ralph. Ralph father’s sudden transformation into a Guru, as the leader o spiritual movement confuses Ralph. He hesitates to accept the role of being the son of an already famous ‘Gurudeva’ (the name his father takes for being a guru) Ralph’s father absurdly imitates the behavior of a Hindu holy man and combines the attraction of Indian withdrawal. The son attaches himself to a wealthy branch of the family, which can provide him with a solid, secure house. The name Gurudeva reminds the famous novel by V.S.Naipaul called The Adventures of Gurudeva (1976). It seems that Ralph’s father had attempted to overcome his feeling of placelessness and frustration by escaping into mysticism.

“He must have summoned up all his original gifts. But now there was the transport contractor’s widow, with her especial piety; and the irony of my father long-prophesied success was that it came to him as a Hindu.” (P. 138)

Gurudeva’s movement offered enough excitement to people to win popular respect for his family, which Ralph exploits in building up a political career for himself. His father’s movement and the resultant popularity are prelude to his political career. His father becomes a remote figure but once again creates sensation through the ‘Asvamedha.’ the racehorse Taman go belonging to the Deschampsheufs is killed.

“But for me there was something more. Primitive, bestial, degraded; these were some of the words used by certain section of the island. I shared their horror, but I had my own reasons Asvamedha.” (P. 152)
In other words, this sacrifice causes Singh to see an Indian world that is in contrast with the noble and ideal world of imagination. The people have lost their connection with India, her culture, customs and tradition. Ralph is a member of this ethnic minority. He creates an idea and heroic past, which is in conflict with the real life condition in Isabella the compression of two cultures, the Indian and the French. Although he fails to reconnect himself to India, the homeland, or to connect himself to London, the metropolis, by writing his memoirs, Singh finally takes control of his sense of dislocation as he realizes that there is no ideal place with which he can identify himself.

“We, here on our island, handling books printed in this world, and using its goods, had been abandoned and forgotten. We pretended to be real, to be learning, to be preparing ourselves for life, we mimic men of the New World, one unknown corner of it, with all its reminders of the corruption that came so quickly to the new.”

(P. 157)

Thus in the novel Naipaul returns to the subject of West Indian politics and the theme of colonial mimicry. The structure of the novel is complex with the narrator protagonist Ralph Kripal Singh. He makes money and creates a nationalistic fervor to political power. His eventual exile from Isabella is even more final than the spiritual downfall of Ganesh Ramsumair in The Mystic Masseur novel. Ralph detects a pattern that is all too familiar in the West Indies; a pattern from isolation and frenzy to failure and disorder. Ralph retires to a contemplative life in a London suburban hotel. Ralph seeks refuge in flight from Isabella to London where he wishes to avoid a greater disorder, a greater shipwreck. He had pictured London as a part of the true pure world and he finds it to be larger Isabella with its own set of mimic men. Ralph has chosen political field but there also he fails.
“Our landscape was as manufactured as that of any great French or English park. But we walked in a garden of hell, among trees, some still without popular names, whose seeds had sometime been brought to our island in the intestines of slaves.”

(P. 158)

Ralph Singh thinks about Isabella’s colonial past when his friend Browne points out a feature of Caribbean landscape: the imitation of the English or French parks on the Caribbean soil and the transplantation of seeds. In The Middle Passage (1962), too there is homeland transplantation. The mimic life is reality, whether he likes it or not. The First World/Colonial centred education system created a great pressure on his mind which results in denial of real life. The novel is a myth of rootless person has shipwrecked condition on the Caribbean island, Isabella. The image of shipwreck conveys the sense of loss, in lives of those who desire to survive in life.

“I was totally blank: no shame, no guilt, no anxiety. I hated as the deeper intrusion the cross-examination that followed. It was detailed and I though pointless; it reduced everything to absurdity.” (P. 171)

Ralph had feeling that without the help from English, he is unable to find any solution to his country problem. Thus, nationalization becomes the world and finally Ralph Singh faces his private loss, as he cannot act without the master’s approval. Like Naipaul’s A Flag on the Island, (1967) it is set in imaginary place of Island. Since nationalist politics aims at destroying an older order, few materials to build a new order but only chaos follow. Even government is a problem since society is made up of various nationalities and races. The career of politician in such society is short and ends brutally.
“His vision widened. He saw The Socialist as an international paper, and he talked about the need for a ‘nationalist’ publishing house in the region. This was one of the schemes he often spoke about, and I knew it was just the sort of thing he might jump into.” (P. 203)

Ralph is drawn into politics by a former school-friend Browne, a Negro. Browne, the editor of The Socialist, asks Ralph to write an article. With the publication of the article in the anniversary issue of The Socialist Ralph’s political movement gets launched

“We were, of course, of the left. We were socialist. We stood for the dignity of the working man. We stood for the dignity of distress. We stood for the dignity of our island, the dignity of our indignity.”

