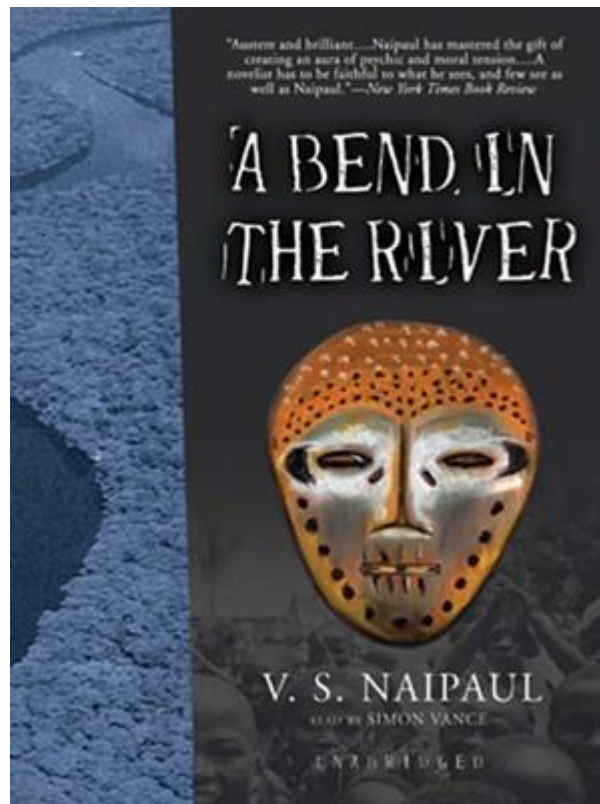


**Expatriate as the Subaltern in V. S. Naipaul's
A House for Mr. Biswas and *A Bend in the River***

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Abstract

Expatriate means a person who is voluntarily absent from home town and the word 'Subaltern' is extracted from Latin word 'subalternus'. The word divides into two which are sub- 'next below' and alternus - 'every other'. Expatriate is a basic need for some people's lives. Some reasons make people move from place to place; they may be jobs, business purposes and visiting tourist places. If one's mind is disturbed, expatriation will be medicine for it. It helps to make a new way, find solution, relaxation and so on. Expatriation makes people glad while they

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 16:6 June 2016

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move to new place. After reaching they feel lonely, not knowing the people, the culture, the weather, the food and so on which are all different. At first, a few difficulties have to be crossed and later on it becomes easier to mingle. Sometimes there are chances to be humiliated and blamed by others in the new area. Some people overcome them after long struggles and some want to go back to their homeland. In India, after independence, people's expatriation becomes a factor.

The Nobel Prize winner V. S. Naipaul begins to write of emigrants' dilemma, problems and plights in a fast changing world. He has travelled to many countries with the help of a scholarship of the Trinidad government. *A House for Mr. Biswas and A Bend in the River* are notable novels of Naipaul. This paper deals with the picture of a man's expatriation and its sufferings. Mr. Biswas and Salim are protagonists of those novels. Basically they belong to India. During the British period, their grandparents expatriated from India to Trinidad. Mr. Biswas is a third generation Indo-Trinidadian. He has moved from country side to town and one house to another house. He never gets a chance to live under a roof and live with his mother too, after his father's death. He has been blamed by his relations. Salim, the other protagonist moves from outside to an interior place in the newly independent Africa. First he has been treated in a friendly manner, but later on he also is blamed by a servant. At the end of the novel he has been helpless. Both of them have to survive without their own family members.

Keywords: expatriation, isolation, homelessness, helplessness, immigrant's dilemma

V. S. Naipaul

V. S. Naipaul is one of the most accomplished contemporary Diaspora writers. Vidiadha Surajprasad Naipaul known as V. S. Naipaul is one of the remarkable English speaking- writers of modern times. He is an Indo-Trinidadian. He was born at the small town Chaguanas in the Caribbean island of Trinidad on 17 August, 1932. He belongs to an orthodox Hindu Brahmin family of India. His grandparents had emigrated from India to Trinidad to work as indentured laborers in sugarcane fields. His father published *Gurudeva* and Other short stories in 1943. He wanted Naipaul to be a great writer. His brother Shiva Naipaul too has written a novel. It is entitled *Fireflies*. At the age of eighteen the first novel was written by Naipaul. Unfortunately it

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was rejected by the publisher. But he never lost his high ambition. He put his effects to fulfill his father's dream.

