

SYNOPSIS

A HOUSE FOR MR. BISWAS, A NOVEL BY V. S. NAIPAUL.

A House For Mr. Biswas is regarded as Naipaul's masterpiece. It tells the tragicomic story of the search for independence and the identity of a Brahmin Indian living in Trinidad. The main character in the story is Mohun Biswas or particularly known as Mr. Biswas. He was the youngest son of a poor Indian family in the British colony Trinidad. His father, Raghu worked in a sugar cane estate with very low salary. When he was a baby, he got malnutrition, had six fingers and was branded unlucky from birth by the Pundit. He was believed to be lecherous and spendthrift and bring bad luck for the entire family especially the parents. And the bad thing came true when his father died because of his fault.

As the son of poor laborer in Trinidad, Mr Biswas was forced to live as a guest in one crowded, inhospitable house after another. After the death of the father, his entire family moved in with his wealthy Aunt Tara in Pagote. There he was sent to school and was educated to be a pundit. But he failed at this calling and then sent into Tara's brother-in-law Bhandat who kept the rumshop. In this house he was humiliated and severely beaten by Bhandat.

Being tired of his dependent on peoples he decided to get a job on his own and he promised to get his own house too. He learnt to be a sign painter and went to work as a sign-painter for the Tulsi Family, a low caste but rich family in Arwacas. There he began a flirtation with Shama, a daughter of Mrs Tulsi, the

caretaker of the family. After his love letter was discovered by Mrs Tulsi, Mr. Biswas was bullied into marrying Shama. She "forced" Mr. Biswas to marry her daughter because he was of the right caste. People of old Indian traditions valued another persons by the caste they belong to. It was the beginning of a long and unhappy marriage that produced four children, a constant struggle for money, and countless bitter quarrels. The marriage did not bring him happiness. Instead, he felt disappointed by marrying Shama because he always contrasts her family who still keep old Indian tradition. There were disputes and disagreement between him and his in laws for years.

After a brief and failed attempt to run a dry goods store in The Chase, Mr. Biswas and his family return to live with the Tulsi Family, a pattern recurs throughout the novel. It is in Port of Spain that Mr. Biswas comes closest to happiness, working as a journalist for the tabloid Sentinel, writing outlandish stories, and achieving a degree of local fame. He died from heart attack at the age of forty-six. When he died he had no money. His two children were at school. The two older children, on whom Mr. Biswas might have dependent were both abroad on scholarship. Although he had no money he was happy because he could have his own home, his piece of earth.