(P. 215)

They attracted supports from all races and all classes; everybody is attracted to the sense of drama for the people need some sensation. These remedies later turn out to be worse than the disease ending up in the unreality of fantasy. With the drama on the island, it was not difficult for Singh is to win the elections. After coming to power, they learnt about power and poverty.

“But on power and the consolidation of passing power we wasted our energies, until the bigger truth come: that in a society like ours, fragmented, inorganic, no link between man and the landscape, a society not held together by common interests, there was no true internal source of power, and that no power was real which did not come from the outside.” (P. 224)

Their party wins the election, Browne becomes prime minister, and Kripal Singh is made a cabinet minister. After that, he comes to realize the futility in new world politician’s situation. He begins to withdraw once more and after failing to bring about a nationalization of the sugar estates and controlling the race riots which break out over this issue, he
leaves Isabella and settles down in a suburban London hotel as an exiled ex-politician. He has freed himself from is the futile search of the displaced colonial for a homeland and his dreams of escape to some ideal landscape. He comes to accept his rootlessness, his placelessness as final and becomes a free man. The Mimic Men is political history on Roman house. Naipaul’s main theme is the escape of the Third world politics into fantasy on being poverty-ridden isolated political power.

“It HAS HAPPENED in twenty places, twenty countries, islands, colonies, territories- these words with which we play, thinking they are interchangeable and that the use of a particular one alters the truth. I cannot see our predicament as unique.” (P. 209)

Naipaul’s protagonist stresses the point that what happens on this island is representative of other colonies in other parts of the world. Naipaul makes Ralph Singh a representative who underlines the illusions, conflicts, objectives of the new world politicians. It in fact makes them all mimic men. The tragedy of these politicians is the result of not knowing the defects. It takes four years for Ralph Singh to complete the process of education in the school of politics and at last be disillusioned. He detaches himself from his colleagues and the alternative is an exile in London. Ralph is the representative of Indian Caribbean colonial subject but at the same time, he is away from Caribbean.

In the capacity of the politician, he faces three tasks of increasing difficult problem. His first challenge is to deal with financial strain on the economy of country for supporting the English administrative section of the island civil service. Ralph was for a better quality and of the South American and Australian bauxite. He refers to his political activity as a ‘Drama’ on himself. Without any help from
the English, Singh is unable to find any solution to his country’s problem and thus he has only ‘private loss. His lack of a political awareness makes him an absurd character who suffers from not being able to know problems over there. He writes:

“My sense of drama failed. This to me was the true loss. For four years, drama had supported me; now, abruptly, drama failed. It was a private loss; thoughts of irresponsibility or duty dwindled became absurd.” (P. 241)

Identity is related to political success but being unable to know problems of Island they at last fail as leaders. The politicians are used only as stooges by the superpowers. Ralph Singh has always been encouraged to imitate the empire, hence to be a ‘mimic man’.

“I said, ‘How can I take this message back to my people? ‘My people’: for that I deserved all I got. He said: ‘you can take back to your people any message you like.’ And that was the end.” (P. 245)

Moreover, Lord Stockwell refuses to talk seriously about labour problems and sugar estate instead, he treats Singh like a child and says that he has got nice hair. Both the minister and Lord Stockwell, the representatives of the imperial power make a fun of Singh who is reduced to be a child, not knowing anything in real. Stockwell had met the Gurudeva twice and his sugar estates were also at stake in the nationalization issue that was affecting Isabella.

“In Isabella in the early days I spoke as much as anyone about culture and the need for a national literature. But, to tell the truth, I had no great regard for writers as men, much as I might have enjoyed their work.” (P. 266)

He returns to the city that he had known as a student. Mr. Shylock’s boarding house come hotel is on the Kensington High Street. The Mimic Men is a political satire of the Caribbean society. The novel poses economic and political problems of colonial sufferers. In his
travel from Isabella to London and return from London to Isabella, he stories to seek his Aryan heritage in imagination to escape London and to return home. He releases himself from the wheel of karma no longer expected the fruit of action. Ralph never takes any active part in politics in the real sense he is in that field because of his friends Browne.

“It gives me joy to find that in so doing I have also fulfilled the fourfold division of life prescribed by our Aryan ancestors. I have been student, householder and man of affairs recluse.” (P. 274)

He is the product of colonialism. He feels the urgency to escape and decides to go to London where he meets Sandra. Because of his father’s reputation and his Orator friends Browne, he is elected to power. It is in a sense that he is product of colonialism. Ralph represents the directionless and aimless modern man who goes on doing things without any motive behind it. He is cool and helpless but in the end sad and lonely. The novel finishes with Ralph Singh being settled in his hotel-room. Ralph is a politically uprooted man. Naipaul poses the problems providing answers in The Mimic Men. The novel are a complete novel but open-ended.

