

“IDENTITY CRISIS IN V.S. NAIPAUL’S A HOUSE FOR MR. BISWAS”

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ABSTRACT:-

Mohun Biswas is born in rural Trinidad to parents of Indian origin. His birth was considered inauspicious as he is born in the wrong way and with an extra finger. The pandit advises that the boy be kept away from trees and water, particularly water. A few years later, Mohun leads a neighbor’s calf, which he is tending, to a stream. The boy, who has never seen water in its natural form, becomes distracted and allows the calf to wander off. Mohun then hides in fear of punishment. His father, believing his son to be in the water, drowns in an attempt to save him, thus in part fulfilling the pandit's prophecy. This leads to the dissolution of the family. Mohun's sister is sent to live with a wealthy aunt and uncle, Tara and Ajodha. Mohun, his mother, and two older brothers go to live with other relatives.

Ajodhya then puts him in the care of his alcoholic and abusive brother Bhandat, an arrangement which also ends badly. Finally, the young Mr. Biswas decides to make his own fortune. He wants to be the author of his own life. Despite his poor education, Mr. Biswas becomes a journalist, has four children with Shama, and attempts several times to build a house that he can call his own, a house which will symbolize his independence.

Keywords: - Unfavorable conditions, bad luck, unintentionally, upbringing, destiny, future, successful.

IDENTITY CRISIS

A period of uncertainty and confusion in which a person's sense of identity becomes insecure, typically due to a change in their expected aims or role in society.

Literature is often born in protest. The previous generation, seeks to impose upon the new generation. Being fully aware of the dialectical relationship between individual and society, many contemporary American writers are suspicious of tradition’s valetudinarian impact. In their works, character’s sense of self and their acceptable role in society constitutes a major conflict, which possess the potential for tragedy. To celebrate the diversity of American society is to

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recognize literary voices whose power is generated by writer's deep identification with their race and gender. Such voices call reader's attention to the uniqueness of experience. In an attempt to democratize American literary voices , many contemporary American writers of color want to reclaim their sense of history and identity by exploring what has been lost in scholar's subjective reconstruction of history. Their works portray character's struggle in search of their ontological as well as cultural identity.

Conflict has always been an important subject in literature. In much American literature, tragedy is closely tied to character's confusion about their identity. Their emotional sufferings are frequently occasioned by their inability to overcome crisis. The narrator's problem is not that he does not know who he is, but that he lacks the courage to be who he is. The main character has been unable to resolve his identity crisis throughout his life. His sometimes contradictory behavior underlines the intensity of the war within himself. In the first part of the novel, Mohun Biswas is an Indo-Trinidadian who begins his life inauspiciously when he is born under several unfavorable conditions. A Hindu pundit is called in to name him and cast his horoscope; he predicts that this will be a child who brings bad luck to his family. The prophecy seems to begin to fulfill itself when, as a child, Mr. Biswas is indirectly and unintentionally responsible for the death of his father, and his family is eventually broken apart as a result. As the youngest child, he stays with his mother, but she lacks the capacity to nurture him and influence his upbringing. In his job as a sign painter for the Tulsi store, he is attracted to a young girl's smile. It inspires him to write her a note which her family interprets as a love letter, and he suddenly finds himself engaged, with no way of extricating himself from the situation.

As a married man, Mr. Biswas and his wife Shama live in Hanuman House with Shama's mother and multitudes of her relatives. He becomes a buffoon, a clown, a rebel, and is constantly in conflict with one member of the family or another. Eventually his offense is so great that he is sent from the house to run a store on one of the Tulsi properties. The endeavor is successful until Shama wants to have the house blessed; after that, Mr. Biswas experiences financial difficulties and makes ill-advised decisions that result in getting him deeper into debt. Seth, Mrs. Tulsi's brother-in-law and manager of Tulsi affairs, offers him a position as a driver on one of the Tulsi sugar estates, and he accepts, under Shama's coaxing. On the sugar estate, the family lives in a barracks shared with eleven other families. Mr. Biswas is impatient to build a house, but he does not have very much money. The house is built bit by bit, and the promise of a nice house diminishes as economic considerations necessitate the substitution of substandard supplies for quality materials. Between his house, his growing family, and his job, Mr. Biswas begins to have worries, the worries become anxieties, and the anxieties become full-blown fears. One night

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during a storm, his house is almost blown away and he breaks down completely. He is taken back to Hanuman House, where Shama is about to give birth to their fourth child, and he recuperates in the solid security and comfort of the house he has professed to hate. When it is time for him to make a decision, he decides to leave Hanuman House and his family behind and make another attempt at setting out on a new life.

