COOLIE TALES: EAST INDIAN WRITERS

The East Indians arrived in the Caribbean much later than the white settlers and their black slaves. After Negro emancipation, the sugar estates of the Caribbean became derelict and the need of the day was to procure cheap labour. India became the main overseas source of cheap labour though labourers were brought in from China as well. Between 1839 and 1917 nearly 416,000 indentured labourers were brought in from India and most of them were transported to Guyana and Trinidad where the shortage of labour was most acute.

Most of the Indian immigrants were contracted from the poverty-stricken districts of Northern India though a significant number were from Southern India. They were labelled 'East Indians' or 'coolies' to distinguish them from the West Indians, mostly Negroes and coloured folks. There were Hindus and Muslims among them. J.C. Jha's article entitled "Indian Heritage in Trinidad, West Indies" published in Caribbean Quarterly in 1973 gives us information about their background. He states that most of these immigrants had possessed land in India before unforeseen circumstances forced them to
emigrate. So they were good farmers and were used to methods of irrigation and cultivation of marshy lands. Most of them preferred to work on the land and save money to acquire property so that their children at least could live in comfort.

When a comparison is made between the Negro slave and the East Indian coolie, one is struck by the latter's adherence to his culture. Jane Grant attributes this state of affairs to a particular reason. In her introduction to Sam Selvon's short stories entitled *Ways of Sunlight* (1987), she describes how the indentured labourers were forced to live in unusually harsh conditions like the Negroes under slavery; but there was no attempt to destroy their culture and traditions as there had been earlier to destroy the African culture of the slaves (vi). In the beginning, the coolies preferred to keep to themselves, for they had brought from India an entire culture. They followed their own religions and celebrated their own festivals. They married among themselves. Though caste was adhered to, taboos regarding caste were not very strict. They were largely illiterate but they could speak different
languages. In spite of all this, the West Indian looked down upon the East Indian. There were several reasons for this. In the early days of indenture, the East Indians were looked upon as transients, protected by the white planters and the colonial government and assaults on them were common. Many of the Indians returned to India but a larger number stayed on. Their numbers soon increased. As they were good, hard workers, they were encouraged to own land by the authorities. But the attitude of derision and discrimination persisted. The East Indian could not be at par with the West Indian for the former had to carry a passport; he was denied full citizenship rights and the chances of modern education. The coolie way of life in mud huts devoid of comforts, the habits of sleeping on the floor on flour sacks, eating food with the hand etc., invited derision and contempt. The Negroes preferred to spend all they earned on comforts and a good life. The coolies preferred to save and hoard money. The East Indians made significant contribution to society in terms of agricultural produce but they were denied representation. Indenture ended in 1917 but by this time one third the population of Trinidad consisted of
East Indians. Against heavy odds, many of them managed to educate themselves and quite a few intellectuals emerged from among them. This, in turn, led to socio-political awareness and various organizations became active in the East Indian community. By the early 1920s they had become strong enough to demand proportional representation in the Legislative Council.

In the fast changing society of the Caribbean, it was impossible for the East Indians to retain their ethnicity for long. Though in the villages, the peasant community still held on to their own culture, the cities influenced the East Indians who had migrated there. The process of "creolization" soon gained momentum. Slowly the Indian languages ceased to be spoken and were replaced by the lower class dialect of English. Many East Indians converted to Christianity. Even those who did not convert, lost touch with the Hindu scriptures. Dress, food habits and recreational activities also underwent change. It was the local environment that decided them but in spite of these changes, the East Indian sensibility remained distinct. This was most reflected in their domestic lives, their family
relationships and their priorities. The two East Indian novelists chosen for contrastive analysis, Sam Selvon and V.S. Naipaul, are from Trinidad. Though both of them were born in Trinidad of East Indian parents, they had to migrate to England to achieve success as writers. But there the resemblance ends. Though their concerns especially in the novels chosen for analysis, are sociological, their attitudes are completely alien to one another. Their attitudes, their linguistic styles and above all their world-view as a whole are contradistinct from each other and therefore provide enough scope for contrast.

Sam Selvon, born in 1923 in Trinidad started writing early in life. However he achieved success only after emigrating to Britain in 1950. His first novel A Brighter Sun though completed before he left Trinidad was published in London in 1952. From this beginning he went on from success to success to establish himself as a well-known literary figure. Selvon's novels fall into two categories: those that record Caribbean experience and those that relate the experiences of West Indian immigrants in England. His novels, The Lonely Londoners
and *Moses Ascending* belong to the second category. In the novels that are set in Trinidad we get an authentic picture of East Indian peasant life. The London novels on the other hand transcend the East Indian identity to assume a cosmopolitan Caribbean identity emerging from the engulfing sea of British supremacy over the immigrants from the erstwhile colonies of Britain. The characters, Moses and Galahad are black if one goes by ethnicity, Caribbean if one goes by region. Though these novels are full of pinpricks at the English prejudices against the immigrants, they are devoid of bitter denunciation. The Trinidad novels present both sides of East Indian life: the close-knit almost exclusively Indian village communities and the open cosmopolitan atmosphere of urban areas. *A Brighter Sun* centres upon Tiger, growing up in Trinidad at the time of the Second World War. It opens with Tiger's marriage at the age of sixteen to Urmilla, and follows his attempts to establish himself away from the influence of his family. In the sequel to this, *Turn Again Tiger* published in 1958, he returns with Urmilla and his daughter Chandra to the canefields to help his father. Selvon's other novels like *The Plains of*
Caroni, Those who eat the Cascadura etc., also deal with life in Trinidad but the Tiger novels have been selected because of their sociological interest and the authenticity of their peasant experience.

V.S. Naipaul was born in 1932 in Trinidad. If Selvon's father was a merchant, Naipaul's father was a reporter for the Trinidad Guardian. Seepersad Naipaul was an author in his own right having published The Adventures of Gurudeva and other Stories in 1943. He was thus a pioneer among the writers of Trinidad. His son, Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul received a scholarship to Oxford and went to England in 1950, the same year as Selvon. Naipaul's The Mystic Masseur was published in 1957 five years after A Brighter Sun but it was awarded the John Llewelyn Rhys Memorial Prize. Naipaul thereafter lived mostly in England working for the B.B.C and writing novels, returning to Trinidad only for short spells. His novel A House for Mr Biswas set in Trinidad is based upon family history. Published in 1961, the novel is a tribute to Naipaul's skill as a social historian. Naipaul has written a significant number of novels since then and many of them have won
him worldwide recognition. His chief concern is the problem of identity in post-colonial societies and he depicts it in his own characteristic way, tinged with humour and irony. His analytical vision and intuitive understanding of people and nations have earned him esteem as a novelist. _A House for Mr Biswas_ has been selected for closer study here because it presents the East Indian community of Trinidad in all its diversity. It explores the lives of not only the East Indian peasants in the sugar estates but also the emerging educated middle class from among them. Above all it depicts the joint Hindu family in Trinidad society in its state of waning and decay.

Before we proceed to the dilemma of identity with reference to the six situations mentioned earlier, it would be worthwhile to look at the opinion of critics regarding the two authors. Of the two, Naipaul is one who inspires a love-hate ambivalence among his critics. In _A Double Exile_ Griffiths makes the following statements:

In his early work like _Miguel Street_, _The Suffrage of Elvira_ and _The Mystic Masseur_, the interaction of Indian and Negro, of Chinese and
mulatto is implicit but despite his unsurpassed eye for recording detail and his ready compassion for their suffering and deprivation, Naipaul's view of the relations between these inhabitants of the urban slum and straggling rural village is dominated by his sense of their shared eccentricity and pathos. For Naipaul they are united beyond their racial differences in their shared lack of meaning. There is no sense here, as in Selvon's novels, of a new kind of man, emerging uniquely and distinctly West Indian. (1978, 122-123)

In the same work the author praises Selvon for his lighter touch and sharp eye. Kenneth Ramchand holds a different view however. His The West Indian Novel and Its Background makes the following comments:

While in his first three works, however, Naipaul was, on balance, a popular but ironic entertainer and gentle satirist, his fourth, A House for Mr Biswas (1961) established him as the author of a major twentieth century novel on the increasingly rare scale of Middlemarch, Anna Karenina or The Rainbow. The three generation span of the novel gives free play to Naipaul's favourite pattern of authorial stage setting summary followed by abundantly rendered and partly illustrative episode; and the wide cast of secondary characters allows the author's manner of swift and vivid characterization enriched by occasional glimpses in depth, to operate with reasonable legitimacy. (1970, 7-8)

At the same time, Ramchand concedes that Naipaul is the most observant and the least metaphysical of West Indian novelists. Naipaul's style and irony
contribute to his popularity as a novelist and there is no denying the fact that he is the most well-known and most widely read Caribbean novelist to date.

Selvon in contrast does not excite extremes of love and hate. Michel Fabre in his essay on Selvon in *West Indian Literature* makes the following comments:

A pioneer in Trinidadian fiction, quick to exploit the topical tensions of his time and render them in striking, accurate, literary terms, Sam Selvon has moulded the folk tradition of the Caribbean into a recognized literary form, somewhat in the way Ralph Ellison used the blues in *Invisible Man*. Throughout his novels, he has achieved a convergence of the written and oral modes in Trinidad, largely by bridging the gap between local creole and accepted standard English. He has extended that form to accommodate the European tradition. His preoccupations with language are contemporary; he is still creating new ironical tools fitted to the demythification of solemn postures, be they imperialistic dictates or frozen modes of expression which prevent the spirit from moving in harmony with fundamental emotions. Selvon's humanistic vision extends beyond social concern, whether explicit or muted. It centres on the essential worth of the individual within the community. (1979, 124-125)

Even while noting the success of Naipaul, one has to take into account the pioneering nature of Selvon's work which had been almost completed before he
went to England. Selvon as such has contributed to the creation of a Caribbean ethos-thematic as well as formalistic.

Childhood: Though *A Brighter Sun* is a bildungsroman childhood experiences are given little importance within the novel. When the novel starts, Tiger the protagonist is sixteen and the most important event that happens to him at that age is his marriage. Tiger is hardly grown up and the premature nature of the event is thus expressed: "Tiger didn't know anything about the wedding until his father told him. He didn't even know the girl. But he bowed to his parents' wishes. He was only sixteen years old and was not in the habit of attending Indian ceremonies in the village. But he knew a little about weddings, that Indians were married at an early age and that after the ceremony friends and relatives would bring him gifts until he began to eat; only then would they stop the offerings" (1985, 4-5). Here Tiger seems to be unaware of the responsibilities that marriage incurs. When the boys and girls of the neighbourhood started teasing him, he felt that they were still little children and that he, as an adult,
should learn to forget them. Tiger did not know what to do but he just obeyed the instructions given, with all the naivete of a child.

Once the marriage was over, Tiger had to take charge in the hut in Barataria that was provided by his wife's family. He understood that he had to prove his manhood to his wife and felt acutely nervous about it. We see Tiger trying to assert himself in various ways including smoking and drinking; the smoking ended up in Tiger coughing and Urmilla laughing at him. Drinking at the rum shop gave him the courage to establish physical contact with his wife. He also went to the estate office and leased out some land for cultivation. He was illiterate and inexperienced and not quite sure of himself. But he managed to find the office and did the job without resorting to outside help. This made him feel self-confident. Having proved himself a man to his wife, Tiger now had to prove it to his parents and the world. For this he had to wait till he became a father. His father and his other relatives came to see Urmilla and the child. Feeling that it was an important
occasion, he wanted to offer drinks to his guests but was afraid of rebuke. In the end, he offered to get drinks from the shop and the old man was pleased:

The old man said, "well, you should have'am here already! After all, you is a man now, boy and you must have'am drink in house for when friend come." Tiger thought, to my wife, I man when I sleep with she. To bap, I man if I drink rum. But to me, I no man yet. (45)

Tiger realizes that he has lost the carefree existence of childhood. Unlike the other young men of his age, he could not wander around doing nothing:

Sometimes a heart slowing homesickness overcame him and he wanted to run back into his life as a boy in the canefields, with no thoughts to worry him, with parents to give him food and occasionally short khaki pants to wear. How easy it had been to get up and milk the cows or fix the harness on the mules, and go to work with the others, talking about games and who had the most marbles. He remembered once, a game of "hoop", he had got lost in the cane. Right in the middle of the field he went to hide, and when he wanted to come out he didn't know in which direction to turn. The way he felt then, it was the same when he cowered under the shadow of life now. When Urmilla and the baby were asleep he looked up at the roof and felt revulsion for his wife and child. They were to blame for all his worry. If he were alone he could be like Boysie, not caring a damn. (81-82)
The childhood remembered thus with its aura of enchantment offers a contrast to the self-same childhood remembered by Tiger in the sequel, Turn Again Tiger. The sudden discovery of a white overseer on the cane project was something of a shock to Tiger who had left Barataria and come to Five Rivers to help his father. The sight of the overseer's house with all modern amenities, tucked away in the wilderness, strikes a raw nerve somewhere. Having forgotten the whip of the white master, the coolie is reminded of it again:

He could remember clearly now -- it was funny how the memory came, after sleeping all those years when it wasn't needed -- how the overseer used to come in the morning, a cork hat on his head to shade the sun, white shirt tucked into leather leggings polished smooth as glass by some labourer's child, and legs straddling the saddle of a big horse, one hand holding the reins, the other a riding whip flicking against the leggings as if the man was brushing away mosquitoes all the time. And the stories which had fed his growth told of nights when the old men sat around smoking their pipes after a day in the fields. Working for the white bosses day after day. The white man was making all the money and they had all the work to do. Tale after tale but only variation on a theme. The white overseer screwed the young Indian girls in the cane, and nobody could do anything about it. They were short-paid last week but no one said anything. Everybody grumbled, but they still worked, because not to work was to starve. That was the tune ringing in his ears
as he grew up, and he got to link rebelliousness with cane and he had been happy to leave Chaguanas and go to live in Barataria vowing never to return to such labour. (1971, 47-48)

The other side of childhood is thus portrayed in the second novel helping to complete the picture.

Though actual reminiscences of various experiences in childhood are not described in Tiger's case, Selvon gives a graphic picture of Tiger's friend Joe whose mother had abandoned him at birth leaving him in the care of her aunt. The lady in question, Ma Lambie, derived some sort of satisfaction from beating Joe. As the boy grew up, the stick grew in proportion. Something significant happened to Joe when he was sixteen. The incident is described with grim humour. Joe's aunt had been searching for Joe in vain and her temper had touched its highest point when she discovered him playing with his friends near the river. Hiding the stick behind her, she lured Joe with honeysweet words but once he got close enough, she started beating him up mercilessly. Seeing the state of Joe, one of his friends remarked that he was too stupid to allow an old woman to beat him. Hearing this, Joe
got up as if the devil had got into him. He advanced upon Ma Lambie and started beating her. When she tried to run away, he followed her home beating her every step of the way. The incident became a delicious scandal, a big "bacchanal" but it also helped to establish Joe's adulthood. He found himself a job and refused to pay any attention to the old woman. The oppressor soon turned into a cringing frightened woman.