The novel is not only about the corrupt politicians who are different from Ralph Singh, who is a sincere politician. Honesty is poles past from politics but Ralph realizes it very late. He is condemned to play a role, which can help his success in his little world. Ralph’s career fails in political life. The political autobiography of Ralph Singh shows a confessional tone of an allegory of the Third world political world that has only mimic men. The Mimic Men focuses more on the growth and development of the individual who seeks refuge in politics as well as idle elite in London as an ex-politician.
“He thinks that only he is lost and his society alone lacks unity. He does not realize that this is a universal condition of a man in the twentieth century.” (Bruce, 1975, p. 49)

Whether London or Isabella, there is disorder that creates own set of Mimic men. There is greater disorder, greater shipwreck. As he himself is a middle class man, he does not have enough knowledge of the new value system. He is unable to surrender himself or to get a place in of two. It is in a sense that he represents the modern man as the product of colonialism. He is not an active agent but goes on with flow of time. His cool and helpless acceptance leads him to sadness. This is the fate of colonial man. He moves from place to place assumes many roles but the inner struggle remains the same. He is unable to balance these two worlds. He is in search of harmony in his life by adopting forms and manners of another culture. But one cannot find solution to the problems of one’s own culture in the other culture. Ralph does not feel at home as the shipwreck lies within and so his personality suffers from helplessness and hopelessness. Isabella has social and political transition and a new discourse is needed. Isabella is highly creolized society with many dialects, patois and argots. English is a speaking language in Isabella and London. Naipaul views that the colonial has been forced to surrender his local culture (language) and accept an imperial discourse. The Mimic Men has a political part in Isabella where he is a leader who fails to lead the society. Ralph Singh enters politics as an antidote to a broken marriage. His political career is like his father. Just like his father, he attempts to escape his shipwreck by maintaining his connection with the Aryan past. His access to political power is not achieved by competing with the establishment but by putting an end to the old order.
Ralph Singh describes his condition as an exiled colonial politician, writing his autobiography at the age of forty in a hotel room in suburban of Landon. It is first person narration in flashbacks and memories. Ralph gets the opportunity to weave in reflection with narrative and self-analysis with exposition, which is very particular of the modern man in the post-colonial period. The oscillation between married life at London, leadership and ministry in Isabella and his mother’s memories in India make the composition more confounded. Ralph is an example of those persons who leave their native place and play gimmicks to establish their credentials in some or the other field, in spite of their natural capacities and tendencies. The real Ralph is different from all these lives for he shows the tragic Journey of the persons, who in search of money and honour leave their own countries and ultimately invite more troubles than they have ever expected. The Mimic Men evokes a colonial man’s encounters in a world transmuting from a colonial milieu to a post-colonial one to “Mimic Men” of the “New World.”

“Writing has to change the writer. It isn’t just writing a book; it is an experience for the writer and an education too… without that book I wouldn’t have sense of myself.” (Interviewed by Tewarie: P. 64)

V.S.Naipaul A House for Mr Biswas (1961), has a period of forty six years narrating the life- history of the protagonist Mr.Biswas. The novel deals with the life and times of the East Indians who had migrated from the rural Trinidad to the city Port of Spain. During the period of colonization, the French, the Dutch, the Spanish, and the English conquered the island and the native Caribbeans and Arwacas. The African slaves and the indentured labour from China, India and other Asian countries, they were brought into work and now populating the islands. Once Independence was granted to the island and these
different social groups were left to themselves, there was an exchange of culture between them through every day interaction and through inter-marriages. They had left their native countries for livelihood. They are forced to live together and had accepted it Willy-nilly what they have in their minds. They have to adjust with the place the period and the people. The novel points a realistic picture of Mr. Biswas as he struggles to preserve his own identity in strange environment and tries to establish his selfhood. The novel narrates the marginalized East Indian community in Trinidad. Naipaul describes A House for Mr Biswas as his non-fiction for Finding the Centre saying that it was very much like his father’s book. To Mr Biswas, it is a typical joint family, which functions on the same pattern as the British Empire in the West Indies. Hanuman House provides shelter to Mr Biswas but wants total negation of identity. It is a novel dominated by the house metaphor named Hanuman House.

“A House for Mr Biswas was a departure from the first three books. The book is full of comedy, less verbal, less farcical but it is in everything. The jokes have become deeper and the comedy more profound. According to Naipaul without the humorous view, you couldn’t go on. You can’t give a dark tragic view all the time. It must be supported by the underlying comedy”. (Interviewed by Tejpal: P.9)

The novel is a struggle of a man who has a strong desire to own his house. It presents the East Indian Trinidadian society as it was before and after colonization affected them. The novel is in two parts: The first part novel begins with the birth of Biswas and continues till he leaves for Port of Spain in search of work and earning. The second part begins from Port of Spain until he dies there in his ‘own house’. The first part of the novel deals with Biswas’ experience in Chase, Green Vale and Short hills, the suburban places of Trinidad. The second part of the novel narrates his life in the cities of Trinidad, particularly Port
of Spain. A contrast is presented in these two parts of the novel between the East Indian migrants who refuse to leave their old tradition. The plot of the novel shows life the time story of Mohun Biswas from his birth to death and it is set in Trinidad before, during and after the World War II.

