

The Dilemma of Hybridity in *A House for Mr. Biswas* by V.S Naipaul**Moustafa OUSSAR*****University of Tlemcen, Algeria, moustafa.oussar@univ-tlemcen.dz****Dr. Wassila MOURO-HAMZA REGUIG****University of Tlemcen, Algeria, wassila.hamzareguig@univ-tlemcen.dz****Received 18/12/2020 Accepted 02/04/2021 Published. 27/09/2021****Abstract:**

The present article deals with some of the most widely used and disputed terms in post-colonial literature and theory, which commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization. It casts light on the issue of Hybridity as a phenomenon and shows the lingering effects of colonialism upon it. Hybridity covers various domains in culture and society, identity, language, religion, and the right of a true citizen of the country as warmly interested topics in cultural and literary studies. Hence, this paper aims at presenting a proffer to substantiate, emphasize, and personify the intersection between hybridity and the legacies of colonialism in *A House for Mr Biswas* by V.S Naipaul, which are acculturation, double consciousness, unhomeliness, alienation and exile, as main elements in postcolonial literature.

Keywords: hybridity; colonialism; postcolonial literature; alienation; acculturation

1.1 Introduction:

A House for Mr. Biswas written by V.S Naipaul and with the help of its protagonist Mr. Biswas, shifted from one period of time to another, a small part of a long term in the history of India. He is the son of a labourer family, a little bit having more prestige than slaves, but threatened and attacked by segregation, low life conditions, dispossession and the belief of migrating. This tale tries to cover two main topics. The first one of Mr. Biswas eking to survive and find himself in another environment, and the second one of the Westernization of the Hindu. All the characters presented and spoken about appear to have conflicts and disagreements as agreed on by the author Naipaul himself. He pictured them in way to show how much they are hybridized in religion, language, schooling, lifestyle and identity. In postcolonial studies, hybridity and identity are remarkably questioned and considered as a main problematic. These concepts have contributed in shaping the societal patterns of the postcolonial world within postcolonial communities. However, hybridity and identity have gradually changed along with their premises which have

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been reshaped due to many factors. These lines would try to briefly answer the following questions: Which societal patterns have been hybridized? To what extent has Naipaul succeeded in picturing this phenomenon via Mr. Biswas? Thus, this paper aims at approaching the term hybridity in one of the most famous works in postcolonial literature, *A House for Mr. Biswas* by V.S Naipaul.

1.2. Hybridity

Hybridity deals with the advent of a brand new form out of two or extra matters. This is a combination of various or in contrast to things. Hybridity can appear in different types, linguistic, cultural, political, racial and so on. It is one of the most questioned hypothesis in postcolonial studies. Hybridity mainly refers to the advent of recent transcultural branches inside the space caused by colonization.

In horticulture, hybridity is the outcome of different parts of variations. In every other utility, the cross-fertilization of different languages resulted what is known as hybrid. However, in postcolonial idea, these meanings were extended to refer to the hyphenated identities of individuals or ethnical societies

Maximum postcolonial writing has centered on the hybridized nature of postcolonial subculture as power in place of a weakness. It isn't a case of the oppressor obliterating the oppressed or the colonizing silencing the colonized. In practice, it stresses the mutuality of the system. The clash of cultures can impact as plenty upon the colonizer because the colonized. (Ashcroft, Griffith & Tiffin, 2010, pp. 35-36)

Hybridity takes place in postcolonial communities, each because of aware-like times of cultural suppression, as while the colonial strength works on empowering political and economic control or whilst the settlers oblige indigenous societies to follow the wind of social movements. It could also appear in later durations when a form of model of shifting from the cosmopolitan communities plan to cause mixed cultural doctrines with the decolonized nations.

Hybridity has been, from time to time, misunderstood as showing from where it comes. It might be real to say that no postcolonial part was capable of keeping away from the influence of the displacements, which have shaped the postcolonial globe.