V. S. Naipaul begins his career as a writer before He has joined BBC to work as programmer to Caribbean Voices which was broadcast in once in a week. He was a fiction reviewer from 1957 to 1961 in New Statesman and wrote public relations copy for a concrete company in 1957. He has been traveling to many countries since became a writer. He acts as a mouthpiece of displacement and rootlessness. He is one of the most significant contemporary English Novelists in Post-colonial period. He can be known as travel writer as well as immigrant writer. He has visited many countries to know of its history with the scholarship of the Trinidad government. He always narrates what he has experienced and learned in the new land in his works. The exile sensibility manifests in almost all major works of Naipaul making him a great Diasporic writer. Most of his novels depict original history, real cultural, many serious issues like impact of colonialism on the societies and individual, the half organized world of third world countries, dilemma of identity-crisis and so forth. His themes like homelessness, spiritual isolation and perpetual exile in his works.

The Mystic Masseur is a key to open the door through which Naipaul emerges as a great novelist. It was published in 1957. It is a comic fiction. The background of the novel picturizes the atmosphere of colonial Trinidad. The novel portrays the life of an Indian writer who wanted to become a politician. This is the first novel of Naipaul that has been made into a film in 2001.

An Area of Darkness, In a Free State, The Enigma of Arrival, A Way in the World, Half a Life (2001) and *Magic Seeds* (2004) are some of the major novels of V. S. Naipaul. *A Flag of the Island* and *Miguel Street* are Naipaul's short story collections. *The Loss of El Dorado, In India; Wounded Civilization, India: A Million Mutinies* are Naipaul's historical works. Naipaul's works reflect Caribbean society as well as colonized countries. His literary genres are also based upon British community. He was born and brought up in the slave society of colonial Trinidad. So he could not survive in London. When he has lived in England, he writes of views on the new society: "All mythical lands faded, and in the big city I was confined to a smaller world than I had ever known. I became my flat, my desk, my name."

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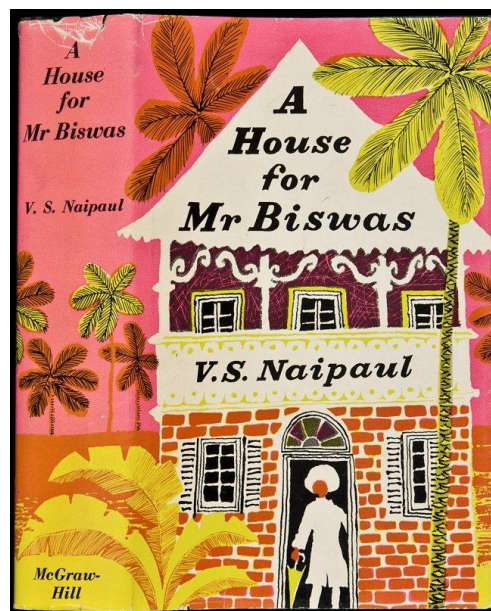
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Naipaul has been honored by a lot of awards and laurels. The most highly coveted award, Nobel Prize in Literature is won by Naipaul on 11th October in 2001. He has got the Rhys memorial prize, the Somerset Maugham award for *The Mystic Masseur* in 1961. He received the Booker prize for *The Free State*. He also is awarded David Cohen British Literary award, W. H. Smith Literary award and so forth.

Expatriate

The word 'Expatriate' is originated from Latin word 'expatriare'. It means a person who voluntarily absent from home town. The word 'Subaltern' is extracted from Latin word 'subalternus'. The word divides into two which are sub-'next below' and alternus - 'every other'. Expatriate is a basic need for life. Some reasons make to move from place to place. They may be jobs, business purpose and visiting tourist places. If mind is disturbed, migration will be medicine for it. It helps to make a new way, find solution, relaxation and so on.

The novels *A House for Mr. Biswas* and *A Bend in the River* of V.S. Naipaul are chosen for analysis in this article.



A House for Mr. Biswas

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Seebersad Naipaul (V.S. Naipaul's father) encouraged Naipaul to become the best writer. Naipaul has respected his father's dream and fulfilled it successfully, after his death. They loved each other very much. Their thinking was the same at many times and their views also. His father shared about the sufferings of his married life to Naipaul. While Naipaul has stepped into the literary world, he writes of his father's life. He started writing it in 1957 and finished in the year 1961. The work is named as *A House for Mr. Biswas*. His father's life was portrayed through the life and character of Mohan Biswas.

The novel *A House for Mr. Biswas* picturizes the life of Mohan Biswas. He is the central character of the novel. He is from an Indo-Trinidad poor family. From his childhood he has been facing neglects and insults. Even when he becomes a son-in-law of a rich family, he has to meet humiliations. So, Biswas wants to build a house for him. He believes that a house will earn him identity and for that he works a lot until his death. That is why the novel is named *A House for Mr. Biswas* symbolically. The entire novel talks about Biswas' longing for his own house. It is the fourth novel of Naipaul which was published in 1961. It is considered as his masterpiece as well as a milestone in Naipaul's career. It is an autobiographical, personal novel; in addition, it is close to Naipaul's heart. The story is written in first person narration. The story travels from place to place. First it is set in the country side of Trinidad and then moves to town and city.