“It is about a man who in the end considers the things around him which he has acquired and reflects on the stories of the narrative that they implied.” (Interviewd by Tewarie: P.66)

Mr Biswas’s life is full of obstacles, which he has to overcome; he comes from poor a background and has to cope with constant lack of money. He struggles for Independence and his desire for his own house. Biswas is a representative of the people who are unwillingly forced to live in other countries and are enforced to make compromises with the situation. He has his mother Bipti and father Raghu in Pagotes. He comes into the world with six fingers on his hand, which is considered a bad luck. Biswas is born in the wrong way and at midnight, the midwife shrieks together with the newborn body. The pundit is called later and he strongly reminds of pundit Ganesh in (The Mystic Masseur). The sixth finger the pundit interprets as a shocking sign of curse. The pundit reads in his astrological almanac that Mr Biswas’s life is important and he has great chance and it will later be seen that he always misses chance much unlike Ganesh Ramsumair in The Mystic Masseur; Biswas cannot take his share from the wealth coming from oil on his family ground. The Pundit also warns Mohun’s unlucky sneeze. Though Mr Biswas lost his sixth finger before he was a nine years old. The pundit advises to avoid evil by not allowing the father and the son to see each other for twenty-one days.

“The water rolled off his oiled skin, but his moustache had collapsed over his upper lip and his
hair fell in a fringe over his forehead. Lakhan gave him a hand up. ‘I believe there is something down there. ’Raghu said. ‘But it is very dark.’
(Naipaul, 1961, p. 27)

Thus, Mr Biswas becomes the cause of his father Raghu’s death, who jumps into the pond to find out the dead body of his son who was actually hilding under his father’s bed. But even when Raghu is pulled out of the unconscious and Lakhan declared him dead there are sudden exclamations of sorrow or lamentation.

After this misfortune, Bipti, together with her children Mohun and Dehuti moves to Pagotes to her wealthy sister Tara. Dehuti works as a servant at Tara and Bipti with Mohun lives in the back part of the house. He attends local school where he becomes friendly with his schoolmate Alec. Bipti loses her hold over Biswas as now it is Tara who decides everything for them. It is Tara, who sends Biswas to the Canadian mission school, and then suddenly decides that he should be made a Pundit. Mr Biswas’s Aunt Tara, who at times plays the role of his mother, wants him to become a pundit and sends him to pundit Jairam for training. There he works in a rum shop Owned by Ajodha, Tara’s husband. In this period, he thinks over the purpose of life and love. He has two brothers Pratap and Prasad, and a sister, Dehuti. As a boy he is given a job to look after a calf belonging to Dhari the next-door neighbour. Biswas takes the calf for walk and visits a stream. He spends a long time in search of it, but there is no calf. He returns home and hides himself under a bed. Biswas’s life hereafter consists of one misfortune after the other. He really becomes an orphan. He has to move from one house to another. He is sent to his Aunt Tara’s house. Then he is sent to Jairam to be trained as a pundit, but his questions make Jairam angry Jairam drives Mohun out. His aunt stops his education and forces him to search a Job. Biswas realizes that it is
because of his economic dependence that he has to face problems. His works in a rum shop, then with the help of his friend Alec, he gets a job sign painter. The sign writing brings him to the Tulsi store at arwacas where he meets Shama, one of the Tulsi daughters. He moves to Hanuman House the residence of the Tulsi, which he calls a ‘blasted zoo’, to express his anger in irony. After the loss of his father and the uncle’s injustice, Biswas finds a sort of relief to get rid of all troubles in the house of the Tulsi’s as the son-in-laws and his wife relationship. He never imagines that the new house also, after some time, may create greater problems than he had before. Mohun has to do some or the other work to earn money because his relatives have not been very helpful to him. As the result he is tossed from one work to another. He has neither money nor any desire for any career. Mohun falls in love with Shama, one of the Tulsi girls the Tulsi clan a joint Hindu family in the Caribbean society for Biswas homelessness is a curse a worry, so he feels happy after marriage. The Hanuman house is for him, a source of greater joy with home and wife Shama. The house is called Tulsidom. It is very crowded with men, women and children almost two hundred in number. There is Mrs. Tulsi the dominating mother, Seth, Hari, Shekhar, Owad etc. The house appears to be well disciplined with its own rules and orders. The house has a reputation of having strict Hindu ways of culture. Shekhar performs puja every day. The Tusi house is a symbol slavery and colonization. According to the traditional Hindu custom, the bride has to join her husband’s home but here he has to join his wife’s home. The elders in the hunuman house never speak about their plans to entrap him. Biswas feels upset and restless but he has no other option. He wants a house of his own where he will be able to live happily. Biswas is an example of the story of a
man who suffers a lot for none of his faults. The novel has been called an epic and the protagonist is as an everyman.