In *A House for Mr. Biswas*, V.S Naipaul pictures a hybridized community. The story shows the warfare for identity of an Indian person dwelling in Trinidad. It indicates the reader how his agrarian beliefs have been challenged by the intruder's lifestyle when he shifts to the city.

1.3 *A House of Mr. Biswas*

Naipaul, the writer of this story along with many other critics, have argued that this is the best novel through which he has successfully approached and reflected his real life. He wrote about many situations since his childhood among which the picture of a hybridized

Naipaul is well presented throughout the incidents of the story and via its protagonist Mr Biswas.

1.3.1 Historical Background

The tale of this novel is “self in Trinidad”, where V.S. Naipaul was born, however from wherein he moved to Britain carrying his studies at Oxford University and ultimately to live there permanently. Trinidad is considered as one of the islands in the West Indies; it is located inside the Caribbean Sea. Trinidad became at the beginning a land ruled by the Spanish. By time, because of the Anglo Spanish conflict, this area was announced as a British colony. Trinidad got free, however selected to stay in relation with the Common Wealth, in 1962. Trinidad covers a large numbers of different social classes; among which we have English, French, Spanish and Portuguese peoples.

As many of those settlers who came to Trinidad seeking of jobs, Naipaul’s grandfather was one of those folks who travelled from his homeland India to Trinidad to work as a labourer. Even though the father of Naipaul stepped forward the own family status with the aid of becoming an author and afterward his son himself traced the same way to become a writer and reporter.

The tale of *A House for Mr. Biswas* narrates in part within the side Trinidad and partly within the capital, Spain’s port. In this place, the principle damage of the people is in agriculture in which sugar, cocoa, coconut and citrus fruits are the main merchandise. In this tale, there is a reference to the flourishing as a result of the advent of American citizens within Trinidad. Govind, who works as a taxi driver in Port of Spain, became rich by owing a lot of money from his American tourist. The incidents in this novel shed light on a long life term in Mr. Biswas life. *A House for Mr Biswas* strains the battle of Mr. Biswas to have a residence which he in the long run does manipulate to own although his untimely demise has a hint of tragedy about it.

1.3.2 Themes of the Novel

The starting of the novel onto two components is very suitable. The first part of the novel incorporates a description of Mr. Biswas’ lifestyles in Trinidad, whilst the other component includes a version of his life and reviews mainly within the port of Spain with a part picturing the life of the Tulsi relatives and of Mr. Biswas in a hilly locality referred to as “short hills”, as well.

The first part of this tale accustoms us with the conditions of Mr. Biswas start and his motion from Parrat Trace to Pagotes. The second one covers the description of Mr. Biswas’ studies and the efforts made by his aunt Tara to reach his aims. The other written part acquaints us with the occasions in which Mr. Biswas got married to one of the Tulsi girls, the stoppage of the marriage and the rebel before the Tulsi Seth tyranny, and his removal from “Hanuman dwelling”. The next part covers and sheds the light on the six years of his lifestyles at a city referred to as the chase. In that time, he shows himself a futile one while being the father of three children. The subsequent chapter narrates how Mr. Biswas

attempts to build a residence of his. His choice to construct a house symbolizes his need to self-sufficiency and the claim of his uniqueness. However, the house stays unfinished, with the result that Mr. Biswas feels unhappy via this disappointment.

The different sections in the second part of this tale explain the brand new stories that Mr. Biswas is going via in an all in all unique location. Right here, the tales try to cover in as much as possible casual information related to Mr. Biswas' journalistic work within the first chapter. The subsequent chapter copes with the appealing of Anand in scholarship and the adjustment of Mr. Biswas' journalistic works.

Following the opposition between Tulsi and Owad, Mr. Biswas moves to purchase a new residence for him in Sikkim Street, yet to do so, he must take a massive mortgage from his uncle. Although, he is satisfied along with his ownership of the residence and with his girls achievement in life, there may be other things that can drive him have a miserable feeling.