Though both Joe and Tiger come out of the cocoon of childhood at sixteen, Joe emerges the tougher of the two due to the deprivation he had suffered. Tiger had been denied education as a child. His father had sent him early enough into the canefields to work. Later on, he managed to acquire the ability to read and write. When one looks at Naipaul's novel, A House for Mr Biswas one sees that it was the same for Mohun's brothers Prasad and Pratap. Biswas himself was more fortunate in this regard for, after migrating to Pagotes he was enrolled in a school and learned to read and write. Ironically enough it was his misfortune in losing his father that brought about the shift to Pagotes. At the same time the acquisition of education
was regarded as a great achievement by the peasant community. In *Turn Again Tiger* Selvon portrays the respect that Tiger inspired among the villagers on account of his education. Tiger was ranked top man in Five Rivers though it was like "one-eye man in a blind eye country" (39). At first Babolal, Tiger's father felt jealous of Tiger for he felt that he should get more respect as the big boss. But after some time he started becoming proud of his son as the educated one. Ironically enough he started falsifying the past trying to take credit for Tiger's knowledge. The scene is depicted with humour:

"Yes," he told them, drinking in the shop in the evening, "if wasn't for me, he grow up like any other poor child, not learning his lessons or anything, only playing all the time. But from small, I take behind him. I used to beat him everyday and make him study how to read and write and how to count."

"You is a lucky man to have a son who know so much," they told him.

"Well, seeing as I didn't have much education myself, what else I could do but see that the boy learn lessons? Ask him, ask him, how I had to beat him everyday to go to school."

"Is true Tiger, is true?"

"Yes," Tiger said, seeing that his father was happy in his fancy. "If it wasn't for bap I wouldn't know anything." (39)
Thus an artificial past was created for Tiger in Five Rivers. *A Brighter Sun* describes how painstakingly Tiger had acquired the ability to read and write by cajoling his neighbour Sookdeo with rum. He had learnt bit by bit and had augmented it by reading. The case of Tiger and Biswas's brothers point to the lack of educational facilities in the villages where the East Indian coolies lived. In Five Rivers too it was the same, but in Barataria there were schools and Joe's adopted son Henry could attend one, just as Biswas could after migrating to Pagotes. Though Tiger promised to teach the children in Five Rivers, the events that befell him did not allow him to keep his promise.

In Naipaul's novel *A House for Mr Biswas* the experiences of childhood are given a great deal of importance. After the first chapter, entitled 'Prologue,' which describes Mohun Biswas's death, the author goes on to narrate the entire life history of his protagonist. Part One is significantly named 'Pastoral' tracing as it does the origins of the protagonist in the cane community of indentured labourers. The term 'pastoral' has no romantic illusions about it, though
one tends to associate it with the image of a magical existence under the greenwood tree. The protagonist is doomed from the very beginning, having been born in the wrong way with six fingers. The midwife herself pronounced him unlucky and the pundit who was called by his maternal grandmother confirmed the opinion. He went on further to pronounce that the boy would grow up to be a spendthrift, a liar and a lecher with an unlucky sneeze. He was particularly advised not to go anywhere near ponds and rivers. The pundit also forbade his father from looking at him for twenty one days and then to see his reflection first in a brass plate filled with coconut oil collected and made by hand. It was easy to keep the father from seeing the boy because his mother Bipti had quarrelled with her husband Raghu and had left him to go to her parents' home only the previous day. The name chosen was Mohun and the pundit left the mud hut pleased with the florin the poor woman gave him. Needless to say, the superstitious folk attended to every word of the pundit and did likewise. Thus the atmosphere painted is one of superstition, ignorance, poverty, deprivation and greed.
In the days that followed, though the importance of Mohun diminished, he still carried weight as an unlucky child. Naipaul describes it with grim humour: "But he still carried weight. They never forgot that he was an unlucky child and that his sneeze was particularly unlucky. Mr Biswas caught cold easily and in the rainy reason threatened his family with destitution. If before Raghu left for the sugar estate, Mr Biswas sneezed, Raghu remained at home, worked on his vegetable garden in the morning and spent the afternoon making walking-sticks and sabots or carving designs on the hafts of cutlasses and the heads of walking-sticks" (1969, 20). The only occasion on which Raghu did not pay any attention to his son's sneeze brought him misery in the form of an accident at his workplace!

Mohun grew up thin and unhealthy due to malnutrition. At home his brothers Prasad and Pratap were already working on the sugar estate. Soon it would be his turn; in the meanwhile he stayed at home playing with his sister Dehuti. However, unforeseen events happened which prevented his joining the labour force. Mohun was given the calf of one of the neighbours to
look after in return for a small wage. Wandering about with the calf he saw a stream. Because of the pundit's warning, Biswas had been forbidden to go anywhere near the water. So the stream held an unusual fascination for him and he started going there regularly. One day he lost the calf.

While he was watching the fish in the stream, the calf had wandered off. A diligent search was unfruitful and Mohun decided to hide being frightened to face the consequences. Soon the owner of the calf came looking for Mohun and when some of the neighbours remarked that they had seen the calf near a pond everyone was alarmed. Mohun's father decided to go and dive in the pond looking for his son and the calf. The first time Raghu dived, he came up with the dead body of the calf. He dived a second time looking for Mohun. He didn't come up for a long time. So one of the neighbours dived in and brought him up unconscious. Raghu died soon thereafter fulfilling the prophecy of the pundit.

After the funeral, attended by Bipti's wealthy sister Tara, they started looking for the money Raghu had hoarded through his miserliness. They couldn't get
it. Dehuti was taken away by the childless Tara to her house in Pagotes. The rest of the family had a hard time with the neighbours becoming treasure hunters overnight. Searching for Raghu's money they dug up the vegetable patches. In the end Bipti sold off her land and migrated to Pagotes to live in a hut on the back trace with some of Tara's husband's dependent relatives. The sons Prasad and Pratap were sent with a relative to work on an estate far away. Mohun however, stayed with his mother. Thus Mohun's ill-luck led to his family unit being broken up and scattered. The sense of loneliness and rootlessness which thus began is depicted in vivid detail: "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" (40).
The shifting to Payotes had one advantage. Mohun Biswas was admitted at the Canadian Mission High School. But before that could be done, a birth certificate had to be procured. Bipti had no record of Mohun's birth. Tara helped her to procure one from a solicitor, a Muslim East Indian F.T.Ghany, for the sum of ten dollars. The education he received is also described with ironic humour. "Mr Biswas was taught other things. He learned to say the lord's prayer in Hindi from the King George V.Hindi Reader and he learned many English poems by heart from the Royal Reader. At Lal's dictation he made copious notes, which he never seriously believed about geysers, rift valleys, watersheds, currents, the gulf stream and a number of deserts. He learned about oases, which Lal taught him to pronounce 'osis' and ever afterwards an oasis meant for him nothing more than four or five date trees around a narrow pool of fresh water, surrounded for unending miles by white sand and hot sun. He learned about igloos. In arithmetic he got as far as simple interest and learned to turn dollars and cents into pounds, shillings and pence. The history Lal taught he regarded as simply a school subject, a discipline, as unreal as
the geography, and it was from the boy in the red bodice that he first heard with disbelief about the "great war" (46). The unreal nature of education under colonialism is outlined here. Children were being taught things that had little relevance to themselves. But unlike his father and his brothers he learnt to read and write and to do sums. He also discovered his talent for lettering which helped him later on in his job as a sign painter. He made friends with a Negro boy called Alec who used to wear multicoloured dresses belonging to his sister-in-law with whom he stayed. After six years at Lal's school, Tara decided to make him a pundit and made him the apprentice of Pundit Jairam.

Biswa's brahmin caste did not alleviate his homelessness or his poverty. But it gave him a curious status during religious ceremonies. The eight months spent by him at Pundit Jairam's made him acquainted with the more important of the Hindu scriptures. Pundit Jairam himself is satirized by Naipaul as a bundle of contradictions. The mechanical side of the puja was delegated to Biswas on Jairam's visits to people's houses. He was supposed to take round the brass plate
with the lighted camphor and collect the coins offered by devotees. Though Jairam would appear unconcerned, he would feel the boy all over to make sure he hadn't kept anything back after they returned home. Biswas was also supposed to carry the fruits and vegetables that people gave Jairam. On one occasion someone offered Jairam a bunch of unripe bananas. These were hung in the kitchen to ripen. Thinking that one or two bananas would not be missed Biswas took two of the ripe ones and ate them. Jairam however did not take it lightly. Instead of flogging his apprentice he forced Biswas to eat the whole bunch of unripe bananas saying that no one would touch them since Biswas had begun on them. With sadistic zeal, he forced banana upon banana on the poor boy making him sick. The incident is used by Naipaul to satirize the element of cruelty in a man of God who is supposed to be holy and altruistic. By making him incapable of pardoning the theft of a couple of bananas, Naipaul questions the validity of the attitudes of holiness that such people project. The Hindu religion as practised by such people in the West Indies had lost its core and survived only in the form of rites and rituals. The feeling of identifying God in every human
being had vanished to be replaced by a wholly materialistic philosophy. To Pundit Jairam, his job was like that of any other professional and as such the bananas that he received as wages belonged to him alone.

Thanks to Pundit Jairam's method of punishment, Biswas developed stomach trouble. It followed him throughout his existence. Because of his bad stomach, the call of nature started coming to him at awkward moments. Once in the middle of the night, he got the call. The latrine was far from the house and the boy was afraid to disturb the sleep of Pundit Jairam by opening doors and locks. So he relieved himself on a handkerchief and threw it out of the window. It fell on the cherished oleander tree in the garden. The next morning Jairam who was extremely angry with Biswas dismissed him saying that he would never make a pundit. The neighbours watched as Biswas left Jairam's house in disgrace. His childhood was over.

Childhood experiences are also used in a secondary fashion in the novel by describing Biswas's relationship with his children. Biswas's relationship with his mother is also portrayed on several occasions
but his relationship with his father is described only in the beginning. Selvon, in contrast does not provide much information about Tiger's mother who makes a brief appearance in *A Brighter Sun*. Babolal, his father, however plays an important role in the sequel, *Turn Again Tiger*. These relationships even when portrayed in adulthood echo the childhood experience.

After his marriage to Shama, Mr Biswas found it hard to claim his children for himself living as he did at Hanuman House, the family abode of the Tulsis. His children were named without consulting him. When his eldest girl Savi was born, Biswas tried to assert himself by calling her Lakshmi but she continued to be known as Savi. Thereafter he ceased to protest. When Anand was born, Biswas was running a shop in a village called The Chase. Savi used to stay for long spells at Hanuman House because it was full of children. One day she asked her mother if she couldn't exchange her for Aunt Chinta's son Vidiadhar. She preferred Chinta because it was this aunt who distributed all the delicacies in Hanuman House. Shama treated it all as a joke but Biswas got extremely annoyed on hearing this.
He wanted to claim his children for himself and therefore he used to visit Savi every week at Hanuman House to enquire after her well-being.

The atmosphere of the joint family had many disadvantages which Naipaul pinpoints piling satiric detail upon detail. The quarrels among the elders were reflected among the children. Insults were hurled at one another and often children were flogged for the sake of other people. On one occasion Biswas witnessed his five-year-old daughter Savi being beaten by her mother for not being able to tie her shoelaces. Biswas could only look on helplessly as the aunts and cousins watched the scene with enjoyment. Naipaul comments on the psychology of flogging: "At The Chase, Shama had seldom beat Savi and then it had been only a matter of a few slaps. But at Hanuman House the sisters still talked with pride of the floggings they had received from Mrs Tulsī; certain memorable floggings were continuously recalled with commonplace detail made awful and legendary by its association with a stupendous event; like the detail in a murder case. And there was even some rivalry among the sisters as to who had been
flogged worst of all" (199). The meaning here is obvious: these floggings had little to do with the correction of the children, they were more for show.

Another incident is described by Naipaul to show the effect of the joint family on single individuals. One Christmas, Mr Biswas bought his daughter Savi a doll's house as a gift. It was extremely extravagant of him because he had spent one month's wages on it. But he had done it on impulse and it was a beautiful little house with all the amenities that Biswas had dreamt of as part of the house that he would own some day. The arrival of the doll's house created confusion in the Tulsi household. After the initial exclamation of the children over the beauty of the house, Mrs Tulsi came out with a scathing comment. Thinking it a personal affront, she asked Biswas cuttingly what he had bought for the other children of the house. Her own gifts were not spectacular but she had something to give every child in the house. Shama's sisters took their cue from her and started threatening their offspring with dire consequences if they touched Savi's doll's house. In the end, Shama whispered to
Savi to go and put it away. The other sisters banded together isolating Shama who in turn looked accusingly at Biswas. Biswas left the scene hurriedly promising to buy a car for Anand whom he had forgotten. Biswas returned again the next Saturday but was horrified to hear that Shama had smashed up the doll's house. It was lying in the yard shattered like his own dream to own a house. Shaking with rage he started shouting at Shama but his rage was ineffectual. Feeling angry with Shama for destroying something that he had bought with his hard earned money, he took Savi with him and left for Green Vale.

Father and daughter spent a subdued week at the barracks. Biswas had to leave her alone for most of the day but he tried to amuse her by telling her stories. On Saturday, Shama arrived with her uncle Seth who had come to pay the wages. Biswas was startled to see the excitement in Savi:

While he sat beside Seth, calling out tasks and wages and making entries in the ledger, he listened to Savi talking excitedly to Shama and Anand. He heard Shama's cooing replies. Soon she was so sure of the children's affection that she was even scolding them. What a
difference there was though in the voice she used now and the voice she used at Hanuman House!

And even while he noted Shama's duplicity, he felt that Savi had betrayed him. (223)

Later on Shama made up her quarrel with Biswas saying that she had to do it because of the pressure the family was putting on her.

On another occasion, on the brink of a nervous breakdown Biswas turned his ire on his wife kicking her viciously. She was pregnant at the time and her loud cries brought in the neighbours. They advised her to go home. She started packing but Biswas insisted that his son should be left behind. Though Shama asked Anand to come with her, he decided to stay behind. Later on when Biswas questioned Anand as to what had prompted him to stay behind, his answer was full of exasperation. He told his father that had done so because they were going to leave his father all alone. In the days that followed a rapport was established between father and son. He even told him that his father was God and not Mohun Biswas who was just a man he knew! With Anand he moved in to the finished room of his incomplete house.
They were not able to stay there for long however. A thunderstorm broke out destroying part of the house and Biswas suffered a total breakdown. In the end, some of the Tulsi kinsfolk had to come and rescue father and son.