The story of *A House for Mr. Biswas* is set in a small remote village of Trinidad soil in the Caribbean Sea. It covers the history of Trinidad also. In the year 1962 Trinidad got freedom from the Spanish colonists. Such a small island had a mixed population. There were the white men (Spanish settlers), the coloured people (native Africans, the Negro slaves) and Indians who migrated to Trinidad from India in the early 50s and 60s. The novel *A House for Mr. Biswas* presents features of expatriation such as moving from country side to capital city, Port of Spain and covers the story of three generations that are Bipti and Raghu, Mohan Biswas and Shama and Mr. Biswas' children.

The novel has two parts - one is prologue and another is epilogue. The first part tells about the early life of Mr. Biswas. It is set in rural Trinidad and it describes the life of the Indians who migrate to the island. The second part moves to city. This part shows the sufferings of Mr. Biswas with society. It also shows that he wants to build a house of his own.

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Mr. Mohan Biswas works as a journalist in the Port of Spain. The novel begins with the death of Mr. Biswas and then the story moves to tell his past life. From his childhood he feels alienated from the society. He has no feeling of being a part of that society. He has been experienced alienation and exile in every stage of his life. When he was born, no one is happy in his family because he has six fingers in his hand. So they think that it is an ill omen. A foreteller tells that he would be the reason to the death of his father. As the foreteller's words, one day his father jumps into the lake to save Mr. Biswas and dies. His family believes in fate and regards Mr. Biswas as one who will bring poverty to them. Thus, he is set apart from his brothers and becomes an alien within his own family. He has an unlucky sneeze which is the mark of his distinction among the other members of his family. They expatriate from their village and they become displaced and scattered after his father's death. His brothers are sent to work. They are subalterns there. His sister is taken by Tara to work as a maid servant. She is also a subaltern in her own aunt's house.

Pundit Jayaram is a Hindu priest. Mr. Biswas' aunt Tara takes him to Jayaram to learn mantras. Unfortunately one day Jayaram comes to know of the truth that Mr. Biswas is not a brahmin. So he has been hated and sent to Tara again. She wants him to earn money. So she gets him employed in a rum shop of Bhandat. Bhandat is a brother of Tara's husband. He does forgery. He cheats his customers by giving them unmeasured drinks. He takes a mistress of another race and after his wife's death goes to live with her in Port of Spain. One day Mr. Biswas is charged by Bhandat of stealing one dollar from his pocket so that Biswas is cruelly beaten with a belt and is turned out of his shop. He returns to Bipti's room in the hut and cries out to her, "Why do you keep on sending me to stay with other people?" (p. 65).

Mr. Biswas goes to Tulsis' Store. He meets Shama there and falls in love with Shama. They get married. Mr. Biswas think that he will live a luxurious life because Shama belongs to a wealthy family. He mistakenly believes that the Tulsis will provide him with what he lacks, so when he speaks with Alec about his marriage to Shama, he says: "I got my eyes open. Good family, you know. Money. Acres and acres of land. No more sign-painting for me" (88), but he

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understands soon that he leads a subaltern life. He has no power. They have chosen him to work there. Tulsi world is also a prison, becomes once more an outsider and a stranger. He has to live in joint family. He is unhappy because no one respects him and his feelings; even Shama gives first priority to her mother rather than him. He realises that it is not a suitable place. He develops a mental complex due to the uncongenial family atmosphere. In Hanuman House, within the Tulsis group, Mr. Biswas loses his personality and he is needed only as a husband and labourer. Hanuman House, just like the colonial world, works "on the same pattern as the British empire in West Indies". (137)

Thus, Mr. Biswas phases exile and alienation in this world. He turns into a man with no name, land, history or sense of self. Hanuman House is portrayed in the novel as an alien white fortress. Even though Biswas is one of the relations in Tulsis family, he feels lonely. He cannot do anything against Tulsis. His wife Shama also supports her mother and has great affection for her maternal family rather than Biswas. She also wants him to be that way. Though Mr. Biswas is surrounded by relations, he lives as the other. These incidents make him construct his own new house for himself.