A House for Mr. Biswas is mainly the tale of Mr. Mohun Biswas who belongs to a modest family, however who got married to a rich, land-owning family generally due to the higher Brahmin cast to where he is from and to which that own family additionally belongs to. That family is outstandingly known by the name Tulsi. Mrs Tulsi lives with big circle of relatives together with sons. Living at Hanuman residence for decades, the Tulsi travelled to short hills after which they circulate to some other residence in Port of Spain. The Tulsi family along with the Hanuman residence constitute the vintage Hindu lifestyle now coming below to have an impact on the alien western tradition. Orthodoxy is well presented in The Tulsi circle of relatives, whereas its orthodox starts to fall apart with the western alien impacts.

Due to his nonconformism in this circle of relatives, Mr. Biswas is struggling a lot in Tulsi's. He faced problems for his very own identity challenges. Because of this, he starts to look for proper reasons and solutions to move away from the Tulsi house. This is the principal purpose of disagreement between Mr. Biswas and his wife called Shama.

1.4. Hybridity through Language and Education

As presented before, the issue of hybridity has taken different images, yet critics view that the people's tongue along with their educational status have reflected the best hybridized citizens within a hybridized society. The following lines would shed the light on this dilemma arguing to what extent it is pictured within the story of *A House for Mr Biswas*.

1.4.1 Language

Language is the place wherein hybridity appears more obviously, as it is the intermediate via which a hierarchical structure of strength is kept on action one of the primary and important functions of imposing domination is control over language. The imperial constantly attempts to compel their own tongue into that of the settled nation. Consequently, many terms of the imperial language turn out to be used in the colonized people's language. For instance, different English phrases like chair and table turned to be Bengalian. Once more, the colonizers had additionally to acquire various local terms for the

motive of management. Now, the coming lines attempt to show how 'hybridity' is used in *A House for Mr Biswas*.

In Hindu, Creole English is widely spoken by the young Tulsi kids. Spanish is frequently used by Dorothy and her daughters. Meanwhile, the Tulsi living in Port of Spain have been considered a brain star for the kids and even those who got old and spaces where tournaments took place like bicycle, motors, glass cabinets and radiograms. Moreover, if it is not taking as lengthy earlier than Mr. Biswas being proud in his fits and ties, which he as creole community do not agree to become symbols of westernization development and decency. He, indeed, tempts his kids to the capital via the variants of European food. He is may be very discomfited when Anand at the top of his voice announces in an eating-place that coca cola seems like horse-pee. His satisfaction is in his social endorsement in having a bicycle and when abnormal to his class. Hampers, picnics and beach vacations at the moment symbolise his personality.

In the meantime, Shama starts to gather fits, give names, deliver items as prizes and speak to white ladies about the political and social problems of the island. The youngsters are very choosy about their father's automobile and believe that toning down names like of "mai" instead of "mummy" and "bap" for "daddy" is an indication of cultural heritage. However, it should be mentioned that even at the same time a new system is taking its place instead of the old one, a homeless character like Dehuti nonetheless looks for appreciation throughout her relationship with the Tulsi's that she nervously cultivates. Meanwhile, the antique Hindus retain to wish of having back the old India as they dream of cultural balance and acquainted styles.

Bakhtin (1981) in his book *The Dialogic Imagination* commented about hybridity that:

It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation, or by some other factor (p. 358)

Consequently, any lay reader or critic would be on aggregation with Bakhtin's previous lines wherein he showed that the different tongues of the people within the same community is by all means a direct representation of different societal patterns in a single and unique society.

1.4.2 Schooling and Education

The sarcastic influence of the western education on the Hindu manner of existence can never be undervalued. Western schooling familiarized the two new Tulsi sons, Shekhar and Owad, into getting in touch with ideas and a faith different to those of their relatives. Owad's academic success saves his heritage as the pinnacle inside the circle of relatives on his backing from England. It is for the importance of Owad's education that Mrs. Tulsi abandons the shell of Arwacas and lives her house into five days per week residence in port of Spain. Certainly, Western teaching turns into the best rescuer of the lectures.