Later on, while working as a journalist in Port of Spain, Biswas was able to supervise Anand's education. Finding that Anand was intelligent he started making arrangements for him to appear for the Exhibition Examination. These included not only coaching classes but also special diets of milk and prunes. Anand had to meet stiff competition both within and without the Tulsi family. His chief rival was his cousin Vidiadhar. The competition actually led to an intense antagonism between the two. Naipaul uses Anand's experience of writing the examination to portray the importance of the Exhibition Examination in the Caribbean. In fact winning an Exhibition was the only method whereby the lower middle class could see the portals of a college. As the day of the examination got closer the tension mounted. Shama and Biswas were afraid that Anand would get an asthmatic attack on the
The exhibition candidates prepared for years for the sacrificial day had all come dressed for the sacrifice. They all wore serge shorts, white shirts and school ties, and Anand could only guess at what charms these clothes concealed. Their pockets were stuffed with pens and pencils. In their hands, they carried blotters, rulers erasers and new pots of ink; some carried complete cases of mathematical instruments; many wore wrist-watches. The schoolyard was full of Daddies, the heroes of so many English compositions; they seemed to have dressed with as much care as their sons. The boys looked at the Daddies; and the Daddies wrist-watchless eyed each other, breeders of rivals. There were few cars outside the school and Vidiadhar had achieved a temporary glory when he arrived in his father's car. But Govind hadn't left quickly enough and the boys skilled in noticing such things, saw the H on the number plate which indicated that the car was for hire. Altogether it was a dreadful day, a day of reckoning, with Daddies exposed to scrutiny on every side, and the examination to follow. (471 - 472)

After the examination Anand was gloomy and Vidiadhar jubilant but when the results came Anand had secured the third place in the entire island whereas Vidiadhar had failed. So Anand was congratulated and Vidiadhar was flogged by his mother!
The Tulsi household presents the Caribbean in miniature. Naipaul portrays the scramble for education by portraying "the learners and crammers" who flock to the Port of Spain house of Mrs Tulsi's to get a decent education. Biswas's illiterate sister Dehuti makes her son recite his lessons to his uncle when Biswas goes to stay with them. Mrs Tulsi is willing to go to any length to provide her sons Owad and Shekhar with the best of education. Owad is sent to England to study medicine. Whenever she helped Biswas, he was made to feel indebted to her and as a consequence he felt trapped. His circumstances made it difficult for him to refuse her help. Naipaul describes a situation where Biswas looks on the future of his children:

And now Mr Biswas began to make fresh calculations working out over and over the number of years that separated each of his children from adulthood. Savi was indeed a grown person. Concentrating on Ananad, he had not observed her with attention. And she herself had grown reserved and grave; she no longer quarrelled with her cousins, though she could still be sharp, and she never cried. Anand was more than half way though college. Soon, Mr Biswas thought, his responsibilities would be over. The older would look after the younger. Somehow as Mrs Tulsi had said in the hall of Hanuman House, when Savi was born, they would survive; they couldn't be killed. Then he thought: "I have missed their childhoods." (533)
When one looks at *Turn Again Tiger*, one sees that the relationship between Tiger and his daughter is not explored in detail but the relationship between his father Babolal and himself is explored. Though Tiger returns to Five Rivers as a grown-up person, Babolal often treated him as if he were a child. On one occasion Babolal got angry with Tiger and fought with him because he thought that Tiger was not giving him due respect: "Tiger got up and fought. There was too much at stake. Babolal knew that he had to tame his son of superior airs or else suffer the indignity of being beholden to Tiger, who knew so much more about everything. The matter had to be settled once and for all if they were going to work together in Five Rivers" (36). Though they fought Tiger waved Urmilla away when she tried to join in by threatening Babolal with a mortar pestle. When the fight was over Tiger felt remorseful and apologized. But Babolal remained sullen. In the days that followed the busy schedule made them forget the fight.

In Five Rivers, Tiger made friends with Soylo who preferred to remain aloof from the villagers. Though Soylo was reluctant at first, he soon started
liking Tiger's company Soylo had an intense hatred for sugarcane. The reason was revealed to Tiger during the harvest season. The cane had grown to full size and it was time to cut it. Prior to cutting, the canefields had to be set ablaze. The day the fires were started Tiger found Soylo sitting hunched up and gloomy. When Tiger asked him the reason Soylo told him a sad story. Soylo had a son who had gone into the canefields to play, the day they were set ablaze. Soylo and his wife had not missed him but when they did, they started searching frantically. But they had to wait for the fires to die out. Without waiting for the fields to cool, Soylo went in, burning his feet. The search was in vain; the next day they discovered his bones. The shock killed his wife and left Soylo embittered. Tiger was shocked to hear the story which affected him deeply. As he was going home Urmilla met him and asked him if he had seen Chandra anywhere for Chandra had gone to Manko's house to play. Panic seized Tiger and he rushed to Manko's house. Shocking Manko's wife, Tiger seized Chandra who was playing quietly with the children. Soylo's story was still fresh in his mind and all of a sudden he had realized how much Chandra meant to him.
Of the three novels, *A House for Mr Biswas* explores childhood experiences in greater detail when compared to the other two. *A House for Mr Biswas* is full of childhood experiences not only of Biswas and his children but the other Tulsi children as well. A certain family member is called "the expert lace knitter" and so on. These experiences help to highlight Biswas's own dilemma in a world that is alien and incomprehensible. He continues to remain a little man in a big world, with a cap that comes right over his eyes.

Struggle for Existence: The struggle for existence starts for both protagonists, Tiger and Biswas, early in life. In Tiger's case, he is pushed into marriage at sixteen. Though he was working earlier, it was his marriage that made him realize the importance of the struggle. *A Brighter Sun* starts with Tiger's marriage. Immediately after marriage he moves into the hut his wife's people had provided in Barataria. Urmilla had also been given a cow and a hundred dollars as part of the dowry. This custom of providing a dowry was peculiar to the East Indian community in the Caribbean.
In *A House for Mr Biswas* we have a similar situation, when Biswas marries Shama. The question of dowry was not mentioned at all by the Tulsis. When Tara, Biswas's aunt, went there later on she was told that it was a love match and that a shop would be offered to Biswas in a village called The Chase if he did not want to carry on with the sign painting. Late in life Biswas regretted his impulsive action of passing a note to Shama that had led to his marriage being labelled a love match.

Immediately after marriage, Tiger started seeking ways and means of supporting a family. He leased out some land and started planting crops on it with the money he had in hand. When Urmilla became pregnant, Tiger counted the money he had in hand. They had only one hundred dollars and there was plenty of work still in the garden. So Tiger suggested that they should start selling milk:

Tiger knew that money was necessary, that life could be hard, rotileless without it. He had seen his father and mother scrape together the remains of supper for breakfast in the morning, and how often had he gone out in the cane with nothing but a weak cup of tea in his belly? Hours and hours in the blazing sun. Out there
in the sun one forgot hunger in the swing of cutlass on fat, juicy stalks of cane. There was no time to think - it was work, work until the back ached and the days burned into weeks and months. (33-34)

Tiger even thinks in terms of a barter system to solve his problem. When Urmilla started selling milk, Tiger insisted that she should not mix any water with it because as they were new they should try to be on good terms with everybody. This actually proved beneficial for Urmilla was able to sell all the milk. Rita, also became one of her customers.

Urmilla became very friendly with Rita, her creole neighbour who offered to act as midwife for Urmilla. But when Rita went into the hut she was startled to see that they had no bed. Though she abused Tiger, she went into her own house and lent her bed to Urmilla. When Joe came home that evening he was irritated to hear what Rita had done, for, he did not like her interfering too much with the "coolie" people next door. He was also afraid of something going wrong when Rita acted as midwife. Tiger likewise was irritated to hear that Urmilla had allowed Rita to bring her own bed into the hut. But he was afraid to return it. The very next night, Urmilla's pains started. Rita
helped her with the delivery while Tiger talked to Joe. Contrary to his expectations Urmilla gave birth to a girl. The same situation is projected in A House for Mr Biswas. Biswas had looked up only boys' names for his first born but Shama gave birth to a girl who was named Savi. The East Indian community gave importance to male children, a fact that perplexed the Negroes who did not give undue importance to the sex of their children.

Tiger worked hard on his land. But though he weeded and manured and watered his plots, Sookdeo his neighbour had a better crop than he. Sookdeo was addicted to drink and worked very little. One day he asked Sookdeo about it. Sookdeo told him to love the things he planted. Tiger found it difficult to understand why Sookdeo's plants were doing better than his and wondered if he knew more about agriculture than Tiger or if it was because he was following the advice of the man from the agriculture department. Sookdeo, however felt that the men from the agriculture department knew nothing. As time passed, Tiger too learnt from experience and things began improving on his plots.
Another of Tiger's struggles was to educate himself. Being illiterate he was always at a loss to answer the many questions that were forming in his mind. He wanted to learn to read and write in order to read the books that would tell him everything. Sookdeo was cajoled with rum and treated with great respect by Tiger because he knew how to read and write. Slowly, painstakingly Tiger learnt from him and augmented it with the school books that Henry used. Soon his learning was put to the test when the Americans posted a notice on the door of Tall Boy's shop. None of the other Indians could read, so Sookdeo was asked to. He told them that they were going to lose their land. The Indians did not believe him. So they asked Tiger to read the notice. This was a big moment for him, like his wedding and his fatherhood, Selvon treats it with humor:

He cleared his throat. "Well, as you could see for yourself, the American and them going to build a road right by here. The notice from the estate people. It say that we will be com-pen-sated by the estate company. I don't know what the word mean, but the sense is that get money for whatever we lose. It say we have two weeks to clear out. It say a man will come from the estate-owner office, and ass-ess the gardens and them. That must be mean to see how
much crop we have plant. And we will get compensation to match. It say that we could get all the information from the office in San Juan. Then below here like they add something, let me see good. Oh yes, they say that the road will not take up all the room, and may be some people will have to move and others could stay. And it say that whoever still want to keep garden could get other land to rent, just as soon as the American finishing surveying the land to see how much they will want. But it say again that the best thing to do is to see the man in the San Juan office, who will explain properly." (106)

So Tiger had to give up his land. He did not mind this as he was happy for a change. After the assessment, Tiger did not lease out more land. Instead, he began to slowly and painfully write down the entire story of his garden. He also read several books on roads. When the Americans started building the road, he got a job with them at twenty dollars a week. In the meanwhile Urmilla became pregnant again. His responsibilities were increasing.

Tiger's experience with the Americans opened new avenues of speculation for him. He was given the exalted job of carrying the surveying instruments for the Americans and this made him feel like one of the surveyors. The Americans were very friendly with Tiger.
Realizing that his vocabulary was poor, he tried to improve it by using a dictionary. Tiger's conversation became a humorous mixture of dialect words and pompous sounding words that he lifted from the dictionary. He also startled Urmilla by describing cigarettes as "cylinders of narcotics rolled in paper."

Gradually Tiger's confidence grew and he invited his American bosses to his house. When Urmilla heard this, she was thunderstruck. Tiger gave her orders left and right as to what to cook and what to wear, but she only got more confused. In desperation she went to Rita for help. Rita and Joe, being creole, used forks and spoons while the East Indians had the habit of eating food with their hands. Rita lent all her cutlery and crockery. She also helped her with the arrangements. She even pulled a wire from her own house to provide electricity. She made Urmilla apply make-up on her face. Though the function went off well and the Americans enjoyed themselves, Urmilla got no words of praise from Tiger. He was angry because she borrowed things from the neighbours and because she had put on make-up. He kicked her viciously in the belly. Joe
Martin too was vexed with Rita for interfering with the neighbours. Urmilla fell sick and Joe and Rita stopped talking to Tiger. Haunted by guilt and loneliness Tiger started drinking. One day in the rainy season Urmilla fell seriously ill and Tiger had to rush out to get a doctor.

Tiger's experience with doctors is similar to Mohun Biswas's experience that is described in *A House for Mr Biswas*. In desperation Tiger went to an Indian doctor first who refused to come out in the night saying that he would come in the morning. He then went to a Negro doctor who treated him likewise. Finally he went to a doctor who had come to the Caribbean from England. This doctor took his own car to go to Tiger's house and see Urmilla. He gave her some medicine and told Tiger to allow her to rest. He also told Tiger that they should get a doctor's help at the time of her delivery. Tiger was extremely grateful to him and thanked him profusely. The next day Tiger went to see the East Indian doctor and the Negro doctor to give them a thorough scolding. His vehemence took them by surprise and they felt embarrassed. The people listening to him felt sympathetic and started passing comments on the
inhumanity of the doctors. In Biswas's case Naipaul describes how Biswas was upset because a doctor was very rude to his brothers when they requested him to sign his mother's death certificate: "They had been made to wait for very long in the doctor's verandah; they had complained and the doctor had damned them and damned their mother. His bad temper continued all the way to the house; with anger and disrespect he had examined Bipti's body, signed the certificate, demanded his fee and left. This had been told to Mr Biswas by his brothers, not in anger; they told it simply as part of the tribulations of the day: the death, the sending of messages, the arrangements" (482). Biswas, like Tiger, was badly affected by the inhumanity of the doctor who was an East Indian like himself, but who had converted to Christianity. He wanted to do something about it; after several abortive attempts Biswas, with Anand's help wrote a scathing letter to the doctor which ran to eight pages. It had some effect on the doctor who came in person to the Sentinel office to return the letter. Both the incidents show how the protagonists try to retain their self-respect by protesting against insult and indifference. Though they cannot make
anything happen, they can at least comfort themselves with the thought that they are doing something instead of taking every blow without protest.

After Urmilla lost her baby, Tiger sent her home to Chaguanas. The relationship with Joe and Rita had gone sour because Urmilla had insisted on Rita attending on her at the time of delivery against medical advice. Rita was Urmilla's closest friend and though Joe and Tiger had moved apart after the party given to the Americans, Urmilla wanted the friendship to continue. As Rita had attended on her the first time, Urmilla felt confident that Rita could handle the situation with competence. When the child was born dead Rita felt that they were blaming her. The road work was now over. So Tiger started building a house in the place of his hut. Brick by brick he worked on it. He was very much alone as the relationship with his neighbours had deteriorated. He didn't want to talk about his wife or his lost child, so he shunned the villagers. But after some time, he started doing odd jobs round the village and selling milk. He didn't know how to approach Rita about the milk. So he just left a bottle for her on the
back step. Rita accepted the milk and soon the coldness was forgotten. After a while, Tiger's friends started helping him with the house and soon it was completed. Urmilla returned from Chaguanas looking more healthy and they started living in the new house. The war was over and there was a big celebration. The end of the novel sees Tiger facing the future not having decided what to do.

The sequel to A Brighter Sun focusses on Tiger's return to the canefields in his struggle for existence. Creolization and the process of self education had put a distance between Tiger and his own roots in Chaguanas. According to Sandra Pouchet Paquet, Tiger's estrangement from the traditions of the East Indian peasant community had made him vulnerable to the lure of emigration and the prospect of further education. In her introduction to the 1979 edition of the novel she states that Turn Again Tiger makes it clear that Tiger's roots in the cane community are not easily laughed away. She also emphasizes Tiger's need to reconcile himself with his peasant roots in the cane community; and this is a vital and necessary
grounding if the process of creolization is not to lead to a crisis of disconnection and directionlessness (vii).

Selvon does not romanticize the peasant experience of Tiger in the novel. Though Tiger is a self-conscious and sentimental character, the hard life and the stress and strain of the rural community, are portrayed with authenticity. The description is vivid with comic touches that help to relieve maudlin sentiment. The poverty and lack of opportunities of the labourers is contrasted with the amenities enjoyed by the white supervisor but Selvon does not portray the white man as unduly harsh or cruel. The white couple lived apart, in a good house complete with car, refrigerator and radio. They had a gardener and a maid to wait upon them. Robinson's style and appearance suggest the stereotype of the plantation owner; even the name is suggestive with its affinity to Robinson Crusoe, the archetype of the colonizer.

The first chapter of *Turn Again Tiger* focuses on Tiger and Urmilla leaving Barataria for Five Rivers. Arrangements had been made with Joe and Rita and Deen
for taking care of their house and garden. When they leave Barataria, they leave behind all the amenities that the suburban multi-racial society had to offer them. Babolal, Tiger's father had induced them to leave by asking for his son's help to supervise an experimental cane project. Tiger was reluctant to leave the house that he had made with his own hands; he was even more reluctant to leave his friends and the comforts of city life for a remote village but the decision was made and had to be effected.

