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NAIPAUL'S A HOUSE FOR MR. BISWAS : AN EXISTENTIAL FIGHT OF A BATTLING BELITTLE

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Abstract:Existentialism, a literary critical and moreover a philosophical term , is emerged in the post Second World War period though it has its roots in the 19th century writings and ideas of Soren Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, respectively the Danish theologian and the German philosopher. Kierkegaard had voiced against the evils of the materialistic approach of the Western and thought man as a slave of the machine age. Friedrich Nietzsche stood against the social, moral and questioned about the ethical values regarding the existence of god. Both marched at two direction with a flag of revolt: the Atheistic and the Theistic. The Atheistic approach believed in the ability of man to decorate and carve life out of the situations he encounters. While the Theist man moves ahead by believing in the existence of god. The impact of Existentialism was echoed in the mid 20th century in France and Germany ;by paving the seeds and creating a fertile land for Jean Paul Sartre ;by Martin Heidegger and Karl Yaspers.

Keyword:Existential Fight , Battling Belittle , philosopher , Atheistic.

INTRODUCTION:

Jean Paul Sartre , one of the universally acknowledged Existential philosophers, has erected the empire of Existentialism in the modern age under the influence of its pioneers. His Philosophy stands on the belief that man must make meaningful out of the meaningless, adverse and the absurd world. La Nause,(1938), Les Mauchés(1943) and L'Etre et Jeaneant(1943) are his creative works, The French philosophers Simone de Beauvoir . Albert Camus, Maurice Merleau-ponty, the Russian Fedor Dostoevski, the Irish Samuel Beckett and the Czech born German Franz Kafka are the other exponents of the Existential philosophy.

EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY:-

The philosophical base of Existentialism stands on the individual's revolt against traditions and conventions that hampers human liberty; creed that fosters the inevitable existence of mankind/humanity and acts for his/her true freedom. It bars all that ignores human existence, decisions, freedom and holds man responsible for his 'self'. Existentialism begins from whatever that belittles human existence. Man's existence is certified and attested through the registration of the Existentialism. It believes in the kingly state of man against all doctrines, rules and regulations that discard 'Man' and his existence, 'Man is because man exists'. Man is obsessed with a Myth of happiness though it is encircled with melancholy, misery, suffering and suffocation. The material maturity_ social, economical, scientific_ cannot install man's position. On the other hand it has over thrown man in the complex and confused state , “ to be or not to be” (William Shakespeare); and has made him a mechanical figure. Man as a result becomes a mesmerized figure in the artificial progress of the universe. Man should

remember that “ Times winged chariot is hurrying near”(Marvell Andrew) and he has been participating in the race of the material progress by neglecting his liberty in an atmosphere where death is inevitable and the 'ultimatum'. Hence Existentialism talks of total freedom. “Turning and turning in the widening gyre”(W.B.Yeats) man has lost. In this 'Endgame' he has made himself an absurd figure. While the Existentialism believes in man's search for himself and to establish the reign of human existence in the world where Darwin had once stressed the universality, 'Survival of the Fittest'. The Existentialism philosophizes human's permanent existence and its eternal problems.

EXISTENTIALISM:- ESSENTIALS AND RECURRING THEMES:-

Existentialists celebrate man as a solitary and alienated , an estranged figure in the hostile world. The sense of insecurity about future, feelings of anxiety, bloody battles against nothingness, personal freedom lie at the root of Existentialism. A sense of guilt and failure runs through him while getting through life. His incapacity for creative actions end in helplessness, confusion and moreover consciousness of death makes him aware of the absurdity human existence. Ignorance, impotence, boredom, disintegration and regression makes his life meaningless and he becomes an 'Anecdote Untold' in his revolt against conventions and traditions.

MAJOR CREEDS/BELIEFS:- SUBJECTIVITY, FREEDOM AND INDIVIDUAL'S IDENTICAL EXISTENCE:-

Existentialism realistically unfolds human predicament by emphasizing man's miserable experiences. It is a way to 'Man', who is treated a 'foundling' in the

universe. It strongly views and visualizes individual's existence.

AN EXISTENTIAL FIGHT OF V. S. NAIPAUL'S MR. BISWAS, A BATTLING BELITTLE:-

Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* realistically depicts Mr. Biswas as an Existential figure who finds himself a stranger in the stagnant setting of the Trinidad while fighting against the world of Tulsidom with a passion and an obsession to build own house.