Mr. Biswas appearance and his social clumsiness drive him unwell in the multiracial community of the capital metropolis. He has realized that he belongs to a world ruled by Western premises, thoughts and well built homes. It is far a phrase of great grammatical fault in talking to miss logic.

The Tulsi were being expected to stand high above the changes exposed on them by Tulsidom at that time. The westernized way of living of Dorothy was clearly faced by opposition and disagreement of the Tulsi people. She, Dorothy, underestimates the long and covered shirts of the young daughters by means of her unsuitable dresses. Her vacations in South America are an incomprehensible wastefulness for the Tulsi whose idea of holiday is quite abnormal who only has the habit of staying close and together with their families.

1.5 Identity

Critics agree on the fact that the term 'Hybridity' has a relation with identity. The term identity covers both people's national and political streams in relation to the place where these people live. Nonetheless, in the colonial meaning, a recently formed, varied or paradoxical identity is all described by hybrid identity. Diaspora, immigration, and exile are of the main premises that help in causing and creating the hybrid identity, like Asian-American, Black-British, Anglo-Indian, African-American, and Turko-German groups who include "hyphenated-identities". Nowadays, whilst a white woman gets married to a black man as an example, their kids have each black and white blood, identity is shaped in their kids as hybrid.

As far as, these papers aim at approaching the veiled era of the hybrid identity within *A House for Mr. Biswas*. In this tale, the desire of Mr Biswas to purchase a house of his own has been looked at as an allegory of the search for identity of the colonized man or woman. Apart from this, he was capable of setting up his identity by founding a residence at Sikkim Avenue. This identification shows the established order of his identification. As a way to set up his identification, he moved to the residence of chase. Yet this house remains independent since it is one of the Tulsi circle of relatives' belongings. Once more, Mr. Biswas was in a situation of being strange in his personal yard during the residence' blessing rite. Though Mrs. Tulsi, Sushila and the villagers did not assume to think, he returned to Hanuman house with a feeling of loneliness and homelessness. He did not give up looking for to build up his own identity but carried out his way and went to the Greenvale house.

His discontented state of desire was well pictured in the Greenvale house, which became an important caricature of his dream house and stays incomplete. Since it was constructed on an area belonging to the Tulsi, it could never have gotten answers for his desire to be independent. In a dramatic scene, his heart was broken along with the burning of the house, what urges him to start again looking for himself at the age of six and with a feeling of homelessness and loss. That feeling which remains in him within though he left both his family and the Hanuman House, was the main cause that pushed him to seek freedom.

This quest for freedom did unfortunately not stop at this point, yet it continued. In the second chapter, the author focuses his narration on the foundation of the two houses; one already burnt and the other built with good materials in short hills. Mr Biswas, meanwhile, never felt easy and comfortable by having built this new house. A feeling of being

incarcerated and besieged in silence once thinking of the materials which were gathered from the Tulsi's and the house that was burnt once again.

Homi K. Bhabha (2004) in *Location Culture* observed that:

I have lived that moment of the scattering of the people that in other times and other places, in the nations of others, becomes a time of gathering. Gathering of exiles and émigrés and refugees...Also the gathering of the people in the diaspora; indentured, migrant (p. 21)

In this wave of thought, Bhabha(2004) notes that these people, struggling with diasporic and identical questions, are scattered in different locations yet that they gather in other places founding new societies, communities and trying to assimilate the other new cultures and traditions. What really helped to make Mr Biswas satisfied and find fulfilment is the house of the Sikkim Street where he felt independent after having the sense of being dispossessed. It is not a transition in the place of residence only yet a shift from being a visitor and traveller into a dweller. Our figure here pictures the best image of an Indian immigrant in Trinidad who has suffered a lot to find answers for his identity's quests.