On reaching Five Rivers, Tiger found that he had to adjust himself to his father's ways. His years in Barataria had changed him from the boy he was and his education had made him a better man. His father on the other hand had spent his entire life in the canefields. Babolal was not capable of profound thoughts or niceties of behaviour but he expected respect from his son. When he was denied the room he coveted, and spoken to disparagingly he picked a quarrel with Tiger. They fought, man to man, the ultimate victory coming to Tiger. Later on, Tiger felt remorseful. Looking at his father, Tiger pondered over the struggle for existence:
No one had ever asked to be born. A baby had soft hands and soft skin on its body, but it grew up and the sun and rain hardened that skin, and the struggle to live made the eyes sink in the head and the skin grew coarse and wrinkled. That was something, just being, and maintaining an equilibrium in a place where nothing seemed worth living for. Age was what he had to go by. Of all the other things he wasn't sure, but for a fact he knew he would grow old. What he saw around him was life, growing up, growing old, dying and rotting in six feet of earth. What had kept his father going all the long, lean years, never prospering, never ever wealthy enough to sit back for a minute of leisure, canefield after canefield, harvest after harvest. If even there was nothing in a man, still it was something that he had lived, that he had survived to reach an old age. (35)

Tiger's next hurdle was to be accepted by the villagers. When Babolal announced that he was the new foreman in charge of things, the people wanted to know who Tiger was; when Babolal announced that his son Tiger was going to help him, they felt resentful thinking that Tiger was too inexperienced. Their reaction changed to admiration when they heard that Tiger was educated. But Tiger's troubles were not over. He had thought that his duties would involve only book-keeping for his supervising father. The first seed of doubt was sown in his mind by Soylo. Soylo was an East Indian living a hermit's life in the the hills coming into the village
only to sell vegetables. Tiger tried to make friends with Soylo by offering him a drink. When Soylo heard that Tiger was helping his father supervise the cane, he laughed loudly; "Supervising! What estate going to leave white man and put Indian to supervise?" (25). He then mentioned a house two miles away built for a white man who had come all the way from England to be in charge of the cane in the valley. Soylo laughed at his story saying that it was a joke but when it was repeated a second time, Tiger felt the need to investigate; he was horrified to find that the white supervisor did exist.

In the days that followed Tiger was full of resentment. He wanted to go back to Barataria instead of working under a white man. He even felt that instead of moving ahead in his life, he had come back full circle to where he had started, a mere lackey to the white master. Yet the knowledge that he was free to leave any time made him wait. When Babolal was questioned, Tiger found that the words "supervisor" and "foreman" did not make much difference to him. Tiger was much upset:
"Why I bothering!" Tiger exclaimed, fighting hard to keep his voice low. "When you come to me in Barataria you tell me how you will be boss up here, and how I would just have to help you manage things. That was the onliest reason why I leave Barataria to come up here in the bush. And now I find out you was lying all the time. I have a feeling that you know all the time tat it had a white overseer."

"No, Tiger, I didn't know," Babolal said. "Who tell you is true? You see the supervisor with your own eye?"

Tiger began to walk off and Babolal caught his arm.

"What you going to do, Tiger? You can't go back to Barataria now?"

"I mad to do just that", Tiger said, stopping and raising his voice now, not caring if others heard. "I mad to pack up and go back and leave you here and see what you will do."

"Don't do that, Tiger, don't leave me alone. You know I can't read or write, I can't make up the paysheets..."

He left Babolal in distress, angered at the turn of events, angered by the memory of his flight from the river, but angered most of all by the helpless feeling of being unable to cope. (53)

Soon it was payday. A transformation came over the village. Selvon describes it with characteristic vividness "as the sum total of their lives." When the news came that the white supervisor was coming to pay the men, Babolal acted as if he had been expecting this
to happen all the time and Tiger had another bitter quarrel with him. The coming of the supervisor worried Babolal. He thought that he would lose his job if he couldn't make a good impression on the white supervisor. It was a question of prestige for him. So he went on seeking Tiger's advice as to how he should receive the supervisor. This irritated Tiger who was busy with the books. According to Sandra Pouchet Paquet, "In Babolal, Selvon evokes the stereotype of the foreman, anxious to prove himself, nervous that his people will let him down, obsequious before the white man" (ix-x).

When the supervisor arrived, Tiger was amazed to see his wife accompanying him. Her presence upset his composure due to his earlier encounter with her near the pool where she was taking a bath. He had fled from the scene in panic. The payments were made, the labourers forming a line and Tiger calling out the days and hours of their work. In the end, only Babolal and Tiger remained, but the supervisor had something to say about Tiger: "I didn't think you'd need a time keeper, Babolal. You've only got a few labourers to look after until the crop season starts" (60). Babolal argued
putting on an expression of anguish and in the end, he had to promise not to employ any more men without consulting the supervisor. In the days that followed, Tiger kept his distance from the supervisor letting Babolal do all the bowing and scraping but the worst was yet to come. One day Babolal came and announced that Mr Robinson wanted somebody to help round the house. He then said that he couldn't send any of the villagers and Tiger understood the hint. He was extremely annoyed:

"You talking damn foolishness!" Tiger looked up at last. "This thing getting from bad to worse. You make me leave my own home and come up here under false pretences, and now you want me to go and shine down the boss car. Why it is you 'fraid to send somebody from the village, eh? You frighten he do something with Robinson wife?" (92)

In spite of these protests, it was Tiger who did go ultimately. Selvon thus manages to portray Tiger's journey backward into the servile cane community.

On his way to the white man's house, Tiger thought out a strategy of remaining aloof and dignified and not doing anything he didn't like to do. On reaching there however, he became nervous. It was the
supervisor's wife who gave him instructions about clearing the land and making a garden. She also told him, though gently, to address her as "madam."

In the days that followed Tiger found himself in a state of confusion, due to his extraordinary infatuation for Doreen, the supervisor's wife. One night he found himself unable to sleep. Selvon reveals the inner consciousness of his protagonist in his state of restlessness:

He went out on the verandah. The night was beautiful and still. He sat down on the steps, watching the mountains shape in front of him, thinking, this is a night in my life. A restlessness of mind had kept him awake, and he couldn't come to terms with his thoughts laying on the bed. Always with this assessing he would pile circle on circle and get nowhere, his life flashing in a series of pictures, and he would find himself bewildered and without direction. If there had been some progress he would not have minded. But it was as if there was nothing to hold on to, and it would amount, in the end, to contemplation of events of the day and flashbacks to the past, and when he thought of the future he could see nothing that urged him toward. There was one thing he must do soon: he must come to grips with his life, understand the possibilities and reconcile himself to the limit of opportunity. Unless he did that the restlessness would dog his life for ever. (110-111)
Tiger then did, a very uncharacteristic thing -- he burnt all his books. He felt that they could offer him no solace in his misery. This was the start of Tiger's deterioration. In the days that followed, he started drinking heavily. He surprised everyone by giving away his radio to Otto, the Chinese shopkeeper. He also started picking up fights with people, in a drunken state. On one occasion Urmilla had to come to fetch him home. Tiger was trying to find answers to his problem. He approached Soylo, a man older and more experienced than he. Soylo advised him to work hard for his family for misery was brought on by idleness. Drinking too much rum was no solution: it could only ruin his health.

Another person Tiger tried to talk to was More Lazy. More Lazy is cast by Selvon as a rootless drifter, a dreamer who survives by entertaining people. While the entire village was hard at work More Lazy preferred to lie around doing nothing. Soylo threatened him several times to make him move without success. His chief occupation was to recount dream fantasies to entertain the villagers. After their initial
irritation, the villagers came to humour and support him. He thus became an established presence in Five Rivers. On the night that he burnt his books, Tiger sought him out to talk to him. Though More tried to offer sympathetic responses, Tiger realized that it was no use. More Lazy told Tiger that he was a born scholar and should go to college. Tiger, however, insisted that he was going to turn over a new leaf with the burning of his books. He then went to sleep next to the vagabond. This incident is used by Selvon to focus on Tiger's deterioration. Though More Lazy is presented as an idler, the end of the novel shows him joining the harvesting of sugarcane. He escapes from total isolation by becoming part of the cane community.

The root cause of Tiger's frustration was the white supervisor's wife Doreen. Though he had sex with her in the end, he felt no pleasure, he only felt a sense of relief. Once it was over, he was able to go back to book-keeping. He stopped going to the white man's house and many of the villagers suspected that he had been fired. No one knew of Doreen, however. The villagers had been surprised to see Tiger doing menial
jobs for the white supervisor. Being educated, they thought that he would stand for his rights. Selvon pictures Tiger's mixed reactions through this conversation:

"You really surprise me, boy. You who could read and write who have more education than all of we, went and doing the worse jobs. Why?"

"Some times when you take one step back you could make two in front after." But I wonder if a man could really do that? I mean, it must be going forward all the time: at least you getting older. (150)

Tiger had done exactly that. Through going back to the canefields he had come to terms with his past, his country's past, his people's past. He had also reversed the colonial equation by having sex with the white master's wife and then discarding her. As the harvesting season came, Tiger counted the days left before his voluntary indentureship would be over. After the job in Five Rivers Tiger returned to Barataria with new hopes.

When Tiger is contrasted with Babolal, one finds that Babolal's struggles are different from Tiger's. From the very beginning, he does his best to make a good impression on the white supervisor. For
example, on payday, he instructed all the labourers to clean their courtyards and be neatly dressed. He even irritated his son by his eagerness to please the white bosses. As a foreman, he was proud of being in charge of the experimental cane. He was so careful of it that he allowed no one to touch it. A lifetime in the canefields had made him an expert in that. In fact, his very rhythms were attuned to the cane. His relationship with cane is portrayed thus:

It was the first time in his life that he had been given such authority and now that the cane was about to be reaped, he would have a chance to exercise it fully. It was as if in firing the cane, he fired his own ambition. The smell of the smoke, the crackling of the flames, the black wisps of straw rising rapidly into the air with the heat—these were the things he had lived with all his life. For Babolal there was no romance in the work, it was just that cane was all the he had ever known and out of a canefield he was helpless and lost. (165-166)

Babolal successfully completed his work and Tiger was surprised by his dignity. Earlier, he had looked upon his father with a mixture of sympathy and contempt, for he was illiterate and his scope of experience limited. But now he started looking up to him with admiration.
In contrast, *A House for Mr Biswas* marginalizes the peasant experience. Biswas, like Tiger was born of peasant parents working in the canefields but Naipaul prefers to gloss over it and moves on to the urban milieu. Fate takes Biswas away from the canefields to Pagotes to struggle through life working at different jobs as varied and fantastic as sign-painter, shopkeeper, conductor, overseer and ultimately, a journalist. According to F.G.Roehler, the central character, Mohun Biswas is frustrated and isolated in his lonely task of self discovery. In an article on the novel published in *Caribbean Quarterly* in March 1964, Roehler makes the following comments: "It depicts an individual carrying out a pathetic rebellion against a society, which he neither likes nor can discard which offers him both protection and imprisonment" (4). Biswas's struggles, like Tiger's start early in life. In his case, it starts before marriage. Biswas's childhood ends with the disgrace he suffers at Pundit Jairam's. Thereafter it becomes a continuing struggle where the ownership of a house becomes the symbol of fulfilment.
Reaching home after his experience at pundit Jairam's Mohun Biswas was pained to see the reaction of his mother who did not seem to be in a welcoming mood. He himself was tired and hungry but he did not realize that her reaction owed a great deal to his sister Dehuti who had disgraced herself by running away with Tara's low caste yard boy. Bipti was worried about Tara's reaction to Biswas's return. But Biswas himself felt no shame or anger about Dehuti. He could only remember the little girl who had wept pressing his dirty clothes to her face when she thought that her brother was dead. Tara, however, was angry about Dehuti and vowed never to mention the name again. When Tara was informed about Mohun's return from the pundit's house, she did not yet angry. She comforted the boy and provided a job for him in the rum shop managed by her husband Ajodha's brother Bhanadat. He was to be paid a salary of two dollars a month in addition to food, clothes and accommodation. Thus he started earning his keep.

From the very beginning, Bhanadat mistrusted Biswas looking on him as Tara's spy. He himself used to steal from the rum shop but even when Biswas realized
what was happening he kept his mouth shut. Bhanadat, however, irritated him by ridiculing him in front of the customers by calling him "smart man." One day he beat up Biswas accusing him of stealing a dollar. This event had occurred when the entire family of Bhanadat had left to attend a funeral. Biswas had a cut on his cheekbone and the blood started to flow. Though it was early in the morning, Biswas went back to his mother, startling her by his unkempt appearance. When she was told what happened, she blamed it all on fate recounting the prophecy of the pundit who had cast Mohun's horoscope. Biswas was very angry when he heard it and described Bhanadat as the liar, lecher and spendthrift. That evening Tara came trying to comfort Biswas but she was irritated when Biswas justified Dehuti's action of running away from Tara. She left the place in anger though Bipti tried to stop her. When Bipti blamed Biswas, he announced that he would get a job for himself and a house to live in.

The struggle to find a job is portrayed by Naipaul with sardonic humour:
On Monday morning, he set about looking for a job. How did one look for a job? He supposed that one looked. He walked up and down the Main Road, looking. He passed a tailor and tried to picture himself cutting Khaki cloth, tacking and operating a sewing machine. He passed a barber and tried to picture himself stropping a razor; his mind wandered off to devise elaborate protection for his left thumb. But he didn't like the tailor he saw, a fat man sulkily sewing in a dingy shop; and as for barbers, he had never liked those who cut his own hair, he thought too how it would disgust Pundit Jairam to learn that his former pupil had taken up barbering, a profession immemorially low. He walked on. (67)

In the end, tired and dejected he returned home. The next day he went out of Pagotes and met Dehuti's husband Ramchand casually. The latter tried to establish friendly relations with him by inviting him home. Biswas went but the visit made him realize that the tie with his sister was broken. Though Ramchand tried his very best to please Mohun, Dehuti remained sullen and remote. She was uneasy because she feared rebuff and she was afraid of the reports he would carry back. Soon the visit was over and Biswas left promising to come again.

The next day Biswas met his school friend Alec who had taken up sign-painting as his profession.
Biswas joined him because he had a natural gift for designing letters. Though the job was enjoyable, it was irregular. In the days that followed Biswas travelled from district to district, sometimes working, sometimes not, the partnership with Alec being spasmodic. He spent his spare time reading books and improving his skill in drawing. The Christmas season provided a great deal of work as did the elections. In between spells of work, he would work as conductor on one of Ajodha's buses. He also read a great deal especially about intoxicating and fantastic lands, far away from his own dull land scorched by the sun.