A Bend in the River

A Bend in the River, the fiction, visualizes Salim's life. He is the protagonist of the novel. He likes to move from East coast to an unnamed town of Africa. It is situated on a bend of a river bank. The plot begins and ends with the river. So the novel is entitled as *A Bend in the River*. *A Bend in the River* is another notable fiction of Naipaul. The novel was published in 1979. It is written in first person narrative. The fiction is considered as his satirical novel because Naipaul has brought in pictures about the drastic changes of the unnamed town of Africa. Naipaul has stayed in Africa to observe the condition of the place after colonial domination.

In *A Bend in the River* two stories run parallel to each other: the story of the narrator Salim and the story of the town at a bend in the river which is revived after the post independent struggle. Naipaul interlinks the two stories with masterly skill. He reveals the reality of a newly independent African state. There is a group of people who occupied a small town at the bend of

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the river like people who settled in Trinidad. There are a few Belgians, some Greeks, Italians, and Indians living there. Naipaul describes his narrator Salim in relation to the different people he encounters. There are two sets of characters: Metty, Zabeth, Ferdinand and Father Huismans who represent the African History and civilization; and the other set consisting of Nazruddin, Mahesh and Indar who teach Salim how to live on the island.

The novel is divided into four parts: The Second Rebellion (the Big Man's accession to power), The New Domain (the cultural innovations in the European style introduced by the President), The Big Man (the progressive reduction of the exercise of power to absurd tyranny), Battle (the assault on the steamer on which Salim is leaving Africa probably carried out by people in flight from the country).

Salim is not only the protagonist but also the narrator of the novel. He is an Indian Muslim. He survives in the East coast of Africa. He wants to migrate to the unnamed village for developing his business. After he has moved there, he decides to spread his community. At first he is helped. Later on he is blamed and cheated by his servant and other people. Bigman, chief head of the village disturbs him. Salim is caught and thrown in prison. At the end of the novel he decides to come back to India. So he escapes from there at night.

Character and Place

A great deal of Naipaul's criticism is focused on his preoccupation with the accommodated individual. Part of this preoccupation is an interest in the relationship between character and place. *A Bend in the River* embodies the same concerns, but underlying the story is an interest in the process through which people lose their sense of place. However, in *A Bend in the River* there is a more complex elaboration of idea and image than in the other works. The sense of place in this novel relates to differing views of reality; one associated with the darkness and vitality of old Africa predetermined by an old and natural bond between man and the land; the one imported from Europe with a superficial bond between man and things. These relationships are explored through the inversion of traditional associations surrounding the image of darkness and light. This particular use of imagery is consistent throughout the novel as the focus shifts from the land to the town to the city. Naipaul exploits the description of the

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landscape to prove a point about man's alienation from the land and from society. He achieves this by juxtaposing contrasting descriptions of the same or similar scenes, one designed to undercut the other. It is the history of the independent Africa.

Mohan Biswas and Salim were born and brought up in different places as well as communities. Their backgrounds also vary from one to the other. Mohan belongs to the Hindu community and Salim is a Muslim. But both of them are alike in some ways. They are willing expatriate. Mr. Biswas leaves from the country side to get to the town of Trinidad for a job. Salim's family moves from India for trade. Though both of them are surrounded by family members, friends, neighbors, colleagues and so forth, they are alienated. They want to come out from their immigrant places because of their sufferings, identity crises and so forth.

Trinidad and Africa's colonial period will have been dealt in the following way. British rule leaves its political, linguistic, and cultural legacies in both African countries and Trinidad and this can be elaborated through examining the communities in which both Salim and Mr. Biswas live. Societal and cultural forces of colonialism reshape the Indian community in both Trinidad and African countries, and this, results in creating a feeling of homelessness and double consciousness on the part of individuals and society as a whole. The multicultural society is due to colonialism and it makes both the individuals and the society undergo the process of socialization and acculturation. Alienation and Exile represent dimensions of colonial legacy in both Africa and Trinidad. They are reflected in both Salim and Biswas' characters. The use of English language by Salim, Mr. Biswas, and many other characters in the novels represent another dimension of British colonial legacy in Trinidad and African countries. Throughout the two novels, the narrators implicitly tell the readers that colonial education is the means for getting good jobs and progression. However, they also suggest that it is the means for losing cultural values. This ambivalent view is the view of the characters in the novels as well. Thus, it is seen as an actual impact and legacy of colonialism in the societies presented in the novels. The uprooting and displacement of people result in creating Diasporic communities throughout the world. Indians are presented as one of these Diasporic communities who suffer the apathy of their loneliness that they experience and a sense of estrangement from their tradition. Thus, cultural loss and mimicry are seen as legacies of colonial British in the formerly colonial

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countries. Both novels, in their narrations, reassert the notion of British colonizers who believe in the inferiority of colonized people and thus they assume that the colonized people are heathen, savage, and uncivilized.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 **16:6 June 2016**

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