1.6Religion

From the outset, the attempt to create unity out of mixture through the separation of core main beliefs and creating core principles shared by all the people living in the same place is highly challenging specially in the religious field.

Thus, in our tale, Shekhar in his wedding practised traditions and presents a religious hybridization besides the Tulsi's values and beliefs. He wishes to have a marriage based on the customs that he believes in by choosing his wife and dramatically threatens to kill himself if he is obliged to marry the wealthy Presbyterian woman of Indian origins.

More than this, the Tulsi turns the vintage woman from Europe at short hills right into a changed type of Hanuman residence in a ludicrous way, in addition to turning the rest room to be used as a sewing-room. Hence, inside the Tulsi's

Every facet patronized the opposite and neither suspected it become being patronized, after clean and quick negotiations the marriage took place in a registry office, and the elder god, contrary to Hindu customs and traditions of his own family, did no longer baring his bride home, however left hanuman house for suitable, now not speaking of suicide, to look after the lories, cinema, land and filling station of his wife's family (Naipaul, 1961, p.230)

Surely, there may be no answer of this challenge. The dilemma 'hybridity' used in *A House for Mr Biswas* is the hassle of geographical boundaries of the human beings and the outcome of cultural mixture. At this instant, equally males and females need to deal with a greater praised life. At the present time, people are looking for a change in their lifestyle by immigrating from a place to another. This migration is well presented in Biswas ambition, isolation, the feeling of loss, travelling and his house to guard them, each person needed to prove himself in a new world shaped by variety wherein being educated was the only fortification.

1.7 Alienation and Exile

The mindset of the society and more precisely the family of Mr Biswas along with the characters of *A House for Mr Biswas* rotate under the roof of one principle element, namely, identity crisis. Postcolonial reviewers interpreted this as a psychological state wherein a refugee is suffering his suspension in another strange home other than his own. Ghosh Oindrila in her book *To Lay Claim to one's Portion of the Earth: Leaving a Mark on History in A House for Mr Biswas* claimed that:

Mr. Biswas's quest for identity in *A House for Mr. Biswas* actually sheds light on the dilemma of the anchorless existence, uncertainty and vain struggle for security and identity in a postcolonial society. To be a colonized subject is to be secure, protected, fed with the decisions of the rulers and to be thrown into freedom entails the exertion of one's own mind and capacities to fend for oneself. The story of the novel is punctuated with Mr. Biswas's repeated bouts of exhilaration at being free and his breakdowns and backsliding into the refuge of Hanuman House. (2011, p.583).

The reading of the previous lines, would lead us to affirm a fact that the continuous mistreatment and mortification practiced by the Tulsis upon Mr. Biswas obliged him to look for a solution by himself rather than living under a humiliated life. Because of this humiliation, the ambition to build up a free life for his own and the desire to have meaningful existence becomes a challenging wish that never leaves his mind. As narrated in the novel,

He thought of the house as his own, though for years it had been irretrievably mortgaged. And during these months of illness and despair, he was struck again and again by the wonder of being, the audacity of it: to walk in through his own front gate, to bar entry to whoever he wished, to close his doors and windows every night, to hear no noises except those of his family, to wander freely from room to room and about his yard, instead of being condemned, as before, to retire the moment he got home to the crowded room in one or the other of Mrs Tulsi's houses... As a boy he had moved from one house of strangers to another; and since his marriage he felt he had lived nowhere but in the houses of the Tulsis... And now at the end he found himself in his own house, on his own portion of the earth. (Naipaul, 1961, p. 2)

Thus, our protagonist throughout the novel, and due to the humiliation he faced suffered a big amount of exile and alienation which he tried by all means to oppose and stand before. The gloomy and shadowing feelings that Mr Biswas experienced took place in the house of the Tulsis. Therefore, he attempted to keep his chin up and fought for his own identity, own customs and self-worth towards both his African origins and the European social patterns. In this wave of thought, Ali Shehla and Alka Gupta argued that Mr Biswas lived right through the novel a feeling of exile and alienation and stated in this respect that,

Alienation is usually defined as a feeling of separation or isolation, associated with minorities, the poor and other groups of periphery who have limited power to bring about changes in society. Mr. Biswas is the unaccommodated man representing the outcast's symbolic quest for a place in the hostile universe... a sense of place and self, which was difficult for East Indians in Trinidad to have. (2013, p.1).