It was while working as a sign-painter that he met and married Shama. He had gone to the Tulsi store to paint Christmas signs and had met Shama, one of the daughters of Mrs Tulsi. She was working as a salesgirl in the store. Feeling attracted towards her, he passed her a note confessing that he loved her. Unfortunately for him, it landed in the hands of Mrs Tulsi. Mrs Tulsi did not create a hue and cry about it but called him and suggested a simple marriage. Before Biswas realized what was happening the marriage was over and no mention
at all was made about dowry. Biswas found himself in a strange situation. He had very little money in his possession and had no means of supporting himself or his family. He had no house of his own to take his bride to. These things did not matter to the Tulsis because in the community life of the Tulsi family, the sons-in-law worked for the Tulsis and stayed in Hanuman House. It was too late when Biswas realized that he was enmeshed in the thralls of Tulsidom. Naipaul describes the situation with dark humour:

The organization of the Tulsi house was simple. Mrs Tulsi had only one servant, a Negro woman who was called Blackie by Seth and Mrs Tulsi and Miss Blackie by everyone else. Miss Blackie's duties were vague. The daughters and their children swept and washed and cooked and served in the store. The husbands under Seth's supervision, worked in 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; and they were treated with respect by people outside because they were connected with the Tulsi family. Their names were forgotten, they became Tulsis. (97)

Biswas realized that they had shown him no special favour in marrying Shama to him. They had done so on account of his brahmin caste just as Shama's
sister Chinta had been married off to an illiterate coconut seller. Biswas had no money or position so they expected him to become a Tulsi. Biswas did not want that and he rebelled. Thereafter Biswas's sole ambition in life became the possession of his own house. The house symbolized independence from the Tulsis; it signified his ability to provide for his own family; it was synonymous with his identity. In the vast crowd at Hanuman House, Biswas felt lost. Unless they could move into his own house, he wouldn't be able to claim his family for his own. With Biswas's marriage the struggle for existence becomes synonymous with the struggle to get a house of his own.

The struggle for existence made Biswas take up one job after another. The Tulsis had told his aunt Tara that they would offer him a shop in a village called, The Chase. As the days passed by, no mention was made of the shop at all. Biswas continued with the sign-painting but it did not provide a regular income. Time hung heavily on his hands until he met Misir, an under-employed correspondent of the Trinidad Sentinel. Thereafter they spent their spare time discussing jobs, Hinduism, India and their respective families.
Living in the confusion of Hanuman House was an ordeal for Biswas. There were so many people that he had no privacy at all. He started observing their idiosyncrasies and giving them nicknames. In the beginning Shama was hostile but soon she too started enjoying the game. Biswas found that the two sons of Tulsi, Owad and Shekhar, enjoyed special privileges within tulsidom. So he nicknamed them 'gods.' Seth, Mrs Tulsi's brother-in-law managed the Tulsi lands and estates and he called Seth 'the big boss.' Mrs Tulsi with her airs of philosophy, sentiment and piety, he called 'the old queen' and 'the old hen.' As long as only Shama heard these blasphemies there was no trouble. But one day, Biswas was foolish enough to voice his opinions to Govind, Chinta's husband. Govind reported everything to Seth and Mrs Tulsi and Biswas was summoned by them. He was accused of ingratitude and blamed for not taking up work on the Tulsi estate. Aspersions were cast upon Biswas's family and Owad declared that Biswas should apologize to his mother for his rudeness. This was too much for Mohun Biswas. He lost his temper and declared that he would not apologize. Then he started preparing to leave. In the end, the wives of the offenders, Chinta and Padma (Seth's wife) came to apologize and pacify him and he stayed on.
Incidents like this became common in the days that followed. On one occasion, Govind, Chinta's husband, beat him up for throwing food out of the window which landed on Owad who was standing below. After the beating even Shama seemed to be unsympathetic towards him. So he went out of the house to eat oysters from outside. Yet his disgrace turned out to be his triumph. Seth told him to move to the shop at The Chase, saying that he was a trouble maker. Thus Biswas became a shopkeeper.

The shop at The Chase, was hardly a big affair. The Chase itself was a long straggling settlement of mud huts in the heart of the sugarcane area. It was like the village where he had spent his early years. Shama was at that time pregnant. Most of his savings had been spent on buying pots and pans and other necessities for the house. Shama was not very happy about leaving Hanuman House but once the sobbing was over, she took charge of the shop and house which looked dirty and derelict. In the weeks that followed the house became cleaner and habitable but Biswas continued to feel that it was temporary and not quite real. Though Biswas
tried hard to be successful, he found that it was not easy. In the article mentioned earlier F.G. Roehler states that Biwsas is destined to fail:

He blames everyone and everything for his position -- fate, his parents, the Tulsis, life itself -- never his gullibility and lack of drive. To admit these is to admit defeat and in the storm he is nearly defeated by a recognition of his helplessness. Biswas accepts the idea that he is predestined to fail and as the prologue suggests, Naipaul is almost as fatalistic. The only thing man is left with in his struggle against nonentity, he seems to say, is a sense of his individual reality. To strip him of that (as does life in Hanuman House) is to leave nothing at all. Moreover a man must own something concrete and tangible to be convinced that his life is meaningful. (16)

Biswa spent six years at The Chase but he had to give it up in the end. When things began going downhill, a lawyer's tout approached him. He promised to issue notices to the debtors who owed Biswas money. Unused to the world of lawyers and lawsuits, Biswas fell an easy prey to his beguiling offers. Instead of regaining his money, he lost more when the lawyers of the debtors started issuing him counter notices for denying their credit. It was too late when he realized that he had been caught in snare set by the two advocates Seebaran and Mahamoud. In the end he had to
borrow money from his friend Misir to settle the case. Much of what he earned had to be spent in repaying the debt. In the meanwhile he had fathered three children—two girls and a boy. Shama was getting tired of The Chase and wanted to move back to Hanuman House. Though Biswas resisted at first, he gave in at last and his days as a shopkeeper came to an end.

Biswa's next adventure was at Green Vale. He was given the job of driver-cum-overseer on the Tulsi estate at a salary of twenty five dollars per month. Accommodation was provided in the barracks with the labourers. His room was at the end of the row and was hardly comfortable. Biswas knew nothing about estate work and the labourers fooled him easily. But he was too ashamed to complain to Seth. Naipaul pictures him walking around the estate in a hat that is too big for his head. The absurdity of his protagonist assuming an authority he is incapable of exercising is focussed here.

Biswa had got seventy five dollars as insurance money on the shop. With it in hand, he started dreaming of a house again. He had a clear picture of the house he was going to build:
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 coloured panes, 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 so that he would get two floors instead of one, and the way would be left open for future development. The kitchen would be a shed in the yard; a neat shed, connected to the house by a covered way. And his house would be painted. The roof would be red, the outside walls ochre with chocolate facings and the windows white. (210-211)

The importance given to solidity and beauty symbolizes Biswas's desire to claim a portion of the earth as his own. It is a rootless drifter's craving to grow roots, to belong somewhere but the house when it does materialize, is full of drawbacks. Seth had told him that he could build on Tulsi land. So he had started, with one hundred dollars in hand.

As the work on the house progressed Biswas had to make several compromises. The earlier emphasis on beauty and solidity was forgotten. Now what was important was to make do with what was available, what his depleted purse could buy. The roof was made up of
the rusty iron sheets rotting in the Tulsi backyard, the floor was made up of rough hewn cedar planks instead of pitchpine. The holes in the rusty roof had to be closed with melted tar. With the house still half-way through, Biswas was overcome with despair. He had no money and a hostile situation had developed between the labourers on the estate and himself thanks to Seth's announcement that the land leased out to the labourers was going to be taken back.

Shama made frequent excursions to Hanuman House leaving Biswas alone at the barracks. Many of these visits were occasioned by quarrels between husband and wife. On one occasion, Biswas brought Savi to stay with him for a week because he was angry with Shama for destroying a doll's house he had bought her. On another occasion, he kicked Shama viciously in the belly. She was at that time carrying his fourth child. So she left with all her children except Anand. Most of these quarrels were occasioned by his feeling of defeat. The sight of his unfinished house filled him with helplessness and despair. He felt that he was about to die. He was physically and mentally on the verge of a
nervous breakdown. Yet he tried to make an effort with Anand. It was with Anand that he moved into the finished room of his unfinished house. He thought of it as a positive action: "... There was his hope that living in a new house in the new year might bring about a new state of mind. He would not have moved if he had been alone, for he feared solitude more than people. But with Anand, he had enough company" (281-282).

These hopes were unrealized. His fear intensified when somebody killed his pet dog Tarzan and put the body on the steps of the house. The sight sickened Anand, who started screaming saying that he wanted to go back to Hanuman House. That night a terrible storm broke out blowing away part of the roof. The storm was the last straw and Biswas gave in to a nervous breakdown. In the end, Ramkhilwan, one of the labourers, rescued Anand and Biswas from the half wrecked house and sent word to the Tulis.

Biswas returned to Hanuman House on the shoulders of Govind, the man who had beaten him up in the past. He was in a state of bewilderment. Naipaul portrays it vividly: "Lying in the room next to Shama's,
perpetually dark, Biswas slept and woke and slept again. The darkness, the silence, the absence of the world enveloped and comforted him. At some far off time he had suffered great anguish. He had fought against it. Now he had surrendered and this surrender had brought peace" (299). In the days that followed Biswas took complete rest but a sense of apathy had overcome him. His wife had given birth to his fourth child, a girl, but he did not feel inclined to see her. He survived on the medicines and tonics given him by the doctors but this state of affairs could not go on. His money had dwindled and when Seth announced that Mrs Tulsi and Owad were returning from Port of Spain, Biswas decided to move. He packed up his few clothes and paint brushes and left the house telling his daughter Savi. He had not gone to see Shama or the baby.

Biswas had no clear idea as to where to go or what to do but he ended up going to Port of Spain. He went to see Ramchand, Dehuti's husband who was staying there. Ramchand was working in a lunatic asylum and was happy to see Biswas. Biswas stayed there for some time. Ramchand took him round the city and showed him all the
sights. The job-hunting started and the apprehensions began to reappear. This time it was not fear that caused it but regret, envy and despair.

It was by accident that he got a job on the Trinidad Sentinel. When he met the editor and demanded a job, the latter was embarrassed. This changed into surprise when Biswas told him that he had no previous experience as a reporter. On hearing that he was a sign-painter, the editor gave him some work, painting signs. The signs were good and the editor decided to put him on trial for a month as a reporter. The incident is described with humour: "A chance encounter had led him to sign-writing. Sign-writing had taken him to Hanuman House and the Tulsis. Sign-writing found him a place on the Sentinel. And neither for the Tulsi store signs nor those at The Sentinel was he paid" (323).

This was a job that Biswas enjoyed. Even after a dozen years he never lost the thrill which he had felt the first time, at seeing what he had written appear in print. His natural facetiousness helped him in his work. In his fourth week, he was made shipping reporter
in place of a man who had died and his salary was fixed at fifteen dollars a fortnight. Recognition in his work made the reconciliation with Shama easy. When he went to Hanuman House, he was welcomed with cheer by the Tulsis and he was happy to see his youngest girl Kamala whom he had not seen at all. When Mrs Tulsi offered to accommodate Biswas and his family at their Port of Spain house, Biswas was very happy. Though this involved Shama doing all the housework, the offer was a good one. The next four years were spent there in comparative comfort. Mrs Tulsi was not as tyrannical and distant as she used to be in Hanuman House. Owad too made friends with Biswas and enjoyed talking to him. Biswas was able to supervise his children's education for the first time in his life. He also tried to improve himself by learning shorthand and doing a correspondence course in journalism.

This happy state of affairs did not last long. Owad went abroad to study medicine and Mrs Tulsi returned to Hanuman House. At the newspaper office too, there were changes. The editor who had employed Biswas, Mr Burnett was sacked and a new person appointed. The
new regime went by decorum and dignity rather than humour and interest. Biswas was forced to write features he was not particularly interested in. This was extremely difficult, and he felt cramped in style as he laboriously wrote and rewrote the sentences. He also had to face financial difficulties on account of the rising prices.

In the meanwhile, things at Hanuman House were also changing. Seth had quarrelled with Mrs Tulsi and had threatened her with lawsuits. The Tulsis decided to shift to their estate house in Shorthills after leasing out the house and shop to others. Mrs Tulsi also proposed an increase in the rent paid by Biswas on the house in Port of Spain. So Biswas was forced to move to the house in Shorthills along with the others. Though the shift entailed difficulties of transport Biswas considered it as an interlude, an adventure:

For him Shorthills was an adventure, an interlude. His job made him independent of the Tulsis, and Shorthills was an insurance against the sack. It also provided an opportunity to save, an opportunity to plunder. And secretly he was plundering; half a dozen oranges at a time, half a dozen avocado pears or grapefruit or lemons, sold to a cafe keeper in St.Vincent Street with some story about the variety of
fruit trees he had in his backyard. The money was little but regular, the thrill of plundering delicious. (402)

But there were other members of the Tulsi clan who were smarter than him. They plundered whole truckloads of fruit and even trees. As there was no one to supervise things, it was each one for himself. The cleverest managed to acquire lorries and taxies while people like Biswas remained detached, being unable to prevent the dereliction.

It was difficult to maintain domestic harmony amongst the multitude of Tulsis. Biswas's children wanted to move especially after Shama's sister Chinta accused Anand unjustly of theft. So Biswas selected a site and started building a house for the second time. This time, however, the house was completed within a month though they had problems like transport and shopping. After moving in, Biswas sent for his mother who came and stayed with them for a fortnight. He thus fulfilled his childhood promise to his mother. Unfortunately for Biswas, his house did not last. It was destroyed by fire. Though the family escaped, the house was gutted and they had to move back to the family house in Shorthills.
After a while, Biswas moved back into the Port of Spain house of Mrs Tulsi. This time he was given only two rooms and was crammed for space. The other rooms were let to the other members of the Tulsi clan, who had started flocking to Port of Spain to provide better educational facilities for their children. Very often Biswas found the house so claustrophobic that his office seemed a haven of refuge.

Biswas's financial difficulties continued to mount. As a journalist, he was used to travelling in the official car in the villages but he had less money than the illiterate Govind who had a taxi of his own. Another brother-in-law whom he had nicknamed "W.C.Tuttle" had a lorry. Biswas often felt frustrated and angry about his own fate. He used to talk to his children about his childhood:

He told them of the hut, the men digging in the garden at night; he told them of the oil that was later found on the land. What fortune might have been theirs, if only his father had not died, if only he had stuck to the land like his brothers, if he had not gone to Pagotes, not become a sign-writer, not gone to Hanuman House, not married! If only so many things had not happened! (438)
When the newspaper started a fund for deserving destitutes, Biswas was put in charge of it. This was a job that entailed immense responsibility and power but it had its hazards. There were fraudulent applications that had to be distinguished from just claims. He also became unpopular when some of the widows of the Tulsi clan wanted him to help them and he refused. Another applicant was Bhanadat, his one time employer who had suffered setbacks in fortune after their initial encounter. The job, however, helped to establish Biswas as an expert on social welfare. When the Government formed a Community Welfare Department, he was called for an interview by the head of the department. Miss Logie was impressed by Biswas and offered him a job as the community welfare officer at a salary fifty dollars higher than what he was getting from The Sentinel. Biswas accepted the job and sent in his resignation to the newspaper.