In the second part of the novel, Mr. Biswas goes to Port of Spain and finally begins to establish himself as an individual, settling into a satisfying, although low paying, job as a journalist. He reconciles with his family, and Mrs. Tulsi invites them to live in her house in Port of Spain. They enjoy their time there, and Mr. Biswas feels that he is becoming more detached from the hold of the Tulsis. Nonetheless, Mrs. Tulsi continues to use her manipulative powers on Mr. Biswas, and he eventually finds himself a reluctant resident of the Tulsi estate in Shorthills. Seth has had a falling out with the Tulsis, and life is very difficult as the house deteriorates from neglect and abuse. The children especially face unpleasant challenges, and Mr. Biswas builds another house for his family. This house is also doomed, and more bad judgment on Mr. Biswas's part causes a fire that barely avoids destroying the house. The family does not have to stay in the house long, however, since Mrs. Tulsi's house in Port of Spain becomes vacant again, and Mr. Biswas moves back, occupying two rooms, and sharing the rest of the house with other members of the Tulsi family. Conditions at the house get out of control as more and more people move into the house and it becomes a den of noise and unclean lines.

As Mr. Biswas's son Anand starts college, Mr. Biswas begins to sink again into despair. He is pulled out of it when he is offered a new job as a community Welfare Officer with better pay. The job eventually also provides him with a car, and Mr. Biswas achieves new status in the house. The status turns out to be temporary, as his family is obliged to move to a tenement in order to make improvements to the house in anticipation of the return of Owed, Mrs. Tulsi's son who has been studying medicine in England. The family is allowed to move back into the house after three months, but their stay is brief because of conflict between Owad and Anand, then Owed and Mr. Biswas, and finally Mr. Biswas and Mrs. Tulsi. As Mr. Biswas looks for a place to live, he is not holding out much hope, but he is approached by a man who wants to sell his house, and circumstances arrange themselves so that Mr. Biswas agrees to make the purchase. Unfortunately, this turns out to be another incident of bad judgment, as the house has more problems than he realized, and the family is once again disheartened. They work to get the house livable and are able to enjoy some time in it, making it their own, before Mr. Biswas loses his job because the Community Welfare Department is abolished.

He goes back to his job at The Sentinel, and now his money worries are magnified since he has acquired a great deal more debt but lost a great deal of his income. He eventually has a series of heart attacks and ultimately dies, but he leaves behind a house that will shelter his family for as long as they live. Ten weeks before his death, Mr. Biswas is sacked from his job as a journalist. The family is living under challenging circumstances, but Mr. Biswas receives a sense of satisfaction from knowing that his wife Shama has not run to her mother for help. She has changed since they moved into their own house, and he considers that fact to be as rewarding as the actual acquisition of the house after years spent living with Shama's family. As a boy, before he married into the Tulsi family, he has been compelled to move from one house of strangers to another. When he finally buys a house of his own, it has many problems that he has not noticed until they moved in and were settled. Nevertheless, he feels gratified in knowing that he has reached the end of his life with something to show for it.

CONCLUSION:-

When Mohun Biswas died of heart trouble at forty-six, jobless and penniless, leaving a wife, four children still in school, and a three-thousand-dollar mortgage on a poorly constructed house, it might seem that he was a failure in life. In his own eyes, however, Mr. Biswas was triumphant. Not only had he won one of the two great battles of his life (his wife, Shama Biswas, had finally learned to put her husband and her children ahead of the family into which she was born, the enormous Tulsi clan), but also he had bought his own house on his own land, thus providing a place for his family to be a family. In the prologue to the novel, V. S. Naipaul reveals Mr. Biswas' sense of satisfaction with his achievements, while at the same time realistically describing the house of which he is so proud. The story then moves backward in time to the birth of Mohun Biswas and proceeds chronologically, concluding with his funeral.

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