The *A House For Mr. Biswas* moves among the domestic action of the East Indians on the socio-culturally mixed world of Trinidad. Mr. Biswas is everyman; hence the novel has created the universal sense of the 'house', existence and identity. The following comment of Naipaul focuses on the rootless and marginalized life of the East Indian Community of Trinidad: "Living in the borrowed culture, the West Indian, more than the most, needs writers to tell him who he is and where he stands." (Naipaul: 1962,73) *A House for Mr. Biswas* is a heart-touching tale of marginalized man's struggle for own 'House' against hostile society. It is universally acknowledged because it narrates reality of a need of permanent refuge. Naipaul takes novel as a form of social inquiry. It reveals the problems of society and individual, the alienated individual and displaced communities among socio-culturally mixed societies of Trinidad. The individual finds himself nowhere on the land. Man in the universe is a sum of social, cultural and self amalgamated norms. But it is difficult for a displaced individual to draw his complete self of the foreign soil trampled and transplanted by communities: African, Negro, indentured East Indian and Chinese.

The novel depicts the transplanted East Indian community's wayward condition on the Caribbean islands. They are marginalized in the Creole Caribbean world. Both the protagonist and the omniscient narrator are marginalized figures in *A House for Mr. Biswas* the 'House' is a metaphor of freedom and root, success and achievement, stability and permanence. Mr. Biswas is lower-middle class man. His early homelessness and humiliating social experiences created an urge in him to build a 'house'. His is the lonely march on the track of settlement. He brings his dream into reality by traveling to the capital of Trinidad, Port of Spain, schooling his children; Anand and Savi, managing grocery and rum shop, working as a journalist, painting sign boards and serving at Govt. Welfare Department. The novel is a celebration of the achievement of the homeless figure of the poverty-stricken condition. He is a rebel against the anti-forces and has successfully transformed them into opportunities, though he is born as unlucky person for the domestic world. William Walsh argues: "The substance of the novel has to do with the transformation of Mr. Biswas, a slave to place, history and biography, into free man, the sign and realization of that emancipation being his house." (Walsh:1973,32.) Naipaul successfully blends a garland of autobiographical, socio-cultural, political, historical and economical elements in *A House for Mr. Biswas*.

The series of a serial of Mr. Biswas' life starts, naturally, with his birth, "Six-fingered and born in the wrong

way" (P.15) at the most inauspicious hours of midnight. The words of a midwife darken the moment: "whatever you do, this boy will eat up his mother and father." (P.15) The words of the family Pundit makes the moments complex and cloudy: "...much of the evil this boy will undoubtedly bring will be mitigated if his father is forbidden to see him for twenty-one days..." (P.17) and warns him to keep Mr. Biswas away from water and trees. His grandmother, Bissoodaye, tries at her level best to mitigate the evils of his disastrous horoscope by hanging the leaves of cactus on the doors and windows. The Pundit too used disingenuous powers to mitigate the veils of the dark moments of birth. She named him 'Mohun', means beloved. Paradoxically through out his life no one loved him; neither his mother, father, relatives, children the creator-God. Born in the family of indentured laborers of sugarcane estates, he began to graze and water the calf of Dhari. Once he had neglected the calf and thrown himself in fishing at the 'forbidden stream', unfortunately the calf was lost, the fearful figure hides himself among the beach rocks. His father, Raghu, dived into the water to search him and got drowned. The death brings family distortion. Fate plays her role by giving blows to Mr. Biswas by bringing the dark moments of his birth into reality. After his father's death the muddy-hut of his family was sold in low price and since the age of six he becomes a picaresque hero who wanders through out his life till death brings him rest.

Mr. Biswas and his mother Bipti live under the mercy of Tara who sends him to the Canadian Mission School and after his failure in schooling he is sent to become a professional pundit at Pundit Jairam who too drives him out of his house on spoiling the auspicious oleander, 'puja' tree. He joins the rum shop at Bhandat, where he is accused of theft and beaten brutally black-blue. The helpless soul cries in front of mother, "You see, Ma. I have no father to look after me and people can treat me how they want." (P.67) But she replies very coldly and passively, "Where will you go then?" (P.65) He exposes his dream of building own house at his mother, "Why do keep on sending me to stay with other people...I am going to get a job of my own. And I am going to get my own house too. I am finished with this." (P.67)