Biswas enjoyed this job because the head of the department was a lady, Miss Logie, who was very kind and gracious towards him. He had to tour the villages collecting information. So he was offered a car on a
painless government loan. The possession of a car created jealousy among the Tulsiś. When Owad announced his return to the Island, Biswas was asked by Mrs Tulsi to move into a tenement till repairs were done. The years abroad had changed Owad into a windbag full of prejudiced opinions about religion, politics and art. Through Owad's bragging Naipaul satirizes the West Indian who shows off his culture and refinement acquired from abroad to his kinsfolk who have not had the same opportunity. In the beginning Biswas's son Anand was a great admirer of his uncle. But after a quarrel, a rift was created between the two and tension mounted within the family. Biswas and Mrs Tulsi competed with one another issuing notices to each other about vacating the house. Mr Biswas was forced to seek alternative accommodation.

Biswas had only eight hundred dollars in hand but a house was offered for sale at five thousand dollars. Though the house had its defects Biswas did not notice them at first. He was full of despair because he had very little money in hand. Then, out of the blue, an offer came from a Negro for the materials
left behind on the gutted house at Shorthills. Borrowing the rest of the money from Ajodha, the sale was effected. It was then that Biswas noticed the numerous defects of the house. It was too late then and Biswas's family moved into the house. They settled down so well that soon they had the feeling that they had never stayed anywhere else.

At the end of the year, the Government abolished the Community Welfare Department forcing Biswas to go back to The Sentinel. His salary was reduced and the debt on the house was still outstanding. He was unable to repay it in the five year period as promised. In the meanwhile both Savi and Anand won scholarships to study abroad. The prospect of repaying the debt became even more bleak but new hopes were born. It was then that Biswas suffered a heart attack and had to be hospitalized. During his recovery he was put on half-pay but after a month he had to go back, because of financial constraints. After his second attack, he was issued three month's notice by the newspaper office. Biswas was full of anger and helplessness as he wrote to his two children. Fortunately for him, Savi returned
immediately and got a job at a higher salary than her father. Biswas died with his house still mortgaged but he was happy to die in his own house rather than in one belonging to the Tulsis. His struggles at last were over.

When one compares the two protagonists, Tiger and Biswas, one is surprised by the variety of roles that Biswas has to enact in his struggle for survival. Tiger's jobs also vary from canefield worker, to gardener to labourer and back again to the canefields as a time-keeper. Biswas's roles are many and varied. Starting off by looking after a cow, he goes on to become the apprentice of a pundit and then a server in a liquor store. From there he goes on to become sign-painter, shopkeeper, driver, journalist and the community welfare officer. Biswas's natural facetiousness makes him see the comic side of every role but it is a dark comedy born out of despair and helplessness. Though Tiger too has a sense of humour, bitterness does not tinge it as it does Biswas's. Moreover, Tiger's peasant experience is authentic and deep-rooted whereas Naipaul fails to portray Biswas's
roots in the cane community with the same intensity. After reading the two Tiger novels by Selvon one gets the feeling that Tiger does have bright prospects for the future. At the end of A House for Mr Biswas, we find Shama returning to their mortgaged house after the cremation of the protagonist.

Search for Roots: Both Naipaul and Selvon emphasize this motif by presenting characters with questioning attitudes. In Tiger's case his growing consciousness accentuates his search for meaning in life. In A Brighter Sun the process of creolization is accelerated by Tiger's newly acquired literacy and his growing social awareness that recognizes inter-relationships with different ethnic groups as important in a multiracial society. In this novel we see Tiger interacting with Negro, Chinese, American and East Indian people. In the sequel, Turn Again Tiger, a new dimension is added by the introduction of the white supervisor and his wife. In Naipaul's novel on the other hand, we see Biswas interacting with different people belonging to different ethnic groups. But they are treated as individuals, not as representative of the
ethnic groups that they belong to. Selvon's novels portray the protagonist searching for his roots both in terms of ethnicity and in terms of societal values. Naipaul's protagonist searches for the meaning of existence through the religion and culture of the East Indian in the Caribbean. But his dilemma is the dilemma of the modern man in the work-a-day world who is unable to find the answer to his problems in his tradition and heritage. Yet he cannot wholly give it up either for he has no alternative tradition or culture to belong to.

In the beginning of A Brighter Sun Selvon presents the atmosphere of Barataria, the place to which Tiger moves with his bride Urmilla;

The village was almost as cosmopolitan as the city, Indians and Negros were in the majority. In the back streets, the Indians lived simply, observing their customs and tending their fields, bringing the produce to sell in Sixth Avenue or going to the market in San Juan, a town bordering the eastern side. The earth was black and rich; they grew vegetables in the yard, kept a few chickens and perhaps a few cattle or a donkey. The Negroes were never farmers, and most of them did odd jobs in the village or the city. But it didn't need any knowledge of farming to dig a hole and put in tomato seeds; the land was so rich that nearly every villager grew peppers or bananas or string beans. (9-10)
Tiger lived in a mudhut but his neighbours, the Joe Martins, lived in a yellow and brown brick house with glass windows. They were Negroes but from the very beginning Urmilla got along well with Joe's wife Rita. Soon a friendship developed between the neighbours. It was Rita who attended to Urmilla when she was in labour. But when Rita announced that the child was a girl, Tiger was disappointed. This made Rita angry and she commented about the Indian people who only wanted boy children. When Tiger's relatives came to see Urmilla and the child, they did not approve of the close friendship that had developed between Joe and Tiger. Joe and Rita had joined them in the celebration but when Joe was called to make a toast he felt embarrassed and mumbled something about long life and health. This induced Tiger to propose a toast. But even as he began he found it difficult to go on because of his lack of experience:

"Well" he began waveringly, "I-we-glad to have family and friends here today, especially as the baby born. Is true we not rich and we have only a small thing here, but still, is a good thing. So let we make a little merry for the baby. I should really begin different, I don't know what happen to me. I should say, 'Ladies and gentlemans", and then make speech. But I
cannot speechify very good I would learn though" - That was as far as he could go. He felt he would talk foolishness if he continued, and he gulped his drink. (47)

This speech by Tiger indicates his desire to better himself through learning and establishing relationships with other people in society. He wants to belong to the community, to carve out a niche for himself. Selvon presents Tiger as achieving this by the end of the novel. In sharp contrast, Biswas is portrayed as drifting from one thing to another, insecure and rootless in a world that is beyond his understanding. The dream of a house, signifies his desire to grow roots and belong but the numerous houses that he inhabits give him no such sense of belonging. The house he dies in, is heavily mortgaged and the burden of redeeming it is passed on to the next generation.

The clash between races forms a major theme in Selvon. At one point Selvon portrays Tiger as pondering the problem of ethnicity:

"Why I should only look for Indian friend? What wrong with Joe and Rita? Is true I used to play with Indian friend in the estate, but
that ain't no reason why I must shut my heart to other people. Ain't a man is a man, don't mind if he skin not white, or if he hair curl?" (48)

A Brighter Sun portrays the interaction with the Chinese through the character of Tall Boy and the Chinese connection is carried on through Otto in Turn Again Tiger. Through a telling incident that describes the arrival of Tall Boy's children in school for the first time, Selvon portrays the prejudice that each race has about the other. At recess the newly arrived Chinese were surrounded by all the children who started singing a song about flat noses and chinky eyes. But Ling (Tall Boy's son) was no coward. In retaliation Ling sang a song about the Negroes stinking with perspiration. Then noticing the Indians, he mocked them for using a bottle of water in the W.C. Soon it became a shouting match with each child mocking the other's race. A white skinned girl with a blue ribbon in her hair was called a "whitey cockroach" to which she retorted by calling the offender "a black tar baby." In the end the teacher had to interfere with a stick cut from the hibiscus fence to make the children stop. Among Tiger's Indian friends were Boysie and Sookdeo. Boysie
preferred to forget his East Indian identity by going around with a creole girl. In Turn Again Tiger we are told about his marrying a white girl while abroad leading to unforeseen difficulties. Tiger too had difficulties in digesting white supremacy. In A Brighter Sun, Selvon describes how Tiger feels offended when a salesgirl in a shop passes him by to attend to a white woman. When Tiger told Boysie about it, he told him that white people "were god" in this country. Tiger's antipathy for the white race assumes a new dimension in Turn Again Tiger. Tiger's return to the cane community had not been deliberate. In the beginning he had delusions of just helping his father by keeping the books but when he found out that there was a white supervisor above them, he felt cheated. His immediate thought was to go back to Barataria. He decided to stay on in the end, thinking that his education would help him to hold his own with the white man. His composure was shattered when he suddenly confronted the white supervisor's wife, bathing naked in a pool. His reaction reveals how he was still tied to the fears and inhibitions surrounding the white race which formed his inheritance as a worker in the
canefields: "There was danger here, his thoughts were jumbled as he tried to reason it out, flashing across the years to his childhood, keep off the white man's land, don't go near white man's wife. Such were the warnings of old men who in their youth had laboured in the fields and passed their experiences to their own sons" (49). Despite his best efforts, he succumbed to his fears and ran away, even as the woman hailed him with a friendly hello. Later on he felt foolish though he tried to rationalize his action by telling himself that he had run away because she was a woman, and naked at that.

The preoccupation with the image of a white woman as a goddess to be respected and feared was a colonial heritage deeply ingrained in Tiger's make up. Tiger's fascination for Doreen threatened to destroy Tiger emotionally as he took to drinking and behaving in an uncharacteristic way. Working as a gardener in the white supervisor's house, Tiger's self-esteem was lost. When he had sex with her, it was more like an exorcism than an extra-marital affair. Afterwards, he felt a sense of release, as if he had been freed from the
dominance of the white woman over his emotions. A similar feeling is to be detected in More Lazy's fantasies also. In his dream, the black man becomes the rescuer of a white damsel in distress, who is held captive by a huge American giant. The psychological and sociological trauma of colonization had infected the Caribbean psyche to the extent of making them look upon the white race as untouchable in a superior sort of way.

Strangely enough, Tiger's encounter with the Americans in *A Brighter Sun* projects no such feeling of alienation. The Americans were Tiger's bosses but they were happy to accept Tiger's invitation to dinner. They enjoyed the Indian food and the company of Urmilla and Tiger, and the dinner was a success. Afterwards however, Tiger quarrelled with Urmilla about the arrangements she had made with Rita's help and kicked her viciously in the belly. Later on Urmilla gave birth to a still-born son.

Selvon makes use of cane as a symbol in *Turn Again Tiger*, using it to delve into the economic and political history of the Caribbean. Tiger had left Barataria to go to Five Rivers to help his father with
an experimental cane project. His forefathers, significantly had come to the West Indies, as indentured labourers to work in the canefields. Soon after his arrival in Five Rivers, we see him confronting his past while looking at the cane: "Standing on the hill, gave him a feeling of power. He hated the cane. Cane had been the destiny of his father, and his father's father. Cane had brought them all from the banks of the Ganges as indentured labourers to toil in the burning sun. And even when those days were over, most of them stayed shackled to the estates" (1). Here Tiger's elevated position on the hill signifies the distance he has achieved from his peasant roots. But his descent into the valley symbolizes his psychic journey into unexplored areas of self-identity and national history. His stay in Five Rivers is a sort of voluntary indentureship to cane. The backwardness of the village, its limited scope of educational development, the presence of the white master and his wife and the menial jobs Tiger finds himself doing all indicate a journey backward. He resents it and is happy when he is released after the harvest. The experiences help him understand the privations and humiliations suffered by
his race and set him free to go back to Barataria like a man "who has walked through fire and come out, burnt a little, but still very much alive" (81).

Naipaul plays down the interaction between races in *A House for Mr Biswas*. Alec, Biswas's school friend, who later becomes his partner in the sign-painting venture, is a Negro. But the intricacies of interaction on an ethnic level are not portrayed. Other characters like Mr Maclean, (the contractor who undertakes to build Biswas's house), Miss Blackie (the Negro servant of the Tulsi's) and Mr Burnett (the editor who employed Biswas) make their appearance as individuals. Biswas's interactions with them are portrayed with intuition as man-to-man relationships. The elements of racial prejudice is hinted at, as for example, Biswas's experience in the house belonging to his brother-in-law Ramchand in Part of Spain, but these elements are not probed in depth. Most of the characters in the novel belong to the East Indian community and Biswas's dilemma is portrayed specifically from an East Indian stand point.
Biswa's marriage to Shama gives Naipaul the opportunity to portray the Hindu joint family in the Caribbean, a system that was slowly dying down. The world of Hanuman House was strange and weird even to an East Indian like Biswas; so one can only imagine its strangeness to the other ethnic groups of the Caribbean. Regarding the Tulsis, Naipaul gives the following description:

The Tulsis had some reputation among Hindus as a pious, conservative, landowning family. Other communities, who knew nothing of the Tulsis, had heard about Pundit Tulsi, the founder of the family. He had been one of the first to be killed in a motorcar accident and was the subject of an irreverent and extremely popular song. To many outsiders he was therefore only a creature of fiction. Among the Hindus there were other rumours about Pundit Tulsi, some romantic, some scurrilous. The fortune he had made in Trinidad had not come from labouring, and it remained a mystery why he had emigrated as a labourer. One or two emigrants, from criminal clans, had come to escape the law. One or two had come to escape the consequences of their families' participation in the mutiny. Pundit Tulsi belonged to neither class. His family still flourished in India -- letters arrived regularly -- and it was known that he had been of a higher standing than most of the Indians who had come to Trinidad, nearly all of whom, like Raghu, like Ajodha, had lost touch with their families and wouldn't have known in what province to find them. The deference paid to Pundit Tulsi in his native district had followed him to Trinidad and now that he was
dead attached to his family. Little was really known about this family, outsiders were admitted to Hanuman House only for certain religious celebrations. (81)

As a member of the family Biswas found himself caught in the Tulsi whirlpool. He had no money or position of his own, so all his efforts to call his family unit his own were thwarted. He was ridiculed for wanting "to paddle his own canoe." When his daughter Savi was born, they made fun of her calling her "the little paddler."

Struggling to survive, Biswas tried to find solace from books. He read many books including philosophers both oriental and occidental but it often left him with the feeling that their sayings had no relevance to his particular situation. An experience he had while serving as a conductor on one of Ajodha's buses made a profound impression on him. One day at dusk, while speeding along a country road, he saw a boy leaning against a hut, staring at the road, not seeming to know where the road or the bus went. This image he carried with him throughout his life because it seemed to be a reflection of his own predicament on the road of life.
Being naturally facetious, Biswas was detested at first by the Tulsis because of his habit of giving nicknames. But after some time his pungent witticisms gained acceptance. Whenever there was an important religious ceremony in the household, Biswas was invited to have disputations with the visiting pundits. Most of his pronouncements were dismissed as waggishness, all they wanted from him was the likeness of a clown. But throughout the clowning Biswas feared about the future: "The future he feared could not be thought of in terms of time. It was a blankness, a void like those in dreams, into which past tomorrow and next week and next year, he was falling" (90).