In the section, entitled “The Chase” Biswas begins an Independent life with Shama. Biswas has the feeling that the chase is just a temporary arrangement and the real life was yet to begin for them sooner or later, there or elsewhere. Even Hanuman house, is built of clay bricks, the reasons being that the Tulsi had never considered themselves settled in Arwacas or even Trinidad. The old men who are in Hanuman house always talk of returning to India, they are afraid of leaving Trinidad. Biswas never gets over the feeling of temporariness during the period he spends at the chase. In ‘The Chase,’ Biswas’s attitude to Hanuman house changes. He realized that though Hanuman House is chaotic to him, it is in reality well ordered. His loneliness at The Chase makes him recall the warmth and noisy activity of Hanuman House, anyway he has been acknowledged at least as a man, though he feels reduced to be a puppet dancing to the tunes of elders in that house. He is again sent to Green Vale as a driver-sub overseer and is forced to live in a dark room with labourers. Here his desire to build his own house is rejuvenated and he frames a dream picture of his house. The Doll house he brings for Savi as a Christmas gift becomes an expression of his innate desire to build a house. The breaking of the Dolls house by Shama in order to avoid the jealousy of all other members of the Tulsi Family affects him mentally. He feels that is something very substantial inside him that is affected and not merely the Doll House. He begins to suffer for building a house take their first shape at Green Vale with the help of Maclean a carpenter-cum-builder. Life at Green vale is a more distressing experience.

Biswa realizes that Hanuman house is a protection he needs but his relationships with the Tulsi’s undergo a change. He visits
Hanuman House more often and even tries to win their favour. In spite of his vain efforts to adjust with the typical Hanuman house and his efforts to win their favours, he fails in either. Mr Biswas now feels that he is only a mimic man in Hanuman house. Biswas’s life is meaningless without Shama, his children and even the Tulsi-clan. Mr Biswas’s visits to Hanuman House reflect his dilemma that he cannot leave his family for he is a parasite who cannot leave but is not able to live there. Thus the novel is the tragic story like a wife and slaves, who dislike everything but are forced to stay where they are because there is no other work, no other place and no other means to fulfil routine needs.

The second part of the novel focuses on Port of Spain, a place that opens new avenues for Mr. Biswas. The city provides him with opportunities to establish him professionally as he has so far desired for. He becomes a reporter for the Trinidad ‘Sentinel’ with a salary of fifteen dollars a month. It is a job that helps him to earn some respect from the Tulsi, too. His relation with Mrs. Tulsi slowly improves but for some time only. There is no affection from either side. He forgets his success in family life. His happiness however is short. The takeover of the Trinidad ‘Sentinel’ by new authorities, Seth’s break up with Tulsi and Mrs. Tulsi decision to live in Short hills are blows upsetting the family tradition upon which the Tulsi family has run. The Domestic situation after return of Owad also changes. He slaps Anand for answering him back; Anand argues the insult with his father. Mr. Biswas, who has himself faced such things many times during his childhood, is deeply moved by his son’s appeal. Mrs. Tulsi’s two sons are seen as proof of the success and security education can provide. But Owad and Shekhar are not as content and complete as they are believed to be. After his marriage into a rich family, Shekhar does not
bring his wife at home but leaves his own home to live with his wife’s family. Therefore Shekhar finds himself in the same confused role like that of Biswas and the other poor husband who married into the Tulsi clan, marriage and money are poor substitutes for an ambition. He becomes part of the elite released from both the Hindu and Creole world of Trinidad. The home metaphor therefore forms the core of the novel.

Biswa needs more than food and shelter house of his own. He thinks that he is an unwanted element in Tulsi family. He is a person who tries to improve people’s lives, but his own life becomes miserable in Mrs. Tulsi household. He is unable to manage a village shop, as the customers cheat him. His repulsion for the Tulsi family is so strong that he does not care for the future. He does not want to become an obedient husband who works on the Tulsi land.

“Relationship at Hanuman House were complex and as yet he understood only a few, but he had noted that two friendly sisters made two friendly husbands, and two friendly husbands made two friendly sisters. Friendly sisters exchanged stories of their husbands’ disabilities, the names of illnesses and remedies forcing such discussions to be in English.” (P. 107)

To assert his freedom in Hanuman House, Mr Biswas joins the Aryans, a group of Protestants, Hindu Missionaries from India and starts advocating the acceptance of conversion and women education on the one hand and the abolition of the caste system, child marriage and idol worship, on the other. He knows that these doctrines will anger the Tulisis. Mr Biswas takes up means that are as absurd as comic such as his revenge on Bhandat or giving various nick names to the Tulises such as ‘the old queen’ ‘the old hen’ ‘the old cow’ for Mr.Tulsi ‘the big boss’ for Seth the old holy man and holy ghost for Hari or the two Gods for Tulsi’s son. He nicknames Mr. Seth an uncle to Shama as big
boss and Mrs. Tulsi as the old hen the old cow and she fox. There are
two brother of Shama, Shekhar and Owad Mr. Biswas labels them as
little Gods. Above all he calls the whole Hanuman House ‘a zoo’ filled
with all sorts of crazy creatures.