The war against 'Fate', family and life begins, which is a revolt for freedom and self existence from all sorts of bondage. It may be defined as a first step at settlement and identity formation out of which he turns at sign painting that puts him near his life partner, Shama, a Tulsi girl; "She was of medium height, slender but firm with fine features and though he disliked her voice, he was enchanted by her smile." (P.74) Though unknown to the marriage Bipti welcomes her son, who since birth has been bringing such shocking news for the family. Now Mr. Biswas comes at the Hanuman House, the Tulsidom, where all are treated at puppets under the hands of Mrs. Tulsi. William Walsh exposes the functioning and the psyche of the Hanuman House, Tulsidom, realistically, "The Tulsi family condensed into itself the character of the larger world outside. It was fundamentally indifferent but grasping. It ran superstition and power, expressed in the Tulsi case in the mysterious matriarch and her brother-in-law the gangsterish overpowering Mr. Seth. Its system was to provide subsistence and cover in return for total devotion and the abdication of self.

Its modes of behavior were derived from a remote civilization from India, but merely they were merely forms, empty of any content of value. (Walsh:1973, 34)

Mr. Mohun Biswas attempts to come out of the subjugated atmosphere of the Tulsidom. William Walsh says, “ Everybody lived at Hanuman House in a complex relationships and transient alliances, the purpose of which was to placate the authorities and to slide through life unnoticed. In this cruel, conic world, both crowded and solitary, bullying and servile, Mr. Biswas kept alive a mere glint of independence and self by refusing to be either a suave or a mild victim.”(Walsh: 1973,34).The heart-cherished dream of self house remains open to sky and doesn't get buried in the moments of mental and physical crisis. He is very conscious of the idea that without house the present will lead him to uncertainty.

The Tulsidom decides to send him at the Chese where by living in a mud-hut he manages a grocery shop. But his venture at Chase fails , moreover the birth of Savi brought him at the Tulsidom again.He is sent at Green Vale as a driver to look after Tulsi estates of the salary of 25 dollars per month. He first builds his own house but unfortunately it gets a blow of heavy rain and storm, all ends in quiet and calm. The feeling of failure turns in affection at Savi whom he gives a gift of “ a doll's house' at Christmas. He tries his luck at Port of Spain, The capital of Trinidad: “ He was going out into the world, to test it for its power to frighten. Real life, and its especial sweetness, awaited; it was still beginning.”(P.305)His sign painting and writing skill make him financially strong to buy a house at Shorthills, which soon gets destroyed in fire. The job as the Community Welfare Officer on eight percent brings his dream of a house into reality in Sikkim Street. Naipaul in the prologue to the novel states, “ ...As a boy he 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, at Hanuman House in Arwacas, in the decaying wooden houses at Shorthills, in the clumsy concrete house in Port of Spain. And now in the end he found himself in his own-half-lot of land, his own portion of the earth. That he should have been responsible for this seemed to him, in these last months stupendous. (P.8)

Naipaul has stressed the need of existence in the colonial situation through Mr. Biswas' hard struggle against complex socio-individual structure of the rootless and transplanted society. For preserving independence, establishing his identity and building permanent refuge for self and children. Mr. Biswas' aspiration for self-reliance narrates the existential absurdity of modern man, who is transplanted on the foreign soil among fractured sense and sensibilities, caused due to rootlessness and homelessness in socio-political life. He starts from homeless and halts at having own 'House'. A House for Mr Biswas is a ballad of the genuine self and feelings of the socio-culturally exiled, powerless but aspirated figures. Manjit Inder Singh says, “Mr. Biswas may be colonized in the physical, economical and political sense, but his emotional urge for freedom , his sensitivity to humiliation and slavery are signs of a temperament that bristles with rebellion and subversion.”(Singh: 2002,114).The novel is a metaphor of

the aspired individual, who is abandoned by family, trapped and tortured by society. According to Robert Morris the 'house' is “ the grand symbol of his freedom, personal independence, pride and dignity...redeeming all his past trials, perhaps the very past itself.” (Morris:1975, 35) Mr. Biswas' ambitions and aspirations are celebrated by Kenneth Ramchand , “ But if Mr. Biswas finds his world a deterrent to ambition, as well as engulfing and repulsive, the faith in life with which author endows him ...is greater than the fictional character's impulse to escape.”(Kenneth:1990,204) Thieme John considers Mr. Biswas “is a 'little man' who is doubly disadvantaged victim of both his lowly status and his colonial situation.”(Thieme:1987,70)

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