While staying at Green Vale, Biswas was overcome with nervous fatigue. The hostility of the labourers made him feel insecure and unable to sleep. He started biting his nails, tormented by the intense questioning that went on in his head. It was in such a mood that he kicked Shama and sent her packing to Hanuman House. Ultimately he collapsed because of nervous strain after the night of the storm.
Though Biswas survived the breakdown and recovered, he carried the burden of doubt and insecurity throughout his life. This made him look back into the past and wish that things were different. He preferred to lay the blame on other people, on fate, rather than on his own inadequacy. On one occasion visiting the deserted Hanuman House after the Tulsis had moved out, he felt a change of attitude to the house he had detested:

Here, claimed by no one, he had reflected on the unreality of his life and had wished to make a mark on the wall as proof of his existence. Now he needed no such proof. Relationships had been created where none existed; he stood at their centre. In that very unreality had lain freedom. Now he was encumbered, and it was at Hanuman House that he tried to forget the encumbrance: the children, the scattered furniture, the dark tenement room, and Sharna, as helpless as he was, and now, what he had longed for, dependent on him. (531)

The passage indicates Biswas's ambivalent attitude. When one looks at Selvon's protagonist Tiger, one finds that Tiger too is tormented with questions within the mind. He thought that education would help him find answers to those questions, like "What I doing here now? Why I living" etc., but like
Biswa found himself unable to find all the answers he sought in books. In Turn Again Tiger, we see him burning all the books he had bought with his hard earned money. He then sought out Soylo to ask him, as an older and wiser person. He wanted to know how Soylo confronted the big disappointments of life. Soylo had no readymade answers for Tiger. He told Tiger that it was useless to seek another's advice about life; one had to live it on one's own. Selvon portrays Tiger seeking even the vagabond More Lazy in the hope of finding answers.

Man-Woman Relationships: Man-woman relationships are given prime importance by both the novelists. In Selvon's case the Urmilla-Tiger relationship that begins in A Brighter Sun takes a different turn in Turn Again Tiger with Tiger's fascination for Doreen brought in. Mohun Biswas on the other hand has no time to indulge in extra-marital affairs, pre-occupied as he is with the problem of survival. Being romantic, he does fantasize about delicate, barren, heroines but they remain dreams, Shama being his only reality. In addition to the protagonists' relationship with their wives, other couples are also portrayed for comparison and contrast.
In *A Brighter Sun* along with Tiger's relationship with Urmilla his friend Joe's relationship with Rita is given equal importance. Along with Tiger's growing consciousness, Urmilla's growing awareness is also probed. When Tiger married Urmilla, he didn't even know her name. Immediately after marriage, he felt that he had to prove his manhood to her. Selvon describes how Tiger attempts to demonstrate his manhood by smoking, something he had never done before. However, he made a mess of it and Urmilla laughed. Though irritated for a moment, Tiger realized the humour in the situation and started laughing too. This made them less nervous. When they came together, instinct took over and Tiger realized that all his apprehensions were baseless.

In *A House for Mr Biswas*, Naipaul elucidates with ironic humour, Biswas's entry into the holy state of matrimony. He had gone to the Tulsi store on a sign-painting assignment. Watching the Tulsi girls who served in the store, he felt attracted towards one of them. One day, he passed her a love note which landed in the wrong hands. Thereafter things were taken
completely out of his hands. The marriage itself seemed unreal to him:

After a brief ceremony at the registrar's as make-believe as a child's game, with paper flowers in dissimilar vases on a straw coloured, official looking desk, Mr Biswas and Shama were given a part of a long room on the top floor of the wooden house.

And now he became cautious. Now he thought of escape. To leave the way clear for that he thought it important to avoid the final commitment. He didn't embrace or touch her. He wouldn't have known, besides, how to begin, with someone who had not spoken a word to him, and whom he still saw with the mocking smile she had given that morning in the store. Not wishing to be tempted, he didn't look at her, and was relieved when she left the room. He spent the rest of that day imprisoned where he was, listening to the noises of the house. (96-97)

Here the tone is one of denial and escape. In Tiger's case, he does not want to escape, at least not in the beginning. Later on, when he compares himself to his friend Boysie, he wishes to escape, living a life without cares and worries and getting an education for himself. Even as Tiger was growing up, Urmilla too was attaining maturity. But Urmilla was too shy to talk about herself. When she felt lonely, she would talk to her daughter Chandra. Tiger thought her stupid. When Urmilla conceived a second time, Tiger scolded her for not informing him. He even hinted at infidelity but
when Rita heard his suspicions, she was furious with him. She told Tiger that Urmilla had no thought for anyone else other than Tiger and asked him to get out of her house. It was Tiger's naivete which made him talk like that. He felt ashamed of himself. On another occasion, he kicked Urmilla viciously in the belly while she was pregnant. She had committed no mistake at all other than try and please Tiger but when she fell sick, Tiger was very much worried and went hunting around the countryside in search of a doctor. Ultimately when she lost her baby, he sent her home with plenty of money asking her to rest. The rest did her good. By the time she came back, he had completed his house and they could move in. She looked very much healthy and was happy to be back in Barataria with her husband.

Urmilla and Shama in A House for Mr Biswas have many points in common. Naipaul describes the character of Shama with all its inherent contradictions:

Shama was a puzzle. Within the girl who had served in Tulsi store and romped up and down the staircase of Hanuman House, the wit, the prankster, there were other Shamas, fully grown it seemed, just waiting to be released: the wife, the housekeeper and now the mother. With Mr Biswas she continued to be brisk,
uncomplaining and almost unaware of her pregnancy. But when she was visited by her sisters, who made it plain that the pregnancy was their business, Tulsi business and had little to do with Mr Biswas, a change came over her. She did not cease to be uncomplaining: but she also became someone who not so much suffered as endured. She fanned herself, and spat often, which she never did when she was alone; but pregnant women were supposed to behave in this way. (159 - 160)

Urmilla too takes pregnancy in her stride though she has to talk to Rita before she can confirm it. She started selling milk in order to make more money. But the arrival of Chandra made an immense impact on Tiger. After hearing that it was a girl, not the boy he wanted, Tiger had run out in the night. He felt that all the incidents that had happened since his marriage were like giant hands coming out of the night to hold him down. It was the thought of Urmilla and the baby that made him return. Biswas too was unhappy because his first born was a girl. He got even more vexed when he heard that the Tulsis had named her Basso without consulting him. He was also angry because they had written in the birth certificate that the father was a labourer.
In *A Brighter Sun* the relationship between Joe Martin and Rita is used as a foil to contrast Tiger's relationship with Urmilla. Rita and Joe had been going steady for some time before they decided to settle down. In spite of this, they used to quarrel a lot. On more than one occasion, the quarrel was caused by Rita's involvement with "the coolie" people next door. At the time of Urmilla's first pregnancy, Rita offered them her bed and her services as a midwife. On another occasion Joe quarrelled with her for helping Urmilla by lending all her things when the Americans visited them. When Urmilla insisted that Rita should attend on her during her second delivery too, Joe did not want her to accept it as it was too risky. The doctor had told Urmilla to get medical help during delivery but Urmilla was adamant. When the baby died, a coolness developed between the families. After some time Tiger and Rita were equally glad when the friendship was restored. Rita is presented as much more dominating than Urmilla who always goes by Tiger's looks. But in *Turn Again Tiger* we see Urmilla maturing into an individual in her own right. In the first novel, Urmilla is presented as a loyal, faithful wife, who helps her husband in his
struggles. Tiger's assessment of Urmilla as stupid is naive and shallow. Though she is too shy to articulate, she does not lag behind while Tiger gets creolized.

In *Turn Again Tiger*, Tiger's relationship with two women, Urmilla and Doreen, play a pivotal role in his quest for identity. From the very beginning of the novel, we see how Urmilla has matured into an individual. She is the person with whom Tiger shares his doubts and fears. When Soylo hinted at the presence of the white supervisor, all the time insisting that it was a joke, Tiger was sorely perplexed. Seeing him in this mood Urmilla wanted to know the reason why but was hesitant about asking him directly. Her feelings are portrayed in vivid detail throwing light on the growing awareness in Urmilla:

Every morning she liked to share a few words with Tiger, because she had made no friends in the village yet. And sometimes Tiger played a little with Chandra and remarked how she was growing, and how she resembled Urmilla. Nothing important really, but it left a good feeling in her heart after he was gone. But this morning he was quiet. Whatever was on his mind, why didn't he share it with her? Why didn't they talk together and discuss things, and may be she could help him? (43-44)
In the end, she mustered up enough courage to ask him and Tiger told her what Soylo had told him. Urmilla was able to help Tiger by giving him the information that Soylo had a habit of telling the truth while insisting that it was a joke. This made Tiger decide to go and investigate. However, when she suggested that she too would come along, Tiger told her to remain at home. This made her wonder how unpredictable he was.

Another incident in the novel humorously portrays the women's uprising in Five Rivers. Berta, the wife of the Chinese shopkeeper was the one who sowed the seeds of unrest in the village. The ladies were angry because their menfolk spent much time drinking in Otto's shop. Berta told them to go in a procession to the shop with the demand that Otto should stop supplying drinks on credit. It was Urmilla who led the ladies, though inwardly she was apprehensive about Tiger's reaction. Though Otto was amazed at the turn of events, he couldn't antagonize the entire female population. So he agreed. When the menfolk heard about this, they were infuriated at the audacity of the ladies. One and all
they beat up their wives, all except Tiger. Tiger questioned Urmilla about it. Though Urmilla was frightened, she stood her ground, saying that she had done the right thing. Tiger's reaction was unexpected. He told her that he was proud of her but he also made her promise not to repeat it. The women, he suggested, should talk to their husbands, and Urmilla should tell Otto to forget the whole thing. This incident throws light on Urmilla's growing assertiveness. Urmilla and Berta were the only two ladies in Five Rivers who escaped getting beaten up. But as Tiger sat on the door step, he wondered if he had forgiven Urmilla because of his own feeling of guilt regarding his fascination for Doreen, the white supervisor's wife.

Tiger's first meeting with Doreen had been accidental. He had gone to investigate Soylo's story of a house in the wilderness and had discovered to his dismay the existence of the white supervisor. While making his way back to the village in a mood of anger and frustration, he suddenly caught sight of a white woman bathing naked in a pool. For a moment he was so amazed that he did not know what to do. He could go
forward as if unconcerned or he could go back as if he were guilty of something. He was seized with panic because of his innate fear of the white race. In the end, he decided to walk past looking straight ahead. All of a sudden, the lady saw Tiger and dived into the pool. He heard the splash and had to turn his head rather casually. But when he saw her regarding him, he was embarrassed and turned away but she hailed him with a loud 'hello'. Tiger was so taken aback with a mixture of emotions that he ran away from the scene: "Tiger ran. He stumbled around the corner and kept on running, his bare feet thudding lightly on the trail, the sound deadened by dry leaves. He stepped blindly on a horsewhip snake sunning itself in the path, and it wrapped itself around his foot with the speed of a taut spring suddenly released. Tiger grabbed it and pulled it away and flung it in the bush, still running in a kind of one-legged madness" (50). Later on, he felt ashamed of his action, thinking that it was childish. In his mind he could remember the nakedness of the woman and it roused a desire in him. Doreen thus became a rival for Urmilla.
In the days that followed, Doreen appeared again, with her husband on payday. Though Tiger had resolved to distance himself from the white supervisor, he found it impossible to do so with his wife. He found himself relinquishing his chair for her. He had the feeling that she was laughing at him. He caught her name when her husband called her 'Doreen.' As the days went by, Tiger was unable to get the picture of Doreen out of his mind. When Babolal suggested that Tiger should go to help at the house of the white supervisor, he was extremely angry. In the end, he agreed.

When he left for the supervisor's house, Tiger had decided not to bow and scrape in front of him. When he reached the house, he found that Robinson was not there. The orders were being given by Doreen. Her close proximity affected Tiger. In the days that followed, Tiger started treading the path of self destruction on account of his fascination for Doreen. He started drinking too much, he burnt all his books, he gave away his radio and he started picking up fights for no reason at all. At work, in the supervisor's garden, he had the feeling of being watched the whole time.
Berta, Otto's wife, was working as a maid in the white supervisor's house and Tiger was happy for her presence. He felt that something would have happened if she were not there.

Urmilla noticed the change in Tiger. She was worried but could do nothing. One night, Urmilla and Singh had to help Tiger home in a state of intoxication. That day Urmilla opened her mind to Tiger:

"You does only think of yourself" she said. She didn't speak angrily or noisily, she was resigned, but it was this quietness and lack of stress which made him listen. "You think you is the only one in the world growing up, that nothing happening to other people, only to you. All these years we live together, Tiger, and you 'ave a girl child what you don't think about. She getting big you know."

"I tell you already we going send she to school in Port of Spain next year," Tiger said. "The best school it have in the island."

"I only telling you to show you how things happening to others besides yourself. You remember how she was a little baby? Look how big she getting now. And you think I would of talk to you like this five years ago? All these years, i ain't open my mouth to you or ask you for anything, and you always making the decision what to do, when to do, how to do. Sometimes you get on as if I ain't here at all, as if you forget all about me until somebody or something remind you that you have a wife. The same way you getting older, I getting older too, you know." (126)
Urmilla confided in Rita about the change that had come over Tiger when she visited Barataria. Rita immediately sensed the presence of another woman but Urmilla wouldn't hear of it: her faith in Tiger was absolute.

Meanwhile Tiger's frustration increased. Berta told him that Doreen was asking questions about him, especially about why he was drinking so much. Tiger felt angry because his condition was caused by her. Even in his drunken state the desire for her burnt hot within him. Though he tried hard to avoid it, the inevitable happened. Out in the open, he was cutting a piece of bamboo when he encountered Doreen. It was very hot and the sweat was running down his body. She stood motionless staring at him as he stared back. All of a sudden, he wanted to kill her because she was the reason for all his trouble. He clutched the cutlass tightly as she approached him. When she came near, he held her tightly meaning to kill her but she held on too. The whole incident with its contradictions is thus described:
The cause of every personal catastrophe was in his arms, and hatred and lust struggled equally in him. What he did was done blindly and vengefully and he never knew how it was with Doreen. What had tortured him had taken the form of her and that was what he had under him writhing and biting his arms and chest. (146)

Though he had not fulfilled his wish of killing her, he felt a sense of release after it was over. They had not talked at all and after it was over, Doreen put on her clothes and left after giving Tiger a long look. Tiger dived into the water, scooped the mud from the bottom and cleaned himself in a sort of ritualistic cleansing. He then felt free. According to Sandra Pouchet Paquet, "the phallic image of the blackman's cutlass on white flesh neutralizes the anguish of a memory in which it was always the white overseer who took Indian women and not the other way round. There was absolutely no tenderness in the lovemaking. In the violence and exhaustion of their mutual passion, Tiger succeeds in killing off that part of himself that is vulnerable to the mystique of the white woman and with it the legacy of the colonial past" (xii).

In Mohun Biswas's case, the joint family system was responsible for many of his quarrels with Shama. From the very beginning, Biswas found it difficult to
stay in a house full of people. Though Shama was quite young when she married Biswas, she surprised him by her skill in nagging. Biswas was totally unused to such a thing but Shama would resort to it whenever Biswas denied her something she wanted. On one occasion, she tormented Biswas by her sighs and looks of martyrdom when he refused to arrange a house blessing ceremony at The Chase inviting all her relatives. In the end, he had to give in. On another occasion, Biswas hit Shama and she packed up and left for Hanuman House. She was carrying her third child at the time. This time Biswas decided that he would not make the first move towards reconciliation. For many months, he stayed away. In the end, he had to go, judging that his wife would have given birth to their child by then. When Biswas saw his wife, she was bathing Myna, the baby. She went on with her work refusing to pay any attention to him. While dressing the baby, she asked him if he had eaten. Her behaviour seemed to suggest that their separation had lasted hours only instead of months.