All in all, these lines picture the lifelong pain of Mr. Biswas for being displaced and alienated within the Caribbean Island far from his ancestral home. The dilemma 'hybridity' used in *A House for Mr Biswas* is the hassle of geographical boundaries of the human beings and the outcome of cultural mixture. At this instant, equally males and females need to deal with a greater praised life. At the present time, people are looking for a change in their lifestyle by immigrating from a place to another. This migration is well presented in Biswas' ambition, isolation, the feeling of loss, travelling and his house to guard them, each person needed to prove himself in a new world shaped by variety wherein being educated was the only fortification.

1.8 Duel Vision in *A House for Mr Biswas*

Duel vision is well represented through the novel's events; the writer concentrates his narration on the protagonists' psyche from both angles and meanwhile, the readers' reactions over the events occurring to Mr Biswas. Naipaul carries on approaching Mr Biswas' veiled era of cheerfulness and sanguinity through his relation with his wife Shama. He shows that this relation is taking the right path and experiences a good process after obtaining a new dwelling altogether. He writes:

He had grown to accept her judgement and to respect her optimism. He trusted her. Since they had moved to the house, Shama had learned a new loyalty to him and to their children; away from her mother and sisters, she was able to express this without shame, and to Mr Biswas this was a triumph almost as big as the acquiring of his own house (AHB, p. 8)

Mr Biswas has gained the heart and even the respect of his wife after changing the house and moving away from where the mother of Shama is. Furthermore, she recognises the importance of this bond and starts taking care of him and her children, as well.

The cheerfulness of finding a house where to reside did not rest for long because Mr Biswas still feels himself strange and alienated. He looks for to have a house for his own, a house that belongs to his property and takes his name. He has hated the fact of depending on the others. Mr Biswas is never stable rather annoyed to see himself, his children and his family as a whole in subaltern and expatriate. He seeks to free his sensations and live the freedom he looks for under the stipulations of his identical terms. In this sense Naipaul writes:

He thought of the house as his own, though for years it had been irretrievably mortgaged. And during these months of illness and despair he was struck again and again by the wonder of being in his own house, the audacity of it: to walk in through his own front gate, to bar entry to whoever

he wished, (...). And now at the end he found himself in his own house, on his own half-lot of land, his own portion of the earth. That he should have been responsible for this seemed to him, in the last months, stupendous. (AHB,p.12)

What has pushed Mr Biswas to express his madness and unsteadiness is not only the problem of having a house for his own. He showed no importance over this the first moment he came to this house, yet he literally found no place where to sleep and relax comfortably. The house in general is about to fall into ruins and all its corners are about to destroy. Mr Biswas thinks it is worse than having no house because it is dangerous and not suitable for residing. He believes it suits animals rather than human beings.

1.9 Conclusion

Among the troubles hired on this novel is the problem of geographical uprooting of humans and the consequence of the hybridization of culture by a modern and strange one. Hanuman house is the dwelling house of the Tulsi extended family that symbolises the hybrid culture. Although the residence contains an old Hindu culture sample, their customs were hybridized by European lifestyle, faith, language and education. This latter's tradition as exemplified via the Tulsi relatives is sacred. The incidents of the novel tell us that *A House for Mr. Biswas* so often delicate and in manner in which the new European orientated culture of Trinidad undermines the traditional customs and ideals of the Hindu. The cultural disagreement among the Hindu and the Western traditions results in a hybrid lifestyle.

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