“Hanuman house reveals itself not as a coherent
reconstruction of the clan but as a slave society,
erected by Mrs Tulsi and Seth who need workers
to help rebuild their to tottering empire. They
therefore exploit the homelessness and poverty of
their fellow Hindu and reconstruct a mockery of
the clan which functions only because they have so
completely grasped the psychology of a slave
system.” (Gordon, 1979, p. 87)

He is again sent to Green Vale as a driver-sub overseer and is forced to
live in a dark room with labourers. Here his desire to build his own
house is rejuvenated and he frames a dream picture of his house. The
Doll’s house he brings for Savi as a Christmas gift becomes an
expression of his innate desire to build a house. Mr Biswas’s attempts
to claim a portion of the earth and dream to build a house meet the
same result as the Doll’s house given to Savi, daughter of Mr Biswas on
her birthday.

The breaking of the Doll’s house by Shama in order to avoid the
jealousy of all other members of the Tulsi Family affects him mentally.
He feels that something is very substantial inside him that is affected
and not merely the Doll’s House. His desire for building a house takes
first shape at Green Vale with the help of Maclean a carpenter –cum-
builder. Life at Green vale is a more distressing experience. In Chase,
he moves with family and furniture into a single room. Although Green
Vale gives him a sense of freedom and importance, his actions in
Green Vale are full of physical and mental insecurity. His dream to
build a house begins to shape into reality. It is not that he wants a
spacious place for himself but he wants to be recognized as the father
of his children especially by his son Anand. For Mr Biswas, Anand belongs completely to Tulsis.

Biswa tries to overcome his problems in very ways. He reads for his uncle but thinks of the problems he had with him. Printed books do not provide solutions to the problems one has in real life. The book has advised many solutions but provides no solution to the problems one has in real life. The printed words are of no use to cure his relatives or his serious diseases. The actual experience and theory knowledge are always poles apart. His early attempts to find a house of himself do not materialize as he secures a job only as a sign painter. He manages to find a job in the sentinel and gets his family to Trinidad to stay with him. He needs to pay only eight dollars a month, as rent and Shama would do the completely household work. He feels he is the owner of the house and develops a very good garden in front of the house. He is at ease in the house as Owad leaves to England and Mrs. Tulsi finds that there is no need of her in Port of Spain. Mr Biswas’s ambition to have a house re-surfaces again. He has spent all his savings to build the house there. But the house is not proper for Shama has to walk a mile daily for shopping and there is also a problem of transportation. The children too, want to return to Port of Spain. Even though the house is not the house of his dreams, the house for Mr Biswas is more of a prison as it is situated far from the city. Mrs. Tulsi offers him two rooms. Shama and Biswas live in Hanuman House. House is his dream as well as the reason of his tragedy. The nation, the area, the place, the locality are not important. Since his childhood until his death, he wants a comfortable house but it is not in his fate and life of forty-six years. Naipaul makes it clear that for displaced people like Biswas, owning a house does not just mean having a shelter. After
Biswas shifts to their own house, there is a further change of scene in the Tulsi household.

At Short hills Biswas ambition of having his own house, finally finds fulfillment. He is able to complete the house within a short period and even shift into it. Though his ambition remains steady, his conditions have changed like changing the house. Even inside the house, the children felt threatened by the smell of snakes and Biswas waits to be released from the house which cannot be a home to them.

Mohan Biswas now realizes that he has the responsibilities of a father and husband as well and that his ambition can become truly meaningful only if the aspirations of the other members of the family are also fulfilled. After the Short hills, Biswas once again returns to the Port of Spain house. He has to share with some of the other Tulsi members like Govind and Chinta W.C. Tuttle and their families. The encouragement and guidance of the Welfare Department are no longer needed. He does not have access to the kind of money people like Govid and Tuttle get. Biswas continues to live in the Port of Spain house even after Owad returns from England. Owad’s return revives the community life of Tulsi’s when even communal cooking is resumed, but there is still a competition among the sisters with each sister trying to establish her intimacy with Owad. On the same night, Biswas insults Mrs. Tulsi and even tells her that he would be vacating her house. With a saving that hardly amounts to eight hundred dollars, it is impossible for him to think of buying a house but when he gets four hundred dollars for his Short hills House, he is in a position to give it a serious thought. He manages a loan of four thousand dollars from Ajodha and finally decides to purchase the solicitor’s clerk’ house in Port of Spain. Biswas thus craves for a house. His struggle for a house goes parallel to the development of his personality. Mr
Biswas has lost all his mental and physical strength to reach to this position and as the result, he suffers a heart attack and dies only when he is forty six. At his funeral, people from all races come to Mohun because his writing has made him very popular. Biswas lacks skills for he is straightforward and native individual who cannot think of either cheating or playing gimmicks to impress others. He has faced challenges in spite of ordinariness. Biswas has faced all troubles and emerged in his rich family. Ganesh (The Mystic Masseur), is a man with a high degree of interest, individual benefits and selfish motives but Biswas’s only aim in life is to acquire a house that will provide him an identity in the society – his own house, his own lot of land and his own lot in general. Whatever one gets in the end is neither total success nor total failure. The house and Mr Biswas have got some satisfaction but still there are limitations to everything as nothing is complete and nothing is totally flawless. Whether it is human life or a house there are always problems.