In contrast to Urmilla, Shama's identity as a Tulsi gives her confidence. Moreover, she is not illiterate, having gone to school as a girl. Urmilla
remains uneducated though Tiger achieves literacy. Her loyalty to Tiger is absolute and she obeys him implicitly. She could never run home even if her husband beat her. In contrast to Biswas, Tiger's achievements were entirely his own. In Biswas's case, he had to depend on the Tulsis, one way or the other till the end of the novel. Urmilla gradually acquires the courage to stand up to Tiger but in Shama's case the opposite happens. After Biswas achieves recognition as a journalist, Shama becomes less assertive. The quarrels do take place but she stops running home to Hanuman House every time they have a slight misunderstanding. Though this owes a great deal to the gradual disintegration of the Tulsi power, the change in Shama's attitude is welcomed both by Biswas and his children.

Shama continued to surprise Mr Biswas even after a lifetime spent with her. Earlier he had been surprised to find a collection of letters in her possession sent by a friend from England. Though Shama found it difficult to manage the household on Biswas's meagre income, she amazed him by suddenly producing
acquisitions he had not known about, like a sewing machine and a cow. Though she did not get along with Biswas's aunt Tara, she was the epitome of Hindu virtue when Biswas's mother Bipti came to stay with them in their house at Shorthills. Though she was shy with strangers, especially those of another race, she got along well with Miss Logie, the lady in charge of the Community Welfare Department. The scene in the car as Biswas and his family accompany Miss Logie on a picnic, is described with humour:

Mr Biswas was worried about Shama. Sitting next to Miss Logie on the front seat, her elaborate georgette veil over her hair, Shama was showing herself self-possessed and even garrulous. She was throwing off opinions about the new constitution, federation, immigration, India, the future of Hinduism, the education of women. Mr Biswas listened to the flow with surprise and acute anxiety. He had never imagined that Shama was so well informed and had such violent prejudices, and he suffered whenever she made a grammatical mistake. (504).

In *A House for Mr Biswas*, Tulsidom is presented as a parallel to the colonial setup. The advantages of Tulsidom were many but the disadvantages were even greater. The prosperous facade that the Tulsi projected was very much like the facade of the British
empire. The economic advantages offered were outweighed by the loss of self-esteem suffered. In the end, Biswas did break free, like one of the colonies gaining independence but his mortgaged house symbolizes the dependent financial status of the erstwhile colonies, that were heavily in debt. In Tiger's case, he moves from the independence of Barataria to the indentureship of Five Rivers. But even there, Tiger is able to assert himself, for Urmilla always remains staunchly by his side. Even after their most bitter quarrels, she stays on never thinking of going back to her parents' home. It is this strength in her that helps Tiger exorcize himself of Doreen's fascination and return to her, whole and healed.

Both Selvon and Naipaul use other relationships to contrast the main one. In Turn Again Tiger the Otto-Berta relationship is explored to show the henpecked husband. Otto was willing to do everything for his wife Berta but he was deeply hurt when he found out that she had been unfaithful to him. In the end, he beat up the culprit, a man called Singh. Though Singh was stronger and heavier than Otto, Otto fought bravely
and broke Singh's hand. He also beat up Berta to teach her a lesson. *A House for Mr Biswas* explores a number of relationships that serve to contrast with the main one. Mrs Tulsi's memories of her dead husband provide a foil for the relationship between Biswas's mother and father. Biswas's father had been a miserly man while Pundit Tulsi had been one who had never had a disagreement with his wife. The story of Bhanadat is used to highlight how a bad relationship can lead to absolute ruin. Ajodha's brother Bhanadat had taken up abode with his mistress after his wife's death. This led to an estrangement between Ajodha and his brother. When Biswas met him later on, he was overcome with pity to see his sad state, living as he did in the worst quarter in the city. Biswas's sister Dehuti was ostracized by Tara for running away with a low-caste yard boy. Ramchand proved to be a good husband and later on he was accepted. The story also indicates how barriers of caste were being broken down in the fast movement towards creolization.

Religion: The attitude to the Hindu religion plays a significant role in the search for selfhood in the East
Indian novels. Of the two novelists under consideration, Naipaul explores the intricacies of the Hindu faith in greater detail than Selvon. Selvon's protagonist does not follow the orthodox Hindu faith. Though a great deal of time is spent by him speculating about the meaning of existence, he never accepts any orthodox creed. In Biswas's case religious questioning was part of his mental make-up and contributed to his search for selfhood. Mohun Biswas's parents like Tiger's took the ritualistic aspects of religion very seriously. For example when Tiger's daughter was born, it was the pundit who gave her a name. It was the same in the case of Mohun Biswas's unfortunate birth. But Mohun Biswas was of the Brahmin caste and as such enjoyed a privileged position. Selvon gives no indication of Tiger's caste. Both the novelists portray the increasing creolization among the members of the Hindu community. Many of the educated East Indians had converted to Christianity. In A House for Mr Biswas, both the sons of Tulsi marry ladies who follow the Christian faith eventhough Mrs Tulsi gives a great deal of importance to her religion. A Brighter Sun presents the character of Mr Bunsee, an East Indian who had come
up in the world. Mr Bunsee was in love with a Portugese - Indian girl who insisted on a church wedding causing a rift with his parents who were strict Hindus. In A House for Mr Biswas, Dehuti, Biswas's sister was ostracized because she ran away with a low-caste yardboy. Every time a quarrel flared up between Mohun Biswas and the Tulsis, they would refer to her to irritate him. He in turn would shout back that she lived in a much cleaner house than the abode of the Tulsis. The self-same Dehuti later on became a great favourite of the Tulsis coming to help them whenever a social function was held there.

The subject of religion, Christian and Hindu, is treated with irony by both novelists. In Selvon's novel, A Brighter Sun, Joe's aunt Ma Lambie is presented as a deeply religious woman though she has a streak of cruelty in her. In A House for Mr Biswas the holy man Pundit Jairam, treated Mohun Biswas most cruelly for taking two bananas from a bunch. Religion plays no part whatsoever in the sequel to A Brighter Sun: Five Rivers does not even have a church.
Though orthodox religion is treated with irony, both protagonists are religious in a different sort of way. Biswas's interest in religion got him interested in the Aryan Association to the great consternation of the Tulsis. He also used to read a lot of books and paint quotations from the scriptures. This greatly surprised the members of the Tulsi household when the placards were brought into Hanuman House after Biswas's nervous breakdown. Biswas also taught Anand the Hindu hymns. Though he was not very much interested in ritual, Biswas's belief in God was strong. In fact, it was strengthened by the events that befell him. On one occasion, after his quarrel with Mrs Tulsi, Biswas felt impelled to move out of her house in Port of Spain. It was next to impossible to buy a house on the eight hundred dollars he had in his hand. All of a sudden, a Negro came and offered him four hundred dollars for the materials on the burnt down house in Shorthills. This made a great difference to him and he told his son Anand: "You don't believe in God, but look" (567). In the last months of his existence, Biswas found himself in great difficulties. After his illness, the newspaper office had issued a notice to him prior to dismissal.
Both his older children were abroad and the debt on the house was still unpaid. But things righted themselves when Savi arrived and took charge. She got a job at a higher salary than her father and Biswas felt relieved to think that God had answered his prayers.

_A Brighter Sun_ projects Selvon's attitude to religion through the consciousness of Tiger: "Whenever big things happen, I does go out and look all about, at the hills, and the trees and the sky, and them. And I does get a funny feeling, as if strength coming inside me. That must be God"(117-118).

Politics: When one approaches the political angle, one sees that both the novelists give importance to it though politics is not the main issue in the novels under consideration. This is all the more significant when one considers Naipaul, for, Naipaul has written other novels where politics enjoy the central position. _A House for Mr Biswas_ portrays Mohun Biswas's inability to find answers to problems from political creeds. In the two novels by Selvon, the political angle is developed through Tiger's growing awareness of his
responsibilities in society. Tiger emerges from the ignorance of illiteracy to become a spokesman, not just of his race but of the entire society.

In *A Brighter Sun*, Selvon touches upon the political angle in a significantly unique way. The narrative of the omniscient narrator frequently dips in and out of the consciousness of Tiger. International events are described keeping intact the naivete of the uneducated protagonist in the beginning of the novel. For example, the start of the novel describes the New Year's day of 1939, with Trinidadians, trying to win money at the horse races, the Jewish refugees landing on the island etc., to come to the most important event, namely Tiger's marriage. Elsewhere in the novel, the novelist elucidates how little the war has affected the ordinary people except in the way of rising prices and shortage of food:

Though the tentacles of war reached into the country districts as in the shortage of foodstuffs and in the putting up of bases here and there, village folk plodded on in life and didn't worry about how the war was going. A man named Soylo who lived in the Northern Range, up on the Aripo hills in the central part of the island, didn't know there was a war until a day in August 1942. And when he heard he shrugged
his shoulders and said "O - no! Dat is why we seeing so much trouble to get saltfish in de shop now!" But when he heard about submarines and bombs he got nervous and wanted to know if the Germans were coming to bomb Trinidad. (63)

Tiger, however, was different. He wanted to find out about things. So he used to spend hours in the shop listening to the opinions of those who had at least a passing interest in the war. As a result of this his political awareness increased. Tiger's friend Boysie once took him to Port of Spain but though he could talk enthusiastically about the governor's speech, he had little knowledge about the governor's policy. Boysie's attention had been taken up by the paraphernalia that was part of the governor's set up. Tiger, however was more discerning.

The influence of the Americans on the economy of the island is also touched upon by Selvon. The arrival of the United States personnel brought in prosperity in the form of the yankee dollar. As far as Tiger was concerned, it helped him find work with the Americans. Later on, however the Americans became unpopular because many yankees had left Trinidadian
girls with illegitimate babies. In Tiger's case, the Americans were very friendly to him. When they visited his house he had a discussion with them about politics. One of them advised Tiger:

"It's politics that builds a country, John, don't ever forget that. Don't sit back and let things happen to you. Interest yourself in how you are governed, find out why laws are passed. Oh yes, I've already seen you're an easy going people. But, John, when you vote for a man who gets a seat in the Government, remember that you want a man there who'd fight for your rights, a man you and other poor people like you could trust." (173)

When the war ended there was a big celebration and Tiger got drunk. But he realized that everything was the same as before. "There was too much of this sameness, all over, in the gardens, in the shops, in the village streets. What difference did anything make" (214).

In *Turn Again Tiger*, one is surprised by Tiger's total apathy regarding community welfare. Earlier we had seen Tiger wanting to work for the whole community regardless of race as he had told Joe. After his arrival in Five Rivers the events that befell him made him lose interest in community welfare. The
villagers who had looked up to him as the educated man who would teach their children were disappointed in Tiger. Selvon uses this to show how Tiger's stay in Five Rivers is a journey backward. After the Doreen episode however, Tiger started moving forward again. He visited Barataria and had a heart-to-heart talk with Joe. Both Joe and Tall Boy made him feel happy by talking about the plans they had for Tiger. They had suggested his name for membership on a committee because they were sure of his potential. This induced a feeling of optimism in Tiger. The end of the novel presents Tiger with the glowing prospects of working for the people in the community of Barataria and carving out a niche for himself there.

The political angle is explored in A House for Mr Biswas in connexion with the conflict Biswas had with his two brothers-in-law, Shekhar and Owad. For a short period Biswas enjoyed the status of a government servant while working under Miss Logie in the Community Welfare Department. He was feeling happy in his new job when the department came under attack by a political party. Shekhar, his brother-in-law, was a prominent member of this party and this in turn led to a strained
relationship between the two. Biswas felt bitter because Shekhar, though in affluent circumstances, did not care a damn about Biswas losing his job.

When Owad, his younger brother-in-law, returned from England, Biswas found to his dismay that Owad's head was full of prejudiced opinions about a great many people. He had the habit of airing his opinions to the other members of the Tulsi household. He bragged about the distinguished men that he had defeated in debate and these included Russell, Joad, Radhakrishnan and Krishna Menon just to mention a few! Owad's sisters, who had never heard these names before, were suitably impressed. The nephews, especially Anand, also started voicing the opinions of their uncle. Speaking about the inherent virtues of the Soviet Union Owad started spinning tall tales about trees growing coloured cotton and rice being shot from aeroplanes. Of the listeners only Biswas was skeptical.

One day while playing cards with his brother and his two nephews, Anand and Vidiadhar, Owad lost his temper, because Anand voiced his opinion about Picasso. Owad insulted him by comparing him to a portrait by
Picasso. Anand was so confused that he made wrong moves and lost the game. Owad blamed him saying that this was the reward for his genius. This was too much for Anand who shouted back that he was no genius. The infuriated Owad slapped Anand. The same day Biswas too quarrelled with Owad and exposed his humbug about the Soviet Union. The incident cured Anand of his hero-worship and made him recant all the opinions he had expressed about Eliot, Picasso and the others echoing Owad's opinions. Biswas also felt forced to seek another place of residence.

Though the Community Welfare Department was abolished, Biswas was able to go back to the newspaper office. As for Shekhar, he was defeated miserably in the general elections and had to withdraw from politics.

Style and Technique: Both Selvon and Naipaul make use of omniscient narration. Both of them elucidate their themes with humour and pathos but Naipaul's humour is tinged with darkness. His protagonist performs like a clown but it is a performance necessitated by circumstances. Biswas induces laughter both at himself and at the people he ridicules. Biswas looks comic in
his hat that is too big for his head eventhough we feel
sorry for him as he is on the verge of a nervous
breakdown. In Tiger's case there is no bitterness in
the humour, that is created mainly through interaction
with other races. The characters of Tall Boy, Otto and
More Lazy provide scope for fun and add a local flavour
to the narrative. Moreover the omniscient narrator dips
in and out of Tiger's mind and Selvon makes use of
different registers to differentiate the characters.
Dialect is made use of to portray the thoughts that pass
through Tiger's mind in A Brighter Sun and this helps to
establish a closer link between the narrator and Tiger.
In Naipaul's case the use of dialect is at a minimum
though the West Indian flavour is retained in
the conversations. Michael Thorpe, in his book,
V.S. Naipaul states that the plot structure of A House
for Mr Biswas follows the novelistic tradition of
Dickens, Thackeray, Hardy, Wells and Lawrence (1976,15)
Naipaul alludesto a variety of subjects ranging from
philosophy and Hinduism to international politics and
world literature. Very often the reader is amazed at
the range of subjects that the ineffectual Mr Biswas is
capable of getting involved in. In Selvon's case,
A Brighter Sun adopts a style where events of national and international importance are mixed up with those of local interest that pertain to the protagonist. This helps to underline the limited range of Tiger's vision, that is in the process of broadening. This method is discarded in Turn Again Tiger to emphasize that Tiger has become more mature after his years in Barataria.

In the ultimate analysis one finds that both Selvon and Naipaul present the search for identity in their own individualistic ways. In Selvon however, there is a gleam of hope for the protagonist who is at last able to come to terms with his own identity as the creolized West Indian descendant of the indentured, illiterate East Indian coolie. Not only has he come a long way from indentured labour, he has plans to help other people do the same. In A House for Mr Biswas the protagonist escapes from the sugar estate only to end up in Tulsi thraldom. The education that he receives and the exalted job of a journalist that he acquires, do not help him to find his own identity. He continues to remain perplexed and rootless. The house that he has acquired is heavily mortgaged. The quest has to be continued by the next generation through Savi and Anand.