The house in this novel is a symbol not for homelessness but for freedom from slavery and injustice. Mr. Biswas dies in a simple house but it is his own. He spends a month in hospital. Biswas is kept in the hospital for six weeks. The sentinel keeps him on half-pay. When he returns home, the house is prepared for Shama, Kamla and Myna. The garden is blooming the floor is freshly furnished. Biswas develops a tendency to find happiness in small things such as children, garden flowers plants etc. Biswas achieves little but he leaves his children in a better position in the changing society. The house appears to be the central symbol in novel. To have a house of his own is hero’s idea of liberation from the Tulsis.

The novel is autobiographical to the extent that the character of Mr Biswas is drawn very much after Naipaul himself, the author’s
father and his restlessness in finding a proper vocation and a sense of belonging to the society they are forced to live in. The tragedy of Mr. Biswas is a tragedy of a man who tries to adjust himself to a change in his society and in his personal outlook and before he is forty, he considers his career closed. Mohun Biswas is the story of a man’s effort to overcome problems of Trinidad East Indian community. The life and struggle of Mr. Biswas prove the basic fact of human state loneliness and helplessness. This kind of rootlessness and helpless suspension experienced by Naipaul’s heroes represent the central problem in most of Naipaul fiction.

At the time of his death of a heart attack at the age of forty six Mr Biswas is living in his own house, but he is unemployed, his house is a structural disaster, and the mortgage is well beyond any possible means of payment. His partial victory shows that it is incomplete. Biswas had no roots in the lands or customs of his forefathers and the new world of Trinidad seemed to throw him out. Yet, he does not want to have lived without even attempting to lay claim to his own portion of the earth, to have lived and died, as he had been born alone and helpless.

“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 earth; to have lived and died as one had been born, unnecessary and unaccommodated.”

(Naipaul, 1961, p. 08)

It is a symbolic history of Trinidad; the psychic features of placelessness and denial. Mr Biswas himself is a second generation in the changing society. He is in constant attempt to assert his identity but fails to do so in the end. Biswas’s ambition to build a house is
therefore, more than a place to live in. It is the symbolic quest for a home. This is why he resents the materials he is forced to buy from Hanuman house. The house of Tulsi is not a good place for they have built it temporality as they have place to return to India. Even precious trees are not planted there. What is the position of Mohun is also the position of the Hanuman house.

“A House for Mr Biswas is an individual’s search for identity and his struggle to arrive at authentic selfhood which comes to an end with his construction of a house for himself and his family, however faulty the construction might be.”
(Ramadevi, 1996, p. 55)

Mr Biswas like his house has only a fractured satisfaction. There are defects in the house as well as in the achievement of Mr Biswas. Building one’s career and a house are both great problems for there are careful omissions and commissions, troubles and assets in work as well as in construction.

“Biswa is everyman, wavering between identity and non-entity and claiming his acquaintance with the rest of them. If Biswas represents all the things I feel he does, it is because he is fully presented as a person whose quirk and idiosyncrasy we know, in a world whose very sight, sound and smell is recorded with fidelity and precision.” (Gordon, 1979, p. 03)

In Biswas’s attempt to build a house, one can see his desire to create a small centre of order in a society that had no rules and patterns. There are many like Biswas who want to build house to establish them, but houses they build reflect their incompleteness. He has a house, but there are still many financial problems. He had at last built his house but he knows well he will not be able to get rid of the money he had borrowed. Biswas and his house are both unfortunate things. For neither of them will be suitable and satisfactory. Both have their own limitations, man with his nature and economic position, house, with
bricks stones and other materials. Naipaul makes it clear that for displaced people like Biswas, owning a house does not just mean having a shelter.

“Every element in his psyche, Every emotion and impulse, Every desire and idea is centered around the house.”

(Shahan, 1982, p. 51)

The house appears to be the central symbol in novel. To have a house of his own is hero’s idea of liberation from the Tulsis. The passive independent life of the child in his mother’s houses he has only the Hindu’s dependent status as a member of the extended family in Hanuman House. Whatever one gets in the end is neither total success nor total failure. The house and Mr Biswas have got some satisfaction but still there are limitations to everything as nothing is complete and nothing is totally flawless. Whether it is human life or a house there are always problems. Nothing is completely satisfying for human life house is full of odds and assets. It is symbolic that both are limited to a certain period and have limited comforts.

“A House for Mr Biswas is as subtle and comprehensive an analysis of the colonial situation in the Caribbean as anything in imaginative literature.” (White, 1975, p. 80)

Naipaul’s love -hate relationship with the Hindu customs make Hinduism hard for him to accept. Biswas hates the Tulsis. He does not want the domination of the Tulsi and at the same time he is unable to build his own house and lead an independent life. He is unable to have a happy adjustment with the Tulsi. He is not able to reject them his own house partly fails.

“The mixed nature of Biswas desire for self reliance echoes existential absurdity. Stifled by communal pressures, yet afraid of the chaos of an
unstructured society, Biswas in constant suspension.”) (Hamner, 1979, p. xvii)

Though Biswas succeeds in building his own house he fails in the achievement of the broader objective. A House for Mr Biswas is the most personal novel Naipaul has written. This novel has a careful structure consisting of the prologue, the swelling, Act and Epilogue. The protagonist Mr. Mohun Biswas’s achievement signifies the general mental make-up of colonial society in Trinidad where people are content with simple achievement. Mr Biswas struggles for the house. He suffers due to accepting new path having a house of his own is not a just dream for him, but a point of revolt and refusal of the Tulsi clan. This is why the house in this novel is a symbol not of homelessness but of freedom from slavery and oppressions of Hanuman house.

“It is worth asking what is the social and universal signification of the rebellion of a mediocre ridiculous man. Biswas certainly is this: an anti-hero moving through dimension after dimension of nearly epic absurdity. He is forever trying to arrange his world and ending up more deeply immersed in the absurd situation.”) (p. 84)

The novel is epic in scope and a saga of the struggle of an individual Indian against the colonial life under new forces past clashes with present. The story of Mr Biswas with all the absurdities and chaos exposes the wounds of East Indians who are exiled and whose historical Indianans is nothing more than a dead burden on them. V.S. Naipaul traces the life and death of Mohun Biswas in this novel. The life represented at Hanuman House no longer exists in Trinidad.

“Yet, he is representative enough of our local predicament: a man without a past, an orphan wavering between equally dubious cultural alternatives; winning assort of independence and returning in humiliation to the people he is still forced to fight; turning anxiety into absurdity by using humour as a weapon and an escape; trying
to create an identity from the void and sometime unknown to himself, exercising and expressing identity in the very act of searching for it.” (p. 93)

The novel though not an autobiography has autobiographical elements in it. Mohun Biswas is Naipaul himself and the Hanuman house is the same Lion house in Port of Spain. It is a novel of therefore individual attempts to overcome Homelessness. The possession of ramshackle house is the almost concession for a man in the absurd society. This house can be compared to Emily Bronte’s Wuthering Heights (1847) the main character Heathcliff (represented the households of this novel) like Mr. Biswas suffer many psychological problems. Mohun Biswas is a more complex version of Ganesh who rejects the Hindu world of Hanuman House and decides to make his house in the Creole world of Port of Spain. One may say that he settles down in Miguel Street. His son Anand rejects both Hanuman house and Miguel Street. He is a representative figure an everyman. When a bewildered Anand asks him who he is, he replies, ‘I am just somebody, nobody at all. I am just a man you know.” The novel is suggested to be the West Indian novel of rootlessness (homelessness) par excellence. It is comprehensive analysis of the colonial situation in post-colonial literature. In stead’s of co-operation, competition between Mr. Biswas’s son Anand and Govind’s and Govind’s son Vidiadhbar. The last paragraph of the Epilogue describes the cremation. The house is a strong metaphor in the novel. The house gives all a sense but he has ultimately lost his very roots of life in the world suffering. The last day of Mr. Biswas has been full of miseries and misfortunes. He is constantly in pain for the Sentinel gives him half-pay. His wife gets another message day. When the condition of Mr. Biswas is very serious, he comes home after staying for six weeks in the hospital. The
Sentinel sacks him, and gives him three months notice. He is happy in his last days. The cremation was thinly attended and attracted spectators of various races. Strangely enough, Mr. Biswas is cremated whereas his father Raghu was buried. Shama and the children go back to the empty house. The crowning irony is that when Biswas died his house is irretrievably mortgaged to his uncle Ajodha. He dies with a fulfilled desire of owing a house. The novel ends with Mr. Biswas’s death.

“The ‘House’ in this novel is a symbol not for ‘rootedness’ but for freedom, freedom from slavery and oppression. This much needed freedom explains the predicament of all expatriate, immigrant persons who are largely disposed of their past.” (Das, 1995, p. 102)

The protagonists of the novel, his family, the Tulsi family---all these characters are the typical representatives of the marginal’s and their problem, their predicament in the post-colonial situation. It seems that the Tulsi Dom itself is Naipaul’s idea of the colonizers and the outsiders like Biswas and the other sons-in-laws are the colonized because of the infrastructure of the Hanuman house. Most of the characters are emigrants and so facing the life and problems of the feminization in terms of the female Tulsis and de-humanization of thei sons—in law is very peculiar to the post-colonial period.